The little known and ‘Critically Endangered’ Príncipe Thrush was a BirdQuest lifer and just one of the exciting highlights of the tour. (Nik Borrow)

GABON, SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE

4 – 26 JULY 2013

LEADERS: NIK BORROW assisted by PATRICE CHRISTY in Gabon

Birdquest first visited Gabon in 1995 and this was our twelfth tour to the country and our thirteenth visit to the far-flung islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. We managed to see most of the generally accepted endemic species on São Tomé and Príncipe and these included marvellous views of rarities such as Dwarf Olive Ibis, São Tomé Short-tail, the superb Giant Sunbird and for the first time in the history of our tours, even the recently split Príncipe Thrush! During our time in Gabon, we were fortunate to see many of the most spectacular of all Western African birds including the delightful Grey Pratincole, a pair of Vermiculated Fishing Owls, Sjöstedt’s Barred Owlet, Brown and Bates’s Nightjars, Bare-cheeked Trogon, Black-headed
and Rosy Bee-eaters, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide, Gabon Batis on the nest, Black-collared Bulbul, Congo Moor Chat, Violet-tailed Sunbird, Black-chinned and Loango Weavers and Red-crowned, Cassin’s and Rachel’s Malimbess. Other specialities seen included Black Guineafowl, Finsch’s Francolin, Hartlaub’s Duck, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Barrow’s Bustard, Forbes’s Plover, Black-collared Lovebird, Gabon Coucal, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Bates’s Swift, Black Dwarf and White-thighed Hornbills, Spotted Honeyguide, Elliot’s Woodpecker, West African Batis, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Lowland Sooty and Swamp Boubous, Petit’s Cuckoo-shrike, Souza’s Shrike, Rufous-vented and Bates’s Paradise Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Nicator, Malbrant’s (split from Rufous-naped) Lark, Xavier’s, Eastern Bearded and White-bearded Greenbuls, Yellow-looded Bristlebill, Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Ja River Scrub Warbler, Dambo and ‘Teke’ Cisticolas, Gosling’s Apalis, Salvadori’s Eremomela, Forest White-eye, Violet-backed Hyliola, Yellow-footed Flycatcher, Reichenbach’s, Carmelite and Bates’s Sunbirds, Preuss’s Weaver, Woodhouse’s Antpecker, Pale-fronted Nigrita, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Black-headed Waxbill, Black-chinned Quailfinch, Locust Finch, Magpie Mannikin, Long-legged and Short-tailed Pipits and Black-faced Canary to name but some. Of the 409 species of birds recorded during this tour 394 were seen, we also identified 36 species mammals.

We begun our tour in Libreville, the capital of Gabon but lingered only long enough to take in the Reichenbach’s Sunbirds in the hotel garden along with some of the saddest looking, oil-stained and bedraggled Western Cattle Egrets on this planet. We also noted Western Reef Egret, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, African Palm Swift, Common Bulbul, African Thrush, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, Black-necked and Village Weavers and Bronze Mannikin before embarking on the flight to the far-flung island of São Tomé.

Four years had passed since our last tour and numerous changes have taken place in both countries during this short time. Prices have surged upwards, and particularly on the islands, standards of living have obviously improved enormously. Perhaps because of their Portuguese history São Tomé and Príncipe have a distinctly South American or Caribbean feel to them. There are of course a whole heap of endemics to find and this year we succeeded in searching out most of those generally accepted. Our visit was timed to coincide with the ‘dry’ season known as the gravana but as this is one of the wettest places on earth, it can in fact rain any time of year. Yellow-billed Kites gliding over the runway greeted us and as soon as we could we rushed out to an area of cultivation near the hotel where we managed to see our first specialties. Here some São Tomé Prinias performed their lively, undulating wing-snapping display flights, an Island Bronze-naped Pigeon was scoped, our first São Tomé Paradise Flycatchers, Black-capped Speirops, Newton’s Sunbirds and Giant Weavers were seen and São Tomé Spinetails fluttered overhead. The São Tomé form of Chestnut-winged Starling was studied perched in the top of a dead tree and we also found Harlequin Quail, Laughing Dove, Red-headed Lovebird and Little Swift as White-tailed Tropicbirds (with yellow tails) flew over. Searching for Golden-backed Bishop and hunting through the various non-breeding plumaged
granivorous birds we only found some Southern Masked Weavers, Black-winged Red Bishop, White-winged Widowbird, Blue and Common Waxbills and Yellow-fronted Canaries before the day drew to a close.

The next morning we took a picnic lunch and headed into the interior of the island with the aim of finding as many of the more widespread endemics as possible and to do this we chose a path that took us up to Lagoa Amelia. Busy flocks of São Tomé White-eyes and several São Tomé Orioles and São Tomé Thrushes were found easily. Príncipe Seedeaters flaunted themselves and there were São Tomé Green Pigeon feeding in the fruiting trees as we made our way up the track. A pleasant surprise was the ease with which we saw several Giant Sunbirds this trip and a pair of São Tomé Scops Owl comprised of grey and rufous phase individuals was found at their daytime roost. Once inside the forest we had little problem finding São Tomé Dove and São Tomé Weaver with the ultimate prize of an São Tomé Olive Pigeon as we ate our lunch! In the afternoon we returned to the savannas in search of the bishop but drew another blank although we did add Striated Heron, Reed Cormorant, Red-headed Quelea and Pin-tailed Whydah. By our hotel São Tomé Kingfishers zipped back and forth, Pied Kingfisher was an unusual find and we heard the São Tomé form of Western Barn Owl.

After a good nights sleep we woke to a fine morning and left early the next day for the southeast end of the island for our night camping in the forests there. As the road gradually got worse and the cars had more trouble negotiating the rutted track the hike into the forests began. It was very dry this year and the anticipated wellington boots were scarcely needed as we trudged along the still muddy trail but over dry streambeds and slippery rocks. Our walk took us past a spooky old crumbling plantation building, through huge stands of bamboo and spreading palms and then finally into the mysterious forest where we trudged and the day began our climb up onto the ridge. We made it to the campsite area around lunchtime with nothing new added to the list but almost immediately heard a São Tomé Short-tail calling that responded aggressively to playback and we all had brilliant views of this strange bird with its over-sized feet, initially perching in the saplings but thereafter walking over the leaf litter, rocks and fallen logs and quite unperturbed by our presence. As it was dry we decided to try for the fiscal but of this there was no sight or sound and so with the daylight rapidly ebbing away we embarked upon another search for the São Tomé Ibis and at the end of the day luckily flushed one and were overjoyed when it landed on a nearby perch and froze thus allowing walkaway views!

The following morning we carried on past another short-tail, up the ridge to a known haunt of the São Tomé Fiscal but there was no sign of any bird and nor of the hoped for São Tomé Grosbeak either. Our camp had been dismantled during the mornings birding so we had nothing to do but head back down and back to the hotel knowing by now the dream of all the endemics was not going to come true.

The next morning we boarded our scheduled flight to Príncipe and transferred to the tiny island arriving in the late morning with just enough time to take a short boat trip out to some small rocky islets where Brown Booby and Black and Brown Noddies were resting and prospecting White-tailed Tropicbirds sailed past the

São Tomé Short-tail (left) and São Tomé Ibis (right) both allowed excellent views. (Nik Borrow)
cliff faces. At lunch the Príncipe Kingfisher could be seen from the dining table whilst in the gardens and surrounding forest we watched Príncipe Sunbird, Príncipe Speirops and Príncipe Golden Weaver. Along the road Príncipe Glossy Starlings squabbled in the treetops while the strange Dohrn’s Thrush Babbler gave its explosive song from the bushes below. Príncipe Drongo (often lumped with Velvet-mantled Drongo) perched in the trees and the island form of Lemon Dove was seen well. Grey Parrots with their bright red tails were a feature of our stay and their screeches and whistles were heard often. Also seen was African Green Pigeon and the dryas race of the Blue-breasted Kingfisher, a form that is surely ripe for splitting.

The following day we set off by pirogue to the remote southern part of the island that is dominated by the strange volcanic plugs that are a feature of the island. The reason for this visit was a quest to find the recently split Príncipe Thrush and Príncipe White-eye, species that appear to be mostly restricted to the remaining pristine forest that swathes the mountainous terrain where it always seems to be wet or draped in heavy cloud. Fortunately for us the morning was dry and the beach landing went smoothly and easily. Our local guide led us up a steep and rocky trail towards the Pico but hardly a bird was seen in the silent forests. We climbed onwards and upwards over mossy boulders beneath towering trees but there was no sign of our targets although the island form of Príncipe Seedeater was happily accepted. By lunchtime we had reached the saddle and some of the group were finding the climb a little too taxing but as we were firmly placed in thrush territory we decided to work our way slowly back pishing and squeaking along the way. It was with excitement and a great relief that after some short time a thrush was spotted close by and allowed fantastic views. It transpired that this was just in time for shortly after the rain began to fall and continued to do so until we reached the bottom of the hill. Our return route took us on a wet sea cruise to the rocky islets where the same species of noddy were present but we also picked up a Bridled Tern.

Our return to São Tomé was earlier than expected and we had time for lunch in a wonderful local restaurant in Guadalupe. We finally tracked down a moultng male Golden-backed Bishop in the savannas and a male Emerald Cuckoo in the cocoa plantations thus bringing our adventure on the Gulf of Guinea islands to a close.

The return to Gabon was tedious but eventually we found ourselves in Libreville at a time of day that was too early to do nothing but too late to do something. We accepted our fate and waited for the next day. Some years ago Gabon was set to become a hot ‘new’ eco-tourist destination being billed as a veritable ‘Garden of Eden’. In August 2002 in what was billed as “one of the most courageous conservation acts in the last twenty years”, the late President Omar Bongo declared that ten per cent of the country was to be transformed into thirteen national parks covering some three million hectares. However, already the developments that were being made to facilitate the ease with which its national wonders of gorillas, chimpanzees, forest elephants and buffalo and a fantastic wealth of bird-life might be shown to a prospective stream of tourists appear to be
in decline. With some places closed, others struggling to stay open and a few almost prohibitively expensive to visit.

Over the years, this Gabon tour has sometimes felt like a battle of wits waged against all the gremlins that leapt in its path and this year things were certainly no better and birding during the middle of the dry season (for logistical reasons) meant that birds were very quiet or unresponsive. The next day we were joined by local expert Patrice Christy and we set off for the nearby Akanda National Park set up in 2002 and comprised mainly of mangrove and tidal beach habitats that are of international importance. To get there we undertook a boat trip down through the mangroves to the mouth of the Moka River. The tide was very high on arrival and virtually all land was covered leaving a group of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Great White and Pink-backed Pelicans and a few Grey Herons to sit out the high waters which were already beginning to fall as we drifted past the slightly nervous birds. Some roosting terns included Royal, Sandwich, Little, Common, Black and Gull-billed Terns but there was no sign of the hoped for Damara. A large flock of African Skimmers was present, an African Fish Eagle sailed past and as the sand bar became exposed so good numbers of waders appeared and we noted White-fronted, Common Ringed and Grey Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Curlew, Terek and Common Sandpipers, Red Knot, Sanderling and even two Avocets. Landing in the mangroves enabled us to get ashore where we enjoyed great looks at the sublime Rosy Bee-eater and found the rare Loango Weaver easily. A juvenile Violet-tailed Sunbird was waiting to be fed by its parents although we only saw the female. A male Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher didn’t stay around long but Yellow-crested Woodpeckers, Yellow-breasted Apalis and Pale-fronted Nigrita posed for longer whilst a Square-tailed Nightjar flushed and studied at length was much appreciated. Both Mangrove and Carmelite Sunbirds were seen and along the waterways we found both Malachite and Shining-blue Kingfishers. Overhead we noted Woolly-necked Stork, Palm-nut Vulture, Mottled, Sabine’s and Cassin’s Spinetails, Petit’s Saw-wing and Lesser Striped and Red-breasted Swallows and other species included Great Egret, Hamerkop, Red-eyed Dove, Woodland Kingfisher, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, African Pied and Piping Hornbills, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Western Nicator, Little Greenbul, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Crombec, Chattering Cisticola, Collared, Green-headed and Olive-bellied Sunbirds, Vieillot’s Black Weaver, Orange-cheeked Waxbill and Black-and-white Mannikin. Returning to Libreville we were delighted to find a responsive Swamp Boubou before heading back to our hotel.

The following day we boarded our large bus that was set to carry us on a series of long drives across the country, travelling on kilometre after kilometre of mostly dirt roads that were usually bordered by a thick, wide carpet of red dust that had been thrown up by the enormous trucks and logging vehicles. We paused a while at the small town of Ndjolé situated on the mighty Ogooué River where a sandbank mid-river once again proved to be a reliable spot to see Grey Pratincoles. Also present were Hadada Ibis, White-crowned Lapwing with pendulous wattles and a flock of 130 Rock Pratincoles. Red-chested Swallows appeared to be nesting...
here, Yellow-throated Leaflove was seen and both Orange Weavers and Black-headed Waxbills were coming down to drink or bathe. Refreshed, we continued on our way following the picturesque river upstream, and apart from the road itself, the landscape probably little changed from the days of Brazza’s early explorations. African Harrier-hawks were seen regularly on the journey and numbers of Square-tailed Saw-wings were noted. As we neared our destination of la Lopé small numbers of Bates’s Swifts were identified, a Scaly Francolin and Speckled Mousebird were seen and we also spotted White-throated Bee-eater, Pied Crow and Green-throated and Superb Sunbirds. Just before the hotel we found an African Darter on a small pool.

The hotel itself has a superficial veneer of luxury but the truth is that it was a rather hit and miss affair as to whether things actually worked! However it overlooks the Ogooué River and is surrounded by an attractive natural mosaic of gallery forest and open savannah and despite the gloomy dawn of the following morning the garden was coming alive with Vieillot’s Black, Village, Black-necked and Orange Weavers, Common Bulbul and Copper Sunbirds getting their first sips of nectar of the day. Long-legged Pipsits accompanied African Thrushes on the lawns watched over by Senegal Lapwings, Blue-breasted Bee-eaters, African Pied Wagtail and flocks of Black-chinned Quailfinches. Splendid Starlings perched up on high snags and a few Red-throated Cliff Swallows were discovered amongst the other swallows. With so much bird activity, it was tempting to linger longer but instead we climbed into the open-topped park trucks and set off for the morning’s birding session.

Once inside the park we found the savannahs to be dry and quiet with little moving. Only the occasional bird was seen but we did encounter Senegal Coucal, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Cardinal Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Croaking, Shortwing and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Yellow-mantled Widowbird and a group of Compact Weavers. At a gallery we added some Black-casqued Hornbills, our first Great Blue Turacos, White-breasted Nigrita and a Cassin’s Honeybird flew over. Perhaps our main objective in the park was to find the Ja River Scrub Warbler discovered in la Lopé (one of the few known locations for this rare and skulking Bradypterus warbler) by Patrice Christy in 1994. We arrived at the small marsh that is their home and most of the morning was taken up trying to get views of a very skulking individual but after a lot of patience and persistence everyone managed to get views of this localised species. In the bush we found some Forest Elephants although the Forest Buffalo appeared to prefer the lawn of the hotel where we also found a solitary Red-capped Lark. The late afternoon the forest was painfully quiet but at dusk Fraser’s Rufous Thrush, Fraser’s Forest Flycatcher and Yellow-footed Flycatcher put in an appearance and as darkness fell so did African Wood Owl and we were also blessed with an amazing sighting of a Water Chevrotain in the torch beam. On the way back to the lodge we found both Swamp and Freckled Nightjars.

The following day was spent working the gallery forest and was a most productive time although the birds needed to be worked for. Red-eyed Puffback and Velvet-mantled Drongo were prominent species and some
treetop Naked-faced Barbets were seen. A Blue-headed Wood Dove was watched feeding on the path but an astounding success was lucking into a superb Lyre-tailed Honeyguide at the edge of the gallery rather than as a dot high in the sky! It appeared to be loosely associated with a bird party that held wild-eyed Red-billed Dwarf Hornbills, Western Oriole, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher and Chestnut-capped Flycatcher. Other species noted during the morning included Red-chested Goshawk, Blue Malkoha, White-crested Hornbill, Speckled Tinkerbird, Slender-billed and Ansonge's Greenbuls, Red-tailed Bristlebill, Fraser's, Little Green and Blue-throated Brown Sunbirds, Dark-backed Weaver and Grey-headed Nigrita. The final prize of the session was a superb Red-chested Owlet that posed nicely for us. Near the hotel we found a Grey-rumped Swallow, Double-toothed Barbet, Black-bellied Seedcracker and both Cassin’s Flycatcher and Mountain Wagtail on a small river whilst at night we scored with some fine views of a Bates’s Nightjar caught in the spotlight.

During our final day in Lopé National Park we found a Tiny Sunbird at breakfast time after which we then returned to the forest and relocated the previous day’s bird party. We were watching Black-winged Oriole, Shining Drongo and Yellow-whiskered, Honeyguide and Icterine Greenbuls when the rhythmic hoots of Fiery-breasted Bushshrike were heard. Although a trio of birds responded quite quickly it took a long time before everyone in the group had seen them reasonably well due to the bird’s fast movements and skulking habits. It was a very active and busy bird party and we followed it for most of the morning and a number of good species were noted. A flock of Rufous-bellied Helmetshrikes and Blue-billed Malimbe were seen well but a Spotted Honeyguide only put in a brief appearance. Bates’s Sunbird was identified and in the canopy we saw Yellow-throated Tinkerbird, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Buff-throated Apalis, Forest White-eye and Grey-chinned Sunbird and although we struggled hard to see a singing Gabon Batis it sadly remained a disembodied voice. The afternoons are always dull and rather gloomy at this time of year and we spent a lot of time searching for Black-faced Canary but eventually Barbara found us several unobtrusive birds that we had apparently walked past! During our search we also found Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Simple Greenbul and Whistling Cisticola and at the end of the day we were overjoyed as a Forbes’s Plover flew in at the eleventh hour and good views were obtained by us all. As dusk fell a Bat Hawk was watched hunting over the hotel.

The drive from la Lopé to Makokou, our next port of call turned out to be longer than expected, as it was not possible to take the short cut via the ferry at Bouué because it was still out of action. This meant that we had to retrace our steps almost as far as Ndjolé before turning back on ourselves on the opposite bank of the Ogooué River. One benefit however was that since our last visit the road had been paved for a considerable distance and so our progress was smoother, faster and somewhat less dusty. An Ayres’s Hawk Eagle was seen en route as was Blue-headed Coucal whilst our lunchtime stop by a pool that had been created as a byproduct of the new road contained a pair of Hartlaub’s Duck, an African Finfoot and a couple of Little Grebe. We reached our destination of Ipassa Reserve situated just outside of the town of Makokou before
dusk where we were staying for five nights in the renovated research station. The centre is situated on high ground overlooking the Ivindo River with a beautiful panoramic view over the surrounding forest and a perfect place for an evening watch in case an ibis should fly by. However despite a persistent watch we weren’t so lucky this year and neither was there any sign of the hoped for African River Martins that should have been gathered here in good numbers at this season and it is a mystery as to where they could have moved on to. The most unusual bird seen turned out to be the enormous Goliath Heron, however, the centre proved to be the perfect base for our stay because everything was quite literally on the very doorstep!

The lights from the buildings at night attract many insects and each morning various species of birds come to pick off the crop of the preceding nights interesting array of moths and beetles. Grey Parrots and Piping Hornbills were a feature of the morning bird activity with large numbers gathered. As was now to be expected, the birding was slow and we picked up species gradually and in the camp area we found Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Willcocks’s Honeyguide, Gabon Woodpecker, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Spotted Greenbul, Brown Illadopsis, Grey Tit-flycatcher, Johanna’s Sunbird and Western Bluebill.

A wide track runs through the reserve itself and by keeping a watchful eye upon its length we were fortunate to see a Gabon Coucal in the middle of it while high above us Black-capped Apalis trilled and Afep Pigeons crooned from the canopy and a lone Chocolate-backed Kingfisher piped out its melancholy cry. We wandered slowly along this pathway where the many highlights included a stunning male Bare-cheeked Trogon hooting away in the depths of the dense greenery was an utter delight to see. The brightly coloured eastern form of Forest Robin glowed in the dim light of the forest understorey and a glorious trio of Rachel’s Malimbess shone out in their coats of brilliant colours. We had several encounters with the rarely seen Red-crowned Malimbe and also added Cassin’s and Crested Malimbess to our lists. Noisy Yellow-billed Turacos and White-thighed Hornbills weren’t always as easy to see as one might expect but both Blue Cuckooshrike and Black Dwarf Hornbill sat and posed nicely for us for a while. Busy bird parties included Buff-spotted and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Thick-billed Honeyguide, Grey Longbill, Green Hylia, Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher, Bates’s Paradise Flycatcher and Woodhouse’s Antpecker and allowed us to compare Chestnut and White-spotted Wattle-eyes. It was a greenbul paradise with Little Grey, Plain, Golden, Xavier’s, Eastern Bearded, Red-tailed and White-bearded Greenbuls and Yellow-lored Bristlebill all recorded. Ant swarms also attracted birds and we enjoyed very fine views of Red-tailed and White-tailed Ant Thrushes and Fire-crested Alethe. A Black Guineafowl showed for some of the group but we only heard the noisy Plumed Guineafowl. A decidedly tricky Sjöstedt’s Barred Owlet took some tracking down during late one afternoon but we eventually found it just as dusk was falling.

Birding the secondary growth and overgrown plantations outside of the forest was also a rewarding experience and we were pleased to find skulkers such as Yellow-throated Nicator, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher. The more open habitat made it easier to see species such as Tambourine Dove, Guinea Turaco, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Grey-throated, Yellow-spotted, Streaky-throated and

We did well to find this family of Rachel’s Malimbe (left) and the rarely encountered Red-crowned Malimbe (right) (Nik Borrow)
Yellow-billed Barbets. Both Green-backed and Elliot's Woodpeckers were seen, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras gave views, Sooty Flycatchers hawked from prominent perches and Africa’s tiniest bird the diminutive Tit-hylia was seen well. We were also extremely pleased to see a group of Northern Talapoin monkeys. At night, we found, Demidoff's Galagos, Potto, Brown Nightjar, African Wood Owl and a superb pair of Vermiculated Fishing Owls.

At another site not so far from Makokou, large trees line the roadides where it was much easier to set the scopes up and enjoy the canopy birds. Here we found West African Batis and a pair of Gabon Batis building perhaps only the second ever nest discovered for this species. We were also responsible for finding the first nest some years back. Cassin’s Hawk Eagle and Long-crested Eagle were seen, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Purple-headed Starlings and Preuss’s Weavers favoured the treetops but a Uganda Woodland Warbler was nothing more than a fast moving dot in the greenery. Cute Rufous-crowned Eremomelas were persuaded to come down to less neck-breaking levels but Black-collared Lovebirds shot overhead like speeding bullets whilst excitable Banded Prinias popped up from below as some Green-backed Twinspots appeared by the roadside. Lunch by a river provided the hoped for and localised Gosling’s Apalis as well as glittering White-throated Blue Swallows

We bade farewell to Ipassa and leaving Makokou we embarked upon the long dirt-road journey to Franceville. Some casual roadside stops gave us yet another chance to add a few more species that included Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Klaas’s Cuckoo, Blue-throated Roller and Black Bee-eater. We drove constantly through forest but finally the dense canopy gave way to patches of open savannah and we noted our first Little Bee-eater, Northern Fiscal and Dark-capped Bulbul. We had discovered Black-headed Bee-eater during the last tour at a new locality and were delighted to find the birds present once again particularly as a pair of Violet-backed Hyliota was also present. We spent some quality time with these beautiful beasts before having to complete the final leg of the journey and we finally arrived at the hotel at Lékoni late, tired and very dusty only to find that although they were expecting us there were the usual problems with electricity and water. This was mainly a temporary hiccup and eventually the rooms were sorted and there was also food and beer so not all was bad!

Lékoni (or Léconi) is situated on the Batéké Plateau situated on the Congo border, where the rainforest gives way to moorland and a scenic ‘canyon’ has become a tourist attraction although it is actually a huge land slippage rather than a proper canyon. The landscape of this region is quite unlike anything seen elsewhere on our African tours. The habitat is once again literally on the doorstep and the next morning we started chipping away at the specialities. Unfortunately, this year the area was very dry and a large number of bush fires had destroyed huge swathes of the moorlands. This will undoubtedly lead to fresh growth very fast but at least for our visit we found ourselves birding in a rather sooty landscape.
Our first day was spent exploring the scrubby areas that are interspersed with patches of cultivation and we began with a pair of handsome Lüder’s Bushshrike croaking at us from the shrubbery. We were very pleased to hear a Perrin's Bush-shrike calling from the same area as found on our previous tours but sadly it remained in thick cover and refused to show. Snowy-crowned Robin Chat put in a brief appearance but Black Cuckoo, Square-tailed Drongo, a dapper pair of Bocage’s Bushshrike, Northern Puffback, Petit’s Cuckoo-shrike and White-chinned Prinias all showed well. In the more open areas we saw a super Red-throated Wryneck, striking Black-collared Bulbuls posed, Flappet Larks were ‘flappeting’ and there were good numbers of ‘wintering’ South African Cliff Swallows and a few Angola Swallows. We enjoyed excellent views of ‘Teke’ Cisticola (thought to be an as yet undescribed species) and scratched our heads over the very pale and plain bohndorffi race of Plain-backed Pipit. Good numbers of striking Sooty Chats were easy to see and the first of a number of Congo Moor Chats were admired. With their frosted head and breast and conspicuous display flight this is a striking species that has such a range that Gabon is really the only place one is able to reach easily. Other species seen during the morning were African Cuckoo-hawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Striped Kingfisher, Black-crowned Tchagra, Western Black-headed Batis, Fork-tailed Drongo, Tinkling (or Grey) Cisticola, Salvadori’s Eremomela, Violet-backed Starling, Pale Flycatcher and Cabanis’s Bunting. A misunderstanding with our 4X4 vehicles meant that we suffered an unnecessarily long walk back to the hotel for lunch but we were back out again in the afternoon and found a Fiery-necked Nightjar in broad daylight and flushed several Short-tailed Pipits, (a species that seems to be near on impossible to see on the ground!) and a confusing series of flushed francolins that included Red-necked Spurfowl and Coqui and Finsch’s Francolins. At the end of the day we had marvellous views of a spectacular male Long-tailed Nightjar.

On our final day we set off over the open moors in search of Black-chinned Weavers amongst other species. We soon flushed the local form of White-bellied Bustard; known as Barrow’s Bustard (the male with its distinctive tawny-buff hind-neck) and during the course of the morning enjoyed some great flight views. We studied the Rufous-naped Larks here of the form malbranti sometimes split as Malbrant’s Lark and hunted out Dambo, Pectoral-patch and Zitting Cisticolas. Temminck’s Courser’s favoured the burned areas over which hawked Banded Martin. We also came across African Hoopoe and Green-capped Eremomela before finally locating a pair of Black-chinned weavers that stayed around long enough for everyone to get scope views. A flushed Marsh Owl, flyby Dark Chanting Goshawk and a roadside Brown-hooded Kingfisher were the last birds of the morning.
In the afternoon we visited the lake at the foot of the attractive Lékoni ‘canyon’ where a Giant Kingfisher sat by the placid waters. White-fronted Bee-eaters, Ring-necked Dove and Marsh Widowbirds were seen and a pair of Locust Finches allowed amazingly good flight views. A distant African Hobby was spotted and the return drive yielded Black Scimitarbill, Souza’s Shrike, Rattling Cisticola and Black-throated Canary and thus our stay on the Batéké Plateau came to its end.

We had now to get back to Libreville and this year we flew and arrived in time to have a quick look at some rather sorry and degraded forest at Cap Esterias where we added Red-thighed Sparrowhawk and Chestnut-winged Starling to the list before the end of the day.

As well as appealing to anyone with a specialist interest in Africa our ‘Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe’ tour is certainly an adventure and for the time being still remains a destination with a strong sense of ‘wilderness’ that took us through a rich, varied and often-uninhabited landscape. However, with the timber-laden trucks and trains rolling out of the country at an alarming rate and the oil prospectors constantly discovering new areas to destroy, Gabon and the islands are probably one of Africa’s best-kept secrets that should be seen before it’s too late. We indeed felt ourselves fortunate enough to be there before the forests are merely reduced to the boundaries of the National Parks!
A White-crested Hornbill in Ipassa Reserve. (Nik Borrow)
Forbes’s Plover was a popular addition to the list at la Lopé. (Nik Borrow)

**SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR**

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).
Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).
Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered ‘special’ birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International’s magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world’s avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home

**CR** = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

**Black Guineafowl**  *Agelastes niger* ◊ Only John saw the calling bird at Ipassa Reserve.

**Plumed Guineafowl**  *Guttera plumifera* (H) ◊ Heard only at Ipassa Reserve – so near yet so far.

**Latham’s Francolin**  *Peliperdix lathami* (H) ◊ Heard calling at night at Ipassa Reserve. See Note.

**Coqui Francolin**  *Peliperdix coqui*  Seen at Lékoni. See Note.

**Finsch’s Francolin**  *Scleroptila finschi* ◊ Flushed at Lékoni. See Note.

**Scaly Francolin**  *Pternistis squamatus*  Several sightings along roads whilst travelling.

**Red-necked Spurfowl**  *Pternistis afer*  Heard on São Tomé (nominate) and seen at Lékoni (*cranchii*).

**Harlequin Quail**  *Coturnix delegorguei*  Seen on São Tomé.
Hartlaub’s Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii* ◊ A pair seen well en route to Makokou. See Note.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* A pair seen well en route to Makokou.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* c. 60 at Moka River. A recent addition to the Gabon list.

![Part of the flock of Greater Flamingos at the Moka River mouth. (Nik Borrow)](image)

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* (NT) c. 50 at Moka River.

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* Small numbers seen over the islands.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* 1 distant bird in flight over Akanda NP.

Sao Tome Ibis (Dwarf Olive I) ◊ *Bostrychia bocagei* 2 birds flushed on São Tomé, one of which perched and froze.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Easy to see at Lopé NP. See Note.

Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Easily seen on the islands and Akanda NP.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common on the islands and in Libreville.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* At least 10 at Moka River.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* 1 at Ipassa Reserve on the river.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* 1 in Akanda NP.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (NL) 1 was identified at Moka River.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* Both colour phases easy to see on the islands and also in the Libreville area.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Small numbers from Akanda NP to Lopé NP.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* 23 at Moka River.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* c. 10 at Moka River.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* At least 150 off Príncipe.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Small numbers on São Tomé.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* 1 at Lopé NP.

African Cuckoo-hawk *Aviceda cuculoides* 2 at Lékoni.

Bat Hawk *MACHEIRAMPHUS ALCINUS* At least 3 individuals seen in the Lopé area and at Ipassa Reserve.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Very common on the islands and small numbers in the Libreville area.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* 1 at Moka River.

Palm-nut Vulture (Vulturine Fish Eagle) *Gypohierax angolensis* Regularly encountered in Gabon.

African Harrier-hawk *Polyboroides typus* Regularly encountered in Gabon.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* 1 at Lékoni for some.

Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter tousussenii* A few sightings in Gabon and displaying over Ipassa Reserve.

Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *Accipiter erythropus* ◊ 1 in flight at Cap Esterias.

Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus* (LO) Patrice saw 1 at Lékoni Reserve.

Long-tailed Hawk *Urotiorchis macrourus* (H) ◊ Heard at Ipassa Reserve.

Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis* 1 at Lékoni.

Cassin’s Hawk-eagle *Aquila africana* Excellent views of a perched bird along the Bélinga Road. See Note.

Ayres’s Hawk-eagle *Hieraetus ayresii* 1 seen en route to Makokou. See Note.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* 1 seen along the Bélinga Road.

African Hobby *Falco cuvierii* 1 distant bird over the lake at Lékoni.

Barrow’s Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis* barrow ◊ At least 8 seen at Lékoni. See Note.

White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra* (H) Heard in Ipassa Reserve.

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis* Singletons en route to Makokou and in Ipassa Reserve.

Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus* (H) ◊ Heard at night in Ipassa Reserve.

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Singletons in Lopé NP and en route to Makokou.
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Easy to see on São Tomé.
Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus* (H) Heard at night in Lopé NP.
Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (NL) 2 for some at Moka River.
White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps* 2 at Ndjolé.
Senegal Lapwing (Lesser Black-winged Plover) *Vanellus lugubris* At least 15 in Lopé NP.

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White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps* 2 at Ndjolé.
Senegal Lapwing (Lesser Black-winged Plover) *Vanellus lugubris* At least 15 in Lopé NP.
Black Tern  *Chlidonias niger*  1 of these Palearctic migrants at Moka River.
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)  *Columba livia*  Feral or ‘table’ birds only.
Afep Pigeon  *Columba unicincta*  Small numbers in the Makokou area. See Note.
São Tome Olive Pigeon (Maroon P)  *Columba thomensis*  ◊ (E)  3 individuals on São Tomé. See Note.

![A female or immature São Tomé Olive Pigeon. (Nik Borrow)](image)

Western Bronze-naped Pigeon  *Columba iriditorques*  1 for Nik and John in Ipassa Reserve and heard at Lékoni.
Island Bronze-naped Pigeon (São Tomé B-n P)  *Columba malherbi*  ◊ (NT)  Easily seen on São Tomé.
Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D)  *Columba larvata*  Easily seen on Príncipe.
São Tomé Dove (Forest D)  *Aplopedia [larvata] simplex*  ◊  Easily seen on São Tomé.
Red-eyed Dove  *Streptopelia semitorquata*  Commonly encountered in Gabon.
Ring-necked Dove (Cape Turtle D)  *Streptopelia capicola*  A few seen at Lékoni.
Laughing Dove  *Spilopelia senegalensis*  Common on the islands.
Blue-spotted Wood Dove (Red-billed W D)  *Turtur afer*  Commonly encountered in Gabon.
Tambourine Dove  *Turtur tympanistria*  Small numbers usually seen in flight in Gabon.
Blue-headed Wood Dove  *Turtur brehmeri*  1 watched feeding out on the trail in Lopé NP.
African Green Pigeon  *Teron calvus*  Seen well on Príncipe and in Gabon.
São Tome Green Pigeon  *Teron sanctithomae*  ◊ (V)  Seen well on São Tomé.
Red-headed Lovebird  *Agapornis pullarius*  Small numbers seen on São Tomé.
Black-collared Lovebird  *Agapornis swindernianus*  ◊  6 in flight over the Bélinga Road.
Grey Parrot  *Psittacus erithacus*  (V)  Still apparently common on Príncipe and in Gabon.
Great Blue Turaco  *Corythaëola cristata*  Easy to see in Gabon.
Guinea Turaco (Green T)  *Tauraco persa*  Just 1 sighting in Ipassa Reserve.
Yellow-billed Turaco  *Tauraco macrorhynchus*  Several sightings in the Makokou area.
Gabon Coucal  *Centropus anselli*  ◊  A lucky sighting of a juvenile on the main track in Ipassa Reserve.
Senegal Coucal  *Centropus senegalensis*  Seen in Lopé NP and heard at Lékoni.
Blue-headed Coucal  *Centropus monachus*  Seen en route to Makokou.
Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill)  *Ceuthmochares aereus*  A number of good sightings in Gabon.
Klaas’s Cuckoo  *Chrysococcyx klaas*  Seen en route to and at Lékoni. See Note.
Yellow-throated Cuckoo  *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*  ◊  2 sightings in Ipassa Reserve and en route to Franceville.
African Emerald Cuckoo (E C)  *Chrysococcyx cupreus*  1 male seen on São Tomé.
Black Cuckoo  *Cuculus clamosus*  1 singing bird seen at Lékoni.
São Tomé Barn Owl  *Tyto [alba] thomensis*  ◊ (H)  Heard on São Tomé. See Note.
Sao Tome Scops Owl *Otus hartlaubi* ◊ (V) Excellent views of a pair of both colour morphs on São Tomé.

Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri* ◊ We enjoyed terrific views of a pair in Ipassa Reserve.

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Several sightings in Lopé NP and Ipassa Reserve.

Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephrotomum* Daytime views of 1 in Lopé NP.

Sjöstedt's Barred Owlet *Glaucidium sjostedti* ◊ Seen late in the day in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* 1 seen at Lékoni.

Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* ◊ Excellent views at dusk of 1 in Ipassa Reserve.

Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis* Terrific views of 1 in daylight at Lékoni.

This male Fiery-necked Nightjar at Lékoni was found during the day. *(Nik Borrow)*

Swamp Nightjar (Natal N, African White-tailed N) *Caprimulgus natalensis* Seen well in Lopé NP.

Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma* Seen well in Lopé NP.

Bates’s Nightjar *Caprimulgus batesi* ◊ 1 seen well in Lopé NP. See Note.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* 2 seen at Lékoni.

Square-tailed Nightjar (Gabon N) *Caprimulgus fossii* Seen well during daylight in Akanda NP and at Cap Esterias.

Sao Tome Spinetail *Zoonavena thomensis* ◊ Easy to see on the islands.

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri* Small numbers seen in Akanda and Lopé NPs.

Sabine’s Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini* Commonly encountered in Gabon. See Note.

Cassin’s Spinetail *Neafrapus cassini* Smaller numbers than Sabine’s but regularly encountered in Gabon.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Seen throughout the tour.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Seen throughout the tour.

Bates’s Swift *Apus batesi* ◊ Seen well near Lopé NP.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* A few sightings mainly near Lopé NP.

Bare-cheeked Trogon *Apaloderma aequatoriale* ◊ A bit of a struggle but we all saw a male well in Ipassa Reserve.

Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis* 1 at the Sebe River.

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia* 1 seen well in Ipassa Reserve.

Grey-headed Kingfisher (Chestnut-bellied K) *Halcyon leucocephala* (NL) Seen by some in Lopé NP.

Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris* 1 at Lékoni.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* 1 at Lékoni.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* The race dryas on Principe and malimbica in Gabon.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* A roadside bird in Gabon.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta* Numerous sightings in Gabon.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus* Seen well in Akanda NP.
Príncipe Kingfisher *Corythornis [cristatus] nais* ◊ Easily seen on Príncipe.

São Tome Kingfisher *Corythornis [cristatus] thomensis* ◊ Very easy to see on São Tomé.

Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribachys* Singletons seen well along the Moka River and in Lopé NP.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* 1 at Lékoni.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* A pair seen behind Omali Hotel on São Tomé 6-12/7. This is a newcomer to the islands.

Black-headed Bee-eater *Merops breweri* ◊ 4 seen near Franceville and another at Lékoni.

Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis* 3 seen en route to Franceville.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* Easily seen in the southeast of Gabon.

Blue-breasted Bee-eater (White-cheeked B-e) *Merops variegatus* Excellent views in Lopé NP.

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White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides* A poor showing with only 3 at Lékoni.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* Seen in the Lopé area and again at Lékoni.

Rosy Bee-eater *Merops malimbicus* ◊ No problems with seeing this beautiful bird in Gabon.

African Hoopoe *Upupa africana* 1 or 2 seen at Lékoni.

Black Scimitarbill (B Wood-hoopoe) *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* (NL) 4 seen at Lékoni.

African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus* Common and easy to see in Gabon.

Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi* ◊ Excellent views of a male in Ipassa Reserve.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus* Great looks in Lopé NP.

White-crested Hornbill *Tropicranus albocristatus* 3 sightings in Lopé NP and Ipassa Reserve.

Piping Hornbill *Bycanistes fistulator* The race *sharpii* was easy to see in Gabon.

White-thighed Hornbill *Bycanistes albotibialis* ◊ A few seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Grey-throated Barbet *Gymnobucco bonapartei* Easy to see in the Makokou area.

Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus* A poor showing with only a couple seen in Lopé NP.

Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* A common forest bird in Gabon.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus atriflavus* Just one seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* A common forest bird in Gabon.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus* Noted in Akanda and Lopé NPs and at Lékoni.

Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui* Seen in the Makokou area.

Streaky-throated Barbet *Tricholaema [hirsuta] flavipunctata* Seen in the Makokou area.

Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* Several seen in Lopé NP.

Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachyphonus purpuratus* Seen in the Makokou area.
Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis* 1 briefly in flight in Lopé NP.
Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcoksi* 1 for some in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.
Thick-billed Honeyguide *Indicator conirostris* 1 brief view in Ipassa Reserve.
Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus* ◊ 1 short look in Lopé NP.
Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus* ◊ Lucky views of a perched bird in Lopé NP.
Red-throated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* Scope views of 1 at Lékoni.
Green-backed Woodpecker (Little Spotted W) *Campethera cailliautii* 2 sightings in Ipassa reserve and 1 at Lékoni.
Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivosa* 1 in Ipassa Reserve.
Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli* 2 sightings in Ipassa Reserve.
Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Seen in Lopé NP and at Lékoni.
Gabon Woodpecker *Dendropicos gabonensis* Seen each day in the Makokou area.
Yellow-crested Woodpecker *Dendropicos xantholophus* A pair in Akanda
Elliot's Woodpecker *Dendropicos elliotii* ◊ 1 was seen in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.
Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher (Vanga F) *Bias musicus* Just a few sightings from Lopé and the Makokou area.
Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri* A female at Lékoni.
Gabon Batis (Verreaux's B) *Batis minima* ◊ (NT) A male in Ipassa and a pair along the Bélinga Road. See Note.

West African Batis *Batis [poensis] occulta* ◊ Seen along the Bélinga Road and en route to Franceville.
Chestnut Wattle-eye *Platysteira castanea* Seen in Ipassa Reserve.
White-spotted Wattle-eye *Platysteira tonsa* ◊ Seen in the canopy in Lopé NP and Ipassa Reserve.
Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W-e) *Platysteira cyanea* Seen in Akanda and Lopé NPs.
Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Platysteira concreta* A pair in Ipassa Reserve.
Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike *Prionops rufiventris* ◊ A flock allowed good views in Lopé NP.
Fiery-breasted Bushshrike *Malaconotus cruentus* ◊ A trio was seen in Lopé NP.
Bocage's Bushshrike (Grey-green B-s) *Chlorophoneus bocagei* Seen well at Lékoni. See Note.
Gorgeous Bushshrike (Perrin's B-s) *Telophorus viridis* ◊ (H) This bird refused to show at Lékoni. See Note.
Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus* Small numbers were seen at Lékoni.
Sabine's Puffback *Dryoscopus sabini* ◊ (H, LO) Patrice heard 1 in Lopé NP.
Red-eyed Puffback (Black-shouldered P) *Dryoscopus senegalensis* Easy to see in the Gabonese forests.
Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* Several at Lékoni.
Lowland Sooty Boubou *Laniarius leucorhynchos* ◊ Seen well in Ipassa Reserve.
Lühder's Bushshrike *Laniarius luehderi* A pair was seen at Lékoni. See Note.
Swamp Boubou (Gabon Boubou) *Laniarius bicolor* ◊ Good looks at Cap Caravan.

Blue Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina azurea* A male seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Petit’s Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga petiti* ◊ At least 1 female seen at Lékoni. See Note.

Souza's Shrike (Sousa's S) *Lanius souzae* ◊ 1 very volatile bird seen by some at Lékoni. See Note.

Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* A common bird in the southwest.

Sao Tome Oriole *Oriolus crassirostris* ◊ Easily seen on São Tomé.

Western Oriole (W Black-headed O) *Oriolus brachyrhynchos* Easily seen in the Gabonese forests.

Black-winged Oriole *Oriolus nigripennis* 3 sightings in the Gabonese forests.

Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus ludwigii* 2 sightings at Lékoni.

Shining Drongo *Dicrurus atripennis* A bird party leader in the Gabonese forests.

Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* Easily seen at Lékoni.

Velvet-mantled Drongo *Dicrurus [modestus] coracinus* Showy birds in Lopé NP and Ipassa Reserve.

Principe Drongo *Dicrurus [modestus] modestus* ◊ Just 1 seen on Principe.

Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus nitens* A very active individual seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Rufous-ventured Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufocinerea* ◊ A male was seen in Akanda NP.

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventris* 2 sightings in Lopé NP.

Bates’s Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone batesi* ◊ Common in Ipassa Reserve.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Commonly encountered in Gabon.

Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone atrochalybea* ◊ Common on São Tomé.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Just a few seen in Gabon in Libreville and Lékoni.

Western Nicator *Nicator chloris* A number of sightings in the Gabonese forests. See Note.

Yellow-throated Nicator *Nicator vireo* ◊ Seen well in Ipassa Reserve.

Malbrant’s Lark *Mirafra [africana] malbranti* ◊ Quite common at Lékoni. See Note.

Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinammomea* Common at Lékoni.

Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea* 1 seen at Lopé Hotel on 15/7.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* Common from Libreville to Makokou.

Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor* Replaced the previous form at Lékoni.

Slender-billed Greenbul *Stelgidillas gracilirostris* A showy greenbul of the Gabonese forests.

Little Greenbul *Eurillas virens* Easy to see in Gabon.

Little Grey Greenbul *Eurillas gracilis* Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

Ansorge’s Greenbul *Eurillas ansorgei* Seen well in the Gabonese forests. See Note.

Plain Greenbul (Cameroon Sombre G) *Eurillas curvirostris* Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Eurillas latirostris* Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

Golden Greenbul (Serine G) *Calyptrichla serinus* Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

Honeyguide Greenbul *Baeopogon indicator* Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

Sjöstedt’s Greenbul (S’s Honeyguide G) *Baeopogon clamans* ◊ (H) Heard along the Bélina Road.

Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus* Common and easy to see in the Gabonese forests.

Simple Greenbul (S Leaflove) *Chlorocichla simplex* A few seen in Gabon.

Yellow-throated Leaflove *Atimastillas flavicollis* Easy to see in Gabon.

Swamp Palm Bulbul *Thresilochichla leucopleura* Common and easy to see in the Gabonese forests.

Icteric Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus* Common and easy to see in the Gabonese forests.

Xavier’s Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri* ◊ A few seen well in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.

Red-tailed Bristlebill (Common B) *Bleda syndactylus* Skulking birds in the Gabonese forests.

Yellow-lored Bristlebill (Lesser B) *Bleda notatus* ◊ Skulking birds in the Gabonese forests.

Eastern Bearded Greenbul *Criniger chloronotus* ◊ Seen in the Makokou area.

Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus* Seen in the Makokou area.

White-bearded Greenbul *Criniger nudussumensis* ◊ Seen well in Ipassa Reserve.

Black-collared Bulbul *Neolestes torquatus* ◊ Excellent views at Lékoni.

Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens* Common in Gabon.

Petit’s Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] petiti* Easy to see in Lopé NP and at Lékoni. See Note.

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* Lopé Hotel on 14 & 16/7. Perhaps the first records for the park.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta* A few sightings at Lékoni.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida* Apparently breeding at Ndjolé and seen in Lopé NP.

Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis* 2 sightings at Lékoni.
White-bibbed Swallow (White-throated Blue S) *Hirundo nigrita*  Seen in the Makokou area.
Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*  Very common in Gabon.
Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested S) *Cecropis semirufa*  A few widespread sightings in Gabon.
Red-throated Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon rufigula*  Seen well in Lopé NP and briefly at the Sebe River.
South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera*  Good numbers at Lékoni.
Yellow Longbill *Macronenus flavicans* (H)  Heard only in the Makokou area.
Grey Longbill (Olive L) *Macronenus concolor*  Heard more than seen in the Makokou area.
Green Crombec *Sylvietta virides*  Heard more than seen in Gabon.
Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*  1 seen along the Bélinga Road.

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccallii*  Seen well in the Gabonese forests.

*The strange little Chestnut-capped Flycatcher was seen well in Lopé National Park. (Nik Borrow)*

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*  Heard more than seen in the Makokou area and at Lékoni.
Tit Hylia *Pholidornis rushiae*  Singletons in Ipassa Reserve and along the Bélinga Road.
Uganda Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus budongoensis*  A fleeting glimpse along the Bélinga Road.
Ja River Scrub Warbler (Dja R W) *Bradypterus grandis*  (NT)  It was hard work but excellent looks in Lopé NP.
Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis*  Heard more than seen in Gabon.
Chattering Cisticola *Cisticola anonymus*  Heard more than seen in Gabon.
Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana*  1 seen by some at Lékoni.
Tinkling Cisticola (Grey C) *Cisticola rufilatus*  Good views at Lékoni.
Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*  Common in Lopé NP and at Lékoni.
Short-winged Cisticola (Siffling C) *Cisticola brachypterus*  Seen in Lopé NP.
‘Teke’ Cisticola *Cisticola sp. nov.*  Seen well at Lékoni.
Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed C) *Cisticola juncidis*  A few seen at Lékoni.
Dambo Cisticola *Cisticola dambo*  Seen well at Lékoni.
Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens*  Common in Lopé NP and at Lékoni.
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*  Common in Lopé NP and at Lékoni.
Sao Tome Prinia *Prinia molleri*  Seen well along the Bélinga Road.
White-chinned Prinia *Schistolaisi leucopogon*  Seen well at Lékoni.
Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*  Seen well in Akanda NP.
Black-capped Apalis *Apalis nigriceps*  Seen in the treetops in Ipassa Reserve.
Buff-throated Apalis *Apalis rufogularis*  Common in Lopé NP and the Makokou area.
Gosling’s Apalis *Apalis gosling* ◊ Seen well along the Bélinga Road. See Note.
Grey-backed Camaroptera (Bleating Warbler) *Camaroptera brevicaudata* (H) Only heard in Gabon.
Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris* Heard more than seen in the Makokou area.
Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota* Only glimpsed by some in Ipassa Reserve.
Salvadori’s Eremomela *Eremomela salvadorii* ◊ Seen well at Lékoni. See Note.
Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops* A group of 4 seen at Lékoni.
Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps* Seen well along the Bélinga Road.
Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri* (H) Heard distantly in Ipassa Reserve.
Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens* Seen in Ipassa Reserve.
Dohrn’s Thrush-babbler *Horizorhinus dohrni* ◊ Easily seen on Príncipe. See Note.
Príncipe Speirops *Zosterops leucophaeus* ◊ Common and easy to see on Príncipe.
Black-capped Speirops (São Tomé S) *Zosterops lugubris* ◊ Common and easy to see on São Tomé.
Forest White-eye *Zosterops [senegalensis] stenocricotus* ◊ A few seen in Lopé NP and along the Bélinga Road.
São Tomé White-eye *Zosterops feae* ◊ (V) Easily seen on São Tomé.

![Bird](image)

*The São Tomé White-eye is classified as ‘Vulnerable’ by BirdLife International. (Nik Borrow)*

Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea* ◊ A pair seen well near Franceville.
Purple-headed Starling *Hylopospurpureiceps* Easy to see in the Gabonese forests but often in flight.
Splendid Starling (S Glossy S) *Lamprotornis splendidus* Seen well on Príncipe and in Gabon.
Príncipe Starling (P Glossy S) *Lamprotornis ornatus* ◊ Common on Príncipe.
Violet-backed Starling (Amethyst S) *Cinyricinclus leucogaster* Good numbers seen.
São Tomé Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus [fulgidus] fulgidus* ◊ Easily seen on São Tomé.
Chestnut-winged Starling (Forest C-w S) *Onychognathus [fulgidus] h. hartlaubii* 2 seen at Cap Esterias.
Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* Small numbers in Lopé NP.
Red-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus rufus* Several seen in Ipassa Reserve.
White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* Several seen in Ipassa Reserve.
Fraser’s Rufous Thrush *Stizorhina fraseri* Small numbers seen in Lopé NP and Ipassa Reserve. See Note.
African Thrush *Turdus pelios* Common in Gabon.
São Tomé Thrush (Gulf of Guinea T) *Turdus olivaceofuscus* ◊ (NT) Easy to see on São Tomé.
Príncipe Thrush *Turdus xanthorhynchus* ◊ (CR) Excellent views of 1 on Príncipe but it wasn’t easy! See Note.
Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe castanea* Excellent views at ant swarms in Ipassa Reserve.
Brown-chested Alethe *Pseudalethe poliocephala* (H) Heard in Ipassa Reserve.
Eastern Forest Robin *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] xanthogaster* Seen very well in Ipassa Reserve.
Snowy-crowned Robin-chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* Heard in Lopé NP and brief views at Lékoni.
White-browed Scrub Robin *Erzymphysa leucophrys* (H) Heard at Lékoni.
African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* (NL)  Seen at Franceville Airport. See Note.

Congo Moor Chat *Myrmecocichla tholloni* ◊  Easy to see at Lékoni although often distant.

Sooty Chat *Myrmecocichla nigra*  Common and easy to see at Lékoni

Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*  Commonly encountered in the Gabonese forests.

Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*  2 seen at Lékoni.

Cassin's Flycatcher *Musicipaca cassini*  First seen well at la Lopé.

Yellow-footed Flycatcher *Musicipaca sethsmithi* ◊  1 seen at dusk in Lopé NP.

Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Musicipaca comitata*  A pair seen en route to Franceville.

Sooty Flycatcher *Musicipaca infuscata*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher (G-t Flycatcher) *Myioparus griseigularis*  1 seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Grey Tit-flycatcher (Lead-coloured F) *Myioparus plumbeus*  A pair was around the camp in Ipassa Reserve.

Fraser's Sunbird (Scarlet-tufted S) *Deleornis fraseri*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Mangrove Sunbird (Brown S, Mouse-brown S) *Anthreptes gaboicus*  3 seen along the Moka River.

Violet-tailed Sunbird *Anthreptes aurantius* ◊  A female was seen attending a juvenile in Akanda NP.

Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seinundi*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Grey-chinned Sunbird (Green S) *Anthreptes rectirostris*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*  Common in Gabon.

Reichenbach’s Sunbird *Anabathmis reichenbachii* ◊  Seen in Libreville and 1 in Lopé NP. See Note.

Principe Sunbird *Anabathmis hartlaubii* ◊  Easily seen on Principe.

Newton’s Sunbird *Anabathmis newtonii* ◊  Common on São Tomé. See Note.

Giant Sunbird *Dreptes homensis* ◊ (V)  5 individuals seen on São Tomé.

Green-headed Sunbird (Olive-backed S) *Cyanomitra verticalis*  Seen in Akanda NP.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanolaema*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea*  Seen on Principe and again in the Gabonese forests.

Carmelite Sunbird *Chalcomitra fuliginosa* ◊  Small numbers in the Libreville area.

Green-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra rubescens*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Tiny Sunbird *Cinnyris minullus*  Small numbers in the Gabonese forests.

Johanna’s Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae*  A male for Nik and Marco in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.

Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus*  Regularly encountered in Gabon.

Bates’s Sunbird *Cinnyris batesi* ◊  1 was identified in Lopé NP.

Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus*  Common in the savannahs in Lopé NP.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*  Only in Gabon.

Principe Sunbirds were not difficult to see. (Nik Borrow)
Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus* ◊ After a long search we found a pair at Lékoni.
Loango Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus* ◊ (V) A pair was seen well in Akanda NP.
Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis* Easy to see in Gabon.
Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius* Seen from Ndolé to Lopé NP.
Principe Weaver (P’s Golden W) *Ploceus princeps* ◊ Impossible to miss on Principe.
Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* Common in the savannahs on São Tomé.
Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* Seen throughout the tour.

**Giant Weaver *Ploceus grandis* ◊** Easy to see in small numbers on São Tomé.

**Vieilliot’s Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*** Common in Gabon. See Note.

**Compact Weaver *Ploceus superciliosus*** 7 seen in Lopé NP.

**Dark-backed Weaver (Forest W) *Ploceus bicolor*** 3 seen in Lopé NP.

Preuss’s Weaver (P’s Golden-backed W) *Ploceus preussi* 3 seen along the Bélina Road. See Note.

**Sao Tame Weaver *Ploceus sanctithomae* ◊** Impossible to miss on São Tomé.

**Red-crowned Malimbe *Malimbus coronatus* ◊** Two great encounters with separate pairs in Ipassa Reserve.

**Cassin’s Malimbe *Malimbus cassini* ◊** Small numbers in the Makokou area.

**Rachel’s Malimbe *Malimbus racheliae* ◊** Great views of a family of 3 in Ipassa Reserve. See Note.

**Blue-billed Malimbe (Gray’s M) *Malimbus nitens*** Small numbers seen in the Gabonese forests. See Note.

**Crested Malimbe *Malimbus malimbicus*** A few sightings in Ipassa Reserve.

**Red-headed Quelea (R-h Dioch) *Quelea erythrops*** Small numbers on São Tomé.

**Black-winged Red Bishop (Fire-crowned B) *Euplectes hordeaceus*** All in non-breeding plumage on São Tomé.

**Golden-backed Bishop *Euplectes australis*** ◊ At least 1 male seen moulting out of breeding dress on São Tomé.

**Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura*** Small numbers in Lopé NP.

**Marsh Widowbird (Hartlaub’s M W) *Euplectes hartlaubi*** A pair in non-breeding plumage at Lékoni.

**White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus*** All moulting out of breeding plumage on São Tomé.

**Woodhouse’s Antpecker *Parmoptila woodhousei* ◊ A pair in Ipassa Reserve. See note.

**White-breasted Nigrita (W-b Negrofinch) *Nigrita fusconotus*** Regularly encountered in the Gabonese forests.

**Pale-fronted Nigrita (P-f Negrofinch) *Nigrita lutefrons*** ◊ Seen well in Akanda NP.

**Grey-headed Nigrita (G-crowned Negrofinch) *Nigrita canicapillus*** Small numbers seen in the Gabonese forests.

**Green Twinspot (Green-backed T) *Mandingoa nitidula*** At least 3 seen along the Bélina Road.

**Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus*** ◊ A common bird in Gabon.

**Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*** Mainly noted on journeys in Gabon.

**Blue Waxbill (Southern Cordon-bleu) *Uraeginthus angolensis*** A few on São Tomé.

**Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda meloda*** Common in Gabon.

**Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*** Common on São Tomé.

**Black-headed Waxbill *Estrilda atricapilla*** ◊ Seen well in Gabon.

**Black-chinned QualiFinch *Orygospiza gabonensis*** ◊ Large numbers in Lopé NP.

**Locust Finch *Paludipasser Locustella*** ◊ Flight views of a pair at Lékoni.

**Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata*** Common throughout the tour.

**Black-and-white Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor*** Common in Gabon.

**Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringillifrons*** ◊ Small numbers seen well in Gabon.

**Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*** Sightings throughout the tour.

**Mountain Wagtail (Long-tailed W) *Motacilla clara*** 1 in Lopé NP.

**African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*** Commonly encountered in Gabon.

**Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*** Easy to see in the Lopé and Lékoni savannahs.

**Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*** The race *bohndorffi* at Lékoni.

**Long-legged Pipit *Anthus palilidiventris*** ◊ Easy to see in Gabon.

**Short-tailed Pipit *Anthus brachyrurus*** ◊ Seen well in flight at Lékoni but disappears once it lands.

**São Tomé Short-tail *Amaurornis bocagii*** ◊ (V) Wonderful views of a pair on São Tomé.

**Black-faced Canary *Crithagra capistrata*** ◊ Played hard to get at Lopé but we got them in the end.

**Black-throated Canary (B-t Seedeater) *Crithagra atrogularis* (NL)** Seen by some at Lékoni.

**Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica*** Seen on São Tomé

**Principe Seedeater *Crithagra rufobrunnea*** ◊ Seen on both São Tomé and Principe.

**Cabanis’s Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi*** Seen well at Lékoni. See Note.
MAMMALS

Grey-cheeked Mangabey *Lophocebus albigena*  Seen well in Lopé NP.
Northern Talapoin *Miopithecus ogouensis*  Seen well in Ipassa Reserve.
Mona Monkey *Cercopithecus mona*  Seen on the islands.
Putty-nosed Monkey (Greater White-nosed M) *Cercopithecus nictitans*  Seen well in Gabon.
Moustached Monkey *Cercopithecus cephus*  Easy to see in Lopé NP.
Potto *Perodicticus potto*  Good views in Ipassa Reserve at night.
Demidoff’s Galago *Galagoides demidoff*  Seen well in Ipassa Reserve at night.
Thomas’s Galago *Galagoides thomasi*  A pair in Lopé NP at night.
Straw-coloured Fruit Bat *Eidolon helvum*  Small numbers seen on the islands.
Hammer-headed Fruit Bat *Hypsignathus monstrosus*  Seen in Ipassa Reserve.
Franquet’s Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomops franqueti*  Heard only and not knowingly seen in Gabon.
Peters’s Lesser Epauletted Fruit Bat (Dwarf F B) *Micropterus pusillus*  Under the chalet eaves at Lopé Hotel.
Noack’s Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros ruber*  Seen well on the islands.

Mauritian Tomb Bat *Taphozous mauritianus*  The ‘white-winged’ bat seen on São Tomé.

Ribonned Rope Squirrel (Le Conte’s Four-striped Tree S) *Funisciurus lemniscatus*  (NL) 1 Bélinga Road.
Fire-footed Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus pyrropus*  (NL) 1 Ipassa Reserve.
Lady Burton’s Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus isabella*  (H)  Heard Bélinga Road.
Green Squirrel *Paraxerus poensis*  A few seen in Gabon.

Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambia*  (NL) 1 seen by Jerzy in Lopé NP.
Red-legged Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus rufobrachium*  1 seen in Ipassa Reserve.

African Giant Squirrel *Protoxerus stangeri*  Small numbers seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*  Seen on Principe.

Swamp Otter (Congo Clawless O) *Aonyx congica*  (LO)  Nik saw 1 on the Zadié River.

Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguinea*  (NL) 1 in Lopé NP.
Marsh Mongoose *Atax paludinosus*  1 in Ipassa Reserve.

Rusty-spotted Genet *Genetta maculata*  (NL)  Seen by Jerzy at night in Ipassa Reserve.

African Palm Civet *Nandinia binotata*  Seen at night in Ipassa Reserve.

Tree Pangolin (White-bellied P) *Phataginus tricuspis*  1 seen in Ipassa Reserve.

Western Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax dorsalis*  (H)  Heard at night in Ipassa Reserve.

African Forest Elephant *Loxodonta cyclotis*  Seen well in Lopé NP.

Water Chevrotain *Hyemoschus aquaticus*  An amazing nocturnal sighting of 1 in Lopé NP.

Forest Buffalo *Syncerus nanus*  Seen well in Lopé NP.

Central Bushbuck *Tragelaphus phaleratus*  1 in Lopé NP.

Western Sitatunga *Tragelaphus gratus*  A male seen well in Lopé NP.


A fine male Western Sitatunga in Lopé National Park. (Nik Borrow)

Western Blue Duiker *Philantomba congica*  Seen well in Ipassa Reserve.
Peter’s Duiker *Cephalophus callipygus*  1 seen in Lopé NP.
Western Yellow-backed Duiker *Cephalophus silvicultor*  1 seen distantly in Lopé NP.
NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. Gill, F and Donsker, D (Eds). 2012. IOC World Bird Names (v3.4). Available at http://www.worldbirdnames.org

Latham’s Forest Francolin  *Peliperdix lathami*
Dr John Latham (1740-1837) was a British physician, naturalist and author of a *General History of Birds*.

Coqui Francolin  *Peliperdix coqui*
The name is presumably an onomatopoeic reference to the call. However a certain Mr Coqui was a well-known character on the eastern frontier of Cape Colony in the early 1800’s.

Finsch’s Francolin  *Scleroptila finschi*
Friedrich Hermann Otto Finsch (1839-1917) was a German ethnographer and naturalist who travelled widely. He was appointed Imperial Commissioner for the German colony known as ‘Kaiser-Wilhelmland’ that is now PNG. He was also co-author of *Die Vogel Ost Afrika* with Gustav Hartlaub.

Hartlaub’s Duck  *Pteronetta hartlaubii*
Gustav Hartlaub (1814-1900) was a German ornithologist connected with the Bremen Natural History Society Museum. He had a specialist interest in the birds of West and East Africa.

Hadada Ibis  *Bostrychia hagedash*
The name is an onomatopoeic rendering of the call and has been spelt in a number of different ways.

African Harrier-hawk  *(Gymnogene) Polyboroides typus*
Also known as Gymnogene meaning bare-cheeked.

Cassin’s Hawk-eagle  *Aquila africana*
John Cassin (1813-69) was an American businessman and renowned systematic ornithologist. He became curator of ornithology and Vice-President of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences.

Ayres’s Hawk-eagle  *Hieraaetus ayresii*
Thomas Ayres (1828-1913) was a British collector who settled in South Africa. His other lines of work included gold digging and brewing beer!

Barrow’s Bustard  *Eupodotis [senegalensis] barrowi*
Sir John Barrow (1764-1848) was an English Statesman, Secretary to the Admiralty and a founder of the Royal Geographical Society.

Forbes’s Plover  *Charadrius forbesi*
William Alexander Forbes (1855-1883) was a British zoologist who collected in West Africa in 1882 where he died on the Upper Niger River.

Temminck’s Courser  *Cursorius temminckii*
Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778-1858) was a Dutch ornithologist and director of the Leyden Natural History Museum.

Afep Pigeon  *Columba unicincta*
The name ‘Afep’ is a name for the bird in the Bulu language from Cameroon.

Sao Tome Olive Pigeon (Maroon P)  *Columba thomensis*
This species is classified as ‘Endangered’ by BirdLife International. The population is thought to be small with the major threat being that of hunting pressures. There may be no more than 1,000 mature individuals and certainly this seems to be one of the hardest endemics to find now.
Klaas's Cuckoo  *Chrysococcyx klaas*
Described by Stephens in 1853 the species is supposedly named after one of Levaillant's Khoikhoi (Hottentot) servants.

São Tomé Barn Owl  *Tyto alba thomensis*
Although treated as a separate species in *Owls of the World* by König, Weick & Becking (2008) there seems to be no scientific justification for the split and it is not considered to be a species by IOC or HBW.

Sjöstedt's Barred Owlet (Chesnut-backed O)  *Glaucidium sjostedti*
Bror Yngve Sjöstedt (1866-1948) was a Swedish entomologist and ornithologist who collected in Cameroon between 1890-91.

Bates's Nightjar  *Caprimulgus batesi*
George Latimer Bates (1863-1940) was a British naturalist who worked in West Africa, especially Cameroon between 1895 and 1931 and was author of the *Handbook of the Birds of West Africa* published in 1930.

Sabine's Spinetail  *Rhaptidura sabini*
Edward Sabine (1788-1883) was an English scientist mainly interested in terrestrial magnetism and astronomy. He collected this spinetail and a puffback, both named after him, in Sierra Leone and donated them to the British Museum where J. E. Gray officially described the specimens.

Willcocks's Honeyguide  *Indicator willcocksi*
General Sir James Willcocks (1847-1926) commanded the expedition to suppress the Ashanti rebellion of 1900.

Elliot's Woodpecker  *Dendropicos elliotii*
Daniel Giraud Elliot (1835-1915) was Curator of Zoology at the Field Museum in Chicago and a founder of the American Ornithologists' Union.

Gabon Batis (Verreaux's B)  *Batis minima*
The French Verreaux family comprised a father and three sons who ran their own business. They were collectors who owned 'Maison Verreaux' the largest ever known 'Natural History Emporium!' The batis is named after one of the sons, Jules Pierre Verreaux (1807-73) who was married to Pierre Antoine Delalande's sister.

Bocage's Bushshrike (Grey-green B-s)  *Chlorophoneus bocagei*
José Vicenta Barboza du Bocage (1823-1907) was Portuguese and Director of the National Zoological Museum of Lisbon and had a specialist interest in the birds of Angola.

Gorgeous Bushshrike (Perrin's B-s)  *Telophorus viridis*
Jean Perrein (1750-1805) was a French naturalist who collected in northern Africa and elsewhere. The bird is possibly named after him.

Lühder's Bush-shrike  *Laniarius luehderi*
W. Lühder (1847-1873) was a German naturalist who collected in Cameroon in 1872.

Petit's Cuckoo-shrike  *Campephaga petiti*
Louis Petit (1856-1943) was a French naturalist who collected in Angola between 1876 and 1884.

Souza's Shrike (Sousa's S)  *Lanius souzae*
José Augusto de Sousa (1837-89) was the Portuguese Director of Ornithology at the Museum of Lisbon. Despite writing numerous articles on African birds, he never actually visited the continent. The archaic form of spelling the common Portuguese surname is Souza.
Western Nicator *Nicator chloris*
The nicators have recently been placed in a family of their own but have historically been placed with the bush-shrikes. However DNA evidence suggests that they are more closely linked with the bulbuls. The name *Nicator* is a combination of Greek and Latin and can be interpreted as ‘conquest doer’.

Malbrant’s Lark *Mirafra [africana] malbranti*
Réné Malbrant (1903-?) was a French Veterinarian and politician and produced more than 50 scientific papers on African fauna.

Ansorge’s Greenbul *Andropadus ansorgei*
Dr William John Ansorge (1850-1913) was an English explorer who collected in Africa.

Xavier’s Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri*
Xavier Dybowski was a French explorer who collected in the Congo during 1891-2. It is not clear as to whether or not he is the same person as, or perhaps the brother of Jan Dybowski (1856-1928) who has a twinspot named after him.

Petit’s Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] petiti*
Louis Petit (1856-1943) was a French naturalist collecting in Angola between 1876 and 1884.

Gosling’s Apalis *Apalis gosling*
Captain G. B. Gosling (1872-1906) was an explorer and zoologist and a member of Boyd Alexander’s expedition following the Uele River collecting from the Niger to the Nile.

Salvadori’s Eremomela *Eremomela salvadorii*
Count Tomasso Adlard Salvadori (1835-1923) was an Italian ‘museum man’ and became Vice-Director of the Royal Museum of Turin.

Dohrn’s Thrush-babbler *Horizorhinus dohrni*
Heinrich Wolfgang Ludwig Dohrn (1838-1913) was a German politician and entomologist collecting on Príncipe in 1865.

Fraser’s Rufous Thrush *Stizorhina fraseri*
Louis Fraser (1819-1866) was a British museum man, naturalist, explorer, author and member of the infamous ill-fated Niger River Expedition of 1841-42. He also collected specimens from Fernando Po (Bioko) and was eventually appointed British Consul at Ovidah in West Africa.

Príncipe Thrush *Turdus xanthorhynchus*
Thought to have a very small population its habitat is also threatened. It was described in 1901 and rediscovered in 1997. The population is thought to number no more than 364 individuals and possibly fewer than 250.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*
The African resident forms are now considered to be a separate species, African Stonechat *S. torquatus* (sometimes incorrectly named *S. axillaris*). The European Common Stonechat is then renamed *S. rubicola* because the type specimen described by Linnaeus in 1758 came from the Cape of Good Hope of all places! According to recent scientific studies, it has been found that the ‘African’ stonechats have a lower metabolic rate than their European relatives and therefore lead a slower, less hectic and more laid back life style more suited to the tropics!

Reichenbach’s Sunbird *Anabathmis reichenbachii*
Heinrich Gottlieb Ludwig Reichenbach (1793-1879) was an important German systematist and Director of the Dresden Natural History Museum.

Newton’s Sunbird *Anabathmis newtonii*
Colonel Francesco Newton (1864-1909) was a Portuguese botanist collecting in São Tomé in 1888. Bocage described both the sunbird and the fiscal and named them after him.

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Johanna's Sunbird  *Cinnyris johannae*
The species was formerly placed in the genus *Nectarinia*. Johanna Verreaux was the wife of Jules P. Verreaux.

**Vieillot's Black Weaver**  *Ploceus nigerimus*
Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1748-1831) was a French businessman forced to take refuge in the United States during the French Revolution and later because of slave rebellions on San Domingo where he had his business in the spice trade. He had a consuming passion for ornithology dedicating his life to it.

**Preuss's Weaver (P's Golden-backed W)**  *Ploceus preussi*
Paul Preuss (1861-1926) was a Polish-born German naturalist who collected in West Africa between 1886-98. He was responsible for constructing the botanical gardens at Limbe (formerly Victoria) in 1901.

**Rachel's Malimbe**  *Malimbus racheliae*
John Cassin named this beauty after his daughter!

**Blue-billed Malimbe (Gray's M)**  *Malimbus nitens*
John Edward Gray (1800-1875) was a British ornithologist and entomologist.

**Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird**  *Euplectes hartlaubi*
Karel Johan Gustav Hartlaub (1814-1900) was a German collector and ornithologist with a specialist interest in Africa and Central Polynesia.

**Woodhouse's Antpecker**  *Parmoptila woodhousei*
Samuel Washington Woodhouse (1821-1904) was an American explorer and collector.

**Cabanis's Bunting**  *Emberiza cabanisi*
Despite his French sounding name, Jean Louis Cabanis (1816-1906) was a German ornithologist born in Berlin and director of the Berlin University Museum. Anton Reichenow, his son-in-law, described the bunting.