



Abyssinian Catbird is just one of the very special Ethiopian endemics that we succeeded in seeing during this action-packed tour! (Nik Borrow)

ULTIMATE ETHIOPIA

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Ethiopia is a classic sub-Saharan destination with a wide range of habitats and an impressive list of species, including more endemics than almost any other comparable region of Africa. For many years in BirdQuest's history, the challenge of finding all the endemic Ethiopian birds on a 'regular' basis has been one of our main aims. One of the problems is that the taxonomy continuously evolves and more endemics and near-endemics are found to confound the challenge! The exact number of actual endemics varies with the vagaries of modern taxonomy. *Birds of the Horn of Africa* by Nigel Redman *et al.* recognises 15 and lists Blue-winged Goose, Harwood's Francolin, Spot-breasted Lapwing, Yellow-fronted Parrot, Ruspoli's Turaco, Archer's (Sidamo) Lark, Erlanger's Lark, White-tailed Swallow, Abyssinian Longclaw, Abyssinian Catbird, Stresemann's Bushcrow, Yellow-throated Seedeater, Salvadori's Seedeater, Ethiopian Siskin, and Ankober

Serin and of these we encountered them all. In addition to these there is also the virtually mythical Nechisar Nightjar (described from the remains of a single decomposing wing in 1990) that still awaits living confirmation and may or may not be an endemic species. This tour added the chance to see another virtual endemic (there is a record from the Kenyan side of the border) to the list in the form of the recently split (from Chestnut-naped) Black-fronted Francolin and our success was total with great views enjoyed. We repeated our visit to the Sarite Plains to see a recently discovered population of Masked Lark and another new addition to our previous itineraries included a trip down towards the Kenyan border where we found Pink-breasted Lark and Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver. The weather generally treated us well and it was generally hot, dry and sunny with bright blue skies that supported the countries claim to thirteen months of sunshine but we suffered in Negele and the Yabello area where rain (sometimes torrential) cost us a few species.

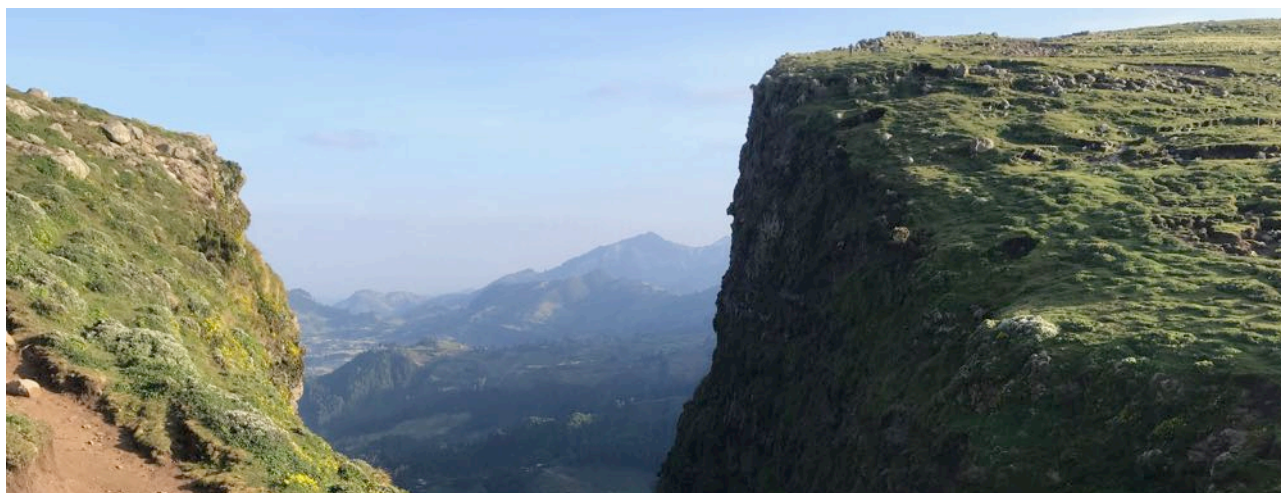


Ethiopia is a country of contrasts and dramatic scenery. The view out over the Jemma Valley is jaw-dropping! (Nik Borrow)

Our journey started with a bang as we journeyed to Debre Birhan and found our first endemics such as White-winged Cliff Chat by the roadside. On the Ankober escarpment where clear skies meant that the sun shone brightly over the rugged cliffs and sheer escarpments, we managed excellent views of endemic Ankober Serins and Gelada Baboons on the impressive heights. In the deep and wide Jemma Valley, which is part of the Blue Nile drainage system of jaw-dropping valleys and gorges we found the endemic Harwood's Francolin as well as Rüppell's Black Chat, Abyssinian Wheatear and the somewhat dowdy Yellow-rumped (or White-throated) Seedeater. Descending from the heights of Ankober we took in Yellow-throated Seedeaters and Yellow-breasted Barbets on our journey as we dropped down into the lands of the Afar, Issa and Kereyou tribesmen that surround Awash National Park. In these desiccated lands we hunted out Arabian Bustard, Somali Bulbul, Gillett's Lark, and Nile Valley and Shining Sunbirds. At night we discovered the little-known Star-spotted Nightjar and for mammal enthusiasts we saw Salt's Dik-dik, Beisa Oryx and Soemmerring's Gazelle. We visited the lava flows at the base of the still active Fantalle volcano which are home to Sombre Rock Chat, Blackstart and Striolated Bunting before descending further into the Rift Valley for a stay at a comfortable lodge on the shores of Lake Langano. Here there were good numbers of Yellow-fronted Parrots coming to gorge themselves in the numerous fig trees in the area where Banded Barbets were also present along with Black-winged Lovebird, White-cheeked Turaco and a pair of gorgeous Three-banded Coursers. Climbing up into the cooler air of the South Ethiopian highlands we stopped at the Bale Mountains Park HQ where approachable Mountain Nyala found sanctuary under the enormous juniper and Hagenia trees that also sheltered Abyssinian Woodpecker, White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Catbird. In the same area Blue-winged Goose, Wattled Ibis and Abyssinian Longclaw showed well and both Abyssinian Owl and Cape Eagle Owl were found during the day at known roosts. Our day on the Sanetti Plateau was a memorable one as we were aware that an outbreak of distemper had hit the endangered Ethiopian Wolf this year making this beautiful animal more difficult to see but fortunately we came across a single individual that trotted right up to us and we were even lucky enough to watch it hunting. We also managed to see its favoured prey, the bizarre Giant Mole Rat! In the crystal-clear mountain air, we enjoyed close views of the elegant Spot-breasted Lapwing around the small pools. Three stately Wattled Cranes were scoped and comical Rouget's Rails ran around amongst the grey cushion plants where Chestnut-naped and Moorland Francolins were also found. A long drive took us across the plateau and downwards

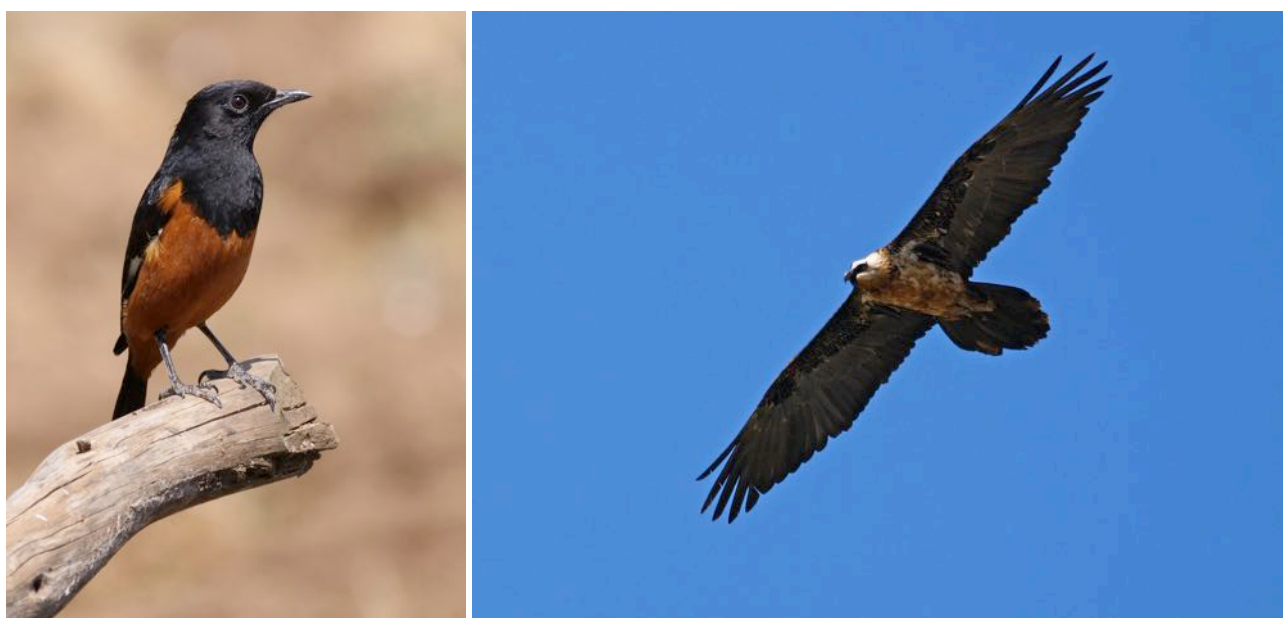
through the Hareenna Forest where we discovered a troop of the localised Bale Monkey as well as some secretive Abyssinian Crimsonwings and Ethiopian Orioles obliged before the forest gave way to a sweeping panorama of well-vegetated scrubby hillsides where at the end of the day the wonderful Ruspoli's Turaco was seen. There followed a three night's stay in Negelle which was our base for exploring the surrounding area. With some local help we had little trouble in tracking down the extremely rare and endangered Archer's Lark however Salvadori's Seedeater took a lot more finding but eventually showed well and at another site Juba Weavers made their appearance but our second afternoon's birding was lost due to torrential rain. Fortunately, the weather stayed dry for our drive through remote bush country to Yabello and the journey produced the hoped for White-winged Collared Dove. Having arrived at Yabello we had three full days to hunt out White-tailed Swallow and the very special Stresemann's Bushcrow, which certainly did not disappoint. Driving through some wild thorn bush countryside Vulturine Guinea fowl and Guenther's Dik-diks scattered from the roadside and we also enjoyed excellent views of Somali Courser, Scaly Chatterer, Pringle's Puffback, Red-naped Bushshrike and Northern Grosbeak Canary. Our excursions to see the desirable Masked Lark and Grevy's Zebra on the remote Sarite Plains and the recently split Black-fronted Francolin near Mega were both great successes but a day of virtually solid rain spoiled the trip to Magado near the Kenyan border although we still managed to add Yellow-vented Eremomela, Chestnut-headed Sparrow Lark, Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver and Southern Gerenuk to our lists. Heading back north to Lake Awassa, Allen's Gallinules showed well, African Spotted Creeper was seen easily and at a special reserve the rare Swayne's Hartebeest was also not a problem. At Gibe Gorge we encountered a flock of Abyssinian Waxbill and the pretty Black-faced Firefinch, the race concerned sometimes split as Ethiopian Firefinch. An extension to Gondar gave us culture in the form of a visit to the Fasilide's palaces in the Royal Enclosure and an exciting drive towards the Sudan border where the trip culminated in terrific looks at the impressive White-headed Babbler.

Of the other specialties encountered on the tour we saw Somali Ostrich, Clapperton's and Erckel's Francolins, the endemic 'Brown-faced' form of Bare-faced Go-away-bird, White-collared Pigeon, Mountain Buzzard, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, the *lafresnayii* form of Blue-breasted Bee-eater sometimes split as Ethiopian Bee-eater, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Grey-headed Batis, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Three-streaked Tchagra, Ethiopian Boubou, Taita and Somali Fiscals, Somali Crow, Thick-billed Raven, Foxy, Red-winged, Short-tailed and Somali Short-toed Larks, Dodson's Bulbul, 'Brown' and 'Blue' Black Saw-wings, Somali Crombec, Brown Woodland Warbler, Boran, Ethiopian and Foxy Cisticolas, Pale Prinia, Green-backed Eremomela, White-rumped Babbler, Abyssinian, Pale and Heuglin's White-eyes, Golden-breasted, Shelley's, White-crowned, Bristle-crowned, Sharpe's and Magpie Starlings, Groundscraper Thrush of the race *simensis* sometimes split as Ethiopian Thrush, Abyssinian Ground and Bare-eyed Thrushes, Black Scrub Robin, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Little Rock Thrush, Red-breasted Wheatear, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Black-bellied and Tsavo Sunbirds, Shelley's, Swainson's and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Rüppell's Weaver, African Citril, Brown-rumped Seedeater and Ethiopian Siskin.



The steep, vertical cliffs of the Ankober escarpment often clothed in dense cloud are home to the endemic Ankober Serin. (Nik Borrow)

Most of the group had opted to arrive before the official start of the tour which meant that we saw our first regional specialties such as Heuglin's White-eye, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Swainson's Sparrow and Brown-rumped Seedeaters in the grounds of our hotel as well as pairs of Eastern Grey Woodpecker and Brown Parisoma. We met the sole incoming person at the airport who having landed in Addis Ababa after a tiring overnight flight was immediately rejuvenated by seven years as the country still operates on the Julian rather than Gregorian calendar. We found a few birds at the airport as the luggage was loaded but quickly got on our way and wriggled our way through a congested Addis Ababa and escaping the city, headed northeastwards to the town of Debre Birhan. The journey enabled us to see our only White-winged Cliff Chat of the tour and there were also Thekla's and the *erlangeri* form of Blanford's Lark (sometimes split as Erlanger's Lark). Other regional endemics such as Blue-winged Goose, White-collared Pigeon, Wattled Ibis, the *simensis* form of Groundscraper Thrush (sometimes split as Ethiopian Thrush), Red-breasted Wheatear and Ethiopian Siskin. More widespread species included Egyptian Goose, Speckled Pigeon, Dusky Turtle and Red-eyed Doves, African Sacred Ibis, Western Cattle Egret, Hooded Vulture, Tawny Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, Augur Buzzard, Speckled Mousebird, Common Kestrel, Northern Fiscal, Cape and Pied Crows, Common Chiffchaff, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Red-billed Oxpecker, Abyssinian Thrush, Moorland Chat, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Tacazze Sunbird, Baglafecht Weaver, Yellow Bishop, Blue-headed Wagtail, Red-throated Pipit and Yellow-crowned Canary. On the outskirts of Debre Birhan we saw our first Bearded Vulture (or Lammergeier).



The handsome White-winged Cliff Chat (left) is endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea and we were delighted to find a family group en route to Debre Birhan where our first Lammergeier was also seen (right). (Nik Borrow)

We wasted little time checking into our hotel and straight after lunch headed further north to the dramatic escarpment at Gemassa Gedal, where we hoped to find another endemic; the unassuming Ankober Serin. The species was described as recently as 1979 and is in appearance somewhat similar to the Yemen Serin just a few hundred kilometres to the east on the other side of the Red Sea. This dowdy finch dwells pretty much exclusively on the vertical cliffs of the Ankober escarpment and only seldom visits the tops. Finding the birds is not usually a problem, but the weather certainly can be; when the hot air from the Danakil Depression far below meets the colder air of the plateau, thick cloud often forms, ensuring that the vegetation clinging on to the edge of the escarpment remains lush year-round. This year we were greeted by clear blue skies that allowed amazing views towards the Danakil very far below and miles away. A large troop of Geladas grazed on the slopes above us and amazingly enough we only had to wait a short time before a small group of serins were found feeding by the roadside at astonishingly close range.

Numbers of species were few on this windswept cliff although a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk shot through and there were also Fan-tailed Raven, Rock Martin and Streaky Seedeater whilst Blue Rock Thrush and

Long-billed Pipit were seen by some. The day had been long enough for those that had arrived on overnight flights so we headed back to Debre Birhan notching up our first White-billed Starlings along the way.



A wonderful encounter with the vegetarian Gelada (left) and the endemic Ankober Serin (right) made for a very successful first day! (Nik Borrow)

We were up well before dawn the following day, setting off on a dark night for a full day trip to the Jemma River area and it was just getting light as we reached the top of the huge, deep and wide valley. The poorly maintained dirt road wound and twisted steeply downwards and the sun was already up when we stopped at a place where we were hoping to see the endemic Harwood's Francolin. We could hear the francolins calling far below us and amazingly Nick spotted one in the middle of a sorghum field, perched up in a tree shouting out his raucous calls across the expansive slopes. Insurance scope views were obtained and then we attempted to drive down and hopefully nearer but sadly the bird had also descended by the time we neared the spot. Thereafter proceeded a lengthy battle playing calls in an attempt to get the bird to show itself again and ultimately, we probably had views of three different birds but none hung around for too long! Erckel's Francolins were also calling and we spotted this francolin far more quickly as it advertised its presence from an exposed boulder. Other Ethiopian specialties nearby included Black-winged Lovebird, Rüppell's Black Chat and Abyssinian Wheatear. As time was pressing, we continued to the bottom of the valley taking in breeding plumaged Red-collared Widowbirds and Black-winged Red Bishops and some super little Foxy Cisticolas along the way until we found a site suitable for what was by now a late breakfast which we left Merid to prepare whilst we went birding.

A small stream ran through the river valley and held Common and Green Sandpipers, Hamerkop, Wire-tailed Swallow and Mountain Wagtails as well as a pair of Half-collared Kingfishers but in particular we were on the lookout for a regional endemic, the rather plain Yellow-rumped (or perhaps more suitably named White-throated) Seedeater and scoured the thorny acacias for our quarry. After a little searching we found the seedeater but it was flighty and often kept its distance.

After breakfast we returned to the bush but as it was getting hotter by the second we sought the cool shade of the river where some large fig trees provided cover and food. Here we found our first Blue-breasted Bee-eaters of the distinctive *lafresnayii* race sometimes split as Ethiopian Bee-eater as well as Grey-headed and African Pygmy Kingfishers and iridescent Greater and Lesser Blue-eared Starlings which were all colourful additions to the list. Vinaceous, Laughing and Namaqua Doves and Blue-spotted Wood Dove were seen along with Bruce's Green Pigeon. The overhanging bushes provided cover for small birds coming down to drink and during our watch we noted Klaas's Cuckoo, Black-billed Barbet, Black-winged Lovebird, Black-crowned Tchagra, Ethiopian Boubou, Common Bulbul, Northern Crombec, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Grey-

backed Camaroptera, Abyssinian White-eye, Northern Black Flycatcher, Mocking Cliff Chat, Familiar Chat, Scarlet-chested and Variable Sunbirds, Sahel Bush Sparrow, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Cut-throat Finch, Red-billed Firefinch, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, African Silverbill, Village Indigobird, Pin-tailed Whydah, Yellow-fronted Canary and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. There was also evidence of Palearctic migration with familiar species such as Willow and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, Eurasian Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Tree Pipit and Ortolan Bunting.



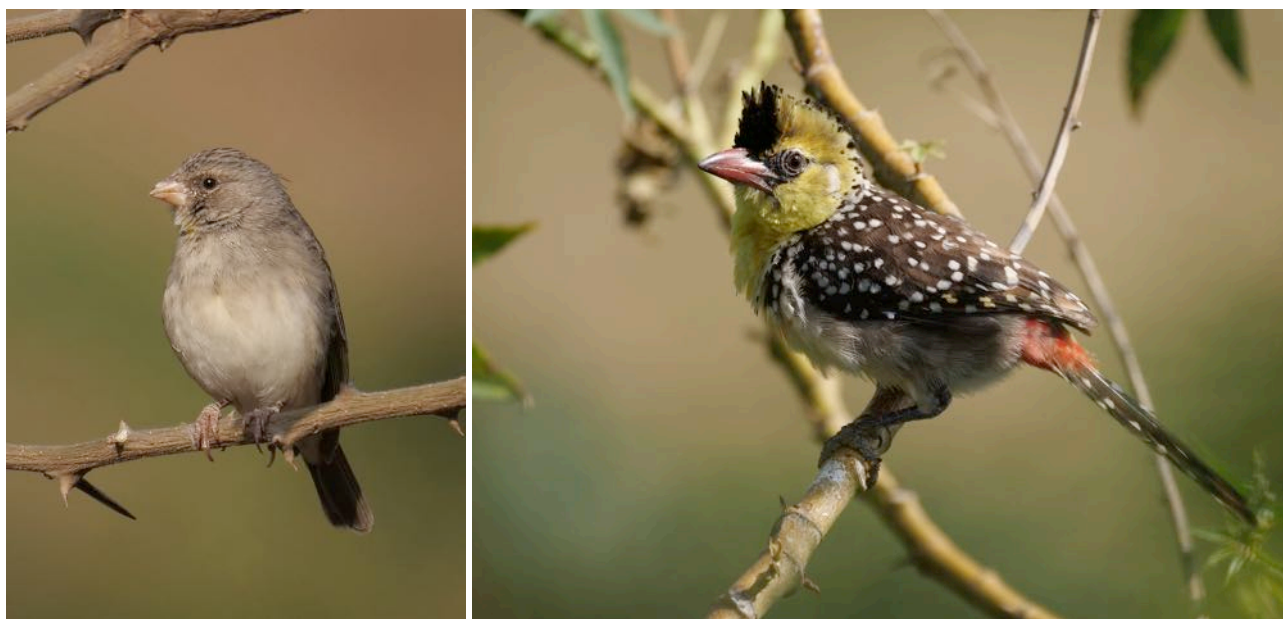
The endemic Harwood's Francolin (left) and the attractively coloured Foxy Cisticola (right) in the Jemma Valley (Nik Borrow)

Along the Jemma River we found Spur-winged Lapwing, Grey Heron, Little Egret and Pied Kingfisher whilst the high cliffs held Hemprich's Hornbill, Little Rock Thrush and Long-billed Pipit. Other species noted in the valley included Nyanza Swift, African Grey Hornbill, Little Bee-eater, Barn Swallow, Singing Cisticola, Red-winged Starling and African Citril.

It was another early start the next day as we headed out of Debre Birhan in the dark, bound for Ankober and beyond. Dawn broke over the highland plateau and it was fully light as we reached the ancient capital, situated at 3,000 m and teetering on the edge of the escarpment. The road descended steeply from here but with the improved road under construction it was not much longer before we reached Melka Ghebdu, at 1,400m. Our target here was another localised endemic, the Yellow-throated Seedeater. We arrived at the site in the early morning while the air was still fresh and within minutes our quarry was in the bag as the seedeater gave itself up easily singing right beside where we had set up for breakfast, which made for very relaxed dining! The individuals that we saw did not have particularly pronounced yellow throats and as some Yellow-rumped (White-throated) Seedeaters seem to show yellowish throats one does wonder about the validity of these two species.

The birding during our breakfast break was hugely enjoyable as we watched Yellow-breasted Barbets behaving like clockwork toys; our first Banded Barbet (a regional endemic) in a fruiting tree was discovered and also the desirable Rüppell's Weaver although these proved to be far more common later in the tour.

Other species included Dark Chanting Goshawk, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Red-tailed Shrike, Glossy-backed Drongo, Common House Martin, Beautiful Sunbird and Village and Red-headed Weavers.



*Melka Ghebdu birds: Yellow-throated Seedeater is an Ethiopian endemic (left) alongside the attractive Yellow-breasted Barbet (right).
(Nik Borrow)*

Following this success, we continued on our way downwards towards Awash along a road that is being newly constructed but was still mostly dirt. As we descended so the landscape became more arid and acacia dominated the dusty landscape. Our first Long-tailed Paradise Whydahs were seen in spectacular breeding regalia and a few stops took in our first bush birds such as Grey-headed Batis, Masked Shrike and Nile Valley and Shining Sunbirds. Other mainly widespread species that we would encounter again included White-bellied Go-away-bird, Ring-necked Dove, Egyptian Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Northern Red-billed and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Abyssinian Roller and Rüppell's Starling. The road carried us to meet the tarmac at a sugar cane plantation where suddenly Marabou Storks became abundant and we arrived at Doho Lodge situated on the edge of Awash National Park overlooking an extensive marsh and hot springs and happily were in time for lunch.

From the lodge we saw African Palm Swift over the lake which also gave us Striated and Purple Herons, Western Marsh Harrier and Sand Martin. The bulbuls in this area are a mixed bag and are perhaps intergrades but at least some appear to show characteristics of the recently re-split Somali Bulbul. The tiny Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit was seen well in the lodge grounds as were White-headed Buffalo Weaver and White-browed Sparrow-Weaver and our explorations of the surrounding thorn scrub also allowed us superb views of Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse and some Slender-tailed Nightjars were also seen including one with recently hatched chicks. Black Scrub Robin was a much-wanted bird that showed well and other species encountered included White-browed Coucal, Mourning Collared Dove, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Black-winged Stilt, Blue-naped Mousebird, Eurasian Hoopoe, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Brubru, Red-fronted Warbler, Wattled and Superb Starlings, White-browed Scrub Robin, Red-billed Quelea and Northern Red Bishop.

The following morning, we were up early to visit the Aledeghe Plains. Our access to the area was somewhat restricted due to tribal tensions and also the recent heavy rains meant that the enormous open plains were still well vegetated. However, we had no problems locating the Arabian Bustards which were easily seen (with no less than an estimated eighteen being seen during the morning) and distant Somali Ostriches shimmered in the heat haze. A number of Crowned Lapwings were present and a pair of Secretarybird was a welcome find although other raptors were few and far between with only one White-backed, a few Rüppell's and eight Lappet-faced Vultures present although there were seemingly good numbers of harriers quartering

the plains but amongst them we only identified Montagu's Harrier and also added Lesser Kestrel to the list. A selection of mammals was noted with Abyssinian Hare, Common Warthog, Salt's Dik-dik, Soemmerring's Gazelle and Beisa Oryx all seen albeit somewhat distantly in cases! Other birds included Helmeted Guineafowl, Buff-crested Bustard, 'Steppe' Great Grey Shrike, Somali Fiscal and Woodchat Shrike, many Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks and Marico Sunbird.



The Arabian Bustard (left) is one of the major attractions during our visit to the Aledeghe Plains and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters (right) are often in attendance. (Nik Borrow)

After this successful visit we continued on our way (spotting a Hamadryas Baboon by the roadside) into Awash National Park for an overnight stay in the idyllically placed Awash Falls Lodge where we watched the murky Awash River cascading forcefully over the rocks where some Nile Crocodiles were enjoying their 'jacuzzi' at the bottom. A pair of African Fish Eagles had their nest above the falls; a juvenile African Harrier-Hawk was seen and a pair of African Pied Wagtails also frequented the river. We had the rest of the afternoon and early the next morning to explore the park which was still lush and green from the recent rain. Sadly, the park is something of an ecological disaster as the once spectacular grass plains have basically become a huge weed patch due to the high numbers of domestic animals and in all honesty, birding here is quite hard work. We spent the late afternoon looking for some key target birds and after some searching we managed to track down White-bellied Bustard, Temminck's Courser, Olive Bee-eater, Eurasian Wryneck, Singing Bush Lark, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Tawny Pipit and ultimately both Ashy Cisticola and the chunky Red-winged Lark which we finally saw as the sun was setting. The return journey to the lodge was made in the dark and Merid did well to find the hoped-for Star-spotted Nightjar near the track and we enjoyed some amazingly close views. We also spotlighted African Golden Wolf, Black-headed Lapwings and our first Kori Bustard of the trip!

We left early the following morning as good numbers of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse were seen flying over towards their drinking areas. In particular we were missing Gillett's Lark and so we stopped in the degraded bush and grasslands for a final search. This wasn't easy but finally we found a pair and during our wanderings we also chanced upon a single Lesser Spotted Eagle as well as Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Grey Wren-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Rufous Chatterer and African Grey Flycatcher.

Leaving the park, the plan was to get to the lava outflows at the base of the dormant volcano Fantalle where a few brilliant green bushes push their way up through the black lava flows beside Lake Beseka. It wouldn't be too long before the searing heat would make conditions too uncomfortable so we were keen to get our target birds under the belt in the early morning before it got too hot as we had three key species to find there,

namely Striolated Bunting, Blackstart and the localised Sombre Rock Chat. All went according to plan and the bunting gave itself up easily being one of the first birds that were spotted. We then crunched our way over the unstable terrain and a chat followed soon after, it's cinereous colouration matching the lava perfectly whilst it was almost immediately replaced by the Blackstart flirting its wings and tail on the very same rock! We were pleased by this because already it was very hot and hostilities in the area meant that it was not wise to linger longer.



Some highlights of short visit into Awash National Park: Star-spotted Nightjar (left) and Sombre Rock Chat (right). (Nik Borrow)

We pushed on along the busy roads to Adama where we paused for lunch before heading south into the Rift Valley and made a late afternoon stop at Lake Ziway. We didn't have a lot of time here, but the shallow margins of the lake were teeming with birds as African Jacanas potted across the emergent vegetation whilst waders on the muddy margins included Ruff, Common Snipe and Wood Sandpiper. A pair of Black Crowned Cranes was scoped and waterfowl included White-faced Whistling Duck, Spur-winged Goose, African Pygmy Goose and Hottentot Teal and other birds included Black-headed and Grey-headed Gulls, Whiskered Tern, Yellow-billed Stork, Reed and White-breasted Cormorants, African Darter, Hadada Ibis, Squacco Heron, Great Egret, Great White Pelican, Woodland and Malachite Kingfishers, Brown-throated Martin, 'Black-headed' Western Yellow Wagtail and Reichenow's Seedeater. Our final destination was a comfortable lodge situated on the southeastern shore of Lake Langano for a two night's stay. The individual cabins were set in a patch of open woodland, overlooking the lakeshore.

We were up at dawn to await the arrival of the Yellow-fronted Parrots. The large fig trees on the southeast shores of Lake Langano are one of the best places in Ethiopia to see this increasingly threatened endemic and they appeared on cue as the sun rose. However, these colourful birds only allowed some fly-by views and a quest for perched individuals during the day was not an easy task! During the day we explored the various habitats that the area had to offer on foot. We started with a bang as our local guide took us straight to a pair of roosting African Scops Owls and we counted ourselves fortunate to be able to admire these intricately marked little owls at close quarters in broad daylight.

Our morning walk, then took us through open acacia scrub into some thick, cool woodlands and a wide variety of species were added to our list. Due to the high number of fruiting figs frugivores were conspicuous and we saw the beautiful near-endemic White-cheeked Turaco, Banded and Double-toothed Barbets, the endemic 'brown-faced' form of Bare-faced Go-away-bird, which is treated as a separate species by some authors as well as pretty little endemic Black-winged Lovebirds, enormous Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, African Olive and Bruce's Green Pigeons and Blue-spotted Wood Dove.

The open acacia woodland held a wealth of birds and in particular we were pleased to find a garrulous group of near-endemic White-rumped Babblers. A pair of showy Red-throated Wrynecks posed nicely for us and long-tailed African Paradise Flycatchers flitted to and fro but the close encounter with a pair of stunning Three-banded Courser was a most memorable trip highlight for everyone! More widespread species seen during our stay included Little Swift, Levallant's Cuckoo, Gabar Goshawk, Black Scimitarbill, Lesser and Scaly-throated Honeyguides, Nubian Woodpecker, Western Black-headed Batis, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Northern Puffback, Grey-backed Fiscal, White-winged Black Tit, Red-faced Crombec, Rattling Cisticola, Buff-bellied Warbler, Violet-backed and Slender-billed Starlings, African Thrush and Little and Spectacled Weavers. Palearctic migrants included Eurasian Golden Oriole, Lesser Whitethroat, the *samamasicus* (or Ehrenberg's) form of Common Redstart, Northern Wheatear and Spotted Flycatcher.



The attractive White-cheeked Turaco (left) is a regional endemic and the 'Brown-faced' Bare-faced Go-away-bird (right) is an endemic if split. Both turacos allowed amazing views as they came down to drink and bathe at our lodge on the shores of Lake Langano. (Nik Borrow)

Nearby in the tall dark woodlands birding was a little trickier, but we found Lemon and Tambourine Doves, a gorgeous male Narina Trogon, Brown-throated Wattle-eye and Sharpe's Starling as well as Rüppell's and Red-capped Robin-Chats.

Down at the lakeshore itself there was a good selection of wetland species that included Senegal Thick-knees resting on the rocky shore as well as other new species; Red-knobbed Coot, Common Ringed Plover, Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plovers, Temminck's and Little Stints, Marsh Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Woolly-necked Stork and Intermediate Egret.

The next day we swiftly departed for the long journey into the Bale Mountains but our progress was halted by a fortuitous sighting of a Clapperton's Francolin perched atop a low tree advertising its presence with some raucous calls. Tucking this welcome species firmly under our belts we continued through the Rastafarian town of Shashemene before turning towards the mountains. It is a fascinating drive that leads up out of the Rift Valley past giant flowering *Echinops* thistles and then through seemingly endless wheat fields before climbing up into the thin air of the Bale Mountains themselves. A casual roadside stop produced a pair of Red-chested Swallows but little else new was seen until we reached the heights of the Bale Mountains themselves. A stake-out for the *dillonii* form of Cape Eagle-Owl (sometimes split as part of a separate species Mackinder's Eagle-Owl) quickly produced the desired target pointed out to us by hyper-excited children and despite the clamour the views were wonderful!

In the Gaysay grasslands Blue-winged Geese and Yellow-billed Dusks were seen well on a roadside pool along with Little Grebe. Amongst the moorland vegetation we found the striking *albofasciatus* race of African Stonechat, Ethiopian Cisticola and Yellow Bishop as we searched for an initially elusive Abyssinian Longclaw. At the park headquarters we admired the bold and tame Mountain Nyala and a few Menelik's Bushbuck before being taken to see a roosting African Wood Owl. In amongst the tall, cool junipers and mighty *Hagenia* trees we sought out the noisy endemic Abyssinian Catbird, a party of near-endemic White-backed Black Tits and found a pair of Abyssinian Woodpecker at their nest hole. We also had tremendous views of the attractive Abyssinian Ground Thrush and pretty Brown Woodland Warbler as well as Common Chiffchaff, Abyssinian Slaty and African Dusky Flycatchers before finishing our visit with the highly desirable Abyssinian Owl at its daytime roost surprisingly low and just above the ground! It had really been a 'purple patch' of an afternoon! At our hotel in Goba Dark-capped Bulbul and grotesque Thick-billed Ravens inhabited the gardens and there were Somali Crows in the town.



The drive to the Bale Mountains gave us two superb owls at their daytime roosts; Cape Eagle-Owl (left) sometimes split as Mackinder's Eagle-Owl and Abyssinian Owl (right). (Nik Borrow)

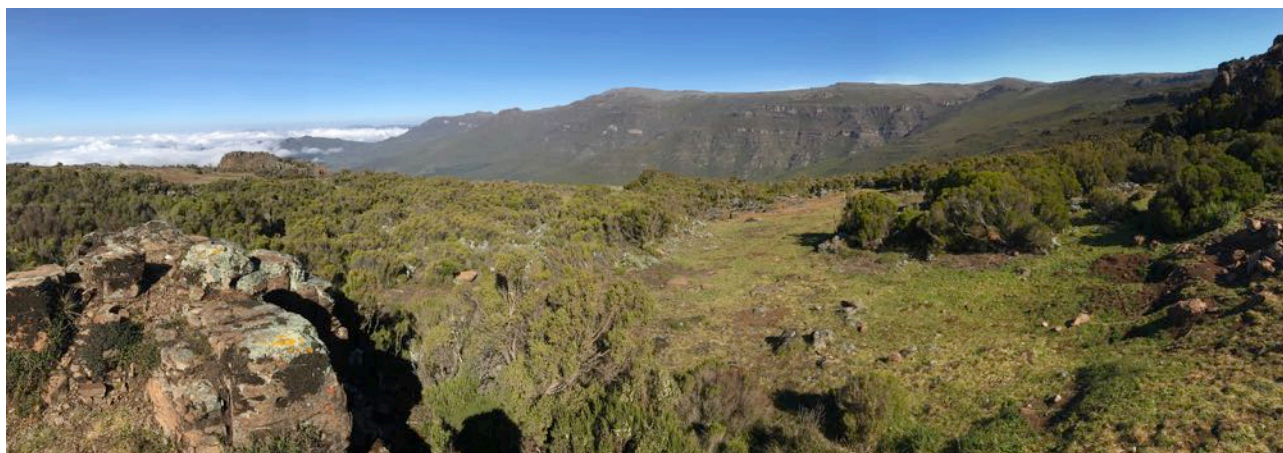
It is always one of the highlights of the trip to visit the magical Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains National Park, and today the weather looked promising as our coaster bus started climbing the highest all-weather road in Africa. The weather was clear and sunny and we climbed up through a zone of giant heath and *Hypericum* taking in roadside Chestnut-naped Francolins and comical Rouget's Rails before this gave way to the tussock grass, cushion plants and Giant Lobelias of the afro-alpine zone. Where the plateau levels out at around 4,000 metres in the distance we could see Tullu Deemtu (4,377m), the second highest peak in Ethiopia. Flocks of Ethiopian Siskins were everywhere and we made a stop for a scattered group of lovely Spot-breasted Lapwings, one of the best looking of all the endemics. A great bonus was a family of three Wattled Cranes, which although somewhat distant was a much-welcomed sighting as this species has been getting decidedly difficult to find upon the plateau these days. Another species that was causing some concern as to whether or not we would see it was the endangered endemic Ethiopian Wolf which had been currently hit hard by an outbreak of distemper and rabies that has caused numbers to crash on the plateau. There are perhaps no more than 440 of these beautiful canids left with the largest population in the Bale

Mountains numbering some 120-160 individuals. At a chance stop, one lone animal was spotted which is not unusual in itself as these creatures are solitary hunters. We were happy enough with this sighting in itself but even more overjoyed when it seemingly made a bee-line towards us, even pausing to hunt right in front of us. It caught one of the many burrowing rats that inhabit the moorlands which it promptly buried before continuing on its way and out of sight.



Highlights from the Sanetti Plateau: Rouget's Rail (left) and the endangered Ethiopian Wolf (right). (Nik Borrow)

During a walkabout, we saw numerous migrant Red-throated Pipits and flushed some African Snipe from one of the many small marshes that also held Ruddy Shelducks, a mostly Palearctic species that occurs in the Bale Mountains at their only sub-Saharan outpost. Overhead was the occasional Red-billed Chough (another species reaching its southernmost limits) and all around us Blick's Grass Rats raced across the ground only to dive down a burrow as soon as we clapped eyes on them and we also managed to get good looks at the most peculiar Giant Mole Rat during the rare occasions that it ventures out of its burrow. Getting a sighting of the Moorland Francolin was also problematic but eventually we tracked down some calling birds of which we obtained scope views. Raptors included Bearded Vulture (or Lammergeier), Steppe Eagle and Lanner Falcon and later in the day we birded the wooded and cultivated lower slopes and obtained good views of the *griseiventris* race of Brown Parisoma, which was once mooted as being worthy of specific status as well as Cinnamon Bracken Warbler.

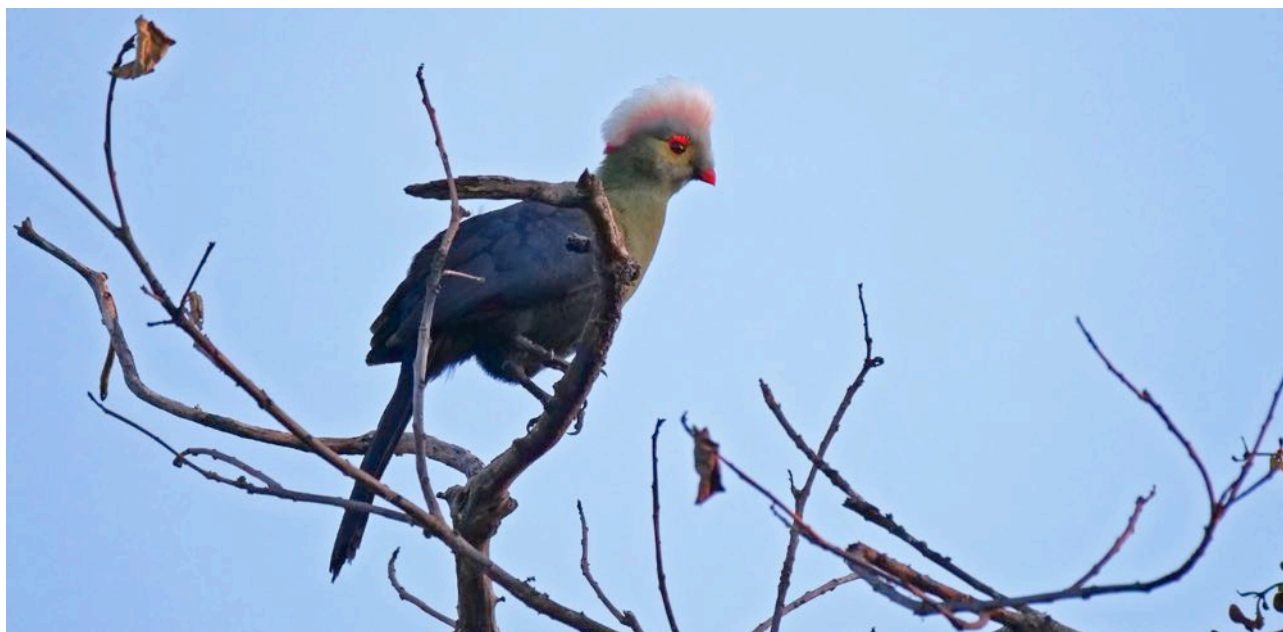


Stunning scenery up above the clouds on the otherworldly Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains National Park. (Nik Borrow)

It was time to leave Goba and head south to Negelle, but first we had to cross over the Sanetti Plateau again although this time we were in sturdy 4WD vehicles that would carry us through the rest of the tour. Up on the tops we enjoyed repeat views of the various montane birds that we had seen during our previous visit. We continued on past Tullu Deemtu with panoramic views every way we looked and then headed down the steep sides of the plateau into what is left of the once magnificent Harenna Forest.

Most of the huge *Hagenia* trees on the higher slopes with their moss-encrusted, gnarled old trunks have long since been cut down as the human population has grown and now threatens the tall and dense forests at lower altitudes. The endemic Bale Monkey occurs in the bamboo zone on these slopes but the altitudinal band it inhabits along this road is quite narrow and to date we had never encountered this prize mammal until this tour when we were thrilled to see an individual run across the road and join a large troop feasting in the bamboo. We watched these uncommon primates for some time before continuing our journey and during another stop in the middle of the forest we had success in finding a few Abyssinian Crimsonwings whilst a low flying immature Crowned Eagle was a very fine sighting. We also had views of Western Banded Snake Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Ethiopian Oriole, 'Brown' Black Saw-wings of the form *antinorii* and Red-faced Cisticola.

After leaving the Harenna Forest, the drive took us through some rolling hills and wild and remote bush country where we made a stop in the hope of seeing Red-billed Pytilia. Sadly, the pytilia did not oblige but we did see some charming little Green-backed Eremomelas as well as Crested Francolin, Slate-coloured Boubou and Purple Grenadier. At the end of the afternoon we called a stop at what appeared to be an unremarkable area of bush bisected by a dry gully with a few larger trees. This was the place where we have successfully seen 'Prince' Ruspoli's Turaco in years gone by but unfortunately this highly desirable species was not at home either and so we drove on, aiming to get to another site before nightfall. However, within minutes we ground to a stop, brought to an emergency halt by a superb Ruspoli's Turaco sat in full view over the road on the top of a bare tree! We tumbled out of the cars and could hardly believe that we were watching this beautiful jewel in the crown of all of the Ethiopian endemics. Better still it refused to move! This rare species has a very restricted range, but we were now in the midst of it and we enjoyed prolonged scope views of this attractive bird. The Prince had collected the turaco in either 1892 or 1893 but was then promptly killed by an elephant without ever passing on the details of the type locality, fortunately, we were spared his fate! Also, on the journey we noted Von der Decken's Hornbill and our first Red-and-yellow Barbets sitting on top of the curious chimney stack termite mounds that are a feature of this countryside but as usual time was running out so elated by our success we carried on to reach Negele just after nightfall.



Illuminated by the dying rays of the late afternoon sun we marvelled at a wonderful Ruspoli's Turaco en route to Negele. (Nik Borrow)

The morning found us on the Liben Plains at first light scanning the grasslands for larks. The songs and calls of Somali Short-toed Larks could be heard immediately as we arrived on these expansive grasslands. This was also a much-wanted bird but we were also on the lookout for a critically endangered species that has undergone a change in its taxonomy in recent years. Once known as Sidamo or Liben Lark it is now thought that this particular form is synonymous with the mysterious Archer's Lark and the two forms are now currently lumped by the IOC as a monotypic species. We headed towards a distant figure of a local man who was already tracking down the lark for us. More 'helpers' soon joined the fray eager to show us this rare bird and after some frustrating moments we managed to get everyone focused on one of these larks at close range just in front of us. Rather than stretching up or singing in display the bird was more inclined to crouch down and hide behind the few grass stems and stalks available making it surprisingly tricky to see. We watched it for as long as we pleased and it was a treat to admire its intricately patterned, quail-like plumage and study this highly localised and particularly endangered species. In fact, actually seeing a Somali Short-toed Lark now proved to be the challenge but by following calling and singing birds we soon had one in the bag and watched them feeding nearby. It was then back for one of Merid's splendid bush breakfasts. Also, out on the plains we found the striking White-crowned Starling as well as Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Pallid Harrier, Lilac-breasted Roller of the blue-breasted form *lorti*, Ethiopian Swallow, Shelley's Sparrow, Plain-backed Pipit and the unassuming Boran Cisticola, which isn't safely identified as such unless it sings!



Our success with Archer's Lark this year was total and absolute with amazing views obtained. (Nik Borrow)

We were now keen to move on to another area of bush country where we hoped to see Salvadori's Seedeater, another Ethiopian endemic. The thornbush was busy with birds and perhaps the best of all the sightings obtained over the following hours were that of some showy Three-streaked Tchagras. We also found Eurasian Hoopoes of the resident form as well as Black-headed Oriole, Fork-tailed Drongo, Acacia Tit, Dodson's Bulbul, Pale White-eye, Marico and Tsavo Sunbirds and Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow. By now it

was the heat of the day and there was still no sign of the seedeater so it was time to talk tactics and we decided to try again the following morning but for now to head back for lunch and then try in the afternoon for some different birds elsewhere.

This destination was to be the Genale River where we almost immediately came across our quarry in the form of a fine breeding plumaged male Juba Weaver and whilst we were watching it a glittering Black-bellied Sunbird also made an appearance. Moving on to another area we again had immediate success with the next target, the rather drab Brown-tailed Rock Chat but then an angry Pearl-spotted Owlet livened up the end of day proceedings and drew in a succession of birds that included gaudy Red-and-yellow Barbet, the hulking Grey-headed Bushshrike, Northern Brownbul and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird.

We were back at the Salvadori's site soon after dawn in the cool of the morning but somewhat surprisingly there wasn't a lot of extra activity. We wandered round for quite a while before some calls of the seedeater finally reached our ears and then it wasn't too long before we were watching a well-marked male and all before our bush breakfast! Other species seen during this quest included Somali Crombec as well as Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Cardinal Woodpecker, Grey Kestrel, Taita Fiscal, Mosque Swallow and Grey-capped Social Weaver. Just on the outskirts of Negele itself we had some good looks at the 'pompadoured' Bristle-crowned Starling. Sadly, the afternoon session was wiped out by absolutely torrential rain and we found ourselves confined to the hotel.



Having first seen Juba Weaver (left) near Negele we were pleased to meet them again at the Dawa River along with the localised White-winged Collared Dove (right). (Nik Borrow)

A dry morning saw us heading southwest through some more wild country towards Yabello. It was heads down until our bush breakfast when we made a stop by the increasingly wider Dawa River where it proved easy to see more Juba Weavers busy nest-building and the attractive White-winged Collared Dove, a localised species seemingly confined to the rivers running towards Somalia. The area has had a checkered past revolving round security issues between Somali and Boran peoples but we were fortunate that all was peaceful for our visit. Also at the river we saw Pygmy Batis, the 'brown-tailed' form of Yellow-breasted Apalis, Collared Sunbird and Somali Bunting whilst several opportunistic roadside stops en route gave us a pair of Black-faced Sandgrouse right next to the cars, the glorious Golden-breasted and Shelley's Starlings and the often skulking Pringle's Puffback as well as a good selection of bush birds that included Purple and European Rollers, Black-throated Barbet, White-crested Helmetshrike, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Banded Parisoma, Spotted Palm Thrush, Hunter's Sunbird, Black-capped Social Weaver, Vitelline Masked

Weaver and the spectacular Straw-tailed Whydah in breeding plumage. We reached Yabello just after dark and settled into our rooms for a four night's stay.

With three full days of uncertain weather in the Yabello area we chose to start our first day on a quest to the Sarite Plains in search of a recently discovered population of Masked Larks. This is a bird that can be difficult to find in neighbouring Kenya where it is possibly only a seasonal visitor to Shaba National Reserve or else involves a special visit to the lava deserts north of Marsabit, an area that has been plagued by security issues. The habitat that we were hoping to find it in Ethiopia was safer and not lava but rather black cotton soils so we hoped that the forecast rain would not disturb us as the wet soil is notorious for claiming many a vehicle! We stopped for breakfast en route in the company of the crazy Vulturine Guinea fowl and dancing D'Arnaud's Barbets whilst other species in the area included Jacobin Cuckoo, Black-winged Kite, Bateleur, Long-crested Eagle, Pygmy Falcon, Bare-eyed Thrush, Parrot-billed Sparrow and Chestnut Weaver but perhaps the best birds were some Magpie Starlings, a striking species that can be difficult to guarantee on a tour.

It had already been a long and heavy rainy season and it was unusual to see the plains green and well vegetated at this time of our visit. The day was dry and we ventured out on the expansive plains. Somali Ostriches and White Storks shimmered in the heat haze and there were also some Grevy's Zebras. A few Zitting Cisticolas and many Red-throated Pipits flushed up but the lark was suitably elusive and the only individual we did find immediately flew off until it was only a small dot in the far distance. We decided to move our explorations to the area that the bird had disappeared towards and this time we struck gold almost immediately with at least two pairs foraging in the long grasses for nesting material. In the process we flushed a male Harlequin Quail but our success with the larks was by now complete!



Highlights of our first day in the Yabello area were secretive Masked Larks (left) and the crazy Vulturine Guinea fowl (right). (Nik Borrow)

In the afternoon we spent our time near our lodge in the company of another primary target, the 'must-see' Stresemann's Bushcrow. This striking bird was described as recently as 1938 and is confined to an area of about 6,000 sq. km around Yabello. The bird's extremely restricted range has long been a puzzle, but it is now thought to be climate related; the precise area that it inhabits is slightly cooler and drier than areas of apparently similar habitat in southern Ethiopia. We watched a family party of these splendid creatures for as long as we wished and we saw the birds each day of our stay in the area. Here we also spotted the pretty endemic White-tailed Swallow which was busy flying all around us and later during this afternoon session we tracked down Bearded Woodpecker, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Foxy Lark, Lesser Striped Swallow and White-bellied Canary. Sadly, at night there was no sign of the expected Donaldson Smith's Nightjar which

was only heard briefly on the second night of our stay and we assumed that the birds were breeding and so unusually quiet.

The next day was devoted to the area south of Yabello and in particular an attempt to see the recently split (from Chestnut-naped) Black-fronted Francolin. Our journey took us to a rocky escarpment in the Mega Mountains where we ensured that we arrived very early in order to pinpoint the francolins calling from the cliffs. The site made another great picnic breakfast location and while Merid saw to the eggs and porridge we tried to spot at least one of the calling birds on the escarpment above us. The slopes were densely vegetated and at first all of the calling birds seemed to be hidden inside the bushes perhaps because a large troop of Olive Baboons was scattered over the rocks. However, with patience we eventually managed to see several francolins posing nicely for us out on the rocks so that tremendous views were had by all and our success was suitably celebrated with a super breakfast surrounded by francolins!

On the Soda Plains we spent some quality time with more Stresemann's Bushcrows and then looked around in search of more of the regional specialties and quickly found a family party of some fine Somali Coursers with a trio of the prehistoric looking Abyssinian Ground Hornbill nearby for good measure! There followed some obliging Short-tailed Larks busy attacking the soil for food with their heavyweight bills and also present were Diederik Cuckoo, a pair of White-headed Vulture and noisy Red-bellied Parrots screeching past.

Moving on to a very different habitat we had one of those purple patches where the birds just kept on coming. No sooner had we got off the bus than we found a showy pair of Red-naped Bushshrikes. Then Northern Grosbeak Canary, Pale Prinia and the *albiventris* (white-bellied) Variable Sunbird were seen and a flock of mega-skulking Scaly Chatterer gave themselves up relatively easily! Rain interrupted our explorations of this area so we tried to drive out for it and stopped later in a fruitless search for Tiny Cisticola and some other species but only added Speke's Weaver to the lists before local people caused us a problem and we had to move on. However, the weather at this stage had also deteriorated and the rest of the day was dull and somewhat disappointing.



The endemic Black-fronted Francolin (left) allowed some excellent views this year as did the desirable Somali Courser (right). (Nik Borrow)

Heavy rain in the night meant that a huge question mark hung over the following day's excursion down towards the Kenyan border in search of some more special birds. A phone call assured us that it wasn't raining where we wanted to go so we decided to attempt the journey into some seriously wild countryside. Pink-breasted Lark was added to the list and other new birds included Common (Steppe) Buzzard, Red-backed Shrike, White-winged Widowbird and Green-winged Pytilia. For some considerable time, we

embarked on a long drive over difficult, flooded tracks with the weather ever threatening and just as we reached the area where some tell-tale nests gave a clue to the presence of some Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weavers, a species that just creeps over the border into Ethiopia from northern Kenya, our worst fears were realised as the rain came down and there was little option but to get wet! We managed to see the sparrow-weavers and we also hunted out Chestnut-headed Sparrow Larks and a pair of Yellow-vented Eremomelas but with conditions worsening it seemed more prudent to get back to 'civilisation'! The journey back was certainly an experience as the tracks had become rivers and we did wonder if we would manage to get back to the tarmac but all was well and so our Yabello experience came to an end!



We saw the wonderful endemic Stresemann's Bushcrow each day of our stay in the Yabello area. (Nik Borrow)

It was time to leave the south and head northwards to Awassa. The main road was still under construction for a good proportion of the latter half of the journey, which slowed our progress but we managed to reach Awassa for lunchtime. During that afternoon and before breakfast the following morning we explored the garden of our hotel and the reedy fringes of Lake Awassa itself. Fortunately, the much-wanted African Spotted Creeper fell very quickly and performed extremely well and we also found the hulking Blue-headed Coucal and colourful White-browed Robin-Chat in the gardens. By the lakeside itself, the jetty and shore were heaving with local people enjoying the ambience of an afternoon by the waters but despite the noise and activity a number of very tame species were seen. Dainty African Pygmy Geese floated on the lake amongst the same lily pads that the African Jacanas trotted across and the squeals and clatters from countless Marabou Storks and yodeling cries of African Fish Eagles filled the air. Black Crakes skittered everywhere and there were also White-faced Whistling Duck, Pink-backed Pelican, African Swamphen, Allen's Gallinule, Common Moorhen, White-winged Tern, a female Little Bittern, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Thick-billed Weaver and Bronze Mannikin.

Our next long journey took in a visit to the Senkelle Hartebeest Sanctuary, which was reached along a tortuous maze of narrow lanes some of which were washed out but we found a suitable access road and having arrived we found a marvellous oasis of remnant grassland habitat where sure enough we easily found

good numbers of the endangered Swayne's Hartebeest. Historically, we used to see this form in Awash National Park but it seems that the population there has all but disappeared and the total population left in the wild is possibly no more than 600 animals with about half of these in Senkelle. Our time here was limited but birds added to the list were Black-winged Lapwing, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Pectoral-patch Cisticola and some high flying Quailfinch. We reached the town of Welkite at dusk for an overnight stay.



African Spotted Creeper (left) allowed great views at Awassa and a visit to Senkelle Hartebeest Sanctuary gave us close views of the endangered Swayne's Hartebeest (right). (Nik Borrow)

Our final day took us into the Gibe Valley and of course once again we needed an early start as it gets very hot in the middle of the day. This region has a distinct western influence to its avifauna and several species are easier to see here than anywhere else on our circuit. We arrived shortly after dawn and were pleased to find numerous Four-banded Sandgrouse by the track side. On the river we spotted a couple of Knob-billed Ducks, African Wattled Lapwing, a huge Goliath Heron and the huge bulks of snorting Hippopotamus. While Merid prepared breakfast we went in search of estrildids and first up was the stunning *larvata* form of Black-faced Firefinch sometimes split as Ethiopian Firefinch. Later we teased out both African and Bar-breasted Firefinches and the scrub also held Striped Kingfisher, Orange-breasted Bushshrike and Moustached Grass Warbler. Overhead an African Hawk Eagle and Shikra were seen and just as it was time to leave Merid came up trumps with a small flock of near-endemic Abyssinian Waxbills.



Gibe Valley birds; male Four-banded Sandgrouse (left) and the near endemic Abyssinian Waxbill (right). (Nik Borrow)

Thus, the main tour came to an end for all that remained was a drive back to Addis Ababa in time for some of us to freshen up and catch the night flight home. For others the adventure continued with a flight to Gondar early the next morning.

The extension promised to mix birds and culture and it proved to be a hugely successful and most enjoyable addition to the tour and added a totally different dimension to the trip. The internal flights were efficient and prompt and it was a fantastic way to view the country as we flew over the intensely cultivated tablelands deeply bisected with deep gorges before giving way to the vast flat expanse of Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile. No sooner had we landed in Gondar than we were taken to our hotel for some reviving Ethiopian coffee and then straight to the famous royal enclosure, sometimes known as 'The Camelot of Africa'. We entered into the peaceful haven of the walled grounds that surround the Royal Palaces. Our guide was a fast speaking smooth operator who gave us a fascinating account of each of the palaces, building up a very vivid picture of life in the times these amazing buildings were constructed and literally bombarding us with information and fact after fact. We even added new birds to the trip list in the form of Booted Eagle and White-rumped Swift! It had been a fascinating morning but we were more than ready for our lunch and we experienced some superb local cuisine in the famous "Four Sisters" restaurant.



The visit to the Royal Palaces of Gondar is a cultural highlight of the tour. (Nik Borrow)

In the afternoon we drove down to the shores of Lake Tana which was quite birdy and a pleasant time was spent reacquainting ourselves with familiar species including a pair of Black Crowned Cranes and adding a few new ones such as Eastern Plantain-eater and Common Nightingale.

Our final day involved the last great adventure in order to see the striking White-headed Babbler. Although there had been some civil trouble recently incurring displaced people and a certain amount of unrest we were given clearance to follow the road down towards the Sudan border into country where we hoped to see the babbler. It was a fine morning and as we descended from the plateau the views of the escarpment and far below were once again quite staggering for the scenic changes in Ethiopia constantly amaze. It was a long drive and we eventually arrived at the site where we had successfully connected with the bird on a previous tour. This time however our success was not instantaneous and the babblers took a little searching for. During our meanderings we found new species for the trip such as Black-billed Wood Dove, Green Wood Hoopoe, Green Bee-eater, Meyer's Parrot, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Black-headed Gonolek, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, Black-rumped Waxbill and White-rumped Seedeater. We also obtained far superior views of a perched Western Banded Snake Eagle but it was a relief when we finally heard the calls of the White-headed Babblers and soon after we had this striking bird firmly in our sights. By now it was seriously

hot so we ate a good 'fasting food' lunch in a local bar and headed back to Gondar to celebrate with local Gin and tonics as the sun set and huge numbers of Yellow-billed Kites lazily circled into roost.



*The White-headed Babbler was the main target during the extension to Gondar and we enjoyed incredible views of this impressive bird.
(Nik Borrow)*

All in all, this had been a hugely successful trip. Ethiopia has been given a terrible reputation to recover from with the damage done by its wars, droughts and famines. This is a country of immense beauty, fertility and history although with an estimated population of over 108 million (with a median age of 18.8!) this trip had seemed more like a 'birds and people tour' at times! With the population growing at a staggering estimated 2.9% each year the pressure on the country's poorly protected National Parks, reserves and natural world will surely intensify. It is perhaps particularly telling that this year very few oxpeckers and fewer vultures were seen and populations of Blue-winged Geese, Wattled Ibis and Stresemann's Bush-crow seemed significantly lower than previous tours. Perhaps this is yet another destination that should be seen before it is too late? Many thanks must be given to Merid and our drivers who worked long hours and had made it possible to see most of the popularly accepted endemics possible on the route as well as many other much sought-after species. As always, the variety and grandeur of the scenery had been awesome and the people were friendly and welcoming. With its tame and abundant avifauna, a trip to Ethiopia is surely one of the best birding experiences available and this trip will certainly be remembered for many years to come.



Our views of the sublime Spot-breasted Lapwing on the Sanetti Plateau were a highlight of our Ethiopian adventure. (Nik Borrow)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

BIRDS

Total of bird species recorded: 501

Somali Ostrich *Struthio molybdophanes* About 12+ on the Aledeghe Plains and c. 6 on the Sarite Plains.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat.

Vulturine Guineafowl *Acryllium vulturinum* Great looks at these bizarre birds in the Yabello area.

Coqui Francolin *Peliperdix coqui* (H, LO) Nik heard one calling in the Negele area.

Moorland Francolin (Montane F) *Scleroptila psilolaema* 3 scoped in the Bale Mountains.

Crested Francolin *Dendroperdix sephaena* Commonly encountered in appropriate habitat in Awash and the south.

Clapperton's Francolin *Pternistis clappertoni* Seen well as we left Langan.

Harwood's Francolin *Pternistis harwoodi* This endemic was seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Chestnut-naped Francolin *Pternistis castaneicollis* This regional endemic was easy to see in the Bale Mountains.

Black-fronted Francolin *Pternistis atrifrons* Excellent views of this near endemic in the Mega area.

Erckel's Francolin *Pternistis erckelii* Scope views in the Jemma Valley.

Yellow-necked Spurfowl (Y-n Francolin) *Pternistis leucoscepus* Numerous in the south.

Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei* Males flushed on the Sarite and Magado Plains.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* 50+ on Lake Ziway.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* 3 were seen on Lake Ziway.

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* 2 were on the river in the Gibe Valley.

Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyanoptera* Endemic; only in the highlands and still appears to be declining.



Chestnut-naped Francolins (left) were easily seen in the Bale Mountains where the endemic Blue-winged Goose (right) seemed to have its stronghold. (Nik Borrow)

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* Common and widespread throughout the tour.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Small numbers were seen in the Bale Mountains.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* 3 on Lake Ziway and a male on Lake Awassa.

Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota* 4 seen on Lake Ziway.

Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* Small numbers were seen in the highlands.

Donaldson Smith's Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni* (H) Heard briefly in the Yabello area.

Star-spotted Nightjar *Caprimulgus stellatus* 1 seen up close and personal in Awash NP.

Slender-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus clarus* First seen well at Doho Lodge where they had newly hatched young.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Seen well at Doho Lodge.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* Seen at Gemassa Gedal, Bale Mountains and Gondar.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (NL) Nick saw 1 over Langano.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* They appeared to be breeding in the Royal Palace at Gondar.

White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis* Seen well at Langano and again in the Bale Mountains.

Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* Excellent views in the late afternoon en route to Negele.

Bare-faced Go-away-bird (Brown-f G-a-b) *Corythaixoides personatus* Great views, an endemic species if split.

White-bellied Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster* A common and most distinctive dry country species.

Eastern Plantain-eater *Crinifer zonurus* Seen well at Gorgora and toward Metema during the extension.

Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs* At least 18 were seen on the Aledeghe Plains.

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* 1 of these huge birds in Awash NP with a few more seen in the south.

White-bellied Bustard (Northern W-b B) *Eupodotis senegalensis* A pair seen well in Awash NP.

Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana* Small numbers seen in Awash NP and the Yabello area.

Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus* Seen well at Awassa.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* (H) Heard widely but somehow never seen!

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* 1 at Senkelle.

Levaillant's Cuckoo (African Striped C) *Clamator levaillantii* 1 for Nik and Nick at Langano.

Jacobin Cuckoo (Black-and-white C) *Clamator jacobinus* Sightings on the Sarite and Magado Plains.

Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* Seen well on the Soda Plains.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* Seen in the Jemma Valley and heard elsewhere.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* Good numbers in Awash NP.

Black-faced Sandgrouse *Pterocles decoratus* Fantastic close views of a pair near the Dawa River.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Excellent views at Doho Lodge.

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus* Good numbers in the Gibe Valley.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Hang your binoculars up if you miss this one in Ethiopia!
White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques* An abundant regional endemic.
African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* Great views of 20+ at Langano.
Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D) *Aplopelia larvata* After some work they were seen well at Langano.
Dusky Turtle Dove *Streptopelia lugens* An abundant species in the highlands.



Pigeons of various species are abundant in Ethiopia; the White-collared Pigeon (left) is endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea whilst the Dusky Turtle Dove (right) is more widespread through East Africa. (Nik Borrow)

White-winged Collared Dove *Streptopelia reichenowi* At least 5 birds seen at the Dawa River.
Mourning Collared Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* Common in the Awash area, the Rift Valley and the south.
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* A common and widespread species.
Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola* A common dry country dove constantly telling us to “work harder”!
Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea* Seen well in the Jemma and Gibe Valleys and again on the extension.
Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* A common and widespread species.
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* Numerous in dry bush country.
Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus* Easily seen during the extension.
Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* A few widespread sightings and first seen in the Jemma Valley.
Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* Good views at Langano and in the Harennia Forest.
Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Common in appropriate habitat.
Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* First seen at Langano with more in the Gibe Valley and on the extension.
Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii* This regional endemic was confiding in the Bale Mountains.
Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Easily seen at Lake Awassa.
African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis* 1 was seen well at Lake Awassa.
Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* At least 3 adults and 1 juvenile were seen at Lake Awassa.
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* 2 were seen at Lake Awassa.
Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C) *Fulica cristata* Small numbers on the Lake Langano and in the Bale Mountains.
Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina* Pairs were seen at Lakes Ziway and Tana.
Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* 3 seen distantly in the Bale Mountains.
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Small numbers in the Bale Mountains and Lake Awassa.
Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* Seen well at Langano and in the Gibe Valley.
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers seen in the Jemma Valley and Lake Ziway.
Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* Common and widespread in suitable habitat during the main tour.
Black-headed Lapwing (B-h Plover) *Vanellus tectus* At least 4 in Awash NP.
Black-winged Lapwing (B-w Plover) *Vanellus melanopterus* Just a flock of 12 in flight over Senkelle.
Crowned Lapwing (C Plover) *Vanellus coronatus* Seen in appropriate habitat from Aledeghe to Yabello.

African Wattled Lapwing (A W Plover) *Vanellus senegallus* 1 on the river in the Gibe Valley
Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus* Good numbers of this endemic on the Sanetti Plateau.
Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* 6 of these Palearctic migrants at Lake Langano.
Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* At least 20 seen at Lake Langano.
Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* (NL) Nick saw 1 at Lake Langano.
African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Common and easy to see on the Rift Valley lakes.
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant on the Rift Valley lakes.
Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Lake Langano.
Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Lake Langano.
African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* 5 birds on the Sanetti Plateau.
Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Palearctic migrants seen at Lakes Ziway and Langano.
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.
Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* 3 of these Palearctic migrants at Lake Langano.
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* A few widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.
Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis* Good looks at 9 on the Soda Plains.
Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* Sightings on the Aledeghe Plains, Awash NP and the Liben Plains.
Three-banded Courser (Heuglin's C) *Rhinoptilus cinctus* A pair at Langano and more in the south.



The views of Three-banded Courser at Lake Langano could not have been better! (Nik Borrow)

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Palearctic migrants at Lakes Ziway, Langano, Awassa and Tana.
Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.
Lesser Black-backed Gull (Baltic G) *Larus [fuscus] fuscus* Singletons at Lakes Langano and Awassa.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Lake Langano.
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Small numbers at Lakes Ziway and Langano.
White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Palearctic migrants seen on Lakes Awassa and Tana.
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* A few seen in the Rift Valley.
Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* 2 seen at Langano and a few more in the Gondar area.
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* 140 of these Palearctic migrants on the Sarite Plains.
Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* Common around the Rift Valley lakes and towns.
Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Just a few in the Rift Valley and Lake Tana.
White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.
African Darter *Anhinga rufa* 3 on Lake Ziway.
African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* A common and widespread bird in the highlands and Rift Valley.
Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Small numbers were seen around the Rift Valley lakes.
Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata* A regional endemic regularly encountered in the highlands.



Tame African Darters (left) can usually be found at Lake Ziway. Wattled Ibis (right) are endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea. (Nik Borrow)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* A female seen at Lake Awassa.
Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Singletons at Doho Lodge and on the extension.
Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Regularly encountered in suitable habitat throughout the tour.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Scattered sightings in small numbers throughout the tour.
Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* The world's largest heron; one was seen on the river in the Gibe Valley.
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Small numbers seen in the Rift Valley.
Great Egret *Ardea alba* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.
Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha* 1 on Lake Langano.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers were seen mainly on the Rift Valley lakes.
Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Commonly encountered at any wetland habitat throughout the tour.
Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Good numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.
Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* 3 at Beseka and more on the Rift Valley lakes.
Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* A pair on the Aledeghe Plains.
Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Occasional sightings in the south.
African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus* (LO) Nik saw a juvenile at Awash Falls.
Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* A poor showing with just 2 individuals seen.
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Small numbers at widespread localities.
Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* The most numerous and widespread vulture.
White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* Just 1 over the Aledeghe Plains and a few during the extension.

Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* Regularly encountered but never numerous throughout the tour.

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* A few sightings in the south and during the extension.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* 8 on the Aledeghe Plains and 2 over the Soda Plains.

Snake Eagle *Circaetus sp.* Either *gallicus* or *pectoralis* distantly on the Aledeghe Plains.

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens* Singletons in the Harennna Forest and during the extension.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* Just 2 sightings in the south.

Crowned Eagle (African Crowned E) *Stephanoaetus coronatus* 1 low over the Harennna Forest.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* 1 in the Sarite area and 3 more during the extension.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in Awash NP.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants over the Royal Palaces at Gondar.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* A commonly encountered and widespread species throughout the tour.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* This Palearctic migrant was most common in the Bale Mountains.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster* Nick saw 1 in the Yabello area and we all saw 1 in the Gibe Valley.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* 1 was seen on the extension.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* 8 widespread sightings.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* Most commonly encountered from the Jemma Valley to Langanoo.

Eastern Chanting Goshawk (Eastern Pale C G) *Melierax poliopterus* Small numbers in the south.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Sightings en route to Senkelle and in the Gibe Valley.

Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris* A brief view at Gemassa Gedal.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Sightings of this Palearctic migrant at Doho Lodge and Lake Ziway.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* A scarce Palearctic migrant with just 6 sightings.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Another Palearctic migrant, with at least 12 seen over the Aledeghe Plains.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Common to abundant throughout the tour.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* Easily seen around the Rift Valley lakes.

Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Magado.

Mountain Buzzard *Buteo oreophilus* 1 over the Harennna Forest.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* Both morphs of this common and distinctive raptor in the highlands.

African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* A pair at a daytime roost at Langanoo



Eastern Chanting Goshawks (left) were regularly encountered in the south. At Langanoo we were shown a pair of African Scops Owls (right) at their daytime roost. (Nik Borrow)

Cape Eagle-Owl *Bubo capensis* Superb views near Dinsho at a known stakeout.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus* (H) Distant birds heard at Langanoo and Yabello.

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Daytime views of a roosting bird in the Bale Mountains and another at Gondar.

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* Just 1 sighting of this diurnal owl near Negele.

Abyssinian Owl *Asio abyssinicus* Superb views in the Bale Mountains at a known stakeout.

Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus* Common and widespread but avoids dry bush country.

Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus* Common in dry bush country.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* A male was seen at Langano.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Sightings of Palearctic migrants in the Awash area, looking very worn at this season.

Central African Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] senegalensis* Resident birds were common in appropriate habitat.

Green Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* A pair was seen during the extension.

Black-billed Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus somaliensis* Frequent garrulous groups.

Black Scimitarbill (B Wood-hoopoe) *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* Seen well at Langano

Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor* The nominate race in Awash area and *cabanisi* in the south.

Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus* 3 on the Soda Plains and a pair en route to Awassa.

Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* Becoming more common in the far south.

Von der Decken's Hornbill *Tockus deckeni* Small numbers from Negele and the south.

Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris* First seen well in the Awash area.

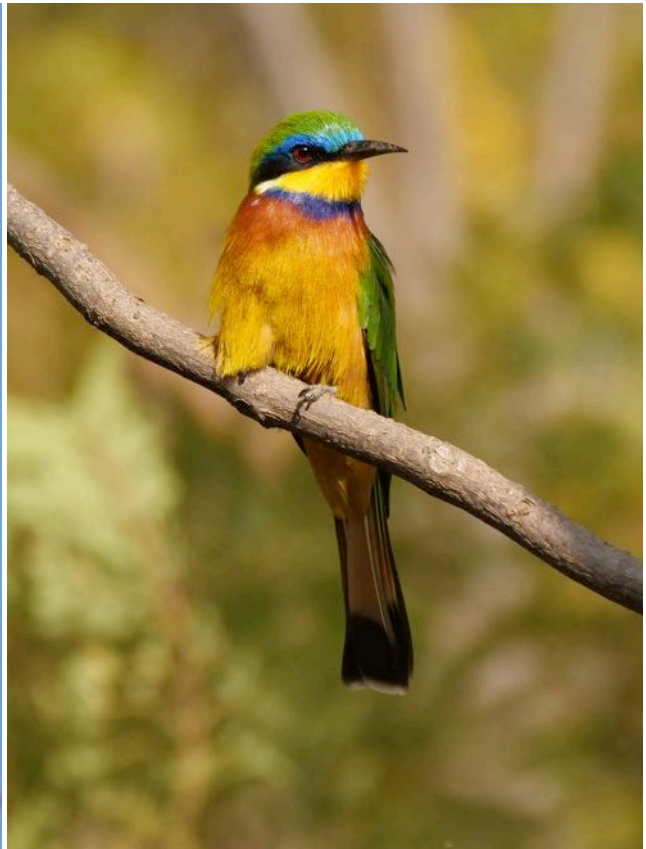
Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichii* First seen on the cliffs in the Jemma Valley.

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* Only small numbers in the Awash area and the south.

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis* Especially common in the enormous fig trees at Langano and Awassa.

Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R) *Coracias naevius* Small numbers seen particularly in the south.

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* The blue-breasted race *lorti* was seen in the south.



The blue-breasted race *lorti* of Lilac-breasted Roller (left) is restricted to north-east Africa. Blue-breasted Bee-eaters of the distinctive race *lafresnayii* (right) are treated as a separate species by some taxonomists and name Ethiopian Bee-eater. (Nik Borrow)

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* Frequent in the Awash area, Gibe Valley and during the extension.

European Roller (Eurasian R) *Coracias garrulus* 2 of these Palearctic migrants en route to Yabello.

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* Seen in the Jemma Valley, Langano and during the extension.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* Seen en route to Senkelle, Gibe Valley and during the extension.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* A few were seen at Doho Lodge and in the Rift Valley.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus* A pair at Melka Jebdu.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata* Easily seen around the Rift Valley lakes.

Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata* Brief views of a pair in the Jemma Valley.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* A conspicuous bird and a feature of the Rift Valley lakes.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* Great looks at the brightly coloured local *cyanostictus* race.

Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops [variegatus] lafresnayii* Split by BirdLife *et al* as Ethiopian Bee-eater.

Green Bee-eater (Little G B-e) *Merops orientalis* A pair was seen during the extension.

Olive Bee-eater (Madagascar B-e) *Merops superciliosus* Seen well in the Awash area and Lake Beseka.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* First seen well on the Aledeghe Plains with more near Awassa.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* First seen well at Melka Jebdu.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Seen in the Harenna Forest and during the extension.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala* The race *stigmatothorax* in the south.

Banded Barbet *Lybius undatus* A regional endemic seen at Melka Jebdu, Langano and during the extension.

Black-billed Barbet *Lybius guifsobalito* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat throughout the tour.

Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* Seen at Langano and Awassa.

Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* Several encounters with this colourful barbet in the south.

Yellow-breasted Barbet *Trachyphonus margaritatus* Seen well at Melka Jebdu.

D'Arnaud's Barbet *Trachyphonus darnaudii* Great views in the far south.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* Seen in the Harenna Forest and at Mega.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus* A singing bird seen well at Langano.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* A female in the Gibe Valley and a juvenile during the extension.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. 1 of these Palearctic migrants in Awash NP.

Red-throated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* Wonderful views at Langano.



Banded Barbet (left) is endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea. Red-throated Wrynecks (right) put on a great show at Langano. (Nik Borrow)

Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica* Numerous widespread sightings during the main tour.

Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicos namaquus* 1 was seen at Yabello.

Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus* A regional endemic seen well in the Bale Mountains.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Most sightings were in the south.

Eastern Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos spodocephalus* Best views at Langano and Awassa.

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* 3 sightings in the south.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Palearctic migrants seen over the Aledeghe Plains and in the far south.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Mainly Palearctic migrants but the resident *rufescens* was also recorded.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* 3 sightings in the south.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* 2 seen in the Bale Mountains and 1 at Magado.

Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons* An Ethiopian endemic seen at Langano.

Meyer's Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri* (LO) Nik saw 1 during the extension.

Red-bellied Parrot (African Orange-b P) *Poicephalus rufiventris* Sightings in the Yabello area.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Seen well during the extension.

Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta* A regional endemic with widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Grey-headed Batis *Batis orientalis* Seen well in the Awash area but voice is the best identification feature.

Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri* Seen and heard well at widespread locations.

Pygmy Batis (P Puff-back Flycatcher) *Batis perkeo* Seen well in the far south.

Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W) *Platysteira cyanea* Small numbers at Langano and Awassa.

Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* Seen well in the Negele area.

Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B) *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* Several widespread sightings.

Rosy-patched Bushshrike *Telophorus cruentus* Small numbers but seen well in the south.

Three-streaked Tchagra *Tchagra jamesi* Excellent views of 3 in the Negele area.

Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus* A few widespread encounters throughout the tour.

Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* A number of widespread sightings during the main tour.

Pringle's Puffback *Dryoscopus pringlii* This secretive bird was seen well in the far south.

Slate-coloured Boubou *Laniarius funebris* A common bird of thorn bush in the far south.

Red-naped Bushshrike *Laniarius ruficeps* Great looks at showy birds in the far south.



Rosy-patched Bushshrike (left) and Red-naped Bushshrike (right) are two stunning bushshrikes readily found in the region south of Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

Ethiopian Boubou (Tropical B) *Laniarius aethiopicus* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat throughout.

Black-headed Gonolek *Laniarius erythrogaster* Easily seen at the babbler site during the extension.

Brubru *Nilaus afer* Excellent views in the Awash area, the south and during the extension.

White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus* Some great views of this spectacular bird in the south.

Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli* Common and easy to see in dry bush country.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* A male of this Palearctic migrant was seen near Mega.

Isabelline Shrike (Daurian S) *Lanius isabellinus* 1 possibly this species was seen in Awash.

Red-tailed Shrike (Turkestan S) *Lanius phoenicuroides* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris* 3 were positively identified in the Awash area.

Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitoroides* Commonly encountered in the Rift Valley.

Taita Fiscal *Lanius dorsalis* Widespread sightings south of Yabello.

Somali Fiscal *Lanius somalicus* Common and easy to see in the Awash area and far south.

Northern Fiscal *Lanius collaris* Common and widespread throughout the highlands.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the Awash area.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants en route to Doho Lodge.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Scattered sightings of these Palearctic migrants.

Ethiopian Oriole (Abyssinian O) *Oriolus monacha* A regional endemic in the Harennna Forest, Awassa and Gorgora.

Black-headed Oriole (Eastern B-h O) *Oriolus larvatus* All sightings were in the south.

Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* Presumably this form in the south. See note.

Glossy-backed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus divaricatus* Presumably this form in the north and west. See note.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Commonly seen in appropriate habitat throughout the tour.

Stresemann's Bushcrow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* Wonderful views of this very striking Ethiopian endemic.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Small numbers in the Bale Mountains.

Cape Crow (Cape Rook) *Corvus capensis* Common to abundant in the highlands.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Very common and widespread.

Somali Crow (Dwarf Raven) *Corvus edithae* Small numbers from Goba into the south.

Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* Common and widespread.

Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris* A characterful regional endemic.

White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas* Seen well at Langanjo

White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus* Great looks at this regional endemic in the Bale Mountains.

Acacia Tit (Northern Grey T) *Parus thruppi* Several chances to get good looks in the south.

Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus musculus* Several sightings in the Awash area.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* Common on the Aledeghe Plains.

Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix signatus* We all saw the birds in the Magado area.

Pink-breasted Lark *Calendulauda poecilostema* A few seen in the Magado area.

Foxy Lark *Mirafrax alopex* Seen well in the Yabello area.

Archer's Lark (Sidamo L, Liben L) *Heteromirafrax archeri* 1 seen well on the Liben plains with local help.

Red-winged Lark *Mirafrax hypermetra* Just 1 in Awash NP.

Singing Bush Lark *Mirafrax cantillans* Small numbers in Awash NP.

Gillett's Lark *Mirafrax gilletti* After a long search 1 seen exceptionally well in Awash NP.



White-backed Black Tit (left) is an Ethiopian-Eritrean endemic whereas Gillett's Lark (right) ranges into Somalia and northern Kenya. (Nik Borrow)

Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* 15+ seen well on the Soda Plains.

Masked Lark *Spizocorys personata* About 6 birds with 2 pairs seen at close quarters on the Sarite Plains.

Thekla's Lark *Galerida theklae* An easily seen highland species.

Blanford's (Erlanger's) Lark *Calandrella [blanfordi] erlangeri* An endemic race seen in the northwest highlands.

Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica* 20+ seen on the Liben Plains and again on the Soda Plains.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* White-vented birds from the west highlands to Awash also in the northwest

Somali Bulbul *Pycnonotus somaliensis* The individuals around Doho Lodge show characteristics of this form.

Dodson's Bulbul *Pycnonotus dodsoni* The dry thorn bush version in the south.

Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor* Yellow-vented birds in the southeastern highlands.

Northern Brownbul *Phyllastrephus strepitans* Easily seen near Negele.

Black Saw-wing (Blue S) *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] pristoptera* (LO) Nik saw 1 during the extension.

Black Saw-wing (Brown S) *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] antinorii* Small numbers in the Harenn Forest.

Brown-throated Martin (Plain M) *Riparia paludicola* Small numbers at Lake Ziway.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant during the main tour.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* This Palearctic migrant was abundant.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida* A pair was seen en route to the Bale Mountains.

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Small numbers flying over the Liben Plains.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Scattered sightings in small numbers often associated with water.

White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* Small numbers of this endemic were seen in the Yabello area.

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant throughout the tour.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* Small numbers were seen in the Yabello area.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* 1 seen in the Jemma Valley and a pair near Negele.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Apparently both the resident *melanocrissus* and nominate race seen.

Moustached Grass Warbler *Melocichla mentalis* Seen well in the Gibe Valley.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* First seen well near Melka Jebdu.

Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii* Only seen at Langano.

Somali Crombec (S Long-billed C) *Sylvietta isabellina* Just 2 sightings in the far south.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread locations.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* This Palearctic migrant seemed to prefer highland localities.

Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* Seen well in the Bale Mountains.

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* Easily seen at Lake Awassa.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (H) This Palearctic migrant was heard in the Gibe Valley.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* 2 at Awassa were apparently Palearctic migrants.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Scattered sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

Cinnamon Bracken Warbler *Bradypterus cinnamomeus* Good views of this skulking bird in the Bale Mountains.



So many shades of brown; Northern Brownbul (left) near Negele and Cinnamon Bracken Warbler (right) in full song in the Bale Mountains. (Nik Borrow)

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* Seen in the Harenn Forest and at Gorgora and heard elsewhere.

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* Seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* Seen from the Rift Valley southwards.

Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa* Seen well near Negele and Yabello. Best identified from Rattling by voice.

Ashy Cisticola *Cisticola cinereolus* Seen well in Awash NP and at Magado.

Ethiopian Cisticola *Cisticola lugubris* This regional endemic was seen well in the Bale Mountains.

Foxy Cisticola *Cisticola troglodytes*. Great looks in the Jemma and Gibe Valleys.

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis* Seen and heard on the Sarite Plains.

Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunescens* Heard on the Liben Plains and seen at Senkelle.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Widespread sightings.

Pale Prinia *Prinia somalica* Seen well in the far south.

Buff-bellied Warbler *Phyllolais pulchella* This diminutive species was easy to see at Langano and Awassa.

Yellow-breasted Apalis (Brown-tailed A) *Apalis [flavida] viridiceps* Vocally different from *flavida*, split by BirdLife.

Red-fronted Warbler *Urorhipis rufifrons* Seen well at Doho Lodge and in the far south.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Common and widespread throughout the tour.

Grey Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes simplex* Seen well in thorn bush in the Awash area and the south.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* First seen well in the Awash area.

Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis* A pair was seen at Magado.

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens* Seen by all en route to Negele.

Rufous Chatterer *Turdoides rubiginosa* First seen in the Awash area with more in the south.

Scaly Chatterer *Turdoides aylmeri* Excellent views of a group south of Yabello.

White-rumped Babbler *Turdoides leucopygia* First seen well by all at Langano.

White-headed Babbler *Turdoides leucocephala* Perfect views during the extension.

Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri* Wonderful views of this endemic in the Bale Mountains.

African Hill Babbler *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* (H) We only heard this sweet songster in the Harennna Forest.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread locations.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Langano and during the extension.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* Very small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread locations.

Brown Parisoma *Parisoma lugens* The nominate race in Addis and *griseiventris* in the Bale Mountains.

Banded Parisoma *Parisoma boehmi* Seen well south of Yabello.

Abyssinian White-eye *Zosterops abyssinicus* Grey-bellied birds found in the north.



White-rumped Babbler (left) is a regional endemic and the recently split Abyssinian White-eye (right). (Nik Borrow)

Pale White-eye (P Scrub W-e) *Zosterops flavilateralis* Yellow-bellied birds in the south.

Heuglin's White-eye (Montane W-e) *Zosterops poliogastrus* Easy to see in the highlands.

Northern Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis* Seen well during the extension.

African Spotted Creeper *Salpornis salvadori* Great views of this much-wanted species at Awassa.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* Widespread sightings but all in non-breeding plumage.

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Common and widespread.

Lesser Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* Seen in the Jemma and Gibe Valleys and the extension.

Rüppell's Starling (R Long-tailed S) *Lamprotornis purpuroptera* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Golden-breasted Starling *Lamprotornis regius* Small numbers were seen well in the far south.

Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus* An abundant and beautiful starling of the drier country.

Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi* First seen well en route to Yabello.

White-crowned Starling *Lamprotornis albicapillus* Impossible to miss this attractive starling in the far south.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Fairly common at Langanano.

Red-winged Starling *Onychognathus morio* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Slender-billed Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris* Good numbers at Langanano and in the Bale Mountains.

Bristle-crowned Starling *Onychognathus salvadorii* Small numbers throughout the south.

White-billed Starling *Onychognathus albirostris* This regional endemic was easily seen in the Jemma Valley.

Sharpe's Starling *Poeoptera sharpii* Distant birds in the fruiting figs at Langanano.

Magpie Starling *Speculipastor bicolor* A total of 6 seen in the Yabello area.



The striking regional endemic White-crowned Starling (left) is easy to see on the Liben Plains but the nomadic Magpie Starling (right) is not always an easy bird to track down! (Nik Borrow)

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Sporadic sightings of small numbers during the main tour.

Abyssinian Ground Thrush *Geokichla piaggiae* 1 was seen at Langanano and another well in the Bale Mountains.

Groundscraper Thrush *Turdus [litsirupa] simensis* A regional endemic split as Ethiopian Thrush by BirdLife et al.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios* Scattered sightings at lower altitudes.

Bare-eyed Thrush *Turdus tephronotus* Seen well in the south.

Abyssinian Thrush (Mountain T) *Turdus abyssinicus* A common highland species.

Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* 1 seen well at Doho Lodge.

White-browed Scrub Robin (Red-backed S R) *Cercotrichas leucophrys* Easily seen in thorn bush country.

Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus* A regional endemic seen well in the Bale Mountains.

Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edoloides* Widespread sightings in small numbers.

African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus* A common bird of dry bush country.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (NL) 1 of these Palearctic migrants seen at Langanano.

African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* A common and confiding bird of the highlands.

Rüppell's Robin-Chat *Cossypha semirufa* A common bird and easy to see in the highlands and Langanano.

White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's R-C) *Cossypha heuglini* Seen well at Awassa.

Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis*. 2 skulking birds at Langanano.

Spotted Palm Thrush (S Morning T) *Cichladusa guttata* Several sightings of this attractive bird in the south.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* A Palearctic migrant heard in the Yabello area and seen at Gorgora.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Palearctic migrants of the distinctive race *samamisticus*.
White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa* A regional endemic seen near Debre Birhan.
Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis* 4 sightings of this Palearctic migrant in the south.
Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinereus* Seen well in the Jemma Valley and at Langano.
Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (NL) 1 of these Palearctic migrants seen by Nick at Gemassa Gedal.
African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* The distinctive race *albofasciatus* was seen well in the highlands.
Moorland Chat (Alpine C, Hill C) *Pinarochroa sordida* Exceedingly common in the highlands.



The regional endemic White-winged Cliff Chat (left) showed extremely well (this is the female) as did the tame and multi-named Moorland Chat (right). (Nik Borrow)

Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* Seen in the Jemma Valley, Mega and Gondar.
Rüppell's Black Chat *Myrmecocichla melaena* A regional endemic seen well in the Jemma Valley.
Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* A few widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.
Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae* A roadside bird in the highlands.
Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* A very numerous Palearctic migrant.
Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* A very numerous Palearctic migrant.
Blackstart *Oenanthe melanura* Just 1 at Lake Beseka.
Familiar Chat (Red-tailed C) *Oenanthe familiaris* A pair in the Jemma Valley.
Brown-tailed Rock Chat *Oenanthe scotocerca* Good views of a pair near Negele.
Sombre Rock Chat *Oenanthe dubia* This little-known bird was easy to see at Lake Beseka.
Abyssinian Wheatear (A Black W) *Oenanthe lugubris* Seemingly common in the Jemma Valley.
Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis* Small numbers seen in the south.
Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* A male seen en route to Negele.
Nile Valley Sunbird *Hedydipna metallica* Small numbers in non-breeding plumage in the Awash area.
Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* (H, LO) Nik heard 1 in the Hareenna Forest.
Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* Widespread sightings but nowhere common.
Hunter's Sunbird *Chalcomitra hunteri* Seen well en route to Yabello.
Tacazze Sunbird *Nectarinia tacazze* Common in the highlands but mainly in non-breeding plumage.
Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus* Widespread sightings and many not looking very beautiful at all!
Marico Sunbird (Mariqua S) *Cinnyris mariquensis* Mainly seen in the south.
Black-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris nectarinioides* Great looks at a breeding plumage male near Negele.
Tsavo Sunbird *Cinnyris tsavoensis* The 'purple-banded' sunbirds in the Negele area appear to be this species.
Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus* Our first shining examples were en route to Doho Lodge.
Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus* Easy to see *fazoqlensis* in the highlands and in the far south *albiventris*.
Shelley's Sparrow (S Rufous S) *Passer shelleyi* Seen well in the south and associated with whistling thorn.



Black-bellied Sunbird (left) and Shelley's Sparrow (right) are both localised East African species to be found in the Negele area. (Nik Borrow)

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Easily seen during the extension.

Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* Abundant virtually throughout.

Parrot-billed Sparrow *Passer gongonensis* A pair near the Sarite Plains.

Sahel Bush Sparrow (B Petronia) *Gymnoris dentata* First seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Yellow-spotted Petronia (Y-s Petronia) *Gymnoris pyrgita* A bird of the dry bush country in the south.

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger* Good numbers in the Awash area and the south.

White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli* A striking bird in the Awash area and the south.

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali* A common bird in the Awash area, Rift Valley and the south.

Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus* Seen well in the Jemma Valley and Melka Jebdu.

Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser donaldsoni* One of the highlights of our visit to the Magado area.



Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver (left) at Melka Jebdu and Donaldson Smith's Sparrow Weaver (right) at Magado. (Nik Borrow)

Grey-capped Social Weaver (G-headed S W) *Pseudonigrita arnaudi* Seen on the Liben Plains and in the far south.

Black-capped Social Weaver *Pseudonigrita cabanisi* Good numbers in the Yabello area.

Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis* This pretty little bird was seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak W) *Amblyospiza albifrons* Small numbers at Lake Awassa.

Baglafaecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafaecht* Small numbers were noted throughout the highlands.

Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus* Seen well at Langano and Awassa.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* A few seen at Langano, Awassa and Gorgora.

Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula* Seen from Melka Jebdu to Langano with a few males in plumage.

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* Seen in the south.

Speke's Weaver *Ploceus spekei* Breeding plumaged birds seen south of Yabello.

Village Weaver (Black-headed W) *Ploceus cucullatus* A few widespread sightings.

Juba Weaver *Ploceus dichrocephalus* Breeding plumaged birds seen near Negele and at the Dawa River.

Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus* Small numbers, mainly in non-breeding plumage south of Yabello.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* First seen well at Melka Jebdu.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* Most numerous in the far south.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus* Breeding plumaged birds in the Jemma Valley.

Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus* Non-breeding plumage in the Rift Valley but breeding at Sarite Plains.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* Small numbers near Debre Birhan and in the Bale Mountains.

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* Small numbers in breeding plumage in the Magado area.

Red-collared Widowbird (Red-naped W) *Euplectes ardens* Breeding plumaged birds in the Jemma Valley.

Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch) *Pytilia melba* Seen well in the south.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* Widespread sightings in dry bush country.

Abyssinian Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza salvadorii* Great looks at a family party in the Harenna Forest.

Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta* Small numbers in the Gibe Valley.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Common and widespread except in the Bale Mountains.

African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* A pair in the Gibe Valley.

Black-faced Firefinch (Ethiopian F) *Lagonosticta [l.] larvata* Seen well in the Gibe Valley and during the extension.

Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* A common and widespread species.

Purple Grenadier *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster* Small numbers were seen in the south.



The nominate race of Black-faced Firefinch (left) is sometimes treated as a separate species. The male Purple Grenadier (right) is another stunning estrildid. (Nik Borrow)

Yellow-bellied Waxbill *Coccyzygia quartinia* Small numbers in the Bale Mountains.

Abyssinian Waxbill *Estrilda ochrogaster* Excellent views of this localised species in the Gibe Valley.

Crimson-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda rhodopyga* A few sightings and first seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* A pair seen at the babbler site during the extension.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Small numbers on the Gaysay Grasslands.

Quailfinch (African Q) *Ortygospiza [atricollis] fuscocrissa* 4 high-flying birds at Senkelle.

African Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Small numbers in the Jemma Valley, Doho Lodge and during the extension.

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata* Seen at Awassa and during the extension.

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata* Widespread sightings and some in breeding plumage.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* Widespread sightings and some in breeding plumage.

Straw-tailed Whydah *Vidua fischeri* Males in breeding plumage in the south.

Long-tailed Paradise Whydah (Eastern P W) *Vidua paradisaea* Breeding plumaged birds in the Awash area.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A common Palearctic migrant. The following races were identified:

Western Yellow Wagtail (Yellow-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] lutea* Small numbers identified.

Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] flava* Small numbers identified.

Western Yellow Wagtail (Black-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] feldegg* Seen at Lake Ziway.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (NL) A Palearctic migrant seen by some in the Haremma Forest and near Yabello.

Mountain Wagtail *Motacilla clara* This elegant wagtail was seen in the Jemma Valley.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* This Palearctic migrant was seen at the Genale River and during the extension.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Seen well at the Awash Falls and Gibe Valley.

Abyssinian Longclaw *Macronyx flavicollis* This endemic was seen well in the Bale Mountains.



A male Straw-tailed Whydah in full breeding plumage (left) Abyssinian Longclaw (right) is an Ethiopian endemic. (Nik Borrow)

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in Awash NP.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Seen at Gemassa Gedal and in the Jemma Valley.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* First seen well on the Liben Plains.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Palearctic migrants at scattered locations.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* A common Palearctic migrant in the highlands and on the Sarite Plains.

African Citril *Crithagra citrinelloides* Small numbers at widespread localities.

White-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra leucopygia* At least 3 seen at the babbler site during the extension.

Yellow-rumped Seedeater (White-throated S) *Crithagra xanthopygia* Seen in the Jemma Valley and extension.

Reichenow's Seedeater (Kenya Y-r S) *Crithagra reichenowi* First seen well at Lake Ziway.

Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra flavigula* Great views of a pair of this endemic at Melka Jebdu.

Salvadori's Seedeater (S Serin) *Crithagra xantholaema* After much searching a male of this endemic near Negele.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica* Easily seen in the Jemma and Gibe Valleys and during the extension.

White-bellied Canary *Crithagra dorsostrata* Easily seen in the far south.

Ankober Serin *Crithagra ankoberensis* Good looks at Gemassa Gedal.

Northern Grosbeak-Canary *Crithagra donaldsoni* Good looks at a singing male south of Yabello.

Brown-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra tristriata* Easy to see this regional endemic in the highlands.

Streaky Seedeater *Crithagra striolata* A common species in the highlands.

Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus flavivertex* Seen near Debre Birhan and in the Bale Mountains.

Ethiopian Siskin (Black-headed S) *Serinus nigriceps* This endemic is a very common bird in the highlands.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in the Jemma Valley and 2 during the extension.

Striolated Bunting (Striated B) *Emberiza striolata* Close views of a male by Lake Beseka.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (C-b Rock Bunting) *Emberiza tahapisi* Very common in the Jemma Valley.

Somali Bunting (S Golden-breasted B) *Emberiza poliopleura* Seen well in the south.



The Bale Monkey is endemic to Ethiopia and was a long awaited BirdQuest lifer! (Nik Borrow)

MAMMALS

Total of mammal species recorded: 40

Yellow-spotted Hyrax (Bush H) *Heterohyrax brucei* Seen during the extension.

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis* Widespread sightings.

Grivet Monkey *Chlorocebus aethiops* Hybrids confuse the situation but we mainly encountered this form.

Bale Monkey *Chlorocebus djamdjamensis* A wonderful encounter in the Harennna Forest.

Guereza (Eastern Black-and-white Colobus) *Colobus guereza* Most numerous at Bishangari and Awassa.

Olive Baboon *Papio anubis* Widespread sightings.

Hamadryas Baboon (Sacred B) *Papio hamadryas* Roadside animals in the Awash area.

Gelada *Theropithecus gelada* Seen well at Gemassa Gedal.

Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus* Widespread sightings.

Ethiopian Highland Hare *Lepus starcki* Seen in the Debre Birhan area and in the Bale Mountains.

Abyssinian Grass Rat *Arvicanthis abyssinicus* Apparently this species near Debre Birhan.

Blick's Grass Rat *Arvicanthis blicki* Positively identified in the Bale Mountains where it is abundant.

Giant Mole Rat *Tachyoryctes macrocephalus* A number of these bizarre creatures seen on the Sanetti Plateau.

Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* Seen at Langanjo.

Unstriped Ground Squirrel *Xerus rutilus* Widespread sightings in the south.

Egyptian Mongoose (Egyptian M) *Herpestes ichneumon* 1 ran across the road in the Gibe Valley.

Slender Mongoose (Common S M) *Herpestes sanguineus* 1 south of Yabello.

Spotted Hyena *Crocuta crocuta* (H) Heard at night in the Awash area and at Yabello.

African Civet *Civettictis civetta* 1 for the second car in the Magado area.

Common Genet *Genetta genetta* 1 for some south of Yabello.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas* 4 in the Sarite area.

Ethiopian Wolf (Simien Fox, S Jackal) *Canis simensis* 1 seen well hunting on the Sanetti Plateau.

African Golden Wolf *Canis anthus* Seen well in Awash NP.

Grevy's Zebra *Equus grevyi* 6 seen on the Sarite Plains.

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* Seen in the Awash area, Bale Mountains and in the south.

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Seen at Lake Langano and in the Omo River.

Hartebeest (Swayne's H) *Alcelaphus [buselaphus] swaynei* c. 250 at Senkelle Hartebeest Sanctuary.

Gerenuk (Southern G) *Litocranius walleri* Seen well south of Yabello and Magado.

Guenther's Dik-dik *Madoqua guentheri* Common in the south.

Salt's Dik-dik *Madoqua saltiana* Common in the Awash area.

Grant's Gazelle (Bright's G) *Nanger [granti] notatus* Seen well on the Soda and Sarite Plains.

Soemmerring's Gazelle *Nanger soemmerringii* 12+ on the Aledeghe Plains.

Beisa Oryx *Oryx beisa* 1 on the Aledeghe Plains and 5+ in Awash NP.

Oribi (Sudan O) *Ourebia [ourebi] montana* 6 at Senkelle Hartebeest Sanctuary.

Bohor Reedbuck *Redunca redunca* Small numbers seen on the Gaysay Grasslands.

Common Duiker (Bush D) *Sylvicapra grimmia* Singletons at Langano and Harenna Forest.

Mountain Nyala (Gedemsa) *Tragelaphus buxtoni* Tame and habituated animals in the Bale Mountains.

Lesser Kudu *Tragelaphus imberbis* 3 in Awash NP and 1 en route to Yabello.

Bushbuck (Ethiopian Highlands B, Menelik's B) *Tragelaphus [scriptus] meneliki* Seen in the Bale Mountains.



Giant Mole Rat on the Sanetti Plateau. (Nik Borrow)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* and Glossy-backed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus divaricatus*

The IOC list follows the taxonomy in a recent paper (2017) by Jérôme Fuchs, Dawie H. De Swardt, Graeme Oatley, Jon Fjelsdå and Rauri C. K. Bowie entitled *Habitat-driven diversification, hybridization and cryptic diversity in the Fork-tailed Drongo (Passeriformes: Dicruridae: Dicrurus adsimilis)*. In this paper it is suggested that there are two species of Fork-tailed Drongo in Ethiopia, which presumably follow the already described races *lugubris* and *jubaensis* which are assigned to Glossy-backed Drongo *Dicrurus divaricatus* and Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* respectively. However, the only actual specimen from Ethiopia that was sampled by their team was that of one *jubaensis* and the presence of any other form in Ethiopia is therefore presumed or subjective. The morphological differences are slight, *jubaensis* which was described by van Someren in 1931 has not always been recognised but is reportedly recognised by a greener gloss and a less deeply forked tail than *lugubris*. The drongos seen in the Negele area were presumably of this form (*Dicrurus adsimilis jubaensis*) whilst those seen in the Rift Valley (and elsewhere?) were of what is currently being called Glossy-backed Drongo *Dicrurus divaricatus lugubris*.



Presumed Glossy-backed Drongo *Dicrurus divaricatus lugubris* at Langanò (left) and Melka Jebdu (right) (Nik Borrow)

