



Ethiopia has many endemics and this Spot-breasted Lapwing is one of the most sought-after (János Oláh).

ULTIMATE ETHIOPIA

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LEADER: JÁNOS OLÁH

Ethiopia is an amazing country with fantastic scenery and many exciting endemic birds! It is simply a destination where everybody should go if interested in African birds or in birds at all. The 'Roof of Africa' as this special country is often labelled offers great birding adventure despite habitat changes and population growth. Moreover it offers a great experience for photographers too, as a lot of special birds and mammals are surprisingly tame. We have been operating tours to Ethiopia since the 1980s and our latest visit was again a memorable one. This year we faced rather unexpected and strange weather conditions, however, it is almost not worth mentioning this nowadays, with an extremely dry north and a very wet south. In the Awash region there has not been substantial rain for over a year and this was reflected by the birdlife in this area. However the plains around Negele and the bush country of the south was remarkable alive and colourful. Although our triplist was not the highest at 518 species it included all the regional endemics and almost all the available specialities, which included no fewer than 106 diamond (◇) species and a total of 35 globally threatened birds! For such a long established tour it was also interesting to get three birds, which had not been recorded before, such as White-fronted Plover, Eastern Orphean Warbler and Exclamatory Paradise Whydah. We saw all the Ethiopian/Eritrean endemics (except for the near-mythical Nechisar Nightjar), which included the prehistoric-looking Wattled Ibis, the enigmatic Blue-winged Goose, the highly localised Harwood's Francolin, the strangely tame Rouget's Rail or Bale Chicken, the elegant Spot-breasted Lapwing, the handsome White-collared Pigeon, the localised Yellow-fronted Parrot, the tiny Black-winged Lovebird, the charismatic Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, the variable Banded Barbet, the elusive Abyssinian Woodpecker, the rare Archer's Lark, Erlanger's Lark, the little-known White-tailed Swallow, the grassland-

loving Abyssinian Longclaw, the rock-loving Rüppell's Black Chat, the handsome White-winged Cliff Chat, the recently split Ethiopian Cisticola, the easy-to-see Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, the vocal Abyssinian Catbird, the shy White-backed Black Tit, the cryptic Abyssinian Oriole, the very special Stresemann's Bush Crow, the impressive Thick-billed Raven, the subtle White-billed Starling, and a full set of localised endemic seedeaters, namely Yellow-rumped (White-throated), Yellow-throated and Salvadori's Seedeaters, Ethiopian Siskin, the recently discovered Ankober Serin and the Ethiopian (Red-billed) Pytilia which has just been elevated to endemic status!



The endemic Salvadori's Seedeater feeding on flowers – Southern Ethiopia was in full colours (János Oláh)!

We also had many other goodies, which are endemic to the Horn of Africa, such as Chestnut-naped Francolin, Abyssinian Wheatear, Sombre Rock Chat and Brown-rumped Seedeater but the long list of special birds does not end here as we also had many near-endemics as well such as Erckel's Francolin, African White-winged Dove, White-cheeked Turaco, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Gillett's Lark, Somali Short-toed Lark, White-rumped Babbler, Somali Fiscal, Ethiopian Boubou, Swainson's Sparrow, Juba Weaver and Abyssinian Waxbill. In addition we also saw an Abyssinian Owl that, although not endemic is almost impossible to see anywhere else. Other tour highlights included several Somali Ostriches on the Ali Dege plains, African Pygmy Goose and White-backed Duck at Awassa, Western Banded Snake Eagle at Bishangari, migrant flocks of Lesser Kestrels at various locations, some obliging Moorland Francolins in the Bale Mountains, a large flock of Wattled Cranes, several impressive Arabian Bustards, a Lesser Jacana at Awassa, great encounters with the handsome Heuglin's Courser, an amazing five species of sandgrouse (Chestnut-bellied, Black-faced, Lichtenstein's, Four-banded and Yellow-throated), a roosting Cape Eagle Owl near Dinsho, Northern White-faced Owl at Lake Langano, Star-spotted Nightjar in the Awash area, dry-country Yellow-breasted Barbets at Melka Ghebdu and Bilen, several localised larks including Foxy, Short-tailed and Chestnut-headed Sparrow Larks, Black Bush Robin at Bilen, Abyssinian Ground Thrush at Dinsho, Scaly Chatterer and Northern Grosbeak-Canary south of Yabello, the much sought-after African Spotted Creeper (now split from the Indian forms), duetting Red-naped Bush-shrikes, an obliging Three-streaked Tchagra and a great selection of starlings that included Bristle-crowned, Slender-billed, Golden-breasted, Shelley's, White-crowned and Sharpe's. We also recorded 34 species of mammals with unforgettable views of Gelada Baboons, Mountain Nyalas, several stunning Ethiopian Wolves, Ethiopian Rock Hyrax, Ethiopian Klipspringer, Northern Lesser Kudu, Beisa Oryx and both Northern and Southern Gerenuks.



The amazing Sanetti Plateau with the second highest peak of Ethiopia - Tullu Dimtu (4377m) - in the background (János Oláh).

Exiting the airport terminal we were greeted by a Rufous Scrub Robin, Brown Parisoma, many Tacazze Sunbirds and most importantly Merid our guide! A stroll in the Ghion Hotel gardens provided us with our first endemic, namely Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher and plenty of Brown-rumped Seedeaters entertained us too. Heading north out of Addis over the Entoto Hills, we soon reached the Sululta Plains, where we made a short but productive stop. Migrants included Pied and Isabelline Wheatears and Whinchat, but there were White-collared Pigeons and Blue-winged Geese. We had excellent looks at this fine endemic plus also had Wattled Ibises. Less obliging were some endemic Abyssinian Longclaws which mainly gave flight views. Another stop a few km away produced a large flock of Ethiopian Siskins, more Abyssinian Longclaws - excellent perched views this time! Eventually we reached Debre Libanos for a late lunch. We spent the rest of the afternoon overlooking the dramatic gorge here, looking for raptors overhead and passerines in the bushes. We enjoyed splendid views of more endemics: White-winged Cliff Chat, Rüppell's Black Chat and White-billed Starlings. Raptors included Lammergeier, Verreaux's and Wahlberg's Eagles, Rüppell's Vulture and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. We had Erckel's Francolin in flight, Nyaza and Mottled Swifts, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Northern and Pied Wheatears, Mocking Cliff Chat, Blue Rock Thrush and several groups of Gelada Baboons.



Endemic male Blue-winged Goose in flight on the Sululta Plains on our very first day (János Oláh).

We set off early the following morning for a day trip to the Jemma River valley. The first part of the journey was in the dark, but as the first rays of light appeared we were able to admire the vast open plains and fields of the plateau and the deep canyon of the Jemma valley as it appeared on the horizon. After the small town of Lemi, the road began to descend into the valley. Our first stop immediately produced several near-endemic Erckel's Francolins but the highly localised endemic Harwood's Francolins took some time to track down. Finally we all got reasonable looks so we continued all the way to the bottom of the valley. Singing Cinnamon-chested and migrant Ortolan Buntings were much in evidence and we also had Long-billed Pipit. Around the Lomi River we managed to see Bruce's Green Pigeon, Vinaceous Dove, Black-winged Red Bishop, Black-billed Barbet and a pair of non-cooperative Ethiopian or Red-billed Pytilias. In the midday heat we had a picnic lunch beside the Jemma River where we had Black and Woolly-necked Storks, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Senegal Thick-knee, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and a flock of Abyssinian Waxbills. In the afternoon we climbed back up towards Lemi and our stops yielded Lappet-faced Vulture, Verreaux's and Booted Eagles, a pair of Fox Kestrels, Abyssinian Wheatears, White-throated Seedeater, a rare migrant Cinereous Bunting and best of all two Ankober Serins! We also gave another go to the Harwood's Francolin and this time we got excellent looks. On the return journey to Debre Libanos we saw a covey of Moorland Francolins at dusk. A great day with three species of special francolins!



The highly localised Harwood's Francolin (left, Martin Hale) and the near-endemic Erckel's Francolin in Jemma (János Oláh).

After breakfast we left Debre Libanos behind and headed across the plateau towards Debre Birhan. Our first stop by a small river was particularly productive with more Blue-winged Geese, Erlanger's Larks, Red-throated Pipits, Groundscraper Thrushes and Ethiopian Cisticolas all seen in perfect morning sunlight. We also had a large flock of non-breeding plumaged weavers and bishops but we could only identify Village Weavers and Yellow Bishops. Along the way we had several White Storks, Pallid Harriers and Red-breasted Wheatears but our second stop was the jackpot as we found many Spot-breasted lapwings and they allowed prolonged close looks. What a stunning endemic bird! The wetland area also had many Common Cranes and a large flock of migrant Ruff. Eventually we arrived to Debre Birhan for a late lunch. In the afternoon we headed north up the tar road to the edge of the escarpment. We were lucky as the weather was clear at Gemassa Gedal and we had great looks at Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Augur Buzzard catching an Ethiopian Rock Hyrax, Eurasian Crag Martin, Thick-billed Ravens, a few White-billed Starlings and four Ankober Serins.

It was another early start the following morning as we headed out in the dark towards Ankober. It was a perfect sunny morning and after we passed Ankober we descended towards Melka Ghebdu. We had just arrived at our breakfast spot when two little birds flew into a nearby bush. This time luck was on our side as they were the endemic Yellow-throated Seedeaters, the prime target of the morning! The birds stayed around for some time and we could get amazing looks and photographs of these extremely localised and little known seedeaters. While our field breakfast was prepared by Merid we took a short walk which produced

Brown Snake-Eagle, Bare-faced Go-away-birds, Yellow-breasted and Banded Barbets, Shining Sunbirds and fine breeding plumaged Rüppell's Weavers. After tasty porridge with honey we continued along the track for birding. The temperature was quickly rising but we had a noisy flock of Helmeted Guineafowls, African Pygmy and Malachite Kingfishers, Abyssinian and European Rollers, Isabelline and Red-tailed Shrikes and Black-crowned Tchagra. All too soon it was time to return up the escarpment, and back to Debre Birhan for a quick lunch. Most of the afternoon was spent driving towards Nazret but we also managed a fine last hour birding at Lake Chaleleke with many birds flying in for roosting. We counted hundreds of Marabou Storks, Cattle Egrets, Sacred Ibises, Egyptian Geese, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Ducks, Common Cranes, Gull-billed and White-winged Terns. A wide range of wildfowl included Hottentot Teals, Southern Pochards, Spur-winged Geese and Knob-billed Ducks. Around the edges were many Northern Red Bishops as well as big numbers of Yellow Wagtails. The skies overhead constantly held soaring raptors, mainly kites and vultures, but we also picked out a single Black Kite. The definite highlight was a pair of Black Crowned Crane and a few Quailfinches. It was dusk when we left the lake and drove to Nazret for the night.



The rare and little-known Yellow-throated Seedeater was easily seen this year (János Oláh)!

We were up early again the following morning and quickly on our way towards Awash National Park. Our first stop was the barren lava flow by Lake Beseka, where we located our target bird, the subtle Sombre Rock Chat, and we studied several individuals at length. Blackstarts were also nearby for comparison. After another splendid field breakfast we continued our exploration of the black lava fields, finding such birds as White and Yellow-billed Storks, Greater Spotted and Steppe Eagles, Common Rock Thrush, Steppe Grey Shrike, Lesser Masked Weaver, Bristle-crowned Starling and some distant Striolated Buntings. We continued to the park entrance and realized how bad the drought situation is. This area did not have rain for over a year and the grassy vegetation was sparse to say the least. Inevitably all grass dependent birds left the park but we searched for those remained! We started with an amazing game drive through the scrub and plains and managed to find four species of bustards: the majestic Kori Bustard, the localised Arabian Bustard plus White-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards. We arrived to the superbly located Awash Falls Lodge for a lunch and short siesta. Our afternoon drive in the park produced other goodies like Nubian and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Gillet's Lark, White-browed Scrub Robin, Grey-headed Batis, Somali Fiscal, Ashy Cisticola, Purple Grenadier, Green-winged Pytilia and Somali Bunting. Definitely the star birds of the afternoon were a crypticly roosting Heuglin's Courser which allowed close approach and a rarely seen Star-spotted Nightjar, which we tracked down just after dusk. On the night drive back to our base we had several Black-backed Jackals and a few Abyssinian Hares but no other nightbirds.



The rarely encountered Star-spotted Nightjar was a great bonus at Awash National Park this year (János Oláh)!

Early next morning we were out around the lodge where we tracked down our first Slender-tailed Nightjar for the tour. A good number of the park's commoner bird species were quickly notched up in the early morning activity and the highlights included an Eurasian Griffon Vulture, a pair of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, an amazingly tame Red-winged Lark, several Gillet's Larks, Red-fronted Warbler, a male Nile Valley Sunbird, several singing Rosy-patched Bush-shrikes and a migrant Eastern Orphee Warbler. After a fine lunch back in the lodge – with Eastern Plantain-eater and Black-chested Snake-eagle – we headed out of the park and onto the Djibouti road towards Bilen. By the time we arrived and checked in it was time to go birding again as the heat was less intensive. The late afternoon was very productive and we got to see a Black Bush Robin, Chestnut-headed Sparrow Larks, Ménériés's Warbler, stunning Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouses and a Northern Carmine Bee-eater.

The early morning birding at Bilen was fantastic with European migrants like Wryneck and Lesser Whitethroats and a wide range of resident dry country birds like Yellow-breasted Barbet, Blackstart and Nile Valley Sunbirds. At the springs, we found a few waders like Ruff, Common Snipe and temminck's Stint and some other waterbirds too. After breakfast we packed up and left Bilen Lodge. We continued out of the Bilen Plains but we did not see any bustards at all, however, a nice Northern Gerenuk was spotted in the bush. Our hopes for more Arabian Bustard were now pinned on the Ali Dege Plains. This usually vast grassy area was amazingly barren, almost, no vegetation at all. Almost all the mammals left the area with only a few Common Warthogs and Soemmering's Gazelles wandering about. We managed to find a nice flock of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse and out on the plains we spotted an Arabian Bustard. We covered a lot of ground on the plains and found several more bustards before finally spotting three Somali Ostriches. It was now getting hot, and so we left Alidege for the journey back down the Rift Valley. The only notable bird on our journey was a flock of Abdim's Storks just before Nazret where we had a well-earned lunch. This was followed by another long drive all the way to Lake Langano. We arrived just in time for a late afternoon excursion along the edge of the cliffs. A skulking pair of Clapperton's Francolin eventually showed to everybody while two African Orange-bellied Parrots were feeding quietly in a low shrub. We soon found a fine Verreaux's Eagle-Owl with prey in its huge claws and could watch this fantastic birds for as long as we wanted. Finally we got into position for nightjars and in the fading light we saw several Slender-tailed Nightjar and a Freckled Nightjar too. This was a long day with lots of travelling but the many exciting birds were a great compensation.



Arabian Bustard is a highlight of the north (János Oláh).

Our next morning was spent in the very birdy garden of the Simba Hotel (used to be the Bekele Molla) on the shores of Lake Langano. It was a rather cold morning with a slowly starting bird activity in the shadow of some impressive cliffs. However, we had excellent looks at African Cuckoos, our first Black-winged Lovebirds, several Red-throated Wrynecks, Red-fronted Barbets, fine Little Rock Thrushes, amazing White-winged Black Tits and best of all a roosting pair of Northern White-faced Owls. Also the many Superb Starlings and Hemprich's Hornbills right by the breakfast table were an amazing experience!



Northern White-faced Owl gave superb daytime looks (János Oláh).

In the late morning we moved to the acacia woodland around the headquarters of the Abijata-Shalla NP where we added a few new species including Crested Francolins and Reichenow's Seedeaters. A new hotel on the shores of Langanu was a perfect setting for lunch, with great views, good food and close views of birds coming to drink at various small puddles. Refreshed, we spent the rest of the day at Lake Ziway where we had many pelicans, egrets, storks, waders and local kids. The best birds were Black Heron and Black Crane. This very birdy day with over 100 species seen was finished in style with a fantastic Greyish Eagle Owl.



Greyish Eagle Owl at Lake Langanu (János Oláh).

The following morning we made a short visit to the fantastic soda lake of Abijata. We had to walk a fair way to get to the lake's edge but it was a truly memorable morning in such an amazing setting with many thousands of waterbirds. Huge numbers of flamingos were wading in the shallow alkaline waters, while thousands of Northern Shovelers swam amongst them. On the shoreline there were thousands of Ruffs and Little Stints, with hundreds of Pied Avocets and Kittlitz's Plovers. Diligent searching was rewarded with Grey Plover, Kentish Plover, two White-fronted Plovers – a write in for this tour - and a Garganey plus a migrant Eurasian Hobby. Overhead we had Steppe Eagles, Egyptian Vultures and many Common Cranes. Lake Abijata is always an amazing experience as it provides one of Africa's greatest spectacles. After this great start of the day we settled into a longish drive towards the Bale Mountains. The road down to Shashemene was typically busy, but once we headed eastwards we left all the bustle of the Rift Valley behind. On the way we stopped to see Red-chested Swallow and Red-billed Cough. We continued through the well-populated highlands to Dinsho. Just before Dinsho we stopped by a roadside pond already in the Bale National Park where we soon located Rouget's Rail and more Blue-winged Goose and Spot-breasted Lapwings. Eventually we reached the national park headquarters at Dinsho where we had a late lunch. A local guide was on hand to help us find birds and within minutes we were looking at two roosting African Wood Owls, high up in a dense juniper. After lunch an Abyssinian Owl was found quickly and finally we also got to see a Cape Eagle Owl. Abdullah was in great form to provide us with three owls in just a mere two hours birding. Not to mention the other goodies which included Mountain Buzzard, Martial Eagle, several fluty Abyssinian Catbirds, an Abyssinian Ground Thrush, a few White-backed Black Tits and an amazing male Abyssinian Woodpecker. Wow this was some quality birding indeed! Mountain Nyalas, Menelik's Bushbucks and Bush Duikers all showed well too and we finished the day with great looks at Mountain Nightjar.



Lake Abijata is one of those amazing soda lakes of Africa (top) and Abyssinian Owl in the Bale Mountains NP (János Oláh).

The weather was perfect for our trip to the Afro-alpine Sanetti Plateau next morning. We made several short stops to photograph roadside birds out of the windows, and these included many Rouget's Rails and Chestnut-naped Francolins. We also had Brown Parisoma and Ethiopian Cisticola in low shrubbery with scattered trees. At the top we enjoyed great views of Spot-breasted Lapwings and other high altitude specialities although the much hoped for Wattled Carnes were not located. The most memorable creature of the morning was the rare Ethiopian Wolf and we saw at least three individuals. We were soon across the plateau and slowly descended to the forest zone. The forest birding was very slow on a nice sunny day but with hard work we managed to see White-cheeked Turacos, Broad-billed Roller, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Abyssinian Hill Babblers and even a fine male African Emerald Cuckoo showed well at our picnic lunch spot.

After this brief visit to this amazing Harrena Forest we were back to the high plateau where we enjoyed more great looks of Ethiopian Wolf, a nice pair of Lanners, several Ruddy Shelducks and an African Snipe.



African Emerald Cuckoo (top) on a Hagenia tree (Martin Hale), picnic in the Harrena Forest (right) and the amazing Ethiopian Wolf on the Sanetti Plateau (János Oláh).

We set off early from Goba for the long drive to Negelle. Our route took us over the Sanetti Plateau once again, but this time we only made some brief stops to see a Moorland Francolin with frost on its back and a few Chestnut-naped Francolins. This time we were soon down to the Harrena Forest. We drove to lower altitude and started birding. We had an action-packed two hours with such highlights as Green-backed Honeyguide, several Abyssinian Catbirds and Orioles, a pair of Sharpe's Starlings, a skulking Abyssinian Crimsonwing and Black-and-white Mannikin. Further down the road in the heart of the forest we found African Black Duck, Grey Cuckooshrike and Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird. As we continued down through the forest, we found African Olive Pigeon and a few Emerald-spotted Wood Doves on the track, but little else. Once the forest had ended, we continued without stopping until lunchtime. This was a great stop as we tracked down the endemic Salvadori's Serin right after a quick picnic lunch. This little-known species is once only known from just a handful of locations but our local help Merid has found them at several new locations (such as this site) in the endless scrubland around Negele. The afternoon was mainly spent on a bumpy

track driving but a few leg-stretching stops produced Red-and-yellow Barbet and yet another sought-after species of this country: the mighty Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. Towards the end of the day we had Chestnut Weavers and increasing number of various starlings. It was getting dusk when we rolled into Negele, our base for the next three nights.



Moorland Francolin sunbathing in the Bale Mountains NP at 4000m with frost on its back (János Oláh).

We left Negelle in the dark and arrived at a scrubby area at first light where our first two birds were two superb Prince Ruspoli's Turaco perched out in the open. We all had excellent telescope views of this iconic endemic which was very welcome after the rather short looks of the previous day. The species was first collected by Prince Ruspoli in either 1892 or 1893, but due to his subsequent death, the location and date of this amazing find remained unknown forever. The nearby grassy area was full of amazing White-crowned Starlings and we also had a huge Kori Bustard before we bumped into a displaying Hartlaub's Bustard. Wow it was such a good catch up after not having seen any of them in Awash National Park! We had excellent looks at a male jumping out of the long grass chasing a female before both slowly walked away. In the same area we saw Boran and Desert Cisticolas plus several Plain-backed Pipits. We started birding in a scrubby area again and while breakfast was being made we had a very successful birding session with singing Rosy-patched Bush-shrike and Three-streaked Tchagra allowing exceptional looks as well as many other birds performing nicely like Tiny Cisticola, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Acacia Tits, White-rumped Babbler and several Reichenow's and Salvadori's Seed eaters. After this very productive area we drove to the grazing lake on the Liben Plains where we spent some time with waterbirds. There was a fine selection of waders like Collared Pratincoles, Greenshanks, Spotted Redshank, Little Stints and Ruffs. Best of all however was a flock of 107 Abdim's Stork with a single African Openbill. Raptors above us included Lappet-faced, Hooded and White-backed Vultures and a fine Bateleur. By midday, it was time to head back to Negelle for lunch and a well deserved rest. In the afternoon we drove to a river valley which we simply named the 'golden valley' as the entire scrubland was in yellow colour. It is amazing how green and colourful the entire landscape was following the recently arrived rains. The road was slow and bumpy but we have found Brown-tailed Rock Chat and a Golden-breasted Starlings along the way. Once we got to the river we started to search in the reedy vegetation for the very localised Juba Weaver, including a breeding plumaged male. Although it was not close we had excellent looks at this range-restricted near endemic. On our return journey we had a fine Purple Roller, more Golden-breasted Starlings and a White-crested Helmetshrike.



Hartlaub's Bustard (top), singing Rosy-patched Bush-shrike (center), Three-streaked Tchagra (left) and Abdim's Storks near Negele (János Oláh).

On our second day around Negele we drove to the Liben Plains. While Merid started to cook one of his fine field breakfasts, we set off in search of larks. Somali Short-toed Larks were singing all over the place, but it didn't take long to find our first Archer's Lark. Usually the best way to locate them - even from a great distance - as they have a characteristic songflight at a low height before parachuting down to the ground. We all got great views, both in flight and on the ground. Our morning walk also produced a few Lesser Kestrels and single Grey Kestrel, Black-winged and Crowned Lapwings, Pectoral-patch Cisticolas, Plain-backed Pipits and many Reichenow's Seedeaters. A nice roadside carcass produced excellent close looks of two Lappet-faced Vultures and many White-backed and Hooded Vultures. In the afternoon we visited an area of bushes and scrub for a change of scene. New birds included Northern Browbuls, African Thrushes and a nice pair of Grey-headed Bush Shrikes. At the end of the day we were back to the lake where we found a nice selection of waterbirds again. Our stay around this fantastic area was very successful we managed to find all of the special birds we were after!



The critically endangered Archer's Lark on the Liben Plains (János Oláh).

Next day we had some ground to cover from Negele to Yabello and unfortunately the road has deteriorated a lot recently in the heavy rains. So we left very early and a short stop just outside Negele for two Spotted Thick-knees was followed by a long drive in the dark. The first 70 kilometers was a very slow and bumpy ride as we pressed on all the way to the Dawa River area before the day heated up. Just as we arrived the first target was quickly found in the form of three African White-winged Doves. This is a very localised species which just barely creeps into Ethiopia from the south. A nice walk along the river produced a few special birds like Black-faced Sandgrouse, African Hobby and Grey Kestrel while dry-country species such as Black-throated and d'Arnaud's Barbets, Bare-eyed Thrush, Pygmy Batis, Eastern Violetbacked Sunbird and Somali Bunting all performed well. The scarce Yellow-vented Eremomela took some work to find but finally a pair gave us good views as well as a female Pringle's Puffback. It was time to continue on the long journey. In the next few hours we passed several roadside flocks of the incomparable Vulturine Guinea fowl and many Günther's Dikdiks. At our lunch stop huge storm clouds were gathering but we just managed the snack and also a lovely pair of Red-naped Bush Shrike and a male Pringle's Puffback this time. Our final stop of the day was at the Soda Plains, and we spent a good hour at this area with rainstorms going around us. However we had excellent looks at the special endemics: White-tailed Swallow and Stresemann's Bush Crow! Additional species included Somali Ostrich, Foxy Lark, Banded Parisoma, Diederik's Cuckoo, Grey-capped and Black-capped Social Weavers and many Somali Fiscals. After Soda we were soon back on tarmac, heading north up the smooth, Chinese-built road to Yabello. We arrived to our quiet lodge at dusk.



African White-winged Dove (left) near Dawa River and the iconic Stresemann's Bush Crow (right) near Soda (János Oláh).

A pre-breakfast excursion was very successful with great looks of African Scops Owls and a much-wanted Donaldson Smith's Nightjar. After it got light, we set off southwards on the newly resurfaced road. Our field breakfast area produced Klaas's Cuckoo, several more Red-naped Bush Shrikes, Scaly Chatterer and Northern Grosebeak-Canary. We continued further south and our next stop gave us brilliant views of both Short-tailed and Foxy Larks and also a migrant Lesser Spotted Eagle was seen well. Next we made another visit to the Soda area and we had superb looks at cooperative Stresemann's Bush Crows, a fine male Hartlaub's, Kori and Buff-crested Bustards, many Somali Fiscals but no sign of Taita Fiscal. Most of the afternoon was spent along the Arero Road in bushy habitat where we had great looks of Vulturine Guineafowls, finally found a female Hunter's Sunbird, Spotted Palm Thrush, Bare-eyed Thrush and two pairs of amazing Heuglin's Coursers. We could watch these stunning birds for as long as we wanted. A great end to another amazing day!



Heuglin's Coursers near Yabello (János Oláh).



Vulturine's Guineafowls near Yabello (János Oláh).

We had a little birding time left in the Yabello area before our all-day-long journey to Lake Awassa. A pair of Long-crested Eagle was seen while we packed up our bus after breakfast. We decided to check out a nice area with many commiphora bushes in the hope of finding a Somali Crombec. The activity was amazing and we even had a Jacobin Cuckoo, a few Shelley's Starlings and several Red-faced Crombecs but no sign of Somali Crombec. It was high time to leave this area and drive to Awassa. The journey to Awassa was truly painful, it was even worse than on the previous tour. The condition of the road was appalling, with thousands of potholes and hordes of people and animals blocking the route. Although Merid prepared us for a long drive we did not really expect it to be nine hours of tough driving! Last time it was 6 hours for the Birdquest group but this time 30% more and if this road is not resurfaced soon it will be impossible to do in a day! The only birding stop gave us White-headed Vulture, Whalberg's Eagle and Gabar Goshawks. We were truly exhausted when we rolled into our hotel garden after dusk.

The following morning found us at the lakeshore of the mighty Awassa. Pairs of African Pygmy Geese adorned the reedy margins, while many other waterbirds vied for our attention such as White-backed Ducks and Black Crakes. The lakeside vegetation held Blue-headed Coucals, Woodland Kingfishers and Lesser Swamp Warblers. In the hotel garden we found the much sought-after African Spotted Creeper and a Double-toothed Barbet was a great bonus. After breakfast it was time to leave Awassa, but a quick visit to the fish market produced a superb Lesser Jacana as well as many photographic opportunities. After Awassa we drove to Shashammenne and a short detour took us to a roadside wetland where we finally caught up with Wattled Cranes. We counted as many as 56 of these stunning birds as well as distant Black Crowned and hundreds of Common Cranes. It was a great relief to see them after the fruitless search in the Bale Mountains. We also had Eurasian Wigeon and Chestnut-backed Sparrow Larks. Late afternoon we arrived to Bishangari Lodge on the shores of Lake Langano.

We were up early next morning and soon were watching a large flock of Yellow-fronted Parrots as they were feeding on some special plants along the edge of the lake. This endemic parrot really put on a great show and we had a wonderful experience with them. Lemon Doves were walking around our restaurant at breakfast and the walk in the wonderful mature forest produced Western Banded Snake Eagle, Crowned Eagle, Scaly Francolin, African Olive Pigeon, Tambourine Dove, Banded Barbet, Klaas's Cuckoos, White-cheeked Turaco, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Greater Honeyguide, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Abyssinian

Ground Thrush, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Orange-breasted Bush-shrike and a pair of Green Twinspot for some. A truly birdy morning and a great place! Eventually, it was time to leave the luxurious surroundings of Bishangari for our final destination, Wolliso. The journey took us back through Ziway, where we had lunch in the peaceful gardens of a hotel, away from the bustle of the busy town. The journey across the mountains to Wolliso was uneventful but with spectacular scenery and great looks of Thick-billed Ravens.



The endemic Yellow-fronted Parrot (top) and Western Banded Snake Eagle (right) in Bishangari and Thick-billed Ravens on our way to Wolliso (János Oláh).



The recently split Ethiopian (Red-billed) Pytilia (left; János Oláh) and a pair of Black-faced Firefinch at Gibe Gorge (Martin Hale).

Our final birding excursion was to Gibe Gorge. A number of western species are at the edge of their range here, on the fringe of the highland plateau. The Gibe river joins the mighty Omo River close to our birding sites, and we had just two key species on the agenda: the recently split Ethiopian (Red-billed) Pytilia and Black-faced Firefinch. The morning began slowly but then a fine Ethiopian Pytilia was found and granted superb looks for all! It was a great relief after some of us managed to see a pair in the Jemma Valley but disappeared before we all got to see. This was followed by a final superb field breakfast in Merid style! We picked up a few more goodies like a migrant Masked Shrike and some fly over Yellow-throated Sandgrouse. The bushes held Familiar Chats, Common Rock Thrush and many White-throated Seedeaters but best of all was a fine pair of very tame Four-banded Sandgrouse which was found by Merid. Finally we headed down to the river and walked to a bushy area where we saw many firefinches, mostly Red-billed but eventually several Black-faced Firefinch was seen as well. Along the river we had African Wattled Plovers and on our return walk to the bus we found a male Exclamatory Paradise Whydah. This scarce bird is associated with Ethiopian Pytilia and never previously recorded on a Birdquest tour to Ethiopia. We saw all our main targets and in fact much more so decided to escape from the heat and drive back to Wolliso for lunch. Back in Addis, there was time to change for the journey home and a quick dinner before heading to the airport in good time for our respective flights home.

This was a memorable tour to Ethiopia despite the challenging weather conditions. We had managed to see all the endemics and specialities, a wide range of the near-endemics, a total of 34 mammals plus some fantastic scenery. No doubt Ethiopia remains an incredibly birdy country, and is surely one of Africa's great birding destinations!



Group photo at Gemassa Gedal along the Rift Valley Escarpment (János Oláh).



The Stresemann's Bush-crow is the undoubted star of the tour and in 2015 it was again the 'Bird of the trip' (János Oláh).

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, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened

Somali Ostrich *Struthio molybdophanes* ◊ Three were seen on the Ali Dege plains and one near Soda. See note. **VU**

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Good numbers were seen at Lake Chaleleke and Awassa.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Several sightings on the Rift Valley lakes. See note.

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* Common in suitable habitat.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* Two were seen at Lake Ziway.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Common on the Rift Valley lakes.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Four sightings on the Rift Valley lakes.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (H) It was heard in the marsh at Bilen.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Seen in flight over the marsh at Bilen.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* It was common at Bilen and on the Rift Valley lakes.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common. See note.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* A single was seen at Lake Ziway.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Common in suitable habitat.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* One was seen at Lake Beseka and one at Lake Awassa.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* A few sightings on the tour.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* A few were seen at Bilen and Lake Awassa.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Common.
Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* Several sightings throughout.
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* One was seen at Bishangari Lodge.
Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Common.
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* Regular sightings on various wetlands.
African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* One was seen on the Liben Plains.
Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* A few were seen in the Jemma Valley and at Melka Ghebdu.
Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii* A small flock was seen near Nazret and 107 on the Liben Plains.
Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* Two were seen along the Jemma River.
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* A few sightings on the Sululta Plains and at Lake Chaleleke.
Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* Common. Up to 700 at Lake Ziway.
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Smaller flocks were seen at various wetlands.
Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Regular sightings throughout.
Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata* ◊ A common endemic of the highlands!



The endemic Wattled Ibis is a common bird in suitable highland habitat (János Oláh).

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Common in suitable habitat.
African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* A singleton at Lake Abijata.
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* A few at Lake Chaleleke and hundreds at Lake Abijata.
Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* A few hundred at Lake Koka and thousands at Lake Abijata. NT
Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* About 100 at Lake Chaleleke.
White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* A few seen at Lake Chaleleke and Awassa.
White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leucotis* We had great views at Lake Awassa.
Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyanoptera* ◊ This fine endemic was regularly seen in the highlands. VU
Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Common.
Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* A few were seen on the Sanetti Plateau of the Bale Mountains.
Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* A singleton at Lake Chaleleke and about 30 at Awassa.
Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* Our best views were on the Liben Plains.
African Pygmy-goose *Nettapus auritus* This fantastic wildfowl was seen well at Lake Awassa.
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* A single bird was seen on a roadside wetland.
Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* About 15 were seen at Lake Chaleleke.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* Regular sightings throughout the tour.
African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* A pair was seen in the Harrena Forest.
Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* About 20 were seen at Lake Chaleleke.
Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* About 30 were seen at Lake Chaleleke.
Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* A few at Lake Chaleleke and Ziway.
Garganey *Anas querquedula* A singleton on the shores of Lake Abijata.
Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* One of the most common migrant on various wetlands.
Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma* Just eight were seen at Lake Chaleleke.
Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One was seen eating a fish at Lake Beseka. See note.
Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Several sightings throughout the tour.
Black Kite *Milvus migrans* One was seen at Lake Chaleleke and one at Lake Langanu.
Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Very common.
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* Many great sightings of this superb bird!
Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* Five were seen on the tour. **NT**
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Seven were seen on the tour. **EN**
Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* Very common. **CR**
White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* Common. **CR**
Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* Common. **CR**
Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* One was seen in the Awash National Park
Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* Five sightings this year, the best views we had at Negelle. **EN**



Lappet-faced Vulture (left) is certainly decreasing all over its range. A male Shikra (right) near Yabello (János Oláh).

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* A very brief look for some on our way from Yabello to Awassa. **CR**
Short-toed Snake-Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* One was seen in the Hemma Valley and one at Melka Ghebdu.
Black-chested Snake-Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis* One was seen at Awash and one at Negelle.
Brown Snake-Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* Three were seen at Melka Ghebdu.
Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens* One was seen at Bishangari.
Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* A few sightings in the south. **NT**
African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* The most common harrier, many sightings throughout the tour. **NT**
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Several were seen throughout the tour.
Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Regularly seen on various wetlands.
Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* About five were seen in total.
Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* It was fairly common in the Rift Valley.
Eastern Chanting Goshawk *Melierax poliopterus* Just a few were seen in the dry scrub country in the south.
African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro* Two brief sightings on our travels. See note.
Shikra *Accipiter badius* Several excellent looks of this subtle 'accipiter'.
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* One was seen at Debre Libanos and one near Negelle.
Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris* We had repeated good looks of a pair at Gemassa Gedal.
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Four were seen at Debre Libanos and one at Gide Gorge.
Mountain Buzzard *Buteo oreophilus* ♦ We had three sightings in the Bale Mountains. **NT**
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* Just one was seen on our final day at Gibe Gorge.
Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* Common.
Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* One was identified near Soda – a scarce passage bird.
Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* One was seen thermalling with other *Aquilas* at Lake Beseka. **VU**

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* Common.
 Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* We had about six sightings on the tour. **EN**
 Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* We had several great looks of this cliff and hyrax specialist.
 Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* We had two sightings, one at Debre Libanos and one near Dilla.
 Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* Two were seen in the Jemma Valley.
 Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* Our best look was in the Borana Lodge at Yabello.
 Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* A brief sighting near Bishangari - identified from photograph. **NT**
 Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* We had excellent looks at Dinsho and in the Harrena Forest. **VU**
 Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* We saw three in Awash NP and a few more around Negelle.
 Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Small numbers were seen on the Liben Plains and 30 on the last drive back to Addis.
 Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Common.
 Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex* ◊ We had excellent looks of two in the Jemma Valley.
 Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* Three sightings of single birds around Negelle.
 Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* One was seen on the shores of Lake Abijata and two around Negelle.
 African Hobby *Falco cuvieri* (LO) One was seen flying over the Dawa River.
 Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Several looks of this big falcon.
 Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One was seen in flight over Lake Beseka.
 Vulturine Guineafowl *Acryllium vulturinum* ◊ We saw several flocks on our way to Yabello and around.
 Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Common in the Awash NP area and in the south.
 Moorland Francolin *Scleroptila psilolaemus* ◊ We had three encounters this year with fantastic views! **NT**



Chestnut-naped Francolin (left) and Moorland Francolin (right) (János Oláh) and Scaly Francolin (middle) at Bishangari (Martin Hale).

Crested Francolin *Dendroperdix sephaena* A few sightings on the tour. See note.
 Scaly Francolin *Pternistis squamatus* Four were seen at Bishangari.
 Clapperton's Francolin *Pternistis clappertoni* ◊ A pair was seen twice at Lake Langano on two consecutive days.
 Harwood's Francolin *Pternistis harwoodi* ◊ Difficult this year but we had good views at the end! **VU**
 Chestnut-naped Francolin *Pternistis castaneicollis* ◊ Many excellent sightings in the Bale Mountains.
 Erckel's Francolin *Pternistis erckelii* ◊ It was seen at Debre Libanos and in the Jemma Valley.
 Yellow-necked Spurfowl *Pternistis leucoscepus* Just two at Bilen though common around Negelle this year!
 Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii* ◊ Many great looks of this character in the Bale Mountains. The Bale chicken! **NT**
 Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* One was seen at Lake Ziway and many around Lake Awassa.
 Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* It was seen at Bilen and Ziway.
 Red-knobbed Coot *Fulca cristata* It was most numerous at Lake Awassa.
 Common Crane *Grus grus* Hundreds were seen on various wetlands.
 Wattled Crane *Bugerenus carunculatus* ◊ It was tricky but finally we had as many as 56 birds on a wetland! **VU**
 Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina* Two were seen at Lake Chaleleke and two on a roadside wetland. **VU**
 Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs* ◊ Seven were seen in the Awash NP this year! **NT**
 Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* Two in Awash NP and singletons in the south. **NT**
 Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana* A few sightings in Awash and also in the south.
 White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis* Many sightings this year at Awash and also in the south. See note.
 Hartlaub's Bustard *Lissotis hartlaubii* We had none in the north but managed to catch up with three in the south.
 African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Common in suitable habitat.
 Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis* We had great looks of this somewhat scarce bird at Lake Awassa.
 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Common.
 Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Up to 800 were seen at Lake Abijata.
 Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* One was seen along the Jemma River and it was heard at Bishangari.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* Two were seen near Negelle.
Heuglin's Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus* Amazing tour for this species with three sightings of five birds.
Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* We counted 45 on the grazing lake on the Liben Plains.
Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* A few were seen at Lake Ziway and Abijata.
Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* About 200 were seen at Lake Abijata.
Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Several scattered sightings throughout the tour.
White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* Two were seen at Lake Abijata. It was a write-in.
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* A single bird was seen at Lake Abijata.
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Just two were seen at Lake Abijata.
African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus* A pair was seen on the Gibe River on our last day.
Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus* ◊ Excellent looks at this superb endemic at several locations.
Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus* Six on the Ali Dege Plains. This species is a good sign how dry it was!
Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* Commonly seen at various wetlands.
Black-winged Lapwing *Vanellus melanopterus* We saw six on the Sululta Plains and several in the south.
Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus* It was commonly seen especially in the south.
Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Regular sightings, up to 200 at Lake Abijata.
Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Regular sightings at various wetlands.
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Just four were seen at Lake Abijata. **NT**
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Hundreds were seen at various locations.
Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* It was seen at Bile, Lake Ziway and on the Liben Plains.
African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* One was seen on the Sanetti Plateau.
Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* Largest numbers were seen at Lake Chaleleke. **NT**
Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* A singleton on the grazing lake of the Liben Plains.
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* It was seen at Lake Chaleleke and Ziway.
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Regular sightings throughout.
Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Regular sightings throughout.
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Regular sightings throughout.
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Regular sightings throughout.
Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* It was only seen at Lake Ziway and Awassa.
Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Singletons at Lake Chaleleke, Abijata and Awassa.
Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* The largest flock of 60 were counted at Lake Chaleleke.
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* The largest flock of 200 were counted at Lake Chaleleke.
White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Regular sightings throughout.
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* We had excellent looks in the Bilen area.



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse at Bilen (János Oláh).

Black-faced Sandgrouse *Pterocles decoratus* A total of 17 was seen along the Dawa River – which was in flood.
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Just two were seen at Awash National Park.
Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus* A pair was seen in the Gibe Gorge.
Yellow-throated Sandgrouse *Pterocles gutturalis* A flock of eight were seen in flight at Gibe Gorge.
Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* Just three were seen in the Jemma Valley.
Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* Two were seen at Bishangari.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* Several were seen at Bishangari and Gibe Gorge.
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* Regular sightings throughout.
Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Common in suitable habitat.
Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata* At least five were seen at Bishangari.
African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* A few were seen in the Harrena Forest and Bishangari.
Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common.
White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques* ◇ A common endemic of the highlands.



White-collared Pigeon is a common and very attractive endemic (János Oláh).

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* A few were seen.
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* One of the most common dove on the tour.
African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* Regularly seen in the north.
Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea* Just one was seen in the Jemma Valley.
Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola* Common in the south.
African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* ◇ One was seen in Awash National Park.
African White-winged Dove *Streptopelia reichenowi* ◇ Three were seen in the Dawa River area. **NT**
Dusky Turtle Dove *Streptopelia lugens* Common in the highlands.
Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Common.
African Orange-bellied Parrot *Poicephalus rufiventris* Regular sightings on the tour.
Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons* ◇ Superb looks at Bishangari - about a flock of 60.
Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta* ◇ Our best views were at Lake Langanu.
White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis* ◇ We saw a few in the Harrena Forest and in Bishangari.
Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* ◇ Three sightings of this enigmatic endemic. **VU**
Bare-faced Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides personatus* We had the best views at Melka Ghebdu and Bishangari.
White-bellied Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster* Commonly encountered.
Eastern Plantain-eater *Crinifer zonurus* We saw this species in Awash NP and at Bilen.
Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* One was seen near Yabello.
African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* Two were seen at Lake Langanu.
African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* Excellent looks in the Harrena Forest.
Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* Three sightings in the south – as usual cuckoos follow the rain!
Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* One was seen near Soda in the south.
White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* Regular sightings on the tour.
Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus* We saw four along the Lake Awassa.
African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* Two were seen at Borana Lodge near Yabello.
Northern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis leucotis* Excellent looks of two at Lake Langanu.
Cape Eagle-Owl *Bubo capensis* ◇ Brilliant looks of the *mackinderi* race at Dinsho.
Greyish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens* One was seen by most of us at Lake Langanu.
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus* One was seen at Lake Langanu and one at Bishangari.
Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* (**H**) It remained out of sight this year – one was heard at Bilen.
African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* A pair was seen at Dinsho.
Abyssinian Owl *Asio abyssinicus* ◇ One was seen in the Bale Mountains.
Slender-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus clarus* Regular sightings of this common nightjar.
Montane Nightjar *Caprimulgus poliocephalus* ◇ Excellent looks near Goba.
Donaldson Smith's Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni* ◇ We had brilliant looks at Borana Lodge near Yabello.
Star-spotted Nightjar *Caprimulgus stellatus* ◇ A great bonus bird in Awash National Park this year!

Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma* Singletons were seen at Lake Langano.
African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* A few sightings in the north at Awash and Bilen.
Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* It was common around Debre Libanos.
Little Swift *Apus affinis* Two were seen at Lake Langano.
Mottled Swift *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* It was seen around Debre Libanos and the Jemma Valley escarpment.
Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* A flock of 15 were seen towards the Bale Mountains.
Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus* A few sightings at Awash NP and Bilen.
Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Regularly seen throughout the tour.
Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* A male was seen flying across the road by some towards Negelle.
Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* We had four sightings this year.
Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* Several good looks – the best at Lake Awassa.
Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* Small numbers were seen in dry habitat.
African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus* Up to six were seen in the Jemma Valley.
Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata* It was common at various wetlands.
Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* It was common at various wetlands.
Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* Regularly seen throughout the tour.
Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops [variegatus] lafresnayii* ♦ Regular sightings of this *lafresnayii* race. See note.
European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Just five birds were seen at Bilen.
Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* We had several encounters with this fantastic bird.
Purple Roller *Coracias naevius* A few were seen in the south.



Purple Roller is such a beautiful bird (János Oláh)!

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* The first two were seen at Melka Ghebdu. Later we had more encounters.
European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Two sightings of this migrant on the tour.
Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* It was common in the south.
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* We had great looks of one in the Harrena Forest.
Black-billed Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus somaliensis* ♦ Regularly seen throughout the tour.
Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor* Several sightings of both white and none-white-winged birds.
Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* We had many encounters with this migrant throughout the tour. See note.
Central African Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] senegalensis* A few were seen. See note.
Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* The most common hornbill on the tour.
Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris* A few were seen in the north at Awash and Bilen.
von der Decken's Hornbill *Tockus deckeni* First seen at Lake Langano but later very common in the south.
Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichii* ♦ A few sightings in usual rocky habitat.
African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* Regularly seen on the tour.
Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis* Many great views, first seen in the Bale Mountains.

Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus* Regular sightings of this large, mainly terrestrial bird.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* We had three sightings.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* (LO) One was seen in the Harrena Forest.

Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata* Several great looks of this handsome bird.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala* Finally we had good looks in the south.

Banded Barbet *Lybius undatus* ◊ Excellent looks at Melka Ghebdu and Bishangari.

Black-billed Barbet *Lybius guifsobalito* Regular encounters with this black and red bird.

Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* Just a single one seen at Lake Awassa.

Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* Three encounters in red termite country in the south.

Yellow-breasted Barbet *Trachyphonus margaritatus* ◊ Our best looks were at Melka Ghebdu and Bishangari.

d'Arnaud's Barbet *Trachyphonus darnaudii* Common in the south.

Green-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus zambesiae* We saw one on a treetop in the Harrena Forest.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* Adult and immature was seen at Bishangari.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* We had three sightings on the tour.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Our best look of this migrant was at Bilen as it was preening on a dead tree.

Red-throated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* Repeated excellent looks of this handsome species at Lake Langano.

Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica* Regular sightings in woodland habitat.

Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus* ◊ A fantastic male gave us walk-away views in the Bale Mtns.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Regular encounters in bush country.

Eastern Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos spodocephalus* ◊ We saw a pair in Harrena Forest and Awassa. See note.

Foxy Lark *Calendulauda alopex* ◊ Seen twice around Soda. See note.

Red-winged Lark *Mirafr hypermetra* ◊ One was seen exceedingly well in Awash National Park.

Gillett's Lark *Mirafr gilletti* ◊ We had good looks in Awash NP and one was seen in the south too. See note.

Archer's Lark *Heteromirafr archeri* ◊ About five were seen on the Liben Plains. See note. **CR**

Erlanger's Lark *Calandrella erlangeri* ◊ We had excellent looks on the Sululta Plains.

Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica* ◊ We had point-blank views on the Liben Plains.

Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* ◊ A pair was seen near Soda.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* Common. See note.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* Just three were seen at the Wattled Crane wetland.

Chestnut-headed Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix signatus* ◊ Excellent looks of this nice lark in the Bilen area.



Erlanger's Lark (top left) on the Sululta Plains by Martin Hale, *Chestnut-headed Sparrow Lark* (top right) in Bilen, *Short-tailed Lark* (bottom left) at Soda and *Archer's Lark* (bottom right) on the Liben Plains (János Oláh).

Brown Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] antinorii* ◊ Several flocky were seen in the Harrena Forest. See note.

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* Regular sightings throughout the tour.
Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Regular sightings.
Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* We had two near Yabello and a flock in the Gibe Gorge.
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* It was common in the Debre Libanos area.
Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Common in suitable habitat.
Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Two were seen at Gemassa Gedal with the previous species.
Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* We had several great looks!
White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* ◊ A total of 14 were seen in the Yabello area. **VU**
Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* First seen at Lake Beseka and later common around Negelle.
Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida* Three were seen on our way to Dinsho.
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common.
Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* A flock of 40 were seen at Lake Langano.
Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] flava* Common. See note.
Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] feldegg* Common. See note.
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Singletons were seen along streams.
Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara* We had good views at Debre Libanos and in the Jemma Valley.
White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Regular sightings.
African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* We had a few on larger rivers like Jemma, Dawa and Gibe.
Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* A few were seen around Lake Ziway and Abijata.
Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Two were seen on the Jemma Escarpment.
Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* It was common in the south, especially on the Liben Plains.
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* We had many sightings of this migrant, especially in the south this year.
Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Common wintering bird.
Abyssinian Longclaw *Macronyx flavicollis* ◊ We had four on the Sululta Plains and a few more in the Bale NP. **NT**



The endemic Abyssinian Longclaw in the Bale Mountains – the long claw is visible (János Oláh)!

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea* A female in the Jemma Valley and three at Bishangari.
Grey Cuckooshrike *Coracina caesia* One was seen in the Harrena Forest.
Northern Brownbul *Phyllastrephus strepitans* Two were seen near Negelle.
Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* Common. See note.
Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor* Regular sightings in the Bale Mountains. See note.
Somali Bulbul *Pycnonotus somaliensis* ◊ Two were seen at Bilen. See note.
Dodson's Bulbul *Pycnonotus dodsoni* ◊ It was common in the south. See note.
Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (**H**) It was only heard at Bishangari.
Rüppell's Robin-Chat *Cossypha semirufa* Regular sightings throughout the tour.

White-browed Robin-Chat *Cossypha heuglini* We saw one at Lake Awassa and two at Bishangari.
Spotted Palm-thrush *Cichladusa guttata* Two were seen near Yabello. What a great songster and mimic!
White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* The common robin in the dry scrub.
Rufous Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* One was seen at the airport just when we arrived!
Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* ◇ One was finally seen well in the Bilen area.
Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Regular sightings of this migrant, often 'white-winged' *samamisticus*.
African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* One was seen on the Sululta Plains and one in the Jemma Valley. See note.
Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* A single bird was noted on the Sululta Plains.
Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Three sightings of this scarce migrant on the highlands.
Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Very common. One *vittata* form seen near Soda.
Abyssinian Wheatear *Oenanthe lugubris* ◇ It was common on the Jemma Escarpment.
Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae* ◇ Regular sightings in grassy highland habitat.
Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Common.
Familiar Chat *Oenanthe familiaris* One was seen in the Jemma Valley and a few in the Gibe Gorge.
Brown-tailed Rock Chat *Oenanthe scotocerca* ◇ Two were seen near Negelle.
Sombre Rock Chat *Oenanthe dubia* ◇ We had great views of at least three near Awash.



The near-endemic Sombre Rock Chat (left) near Awash and the endemic White-winged Cliff Chat at Debre Libanos (János Oláh).

Blackstart *Oenanthe melanura* Two sightings of this wing-flicking chat in the north.
Moorland Chat *Pinarochroa sordida* Common at high elevation.
Rüppell's Black Chat *Myrmecocichla melaena* ◇ We saw several at Debre Libanos and on the Jemma Escarpment.
Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* Many good looks throughout the tour.
White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa* ◇ This fine endemic was seen at Debre Libanos.
Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinereus* ◇ Great looks around Lake Langano and in the Gibe Gorge.
Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Juvenile were seen at Lake Beseka and Gibe Gorge.
Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* We had at Debre Libanos and two on the Jemma Escarpment.
Abyssinian Ground Thrush *Zoothera piaggiae* ◇ We have seen it in Dinsho, Harrena Forest and Bishangari.
Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsitsirupa* Common in the highlands.
Abyssinian Thrush *Turdus abyssinicus* Regularly seen in highland woodland habitat. See note.
African Thrush *Turdus pelios* We had four sightings on the tour.
Bare-eyed Thrush *Turdus tephronotus* ◇ We had several great looks around Yabello.
Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus* (LO) Regularly heard and one seen in Harrena Forest.
Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Several were seen at Lake Ziway.
Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (H) It was only heard at Lake Awassa.
Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* A few were seen at Lake Awassa.
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* Singletons were seen at Jemma, Lake Abijata and Yabello.
Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* Regular sightings in bush country.
Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis* ◇ A pair was tracked down along the Dawa River.
Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens* Two were seen in the Gibe Gorge.
Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* Three sightings on the tour.
Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii* Commonly encountered in bush and acacia country.
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Common migrant.
Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* Just a few were seen, much less numerous than the previous species.
Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* We saw this attractive *phyllosc* at Dinsho and Harrena Forest.

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris* One was seen in Awash NP. A write-in for our list!
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Regular sightings throughout the tour.
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (NL) One was seen near Negelle.
Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* Several were seen throughout the tour.
Ménétriés's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* ◊ Three were seen in the Bilen area.
Brown Parisoma *Sylvia lugens* One was seen at the airport and one in the Bale Mountains. See note.
Banded Parisoma *Sylvia boehmi* Just a few were seen in the south.
Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* One was seen on the Jemma Escarpment.
Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* We had several good looks around Lake Langano and around Yabello.
Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa* ◊ We had two sightings near Negelle.
Ashy Cisticola *Cisticola cinereolus* One was seen in the Awash National Park.
Ethiopian Cisticola *Cisticola lugubris* ◊ We saw this species on the Sululta Palins and at Bale. See note.
Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nana* One was seen around Negelle.
Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus* One was seen on the Liben Plains.
Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens* Great views of this tiny bird on the Liben Plains.
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Regular sightings throughout the tour.
Red-fronted Warbler *Urorhipis rufifrons* We saw two at Awash NP and two in the south.
Buff-bellied Warbler *Phyllolais pulchella* Commonly seen in Acacia country, especially around Lake Langano.
Brown-tailed Apalis *Apalis [flavida] viridiceps* It was very common in the south. See note.
Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Several good looks on the tour. See note.
Grey Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes simplex* We saw five in Awash and several in the south.
Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus* ◊ We had excellent looks at this Abyssinian endemic.



White-winged Black Tit (left) at Lake Langano by Martin Hale and Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher at Addis Ababa (János Oláh).

Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides* Regular encounters in the south.
African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus* Common.
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* One was seen near Negelle.
African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* Regularly seen throughout.
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Regularly seen throughout.
Brown-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira cyanea* We had one at Lake Langano and several more at Bishangari.
Grey-headed Batis *Batis orientalis* ◊ Regularly seen throughout the tour.
Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri* We had a few encounters at Lake Langano and Gibe Gorge.
Pygmy Batis *Batis perkeo* A few were seen at Dawa River and around Yabello.
African Hill Babbler *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* One was seen in the Harrena Forest.
White-rumped Babbler *Turdoides leucopygia* ◊ Many excellent looks on the tour.
Rufous Chatterer *Turdoides rubiginosa* Regularly seen on the tour.
Scaly Chatterer *Turdoides aylmeri* ◊ Three were seen in the Yaballo area.
Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri* ◊ Good views at Dinsho and in Harrena Forest of this fluty endemic.
Acacia Tit *Parus thruppi* Regularly seen in the south.
White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus* ◊ We saw about five in the Bale NP headquarter at Dinsho.
White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas* Several were seen around Lake Langano.
Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus musculus* One was seen in Awash NP and one near Negelle.
African Spotted Creeper *Salpornis salvadori* ◊ We had great views of a pair at Lake Awassa. See note.
Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis* First encountered in Awash NP and few more in the south.
Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* We had good looks at Jemma, Melku Ghebdu and Awassa.
Hunter's Sunbird *Chalcomitra hunter* Amazingly two females only in the south!

Tacazze Sunbird *Nectarinia tacazze* Common in the highlands.
 Nile Valley Sunbird *Hedydipna metallica* ◊ Several good looks in Awash and Bilen.
 Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus* It was very common around Lake Langano and Lake Awassa.
 Marico Sunbird *Cinnyris mariquensis* It was particularly common this year!
 Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus* ◊ Excellent looks at several locations in the north.
 Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus* Common.
 Abyssinian White-eye *Zosterops abyssinicus* ◊ Several encounters in the lower areas.
 Montane White-eye *Zosterops poliogastrus* ◊ Commonly seen in the highlands.
 Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* Common.
 Somali Fiscal *Lanius somalicus* ◊ We saw lots on the tour and kept checking for Taita – without luck.
 Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* A singleton in Gibe Gorge.
 Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitorius* We only saw three at Bishangari.
 Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris* A few encounters in the north. See note.
 Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Two sightings in the north.
 Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides* This was the more common form of the two on the tour. See note.
 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* A single juvenile on the Liben Plains.
 Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* One was seen in the Jemma Valley.
 Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli* Common.
 Grey-headed Bush-shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* A pair was seen near Negelle.



Grey-headed Bush-shrike near Negelle (Martin Hale).

Orange-breasted Bush-shrike *Telophorus sulfureopectus* Two were seen in Bishangari.
 Rosy-patched Bush-shrike *Rhodophoneus cruentus* ◊ We saw six in Awash NP and several more in the south.
 Three-streaked Tchagra *Tchagra jamesi* ◊ A very obliging individual near Negelle.
 Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* Several very good looks on the tour.
 Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* We saw in the Jemma Valley, Bishangari and Gibe Gorge.
 Pringle's Puffback *Dryoscopus pringlii* ◊ Both sexes were seen on our way to Yabello.
 Slate-coloured Boubou *Laniarius funebris* Several great looks on the tour.
 Red-naped Bush-Shrike *Laniarius ruficeps* ◊ We had repeated great views in the south.
 Ethiopian Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus* ◊ Common.
 Brubru *Nilaus afer* Common in acacia woodland.
 White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus* A few were seen in the south.
 Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus* It was regularly encountered in the south.
 Abyssinian Oriole *Oriolus monacha* ◊ Great look in the Harrena Forest and Bishangari.
 Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* Common.

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis* Common.
 Somali Crow *Corvus edithae* ◇ Common in the Liben Plains. **See note.**
 Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Common.
 Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* Common.



Fan-tailed Raven (left) in flight and Black-capped Social Weaver at its nest near Soda (János Oláh).

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Two encounters in the Bale Mountains.
 Stresemann's Bush-crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* ◇ We enjoyed great looks of this iconic endemic. **EN**
 Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio* Two were seen at Borana Lodge and two at Gibe Gorge.
 Bristle-crowned Starling *Onychognathus salvadorii* ◇ We had many excellent looks of this strange-looking starling.
 White-billed Starling *Onychognathus albirostris* ◇ Good looks at Debre Libanos, Jemma and Gemassa Gedal.
 Slender-billed Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris* We saw 12 at Debre Libanos and large flocks in the Bale NP.
 Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Common.
 Rüppell's Starling *Lamprotornis purpuroptera* Regularly seen throughout the tour.
 Golden-breasted Starling *Lamprotornis regius* ◇ Good numbers were seen from Negelle to Yabello.
 Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi* ◇ Two encounters in the south.
 Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus* Common.
 White-crowned Starling *Spreo albicapillus* ◇ It was common in the south from Negelle to Yabello.
 Sharpe's Starling *Pholia sharpii* ◇ Two of these treetop species were seen in the Harrena Forest.
 Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* Regular sightings.
 Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Regular sightings.
 Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* ◇ Common.
 Shelley's Sparrow *Passer shelleyi* ◇ It was seen on the Liben Plains and around Yabello.
 Chestnut Sparrow *Passer eminibey* Two flocks in breeding plumage was seen near Soda.
 Bush Petronia *Petronia dentate* We saw several in the Jemma Valley and in the Gibe Gorge.
 Yellow-spotted Petronia *Petronia pyrgita* First seen in Awash NP and later common in the south.
 Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver *Bubalornis niger* It was common in the south.
 White-headed Buffalo-Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli* Common throughout.
 White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* Common throughout.
 Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis* Just three were seen in the Jemma Valley.
 Grey-capped Social Weaver *Pseudonigrita arnaudi* It was seen in good numbers around Soda.
 Black-capped Social Weaver *Pseudonigrita cabanisi* A colony was seen on our way to Soda.
 Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* Several were seen in the south at various sites.
 Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht* Common in the highlands.
 Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus* One was seen in Awash and common at Lake Langano.
 Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* A few at Lake Langano and Awassa.
 Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* Several were seen in the Awash area.
 Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* A few were seen along the tour.
 Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula* ◇ The best breeding plumaged birds were seen at Melka Ghebdu.
 Speke's Weaver *Ploceus spekei* Just a few were seen around Negelle.
 Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* A few large flocks were seen.
 Juba Weaver *Ploceus dichrocephalus* ◇ A breeding plumaged male and a female was seen near Negelle.
 Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus* We saw several in breeding plumage in the south.
 Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* Hundreds were seen on the tour.
 Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus* We saw many on the tour though all in non-breeding plumage.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus* We had a six in the Jemma Valley.
Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* About 30 were seen on the Sululta Plains.
Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula* A pair was seen by some in Bishangari.
Abyssinian Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza salvadorii* ◊ One was seen by some in the Harrena Forest.
Yellow-bellied Waxbill *Coccyzygia quartinia* It was common in the Harrena Forest.
Abyssinian Waxbill *Estrilda ochrogaster* ◊ We saw 12 in the Jemma Valley and one at Gibe Gorge. See note.
Crimson-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda rhodopyga* The largest numbers were seen in the Jemma Valley.
Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Just two were seen on our way to Negelle.
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* Common.
Purple Grenadier *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster* We saw a few in Awash and in the south as well.
Red-billed Pytilia *Pytilia lineata* ◊ Two were seen in the Jemma Valley and one in the Gibe Gorge. See note.
Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* Several great looks in Awash National Park.



Reichenow's Seedeater (left) by János Oláh and Green-winged Pytilia or Melba Finch (Martin Hale).

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Common.
Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata* ◊ We saw six in Gibe Gorge. See note.
Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* We had several encounters on the tour.
Quailfinch *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa* Three were seen in flight at Lake Chaleleke. See note.
Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata* The largest gathering was in the Harrena Forest.
Black-and-white Mannikin *Spermestes bicolor* Four were seen in the Harrena Forest.
African Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Only seen in the Jemma Valley and in Awash NP.
Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Regular sightings on the tour.
Long-tailed Paradise Whydah *Vidua paradisaea* A fine male was seen near Dawa River.
Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta* A fine male was seen in the Gibe Gorge. A write-in.
Straw-tailed Whydah *Vidua fischeri* One moulting male was seen in Awash NP.
Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeate* Regular sightings on the tour.
African Citril *Crithagra citrinelloides* ◊ Regular sightings on the tour.
Reichenow's Seedeater *Crithagra reichenowi* It was very common in the south this year!
Yellow-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra xanthopygius* ◊ We saw several in the Jemma Valley and Gibe Gorge.
Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambicus* We had a few in the Jemma Valley and in the Gibe Gorge.
White-bellied Canary *Crithagra dorsostriatus* One was seen at Lake Langano and several in the south.
Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra s flavigula* ◊ We had excellent looks of three at Melka Ghebdu. **EN**
Salvadori's Seedeater *Crithagra xantholaemus* ◊ We had great looks around Negelle. **VU**
Ankober Serin *Crithagra ankoberensis* ◊ Two were seen in the Jemma Valley, four at Gemassa Gedal. See note. **VU**
Northern Grosbeak-Canary *Crithagra donaldsoni* ◊ Three were seen south of Yabello.
Brown-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra tristriatus* ◊ Common.
Streaky Seedeater *Serinus striolatus* Common.
Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus flavivertex* It was common in the Harrena Forest.
Ethiopian Siskin *Serinus nigriceps* ◊ We saw big flocks on the highlands.
Somali Bunting *Emberiza poliopleura* Several were seen in Awash and in the south.
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* Regular sightings in rocky habitat.
Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* We only had distant views of three at Lake Beseka. See note.
Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* One was seen on the Jemma Escarpment.
Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* A common wintering bird.



Ethiopian or Simien Wolf on the Sanetti Plateau (János Oláh).

MAMMALS

Guereza Colobus *Colobus guereza* This handsome species was seen several times in wooded habitat.

Sacred Baboon *Papio hamadryas* We had 25 on our way to Bilen in the north.

Olive Baboon *Papio anubis* Common.

Gelada Baboon *Papio gelada* ♦ Great views at Debre Libanos, on the Jemma Escarpment and

Grivet Monkey *Cercopithecus aethiops* A few sightings in the north.

Vervet Monkey *Cercopithecus pygerythrus* A few sightings in the south.

Yellow-winged Bat *Lavia frons* We saw two near Yabello.

Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus* ♦ A few were seen at Awash NP.

Starck's Hare *Lepus starcki* Just four seen in the highlands.

Unstriped Ground Squirrel *Xerus rutilus* It was common in the south.

Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* We had some at Awassa and in Bishangari.

Giant Root-rat *Tachyoryctes macrocephalus* ♦ One was seen by some on the Sanetti Plateau.

Blick's Grass Rat *Arvicanthis blicki* ♦ Common on the Sanetti Plateau.

Dega Rat *Desmomys harringtoni* Two were seen on the Sululta Plains.

Common Jackal *Canis aureus* We saw a few in the Awash area.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas* We had great looks in Awash National Park.

Ethiopian Wolf *Canis simensis* ♦ We saw three on the Sanetti Plateau.

Dwarf Mongoose *Helogale parvula* We saw two close to the Dawa River.

Ethiopian Rock Hyrax *Procapra habessinica* ♦ We had a few at Gemassa Gedal and Lake Beseka.

Yellow-spotted Hyrax *Heterohyrax brucei* We saw four in the Jemma Valley and a few near Negelle.

Grevy's Zebra *Equus grevyi* Five were seen by some on our drive to Yabello.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibious* (H) Some of us heard them at night in Bishangari.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africana* Common.

Menelik's Bushbuck *Tragelaphus meneliki* ♦ Two were seen near Dinsho. See note.

Northern Lesser Kudu *Tragelaphus imberbis* We saw several in the Awash area.

Mountain Nyala *Tragelaphus buxtoni* ♦ We saw many in the Bale Mountain National Park.

Bush Duiker *Sylvicapra grimmia* Singletons were seen near Dinsho and Yabello.

Ethiopian Klipspringer *Oreotragus saltatrixoides* ♦ One was seen on the Sanetti Plateau.

Salt's Dikdik *Madoqua saltiana* It was common in the Awash area.

Günther's Dikdik *Madoqua guentheri* ◊ We saw several in the south, especially on the drive to Soda.
Bright's Gazelle *Nanger notatus* A few at Lake Abijata and many more near Soda.
Soemmering's Gazelle *Gazella soemmeringi* Several were seen in the Awash National Park.
Southern Gerenuk *Litocranius walleri* About ten were seen near Soda. See note.
Northern Gerenuk *Litocranius sclateri* ◊ We had one at Bilen and four on the Ali Dege Plains. See note.
Beisa Oryx *Oryx beisa* ◊ It was common in Awash National Park.



Beisa Oryx (top left), Northern Gerenuk (top right) and Black-backed Jackal (bottom left) in Awash NP and Mountain Nyala in the Bale Mountains (János Oláh).

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 List (v6.1).

Somali Ostrich *Struthio molydophanes*

This form is recognized by IOC as a separate species from Common Ostrich *S. camelus*.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*

Redman et al. lump this form in Great Cormorant *P. carbo*.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Redman et al. and other authors use the name Cattle Egret for this species, but it has been renamed following the splitting off of the eastern (Asian) form *coromandus* under the name Eastern Cattle Egret.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

The species has been renamed following the splitting of Osprey into two species.

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*

The two highland races may in future be split as a separate, but closely related, species *A. unduliventer*, which would then become another Ethiopian & Eritrean endemic.

Crested Francolin *Dendroperdix sephaena*

The form *spilogaster*, found in the southeast, has sometimes been treated as part of a separate species: Kirk's Francolin *D. rovuma*. Both were formerly placed in the genus *Francolinus*.

White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis*

IOC lump Barrow's (or Southern White-bellied) Bustard (or Korhaan) *E. barrowii* in this form, using the name White-bellied Bustard for the enlarged species.

Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops [variegatus] lafresnayii*

The form concerned, *lafresnayii*, is sometimes lumped in Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater *M. oreobates*, but is perhaps better split off as a separate species: Ethiopian Bee-eater *M. lafresnayii*.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and **Central African Hoopoe** *Upupa [epops] senegalensis*

Two races occur on the tour: nominate birds are common Palearctic migrants and the race *senegalensis* is an intra-tropical migrant or possible resident. The latter is sometimes lumped in African Hoopoe *U. africana*, and African Hoopoe is sometimes lumped in Eurasian Hoopoe, using the name Hoopoe or Common Hoopoe for the enlarged species.

Eastern Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos spodocephalus*

This form was formerly lumped in African Grey Woodpecker *D. goertae*, using the name Grey Woodpecker for the enlarged species.

Foxy Lark *Calendulauda alopex*

This form is sometimes lumped in Fawn-coloured Lark *M. africanoides*.

Gillett's Lark *Mirafraga gilletti*

Note that Degodi Lark *M. degodiensis*, which was described as a new species based on two specimens collected at Bogol Manyo in southeast Ethiopia in 1975, is now considered synonymous with this species.

Archer's Lark *Heteromirafraga archeri*

The Sidamo Lark of the Liben Plain has now been proven to be Archer's Lark *H. archeri* of NW Somalia. Birds recently discovered in northeast Ethiopia are also the long-lost Archer's Lark. These two tiny populations represent the only known Archer's Larks, and the species remains Critically Endangered.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

The localized forms in northeast Africa may represent a separate species: Short-crested Lark *G. praeterrissa*.

Brown Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] antinorii*

Redman et al. lump several closely related forms in this species using the name Black Saw-wing for the enlarged species. We have treated each of the proposed splits as 'allospecies'. Each allospecies has a distinct English name and is identified in its scientific name by a trinomial, with the superspecies name preceding it in square brackets. We have adopted this treatment to facilitate the accurate recording of the forms encountered.

This form is usually (as in Redman et al.) lumped in Blue Saw-wing *P. pristoptera*, with the name Black Saw-wing being used for the enlarged species. See the note for Blue Saw-wing above.

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] flava*

Some authors have proposed that the various forms in the Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* complex should be split off as separate species. Whilst we have not totally adopted this treatment, we have treated each of the proposed splits as 'allospecies'. Each allospecies has a distinct English name (most of which were already in widespread colloquial use)

and is identified in its scientific name by a trinomial with the superspecies name preceding it in square brackets. We have adopted this treatment to facilitate the accurate recording of the forms encountered.

Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] feldegg*

See the note for Blue-headed Wagtail above.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

The IOC list now recognise the various forms as separate species.

Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor*

The IOC list now recognise the various forms as separate species.

Somali Bulbul *Pycnonotus somaliensis*

The IOC list now recognise the various forms as separate species.

Dodson's Bulbul *Pycnonotus dodsoni*

The IOC list now recognise the various forms as separate species.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Common Stonechat *S. rubicola* and Siberian Stonechat *S. maurus* are often lumped in this form, with the name Common Stonechat being used for the enlarged species. Redman et al. currently list this form as an allospecies, *S. [torquatus] torquatus*. In addition, the distinctive resident form, *albofasciata*, may be a full species in its own right.

Abyssinian Thrush *Turdus abyssinicus*

IOC splits it from Olive Thrush *T. olivaceus*.

Brown Parisoma *Sylvia lugens*

The form in the Bale Mountains has been proposed as a separate species, Bale Parisoma *P. griseiventris*, but there are few morphological or vocal differences, and the principal distinction appears to be habitat. We have retained this form as a subspecies, following Redman et al.

Ethiopian Cisticola *Cisticola lugubris*

This endemic was formerly lumped in Winding Cisticola *C. galactotes*, and we have retained this as an allospecies, following Redman et al.

Brown-tailed Apalis *Apalis [flavida] viridiceps*

The form in southern Ethiopia, *flavocincta*, is sometimes split off from Yellow-breasted Apalis *A. flavida* as part of a separate species, Brown-tailed Apalis *A. viridiceps*.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata*

Redman et al. lump this form in Green-backed Camaroptera *C. brachyura*, using the name Grey-backed Camaroptera for the enlarged species.

African Spotted Creeper *Salpornis salvadori*

Spotted Creeper has been split into two species: Indian Spotted Creeper *S. spilnotus* and African Spotted Creeper *S. salvadori*.

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris*

Redman et al. lump this form in Southern Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis*. A recent analysis has suggested that alternatively the whole group may be best split into six species! Under this arrangement, both migrant *pallidirostris* and resident *aucherii* would become part of Asian Grey Shrike *L. lahtora*.

Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*

This form was formerly lumped in Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* (or previously in Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*). There has also been a nomenclatural change in the isabellinus group. The form breeding in NW China (and known as Xinjiang or Chinese Shrike if split) was until recently called nominate isabellinus, but this form has now been renamed arenarius as it was discovered that the original description of 'isabellinus' (from a specimen taken in the Middle East) in fact relates to the form speculigerus. The latter has consequently been renamed isabellinus and becomes the nominate form!

Abyssinian Waxbill *Estrilda ochrogaster*

This form used to be lumped in Fawn-breasted Waxbill *E. paludicola*, with the name Fawn-breasted Waxbill being used for the enlarged species. Redman et al. treat it as a near-endemic allospecies, *E. [paludicola] ochrogaster*.

Red-billed Pytilia *Pytilia lineata*

This near-endemic form was formerly lumped in Red-winged Pytilia *P. phoenicoptera*.

Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata*

The nominate form concerned is sometimes considered to be a separate species, Black-throated Firefinch *L. larvata*, with the remaining populations being re-named Black-faced Firefinch *L. vinacea*.

Quailfinch *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa*

IOC lumps this form in Black-faced Quailfinch *O. atricollis*, using the name Quailfinch or African Quailfinch for the enlarged species.

Ankober Serin *Crithagra ankoberensis*

This form is sometimes lumped in Yemen Serin *S. menachensis*. It was formerly placed in the genus Serinus and later Carduelis but is now considered to belong to the *Crithagra* genus.

Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata*

Some authors lump House Bunting *E. sahari* of northern and western Africa in this species, using the name House Bunting for the enlarged species, but the two forms differ in morphology, behaviour (not frequenting buildings for a start) and vocalizations.

MAMMALS

Menelik's Bushbuck *Tragelaphus meneliki*

Kingdon lumps this form (together with several other forms) in Western Bushbuck *T. scriptus*, using the name Bushbuck for the enlarged species.

Southern Gerenuk *Litocranius walleri*

This form is renamed following the splitting off of Northern Gerenuk *L. sclateri*.

Northern Gerenuk *Litocranius sclateri*

This form was formerly lumped in Southern Gerenuk, with the name Gerenuk being used for the enlarged species.



Wattled Cranes gave us an amazing show (Martin Hale).

APPENDIX: overall results of the 'Bird of the tour' contest

Species	Points	Nominations
1st Stresemann's Bush-crow	38	4
2nd Spot-breasted Plover	24	4
3rd Wattled Crane	24	3
4th Northern White-faced Owl	20	3
4th Black-crowned Crane	18	3