



The stunning Stresemann's Bushcrow did not fail to disappoint – just one of the many 'mega' birds in the Yabello area! (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 saw all of them very well. 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 confirmation and may or may not be an endemic species. This tour added the chance to see another endemic 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 as well as sound recordings made and photographs taken. Other additions to our previous itineraries included a visit to the Sarite Plains to see a recently discovered

population of Masked Lark as well as a cultural extension to Gondar and Lalibela, which also included the chance to see the impressive Walia Ibex and the little known White-headed Babbler. During our journeys we thoroughly explored the three EBAs (Endemic Bird Areas) identified by BirdLife International; the Central Ethiopian highlands, Northern Ethiopia and the South Ethiopian highlands and our travels took us from high plateau tablelands to low arid plains and thorn bush as well as spectacular montane moorlands and lush forests. Fortunately neither political nor tribal tensions affected us this year and the weather was generally hot, dry and sunny with bright blue skies that supported the countries claim to thirteen months of sunshine!

Our adventure started with a bang north of Debre Birhan on the impressive escarpment overlooking the Danakil Depression that produced Ankober Serin, Rüppell's Black Chat and a herd of Geladas. 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 Abyssinian Wheatear, White-winged Cliff Chat, White-billed Starlings 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 a journey that took us down into the lands of the Afar, Issa and Kereyou tribesmen that surround Awash National Park. In this desiccated countryside we hunted out Arabian Bustard, Scissor-tailed Kite, Somali Bulbul, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark and Nile Valley and Shining Sunbirds. Lions roared at night and for mammal enthusiasts we saw Wildcat, Beisa Oryx, Soemmering's Gazelle, Northern Gerenuk and Grevy's Zebra. The lava flows at the base of the still active Fantalle volcano were home to Sombre Rock Chat, Blackstart and Striolated Bunting which were all seen well before descending into the Rift Valley for a stay in a comfortable lodge on the shores of Lake Langano where there were good numbers of Yellow-fronted Parrots coming to gorge themselves on figs in a huge spreading tree by the restaurant. Banded Barbets were also present here along with Black-winged Lovebird, White-cheeked Turaco and Ethiopian Oriole. Climbing up into the cooler air of the South Ethiopian highlands we stopped at the Bale Mountains Park HQ where approachable Gedemsa (or Mountain Nyala) found sanctuary under the enormous juniper and Hagenia trees that also sheltered White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Catbird and both Montane Nightjar and Cape Eagle Owl were found during the day. Our day on the Sanetti Plateau was a memorable one with close up and personal views of the stunning Ethiopian Wolf and its favoured prey, the bizarre Giant Root Rat! The elegant Spot-breasted Lapwing showed extremely well in the crystal clear air and comical Rouget's Rails ran around amongst the grey cushion plants where Chestnut-naped and Moorland Francolins and Abyssinian Longclaw were found. A long drive took us across the plateau and through the Hareenna Forest where secretive Abyssinian Woodpecker and Abyssinian Crimsonwings obliged before the forest gave way to a sweeping panorama of well-vegetated hillsides where the beautiful Ruspoli's Turacos was seen.

A three night's stay in Negelle was our centre for exploring the surrounding area. We had no trouble tracking down the extremely rare and endangered Archer's Lark, Salvadori's Seedeater eventually showed well and Juba Weavers with some males in breeding plumage put in an appearance. Driving through wild thorn-bush countryside Vulturine Guinea fowl and Guenther's Dik-diks scattered from the roadside and although our time at the Dawa River was curtailed the subtly plumaged White-winged Collared Dove was there to greet us. In the Yabello area we had plenty of time to hunt out White-tailed Swallow and the very special Stresemann's Bushcrow certainly did not disappoint. Pringle's Puffback, Red-naped Bushshrike and Northern Grosbeak-Canary allowed amazing views and at night Donaldson Smith's Nightjar was seen. We also managed to get excellent views of a BirdQuest lifer – the recently split Black-fronted Francolin and a visit to the remote Sarite Plains produced the desirable Masked Lark. Heading back north to Awassa, African Spotted Creeper was seen easily and at a specially created reserve the rare Swayne's Hartebeeste was also not a problem. On the journey to Gibe Gorge a vast wetland allowed us to see a small flock of Wattled Cranes and in the gorge itself we encountered a flock of Abyssinian Waxbill. The main tour ended in Addis Ababa but most of the group continued to Gondar where we visited the Royal Enclosure and swimming pool before heading into the Simien Mountains National Park where we were treated to an intimate encounter with the habituated Geladas and won superb views of the amazing Walia Ibex. An excursion towards the Sudanian border gave us our second BirdQuest lifer of the tour in the form of the rather attractive White-headed Babbler before moving onto Lalibela for more culture and a tour of the incredible monolithic rock hewn churches. Our final bird of the trip was a dapper pair of White-fronted Black Chats on the way to the airport, which was a wonderful way to end a tour full of iconic species and awesome scenery. Of the other 'diamond' (◇) species encountered on the tour we saw Somali Ostrich, Erckel's Francolin, Wattled Ibis, Somali Courser, White-collared Pigeon, African Collared Dove, the *Iafresnayii* form of Blue-breasted Bee-eater (often now considered a species in its own right), Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Fox Kestrel, 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' Black Saw-wing, Somali Crombec, Brown Woodland

Warbler, Boran, Ethiopian and Foxy Cisticolas, Pale Prinia, Yellow-vented and Green-backed Eremomelas, Scaly Chatterer, White-rumped Babbler, Menetries's Warbler, Abyssinian and Montane White-eyes, Golden-breasted, Shelley's, White-crowned, Bristle-crowned and Sharpe's Starlings, Abyssinian Ground and Bare-eyed Thrushes, Black Scrub Robin, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Little Rock Thrush, Red-breasted Wheatear, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Black-bellied Sunbird, Shelley's and Swainson's Sparrows, Rüppell's Weaver, Red-billed Pytilia, Grey-headed Silverbill, Steel-blue Whydah, African Citril and Brown-rumped Seedeater.



In the Ghion hotel grounds were numerous Tacazze Sunbirds (top left) although most were in moult. We did not stay long and drove to the dramatic escarpment north of Ankober (top right) where we found endemic Ankober Serins (bottom left) and regional endemic Rüppell's Black Chat (bottom right). (Nik Borrow)

Having landed in Addis Ababa after a tiring overnight flight yet rejuvenated by seven years as the country still operates on the Julian rather than Gregorian calendar, we stopped for breakfast at the Ghion Hotel. The gardens are surprisingly birdy and while the vehicle was being made ready we watched numerous Hooded Vultures and Yellow-billed Kites swirling overhead. Red-eyed and Dusky Turtle Doves crooned from the trees and there were huge numbers of Tacazze Sunbirds sucking the nectar from the many flowering shrubs. Speckled Mousebirds were common, our first Blue-breasted Bee-eater of the distinctive *lafresnayii* race was seen, a flock of Slender-billed Starlings dashed past and a Brown Parisoma was discovered. Also present were Common Bulbul, Eurasian Blackcap, Montane White-eye, Abyssinian Thrush, Abyssinian Slaty and African Dusky Flycatchers, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Swainson's Sparrow, Baglafaecht Weaver, Red-billed Firefinch, African Silverbill, Bronze Mannikin and Brown-rumped and Streaky Seedeaters.

We did not linger too long in the hotel grounds as we undertook the drive to Debre Birhan where we checked into our hotel and straight after lunch headed further north to the dramatic escarpment at Gemassa Gedal, where we hoped to find our first endemic; the unassuming Ankober Serin. The species was described as recently as 1979 and is very similar to the Yemen Serin just a few hundred kilometres to the east on the other side of the Red Sea. It lives pretty much exclusively on the vertical cliffs of the escarpment and only rarely visit 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. We were fortunate to have clear weather for our visit and the scenic views were nothing short of astounding. Better still we only had to wait a short time before a small flock of serins flew into the gorge below us and we all managed some good looks. A small herd of Geladas (actually not a true baboon) grazed on the slopes above us but moved away quickly because of disturbance. We looked around for other species to entertain us and were pleased to see Wattled Ibis, White-collared Pigeon, Rüppell's Black Chat and White-billed Starling (all near-endemics) and an Erckel's Francolin pop into view alongside some (Ethiopian) Rock Hyrax. In the skies we saw our first Bearded Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle and Augur Buzzard and there were also Cape Crow, Fan-tailed Raven, Thekla's Lark, Rock Martin, Groundscraper Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush, Moorland Chat, Pied Wheatear, Tree Pipit and Yellow-crowned Canary. As we were leaving a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk dashed past.

We were up well before dawn the following day, setting off in the dark for a full day trip to the Jemma Valley. It was just getting light as we reached the top of the huge, deep and wide valley. The well-maintained dirt road wound and twisted steeply downwards. It was already light when we stopped at a place where we were hoping to see the endemic Harwood's Francolin. Although several Erckel's Francolins were calling it was a little while before a Harwood's was heard and then somewhat a little distantly so we had to walk through a maze of fields towards the source of the sound. With the sun rising and the birds calling less frequently it was a nail-biting amount of time before we finally spotted a Harwood's Francolin striding through a cropped field below us. Several more repeat viewings ensured that everyone was happy with this bird. Also here were Black-winged Lovebirds and a female White-winged Cliff Chat although there was no sign of her mate. We continued to the bottom taking in several Abyssinian Wheatears and breeding plumaged Red-collared Widowbirds and Black-winged Red Bishops along the way.



Standing on the edge of the awesome Jemma Valley (Nik Borrow)

Whilst Merid prepared the first of what are becoming legendary picnic breakfasts we went birding. A small stream ran through the river valley and held Three-banded Plover, Grey and Mountain Wagtails and supported some fruiting trees and this attracted a variety of thirsty and hungry birds. The ubiquitous Speckled Pigeon and vocal Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Vinaceous, Namaqua and Laughing Doves were seen. A super Foxy Cisticola was much appreciated, Mocking Cliff Chat, Bush Petronias, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver and Speckle-fronted Weaver were identified and Black-billed Barbet, Ethiopian Boubou and iridescent Greater Blue-eared Starling were seen feeding on the figs. Long-tailed African Paradise

Flycatchers flitted to and fro and the overhanging bushes provided cover for Northern Crombec, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Abyssinian White-eye, Northern Black Flycatcher and Scarlet-chested and Variable Sunbirds. There was also evidence of Palearctic migration with familiar species such as Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, Common House Martin, Willow Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Eurasian Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Isabelline Wheatear, Western Yellow Wagtail, Ortolan Bunting and Common Redstarts of the handsome *samamisticus* race. However, in particular we were on the lookout for a regional endemic, the rather dowdy Yellow-rumped (or perhaps more suitably named White-throated) Seedeater and scoured the thorny acacias for our quarry. After much searching we found the seedeater and had good close views but as it was getting hotter by the second we sought the cool shade of the river where a superb Half-collared Kingfisher dashed past and a succession of birds as they sheltered from the heat came down to drink. Small birds featured heavily and we watched Cut-throat Finch, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Village Indigobird, Pin-tailed Whydah, Yellow-fronted Canary and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting quenching their thirst.



The endemic Harwood's Francolin (left) and regional endemic Yellow-rumped Seedeater (right) were both found in the Jemma Valley. (Nik Borrow)

Retracing our steps across the valley we eventually spotted the desirable Fox Kestrel and other species seen during this busy day included Egyptian Goose, Helmeted Guineafowl, Rüppell's Vulture, Brown Snake Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Spur-winged Lapwing, Klaas's Cuckoo, Nyanza Swift, Pied Kingfisher, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Hemprich's Hornbill, Common Kestrel, Northern Fiscal, Pied Crow, Wire-tailed Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-faced, Singing and Stout Cisticolas, Red-winged Starling, Red-billed Oxpecker, Siberian Stonechat and African Firefinch. Before returning to Debre Libanos we stopped to scan the wide-open fields quartered by Pallid and Montagu's Harriers where our first Erlanger's Larks were seen

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 by the time that we reached the ancient capital, situated at 3,000m and teetering on the edge of the escarpment. The twisting road descended steeply from here, along the way we were treated to an excellent view of some White-winged Cliff Chats and a little further on we reached Melka Ghebdu, at 1,400m. Our target here was another localised endemic the Yellow-throated Seedeater. Arriving at the site in the early morning while the air was still fresh there were seemingly birds everywhere. Yellow-breasted Barbets behaving like clockwork toys were found and also our first Banded Barbet (a regional endemic) in a fruiting tree along with Red-headed Weaver and the more sought after Rüppell's Weaver. The seedeater gave itself up easily singing right beside where we had set up for breakfast, which made for very relaxed dining! During our morning break we also found Black Stork, African Harrier Hawk, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Eastern Plantain-eater, White-browed Coucal, Black-crowned Tchagra, Common Nightingale, Beautiful and Marico Sunbirds, Red-billed Quelea and Northern Red Bishop.



An excellent encounter with a pair of the regional endemic White-winged Cliff Chat (left) below Ankober and the endemic Yellow-throated Seedeater at Melka Ghebdu. (Nik Borrow)

Following this success, we continued on our way downwards towards Awash along a road that is being newly constructed. As we descended so the landscape became more arid and acacia dominated the dusty landscape. A few stops took in our first bush birds, most mainly widespread species that we would encounter again such as White-backed Vulture, Purple and Abyssinian Rollers, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoes of both resident and migratory forms, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, Red-fronted Barbet, Red-bellied Parrot, Slate-coloured Boubou, Fork-tailed Drongo, White-winged Black Tit, Ethiopian Swallow, Grey Wren-Warbler, Rüppell's and Superb Starlings, Shining Sunbird, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Green-winged Pytilia and Long-tailed Paradise Whydah. We also found our only Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse of the tour and were treated to some marvellous close views at its hiding place. The road carried us to meet the tarmac at a sugar cane plantation where suddenly Marabou Storks became abundant and we arrived at Bilen for a late lunch.



A chance sighting on the way to Bilen, this male Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse did a great job of hiding! The impressive male Long-tailed Paradise Whydah in breeding plumage (right) (Nik Borrow)

Bilen lies to the north of Awash National Park. The rooms of the lodge here overlook an extensive marsh that surrounds the springs where Wilfred Thesiger himself once rested. We spent the rest of the afternoon and the following morning exploring the local area. The grounds of the lodge proved to be quite birdy and an adult Eastern Imperial Eagle on arrival was a bit of a surprise for the few who saw it. More thorn-bush birds were added to the list and we managed good looks at Mourning Collared and Ring-necked Doves, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Cardinal Woodpecker, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Red-fronted Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Rufous Chatterer, White-browed Scrub Robin, African Grey Flycatcher, Nile Valley Sunbird, Yellow-spotted Petronia and White-headed Buffalo Weaver. The bulbuls in this area are a mixed bag and are probably intergrades but at least some appear to show characteristics of the recently re-split Somali Bulbul. As the temperatures dropped we headed out towards the hot springs. Along the way we stopped for a Red-tailed Shrike but noted hundreds of doves streaming past, which turned out to be migrant European Turtle Doves. A single African Collared Dove was fortuitously spotted in the bush alongside some resting birds that we chose to look at, a super Black Scrub Robin was seen and a Barbary Falcon circling

overhead was another surprise. At the springs themselves our 'guard' promptly set his guns down, stripped off and took his evening bath whilst we went birding. Western Marsh Harriers quartered the plains and a distant Arabian Bustard was scoped. Small numbers of Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark were feeding on the flats and the pools held Black Crake, Common Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt, Temminck's and Little Stints, Common Snipe, Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers and Malachite Kingfisher. A gathering of bee-eaters included more Northern Carmine Bee-eaters looking gorgeous in the late afternoon sunlight and also Little and Olive Bee-eaters. Migrant Steppe Grey Shrike, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Barred and Menetries's Warblers were seen and a flock of Wattled Starling stopped by whilst at night Slender-tailed Nightjars were around the camp, which brought the day to a successful close.



Watching Northern Carmine Bee-eaters in low afternoon sunlight at Bilen Springs was a fantastic way to spend some time. (Nik Borrow)

The following morning a Lion was roaring in the early hours and we found Pied Avocet, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe and Grey-headed Batis from our lodge before breakfast after which we went on to pick up the guard with his gun and visited the Aledeghe Plains. The area was very dry and the enormous plains were almost grass free, which meant that Arabian Bustards were easily seen (no less than eight being seen during the morning) whilst a distant Somali Ostrich shimmered in the heat haze. Raptors continued to feature and although vulture numbers had crashed to virtually zero we did find Black-winged Kite, Bateleur, Tawny Eagle and Lanner Falcon, with the main prize being small numbers of delicate Scissor-tailed Kites floating gracefully in the blue skies above us. Good numbers of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse were seen flying over towards their drinking areas and we saw a number on the ground with Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks and Singing Bush Larks seemingly everywhere, the latter being particularly numerous this year. White-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards and spiky-crested Black-headed Lapwings were admired and other birds included Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Eurasian Wryneck, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Somali Fiscal, Woodchat Shrike, Ashy Cisticola, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver and Tawny Pipit. We even did well for mammals with Abyssinian Hare, Unstriped Ground Squirrel, African Golden Wolf, Grevy's Zebra, Common Warthog, Northern Gerenuk, Salt's Dik-dik, Soemmerring's Gazelle and Beisa Oryx all seen well.



Bustards are a feature of the Awash area; we saw no less than eight Arabian Bustards (left) and enjoyed repeated views of White-bellied Bustards (right). (Nik Borrow)

After this successful start we continued on into Awash National Park for an overnight stay in the idyllically placed Awash Falls Lodge where we watched the murky Awash River cascading over the rocks. The park was bone dry this year and in all honesty quite hard work; we only saw one pair of Kori Bustards and tracking down the hulking Red-winged Lark took all of the afternoon but we finally saw one as the sun was setting. Other new birds for the trip included Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Yellow-billed Stork, White Stork, Egyptian Vulture, Shikra, African Grey Hornbill, Pygmy Falcon, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Desert Cisticola and Straw-tailed Whydah.



A land of contrasts: Nile Valley Sunbird (left) and Sombre Rock Chat (right). (Nik Borrow)

We left the park fairly early and headed for the strange barren landscape that lies under the shadow of the dormant Fantalle volcano, where a very 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. We found several Blackstarts easily and Striolated Buntings showed well but best of all the Nile Valley Sunbirds here were all in pristine breeding plumage. We then crunched our way over the unstable terrain in search of the unassuming Sombre Rock Chat. In this inhospitable place we quickly found a pair of these little known birds and had some great views of them. On the lake itself we noted Purple Heron, Great and Little Egrets, Reed Cormorant, African Darter, Western Osprey, African Fish Eagle, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Gull-billed Tern and before we left the area we met some Hamadryas (or Sacred) Baboons by the roadside.

We stopped for lunch at Adama (formerly Nazret) and then headed 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. A pair of Black Crowned Crane was appreciated, African Jacanas potted across the emergent vegetation and waders on the muddy margins included Ringed Plover and Collared Pratincole and there were also White-faced and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Spur-winged Goose, Garganey, Hottentot Teal, Little Grebe, Glossy Ibis, African Spoonbill, Squacco Heron, Intermediate Egret, White-breasted Cormorant, Grey-headed Gull, White-winged Tern, Woodland Kingfisher and Brown-throated Martin. Our final destination was a very comfortable lodge on the southeastern shore of Lake Langan. 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. This is one of the best places to see this increasingly threatened endemic, and they appeared on cue. These colourful birds gave us a good show and the early morning light illuminated their glowing colours perfectly as they flew around in small flocks that came to feed in the enormous fig tree that grew outside the open fronted restaurant. In the same tree gathered Silvery-cheeked Hornbills and in this fig rich area by the end of the day we must have seen at least 100 of these huge birds.



Good numbers of endemic Yellow-fronted Parrots (left) can be seen on the shores of Lake Langan. Blue-breasted Bee-eaters of the distinctive race lafresnayii (right) should surely be treated as a separate species! (Nik Borrow)

During the day we explored the various habitats that the area had to offer. Down at the lakeshore there was a selection of wetland species that included Pink-backed Pelican along with the more numerous Great White Pelicans, Hadada Ibis, a single Goliath Heron, Black-tailed Godwit, several Senegal Thick-knees resting on the rocky shore, Lesser Black-backed Gull on the lake and Lesser Swamp Warbler in the reeds. Our morning walk 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 near-endemic White-cheeked Turaco and Ethiopian Oriole, the endemic 'brown-faced' form of Bare-faced Go-away-bird, which is treated as a separate species by some authors as well as African Olive and Bruce's Green Pigeons, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Double-toothed Barbet and Violet-backed Starling. The acacia scrub held a wealth of birds and in particular we were pleased to find Red-throated Wryneck and a superb pair of Three-banded Courser that allowed close approach.

A group of near endemic White-rumped Babblers showed well and more widespread species included Crowned Lapwing, Striped and African Pygmy Kingfisher, Black Scimitarbill, Green-backed Honeybird, Lesser and Scaly-throated Honeyguides, Nubian and Eastern Grey Woodpeckers, Grey Kestrel, Western Black-headed Batis, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Grey-backed Fiscal, the 'brown' form of Black Saw-wing, Rattling Cisticola, Buff-bellied Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, African Thrush, Northern Black Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Common Rock Thrush, Little and Village Weavers and Reichenow's Seedeater. In the tall dark woodlands we spent a long time searching for Lemon Doves that ultimately surrendered themselves and along the way we enjoyed great looks at an Abyssinian Ground Thrush and in the afternoon we also added European Honey Buzzard, Tambourine Dove and a colourful male Narina Trogon to the list.



A pair of Three-banded (or Heuglin's) Coursers was a most welcome find during our morning walk by Lake Langano. (Nik Borrow)



The near-endemic White-backed Black Tit (left) and the endemic Mountain Nyala (right) were easily seen around the Bale Mountains National Park HQ. (Nik Borrow)

The next day we swiftly departed and began the long journey into the Bale Mountains but along a much improved road that dramatically shortens this trip and enables more birding time en route. It is a fascinating drive that leads up out of the Rift Valley past giant flowering *Echinops* thistles and hulking Silvery-cheeked Hornbills and then through seemingly endless wheat fields before climbing up into the thin air of the Bale

Mountains themselves. A stop at a small roadside stream produced Red-chested Swallow, which is rather scarce here at the edge of its range and we also spotted our first Blue-winged Geese and Rouget's Rails. Also on the journey we found Black-winged Lapwing, White Wagtail, our first White-headed and Lappet-faced Vultures and a Martial Eagle, which was a good bird for the trip. Further on a small pool was home to a lone Northern Shoveler, Yellow-billed Duck, Red-knobbed Coot and in the Gaysay grasslands we searched for Ethiopian Cisticola and some initially elusive Abyssinian Longclaws before moving on to the park headquarters where we admired the bold and tame Gedemsa (or Mountain Nyala) and a few Ethiopian Highlands (or Menelik's) Bushbuck.

After lunch we spent the rest of the afternoon at the park headquarters where we were guided to a roosting Cape Eagle-Owl (the form here, *dillonii* is sometimes considered to be part of a separate species: Mackinder's Eagle-Owl) and an African Wood Owl. Despite an intensive search for a roosting Abyssinian Long-eared Owl we had to give up, as it appeared to have gone AWOL. As compensation we were treated to close views of a roosting Montane Nightjar and amongst the enormous trees that enjoy protection here we sought out the noisy endemic Abyssinian Catbird and a party of near-endemic White-backed Black Tits. We also had good views of a couple of Brown Woodland Warblers, Dark-capped Bulbul, African Stonechat and Yellow Bishop during our rather lengthy hike that afternoon. After this it was a relatively short run to our final destination, Goba taking in a pair of African Black Ducks en route.

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 sturdy bus started climbing the highest all-weather road in Africa firstly through some remnant juniper woodland where a Black Sparrowhawk and a cracking Cinnamon Bracken Warbler were seen before we entered a zone of giant heath and *Hypericum* which in turn gave way to the tussock grass, cushion plants and Giant Lobelias of the afro-alpine zone. At first Chestnut-naped Francolins were common by the roadsides and comical Rouget's Rails seemed to be running everywhere.



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

The plateau levels out at around 4,000 metres and in the distance we could see Tullu Deemt (4,377m), the second highest peak in Ethiopia. The weather was clear and sunny and the ice that had formed overnight was already melting. Flocks of Ethiopian Siskins were everywhere and we made a stop for a scattered group of Spot-breasted Lapwings, one of the best looking of all the endemics! On a walkabout we saw some migrant Red-throated Pipits and flushed some African Snipe from one of the many small marshes that also held Ruddy Shelducks whilst Red-billed Choughs swirled over the tops in the clear blue skies. These latter two birds are both mostly Palearctic species that occur in the Bale Mountains at their only sub-Saharan outpost. 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 Root-rat during the rare occasions that it ventures out of its burrow. A splendid Long-legged Buzzard was a real surprise and we had great views of it as it glided low over the moorlands.



Endemic Spot-breasted Lapwing (top left) and Ethiopian Siskins (top right) were seen easily on the Sanetti Plateau, as was the rare Ethiopian Wolf now down to about 450 animals left in the wild. (Nik Borrow)

During our drive we were exceedingly fortunate to find at least four Ethiopian Wolves very close to the road itself and admired these sleek creatures in their smooth red coats as they trotted through the grey cushion plants in search of a tasty rat snack. We struggled to find Moorland Francolin but eventually spotted a distant covey only to find more close to the road as we descended back down towards the woodlands. In the more open country we found a party of Brown Parisoma of the race *griseiventris*, which was once mooted as being worthy of specific status and Yellow-bellied Waxbill. An Ayres's Hawk Eagle passed overhead but most of

the afternoon was spent looking for the tiny near-endemic Abyssinian Woodpecker. It was definitely a bit of a frustrating struggle but persistence paid off as we finally found a male at a nest hole at the very end of the day.

It was time to leave Goba and head south to Negelle, but first we had to cross over the Sanetti Plateau again. Up on the tops we enjoyed repeat views of the wolves and 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 Hareenna 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 lower down. At a stop in the middle of the forest we had success in finding a few Abyssinian Crimsonwings and even scored views of another Abyssinian Woodpecker. African Hill Babbblers sang sweetly from the shrubbery, small numbers of attractive Sharpe's Starlings were found in the treetops and we also saw a distant Crowned Eagle, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Grey Cuckooshrike, Olive Sunbird and African Citril.

After leaving the forest the drive took us through some rolling hills and wild and remote bush country but eventually we called a stop in what appeared to be an unremarkable area of bush bisected by a dry gully with a few larger trees. Within minutes we were watching a superb Ruspoli's Turaco, arguably the jewel in the crown of the Ethiopian endemics. This rare species has a very restricted range, but we were now in the midst of it and we enjoyed some scope views of this attractive species. 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, White-crested Helmetshrike and Black-headed Oriole but as usual time was running out so elated by our success we carried on to reach Negelle just before nightfall.



Our second near-endemic Abyssinian Woodpecker of the trip was found in the vast Hareenna Forest. As we neared Negelle we managed to see two fine endemic Ruspoli's Turacos (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 but these were seemingly disembodied voices! We were 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 almost mythical Archer's Lark and the two forms are now currently lumped by the IOC as a monotypic species. We headed over to the area where Merid's last group had seen the larks and found a bunch of local people waiting for us. Word had obviously got out and they had the lark staked out at their feet so we saw this exceedingly rare bird very easily this year. It was a treat to admire its intricately patterned, quail-like plumage and we were able to watch this highly localised and particularly endangered species for as long as we wished. In fact actually seeing a Somali Short-toed Lark now proved to be more of a challenge but by following calling and singing birds we soon had one in the bag and watched it feeding nearby. Elsewhere Black-chested Snake Eagle and Eastern Chanting Goshawk surveyed the open grasslands frequented by a few Temminck's Coursers, Plain-backed Pipit and the striking White-crowned Starling. After one of Merid's

splendid bush breakfasts out on the plains we admired some Lilac-breasted Rollers of the blue-breasted form *loriti* and managed to find the unassuming Boran Cisticola, which isn't safely identified as such unless it sings!

Moving onto a nearby area of acacia scrub we spent some time searching for another endemic seedeater, in this case Salvadori's Seedeater which caused us some problem as it did not give itself up easily and the morning was wearing on and temperatures were rising. During our meanderings we obtained good views of Somali Crombec as well as Acacia Tit, Yellow-breasted Apalis of the 'brown-tailed' form and Collared Sunbird but just as it felt like time to give up the song of the seedeater reached our ears and we were surprised to find it close by for some good views. In the afternoon we continued to explore the bush country and discovered the gaudy Red-and-yellow Barbet that likes to nest in the characteristic chimneystack termitaria of the region as well as Foxy Lark, Dodson's Bulbul, Bare-eyed Thrush, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Speke's Weaver and Purple Grenadier.



The critically endangered Archer's Lark (left) was found easily with some local help on the Liben Plains. Salvadori's Seedeater (right) near Negelle was not so obliging but eventually gave itself up for good views. (Nik Borrow)

The next day we made an excursion to the Genale River where we hoped to find the localised Juba Weaver. We did indeed find small numbers including some males in full breeding plumage but they were very mobile and took much longer than initially anticipated however finally everyone had scope views. The site was an excellent location for a bush breakfast and a number of other birds kept us busy. A super male Black-bellied Sunbird in breeding plumage was a popular find and there was also a pair of Wahlberg's Eagles, Northern Brownbul and Spotted Palm Thrush. At another site nearby starlings featured prominently and we saw the gorgeous Golden-breasted, Shelley's and Bristle-crowned Starlings. The unassuming Brown-tailed Rock Chat showed well and other species included Brubru and Eastern Violet-backed and Shining Sunbirds.

Leaving Negelle before dawn the next morning we headed west towards Wachile and then on to Yabello. We made a stop at the Dawa River and quickly saw White-winged Collared Dove. Unfortunately our presence in the area caused some upset to the local people and we were not free to go birding as we wished so after a bush breakfast where we managed to see some Black-faced Sandgrouse in flight, we continued on our way. We saw good numbers of Vulturine Guinea fowl and Guenther's Dik-diks by the roadsides and occasional stops produced the hoped for Yellow-vented Eremomela, a showy pair of Red-naped Bushshrike and some amazingly showy Scaly Chatterers as well as Pearl-spotted Owlet, Black-throated Barbet, Pygmy Batis, Banded Parisoma, Hunter's Sunbird, Vitelline Masked and Chestnut Weavers, White-bellied Canary. We also added Black-backed Jackal and Southern Gerenuk to our growing mammal list. Towards the late afternoon we had reached more open plains where we came to a halt as our first endemic White-tailed Swallows put in an appearance. Not too much further on we found another primary target, the must-see Stresemann's Bushcrow. Described as recently as 1938 and confined to an area of about 6,000 sq. km around Yabello, the very restricted range has long been a puzzle, but 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.



Some good bush birding enlivened the long drive from Negelle to Yabello and we enjoyed incredible views of Red-naped Bushshrike (left) and Scaly Chatterer (right). (Nik Borrow)

We had three full days in the Yabello area and we had already seen two of the major targets. As the day dawned we found ourselves on the Soda Plains where Shelley's Sparrows were nesting in the Whistling Thorn and there were small numbers of Bright's (split from Grant's) Gazelles. While breakfast was being prepared we looked around in search of more of the regional specialties starting with some fine Somali Coursers, which were very quickly followed by some obliging Short-tailed Larks busy attacking the soil for food with their heavyweight bills. 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 fine male Northern Grosbeak-Canary singing on top of a bush right in front of us. The calls of a Pringle's Puffback alerted us to its presence and we were astonished to find a particularly showy individual flaunting itself in front of us. We scarcely had time to draw breath when a skulking Three-streaked Tchagra also popped into view and I think never before have these often tricky birds fallen so quickly and so easily! Also present were Pale Prinia, Black-cheeked Waxbill, Somali Bunting and some *albiventris* (white-bellied) Variable Sunbirds. At another open plain we noted a movement of falcons, which were mostly Lesser Kestrels but mixed up amongst them were a few Amur Falcons (only 4 other documented records for Ethiopia in *Birds of Ethiopia & Eritrea*) and even a single Eurasian Hobby. A Peregrine Falcon was perched high up on a rocky crag and we also added Gabar Goshawk, D'Arnaud's Barbet and Lesser Striped Swallow to the list whilst at night we found Donaldson Smith's Nightjar and African Scops Owl in the grounds of our lodge.



A bright-eyed male Pringle's Puffback (left) and Northern Grosbeak Canary (right) were highlights of our birding at Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

The next day was devoted to a new addition to the itinerary that involved an excursion 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 involves a special visit to the lava deserts north of Marsabit. The habitat that we were hoping to find it in was not lava but rather black cotton soil so we hoped that the recent rain would not cause us too much of a problem accessing the site. We set off before dawn as temperatures were sure to soar on the plains and we wanted to get there as early as was realistically possible. All was going reasonably to plan whilst we were on a

gravel road but when this petered out and became little more than a track we wondered if our coaster bus would actually make it. We finally found that the track became nothing more than a footpath and the recent rain had washed a deep gulley through it. A surprising passing motorbike was enlisted by our driver in order to make a recce of the rest of the route and some friendly local Boran people set about trying to make an alternative route for us as we set up for breakfast whilst decisions were being made. Because of the rain it was incredibly birdy in this area; Northern Red Bishops were in breeding plumage and looked like little red fireballs as they buzzed about, both Jacobin and Diederik Cuckoos were seen, several Harlequin Quail were flushed and there were also Black-headed Heron, Lesser Masked Weaver and White-winged Widowbird in breeding plumage. After breakfast and the return of our driver a decision was reached and he was determined to get us (and the bus) safely as close to the plains as he could. The local villagers had smoothed a way for us and our bus was guided around and across the gulley to continue on our drive along the path. Eventually the path disappeared altogether and the bus could go no further and by now it was 10:30 and getting hot but we were just over a kilometre away from the plain itself so it was decided that those who wished should continue on foot with the guide in search of the lark. There was by now little to see except a Taita Fiscal and the horizon shimmering in the heat haze so we trudged onto the vast expanse of flat open land where for a moment needles and haystacks came to mind. Our guide pointed to a distant bush and informed us that he had last seen the larks in that area on a previous visit so we set off trudging over the cracked, crumbling soil with only the odd Isabelline Wheatear to keep us company. However miracles do happen and eventually we did find the lark – it had nowhere to hide really and by the end of our endeavours we notched up five individuals all far, far paler than illustrated in the field guide.



Masked Lark on the Sarite Plains – a new addition to the classic BirdQuest Ethiopian itinerary. (Nik Borrow)

The next day we headed down towards the Kenyan border in search of the recently split Black-fronted Francolin. Previously considered a form of Chestnut-naped Francolin this distinctively plumaged bird is now considered to be a restricted range species in its own right and we knew where to find it but (at least to start with) seeing it wasn't easy! 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 them seemed to be inside the bushes but as it got lighter eventually

a bird was spotted standing out on a rock and we all had clear views in the scope. Of course having seen one we then saw more and more and ultimately this bird did not present too much of a challenge at all! This was a BirdQuest lifer and our success was suitably celebrated with a super breakfast surrounded by francolins!



The recently split endemic Black-fronted Francolin (left) was a BirdQuest lifer! An endemic immature White-tailed Swallow takes a rest in the Yabello area. (Nik Borrow)

There was little left to see in this region so we birded our way slowly back to our lodge picking up a few new species for the list along the way. A Spotted Thick-knee was seen at an opportune stop whilst looking at vultures and some migrant Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were on roadside wires and had perhaps been grounded by a squall of rain passing through. Elsewhere we finally set our eyes on Tiny Cisticola, an African Hawk Eagle sailed overhead and back in the lodge area we found Bearded Woodpecker, Black-capped Social Weaver and several Grey-headed Silverbills.

It was time to leave the south and head northwards to Awassa, the road was under construction for a good proportion of the latter half of the journey, which simply took forever. We started at five and drove all day finally reaching our hotel by the lake shore twelve hours later which was virtually twice the amount of time that it should have done had the road been in decent shape. With just under an hour of light before darkness fell it was a mad dash around the garden to find much-wanted African Spotted Creeper, which fortunately performed well and then out onto the lakeside itself to see what waterbirds we could find. The jetty and shore was heaving with local people enjoying the ambience of sunset over the lake 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 yodelling cries of African Fish Eagles filled the air. Black Crakes skittered everywhere and there were also African Swamphen and Allen's Gallinule, a male Little Bittern of the resident race *payesii*, Purple Heron and a migrant Sedge Warbler. We watched the sun set and drew a deep breath after our long journey.

We had really not had ample time that evening so we explored the hotel grounds and revisited the lakeshore the following morning before breakfast. Similar birds to the previous day were seen but we also enjoyed views of the hulking Blue-headed Coucal and White-browed Robin-Chat before we had to leave. This was going to be another long journey with a visit to the Senkelle Hartebeest Sanctuary to take in on the way, which was reached along a tortuous maze of narrow lanes. Eventually we managed to get our bus along a suitable access road and having arrived we found a marvellous oasis of remnant grassland habitat where sure enough the endangered Swayne's Hartebeest was easily found. We used to see this species 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 Greater Honeyguide and Zitting and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas. Heading onwards we made another detour along more dirt tracks and a short hike to a large wetland where there were hundreds of Common Cranes, 18 Wattled Cranes and certainly no less than 50 attentive children fascinated by our antics. The cranes were distant but scope views helped a lot and then it was all back on the bus for a long drive to Welkite which we reached in the late evening quite exhausted.



African Spotted Creeper (left) put on a good show at Awassa. At Senkelle we enjoyed close encounters with the endangered Swayne's Hartbeest (right). (Nik Borrow)

Our final day took us to Gibe Gorge and we needed an early start of course, as it gets 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 but it was wet after overnight rain and little was moving by the river except the huge bulks of snorting Hippopotamus. A bedraggled Moustached Grass Warbler was found in the rank vegetation and further on a few Bar-breasted Firefinches. Another look along the river gave us Little Ringed Plover, Grey-headed Kingfisher and African Pied Wagtail and as the vegetation dried out a few more birds appeared including Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, Croaking Cisticola and ultimately a large flock of Abyssinian Waxbill. A prolonged watch for birds coming down to drink hoping for Red-billed Pytilia was largely disappointing although we did see a Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat and what was apparently a tail-less male Steel-blue Whydah showing the diagnostic white underwing coverts and flank spot. Thus the main tour came to an end for all that remained was a drive back to Addis Ababa in time to freshen up and catch the night flight home. For those that wanted more it was a short nights sleep and an early departure for the airport the next morning to connect with a flight to Gondar in the far northwest of the country for the Gondar, Simien and Lalibela extension.



Fasilides Castle in the Royal Enclosure at Gondar. (Nik Borrow)

The extension promised to mix birds, mammals and culture and it was 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 no sooner had we landed in Gondar than we were taken for some breakfast and reviving Ethiopian coffee and then straight to the famous royal enclosure, sometimes known as 'The Camelot of Africa'. A church service was in full swing so before entering the enclosure we were led into the midst of the proceedings amongst the white robed masses devoutly listening to the scripts read, sang and chanted out loud. The sights, sounds and movements were totally overwhelming and it was with some relief we came away and entered into the peaceful haven of the walled enclosure that surrounds 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. After visiting the palaces we then moved to the 'Swimming Pool' which although currently empty of water was interesting in its own right.



Religious celebrations and the Royal Enclosure at Gondar. (Nik Borrow)

From Gondar we boarded our 4X4 vehicles on a journey high up into the Simien Mountains and in the late afternoon we found ourselves in the late afternoon sunlight surrounded by a confiding herd of Geladas.



Gelada Baboons foraging in the Simien Mountains. (Nik Borrow)

Although closely related to baboons these vegetarians are placed in their own genus and the numbers in the Simien Mountains are awesome. Not only that some of these large herds are incredibly approachable and seemingly habituated to tourists so that the encounters with these incredible animals are definitely of the up close and personal kind! Late afternoon is a great time to observe these primates as their constant daily foraging for plant matter when the creatures hardly ever look up from their food gradually gives way to more social activities. They spend most of their time shuffling along on their bottoms so the visual signals with which they communicate are placed on their chest with an hourglass-shaped pink patch and a complex language of eye-blinks and grimaces. We spent the rest of the day with them till the setting sun sent all of us heading for our respective resting places for the night. Ours was the well-situated and luxurious Simien Mountain Lodge and we had a little taste of Ethiopian luxury for one night!



Images from our time with the Geladas in the Simien Mountains. (Nik Borrow)

Most of the following day was spent in the Simien Mountains National Park and we set off early on a quest for the endemic Walia Ibex, potentially a mammal 'lifer' for BirdQuest so the heat was on. It was hard not to be sidetracked on the journey to the best area for the ibex not only by the birds (although we had already seen most species that occurred here) but more so the jaw-dropping scenery which presented a marvellous panorama at every turn. We arrived in the Chenek Camp area after a couple of hours and almost immediately our driver spotted a group of ibex on the hillside. They were quite distant but could be seen easily and a count of 17 animals was made. This initially seemed good enough but we were assured that if

we took it slowly we could get closer to these impressive goats! There was one male in particular amongst the herd with a sweeping majestic set of horns. At around 4,000 metres the air was thin and it was not easy climbing up towards the ibex and we certainly couldn't walk at speed. Amazingly enough the animals stayed, taking no notice of our attentions and more interested in something that we couldn't see on the sheer cliff face below us. We watched them for some time before the lure of whatever was below drew them downwards over the cliff edge and out of sight, never to be seen again! We considered ourselves particularly fortunate as we were told that the large number as we had seen was unusual and it was not every visitor that even managed to see the creatures at all. There was no sign of any Ethiopian Wolves but as we had seen these so well in the Bale Mountains it scarcely mattered. Around Chenek Camp itself there were tame near-endemic Thick-billed Ravens to entertain us and as we made our way slowly back to Gondar we added Common (Steppe) Buzzard, Slender-billed Starling and Long-billed Pipit to the list.



Just three of the 17 strong herd of Walia Ibex that we saw in Simien National Park. (Nik Borrow)

The following day we set off on a quest for another BirdQuest lifer and headed out from Gondar towards the border with Sudan. The road took us lower and lower into completely different habitat and avifauna with the result that we picked up a number of write-ins to our list both on the journey (Grasshopper Buzzard and Meyer's Parrots were both seen) and at our destination. We had made this journey in order to find the striking White-headed Babbler, which is a species restricted to the far northwest of Ethiopia extending into Eritrea and across the border into easternmost Sudan. We had never ventured into this region during previous BirdQuest tours so the prospect of getting another life bird for the company was an exciting challenge. In fact seeing the bird did not present any challenge at all once we had arrived in its habitat. Having got out of the car we found ourselves looking at some gorgeous Black-headed Gonolek and then Nik spotted a babbler and the Gonoleks were immediately forgotten. We went on to see two groups of babblers and enjoyed some excellent close views of the birds and with some good sound recordings made it would seem that this bird could be easily found on future tours. With the main target safely in the bag we spent the rest of the morning seeing what else we could find. It was a very pleasant if increasingly hot morning birding and the other main success was the discovery of a pair of near-endemic Red-billed Pytilia, a species that we had missed during the main tour. Some Green-backed Eremomelas were much appreciated and other

species that we found were mainly widespread ones and included Great Spotted Cuckoo, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Masked Shrike, Pale Flycatcher, Black-billed Wood Dove, Green Wood Hoopoe, African Golden Oriole, Yellow White-eye, Pygmy Sunbird, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow and Black-rumped Waxbill.

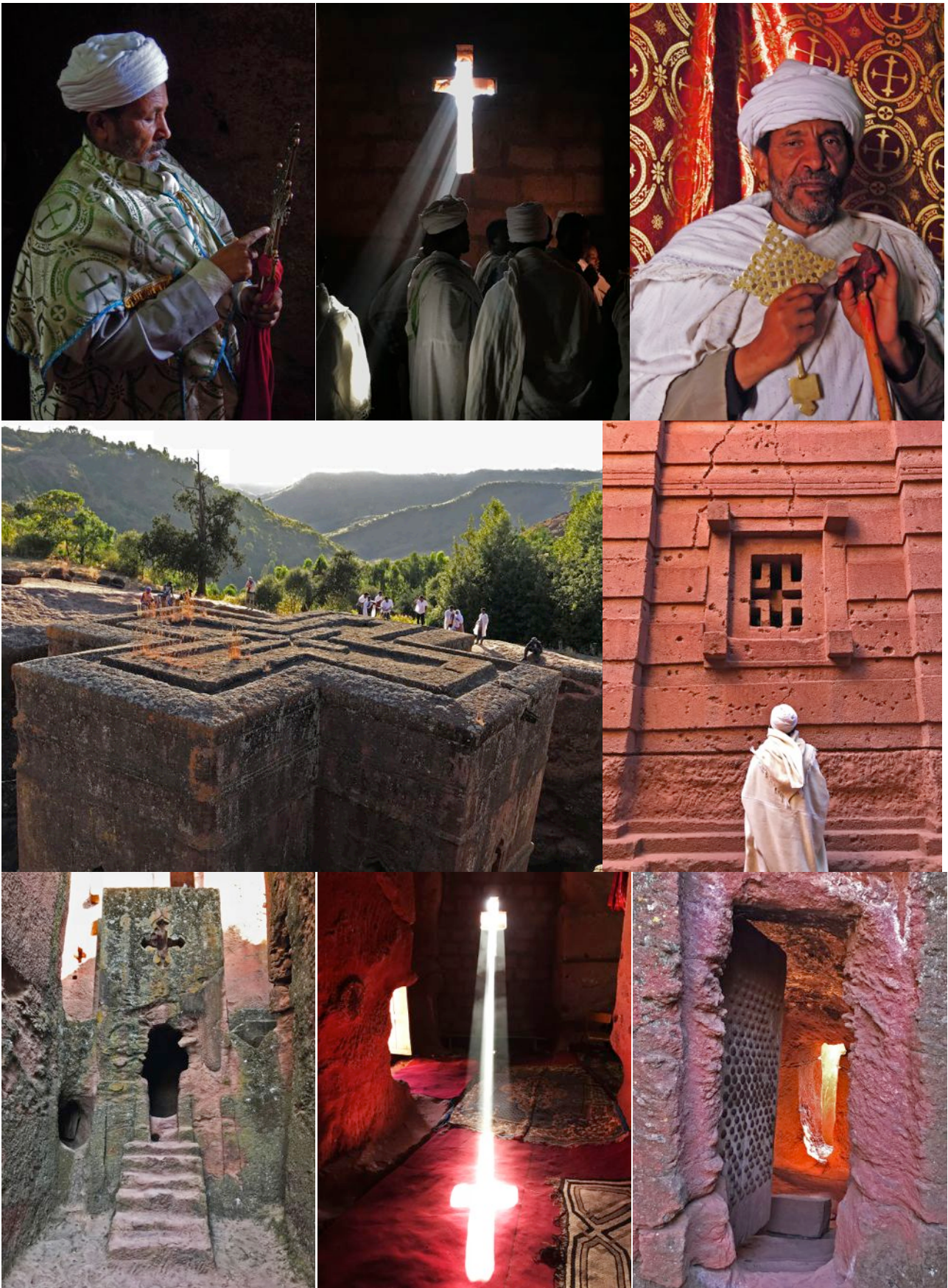


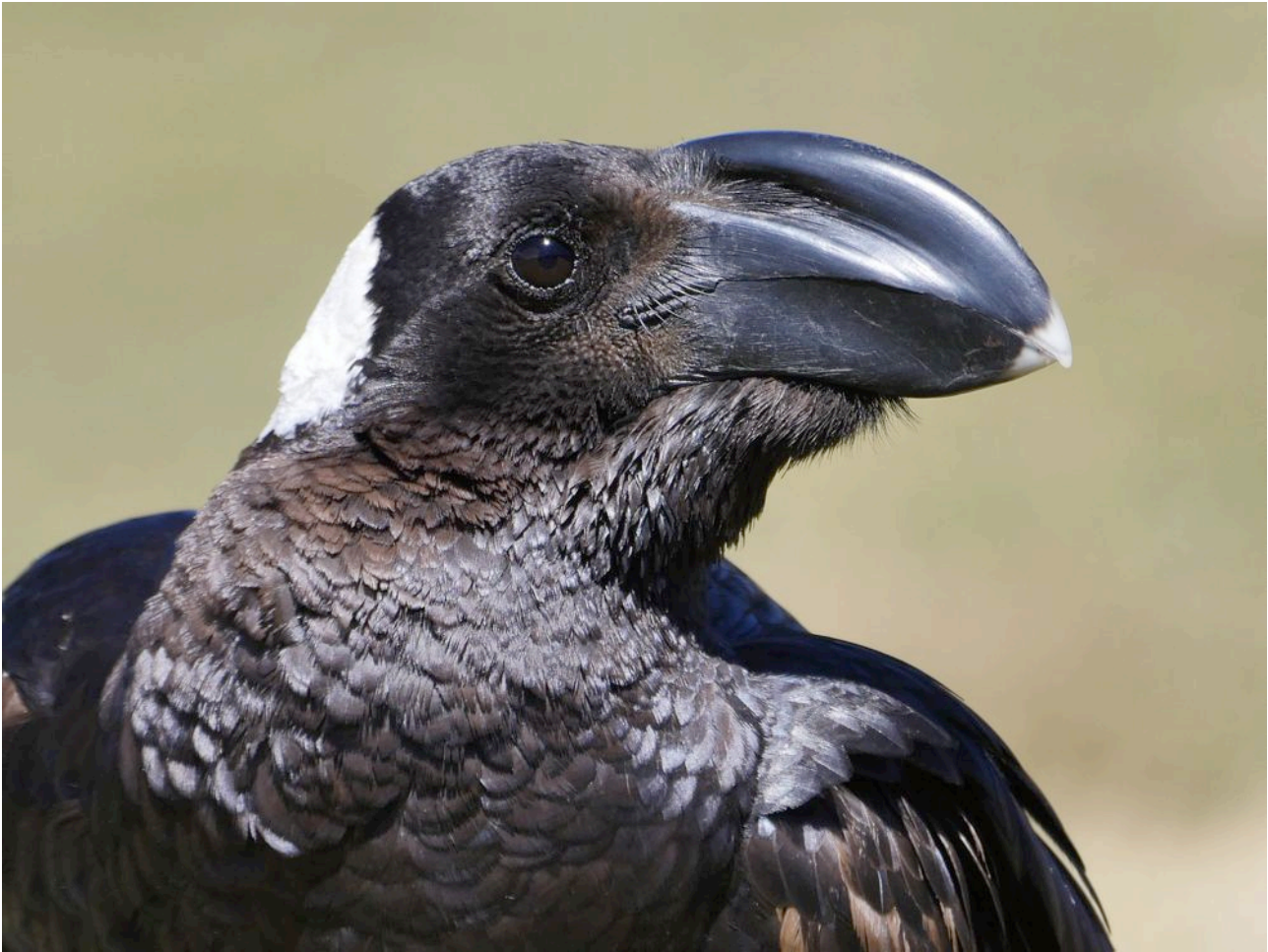
White-headed Babbler was a BirdQuest lifer successfully seen during our excursion towards the Sudan border. (Nik Borrow)

A short internal flight took us eastwards to the historic town of Lalibela for the final part of our tour. Here culture took priority as we spent the rest of the day on a guided tour of the famous UNESCO World Heritage monolithic rock-hewn churches. The churches date back to the seventh to thirteenth centuries and this was a totally immersive way of continuing our explorations of the medieval and post medieval civilisations that we had begun at Gondar. These extraordinary structures have to be seen to be believed and it is mind opening to relate this ancient and overlooked civilisation to what was happening in more familiar parts of the world at the same time. The sense of time and history of humankind was entwined with memories of all the natural wonders we had seen during the tour from the endemic birds and mammals to the dramatic sceneries that they inhabit. Ethiopia is certainly a tour to fire the imagination!

All that remained was the journey to the airport and our last new bird of the trip in the shape of a pair of White-fronted Black Chats. 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 106 million (with an average 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 2.46% next 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 Bushcrow 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 all 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.





The near-endemic Thick-billed Raven was widely encountered. This individual was photographed in the Simien Mountains. (Nik Borrow)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

BIRDS

Somali Ostrich *Struthio molybdophanes* First seen on the Aledeghe Plains with more in the Yabello area.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Only seen on Lake Ziway.

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* 2 on Lake Ziway.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* Small numbers were seen on Lakes Ziway and Awassa.

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

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* Seen well on Lake Awassa.



The endemic Blue-winged Goose (left) and Ruddy Shelduck (right) in the Bale Mountains National Park. (Nik Borrow)

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* Two sightings of this Palearctic migrant on Lake Ziway and in the Bale Mountains.

Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota* Small numbers seen on Lake Ziway.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* Just one of these Palearctic migrants in the Bale Mountains.

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* A pair was seen en route to Goba.

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

Helmeted Guinea fowl *Numida meleagris* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat.

Vulturine Guinea fowl *Acryllium vulturinum* Great looks at these bizarre birds between Negelle and Yabello.

Moorland Francolin (Montane F) *Scleroptila psilolaema* (NT) Small numbers were seen well in the Bale Mountains.

Crested Francolin *Dendroperdix sephaena* Seen in Awash but more numerous in the south.

Clapperton's Francolin *Pternistis clappertoni* (H, LO) Heard by Nik in the Gibe Valley.

Harwood's Francolin *Pternistis harwoodi* (V) After a struggle 2 individuals were 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* This BirdQuest lifer was seen well in the Mega area.

Erckel's Francolin *Pternistis erckelii* Great looks on the Ankober escarpment and in the Jemma Valley.

Yellow-necked Spur fowl (Y-n Francolin) *Pternistis leucoscepus* 1 in Awash NP but more numerous in the south.

Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei* Several were flushed by the bus on the drive back from the Sarite Plains.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* Singletons in Awash NP and Boyo Lake.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* 4 widespread sightings of 6 individuals during the tour.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Some large gatherings of this Palearctic migrant in Awash NP and on the Sarite Plains.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* Common around the Rift Valley lakes and towns.

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.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Small numbers on Lakes Ziway and Boyo.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* Small numbers on Lakes Ziway and 1 at Lake Boyo.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* A pair of the race *payesii* on Lake Awassa.

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 main tour.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* Just three widespread sightings.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* The world's largest heron; one was seen at Bishangari and another at Lake Awassa.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Singletons on the Lakes Ziway and Awassa.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha* 1 on Lake Ziway.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Commonly encountered at any wetland habitat throughout the tour.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Numbers seemed low this year but seen well on the Rift Valley lakes.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Small numbers were seen at Bishangari and 1 on Lake Awassa.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus* Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* 1 on Lake Ziway and 3 at Bishangari.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen on Lake Beseka.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Occasional sightings during the main tour only.

Scissor-tailed Kite (African Swallow-t K) *Chelictinia riocourii* Good looks at several over the Aledeghe Plains.



Little Bittern of the race payesii (left) was seen at Awassa and Scissor-tailed Kites (right) over the Aledeghe Plains. (Nik Borrow)

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus* 6 widespread sightings during the main tour only.

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus* (NT) Ethiopia is one of the best places in the world to see one.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (E) (NL) 1 individual seen by the group in Awash NP.

European Honey Buzzard (Eurasian H-b) *Pernis apivorus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Bishangari.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (CR) The most numerous and widespread vulture.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* (CR) Widespread sightings of ones and twos during the main tour.

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

White-headed Vulture *Trionocephs occipitalis* (CR) 3 sightings of 4 individuals during the main tour only.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* (E) 2 sightings of 3 individuals during the main tour only.

Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis* 3 sightings of 4 individuals throughout the tour.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* Singletons at Jemma Valley and Gondar.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) Only 4 widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Crowned Eagle (African Crowned E) *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT)(LO) Nik saw 1 high over the Harennna Forest.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (V) 1 was seen well en route to Goba.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* 3 were seen near Negelle.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* 4 widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant during the main tour.

Ayres's Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii* 2 sightings in the Bale Mountains and Harennna Forest.

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.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* (V) 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen well by some at Bilen.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* 5 widespread sightings throughout the tour.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster* 1 at Yabello and a pair in the Simien Mountains.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* Just 3 sightings in the south.

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

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

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Sightings in Awash NP, Langano and the Genale River.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk* *Accipiter nisus* A male was probably this Palearctic migrant in Gibe Gorge.

Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris* Brief views on the Ankober escarpment and Bale Mountains.

Black Sparrowhawk (Great S) *Accipiter melanoleucus* 1 seen well above Goba.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant during the main tour.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (NT) A scarce Palearctic migrant encountered in small numbers.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Another Palearctic migrant, but more frequent than Pallid.

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

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

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis* 3 seen along the Metema Road during the extension.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* A great sighting of this Palearctic migrant on the Sanetti Plateau on 19/11.

Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus* A single bird in the Simien Mountains.

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

Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs* (NT) At least 8 were seen at Bilen and on the Aledeghe Plains.

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori* (NT) A pair of these huge birds in Awash NP and 5 on the Liben Plains.

White-bellied Bustard (Northern W-b B) *Eupodotis senegalensis* Seen well in Awash NP and heard elsewhere.

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

Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii* (NT) This regional endemic was confiding in the Bale Mountains.



A Kori Bustard (left) on the Liben Plains. Rouget's Rails (right) were easy to see as usual! (Nik Borrow)

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Easily seen at Lake Awassa.

African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis* At least 3 were seen well at Lake Awassa.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* An adult and a juvenile were seen at Lake Awassa.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Seen at Bilen and on the Rift Valley lakes.

Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C) *Fulica cristata* Small numbers in the Bale Mountains.

Black Crowned Crane *Baelearica pavonina* (V) Pairs were seen on Lake Ziway and in Gibe Gorge.

Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* (V) 18 distant birds at Boyo Lake.

Common Crane *Grus grus* Hundreds were present at Boyo Lake.

Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* Seen at Bishangari and Gibe Gorge.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* 1 at a chance stop near Mega.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Easily seen at Bilen and on the Rift Valley lakes.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Small numbers at Bilen and seen by some at Bishangari.

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* Common and widespread in suitable habitat during the main tour.

Black-headed Lapwing (B-h Plover) *Vanellus tectus* About a dozen on the Aledeghe Plains.

Black-winged Lapwing (B-w Plover) *Vanellus melanopterus* Small numbers en route to the Bale Mountains.

Crowned Lapwing (C Plover) *Vanellus coronatus* Seen from Langano until Yabello in appropriate habitat.

African Wattled Lapwing (A W Plover) *Vanellus senegallus* Small numbers on the Genale and Gibe Rivers.

Spot-breasted Lapwing *Vanellus melanocephalus* Good numbers of this endemic on the Sanetti Plateau.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* 2 sightings of this Palearctic migrant on the Rift Valley lakes.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen on the Gibe River.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Widespread sightings in small numbers.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Common and easy to see on the Rift Valley lakes.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (NT) 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Bishangari.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant on the Rift Valley lakes.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen well at Bilen.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant were seen at Bilen and on the Rift Valley lakes.

African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis* At least 7 birds on the Sanetti Plateau.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Palearctic migrants seen at Bilen and Lake Ziway.

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 on the Rift Valley lakes.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.

Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis* Good looks at 8 on the Soda Plains.

Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii* At least 6 on the Liben Plains.

Three-banded Courser (Heuglin's C) *Rhinoptilus cinctus* A pair seen well at Bishangari.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* 2 were seen at Lake Ziway.

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Baltic G) *Larus [fuscus] fuscus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants for some at Bishangari.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Lake Beseka and 2 at Bishangari.

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus* Palearctic migrants seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

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

Black-faced Sandgrouse *Pterocles decoratus* 5 were seen at the Dawa River.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Excellent views of a male en route to Bilen.

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* A few 'domestic' birds.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Hang your binoculars up if you miss this one in Ethiopia!

White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques* An abundant regional endemic.



Senegal Thick-knee (left) at Bishangari. The near-endemic White-collared Pigeon (right) was common (Nik Borrow)

African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* Great views of a pair at Bishangari.

Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D) *Aplopelia larvata* After some effort 5 were seen at Bishangari.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (V) Exceptional numbers of this Palearctic migrant; 1000+ counted at Bilen.

Dusky Turtle Dove *Streptopelia lugens* An abundant species in the highlands.

African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 1 was scoped at Bilen.

White-winged Collared Dove *Streptopelia reichenowi* (NT) Some good looks along the Dawa River.

Mourning Collared Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* Common in the Awash area and in the Rift Valley.

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 Valley, Gibe Gorge and 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 along the Metema Road 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 Bishangari.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Common in appropriate habitat.

Bruce’s Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* First seen in the Jemma Valley.

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

Ruspoli’s Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii* (V) Amazing encounters in the Negelle area. See note.

Bare-faced Go-away-bird (Brown-f G-a-b) *Corythaixoides personatus* Great views at Bishangari.

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

Eastern Plantain-eater *Crinifer zonurus* First seen at Melka Ghebdu also Gibe Gorge and the Metema road.

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

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* Most numerous in the Awash area.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* 1 along the Metema road during the extension.

Jacobin Cuckoo (Black-and-white C) *Clamator jacobinus* 2 seen at the Sarite Plains.

Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* Singletons on the Sarite Plains and at Yabello.

Klaas’s Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* Singletons in the Jemma Valley and Negelle and heard elsewhere.

African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* 1 seen at night at Yabello.

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

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Daytime views of 2 roosting birds in the Bale Mountains and at Goba.



African Scops Owl (left) at night at Yabello and African Wood Owl (right) during the day at Goba. (Nik Borrow)

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* 3 sightings of this diurnal owl in the south.

Donaldson Smith’s Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni* Great views of a male in the Yabello area.

Montane Nightjar (Abyssinian N) *Caprimulgus poliocephalus* 1 at a day roost in the Bale Mountains.

Slender-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus clarus* Seen at Bilen and Bishangari.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* Flocks seen over the Jemma Valley, Genale River and Simien Mountains.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Seen in Dilla.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* 1 seen at the Royal Enclosure, Gondar.

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

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

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* A brilliant male was seen at Bishangari.

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.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* Frequent in the Awash area, Gibe Gorge and Metema road.



Purple Roller (left) and Abyssinian Roller (right) were colourful birds of the dry bush country. (Nik Borrow)

Grey-headed Kingfisher (Chestnut-bellied K) *Halcyon leucocephala* 3 were seen at Gibe Gorge.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* First seen at Bishangari.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* A few were seen in the Rift Valley lakes.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus* Sightings at Bishangari and Gibe Gorge.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata* Exceedingly common in the Rift Valley lakes.



African Pygmy Kingfisher (left) and Malachite Kingfisher (right) provided colour in the wetter places! (Nik Borrow)

Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata* Brief views of 1 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.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* A flock of 5 of these Palearctic migrants near Mega.

Olive Bee-eater (Madagascar B-e) *Merops superciliosus* Small numbers seen in the Awash area.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* First seen well in the Awash area with more near Awassa.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Widespread sightings of Palearctic migrants all 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 along the Metema road.

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

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

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

Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus* Widespread sightings throughout the main tour.

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

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

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

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 Bishangari.

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

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Seen in the Haremma Forest and Metema road.

Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata* Sightings en route to Bilen and at Bishangari.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala* Sightings of the brown-throated *stigmatothorax* in the far south.

Banded Barbet *Lybius undatus* A regional endemic seen at Melka Ghebdu and Bishangari.

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

Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* Seen at Bishangari and en route to Negelle.

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

Yellow-breasted Barbet *Trachyphonus margaritatus* Seen well at Melka Ghebdu and Bilen.

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



Yellow-breasted Barbet (left) at Melka Ghebdu and D'Arnaud's Barbets (right) displaying at Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

Green-backed Honeybird (Eastern H) *Prodotiscus zambesiae* 1 seen briefly by some at Bishangari.

Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus* (NL) Richard saw 1 en route to Negelle.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* Seen at Bishangari and above Goba.

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

Greater Honeyguide (Black-throated H) *Indicator indicator* A juvenile at Senkelle.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* 1 of these Palearctic migrants seen well at Bilen.

Red-throated Wryneck *Jynx ruficollis* Wonderful views at Bishangari and Dinsho.

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

Bearded Woodpecker *Dendropicos namaquus* A pair was seen at Yabello.

Abyssinian Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus* A regional endemic in the Bale Mountains and Harenna Forest.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* First seen at Bilen with further widespread sightings.

Eastern Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos spodocephalus* Good views at Bishangari and Senkelle.

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* A pair in Awash NP and more in the far south.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Good numbers were seen in the far south.

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

Fox Kestrel *Falco alopex* A single bird seen in flight in the Jemma Valley.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* 4 widespread sightings.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* At least 5 including a fine male mixed with Lesser Kestrel south of Yabello on 24/11.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* 1 was with the Lesser Kestrels and Amur Falcons.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Sightings from Awash area, the Bale Mountains and Boyo Lake.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* 1 of the resident race *minor* south of Yabello.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* An excellent sighting of 1 over Bilen on 14/11.

Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons* Wonderful views of this Ethiopian endemic at Bishangari.

Meyer's Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri* Small numbers were seen along the Metema road.

Red-bellied Parrot (African Orange-b P) *Poicephalus rufiventris* First seen well en route to Bilen.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Easy to see along the Metema road.

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

Grey-headed Batis *Batis orientalis* Seen well at Bilen and Yabello but the voice is the best identification feature.

Western Black-headed Batis *Batis erlangeri* Seen well at Bishangari and Gibe Gorge.

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



The various batis species are a pitfall for the unwary and not easy to identify on plumage alone. Western Black-headed Batis (left) and Pygmy Batis (right). (Nik Borrow)

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

White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus* Seen well in the Negelle area.

Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* (H) Heard near Mega.

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

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

Three-streaked Tchagra *Tchagra jamesi* Excellent views of 1 south of Yabello.

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 but noisy bird was seen well in the far south.

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

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

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

Black-headed Gonolek *Laniarius erythrogaster* Great looks along the Metema road.

Brubru *Nilaus afer* Excellent views in the south.

Grey Cuckooshrike *Coracina caesia* A female seen in the Harenna Forest.

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea* A female seen at Bishangari.

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

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

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris* 2 were positively identified in the Awash area.

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

Taita Fiscal *Lanius dorsalis* A pair on the Sarite Plains.

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



Somali Fiscal (left) on the Soda Plains and Red-tailed Shrike (right) at Bilen. (Nik Borrow)

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

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* 3 sightings of this Palearctic migrant in the Awash area.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* 2 sightings of this Palearctic migrant along the Metema road.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Singletons of this Palearctic migrant at Bilen and en route to Yabello.

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* A male was seen along the Metema road.

Ethiopian Oriole (Abyssinian O) *Oriolus monacha* A regional endemic at Bishangari, Harenna Forest and at Gente.

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

Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* A common and widespread bird of drier bush country.

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

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

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Small numbers in the Bale and Simien 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* Numerous in the far south.

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

Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris* A characterful regional endemic with probably our best views in the Simien.

White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas* Seen en route to Bilen, Bishangari and the Metema road.
White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus* Great looks at this regional endemic in the Bale and Simien Mountains.
Acacia Tit (Northern Grey T) *Parus thruppi* Numerous chances to get good looks in the south.
Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus musculus* Several sightings at Bilen and in the far south.
Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* Abundant on the Aledeghe Plains.
Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix signatus* Easy to see at Bilen.



The near-endemic Ethiopian Oriole (left) and a male Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark at Bilen. (Nik Borrow)

Foxy Lark *Mirafr alopex* Seen at Negelle and Yabello.
Archer's Lark (Sidamo L, Liben L) *Heteromirafr archeri* (CR) Seen easily on the Liben plains with local help.
Red-winged Lark *Mirafr hypermetra* Just 1 in Awash NP.
Singing Bush Lark *Mirafr cantillans* Quite numerous on the Aledeghe Plains and in Awash NP this tour.
Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* About 5 were seen well on the Soda Plains.
Masked Lark *Spizocorys personata* 5 were seen well on the Sarite Plains.
Thekla's Lark *Galerida theklae* An easily seen highland species.
Erlanger's Lark *Calandrella erlangeri* This endemic was easy to see in the northwestern highlands.
Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica* Small numbers seen on the Liben plains with 1 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* Most individuals around Bilen show characteristics of this form.
Dodson's Bulbul *Pycnonotus dodsoni* The dry thorn bush version.
Dark-capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor* Yellow-vented birds in the southeastern highlands.
Northern Brownbul *Phyllastrephus strepitans* Easily seen near Negelle.
Black Saw-wing (Brown S) *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] antinorii* Small numbers at Bishangari and Haremma Forest.
Brown-throated Martin (Plain M) *Riparia paludicola* Most numerous in the Langano area.
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* This clean-cut swallow was seen en route to Dinsho.
Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Most sightings in the south but also seen in the Awash area and northwest.
Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Scattered sightings in small numbers often associated with water.
White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* (V) 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* Sightings in the Yabello area and at Gibe Gorge.
Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* A pair en route to Debre Birhan and another south of Yabello.
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* A pair of resident *melanocrissus* in the Jemma Valley.
Moustached Grass Warbler *Melocichla mentalis* Seen well at Gibe Gorge.
Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* First seen well in the Jemma Valley.
Red-faced Crombec *Sylvietta whytii* First seen well by everyone at Bishangari.

Somali Crombec (S Long-billed C) *Sylvietta isabellina* Easily seen in the far south this tour.

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

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.

Lesser Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* Easily seen at Lakes Langano and Awassa.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* This Palearctic migrant was seen well at Lake Awassa.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (NL) Richard saw 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Gibe Gorge.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Negelle and Gibe Gorge.

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



Bale Mountain warblers: Brown Woodland Warbler (left) and the skulking (!) Cinnamon Bracken Warbler (right). (Nik Borrow)

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* (H) Heard in the Jemma Valley and Gibe Gorge.

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

Rattling Cisticola *Cisticola chiniana* Mostly seen in the south.

Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa* Seen well near Negelle. Best identified from Rattling by voice.

Ashy Cisticola *Cisticola cinereolus* Just 1 seen well on the Aledeghe Plains.

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

Stout Cisticola *Cisticola robustus* (H) Heard in the Jemma Valley.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* 1 was seen at Gibe Gorge.

Tiny Cisticola *Cisticola nana* Eventually seen well by all south of Yabello.

Foxy Cisticola *Cisticola troglodytes* Seen well in the Jemma Valley and at Gibe Gorge.

Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed Warbler) *Cisticola juncidis* Seen well at Senkelle.

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus* Small numbers in Awash NP.

Pectoral-patch Cisticola *Cisticola brunnescens* Common 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 in dry acacia forest.

Yellow-breasted Apalis (Brown-tailed A) *Apalis [flavida] viridiceps* Sounds different from *flavida*.

Red-fronted Warbler *Urorhipis rufifrons* Seen well at Bilen.

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

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

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* First seen well at Bilen.

Yellow-vented Eremomela *Eremomela flavicrissalis* Seen well en route to Yabello.

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens* A trio seen well along the Metema road.

Scaly Chatterer *Turdoides aylmeri* Excellent views of a group en route to Yabello.

Rufous Chatterer *Turdoides rubiginosa* First seen well at Bilen.

White-headed Babbler *Turdoides leucocephala* Amazing views of two groups along the Metema road.

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

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

African Hill Babbler *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* This sweet songster was seen in the Harenna Forest.

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

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (NL) Richard saw a couple in the Jemma Valley.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* Scope views of this Palearctic migrant at Bilen!

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread locations.

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

Menetries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen at Bilen.

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

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



The endemic Abyssinian Catbird (left) and Brown Parisoma (right) en route to Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

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

Abyssinian White-eye (Pale Scrub W-e) ♦ *Zosterops [abyssinicus] flavilateralis* Yellow-bellied birds in the south.

African Yellow White-eye (Northern Y W-e) *Zosterops senegalensis* Common along the Metema road.

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

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

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* Seen at Bilen and Lake Awassa.

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

Lesser Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* Some at Gibe Gorge and more along the Metema road.

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 Negelle.

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

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* First seen at Bishangari.

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

Slender-billed Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris* A large flock in Addis with a few in the Simien Mountains.

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

White-billed Starling *Onychognathus albirostris* This regional endemic was easily seen first at Gemassa Gedal.

Sharpe's Starling *Poeoptera sharpii* Great looks in the Harenna Forest.

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

Abyssinian Ground Thrush *Geokichla piaggiae* 1 was seen well at Bishangari and another at Dinsho for some.

Groundscraper Thrush *Turdus litsitsirupa* A common roadside birds in the highlands.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios* Scattered sightings replacing the previous species at lower altitudes.

Bare-eyed Thrush *Turdus tephronotus* Very easy to see in the south.

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

Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* 1 seen well at Bilen.

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 highlands.



Shelley's Starlings (left) in the far south and regional endemic Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher (right) in the highlands. (Nik Borrow)

Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides* Widespread sightings in small numbers during the main tour.

Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus* A trio was seen well along the Metema road.

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

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Bishangari.

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 northern Rift.

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

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* 1 seen at Gibe Gorge.

Spotted Palm Thrush (S Morning T) *Cichladusa guttata* A number of sightings in the south.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Palearctic migrants of the distinctive race *samamisticus*.

White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa* A regional endemic seen in the Jemma Valley and below Ankober.

Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis* 5 widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinereus* (NL) Seen by Janie at Lalibela.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Palearctic migrants at Gemassa Gedal and Simien Mountains.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (NL) 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen in the Jemma Valley.

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.

Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* Seen in the Jemma Valley and common on the extension.

Rüppell's Black Chat *Myrmecocichla melaena* A regional endemic at Gemassa Gedal and Jemma Valley.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Small numbers and 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.

White-fronted Black Chat *Oenanthe albifrons* A pair at Lalibela.

Blackstart *Oenanthe melanura* Excellent views at Lake Beseka.

Brown-tailed Rock Chat *Oenanthe scotocerca* Easy to see near Negelle.

Sombre Rock Chat *Oenanthe dubia* This little-known bird was easy to see at Lake Beseka.

Abyssinian Wheatear (A Black W) *Oenanthe lugubris* Seemingly most numerous in the Jemma Valley.

Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis* Small numbers seen in the south.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* A male seen near Negelle.

Pygmy Sunbird *Hedydipna platyura* A male in breeding plumage seen along the Metema road.

Nile Valley Sunbird *Hedydipna metallica* Easy to see at Bilen and Lake Beseka with males in breeding plumage.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* 1 seen in the Hareenna Forest.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* Widespread sightings but nowhere common.

Hunter's Sunbird *Chalcomitra hunteri* A few sightings in the far south.

Tacazze Sunbird *Nectarinia tacazze* Incredibly numerous in the hotel garden in Addis!

Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus* Widespread sightings and many not looking very beautiful at all!

Marico Sunbird (Mariqua S) *Cinnyris mariquensis* Mainly seen around Negelle and the south.

Black-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris nectarinioides* Great looks at a breeding plumage male near Negelle.

Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus* Our first shining examples were en route to Bilen.



Black-bellied Sunbird (left) and Shining Sunbird (right). (Nik Borrow)

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 on the Soda Plains.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Common along the Metema road.

Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* Abundant throughout its range.

Parrot-billed Sparrow *Passer gongonensis* Individuals seen near Sarite Plains showed characteristics of this form.

Chestnut Sparrow *Passer eminibey* Small numbers seen near the Sarite Plains.

Bush Petronia *Petronia dentata* First seen well in the Jemma Valley.

Yellow-spotted Petronia *Petronia pyrgita* A bird of the dry bush country from Awash and 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* 2 were seen well in the Jemma Valley.

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* Only small numbers at Yabello.

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

Baglafecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafecht* Small numbers were noted throughout the highlands.

Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus* First seen well at Bishangari.

Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis* A couple seen at Lake Awassa.

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

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* A few seen en route to the Sarite Plains.

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* Seen in the Jemma Valley and in the far south. See note.

Speke's Weaver *Ploceus spekei* Non-breeding plumaged birds seen on the Liben Plains and a colony near Mega.

Village Weaver (Black-headed W) *Ploceus cucullatus* First seen well at Bishangari.

Juba Weaver *Ploceus dichrocephalus* Breeding plumage males and females seen near Negelle.

Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus* Breeding plumage birds seen en route to Yabello and on the Sarite Plains.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* First seen at Bishangari with more in the south.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* Most numerous in the Awash area.

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

Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus* All in non-breeding plumage except those at the Sarite Plains.

Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* Small numbers in the Bale and Simien Mountains.

White-winged Widowbird *Euplectes albonotatus* Breeding plumaged birds at the Sarite Plains.

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

Red-billed Pytilia (Lineated P) *Pytilia lineata* A pair was seen along the Metema road.

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

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* Widespread sightings in dry bush country and the Rift Valley.

Abyssinian Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza salvadorii* Several skulking birds in the Haremma Forest.

Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta* Small numbers at Gibe Gorge.

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

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

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

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

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

Abyssinian Waxbill *Estrilda ochrogaster* Excellent views of this localised species at Gibe Gorge.

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

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* Small numbers seen along the Metema road.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* Common around Lake Awassa.

Black-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda charmosyna* Excellent views south of Yabello.

African Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Small numbers from Addis to Lake Beseka.

Grey-headed Silverbill *Odontospiza caniceps* 2 pairs seen well at Yabello.



We enjoyed great views of Abyssinian Waxbill (left) at Gibe Gorge and Grey-headed Silverbills (right) were at Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata* Seen at Addis and Lake Awassa.

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

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

Steel-blue Whydah *Vidua hypocherina* It lacked a tail but a male in plumage appeared to be this species at Gibe.

Straw-tailed Whydah *Vidua fischeri* A single male in breeding plumage in Awash NP and a female near Negelle.

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

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A very common to abundant Palearctic migrant.

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

Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] flava* The most numerous form identified.

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

Western Yellow Wagtail (Grey-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] thunbergi* 1 identified at Lake Awassa.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant were seen at widespread localities.

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

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* This Palearctic migrant was seen in the Bale Mountains and on the extension.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Seen well at Gibe Gorge.

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

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Palearctic migrants on the Aledeghe Plains.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Seen well in the Simien Mountains and at Lalibela.

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 Boyo Lake.

African Citril *Crithagra citrinelloides* Small numbers in the Harenn Forest and at Lake Awassa.

Yellow-rumped Seedeater (White-throated S) *Crithagra xanthopygia* Great views in the Jemma Valley.

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

Yellow-throated Seedeater *Crithagra flavigula* (E) Great views of several birds at Melka Ghebdu.

Salvadori's Seedeater (S Serin) *Crithagra xantholaema* (V) Excellent close views near Negelle.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica* Easily seen in the Jemma Valley and the Metema road.

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

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

Northern Grosbeak-Canary *Crithagra donaldsoni* Good looks at singing males 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 in the southeastern highlands and Simien Mountains.

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

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* A few of these Palearctic migrants at Gemassa Gedal and Jemma Valley.

Striolated Bunting (Striated B) *Emberiza striolata* Great views by Lake Beseka.

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

Somali Bunting (Somali Golden-breasted B) *Emberiza poliopleura* Seen well south of Yabello.



The endemic Abyssinian Longclaw in the Bale Mountains. (Nik Borrow)

MAMMALS

Wildcat *Felis silvestris* 1 seen well in Awash NP.

Spotted Hyaena *Crocuta crocuta* 5 seen at Negelle.

Ethiopian Wolf *Canis simensis* At least 4 animals were seen on the Sanetti Plateau.

African Golden Wolf *Canis anthus* 2 on the Aledeghe Plains and 1 on the Liben Plains.

Black-backed Jackal *Canis mesomelas* 5 sightings in the south.

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis* Widespread sightings.

Bush Hyrax (Yellow-spotted H) *Heterohyrax brucei* Seen in the Jemma Valley and Simien Mountains.

Plains Zebra (Common Z) *Equus quagga* The race *boehmi* was seen south of Yabello.

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

Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africana* Seen from dry bush country to the Bale Mountains.

Common Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Seen in Lake Langano and the Gibe River.

Ethiopian Highlands Bushbuck (Menelik's B) *Tragelaphus meneliki* Seen in the Bale and Simien Mountains.

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

Southern Gerenuk (G) *Litocranius walleri* 2 sightings south of Yabello.

Northern Gerenuk (G) *Litocranius sclateri* 5 on the Aledeghe Plains.

Bright's Gazelle *Nanger notatus* Seen on the Soda Plains.

Soemmering's Gazelle *Gazella soemmeringi* Seen well on the Aledeghe Plains.

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

Guenther's Dik-dik *Madoqua guentheri* Abundant during the drive to Yabello.

Sudan Oribi *Ourebia montana* Seen in Senkelle.

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

Beisa Oryx *Oryx beisa* Seen well in Awash NP and on the Aledeghe Plains.

Swayne's Hartebeest *Alcelaphus swaynei* Good numbers seen at Senkelle.

Walia Ibex *Capra walie* A herd of 16 plus a single male in the Simien Mountains.

Bush Duiker (Common D) *Sylvicapra grimmia* Singletons in the Bale Mountains and at Yabello.

Ethiopian Klipspringer (K) *Oreotragus saltatrixoides* Seen at Mega and in the Simien Mountains.

Northern Lesser Galago *Galago senegalensis* 1 seen at Yabello was probably this species rather than *G. gallarum*.

Olive Baboon *Papio anubis* Widespread sightings.

Hamadryas Baboon (Sacred B) *Papio hamadryas* Small numbers seen in the Awash area.

Gelada (G Baboon) *Papio gelada* Great encounters with this endemic in the northwestern highlands.

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

Vervet Monkey *Cercopithecus pygerythrus* Our only definite sightings were at Mega but hybrids confuse.

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

Ethiopian Highland Hare (Starck's H) *Lepus starcki* This endemic is a highland species.

Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus* The commonly seen hare at lower altitudes was this species.

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

Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* Seen at Bishangari.

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

Abyssinian Grass Rat *Arvicanthis abyssinicus* The grass rat seen in the Simien Mountains.

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

Ethiopian Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomophorus labiatus* Presumably this species in the hotel grounds at Awassa

