



*The incomparable Egyptian Plover was one of the highlights (Mark Van Beirs)*

# **ULTIMATE GHANA**

**16 NOVEMBER – 5 DECEMBER 2014**

**LEADER:** MARK VAN BEIRS and JAMES NVOESOR

The undisputed highlight of the tour and the main reason why several (most) participants had joined the Ultimate Ghana tour was the White-necked Rockfowl (or Yellow-headed Picathartes), that we saw so very well at what must be the easiest and most accessible place in the world to see this truly amazing species. We obtained fantastic looks at this immaculate looking, enigmatic bird as it performed so very well on the rocky outcrop which it favours. But the supporting cast also held several high quality species that were seen at length and in depth, like Egyptian Plover, Long-tailed Hawk, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Forbes's Plover, Akun Eagle Owl and Blue-moustached Bee-eater. A good number of Upper Guinea specialities was seen while we travelled the length and width of Ghana. The lowland rainforests in the south and the bushy savanna in the north were the main habitats visited and other much appreciated goodies included Hartlaub's Duck, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Long-tailed Hawk, Congo Serpent Eagle, Fox Kestrel, White-spotted Flufftail, African Finfoot, Black-throated Coucal, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Turaco, Fraser's Eagle Owl, Brown and Black-shouldered Nightjars, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Blue-moustached, Black, Northern Carmine and Rosy Bee-eaters, Black Dwarf, Red-billed Dwarf, White-crested and Black-casqued Wattled Hornbills, Yellow-footed and Wilcock's Honeyguides, Fine-spotted, Little Green, Melancholy and Fire-bellied Woodpeckers, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Many-coloured and Lagden's Bushshrikes, Blue Cuckooshrike, White-bibbed and Pied-winged Swallows, Kemp's Longbill, Sharpe's Apalis, Capuchin Babbler, Western Forest Robin, Forest Scrub Robin, Red-fronted Antpecker, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Black-faced Firefinch and Wilson's Indigobird next to a fine assortment of modestly-clad Greenbuls, Cisticolas and colourful Sunbirds. Geoffroy's Pied Colobus, Becroft's, Lord Derby and Pel's Anomalures, Common Cusimanse and Central Bushbuck were some of the better mammals of the tour and notable reptiles included African Dwarf Crocodile, Puff Adder and Forest Cobra.



*Stone Partridge (Mark Van Beirs) and Senegal Batis (Doug Ormston) showed well in the Shai Hills*

A group of international birders gathered on a late Sunday evening at a well-located hotel in the outskirts of Ghana's capital Accra. Our first day in the field started at the scenic Shai Hills reserve where granitic outcrops clothed in shrubby growth towered over stretches of open woodland and savanna. In this very birdy environment we recorded an excellent selection of localized species next to a varied assortment of more widespread birds. A bantam-like Stone Partridge responded amazingly well to its voice and allowed perfect looks at close range. A pair of dashing Lanner Falcons were displaying over a kopje showing off their amazing aerobatics. A colourful Violet Turaco obliged briefly in a distant tree top and the only Black Scimitarbill of the tour was foraging in an isolated savanna tree. We scoped a snazzy Double-toothed Barbet and admired a pair of acrobatic White-shouldered Black Tits. Modestly-clad Croaking and Short-winged Cisticolas were singing away in the bushy grasslands and a White-crowned Cliff Chat was playing hide and seek amongst the boulders. Several, ever so beautiful Blue-bellied Rollers were overlooking their territories from higher vantage points, a Snowy-crowned Robin-chat was found lurking in dense undergrowth and a pair of perky Senegal Batises frequented a contorted acacia bush. Scores of Yellow-billed Kites were overhead and we would get to know the distinctive silhouette very well, as this bird of prey would accompany us all the

time on our travels across Ghana. We also recorded Shikra, Red-eyed, Laughing and Vinaceous Doves, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Senegal Parrot, Western Plantain-eater, Striped Kingfisher, African Grey Hornbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Vieillot's Barbet, Lesser Honeyguide, Cardinal Woodpecker, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Black-crowned Tchagra, Pied Crow, Common Bulbul, Simple Leaflove, Rock Martin, Mosque Swallow, Blackcap Babbler and Violet-backed Starling on our walks around the reserve. After lunch we circumnavigated the megapolis of Accra and its busy harbour and found that traffic wasn't as horrible as expected. A short stop at the famous Sakumono lagoon produced a wealth of waterbirds and waders, many of which we would only see at this venue. We found goodies like White-fronted Plover, Collared Pratincole and Black Tern next to well-known species like White-faced Whistling Duck, Squacco Heron, Western Cattle Egret, Grey and Purple Herons, Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Black Heron (frustratingly distant), Western Reef Heron (dark morph), Reed Cormorant, Western Marsh Harrier, African Swampphen, Black-winged Stilt, Spur-winged and Wattled Lapwings, Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, African Jacana, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Wood and Common Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Pied Kingfisher and Yellow Wagtail. On the long drive west to the Kakum National Park we made a birding stop at the Winneba plains where African Hobby, White-throated Bee-eater, a couple of cracking Yellow-crowned Gonoleks, Singing Cisticola and Tawny-flanked Prinia were seen.



*Black-crowned Tchagra gave good views in the Shai Hills and Black-winged Stilt and Black-tailed Godwit foraged at the Sakumono lagoon (Mark Van Beirs)*

The famous canopy walkway at Kakum National Park was built in 1995 and allows birders to get to grips with the tree crown inhabitants of the West African rainforest. Dawn found us 40m above the forest floor on one of the platforms of this c350m long structure and although it was creaking and moving a bit – which was not everyone's cup of tea - we stood about for hours and waited for the birds to come to us. We had a fantastic time as it was sometimes overwhelmingly birdy. A gorgeous, usually hard to see well, White-crested Hornbill perched in the open below us and we were treated to a true cuckoo parade as Blue Malkoha, Black Cuckoo (of the *gabonensis* race) and Klaas's and gaudy African Emerald Cuckoos all showed very well. Several fine-looking Rosy Bee-eaters flew overhead and a Thick-billed Honeyguide was being chased by angry Naked-faced Barbets. Both Little Green and Melancholy Woodpeckers were tapping dead branches and a glorious Blue Cuckooshrike ventured through the treetops. We got our first taste of greenbuls as Slender-billed, Golden, Honeyguide and Icterine Greenbuls wetted our appetite for this difficult group. A party of smart Rufous-crowned Eremomelas flitted about in a bare tree together with a pair of flashy Violet-backed Hyliotas. A tiny Lemon-bellied Crombec, several Green Hylias, a sneaky Kemp's Longbill and a couple of unpretentious Sharpe's Apalises favoured the dense tangles near our platform. As the sun made the clouds disappear sunbirds became quite active and Green, Little Green, a cracking male Buff-throated and Tiny Sunbird all gave nice views. Attractive Preuss's Weavers and flamboyant Red-headed Malimbos behaved

rather woodpeckerlike and Yellow-mantled and Maxwell's Black Weavers flitted about. We only heard several interesting species like Congo Serpent Eagle, Tambourine and Blue-headed Wood Doves, Yellow-billed Turaco, Black-throated Coucal, Rufous-sided Broadbill and Grey Longbill, but over the next weeks we would get to observe the makers of these tantalizing sounds. Other goodies seen from the walkway included African Harrier-Hawk, Sabine's Spinetail, Common Swift, African Pied Hornbill, Cassin's Honeybird, Wood Warbler, Black-capped Apalis, Ashy Flycatcher and White-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas. In late morning we made our way down to the forest floor and walked quietly through Kakum's primary forest. Patient birding produced good looks at a nice Grey-headed Bristlebill, at White-bearded Greenbul, at Crested Malimbe and at a couple of rarely-seen Red-fronted Antpeckers.



*The canopy walkway at Kakum and one of its greatest prizes, the sublime Long-tailed Hawk (Mark Van Beirs)*

In the afternoon we returned to the canopy walkway and found it very quiet at first, but soon activity picked up again. The highlight was a fabulous Long-tailed Hawk that allowed splendid looks at close range. Pure magic! We scoped a distant Palm-nut Vulture, observed an overhead Ayres's Hawk Eagle and admired a fabulous Black Bee-eater. Other new species included Yellow-throated Tinkerbird, West African Wattle-eye and Chestnut-breasted Nigrita. Two Geoffroy's Pied Colobuses sat in a distant treetop and at dusk we heard the distinctive calls of Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo and Latham's Francolin. Not much later a Brown Nightjar started uttering its "kyup" notes rather far off, but it kept its distance, sadly. On our return walk James found a smashing Pel's Anomalure hanging on the trunk of a forest giant and we had great looks at this marvellous, unusual-looking animal, while the strange screams of Western Tree Hyraxes echoed through the forest.

The following morning we explored a stretch of forest edge habitat at the perimeter of the Kakum National Park. We walked through farmbrush amongst plantations of cocoa and manioc, dotted with isolated tall trees. A Red-chested Goshawk and a Red-necked Buzzard represented the bird of prey department and we heard the resonant notes of a White-spotted Flufftail, but it wouldn't play. Red-fronted Parrots and Rosy Bee-eaters flew overhead and a smart Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill showed at close range. A Speckled Tinkerbird and Bristle-nosed and Naked-faced Barbets were raiding a fruiting tree and we scoped a fine Fire-bellied Woodpecker on a dead palm trunk. A Green Crombec played about in vine tangles and Chestnut-capped Flycatcher and three diminutive Tit Hylia's favoured the highest treetops. We managed scope views of a preening Yellow-browed Camaroptera and a good selection of sunbirds included Blue-throated Brown, Olive, Olive-bellied and a cracking Superb. Red-vented Malimbés were making a nest in a palm, a pair of exquisite Black-bellied Seedcrackers performed at length and parties of Vieillot's Black Weavers (of the distinctive black and chestnut *castaneofuscus* race) sat about. We also noted Diederik Cuckoo, Swamp Palm Greenbul, Whinchat, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Black-necked Weaver and Black-and-white Mannikin. A short drive took us to a bridge that held a large colony of adorable Preuss's Cliff Swallows. We obtained great

looks at perched and flying birds and nearby we found Rock Pratincole, Striated Heron, African Finfoot and a beautiful White-bibbed Swallow.



*The splendid Red-vented Malimbe was obvious in the Kakum farmbush (Mark Van Beirs) and Preuss's Cliff Swallows showed well at a colony under a bridge (Doug Ormston)*

In the afternoon we explored a patch of lowland rainforest and found it very quiet. West Africa's rain forest birding is amongst the hardest in the world, but patience and perseverance usually and eventually yield results. A European Honey Buzzard flew past, we heard and glimpsed an Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, a Yellow-spotted Barbet was enjoying the fruits of a Musanga tree, a mega skulking Green-tailed Bristlebill was seen by one participant, a party of Copper-tailed Starlings sat in a treetop and a shy White-tailed Alethe hopped through the undergrowth. At dusk we managed good looks at a rather cautious Brown Nightjar and heard a Demidoff's Galago.



*A widespread Lesser Striped Swallow (Mark Van Beirs) and the infamous slave fort at Cape Coast (Doug Ormston)*

On our last morning at Kakum we birded another stretch of farmbush, where highlights included African Cuckoo-Hawk, a smart Guinea Turaco, Mottled Spinetail and a stunning male Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, next to African Palm Swift, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Northern Puffback, Northern Fiscal, Simple Leaflove, Ethiopian and Lesser Striped Swallows, Red-faced Cisticola, Grey-backed Camaroptera, African Yellow White-eye, Copper Sunbird, a male Black-winged Red Bishop, Bar-breasted and African Firefinches, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Pin-tailed Whydah and Plain-backed Pipit. We enjoyed a scrumptious lunch at the Cape Coast sea front where several Royal Terns foraged and paid a short visit to the infamous Cape Coast Castle that was used in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Especially the dungeons and the "gate of no return" left a never to be forgotten, gruesome impression. This World Heritage site is testimony to a very sad bit of human history. Later we drove to the Nsuta swamp forest picking up two spectacular Lanner Falcons, Common Moorhen and a small colony of bright Orange Weavers on the journey. Our late afternoon visit produced a lovely Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, two Grey Parrots, a fabulous

Yellow-billed Turaco, Forest Wood Hoopoe and lots of Piping Hornbills and Swamp Palm Greenbuls. Sadly, nothing was heard or seen after sunset.



*A gorgeous Orange Weaver at a colony (Doug Ormston) and a pair of interacting Piping Hornbills (Mark Van Beirs)*

The following morning we returned to the Nsuta forest and walked along the main track where four perched Rosy Bee-eaters, although still a bit distant, were very much appreciated. A male Black Dwarf Hornbill sat very well behaved for extended scope views and we admired an active colony of Blue-billed Malimbés in low palms over a forest stream. An African Piculet was heard in a dense bamboo clump and a party of White-rumped Swifts fluttered over the forest. We also noted Blue-headed Wood Dove, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Little, Little Grey and Spotted Greenbuls, Grey Longbill and Crested Malimbe here. In the afternoon we drove to the Ankasa forest reserve and several stops on the way gave us a smashing pair of Hartlaub's Ducks, Little Grebe, Grey Kestrel and a trio of Mangrove Sunbirds near a nest. We arrived at the reserve in late afternoon and got settled in the spacious walk in tents (with beds). We had opted to camp (in relative luxury) instead of having to drive more than 90 minutes each way to a distant hotel. The tents were situated at the reserve's headquarters and the jovial atmosphere and the good food were much appreciated. Thanks to staying in the reserve we managed to fit in more nightbirding too.



*Blue-billed Malimbe was nesting over a forest stream (Doug Ormston) and Hartlaub's Duck was found at a forest pond (Mark Van Beirs)*

On our full day in the beautiful primary forest of the Ankasa Reserve we duly experienced the typical slow birding of West Africa's forests. There were many quiet moments, but now and then we experienced a flurry

of activity and in the end we came away with a really nice result. The day started with the pre-dawn calls of distant Nkulengu Rails, followed soon by excellent looks at a displaying Rufous-sided Broadbill at close range. A Great Blue Turaco tried to hide in a fruiting tree, a cracking male African Emerald Cuckoo could be studied in the scope, a dainty African Dwarf Kingfisher and an unobtrusive Willcock's Honeyguide performed very well and a party of charming, ever so cute, Red-billed Helmetshrikes warmed our hearts. We got to grips with a skulking Pale-breasted Illadopsis and with attractive Yellow-bearded Greenbuls and obtained all too brief looks at two noisy Black-casqued Wattled Hornbills. We also enjoyed the presence of Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Ansorge's Greenbul, Square-tailed Saw-wing and Copper-tailed Starling. In late afternoon, while waiting at a lovely forest pond we got drenched by a serious, but luckily short-lasting rainstorm. On the evening drive we found a fantastic Lord Derby's Anomalure and later observed a brilliant Fraser's Eagle Owl near the camp.



*A cracking Lord Derby's Anomalure was found after dark (Doug Ormston) and a lovely African Dwarf Crocodile just before dawn (Patty Scott)*

After an good night's sleep under canvas we heard an African Wood Owl pre-dawn and found an appealing, 40cm long Dwarf Crocodile in the forest. A Nkulengu Rail called all too briefly and could not be located, alas. A slow morning in the forest gave us Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo (one showed quite well high in the canopy), Chocolate-backed Kingfisher (scope views of one high in a tree crown), Western Nicator, Cassin's Flycatcher and a Fraser's Sunbird. We heard Lowe's Monkey and James found a mother and baby Beecroft's Anomalure hiding amongst tree vines. Our third Anomalure of the tour! On the drive out a couple of Reichenbach's Sunbirds were located in flowering Coconut Palms and a shaggy Common Cusimanse crossed the track. After an early lunch we started the long drive back to Kakum's Rainforest Lodge. A late afternoon stop in the Drenu grasslands yielded several Double-spurred Francolins, a trio of delightful Black-winged Kites, a perched Shikra, a couple of pretty Little Bee-eaters, a smashing Orange-breasted Bushshrike, two showy Marsh Tchagras, some Fanti Saw-wings, Green-headed Sunbird and several Yellow-mantled Widowbirds in non-breeding plumage.



*A preening Olive-green Camaroptera (Mark Van Beirs) and the star of the tour, the unbelievable Yellow-headed Picathartes (Doug Ormston)*

Our morning at the edge of the Kakum National Park produced several excellent sightings next to the usual frustrations. A stately Ayres's Hawk-Eagle flew overhead and we had a splendid sighting of a cooperative male White-spotted Flufftail. A Blue-headed Coucal showed briefly and a very smart Black Bee-eater showed well. A male Brown-throated Wattle-eye performed nicely, but a male Red-cheeked Wattle-eye refused to perform. A Brown-crowned Tchagra perched on top of a low bush, a Red-breasted Swallow flitted about and we managed to scope a preening Olive-green Camaroptera. A skulking White-tailed Alethe hopped out of its dense habitat and male and female Black-bellied Seedcrackers behaved uncharacteristically well for truly amazing views. In mid-morning we waved goodbye to Kakum and drove north to the most important venue of the tour. We arrived at the village near the Picathartes spot in early afternoon and after organising guides, we walked up the hill for an hour or so. As soon as we reached the fabled outcrop, we sat down on the provided benches in front of the cliff face and waited for the illustrious birds. We had to wait for two hours but then the magical moment arrived and it truly was a heart stopping experience when the most wanted bird of the tour appeared only 10m away. This magnificent creature stayed, together with several others, for 35 minutes and showed extremely well while preening, dozing, hopping about and seducing us. These immaculate-looking birds really showed at length and in depth and everyone showed a really big smile. No wonder the White-necked Rockfowl or Yellow-headed Picathartes was voted as Bird of the Trip. After this out-of-the-world experience we walked back in the dark, said goodbye to our guides and drove to our faraway hotel for some major celebrating.

The following day was mainly a travelling day as we journeyed further north through gradually changing habitat. The forest zone was left behind and soon we travelled through bushy savanna. After lunch the bird of prey spectacle started and next to more widespread species like Bateleur and Dark Chanting Goshawk we found several Grasshopper Buzzards at a couple of savanna fires and scoped an impressive Beaudouin's Snake Eagle on a pylon. Colourful Abyssinian Rollers and Black-headed Heron were added to the list and in late afternoon we rolled into the famous Mole National Park, the largest stretch of protected habitat in Ghana. Our accommodation was built on an escarpment overlooking a large waterhole which was visited by Helmeted Guineafowl, Hadada Ibis, Hamerkop, Senegal Thick-knee, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Common Warthog, Central Bushbuck, Buffon Kob and Defassa Waterbuck. In the surrounding bush we observed a party of endearing White-crested Helmetshrikes, a European Pied Flycatcher and a female Red-headed Weaver.



*Two brood parasites: a lovely male Wilson's Indigobird and a displaying Thick-billed Cuckoo (Doug Ormston)*

Our first full day in the open woodland and bush country of the Mole National Park was delightfully birdy. In the morning we walked, accompanied by an armed guard, at the edge of a dense stretch of gallery forest. Parties of Rose-ringed Parakeets left their roosts just after dawn and flew screeching overhead. We heard the distinctive song of a Thick-billed Cuckoo nearby and soon obtained brilliant views in flight and perched of this rarely seen species. A gaudy Violet Turaco posed for scope views and scores of truly stunning Red-throated Bee-eaters were sitting about or hawking insects overhead. A male Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike foraged in a small tree, together with a glorious male African Golden Oriole. We heard the ebullient song of Oriole Warbler and a bit of judicious taping brought the bird close enough for fair looks. Migrant Willow and Melodious Warblers flitted about in a flowering acacia that also held a variety of Sunbirds, including Western Violet-backed, Pygmy, Scarlet-chested and Beautiful. Several species of seed eaters were foraging on the ground and next to Bush Petronia, Red-cheeked Cordon-blue and Yellow-fronted Canary we identified two male Wilson's Indigobirds. Other new birds for the trip included African White-backed Vulture, Green Sandpiper, Broad-billed Roller, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, Greater Honeyguide, African Paradise Flycatcher, Wire-tailed Swallow, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Senegal Eremomela, Long-tailed Glossy Starling and Kintampo Rope Squirrel. In late morning we spent some time in a large hide overlooking a pond and here we witnessed the lightning snatching of a White-faced Whistling Duck by a medium-sized Nile Crocodile. It all happened within a blink of the eye and most of the other ducks of the flock never realized what had been going on. A pair of dashing African Hawk-Eagles held watch overhead. After a break in the middle of the day, during which time an African Savanna Elephant visited the waterhole we drove to a recently burnt stretch of savanna where no fewer than seven Forbes's Plovers were found. We studied these rarely seen waders in detail and although we were plagued by annoying sweatbees and a few tsetse flies we really relished observing these much wanted birds. Some Four-banded Sandgrouse and several Sun Larks added to the fun, a punky Levillant's Cuckoo showed interest in its own voice, a Giant Kingfisher adorned a pond and Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and Bearded Barbet provided a splash of colour. At dusk a White-backed Night Heron flew from its roost and on the return drive in the dark we observed Greyish Eagle Owl and Western Barn Owl.

Our second day in the Mole National Park started with a Brown-backed Woodpecker and a party of Brown Babblers in bushy savanna. Later, in a patch of gallery forest, we found a Greyish Eagle Owl being mobbed by a pair of well-groomed Lavender Waxbills and other small birds on its day roost. We also observed Square-tailed Drongo, White-crowned Robin-chat and a Grey-headed Bushshrike destroying a caterpillar. A walk in open woodland gave us Wahlberg's Eagle, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Brubru, White-breasted Cuckooshrike and a party of Red-winged Warblers. We also studied a tidy Senegal Parrot perched near its nesthole. In the afternoon we explored open woodland dotted with grassy clearings where many enchanting Red-throated Bee-eaters posed at the colony. Being surrounded by dozens of these marvellous creatures was quite an experience. A Moustached Grass Warbler was singing on top of a bush allowing us to discern its pale eye and obvious moustache. A pair of Fine-spotted Woodpeckers showed off and we were treated to

good looks at male and female Abyssinian Ground Hornbill going to roost. A Lesser Blue-eared Starling posed together with a Purple Starling in a treetop and other species added to the list included Lizard Buzzard, Black-billed Wood Dove, Purple Roller, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, African Blue Flycatcher and Western Olivaceous Warbler. Our evening drive was very productive as Spotted Thick-knee (great looks at close range), no fewer than six Greyish Eagle Owls, a single Plain Nightjar, several Long-tailed Nightjars and a one metre long scary-looking Puff Adder were found. An after dinner nightdrive only added Scrub Hare to the tally.



*Several Greyish Eagle Owls and an impressive Puff Adder enlivened our evening drive at the Mole NP (Doug Ormston)*

A couple of hours at dawn around the lodge at Mole gave us a well-mannered Familiar Chat and several Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weavers. After breakfast we left this splendid reserve and made our way northeast to the town of Bolgatanga. On the drive through the dry bush country of northern Ghana we noted another Beaudouin's Snake Eagle (a very nice female), good numbers of Grasshopper Buzzards, a pale morph Booted Eagle, a party of excited Yellow-billed Shrikes, Piapiac and West African Swallow (split from Red-rumped). Our lunch at the large town of Tamale was enlivened by the presence of several Gambian Fruit Bats. At the extensive Nasia swamp a bout of careful scanning gave us three African Pygmy Geese amongst the water lilies while Winding Cisticola, Black-headed Weaver and Red-billed Quelea played in the reeds. In late afternoon we explored the granitic kopjes of the Tongo Hills and came away with excellent sightings of Gabar Goshawk, Rock-loving Cisticola, Black-faced Firefinch, Village Indigobird and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Best of all was the rarely encountered Fox Kestrel that we were able to admire perched and in flight.

An early start took us to the White Volta River on the border with Burkina Faso, where a peaceful coup d'état had happened just a couple of weeks before our visit. We walked along the fairly wide river with its extensive sandbanks, not too far from the point where the countries of Togo, Burkina Faso and Ghana meet. The main reason for visiting this far flung corner of Ghana was the presence of one of the most appealing waders in the world, the unique Egyptian Plover. We spent quality time getting to know these very special birds as they foraged and played about. At least a dozen were counted and some lovely interaction was witnessed. We also observed African Hawk-Eagle (a young bird had a freshly killed chick Helmeted Guineafowl in its claws), 30+ Common Greenshank, several very attractive Northern Carmine Bee-eaters and African Silverbill. The nearby acacia bush held typical dry country species like Speckled Pigeon, Mourning and Namaqua Doves, African Cuckoo, lots of very pretty Abyssinian Rollers, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, three Woodchat Shrikes, Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark, Red-chested Swallow, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Yellow-billed Oxpecker (on cattle), White-billed Buffalo Weaver, Cut-throat Finch and White-rumped Seedeater. In the afternoon the grassy bush country near the large, rather birdless Tono Dam produced three female Montagu's Harriers, 50+ Senegal Thick-knees, a nice Eurasian Wryneck and a Black-faced Quailfinch on the deck.



*A posing Beadouin's Snake Eagle (Mark Van Beirs) and a party of charming Chestnut-bellied Starlings (Doug Ormston)*

The following day we left the far north and travelled south for more than 500 km to the large town of Kumasi. The journey was enlivened by lots of interesting road signs: many were religious notices, but there were also fun ones like “the world needs more laughter” or “in his own time”(on a taxi). Few birds were seen and just before dusk we arrived at the Bobiri reserve. It didn't take long before we heard the strange cries of an Akun Eagle Owl and after some patient hanging about, we obtained good looks at a perched bird high up in a forest giant. We also had good looks of this superb creature in flight. Magical moments!

The next morning we explored the rather thrashed forest of the famous Bobiri Butterfly reserve. It was overcast and rather gloomy weather, which kept the birds very, very quiet. We scanned everywhere, waited patiently about and slowly added a few birds, but it was excruciatingly painful birding. The sun didn't really appear at all till rather late in the morning so even the butterflies kept a low profile. We heard both Afep and Western Bronze-naped Pigeons and had scope views of a singing Blue-headed Wood Dove, but the morning was saved by a brilliant Black-throated Coucal walking out on the main track as it was trying to eat a small snake. A Blue-throated Roller appeared briefly, Black Dwarf and White-crested Hornbills showed well, we briefly glimpsed a Yellow-footed Honeyguide and scoped a male Johanna's Sunbird high in the canopy. After an early lunch we drove southeast to the famous Atewa range. On the drive we saw several stalls that sold bushmeat and were truly amazed by the enormous size of the Marsh Cane Rats on sale. So sad... A couple of hours in the farmbush at the base of the Atewa hills provided some more quality species as Shining-blue Kingfisher, Red-tailed Greenbul, Whistling Cisticola, Compact Weaver (in near breeding plumage), Western Bluebill and Magpie Mannikin obliged. We even scoped the ubiquitous, often heard, but rarely seen Little Greenbul.

The primary hill forest covering the slopes of the Atewa range holds an excellent selection of rarely seen specialities, so early next morning we started walking up through the farmbush. It took a bit of effort and sweat to reach the forest, but it was definitely worth it. As usual it was rather quiet at first, but gradually activity increased. Highlights included the three very handsome Blue-moustached Bee-eaters that allowed close approach, the cracking Congo Serpent Eagle that gave excellent views, the delicate Red-cheeked Wattle-eye with its electric blue eye patch and the furtive Forest Scrub Robin that, amazingly, half of the group managed to see! We flushed a Crowned Eagle off a partly consumed Tree Hyrax from the forest floor, admired a couple of Many-coloured Bushshrikes and bumped into a mixed bird party with Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Shining Drongo, Plain Greenbul and Finsch's Rufous Thrush. A couple of people were lucky enough to see a rare Lagden's Bushshrike and we tried in vain to lure out Green-tailed Bristlebill. We also added Brown-eared Woodpecker, White-throated Greenbul and Grey-throated Tit Flycatcher to the list and on the return journey stood in awe at a large colony of Straw-coloured Fruit Bats in some dead trees.



*A Straw-coloured Fruit Bat and the beautifully performing Yellow-footed Honeyguide (Mark Van Beirs)*

Another morning along the forest edge of the Atewa hills produced two rather showy White-crested Hornbills, a couple of smart West African Wattle-eyes, African Thrush, Johanna's Sunbird and a cooperative Western Bluebill, but best of all was the amazingly obliging Yellow-footed Honeyguide that we scoped for prolonged studies. Breath taking stuff! Later we drove eastwards towards the Togolese border, took the ferry across the Volta River below the enormous dam that created Lake Volta and arrived at the Kalakpa Resource Reserve in late afternoon. A short, but heavy, shower ruined our birding chances, but, luckily, our slow drive along the main track after dusk was enlivened by a splendid nightjar spectacle. Several Long-tailed Nightjars sat unperturbed in the spotlight, a couple of Black-shouldered Nightjars acted the same way and a subtly-plumaged female Standard-winged Nightjar posed at length for marvellous views. The day finished with an African Scops Owl purring in the distance.



*A marvellous Long-tailed Nightjar (Doug Ormston) and a Ú[ jáã! Pansy (Mark Van Beirs)*

The Kalakpa Resource Reserve protects an area of 330 km<sup>2</sup> and contains one of the last unspoiled examples of Guinean bush savanna. We visited the extensive gallery forest, and although we heard a great selection of goodies, only a few of us managed to see some of them. It was extremely quiet throughout the morning, but, hey, what's new, we were in a West African forest... We heard a party of noisy Capuchin Babblers, but these extremely shy birds disappeared while we were still almost 100m away. Frustration galore! A couple of White-throated Greenbuls performed rather well, but the rare and localized Baumann's Olive Greenbul remained a voice emanating from the dense thickets. A couple of Brown Illadopsises of the brown-throated *moloneyana* race gave fair looks as they moved through the mid stratum. The closely related Puvell's Illadopsis was even more furtive. A Pale Flycatcher sat in the open and we heard the characteristic song of a Thick-billed Cuckoo. In the afternoon we worked the bushy savanna dotted with stately Borassus (or Palmyra) Palms. The tall grass impeded easy viewing a bit, but three elegant Pied-winged Swallows were

a great find. Like so often, they didn't hang around and only allowed rather brief looks. A family party of Green Wood Hoopoes was inspecting a dead palm trunk and just before dusk Ahanta Francolins started calling and not much later we managed to observe one in flight. At dusk a charming Northern White-faced Owl posed at length and we again admired several species of nightjar on our return drive.

On the final day of the tour we revisited the gallery forest of the Kalakpa Resource Reserve and encountered more activity than the previous day. A Congo Serpent Eagle responded well to its voice and showed brilliantly just above our heads. A nest building pair of Red-thighed Sparrowhawks allowed unusually wonderful scope views. We saw the larger female break off a branch and take it to her eyrie, high in the canopy. The orange eye and red orbital ring stood out! Fantastic stuff. We obtained fair views of Puvell's and Brown Illadopsises and a couple of Western Forest Robin finally decided to give in after our previous regular heard only records. Most participants managed to lay eyes on this lovely undergrowth species. A Capuchin Babbler was glimpsed in the mid distance and we heard Baumann's Olive Greenbul again. A shy Mona Monkey disappeared all too quickly and an 1,5m long Forest Cobra that crossed the trail over Adri's boots caused a bit of consternation. Three European Bee-eaters were hawking insect prey over the savanna and on the drive to Accra airport we added Bronze-tailed Starling as the last new bird of the tour. After an excellent final dinner the tour participants departed to different parts of the world or stayed for an extra day of Culture.



*Grasshopper Buzzards were regularly seen at bush fires in the north (Mark Van Beirs)*



*Stunning Red-throated Bee-eaters are easy to see in Mole National Park. (Doug Ormston)*

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

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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>

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

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* Regular in the northern savannas.

**Crested Guineafowl** *Guttera pucherani* One was seen by James at Ankasa.

**Stone Partridge** ◊ *Ptilopachus petrosus* Great looks at one in the Shai Hills and regular observations in Mole NP.

**Latham's Francolin** ◊ (L's Forest F) *Peliperdix lathamii* (H) We heard the distinctive calls at Kakum and at Bobiri.

**Ahanta Francolin** ◊ *Pternistis ahantensis* Seen all too briefly at the Kalakpa Reserve. See Note.



*Double-spurred Francolins were regularly seen (Mark Van Beirs) and Yellow-billed Kites were common all over Ghana (Doug Ormston)*

**Double-spurred Francolin** *Pternistis bicalcaratus* Many excellent encounters.

**White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* Ghana's most common duck was seen near Accra and at Mole.

**Hartlaub's Duck** ◊ *Pteronetta hartlaubii* A splendid sighting of a pair near the Ankasa Reserve.

**African Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus auritus* Three showed well amongst the water lilies on a northern lake.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Two were found on a roadside pond on our way to Ankasa.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* A few observations at Mole NP.

**Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* A female (yellow eyes) showed well at Mole NP.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* Many encounters at Mole NP. A highly distinctive voice.

**White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* A single bird was seen at dusk at a pond in Mole NP.

**Striated Heron (Green-backed H)** *Butorides striata* Three observations of the race *atricapillus*.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Small numbers were seen all along our route.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Very common outside the forests.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* A handful of sightings.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* Just a few were seen in the north.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* A single bird was noted at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Two were seen at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* Two were spotted foraging next to the previous species.

**Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* Three birds were found at the same venue, but sadly in the far distance.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* A few encounters with this well-known species.

**Western Reef Heron (W R Egret) *Egretta gularis*** Four dark morph birds were feeding at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*** Small numbers were found in the north. Highly distinctive.

**Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus*** Small numbers were noted along our route.

**African Cuckoo-hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*** Great looks at a perched and flying bird in the Kakum farmbrush.

**European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*** Three observations of this northern migrant in the south.

**Black-winged Kite (B-shouldered K) *Elanus caeruleus*** A handful of sightings of this lovely bird of prey.

**Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*** This common species was noted on almost every day of the tour.

**Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*** A single bird was scoped at Kakum.

**Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (E)** A regular species all along our itinerary. See Note.

**White-backed Vulture (African W-b V) *Gyps africanus* (E)** A few birds were found at Mole NP. See Note.

**Beaudouin's Snake Eagle ◊ *Circaetus beaudouini* (V)** Scope looks at a male and a female in the north. See Note.

**Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT)** A couple of observations of this spectacular bird of prey.

**Congo Serpent Eagle ◊ *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*** Great looks, eventually, at this exquisite bird of prey.

**Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*** Seven encounters with this northern migrant.

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*** Three females showed beautifully at the Tono dam.

**African Harrier-hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus*** Many observations of this interesting species.

**Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*** Four encounters in the northern savannas.

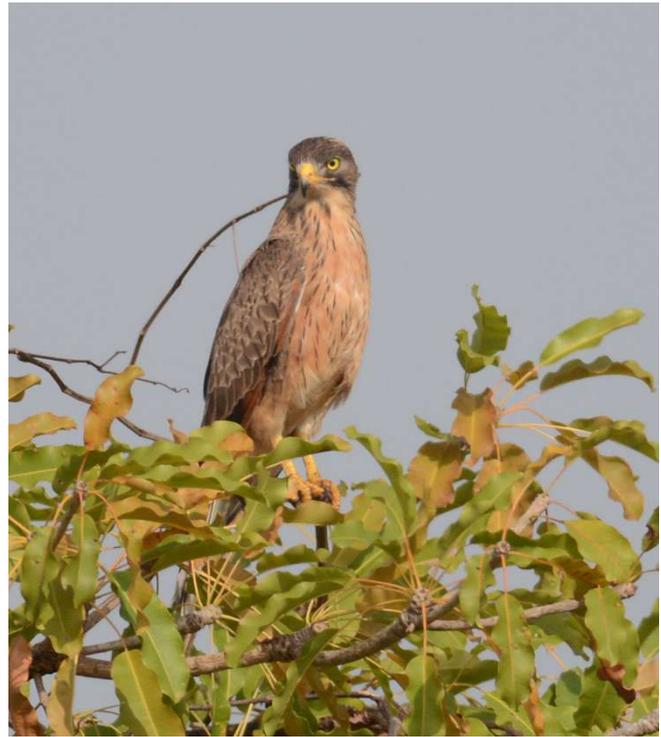
**Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*** Three sightings in the north.

**Red-chested Goshawk ◊ *Accipiter toussenelii*** A couple of nice observations in the Kakum area.

**Shikra *Accipiter badius*** A few encounters with this widespread bird of prey.

**Red-thighed Sparrowhawk ◊ *Accipiter erythropus*** A nest-building pair at Kalakpa showed particularly well.

**Long-tailed Hawk ◊ *Urotriorchis macrourus*** Perfect looks at this marvellous species at Kakum.



A cooperative Lizard Buzzard (Doug Ormston) and a smart Grasshopper Buzzard (Mark Van Beirs)

**Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*** Fairly common and often tame in the north.

**Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*** Regular at savannah fires in the north.

**Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis*** A handful of nice observations.

**Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*** One was seen at Mole NP.

**African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster*** Great looks at a pair at Mole. A young bird was seen along the White Volta.

**Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*** A single bird was identified at Mole NP. See Note.

**Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*** A single pale morph was seen in the north.

**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*** Three sightings of this dapper raptor over the southern forests.

**Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT) A big female was flushed off its Tree Hyrax prey at Atewa. Wow!

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* Eight observations of this widespread species.

**Fox Kestrel** ◊ *Falco alopex* Good perched and flight views of several in the north.

**Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiaceus* Regular encounters with this appealing bird of prey.

**African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* A single bird was seen in speedy flight over the Winneba plains.

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* No fewer than 12 observations of this powerful and swift raptor.

**White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura pulchra* Good looks for all at a male in the Kakum farmbrush.

**African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* Scope views of a male near Kakum. We saw it swim and walk on the shore.

**Nkulengu Rail** ◊ *Himantornis haematopus* (H) We heard the characteristic calls in the distance at dusk and dawn.

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostra* Just two sightings of this endearing species.

**African Swamphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* A single bird was seen at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Just a couple of encounters with this well-known bird.

**Senegal Thick-Knee** *Burhinus senegalensis* A few were seen at Mole NP and c50 were noted at the Tono dam.

**Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis* Several showed well on night drives at Mole NP.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* This elegant species was seen in small numbers on two dates.

**Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover)** *Vanellus spinosus* Several nice encounters.

**African Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus* Regular and quite handsome.

**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* Two birds in winter plumage were at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* c50 were noted at the Sakumono lagoon.



We found Forbes's Plover on recently burnt ground at Mole NP (Mark Van Beirs) and Egyptian Plovers easily won a place in our hearts (Doug Ormston)

**Forbes's Plover** ◊ *Charadrius forbesi* Perfect scope views of several on recently burned terrain at Mole. See Note.

**White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* A single bird showed well at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Egyptian Plover** ◊ *Pluvianus aegyptius* Fantastic close ups with a dozen birds on the Burkina Faso border.

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* Regular sightings.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* (NT) Six showed very well at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Whimbrel (Eurasian W)** *Numenius phaeopus* A single bird was found at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* A single bird was at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Several nice flocks were seen in the north.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* Two were found in the north.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* A few encounters.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Regular at small bodies of water.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* A single bird flew past at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* Four birds were identified at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* c80 showed nicely at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* Three birds in winter plumage showed well at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* Good looks at c30 of these elegant creatures at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis* Four birds performed well at a rocky river near Kakum NP (*liberiae*).

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* A few were flying over the ocean at Cape Coast.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* A single bird in non-breeding plumage was found at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus* Nice views of four at Mole NP.

**Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)** *Columba livia*

**Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* Regular in the far north.

**Afep Pigeon** *Columba unicincta* (H) We heard the distinctive voice at the Bobiri Reserve.

**Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* (H) Another heard only at the Bobiri Reserve.

**Mourning Collared Dove (African M D)** *Streptopelia decipiens* We only saw it close to the Burkina Faso border.

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common all along our route.

**Vinaceous Dove** *Streptopelia vinacea* Regular in open habitat.

**Laughing Dove** *Spilopelia senegalensis* Very common all over Ghana.

**Black-billed Wood Dove** *Turtur abyssinicus* Regular observations in the north.

**Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer* Small numbers were noted in farmbrush habitat.

**Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistris* Regular encounters, but more often heard than seen.

**Blue-headed Wood Dove** *Turtur brehmeri* Several excellent observations of this forest species.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Just a few were seen in the far north.

**Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* Regular observations in the northern savanna.

**African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus* Common and attractive. A peculiar voice.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* Regular at Mole NP.

**Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus* (V) Just a handful of sightings of flying birds in the south.

**Red-fronted Parrot** *Poicephalus gularis* We had to do with small numbers of flying birds.

**Senegal Parrot** *Poicephalus senegalus* Great looks of perched birds at Mole NP, next to regular parties in flight.

**Great Blue Turaco** *Corythaeola cristata* Regularly heard and a single bird seen quite well at Ankasa.

**Guinea Turaco (Green T)** *Tauraco persa* Just a few sightings of this attractive species. See Note.

**Yellow-billed Turaco** *Tauraco macrorhynchus* Several excellent observations. A real cracker.

**Violet Turaco** ♦ *Musophaga violacea* A handful of encounters. Nice scope looks at this showy species at Mole NP.

**Western Plantain-eater** *Crinifer piscator* Regular and quite tame all along our route.

**Black-throated Coucal** ♦ *Centropus leucogaster* Regularly heard. Fantastic looks at one eating a snake at Bobiri.

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis* A handful of encounters.

**Blue-headed Coucal** *Centropus monachus* Several nice observations.

**Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill)** *Ceuthmochares aereus* Regularly heard. Several very nice observations. (*flavirostris*).

**Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii* Nice views of two at Mole NP. See Note.

**Thick-billed Cuckoo** ♦ *Pachyococcyx audeberti* A fantastic encounter with a singing bird at Mole NP. Scope views!

**Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C)** *Chrysococcyx caprius* Regularly seen and heard.

**Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* A regularly heard voice. Several nice sightings.

**African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* This magnificent species showed well on several occasions.

**Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** ♦ *Cercococcyx mechowi* One was found by James in dense canopy at Ankasa.

**Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus* Regularly heard and seen on a couple of occasions.

**Black Cuckoo** *Cuculus clamosus* This noisy species showed well at Kakum (*gabonensis*). Heard elsewhere.

**Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* (H) We heard the distinctive three note song at Atewa.

**African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* Good looks at a perched bird in the far north.

**Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* One was seen on a night drive at Mole NP.

**African Scops Owl** *Otus senegalensis* (H) We heard the characteristic call at Mole NP and at the Kalakpa reserve.

**Northern White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis* Great looks at this cutie at the Kalakpa reserve.

**Greyish Eagle-Owl** *Bubo cinerascens* Excellent views, by day and by night, at Mole NP.

**Fraser's Eagle-Owl** ♦ *Bubo poensis* Great looks of one at the entrance of the Ankasa reserve.

**Akun Eagle-Owl** ♦ *Bubo leucostictus* One showed well at night at the Bobiri reserve. A great bird! See Note.

**African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* (H) We heard it at a couple of places, but were always busy with bigger fry.

**Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum* (H) We heard the mournful calls on a couple of occasions.

**Red-chested Owlet** *Glaucidium tephronotum* (H) We heard one in the Picathartes forest.

**Brown Nightjar** ♦ *Veles binotatus* Good looks at a fluttering male at Kakum. The only member of the genus *Veles*.

**Black-shouldered Nightjar** ♦ *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* Perfect views of several at the Kalakpa reserve.

**Plain Nightjar** ◊ *Caprimulgus inornatus* One showed well on a nightdrive at Mole NP.  
**Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus* Many superb sightings at Mole NP and at the Kalakpa reserve.  
**Standard-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx longipennis* Good looks at a female at the Kalakpa reserve.  
**Mottled Spinetail** *Telacanthura ussheri* Two showed well at Kakum.  
**Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini* Regular sightings of this distinctive species. See Note.  
**African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* Regular all along our itinerary.  
**Common Swift** *Apus apus* This northern migrant was fairly common.  
**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Regular.  
**White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* Good looks at several over the Nsuta forest.  
**Narina Trogon (Narina's T)** *Apaloderma narina* A couple of brief sightings only.  
**Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R)** *Coracias naevius* Regular and attractive.



*Abyssinian Rollers were fairly common in bush country and Blue-bellied Roller posed well in the Shai Hills (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus* Regular, showy and very attractive in the northern savannas.  
**Blue-bellied Roller** ◊ *Coracias cyanogaster* Great looks at this beautiful species in the southeast.  
**Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis* Glimpses only, sadly.  
**Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* Repeated excellent views of this cracker.  
**Chocolate-backed Kingfisher** *Halcyon badia* It played hard to get, but eventually we got nice scope looks.  
**Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* A single bird was seen at Mole NP.  
**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* A couple of encounters.  
**Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* Two showed quite well at Mole NP. A bit secretive.  
**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* This vociferous species was commonly encountered.  
**African Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ispidina lecontei* Perfect scope views in the Ankasa bamboo. A real jewel!  
**African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* Several splendid observations.  
**White-bellied Kingfisher** ◊ *Corythornis leucogaster* (H) We heard it a few times at Ankasa, but it wouldn't perform.  
**Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* Three encounters with this widespread beauty.  
**Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys* One showed unusually well in the Atewa farmbush.  
**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* A single bird was seen at Mole NP.  
**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Small numbers of this showy species were seen.  
**Blue-moustached Bee-eater** ◊ *Merops mentalis* (NT) Great looks at this gorgeous species at Atewa.  
**Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis* Several superb observations of this exquisite species.  
**Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus* Two showed well at Mole NP.  
**Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* Several sightings of this lovely species.  
**Red-throated Bee-eater** *Merops bulocki* A marvellous feeling being surrounded by these beauties in Mole NP.  
**White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* Common and elegant.  
**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* Three showed well during our final hour at the Kalakpa reserve.



The gorgeous Blue-moustached Bee-eater was seen well at Atewa and Woodland Kingfishers were all over (Doug Ormston)

- Rosy Bee-eater** ◇ *Merops malimbicus* Several very nice observations at Kakum. A glorious species!
- Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus* This wonderful species showed very well on the Burkina Faso border.
- Forest Wood Hoopoe** ◇ *Phoeniculus castaneiceps* An all too brief sighting at the Nsuta forest.
- Green Wood Hoopoe** *Phoeniculus purpureus* A nice showing of five playing birds at a dead palm tree at Kalakpa.
- Black Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* One showed well in the Shai Hills on our first day.
- African Pied Hornbill** *Tockus fasciatus* Common and showy.
- African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus* This savanna species was regularly observed.
- Northern Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus erythrorhynchus* Fairly common in the far north.
- Black Dwarf Hornbill** ◇ *Tockus hartlaubi* Several excellent sightings of this unobtrusive forest denizen.
- Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus* Great looks at two in the Kakum farmbrush.
- White-crested Hornbill** *Tropicranus albocristatus* Several much appreciated looks at this unusual-looking bird.
- Piping Hornbill** *Bycanistes fistulator* Regular observations.
- Brown-cheeked Hornbill** ◇ *Bycanistes cylindricus* (H) (V) We heard the distinctive calls at Atewa.
- Black-casqued Wattled Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata* Heard at Kakum and seen quite well at Ankasa.
- Abyssinian Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus abyssinicus* Two were getting ready for roost at Mole NP.
- Bristle-nosed Barbet** ◇ *Gymnobucco peli* Several showed nicely in the southern forests.
- Naked-faced Barbet** *Gymnobucco calvus* More common and often together with the previous species.
- Speckled Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* Several nice encounters.
- Red-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus atroflavus* Regularly heard. Several great looks.
- Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* A few sightings and regularly heard.
- Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* (H) We heard this widespread species at Kakum.
- Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Regular in more open habitat.
- Yellow-spotted Barbet** *Buccanodon duchaillui* A couple of nice observations in the southern forests.
- Hairy-breasted Barbet** ◇ *Tricholaema hirsuta* A single bird showed well in a fruiting Musanga at Kakum.
- Vieillot's Barbet** *Lybius vieilloti* Regular observations.
- Double-toothed Barbet** *Lybius bidentatus* Several excellent sightings of this peculiar species.
- Bearded Barbet** ◇ *Lybius dubius* A handful of pleasant sightings in the north.
- Yellow-billed Barbet** *Trachyphonus purpuratus* (H) We heard this attractive species on several occasions.
- Cassin's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus insignis* A single bird was observed at Kakum.
- Yellow-footed Honeyguide** ◇ *Melignomon eisentrauti* Eye-ball to eye-ball views of this rarity at Atewa. See Note.
- Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* Good looks at this subtly-plumaged bird at Ankasa. See Note.
- Thick-billed Honeyguide** *Indicator conirostris* Two nice observations in the southern forests.
- Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* A single bird showed well in the Shai Hills.
- Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* Two observations of this special species at Mole NP.
- Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* A single bird was found in the far north. Always a joy to observe.

**African Piculet** ◊ *Sasia africana* (H) We heard the high pitched calls at the Nsuta forest.  
**Fine-spotted Woodpecker** ◊ *Campethera punctuligera* Great looks at a pair at Mole NP.  
**Little Green Woodpecker** ◊ *Campethera maculosa* Pleasing looks at several in the southern forests.  
**Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosa* Several fine observations in the southern forests.  
**Brown-eared Woodpecker** *Campethera caroli* A single bird was seen at Atewa.  
**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* Four observations of this widespread species.  
**Melancholy Woodpecker** ◊ *Dendropicos lugubris* A pair gave quite a performance at Kakum.  
**Fire-bellied Woodpecker** ◊ *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster* Attractive and showy at Kakum and at Atewa.  
**African Grey Woodpecker (G W)** *Dendropicos goertae* A few were seen in the northern woodlands.



*Brown-backed Woodpecker and White-crested Helmetshrike were seen at Mole (Doug Ormston)*

**Brown-backed Woodpecker** *Dendropicos obsoletus* Fantastic looks at one in Mole NP.  
**Rufous-sided Broadbill** *Smithornis rufolateralis* Fabulous display was witnessed at Ankasa.  
**Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher (Vanga F, B-a-W F)** *Bias musicus* Superb looks at males.  
**Senegal Batis** ◊ *Batis senegalensis* Several nice encounters with this cutie.  
**West African Wattle-eye** ◊ *Platysteira hormophora* Several observations in the southern forests.  
**Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W-e)** *Platysteira cyanea* A few encounters in more open woodland.  
**Red-cheeked Wattle-eye** ◊ *Platysteira blissetti* Great views, eventually, of this ace skulker. A gorgeous species!  
**White-crested Helmetshrike (W H-s)** *Prionops plumatus* A splendidly performing party was encountered in Mole.  
**Red-billed Helmetshrike** ◊ (Chestnut-bellied H-s) *Prionops caniceps* This lovely species showed well at Ankasa.  
**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* Good looks at one eating a caterpillar in Mole NP.  
**Lagden's Bushshrike** ◊ *Malaconotus lagdeni* One was seen by some in the Atewa forest. A true rarity! See Note.  
**Many-coloured Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus multicolor* A pair showed quite well in the forest at Atewa. Striking!  
**Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B-s)** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* A few encounters with this beauty.  
**Marsh Tchagra** *Bocagia minuta* Marvellous looks at two well performing birds in bushy savanna.  
**Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra australis* A single bird showed well in a patch of farmbush near Kakum.  
**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* Regular excellent encounters and often not very shy.  
**Sabine's Puffback (Large-billed P)** *Dryoscopus sabini* It showed particularly well at Kakum NP.  
**Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis* Regular observations of this widespread species.  
**Lowland Sooty Boubou** ◊ *Laniarius leucorhynchus* (H) We heard the distinctive vocalizations at Kakum, but no joy.  
**Yellow-crowned Gonolek** ◊ *Laniarius barbarus* Several excellent sightings of this strikingly-patterned species.  
**Brubru** *Nilaus afer* A few observations in the Mole NP. More often heard.  
**White-breasted Cuckooshrike** *Coracina pectoralis* A single bird showed well in open woodland at Mole NP.

**Blue Cuckooshrike** *Coracina azurea* Great looks from the canopy walkway at Kakum NP. Good-looking in good light!  
**Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga phoenicea* A few observations in the Mole NP bush.  
**Purple-throated Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga quiscalina* Great looks at a female in the Atewa forest.



A party of cute Yellow-billed-Shrikes (Mark Van Beirs) and THE boy ( Doug Ormston)

**Yellow-billed Shrike** *Corvinella corvina* Several encounters with busy parties in the northern savannas.  
**Northern Fiscal** *Lanius humeralis* Regular and obvious.  
**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Three of these migrants showed well in the extreme north (nominate).  
**African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus* Three encounters with fetching males in the Mole NP.  
**Western Oriole (W Black-headed O)** *Oriolus brachyrynchus* Regular observations.  
**Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis* A few sightings, sometimes together with the previous species.  
**Square-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus ludwigii* A single bird showed well in a stretch of gallery forest in Mole NP.  
**Shining Drongo** *Dicrurus atripennis* Heard at Ankasa and finally seen very well in the Atewa forest.  
**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* Regular in more open habitat.  
**Velvet-mantled Drongo** *Dicrurus [modestus] coracinus* The common drongo of the southern forests.  
**Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher** *Trochocercus nitens* (H) Regularly heard in thickets and dense patches of forest.  
**Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher (Black-headed P F)** *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Several lovely observations.  
**African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* Regular in open woodland in the north.  
**Piapiac** *Ptilostomus afer* A few encounters in the far north. A strange corvid!  
**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* Ubiquitous.  
**White-necked Rockfowl** ♦ (Yellow-headed Picathartes) *Picathartes gymnocephalus* (V) The bird of the tour.  
**African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda* A single sighting in Mole NP.  
**White-shouldered Black Tit** *Parus guineensis* Seen in the Shai Hills and in Mole NP.  
**Forest Penduline Tit** ♦ *Anthoscopus flavifrons* This canopy denizen performed quite well in the Kakum farmbush.  
**Western Nicator (Yellow-spotted N)** *Nicator chloris* Good looks at Ankasa. An often heard voice in the forests.  
**Sun Lark** ♦ *Galerida modesta* Good looks at several in the north. Unobtrusive.  
**Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark** *Eremopterix leucotis* Several were seen in the extreme north.  
**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* This very vocal species was everywhere.  
**Slender-billed Greenbul** *Stelgidillas gracilirostris* Regular observations of this often showy species.  
**Little Greenbul** *Eurillas virens* This inveterate skulker was often heard, and showed well on a few occasions.  
**Little Grey Greenbul** *Eurillas gracilis* A few encounters. An unassuming species.  
**Ansorge's Greenbul** *Eurillas ansorgei* Several nice sightings of this canopy species. Remember the ginger flanks!  
**Plain Greenbul (Cameroon Sombre G)** *Eurillas curvirostris* A few encounters with this inconspicuous species.  
**Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *Eurillas latirostris* Often heard and eventually seen well in the southern forests.  
**Golden Greenbul** *Calyptocichla serinus* A couple of nice sightings of this striking species.  
**Honeyguide Greenbul** *Baeopogon indicator* Regularly heard and a few seen. An eye-catching greenbul.  
**Spotted Greenbul** *Ixonotus guttatus* Several showed all too briefly at Ankasa.

**Simple Greenbul (S Leaflove) *Chlorocichla simplex*** Regular excellent sightings.

**Yellow-throated Leaflove *Atimastillas flavicollis* (H)** We heard the loud, arresting vocalizations in the Mole NP.

**Swamp Palm Bulbul *Thescelocichla leucopleura*** Several great encounters with this neatly patterned species.

**Baumann's Olive Greenbul ◊ (B's G) *Phyllastrephus baumanni* (H)** We heard the calls at Kalakpa. See Note.

**Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*** Several sightings of this distinctive species in the southern forests.

**White-throated Greenbul ◊ *Phyllastrephus albigularis*** Good looks, eventually, in the Kalakpa gallery forest.

**Red-tailed Bristlebill (Common B) *Bleda syndactylus*** We only saw this well-marked bird in the Kakum NP.

**Green-tailed Bristlebill ◊ *Bleda eximius* (NT)** This mega-skulker was seen by some in the Kakum NP.

**Grey-headed Bristlebill ◊ *Bleda canicapillus*** Nice looks for all at this beautifully-patterned forest denizen.

**Western Bearded Greenbul ◊ *Criniger barbatus*** Just a few observations in the southern forests.

**Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus*** Regular and very vocal.

**Yellow-bearded Greenbul ◊ (Y-throated Olive G) *Criniger olivaceus* (V)** Good looks at two in the Ankasa reserve.

**Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens*** Nice looks at perched and flying birds in the south.

**Fanti Saw-wing ◊ *Psalidoprocne obscura*** Adults and young birds showed well in the south. See Note.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*** A very common northern migrant.

**Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida*** Good looks at perched birds in the extreme north.

**Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*** Several showed well over the Kakum farmbrush.

**Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*** Regular at northern ponds.

**White-bibbed Swallow (W-throated Blue S) *Hirundo nigrita*** Scope views of this gorgeous species at the Pra River.

**Pied-winged Swallow ◊ *Hirundo leucosoma*** This fine species showed briefly, but nicely, over the Kalakpa savanna.

**Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*** A few were patrolling cliff faces in the Shai Hills.

**Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*** Several flocks were noted in the Mole NP.

**Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*** Regular encounters with this charming species.

**Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested S) *Cecropis semirufa*** A single bird was seen near Kakum NP.

**Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis*** A handful of sightings of this appealing species.

**West African Swallow ◊ *Cecropis domicella*** Several showed in the north. A recent split from Red-rumped Swallow.



*Preuss's Cliff swallows at the colony (Doug Ormston) and a singing Red-winged Warbler (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Preuss's Cliff Swallow ◊ *Petrochelidon preussi*** Great looks at 150+ birds at a very active colony. See Note.

**Moustached Grass Warbler (African M W) *Melocichla mentalis*** Scope studies of a singing bird in Mole NP.

**Kemp's Longbill ◊ *Macrosphenus kempii*** One was seen from the canopy walkway at Kakum.

**Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*** A few nice sightings of this skulking species in dense tangles.

**Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura*** Several encounters in open woodland.

**Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens*** A few observations at forest edges. More often heard.

**Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*** Great looks at this diminutive species from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccallii*** A couple of satisfactory observations at Kakum and Atewa.

**Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*** One of the most distinctive forest voices. Several point-blank sightings.

**Tit Hylia *Pholidornis rufiae*** Excellent scope views of Africa's smallest bird at Kakum.

**Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*** This northern migrant was regularly seen at Mole NP.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Several observations of this striking species at Kakum.

**Western Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna opaca* Seen and heard in the north.

**Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* Good looks at two in the Mole NP bush.

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrops* Regular encounters in lush farmbush.

**Singing Cisticola** *Cisticola cantans* A few encounters with this widespread species.

**Whistling Cisticola** *Cisticola lateralis* Nice views in the Atewa farmbush.

**Rock-loving Cisticola** *Cisticola emini* Several showed very well amongst the boulders of the Tongo hills.

**Winding Cisticola** *Cisticola marginatus* A few were noted in marshy habitat in the north.

**Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis* Several showed well in the Shai Hills bush.

**Short-winged Cisticola (Siffling C)** *Cisticola brachypterus* Several were seen together with the previous species.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* (H) We heard the characteristic song at the Sakumono lagoon.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* A regularly recorded, well-known and widespread bird.

**Red-winged Warbler** *Helioleis erythropterus* A great showing of several in the Mole NP bush. Scope views!

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* We only saw this cutie in the Mole NP.

**Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps* Several encounters in the southern forests. A beauty.

**Sharpe's Apalis** ◊ *Apalis sharpii* One showed well at the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Oriole Warbler (Moho)** *Hypergerus atriceps* This striking bird was seen quite well in the Mole NP.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata* A commonly recorded species.

**Yellow-browed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera supercilialis* Scope views of this attractive bird in the Kakum farmbush.

**Olive-green Camaroptera** *Camaroptera chloronota* Scope views of a preening bird in the Ankasa farmbush.

**Senegal Eremomela** *Eremomela pusilla* Regular and attractive in open woodland.

**Rufous-crowned Eremomela** *Eremomela badiceps* Scope views of several from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Blackcap Illadopsis** *Illadopsis cleaveri* (H) We heard it at Ankasa.

**Puvel's Illadopsis** ◊ *Illadopsis puveli* This skulker was ventually seen quite well at the Kalakpa reserve. See Note.

**Pale-breasted Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufipennis* Several showed well in the Ankasa forest undergrowth.

**Brown Illadopsis** *Illadopsis fulvescens* Good looks at the *moloneyana* race at Kalakpa reserve.

**Capuchin Babbler** ◊ *Phyllanthus atripennis* This mega secretive species performed for some of us at Kalakpa.

**Blackcap Babbler** *Turdoides reinwardtii* Nice looks at three in the Shai Hills.

**Brown Babbler** *Turdoides plebejus* A noisy party was observed in the Mole NP.

**African Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis* A handful of sightings.

**Violet-backed Hylia** ◊ *Hylia violacea* A pair allowed scope views from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Copper-tailed Starling** ◊ (C-t Glossy S) *Hylopsar cupreocauda* (NT) A few observations in the southern forests.

**Lesser Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chloropterus* Two could be studied at Mole NP.

**Bronze-tailed Starling** (B-t Glossy S) *Lamprotornis chalcurus* A few were noted in the Accra area.



*A Splendid Glossy Starling at its nesthole and a colourful male Scarlet-chested Sunbird (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Splendid Starling (S Glossy S) *Lamprotornis splendidus*** Common and nice-looking.

**Purple Starling (P Glossy S) *Lamprotornis purpureus*** Regular and beautiful in the northern savannas.

**Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus*** Several observations in the north.

**Chestnut-bellied Starling ◊ *Lamprotornis pulcher*** c15 showed well in the extreme north. An eye-catching species.

**Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*** Regular observations of small groups in the south.

**Forest Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus [fulgidus] hartlaubi*** Two encounters in the southern forests.

**Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeoptera lugubris*** Good looks at four from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*** Several were found on cattle near the Burkina Faso border.

**White-tailed Rufous Thrush (W-t Ant T) *Neocossyphus poensis* (H)** We heard one at Kakum.

**Finsch's Rufous Thrush ◊ (F's Flycatcher T) *Stizorhina finschi*** One was in a bird wave at Atewa. See Note.

**African Thrush *Turdus pelios*** It took until the last days before we saw this widespread species.

**White-tailed Alethe ◊ *Alethe diademata*** Recorded at several forest venues. Good looks for most.

**Western Forest Robin ◊ *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] erythrothorax*** Excellent looks, eventually, for most at Kalakpa.

**Snowy-crowned Robin-chat *Cossypha niveicapilla*** Nicely seen in the Shai Hills.

**White-crowned Robin-chat ◊ *Cossypha albicapillus*** An excellent showing in the Mole gallery forest.

**Forest Scrub Robin ◊ *Erythropygia leucosticta*** This extreme skulker performed unusually well to some at Atewa.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*** A handful of observations.

**Familiar Chat *Oenanthe familiaris*** A single bird paraded for us in the Mole lodge grounds.

**White-crowned Cliff Chat ◊ *Thamnoleae coronata*** Briefly seen amongst the Shai Hills boulders.

**Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*** Regular observations at Kakum.

**Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides*** Fairly common and conspicuous in open woodland.

**Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*** A single bird was found in the Kalakpa savanna.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*** A few of these northern migrants were seen in bushy savanna.

**Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caeruleascens*** One showed quite well at Kakum.

**Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica*** Several of this endearing critters lived at the Mole NP ponds.

**Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*** A single bird was located along the river at Ankasa. See Note.

**Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa comitata*** Regular encounters in farmbrush.

**Ussher's Flycatcher ◊ *Muscicapa ussheri*** Three sightings in the southern forests. Remember the swallow-like flight.

**Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher (G-t F) *Myioparus griseigularis*** Nice looks at one at Atewa. Inconspicuous.

**Grey Tit-flycatcher (Lead-colored F) *Myioparus plumbeus*** A single bird showed at Kakum.

**European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*** A few encounters in open woodland.

**Fraser's Sunbird (Scarlet-tufted S) *Deleornis fraseri*** Several were seen high in the canopy at Ankasa and at Atewa.

**Mangrove Sunbird ◊ (Brown S) *Anthreptes gabonicus*** Three were active near a nest along a river in the southwest.

**Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*** A pair performed nicely in the Mole NP.

**Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*** A few were seen in the Kakum NP.

**Grey-chinned Sunbird (Green S) *Anthreptes rectirostris*** A handful of sightings in the southern forests.

**Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*** Regular in farmbrush.

**Pygmy Sunbird ◊ *Hedydipna platura*** Quite common in the northern bush. Several cracking males could be admired.

**Reichenbach's Sunbird ◊ *Anabathmis reichenbachii*** A couple were visiting flowering coco palms in the southwest.

**Green-headed Sunbird (Olive-backed S) *Cyanomitra verticalis*** A few encounters in bush country.

**Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanolaema*** Several excellent sightings of this subtly-coloured species.

**Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea*** Common and quite noisy in the southern forests.

**Buff-throated Sunbird ◊ *Chalcomitra adelberti*** This very attractive species was seen very well at several venues.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis*** Common and so beautiful in the northern bush.

**Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius*** Fairly common in farmbrush habitat.

**Tiny Sunbird *Cinnyris minullus*** Very nice looks at several from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus*** Regular and beautiful in the Mole NP.

**Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigastrus*** Fairly common and so attractive in open woodland and farmbrush.

**Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae*** This canopy inhabitant showed well at Bobiri and at Atewa.

**Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus*** Ghana's largest sunbird showed very well in the Kakum area. A glorious species.

**Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus*** Regular encounters. The male is really splendid when seen in good light.

**Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus*** Good looks at six in the Mole lodge grounds.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*** This 'write-in' was seen in a village in the southwest. A recent arrival.

**Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*** Common near human habitation.



A posing Chestnut-crowned Sparrow -weaver and a brilliant Dark Blue Pansy (Doug Ormston)

- Bush Petronia** *Gymnoris dentata* Quite common in the northern bush.
- White-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis albirostris* We only saw them near the Burkina Faso border.
- Little Weaver** *Ploceus luteolus* A few were noted at Mole NP.
- Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis* Regularly recorded in farmbush.
- Orange Weaver** ◊ *Ploceus aurantius* A small, active colony was found at a pond in the southwest.
- Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* Small numbers were noted all along our route.
- Vieillot's Black Weaver** *Ploceus nigerrimus* Common in farmbush. Here the distinctive race *castaneofuscus*.
- Black-headed Weaver (Yellow-backed W)** *Ploceus melanocephalus* We only saw it at a marsh in the far north.
- Yellow-mantled Weaver** *Ploceus tricolor* Regular in the southern forests.
- Maxwell's Black Weaver** ◊ *Ploceus albinucha* A few were seen well from the Kakum canopy walkway.
- Compact Weaver** *Ploceus superciliosus* Several were noted in near-breeding plumage in the Atewa farmbush.
- Preuss's Weaver (P's Golden-backed W)** *Ploceus preussi* Great looks at several from the Kakum canopy walkway.
- Red-vented Malimbe** ◊ *Malimbus scutatus* Regular excellent sightings of this smart species along forest edges.
- Blue-billed Malimbe (Gray's M)** *Malimbus nitens* Cracking looks at nesting birds in the southern forests.
- Red-headed Malimbe** *Malimbus rubricollis* A few were seen behaving like a nuthatch in the southern forests.
- Crested Malimbe** *Malimbus malimbicus* Regular sightings of this smart species in the southern forests.
- Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* A female showed well at Mole NP.
- Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* Small numbers were noted in the north.
- Black-winged Red Bishop (B-w B)** *Euplectes hordeaceus* Regular encounters with males in breeding plumage.
- Yellow-mantled Widowbird** *Euplectes macroura* A few sightings of non-breeding plumaged birds.
- Red-fronted Antpecker** ◊ *Parmoptila rubrifrons* (NT) A pair played hide and seek in the Kakum forest undergrowth.
- White-breasted Nigrita (W-b Negrofinch)** *Nigrita fusconotus* Just two sightings of this species at Kakum.
- Chestnut-breasted Nigrita (C-b Negrofinch)** *Nigrita bicolor* A few encounters in the south.
- Grey-headed Nigrita (G-crowned Negrofinch)** *Nigrita canicapillus* Common in the southern forests and farmbush.
- Cut-throat Finch** *Amadina fasciata* A lovely male was found in the extreme north.
- Black-bellied Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes ostrinus* Amazing looks at males and females in the Kakum farmbush. Wow!
- Western Bluebill** *Spermophaga haematina* Great looks at this sneaky species in the Atewa farmbush.
- Bar-breasted Firefinch** *Lagonosticta rufopicta* Fairly common along our route.
- Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* Regularly seen at Mole NP.
- African Firefinch (Blue-billed F)** *Lagonosticta rubricata* Several sightings in the southern farmbush.
- Black-faced Firefinch** ◊ *Lagonosticta larvata* A cracking male showed all too briefly in the Tongo hills.
- Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus bengalus* This beauty was common in the northern bush.
- Lavender Waxbill** *Estrilda caerulescens* A preening pair was scoped at Mole NP.
- Orange-cheeked Waxbill** *Estrilda melpoda* Regular in the southern farmbush.
- Black-faced Quailfinch (African Q)** *Ortygospiza atricollis* A male was seen on the deck in the far north.
- African Silverbill** *Euodice cantans* Several showed well at the Egyptian Plover site.
- Bronze Mannikin** *Lonchura cucullata* Common along our route.
- Black-and-white Mannikin** *Lonchura bicolor* Just a few in the Kakum farmbush.

**Magpie Mannikin** ◇ *Lonchura fringilloides* Scope studies of this cutie in the Atewa farmbush.  
**Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* Males in breeding plumage showed well in the north.  
**Wilson's Indigobird** ◇ *Vidua wilsoni* Several males in distinctive breeding attire performed beautifully at Mole NP.  
**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* Common all over Ghana. Just a few males in breeding plumage were noted.  
**Blue-headed Wagtail (Western Yellow W)** *Motacilla [flava] flava* A handful of observations.  
**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* Small numbers of this elegant species were noted all along our route.  
**Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* Great looks at several on a football pitch at Kakum.  
**White-rumped Seedeater** *Crithagra leucopygia* Two were seen in the far north.  
**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Crithagra mozambica* Regular in the Mole NP area.  
**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* Very common and obvious in the Tongo Hills.



*We found this well-behaved Spotted Thick-knee on a nightdrive at Mole (Doug Ormston)*

## MAMMALS

**Geoffroy's Pied Colobus** *Colobus vellerosus* Two were scoped in the distance from the Kakum canopy walkway.

**Olive Baboon** *Papio anubis* Common in Mole NP and in the Shai Hills.

**Patas Monkey** *Cercopithecus patas* Lovely encounters in Mole NP.



A male Olive Baboon in the Shai Hills and a Callithrix Monkey at Mole (Mark Van Beirs)

**Callithrix Monkey** *Cercopithecus sabaesus* A handful were seen in Mole NP.

**Lowe's Monkey** *Cercopithecus lowei* (H) We heard the characteristic vocalizations in the Ankasa reserve.

**Mona Monkey** *Cercopithecus mona* One showed well, but all too briefly in the Kalakpa gallery forest.

**Demidoff's Galago** *Galagoides demidoff* Their chirps were regularly heard. One was seen at Bonkro.

**Straw-coloured Fruit Bat** *Eidolon helvum* The large colony near Atewa was much admired.

**Hammer Bat** *Hypsignathus monstrosus* This amazing bat was seen by some at Ankasa.

**Gambian Fruit Bat** *Epomophorus gambianus* Great looks at roosting animals during a lunch stop in the north.

**Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatilis* A single animal was noted during a Mole NP night drive.

**Striped Ground Squirrel** *Euxerus erythropus* Regular encounters.

**Fire-footed Rope Squirrel** *Funisciurus pyrropus* Two showed briefly at Atewa.

**Kintampo Rope Squirrel** *Funisciurus substriatus* Several were seen in the Mole NP.

**Gambian Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus gambianus* A couple of encounters with this widespread species.

**Beecroft's Anomalure (B Scaly-tailed Squirrel)** *Anomalurus beecrofti* Two were seen in broad daylight at Ankasa.

**Lord Derby's Anomalure (L D Scaly-tailed Squirrel)** *Anomalurus derbianus* Splendid views of one at Ankasa.

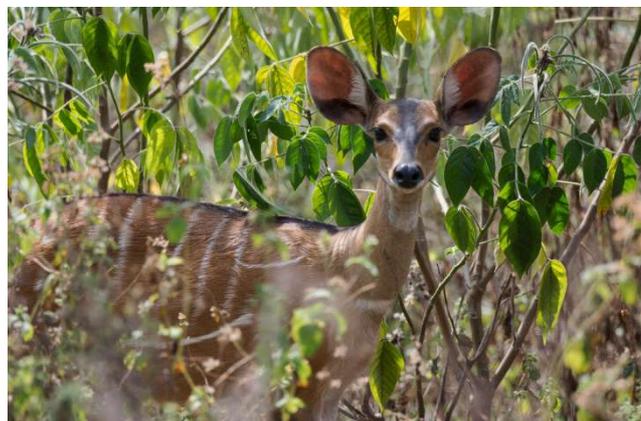
**Pel's Anomalure (P Scaly-tailed Squirrel)** *Anomalurus peli* Fantastic looks at this beauty at Kakum. See Note.

**Slender Mongoose** *Herpestes sanguinea* Three sightings of this widespread species.

**Common Cusimanse** *Crossarchus obscurus* This shaggy animal crossed a track at Ankasa.

**Western Tree Hyrax** *Dendrohyrax dorsalis* (H) We heard their strange calls at night in the southern forests.

**African Savanna Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* A single animal showed well at the Mole waterhole.



Common Warthogs (Mark Van Beirs) and Central Bushbucks were very approachable at Mole (Doug Orstrom)

**Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* Common and often very tame at Mole NP.  
**Central Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus phaleratus* Fairly common and charming at Mole NP.  
**Defassa Waterbuck** *Kobus defassa* A single male visited the Mole waterhole.  
**Buffon's Kob** *Kobus kob* The common antelope at Mole NP.

## REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

**Nile Crocodile** *Crocodylus niloticus* A handful of sightings. Great action at the Mole waterhole!  
**African Dwarf Crocodile** *Osteolaemus tetraspis* We found a small individual in the Ankasa forest. Smashing!  
**Nile Monitor** *Varanus niloticus* Several observations.  
**Puff Adder** *Bitis arietans* This impressive creature was seen very well during a Mole NP night drive.  
**Forest Cobra (Black C)** *Naja melanoleuca* This amazing snake slid over Adri's boots at Kalakpa.  
**Rukwa Sand Racer** *Psammophis rukwae* One was seen in the Shai Hills.  
**Togo Toad** *Bufo togoensis* One was found in the Atewa forest.  
**Boutry River Frog** *Phrynobatrachus calcaratus* This cutie was seen in the Atewa forest.  
**Ahl's (Accra) River Frog** *Phrynobatrachus latifrons* One was found at Ankasa.



A roosting Gambian Fruit Bat and a boy from the Kakum area (Mark Van Beirs)

## NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

### **Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis***

The Ahanta land has been historically known as one of the richest areas on the coast of what is now Ghana.

### **Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* and White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus***

In a very worrying development these species have been up-graded to 'Endangered' by BirdLife International. These species have experienced a very rapid decline due to hunting, persecution and indiscriminate poisoning a.o. by the infamous Diclofenac drug.

### **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini***

M. Beaudouin collected in Portuguese Guinea for the Verreaux brothers.

### **Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi***

Johan August Wahlberg (1810-1856) was a Swedish naturalist and collector in South Africa. He financed his expeditions by hunting elephants and selling the ivory. A wounded elephant killed him in the Okavango. Five new birds have been described by him and he has two birds, a mammal and a frog named after him.

### **Forbes's Plover *Charadrius forbesi***

William Alexander Forbes (1855-1883) was a British zoologist and collector in tropical Africa and Brazil.

### **Guinea Turaco (Green T) *Tauraco persa***

The 23 species of turacos, go-away birds and plantain-eaters form a truly remarkable family, restricted to sub-Saharan Africa. A unique feature of the family is the presence of two copper pigments, red turacin and green turacoverdin, which are unknown in any other birds, or indeed anywhere else in the Animal Kingdom. Bright colours in birds are usually produced by melanins and lipochromes, or by diffraction of light from the feather surface, but not so with turacos. The long-perpetuated fallacy that turacin is washed out of the birds' plumage during rainstorms is of course totally wrong: The pigment is soluble only in alkali and in no other solution.



Waiting for action at the disused Mole airstrip (Patty Scott)

**Levaillant's Cuckoo (African Striped C) *Clamator levaillantii***

François Levaillant (1753-1824) was a famous French taxidermist, collector and ornithologist who had a specialist interest in the birds of southern Africa. Levaillant was among the first to consider the use of coloured plates of birds in his descriptions. Levaillant's reputation is somewhat marred as he was proved to be something of a 'stringer' inventing not only new species but even the journeys on which he claimed to have found them! An analysis of Levaillant's collections made by Carl Sundevall in 1857 identified ten birds that could not be assigned definitely to any species, ten that were fabricated from multiple species and fifty species that could not have come from the Cape region as claimed...

**Fraser's Eagle-Owl *Bubo poensis***

Louis Fraser (1819-1883) was a British museum man, natural history dealer, naturalist, explorer, author and member of the infamous ill-fated Niger River Expedition of 1841-42. He also collected specimens from Fernando Po (Bioko). The scientific epithet refers to this island.

**Akun Eagle-Owl *Bubo leucostictus***

Originally spelt 'Akung', this is a word for the bird in the Cameroonian Bulu language.

**Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini***

Edward Sabine (1788-1883) was an English astronomer, physicist, Arctic explorer and officer. He collected the spinetail and the puffback; both named after him, in Sierra Leone and donated them to the British Museum where J. E. Gray officially described the specimens. Sabine's Gull is also named after him.

**Yellow-footed Honeyguide *Melignomon eisentrauti***

Professor Doctor Martin Eisentraut (1902-1994) was a German zoologist and collector in West Africa. The species was described as recently as 1981.



*A view over the Kakum forest (Mark Van Beirs)*

**Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksii***

General Sir James Willcocks (1847-1926) was a successful British officer in India and Africa. He commanded the expedition to suppress the Ashanti rebellion of 1900.

**Lagden's Bushshrike *Malaconotus lagdeni***

Sir Godfrey Yeatman Lagden (1851-1934) was an English diplomat on the Gold Coast (=Ghana).

**Baumann's Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni***

Eugen Baumann (1865-1895) was a German botanist and collector in Togo.

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

The Fanti are an ethnical group living in southern Ghana.

**Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon preussi***

Paul Preuss (1861-1926) was a Polish-born German naturalist who collected in West Africa between 1886-98. He was responsible for constructing the botanical gardens at Limbe (Cameroon) in 1901.

**Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli***

Pierre Puvel was Swiss and lived in Guinea-Bissau but little else is known about him.

**Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschi***

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

**Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini***

John Cassin (1813-1869) was an US ornithologist, who has several birds on different continents named after him.

**Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae***

Johanna Verreaux was the wife of famous collector Jules P. Verreaux.

**Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha***

Sir Hubert Eustace Maxwell (1845-1937) was a Scot, important statesman. It was Boyd Alexander who named the species after him.

**Pel's Anomalure (P Scaly-tailed Squirrel) *Anomalurus peli***

The Anomaluridae or Scaly-tailed Squirrels are an African family of rodents, comprising seven species. Most of them are able to glide thanks to a special membrane between the legs and the tail (patagium). They are known to prune trees to allow free gliding space and are mainly bark eaters. We were very fortunate to see three species on this tour!

TOP 5 BIRDS of the TRIP

1 <sup>st</sup> White-necked Rockfowl	35 points
2 <sup>nd</sup> Egyptian Plover	16 points
3 <sup>rd</sup> Long-tailed Hawk	11 points
4 <sup>th</sup> Beaudouin's Snake Eagle	8 points
5 <sup>th</sup> Forbes's Plover	6 points