



The little known and rarely photographed Brown Nightjar allowed some superb and totally unprecedented views at Bobiri Forest Reserve during this tour and was deservedly one of many trip highlights. (Nik Borrow)

ULTIMATE GHANA

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Ghana, once known as the 'Gold Coast' is situated in the very heart of West Africa and the country's growing tourist industry has much to offer visitors with its colourful and vibrant culture, turbulent history and a coast lined with beautiful beaches and numerous slave forts that are still left standing to remind visitors of a grim past. However, the aim of our 'Ultimate' tour was to discover Ghana's avian riches and our focus was on an exciting selection of Upper Guinea forest endemic birds and one very special species in particular; the strange and bizarre White-necked Rockfowl aka Yellow-headed Picathartes. We only had to wait for 30 minutes or so before the first furtive birds hopped into view and our success with this charismatic species was total and absolute with prolonged views of at least eight posing individuals at remarkably close range and this event was voted the highlight of the tour! Our tour started with a bang at Shai Hills where we

managed to see the scarce Etchécopar's Owlet in the thickets that surround the base of the rocky outcrops frequented by White-crowned Cliff Chats and noisy Stone Partridges. Sadly the Winneba Plains have largely recently been destroyed and turned into a solar energy plant but even so we enjoyed terrific views of African Hobby here. At Kakum National Park with its famous canopy walkway we were introduced to a mind-boggling array of forest species that included Upper Guinea endemics such as Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Little Green, Fire-bellied and Melancholy Woodpeckers, West African Wattle-eye, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Sharpe's Apalis, Copper-tailed Starling and Buff-throated Sunbird as well as some spectacular mammals with wonderful views obtained of Long-tailed Pangolin, Pel's Anomalure and West African Potto. In the surrounding farmbush and forest we were treated to excellent views of mouth-watering species such as Ahanta Francolin, Long-tailed Hawk, Congo Serpent Eagle, Black-throated Coucal, Akun Eagle Owl and Rosy Bee-eater. Travelling westwards we paid a visit to the remnant forest at Nsuta that added the diminutive African Piculet, Kemp's Longbill and an impressive Fraser's Eagle Owl to the list. The coastal strip gave us Mangrove, Reichenbach's and Carmelite Sunbirds as well as a pair of dapper White-browed Forest Flycatchers. The superb evergreen forest at Ankasa was hard work, we lost half a day through rain and frustratingly missed views of Nkulengu Rail by seconds as a pair dropped from their roost tree before we could reach them but we also had successes with great views of the Upper Guinea endemic Rufous-winged Illadopsis, a glittering White-bellied Kingfisher and some nervous Hartlaub's Ducks. Heading up to the north our visit to Mole National Park was a great success with close up views of the desirable Forbes's Plover, two separate Rufous-rumped Larks and several Sun Larks, as well as colourful Bearded Barbets, Brown-rumped Bunting and a secretive White-throated Francolin. Even further north we searched out Fox Kestrel, Rock-loving Cisticolas and Gosling's Buntings in the boulder-strewn Tongo Hills. Sublime Egyptian Plovers obliged along the banks of the Volta River on the borders of Togo and Burkina Faso. Here we also found the resident African form of Rufous Scrub Robin, which is sometimes considered to be a good species in its own right. Returning south we visited the butterfly sanctuary at Bobiri where both Black and Red-billed Dwarf Hornbills showed themselves well, a Red-chested Owlet glared down at us from a tangled vine and the views of Brown Nightjar could not be beaten. The threatened habitat that covers the Atewa Hills did not give up its treasures easily but the views of a stunning male Red-cheeked Wattle-eye and some beautiful Blue-moustached Bee-eaters did not disappoint. We also experienced some difficult birding in the gallery forest at Kalakpa, which was deadly quiet but most of us managed views of the ultra-skulking Capuchin Babbler. At night a male breeding plumaged Standard-winged Nightjar was a real star and we also added Black-shouldered Nightjar. The final goodie of the tour was a dapper Pied-winged Swallow on the banks of the Volta River on the way back to Accra. Amongst the many other wonderful specialties encountered during this tour were Latham's Francolin (heard only), Spot-breasted Ibis (heard only), Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Red-chested Goshawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Grey-throated Rail, Violet Turaco, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Black Spinetail, Blue-bellied Roller, Yellow-casqued Hornbill (heard only), Bristle-nosed Barbet, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Spotted Honeyguide, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, Brown-necked Parrot, Senegal Batis, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, White-throated Greenbul, Green-tailed Bristlebill (heard only), Grey-headed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow Bearded Greenbul, Fanti Saw-wing, West African Swallow, Preuss's Cliff Swallow, Rufous Cisticola, Black-necked Cisticola, Puvel's Illadopsis, Violet-backed Hyliota, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Finsch's Rufous Thrush, White-tailed Alethe, Forest Scrub Robin, Little Grey Flycatcher, Ussher's Flycatcher, White-crowned Robin Chat, Forest Robin, White-fronted Black Chat, Pygmy Sunbird, Orange Weaver, Heuglin's Masked Weaver, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Red-vented Malimbe, Red-winged Pytilia, Black-faced Firefinch, Magpie Mannikin, Wilson's Indigobird and Exclamatory Paradise Whydah.



Long-tailed Pangolin was seen well from the canopy walkway in Kakum National Park. (Nik Borrow)

As the group arrived in Accra in Ghana the main question on everyone's lips (or at the very least that was in their minds) was "will we see it?" The 'it' referred to the totally bizarre rockfowl but it was going to be some

time before the chance of seeing this very special bird would arise. Our arrival was in the evening for an overnight stop and a short night's sleep in a comfortable hotel near the airport for we were up early the next day at five for breakfast and then drove the short distance towards the Shai Hills Reserve that comprises an interesting area of open grassland and rocky inselbergs. Our visit was soon after the rainy season had finished so the vegetation was high and lush. We made our way around one of the well-vegetated inselbergs that rise up out of the surrounding scrubby plains and before us extended a range of wooded hills that were covered in thick shrubbery and emergent trees where Senegal Parrots screeched past and Violet Turacos and shaggy-crested Western Grey Plantain-eaters were feeding and a dapper male White-crowned Cliff Chat perched up on top of the boulders. Keen to avoid the early morning damp grass, there were many Double-spurred Francolins and some noisy Stone Partridges much in evidence on the tracks. An African Cuckoo-Hawk was seen both flying and perched and other raptors included African Harrier Hawk, European Honey Buzzard, Hooded Vulture, Shikra, Yellow-billed Kite and Red-necked Buzzard. While the morning was still fresh we struggled in the dense thickets to lure into view the local form of African Barred Owl that is sometimes treated as a separate species; Etchécopar's Owl. The bird called back at us repeatedly and eventually came in to investigate a couple of times but it was nervous and didn't stay long enough for photographic opportunities but at least we had seen the bird! A Buff-spotted Woodpecker was seen tapping away in amongst the tangled lianas and a pair of excitable Upper Guinea endemic Grey-headed Bristlebills was seen. As the piping calls of African Grey Hornbills sounded out over the plains where a few Buffon's Kobs were grazing, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds hammered away and we also found a Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird. Colourful Vieillot's Barbets were also seen well and a gorgeous Blue-bellied Roller was much admired and even treated us to a fly past, rolling display flight. Other species recorded during the morning's walk included Red-eyed, Vinaceous and Blue-spotted Wood Doves, Levaillant's Cuckoo, African Palm Swift, Senegal Batis, Black-crowned Tchagra, Fork-tailed Drongo, Common Bulbul, Simple Greenbul, Rock Martin, Croaking, Short-winged and Zitting Cisticolas, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Senegal Eremomela, Blackcap Babbler, Violet-backed Starling, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Northern Black, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, European Pied Flycatcher, Splendid Sunbird, Black-necked Weaver, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, Bronze Mannikin and Plain-backed Pipit.



The colourful Blue-bellied Roller was first seen well at Shai Hills Reserve (left) On the Winneba Plains we enjoyed some close up views of a perched African Hobby in the late afternoon. (Nik Borrow)

After lunch we headed back towards Accra via the Sakumono Lagoon, but with very high water levels was disappointing and somewhat birdless. However we did note a few Palearctic shorebirds and other waterbirds such as White-faced Whistling Duck, Squacco and Purple Herons, Great Egret, Reed Cormorant, Black-winged Stilt, Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, African Jacana, Common Greenshank and Wood and Common Sandpipers as well as Western Marsh Harrier and Little Bee-eater.

The heavy traffic in and around the capital consumed us and the only birds apparent were a few Yellow-billed Shrikes along the way with numerous Western Cattle Egrets, Laughing Doves, Ethiopian Swallows, Northern Grey-headed Sparrows, Black-winged and Yellow-billed Kites, Hooded Vultures and the ubiquitous Pied Crow. Having finally escaped the long queues of traffic we arrived at the Winneba Plains for some late

afternoon birding. The majority of this area of open grassland has now basically been destroyed and covered with solar panels for a renewable energy project so we spent our short time here birding the more shrubby areas amongst the thickets and Eucalyptus trees. An excitable Red-winged Warbler showed very well and spiky-crested Guinea Turacos put in their first appearance. A pair of gorgeous Yellow-crowned Gonolek and the striking Double-toothed Barbet was seen and we enjoyed good long looks at close quarters of a perched African Hobby. We also managed views of Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Black-crowned Tchagra, African Thrush, Whinchat, Copper Sunbird and Yellow-fronted Canary before we had to leave and drove the remaining distance to the comfortable 'Rainforest Lodge' near Kakum National Park for a three nights stay.



A visit to the famous canopy walkway in Kakum National Park is always a highlight of the tour. (Nik Borrow)

Our first day in the area was spent in the famous Kakum National Park. Although created in 1932, the park wasn't officially opened to the public until 1994. Covering an area of 347 square kilometres, it is semi-evergreen rain forest although this has been 'selectively' logged in the recent past and anyone expecting to find pristine forest would be sadly disappointed. However the regenerating secondary growth can be extremely 'birdy'! Kakum is perhaps most famous for it being the site of Africa's first and to date only rain forest canopy walkway. Constructed in 1995 it is comprised of about 350 metres of bridges suspended between six tree platforms that reach a height of up to 40 metres above the forest floor. Officially, it opens at 8.30 a.m. to a seemingly constant stream of whooping and screaming tourists that treat the whole thing like a funfair ride but we had arranged early entry into the park from dawn onwards that meant we had the place to ourselves during the most productive time of day. In the early morning half-light we started climbing the stone steps that led us up the hillside to the start of the walkway itself.

The walkway bounced and the platforms creaked and shifted and it was a strange feeling to be suspended underneath the main canopy and amongst the boughs of the medium sized trees but high above the tops of the vine covered trunks and shrubbery below us. Speckled, Red-rumped and Yellow-throated Tinkerbirds pooped, trilled and squeaked all around us but were not always so easy to see and there were also both Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets. We did well for Upper Guinea endemic woodpeckers with good views of Little Green, Melancholy and Fire-bellied Woodpeckers. Other regional endemics included West

African Wattle-eye and a family party of Sharpe's Apalis that favoured the tangles and Copper-tailed Starling and the vaguely hirundine-like Ussher's Flycatcher which could be found in the higher branches of the giant trees.



The Upper Guinea endemic Sharpe's Apalis was seen at close quarters from the canopy walkway. (Nik Borrow)

During our vigil Velvet-mantled Drongo and African Pied Hornbill were virtually constant companions. Green Hylas piped out their disyllabic call from thick vegetation that provided wonderful hiding places for Tambourine Dove, Grey Longbill, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Blue-billed Malimbe and the diminutive Tit Hylia, which lays claim to being Africa's smallest bird. The spreading canopies allowed good foraging opportunities for Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Violet-backed Hyliota, Little Grey Flycatcher, Yellow-mantled Weaver, White-breasted, Chestnut-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas whilst higher in the trees Red-headed Malimbés and Preuss's Weavers crept along the bare branches and White-crested Hornbill, Sabine's Puffback, Blue and Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes and Violet-backed and Chestnut-winged Starlings were seen.

In the fruiting trees we were introduced to a confusing array of greenbuls that included Slender-billed, Little Grey, Ansorge's, Plain, Yellow-whiskered, Golden, Honeyguide and Red-tailed Greenbuls whilst liberal splashes of colour were provided by species such as African Green Pigeon, Yellow-billed Turaco, Blue Malkoha, African Emerald Cuckoo, Blue-throated Roller, Black-winged Oriole, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher and an amazing selection of glittering sunbirds that included Fraser's, Little Green, Grey-chinned, Collared, Blue-throated Brown, Olive, Tiny, Johanna's, Superb and the delightful regional endemic Buff-throated Sunbird.

We had flight views of Fanti Saw-wing as they passed overhead and also in the skies above us were Palearctic migrant Common Swifts and Barn Swallows, Lesser Striped Swallow, Little Swift, and luckily a lone Black Spinetail. A few airborne raptors included Palm-nut Vulture, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle and Black Sparrowhawk.

However perhaps the highlight of the day was in fact a mammal for we had particularly good views of a Long-tailed Pangolin as it made its way along a horizontal branch before disappearing into the wall of greenery. After a break for lunch at our hotel we returned to the canopy walkway in the late afternoon and waited for any evening activity. Inside the forest a male Rufous-sided Broadbill allowed some excellent views and as dusk fell the Brown Nightjars started calling but were never more than a fluttering shape for leader only and then we got totally distracted by the sight of two incredible Pel's Anomalures as they left their daytime hiding places. We watched them bouncing around on the boles of the huge trees and even witnessed one of these bizarre creatures in full glide. Returning to the bus we spotlighted tiny Demidoff's Galagos and two wonderful West African Pottos, one of which was happily eating a snail. A Long-tailed Nightjar seen on the journey back to the lodge rounded the day off nicely.



Two fantastic night mammals in Kakum National Park; the amazing Pel's Anomalure (left) and West African Potto (right). (Nik Borrow)

The next morning we travelled to Antwikwaa, an area on the northern edge of the main Kakum forest. Cocoa farms, oil palm and other cultivation have eaten into the forest on this border of Kakum but indeed this sort of farmbush can be surprisingly productive. Even before reaching our destination we found ourselves watching a pair of roadside Ahanta Francolins that allowed some incredible views. Not only that but there was a pair of Black-throated Coucals moving stealthily through the stems of the cassava plants that accompanied them. Having had our fill of these two sensational species we then made another stop with the intention of looking for a White-spotted Flufftail. We did not get far because a pair of dapper Black Bee-eaters perched up diverted our attention. A pair of Brown Illadopsis frustrated because they kept to the thick undergrowth and a tiny Red-cheeked Wattle-eye dashed to and fro pausing only for the briefest of glimpses. A pair of Lowland Sooty Boubous proved much easier to see and to top it all we ultimately managed close up and personal views of a pair of White-spotted Flufftails!



We were incredibly lucky to see this Ahanta Francolin out in the open at Antwikwaa (left) and nearby there was also this confiding White-spotted Flufftail (right). (Nik Borrow)

We then walked along a path through thick farmbush following the edge of the National Park and here our run of good luck continued with a marvellous sighting of a Long-tailed Hawk that performed a magnificent flyby and perched for prolonged scope views in the boughs of one of the taller trees. It seemed that anything else after this would be an anti-climax! Vieillot's Black Weavers were common and here are of the striking

castaneofuscus form, which is sometimes treated as separate species known as Chestnut-and-black Weaver. Colourful Red-vented Malimbes and 'punkish' Naked-faced Barbets showed well and a few Rosy Bee-eaters drifted overhead. Other birds included Diederik Cuckoo, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Crombec, Whistling Cisticola, African Yellow White-eye, Splendid Starling, Olive-bellied Sunbird, Crested Malimbe, Black-winged Red Bishop and Black-and-white Mannikin.

As the day was getting hotter and the humidity was rising we travelled further north to visit a river that gave us the shining White-bibbed (or White-throated Blue) Swallow as well as several Rock Pratincoles of the rufous-naped race *iberiae*. Nearby we found small numbers of Preuss's Cliff Swallows that were breeding under a culvert.

After a short siesta, we visited another area on the edge of the Kakum forests but hardly a bird moved in the darkening forests. A few common farmbush birds such as Red-faced Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia and Orange-cheeked Waxbill were seen but it really wasn't the most exciting afternoon that was until dusk fell and a super Akun Eagle-Owl glided out of its daytime hiding place and then perched, turning to glare down at us from a tall tree. This really was the cherry on the top of the cake!

The next morning we started at the crack of dawn in farmbush at the edge of Kakum where we tried to see a Puvel's Illadopsis singing from a dense thicket. An initial aggressive response was too quick for most people's vision in the early morning gloom and then the bird fell quiet. Then from afar we could hear the cries of a Congo Serpent Eagle and the secretive illadopsis was put to one side as we quickly departed and tried to track down the wailing eagle. With the group standing on a well-placed viewpoint it wasn't long before the eagle came flying in towards us and perched nearby allowing some excellent scope views. After a while a pair of Western Bluebills drew our attention away from the eagle and after this sighting we decided to return to the illadopsis and after a bit of a battle everyone managed to get some decent views. Inside the forest we enjoyed good looks at the regional endemic Red-billed Helmetshrike, Bristle-nosed Barbet, a flock of Spotted Greenbuls and Western Black-headed Oriole whilst out in the farmbush three Cassin's Hawk-Eagles displaying overhead was a treat and Senegal Coucal, Woodland Kingfisher and Grey Kestrel all put in an appearance. However it was the tree decorated with perched Rosy Bee-eaters that finished the morning off very nicely indeed and after lunch we packed our bags on the bus and set off for Shama for an overnight stay.



A great sighting of an early morning Congo Serpent Eagle (left, Hans Nicolai) and as the day warmed up perched Rosy Bee-eaters were an absolute delight! (right, Nik Borrow)

We left Kakum and headed towards Cape Coast where we made a brief stop at the nearby lagoon that produced sightings of a large number of Little Grebes, Western Reef Heron and a Spur-winged Lapwing but little else. Upon arrival we quickly dropped off our bags at the guesthouse and duly noted the invasive House Sparrow there before heading off to the nearby Nsuta forest. We birded along a logging track through secondary forest where Piping Hornbills were easily seen and we also managed good looks at the

impressive ‘Western’ Yellow-billed Barbet as well as two diminutive African Piculets. A skulking Olive-green Camaroptera was added to the list and Cassin’s Spinetail fluttered overhead whilst a Crowned Eagle was heard calling from the depths of the forest. At an ant swarm the Upper Guinea forest endemic White-tailed Alethe was seen well and there was also a smart Fraser’s Forest Flycatcher. We stayed out until dark and battled to get views of a Fraser’s Eagle-Owl that initially played hard to get but ended up flaunting itself. An African Wood Owl on the walk back was a bonus.

The next morning we returned to the same stretch of forest. Upon arrival a Black Dwarf Hornbill flew over our heads, as did our only Grey Parrot of the whole tour. The status of this species has taken a nose-dive in Ghana and presumably elsewhere in neighbouring West Africa in recent years and it remains to be seen what the future will bring for this threatened bird. A Klaas’s Cuckoo was seen well and we also had good views of Western Nicator, the tiny Lemon-bellied Crombec and most surprisingly even the skulking Kemp’s Longbill which all too often is impossible to see in the vine tangles but this time proved no problem at all.

We left Nsuta and continued our journey westwards towards Ankasa National Park ticking off some Orange Weavers and later Mottled Spinetails en route. We enjoyed a productive stop at a river crossing where we were treated to excellent views of two specialist West African sunbirds, Reichenbach’s and Mangrove (or Brown) Sunbird. A pair of White-browed Forest Flycatchers was a definite trip bonus as this unobtrusive species is rarely seen in Ghana. A Western Osprey, Grey Heron, Whimbrel and Malachite and Shining-blue Kingfishers were also seen at this spot and at a forest pool nearer to our destination we found an African Pygmy Goose and we arrived at Ankasa Forest Resource Reserve late in the afternoon.



At a river crossing en route to Ankasa we enjoyed excellent views of both White-bibbed Swallow (left) and White-browed Forest Flycatcher (right). (Nik Borrow)

Ankasa is a superb area of wet evergreen forest that between the years 1960 to 1974 only suffered relatively light logging. Seven years ago we were the first organised birding group to visit this forest and since then visiting the forest has been made easier as our ground agents have set up a tented camp actually inside the park so that our three nights stay was made very comfortable indeed. The tents were walk-in and large and spacious, there was a toilet block with good showers and most important of all extremely good food and very cold beer! Next year we look forward to a new lodge being built on the banks of the river at the edge of the park.

It must be stressed that West African forests are not easy places to go birding. The tall trees hide their avian treasures very well and bird densities are comparatively low and this year we really struggled to find some of our targets with long periods of inactivity between sightings. Even the normally common Icterine Greenbuls were hard to come by! After a good breakfast we set off in 4WD vehicles to take us deeper into the forest and there were numerous Blue-headed Wood Doves and a small group of Crested Guineafowl seen on the way. At a point when the vehicles could take us no further we gained a brief lucky sighting of a Great Blue Turaco and then walked to a series of pools where a nervous pair of Hartlaub’s Ducks flushed upon arrival. A Dwarf Crocodile swam through the murky waters and we settled down to see what would turn up. A brilliant

little White-bellied Kingfisher kept us company for much of our watch but a Blue-breasted Kingfisher was only seen briefly as it flew through. A pair of Dusky-blue Flycatcher frequented the first pool, a party of Pale-breasted Illadopsis was coaxed into view and a female Black-bellied Seedcracker was also a welcome visitor. High in the canopy we spotted Cassin's Honeybird, Willcocks's Honeyguide and Black-capped Apalis. Western Bearded and Yellow-bearded Greenbul, both endemic to the Upper Guinea forests were seen along with Shining Drongo in the bird parties whilst in the skies above fluttered a lone Sabine's Spinetail and some Square-tailed Saw-wings. Those who saw a bird that was thought to be a Grey-throated Rail was flushed from the second pool, which was an extremely disappointing miss for the rest of us! We finished our tasty lunch that was sent up to us from the main camp and after we were rested, revived and ready to go again the winds strengthened and the heavens opened frustratingly raining out the afternoon. After the lengthy deluge, rather than go back inside the dripping forest we stood at a bridge viewpoint and watched Cassin's Flycatchers below as the dull afternoon slipped into a dark night. We were hoping to hear and perhaps see the desirable Nkulengu Rail but we heard no sound and our guides could find no birds in the vicinity that evening and so it was that we basically lost a whole half day through poor weather.



This tour was a great one for sightings of the lovely Blue-headed Wood Dove (left). A male Carmelite Sunbird at Half Assini (right). (Nik Borrow)

The following day there were no pre-dawn calls of the rail either so we headed back into the depths of the forest but this time went for a long walk along narrow forest trails. However the forest was again very dark and quiet the silence occasionally broken by the Yellow-spotted Barbets hooting mournfully all above us. We battled long and hard to get everyone on to a furtive Forest Robin but the Upper Guinea endemic Finsch's Rufous Thrush was seen well and we also squeezed out a spiky-topped Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher and glorious Chocolate-backed Kingfisher. Red-tailed Bristlebills were seen and although a vocal Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo was a leader-only sighting everyone managed to set eyes on some Olive Long-tailed Cuckoos. A flyby Western Bronze-naped Pigeon kicked off the afternoon session and we returned to the pools but frustratingly there was little happening. However as dusk fell some Nkulengu Rails started calling close by and our guides rushed off into the forest in a quest to find the tree that they had chosen to roost in. At the same time some Spot-breasted Ibises were heard flying over but were too distant to see. We waited in the twilight waiting to hear if the rail quest was a success or not but as the birds had quickly fallen quiet we feared the worst and sure enough Paul and Andrew returned with only bad news. They knew the general area but had not found the exact tree so a plan was hatched to return at three the next morning.

In the dead of the night we returned and accompanied our guides into the spot where they had last heard the rails and we sat waiting for them to call again as they normally do at dusk and pre-dawn. At last the birds called and were much closer than we were expecting. Our guides then went on a search inspecting the boughs of every single tree and we sat watching the beams of their torches piercing the canopy of the forest like anti-aircraft searchlights. The first glimmers of dawn were seeping through the grainy darkness and the first birdsong was beginning to break the silence and we were about to give up when the cry came from Paul that he had found the birds. No sooner had he done so than the pair apparently descended from their roost

and disappeared without any of us having set eyes on them. Disheartened we returned for breakfast hoping that the morning session would be more profitable.

After having fed we entered the forest again on a different trail system but it was once again a great effort. Firstly we spent a lot of time teasing out a Blackcap Illadopsis that fortunately decided to show itself quite well. A pair of Rufous-winged Illadopsis took somewhat longer to get good views of but eventually we saw this rare Upper Guinea forest endemic well as it foraged on the forest floor tossing leaves aside. In fact this bird even made it into the trip top ten! The only other new bird for the trip that morning was a Dusky Crested Flycatcher that disappeared almost immediately after it was spotted; it was definitely time to move on! A detour took us to Half Assini where we had good views of a male Carmelite Sunbird and then it was a long drive back towards Kakum and in the late afternoon we broke our journey at an area of coastal scrub where there was just enough daylight left to track down a Marsh Tchagra.



A friendly African Wood Owl frequented our camp in Ankasa National Park. (Nik Borrow)

We spent the following morning birding in forest along the southwestern edge of Kakum National Park and although by now we had seen a good proportion of the forest species that we were likely to see we were pleased to notice that our fortunes were somewhat improved with a number of good sightings both of familiar friends and new additions to the list. No sooner had we stepped into the forest than a pair of Upper Guinea endemic Brown-cheeked Hornbills flew into view. Although a Red-chested Goshawk was only seen briefly in flight we enjoyed excellent views of White-headed Wood Hoopoe and it was a pleasure to watch a pair of Fire-bellied Woodpeckers at their nesting tree. As usual the early morning activity subsided as temperatures rose we tried hard to see a singing Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat but it was not meant to be and so we continued to Assin Foso for lunch.

The time had now come for us to set off to a site where we all were hoping to find the main prize of the tour, namely the totally amazing Yellow-headed Picathartes. This species is rather unfortunately named White-necked Rockfowl in some lists but the neck is certainly not white as the yellow colour of the skin shines through the feathers as if lit from within. This peculiar bird nests in the rainy season and makes swallow-like

mud-cup nests that it attaches to the dry overhangs of the large granitic boulders and inselbergs that are such a feature of the region. We arrived at the nearest villages that benefit from the proceeds raised by visiting birders donating to the community-based project and met up with the guides that were to lead us to the rocks where the birds nest. The tension and excitement was certainly mounting and we embarked on an hour's relatively easy although undulating uphill walk with only the last few minutes being a climb up the steep slope to the rocks where the nests are situated.

We arrived in good time at the picathartes colony to take our seats for the late afternoon show but to our surprise and joy we only waited for thirty minutes or so before the first bird arrived, appearing as if by magic amongst the twisted lianas below the nests. It eyed us warily but gradually became used to our presence and then was joined by another and another... During the remainder of the afternoon we were treated to a wonderful show from this most special bird with at least eight individuals bouncing around in front of us, stopping to preen regularly and even visiting the nests on occasions. Anyone who has ever seen the picathartes has always been overwhelmed by their beauty and oddness. Indeed there is something mysterious and even spiritual about them and the sculptured rocks where they live and it is easy to see why they are revered in certain areas. It was then a long two and a half hours drive to our hotel in Kumasi for an overnight stop where there was much jollity and celebration with the beers flowing freely amongst those who hadn't collapsed into their beds.



The White-necked Rockfowl is somewhat misnamed as it has both a yellow neck and head but the name is presumably inspired by the dried and colourless corpses to be found in museum collections. This year our views were prolonged and nothing less than superb as we watched at least eight of these unique birds, observing them preening and visiting their nests seemingly unperturbed by our presence. (Hans Nicolai (left), Nik Borrow (right)

From Kumasi we drove to Offinso to take a look at what is left of the dry forest there. Sadly the access road was impassable so we could not venture far into the forest and our birding was basically in some teak plantation and farmbush. The new species recorded for the tour included Hamerkop, Common Moorhen, Black Cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Northern Puffback, Willow Warbler and African Firefinch. The rest of the day was pretty much taken up with travelling as our long journey took us northwards to Mole National Park. As we headed north so species such as Grasshopper Buzzard appeared attending the bush fires that are so characteristic of the area at this time of year and the occasional Bateleur was also seen. We pulled into the park as night was falling.

The Mole Motel is situated on an escarpment overlooking a waterhole that attracts the parks healthy population of African Savanna Elephants. We had planned to begin our first full day in the park on foot by some small waterholes but as we arrived complete with armed guard and stepped out of the bus so one of these elephants started heading straight towards us. We were advised that this was not a 'good' elephant and that we should get back onto the bus and beat a hasty retreat. We heeded this sage advice and reversed in the bus as fast as we dare back the way we came followed by the bad-tempered elephant until it

was happy that it had seen us out of his territory! After this adrenalin pumping start to the day we relocated to a more peaceful area and tried again and this time it was just the birds and us!

We had two full days to try to see the best of Mole's birds and we did extremely well. Around the large waterhole that lies below the motel are thickets where we hunted out the bizarre Oriole Warbler (or Moho), which is currently placed in the family *Cisticolidae*! This colourful, striking species has a loud song and duets with its mate but can be remarkably difficult to see at times and it took us several attempts to see it. Yellow-throated Leafloves were also seen here, this form with a vivid yellow throat unlike its East African counterparts which are sometimes treated as a separate species. Dowdy Swamp Flycatchers hawked low over the water for insects and everywhere was a riot of colour with species like the Grey-headed Kingfisher and gorgeous Red-throated Bee-eaters that were nesting in the eroded banks. White-crowned Robin-Chats favoured the dense vegetation, as did Yellow-breasted Apalis and Orange-breasted Bushshrike. A Pearl-spotted Owlet worked hard for us by attracting a number of small birds angered by its presence and we noted Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Bush Petronia, African Blue Flycatcher, Pygmy, Scarlet-chested and Beautiful Sunbirds. Also frequenting the area were Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Lavender Waxbill and Bar-breasted, Red-billed and Black-faced Firefinches. The identification of the attendant indigobirds was as always problematic but we more confidently put a name to a magnificent Exclamationary Paradise Whydah in full breeding regalia sporting a long flowing tail. Hadada Ibises probed the soft mud, African Wattled Lapwing, Giant Kingfisher and Black Crake were seen and rasps of Helmeted Guineafowl scattered through the bush as Wire-tailed Swallows dashed past. In the heat of the day African White-backed and White-headed Vultures came to loaf by the pools and we had good views of raptors such as Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Wahlberg's Eagle and Lizard Buzzard.



Two of the most striking birds of Mole National Park were the magnificently grotesque Bearded Barbet (left) and the stunning Northern Carmine Bee-eater (right). (Nik Borrow)

In the dry bush country we were irritated by the biting tsetse flies and seriously plagued by sweat bees that endeavoured to enter our eyes, ears, noses and mouths. It was easier to see birds on the edges of the park where there were fewer of these insects and we notched up a great selection of species. The magnificently grotesque Bearded Barbet was a firm favourite, a wild-eyed Moustached Grass Warbler showed well and we did well to find Heuglin's Masked Weaver, Red-winged Pytilia and both Brown-rumped and Cabanis's Buntings. Clear blue skies and bright sunlight enhanced the colours of many birds and we marvelled at Abyssinian Roller, Green Wood Hoopoe, Rose-ringed Parakeet, African Golden Oriole and Lesser Blue-

eared, Purple and Long-tailed Starlings. A pair of Red-necked Falcons was scoped and we managed good looks at Black Scimitarbill. New woodpeckers for the trip included Fine-spotted, Cardinal and Brown-backed Woodpeckers and other species included Black-billed Wood Dove, Striped Kingfisher, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Lesser Honeyguide, White-crested Helmetshrike, Brubru, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, White-shouldered Black Tit, Rufous Cisticola, Brown Babbler, Familiar Chat, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Red-headed Weaver, Tree Pipit and Common House Martin. White-throated Francolins played hard to get but with much perseverance we finally connected with this attractive species during our last morning just before we had to leave.

Bush fires are a feature of the park in the dry season and although these can be natural in origin some are purposefully started to maintain the savannah and some specialties are associated with these fires. As well as the more expected Sun Lark, this tour we were very fortunate to find two separate individual Rufous-rumped Larks and were able to watch one of them displaying over the recently burned plains. A White-fronted Black Chat was found nearby as beautiful Northern Carmine Bee-eaters swooped all around us. At another burned plain we found the highly desirable Forbes's Plover. We counted five individuals and saw them well by both day and night. As dusk fell the purring bleeps of African Scops Owls sounded out. We called one of these small owls into view as Long-tailed and Standard-winged Nightjars took to the air. Spotted Thick-knees and Four-banded Sandgrouse were caught in the spotlights and we saw a number of Greyish Eagle-Owls.



Two highly desirable species of larks were seen well in Mole National Park. Attracted to a bush fire were both Rufous-rumped Lark (left) and Sun Lark (right). (Nik Borrow)

Our time at Mole had come to an end and once again we boarded the bus for a long journey that took us even further north with our destination being Bolgatanga in the very far north. On the way we saw numerous Red-chested Swallows and our first Black-headed Heron and Speckled Pigeons. We stopped for a leg stretch at a swamp where there were Black-headed Weaver, Red-billed Quelea and Northern Red Bishop and sadly nets strung out to catch the numerous granivorous birds had also ensnared two Grasshopper Buzzards. After this our next port of call was the Tongo Hills a series of strangely sculpted granitic rocks where our main target the attractive Fox Kestrel fell easily and there were also Booted Eagle and West African Swallows in the skies. Gosling's Buntings appeared to be everywhere, dapper Chestnut-backed Sparrow Larks were at our feet and a pair of White-crowned Cliff Chat was scoped. There was also Little Weaver and Black-rumped Waxbill and finally after much searching a single Rock-loving Cisticola.

Starting early the next morning we headed northeast almost to the border with neighbouring Burkina Faso where we paid a visit to the White Volta for one very special bird in particular. This was the sublime Egyptian Plover and we were treated to some really superb views of this unique bird in an attractive setting. We watched at least seven individuals for as long as we wished as they fed on the open sandbanks and engaged in territorial squabbles. Also in this area we saw donkeys adorned with Yellow-billed Oxpeckers, and White-billed Buffalo Weavers at their clumsy stick nests a sure sign that the Sahel was not far away. This was reinforced with the presence of Chestnut-bellied Starling, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Cut-throat Finch

and African Silverbill. A Great Spotted Cuckoo allowed close approach and we also saw Mourning Collared Dove, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, Woodchat Shrike, Greater Blue-eared Starling and Village Indigobird. The big prize however was a great sighting of the resident form of Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin which has been suggested should be treated as a separate species, African Scrub Robin.



The sublime Egyptian Plover seen here aggressively displaying to another individual in a territorial dispute. (Nik Borrow)

In the afternoon we visited Tono Dam, a vast expanse of water that was devoid of birds and certainly not a waterbird paradise so our time was spent in the scrub and cultivation below the dam. A pair of Singing Bush Lark, possibly only the second documented occurrence for the country and a Black-backed Cisticola were both good finds and we flushed a few Quailfinch but only saw them in flight. Other new birds included the seemingly tail-less Northern Crombec and Palearctic migrant Western Bonelli's Warbler and Western Yellow Wagtail.

Our time in the north had come to a close and now the long journey back to Kumasi lay ahead of us. We spent most of the day travelling in a quest to get back in good time for a special reason and that was to squeeze in some extra night birding! Paul, Andrews and Anim our driver were all amenable and with a 'nothing ventured nothing gained' approach we checked into our hotel and immediately departed for Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary arriving shortly before dusk. The decision to do this thankfully paid off for as darkness descended a Brown Nightjar started to call and miraculously responded aggressively to playback landing just above our heads allowing some of the finest views we have ever had of this species. Elated and jubilant we headed back to the hotel for food and cold beer!

The next morning we found ourselves back in Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary a place that is usually blessed with good birds as well and after the previous evenings success we had high hopes. We started with some good looks at White-throated Greenbul but thereafter the forests were disappointingly quiet. A perched Red-thighed Sparrowhawk was seen briefly but departed way too soon but we did obtain far better views of a pair of perched Black Dwarf Hornbill and finally set eyes on a pair of Red-billed Dwarf Hornbills. Thick-billed

Honeyguide and Magpie Mannikin were seen and a super Red-chested Owlet glared down at us from the thick cover of tangled lianas.

In the afternoon, we made our first visit to the Atewa range of hills that rise to a grand height of 770m and are classed as a Forest Reserve although there are plans to upgrade to National Park status. However there has been some mining activity there for bauxite can be found there and currently gold is being mined whilst the buzzing sound of chainsaws caused by the illegal logging is a familiar sound. During this first afternoon we had little time to venture far and so we settled for birding in the farmbush which has been devastated by the surface mining for gold within the past years but all that we added to the list was Thick-billed Weaver.

The next day we devoted to climbing up the hill to an area normally favoured by the Blue-moustached Bee-eater and we very happily succeeded in our quest enjoying some excellent views of this handsome species. We also managed far superior views of Red-cheeked Wattle-eye than previously but a furtive Forest Scrub Robin was only glimpsed. Palearctic migrant Common Cuckoo and Wood Warbler were also seen and some busy bird parties meant that we had numerous chances to reacquaint ourselves with old friends. Before we left the next day we found a pair of Red-breasted Swallows, two Great Reed Warblers, a Garden Warbler, a male Black-bellied Seedcracker and some Compact Weavers in the farmbush before setting off for our final destination on the eastern side of the Volta River.



The forests on the Atewa Range were home to two colourful species; the Chocolate-backed Kingfisher (left) and the delightful Blue-moustached Bee-eater (right). (Nik Borrow)

Our remaining time was spent exploring Kalakpa Reserve but once again the birding pace was painfully slow but we did manage to get views of skulking Capuchin Babbler as well as the brown-throated form of Brown Illadopsis, which was historically treated as a separate species, Moloney's Illadopsis. Frustrations came with a Thick-billed Cuckoo that was seen all too briefly as it flew over in display flight and a Spotted Honeyguide that was gone in a flash. We fared better with a perched Western Banded Snake Eagle and Brown-necked Parrot was also seen. At night we called out a Black-shouldered Nightjar and on the road spotlighted a male Standard-winged Nightjar complete with standards. Time was running out and the trip had come to an end so we headed back to the hotel and ate a celebratory lunch before cleaning up and repacking and heading back to Accra with our last tick of the trip being a fine Pied-winged Swallow on the banks of the Volta River itself.

Ghana is a friendly and stable country; the roads are mostly good although in some places getting a little too pot-holed for comfort these days. The food is definitely tasty and the accommodation really quite comfortable. The Yellow-headed Picathartes is currently very reliably and usually seen extremely well and the sighting of a good number of the Upper Guinea regional endemics certainly made the visit more than worthwhile. With Liberia and Ivory Coast still out of the game and Sierra Leone in a state of recovery Ghana really does offer the visitor a chance to get to grips with one of the most charismatic of all West African birds in much more comfort and less time than anywhere else presently available. This tour is now a classic BirdQuest!



This male Standard-winged Nightjar complete with standards was a highlight of our visit to Kalakpa. (Nik Borrow)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BIRDS

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Widespread sightings but only in small numbers.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* 4 at Nasia Swamp.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii* At least 2 flushed in Ankasa.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* A female near Ankasa and a pair at Nasia Swamp.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Small numbers in Mole NP
Crested Guineafowl (Western C G) *Guttera [pucherani] verreauxi* 3+ very shy birds in Ankasa NP.
Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus* A few of these 'rock chickens' at Shai Hills but most common in the far north.
Latham's Francolin (Forest F) ♀ *Peliperdix lathami* (H) Heard in Kakum NP, Bonkro and Bobiri.
White-throated Francolin ♀ *Peliperdix albogularis* After much effort we saw 1 well in Mole NP.
Ahanta Francolin ♀ *Pternistis ahantensis* Seen well at Antwikkwa and Atewa.
Double-spurred Francolin *Pternistis bicalcaratus* This large francolin seen well at Shai Hills and in the far north.
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Good numbers on Cape Coast lagoon.
Spot-breasted Ibis ♀ *Bostrychia rara* (H) Heard distantly in Ankasa NP.
Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash* Small numbers seen in Mole NP.
Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Widespread sightings in low numbers.



This Striated Heron was watched fishing in Ankasa National Park. (Nik Borrow)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Most numerous at Nasia Swamp.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Singletons at the Ebi River and in Mole NP.
Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* Just two sightings in the far north.
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* 2 at Sakumono Lagoon and a singleton at the Ebi River.
Great Egret *Ardea alba* 2 at Sakumono Lagoon.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (NL) 1 seen by some at the Pra River.
Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* (NL) White phase birds are problematic but 1 identified at Cape Coast lagoon.
Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Easily seen in the north.
Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Widespread sightings in suitable habitat.
Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One of these Palearctic migrants was seen at Ebi River.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Widespread sightings but most numerous in the north.

African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus* Widespread sightings.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* Just 3 individuals in Kakum NP.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Singletons of these Palearctic migrants at Shai Hills and Kakum NP.

African Cuckoo-Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides* Sightings at Shai Hills, Kakum NP and Atewa.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (CR) Encountered throughout the tour at widespread localities.

White-backed Vulture (African W-b V) *Gyps africanus* (CR) At least 4 seen in Mole NP.

White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* (CR) 2 seen in Mole NP.

Beaudouin's Snake Eagle ♀ *Circaetus beaudouini* (V) 2 sightings in the north.

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens* 1 seen at Kalakpa.

Congo Serpent Eagle ♀ *Circaetus spectabilis* Prolonged scope views in the Kakum area.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) Just a few sightings in the north.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT) (H) Heard at Nsuta and Atewa.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (V) Excellent flight views in Mole NP.



Two impressive raptors seen well in Mole NP, Bateleur (left) and Martial Eagle (right). (Nik Borrow)

Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraetus wahlbergi* Singletons in Mole NP.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* Singletons of this Palearctic migrant at Tongo Hills and Sapeliga.

Ayres's Hawk-Eagle *Hieraetus ayresii* 2 in flight over Kakum NP.

Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Aquila africana* 3 together circling over the Kakum area.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* Widespread sightings mainly in the north.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* Easily seen in the north.

Long-tailed Hawk ♀ *Urotriorchis macrourus* Prolonged views at Antwikkwa and heard at Atewa.

Red-chested Goshawk ♀ *Accipiter toussenelii* 4 widespread sightings with best views at Atewa.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Widespread sightings mainly in the north.

Red-thighed Sparrowhawk ♀ *Accipiter erythropus* Brief views at Bobiri Forest.

Black Sparrowhawk (Great S) *Accipiter melanoleucus* 6 sightings in the Kakum area and Bobiri Forest.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* A commonly encountered and widespread species.

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis* Numerous in the north and easily seen.

Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis* Commonly seen in appropriate habitat throughout the tour.

Grey-throated Rail ♀ *Canirallus oculatus* (NL) Yvon saw 1 flushed in Ankasa NP.

White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra* Great views for the group at Antwikkwa.

Nkulengu Rail ♀ *Himantornis haematopus* (H) A frustrating near miss in Ankasa NP.

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* Heard in Ankasa NP and seen in Mole NP.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* A pair with juveniles at Offinso forest.

Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* Seen in Mole NP and at Tono Dam.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* 1 after dark in Mole NP.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* 1 at Sakumono Lagoon.

Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover) *Vanellus spinosus* 1 at Cape Coast Lagoon and 3 at Sapeliga.

White-crowned Lapwing (W-headed L/Plover) *Vanellus albiceps* 1 seen at the Pra River and 2 at Sapeliga.

African Wattled Lapwing (Wattled L) *Vanellus senegallus* Easily seen in the north.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* One of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono Lagoon.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono Lagoon.

Forbes's Plover ♀ *Charadrius forbesi* Excellent encounters with at least 5 birds in Mole NP.



We saw Forbes's Plovers by both night and day in Mole National Park. (Nik Borrow)

Egyptian Plover ♀ *Pluvianus aegyptius* Super views of at least 7 birds at Sapeliga.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Ebi River.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono Lagoon and 11 at Sapeliga.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Sightings of this Palearctic migrant in Mole NP and at Tono Dam.h

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono Lagoon.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants at widespread localities.

Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis* 6 of the race *liberiae* on the Pra River.

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus* Small numbers seen in Mole NP and 2 at Tono Dam.

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* 'Table' birds only.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common to abundant in the far north.

Western Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba iriditorques* Heard at Nsuta and seen by some in flight in Ankasa NP.

Mourning Collared Dove (African M D) *Streptopelia decipiens* Easily seen in the far north.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common and widespread.

Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea* Small numbers at Shai Hills and Winneba Plains but common in the north.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread.

Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus* Commonly encountered in the north.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* Commonly encountered in the forest zone.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* Commonly encountered in the forest although mainly heard or in flight.

Blue-headed Wood Dove *Turtur brehmeri* Easily seen in Ankasa NP.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Just two sightings in the north.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* Small numbers seen in the north.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered in the south.

Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata* Just 1 seen briefly at Ankasa.

Guinea Turaco (Green T) *Tauraco persa* First seen well on the Winneba Plains.

Yellow-billed Turaco *Tauraco macrorhynchus* We had several chances to see this species well in the forests.

Violet Turaco ♀ *Musophaga violacea* Small numbers seen in appropriate habitat during the tour.

Western Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator* Widespread sightings during this tour.

Black-throated Coucal ♀ *Centropus leucogaster* Amazing views of these often-skulking coucals in the Kakum area.



Stunning views of Black-throated Coucal on the edge of the Kakum forests. (Nik Borrow)

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis* Widespread sightings.

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

Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill) *Ceuthmochares aereus* Regularly seen in the forests.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Great looks at 2 at Sapeliga.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii* 3 widespread sightings of this striking cuckoo.

Thick-billed Cuckoo ♀ *Pachycoccyx audeberti* 1 seen in flight at Kalakpa.

Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* Singletons at Antwikwaa and Atewa.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* Often heard and several sightings in the forest zone.

African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* Small numbers of both sexes in the forest zone.

Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo ♀ *Cercococcyx mechowi* Only Nik actually saw the singing bird in Ankasa NP.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus* Often heard and 2 seen in Ankasa NP.

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* An individual of the nominate race seen at Offinso forest.

Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* (H) Heard only at Atewa.

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* 1 possibly this species was seen in Mole NP.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen well at Atewa.

African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* Great looks at a pair of these endearing little owls in Mole NP.

Northern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis leucotis* (H) Heard in Mole NP.

Greyish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens* Easily seen in Mole NP after dark.



Excellent night birding in Mole National Park with African Scops Owl (left) and Greyish Eagle-Owl (right). (Nik Borrow)

Fraser's Eagle-Owl ♀ *Bubo poensis* It was hard work but we finally saw 1 at Nsuta.

Akun Eagle-Owl ♀ *Bubo leucostictus* 1 was scoped on the edge of the Kakum Forests.

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii* Seen well at night at Nsuta and in Ankasa NP.

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum* 1 seen well during the day in Mole NP.

Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum* Seen well during the day in Bobiri Forest.

African Barred (Etchécopar's) Owlet ♀ *Glaucidium [capense] etchecopari* Several brief views at Shai Hills.

Brown Nightjar ♀ *Veles binotatus* Nik saw 1 from the canopy walkway in Kakum and excellent views in Bobiri Forest.

Black-shouldered Nightjar ♀ *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* After a battle we saw 1 at Kalakpa.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* A number of widespread sightings.

Standard-winged Nightjar *Caprimulgus longipennis* Excellent views in Mole NP and again at Kalakpa.

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri* 3 seen en route to Ankasa.

Black Spinetail ♀ *Telacanthura melanopygia* 1 seen well flying over the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini* Small numbers seen over Nsuta and Ankasa forests.

Cassin's Spinetail *Neafrapus cassini* 2 were seen over Kakum.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Common Swift *Apus apus* This Palearctic migrant was seen over the forest zone.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* (H) Only heard at Atewa.

Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R) *Coracias naevius* 2 at Shai Hills but more common in the north.

Blue-bellied Roller ♀ *Coracias cyanogaster* First seen at Shai Hills but more common in the north.

Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis* Regular sightings in the forest zone.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* Sightings from Offinso to Kalakpa.

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia* Great views of singlets in Ankasa and Atewa forests.

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* Small numbers seen in Mole NP.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* 1 seen in Mole NP.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* 1 seen briefly at Ankasa and heard elsewhere.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered in the forest zone.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta* Scattered sightings during the tour.

White-bellied Kingfisher ♀ *Corythornis leucogaster* Prolonged views at Ankasa.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus* Just 2 at the Ebi River.

Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribrachys* A brief fly-by at the Ebi River.

Giant Kingfisher *Megacyrle maxima* 2 sightings in Mole NP.

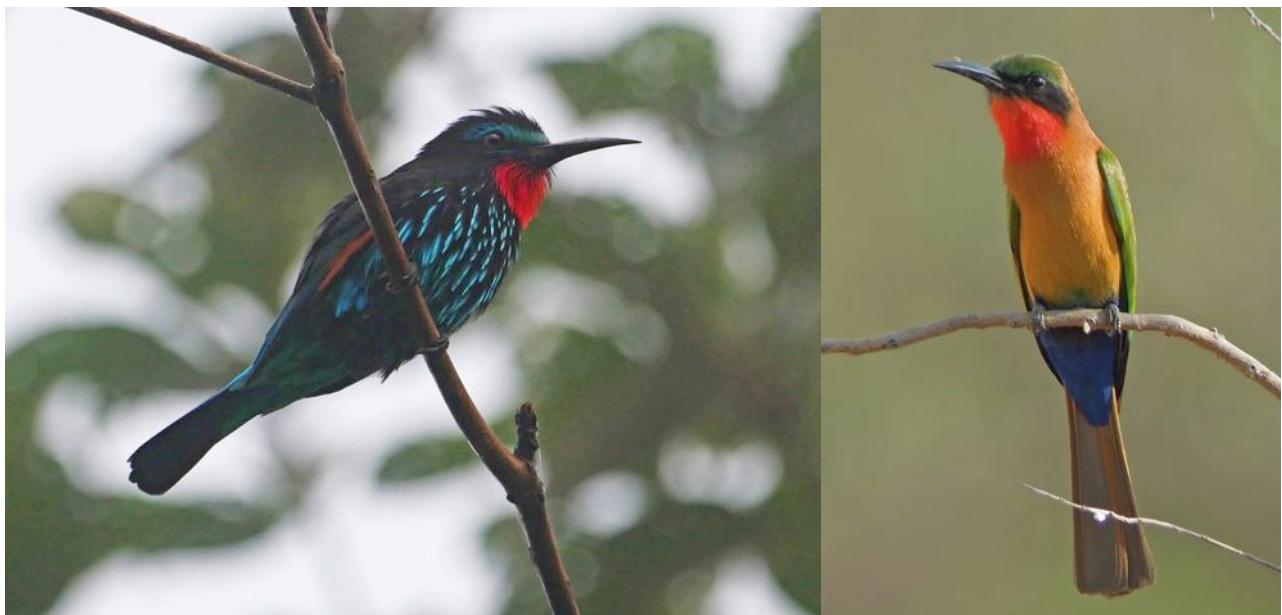
Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Small numbers in appropriate habitat.

Blue-moustached Bee-eater ♀ *Merops mentalis* (NT) Wonderful views at Atewa.

Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis* First seen well at Antwika but numerous repeat viewings in the forests.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* A few widespread sightings.

Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bullocki* This glorious bee-eater is impossible to miss in Mole NP.



Black Bee-eater is always a much-wanted species (left) and Red-throated Bee-eaters have the 'WOW!' factor (right). (Nik Borrow)

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* Non-breeding migrants are common and easy to see on this tour.

Rosy Bee-eater ♀ *Merops malimbicus* Wonderful views of this beautiful bee-eater in the Kakum area.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* Good numbers in Mole NP and at Sapeiga.

White-headed Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus bollei* A pair was seen on the edge of the Kakum forests.

Green Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* Small numbers in Mole NP and at Kalakpa.

Black Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* 1 seen well in Mole NP.

Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus* A family group of 5 individuals in Mole NP.

Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* Easily seen in the far north.

African Pied Hornbill ♀ *Lophoceros [fasciatus] semifasciatus* Common and easy to see on this tour.

African Grey Hornbill *Lophoceros nasutus* Easily seen in the savannah zone.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Lophoceros camurus* A pair was seen in Bobiri Forest.

Piping Hornbill ♀ (Western P H) *Bycanistes fistulator* Most numerous in Nsuta and Ankasa forests.

Brown-cheeked Hornbill ♀ *Bycanistes cylindricus* (V) A pair seen well in flight on the edge of the Kakum forests.

Yellow-casqued Hornbill ♀ (Y-c Wattled) *Ceratogymna elata* (V) (H) Heard distantly in Ankasa NP.

Black Dwarf Hornbill ♀ (Western Little H) *Horizocerus hartlaubii* 1 at Nsuta and a pair in Bobiri Forest.

White-crested Hornbill ♀ (Western Long-tailed H) *Horizocerus albocristatus* 5 sightings in the forests.

Bristle-nosed Barbet ♀ *Gymnobucco peli* Small numbers seen at Abrafo and Nsuta.

Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus* Small numbers seen in the various forests.

Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* The most commonly seen tinkerbird in the forests.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus atroflavus* Often heard and occasionally seen in the forests.

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* Often heard in the forests and occasionally seen.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus* Singletons seen at Shai Hills and Offinso Forest.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* Seen well at Shai Hills and in the north.

Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui* Often heard in the forests and occasionally seen.

Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta* Often heard in the forests and occasionally seen.

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti* Widespread sightings in savannah and forest edge.



Red-rumped Tinkerbirds are perhaps the most striking of their kind (left) and Vieillot's Barbets are a riot of colour (right). (Nik Borrow)

Double-toothed Barbet *Lybius bidentatus* 1 was seen well on Winneba Plains.

Bearded Barbet ♀ *Lybius dubius* Several opportunities to see this amazing barbet well in the north.

Yellow-billed Barbet ♀ (Western Y-b B) *Trachyphonus [purpuratus] goffinii* Seen well on the edge of Kakum.

Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis* 1 in Ankasa NP and 2 at Atewa.

Willcocks's Honeyguide ♀ *Indicator willcocksi* 1 seen well in Ankasa NP.

Thick-billed Honeyguide *Indicator conirostris* 1 in Bobiri Forest. See Note.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* 2 in Mole NP. See Note.

Spotted Honeyguide ♀ *Indicator maculatus* 1 seen briefly in Kalakpa.

African Piculet ♀ *Sasia africana* This tiny woodpecker was seen well at Nsuta with up to 6 individuals.

Fine-spotted Woodpecker ♀ *Campetherina punctuligera* 1 seen well in Mole NP.

Little Green Woodpecker ♀ *Campetherina maculosa* Seen well in the Kakum forests.

Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campetherina nivosa* Widespread sightings during this tour.

Fire-bellied Woodpecker ♀ *Chloropicus pyrrhogaster* Seen well in the Kakum forests and again at Atewa.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* 2 seen well in Mole NP.

Melancholy Woodpecker ♀ *Dendropicos lugubris* Sightings at Kakum and Atewa.

African Grey Woodpecker (G W) *Dendropicos goertae* (H) Only heard during this tour in various savannahs.

Brown-backed Woodpecker *Dendropicos obsoletus* Great looks at a pair in Mole NP.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Mostly noted in towns during journeys.

Fox Kestrel ♀ *Falco alopecoides* 2 seen well but somewhat distantly in the Tongo Hills.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* 7 widespread sightings in open areas.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco [chicquera] ruficollis* 4 sightings in the north.

African Hobby *Falco cuvierii* Excellent views at Winneba and singletons at Kalakpa.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Small numbers seen in the north.
 Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* (E) 1 in flight at Nsuta and heard at Bobiri.
 Red-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus gulielmi* Small numbers seen over the forests.
 Brown-necked Parrot ♀ *Poicephalus fuscicollis* 1 seen well in flight at Kalakpa.
 Senegal Parrot *Poicephalus senegalus* 2 at Shai Hills but more numerous in the north and at Kalakpa.
 Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Common in Mole NP.
 Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* Males were seen well in Kakum and Ankasa NPs.
 Senegal Batis ♀ *Batis senegalensis* Seen well at Shai Hills and in Mole NP.
 West African Wattle-eye ♀ *Platysteira hormophora* Regularly seen in the forests.
 Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W) *Platysteira cyanea* Seen on the Winneba Plains, heard in Mole NP.
 Red-cheeked Wattle-eye ♀ *Platysteira blissetti* First seen on the edge of the Kakum forests but best views at Atewa.
 White-crested Helmetshrike (W H-s) *Prionops plumatus* Busy flocks in Mole NP and at Atewa.
 Red-billed Helmet-shrike ♀ *Prionops caniceps* Great views of these characterful birds in the various forests.
 Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* (H) Only heard in Mole NP.
 Many-coloured Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus multicolor* (H) Close but impossible to see in the canopy at Atewa.
 Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B-s) *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* Seen in Mole NP.
 Marsh Tchagra *Bocagia minuta* Great looks at a female at Brenu.
 Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis* Singletons at Offinso and Atewa.
 Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* Seen well in the various savannahs.
 Sabine's Puffback ♀ (Large-billed P) *Dryoscopus sabini* A male was seen well from the canopy walkway in Kakum.
 Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* Seen well in the various savannahs.
 Lowland Sooty Boubou ♀ (S B) *Laniarius leucorhynchus* A pair was seen at Antwikkwa.
 Yellow-crowned Gonolek ♀ (Common G) *Laniarius barbarus* First seen well on the Winneba Plains.
 Brubru *Nilaus afer* Just 1 seen in Mole NP.
 White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis* Just 1 seen in Mole NP.
 Blue Cuckooshrike *Coracina azurea* Seen well in the Kakum forests.
 Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea* Great looks in Mole NP.



Both Red-billed Helmetshrikes (left) and Red-shouldered Cuckooshrikes (right) allowed some terrific views. (Nik Borrow)

Purple-throated Cuckooshrike *Campephaga quiscalina* Several chances to see well in the various forests.
 Yellow-billed Shrike *Corvinella corvina* Regularly seen in the savannahs.
 Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* Regularly encountered throughout the tour, often by roadsides.
 Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Sapeliga.
 Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Kalakpa for some.
 African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* Small numbers were seen in Mole NP.

Western Oriole (W Black-headed O) *Oriolus brachyrynchus* Small numbers were seen or heard in the forests.

Black-winged Oriole *Oriolus nigripennis* More numerous than the previous species in the forests.

Shining Drongo *Dicrurus atripennis* Only small numbers seen in the various forests.

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* The common Drongo of the savannahs.

Velvet-mantled Drongo *Dicrurus [modestus] coracinus* Replaces the previous species in the forests.

Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus nitens* Often heard and seen in Ankasa NP.

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Commonly encountered in the forests.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Replaces the previous species in the wooded savannahs.

Piapiac *Ptilostomus afer* Particularly common in the far north.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* An abundant and widespread species.

White-necked Rockfowl ♀ (Yellow-headed Picathartes) *Picathartes gymnocephalus* (V) A total success! 8+ birds.

African Blue Flycatcher *Elminia longicauda* Small numbers seen well in Mole NP.

Dusky Crested Flycatcher ♀ *Elminia nigromitrata* 1 seen briefly in Ankasa NP.

White-shouldered Black Tit *Melaniparus guineensis* Small numbers seen well in Mole NP.

Western Nicator *Nicator chloris* Often heard in the various forests and seen at Nsuta.

Rufous-rumped Lark ♀ *Pinarocorys erythropygia* A great showing, 2 separate individuals in Mole NP.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* Most numerous in the Tongo Hills.



The violet-eyed Piapiac (left, Hans Nicolai) and a male Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark (right, Nik Borrow)

Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans* Excellent views of a pair at Tono Dam on 3rd December. See Note.

Sun Lark ♀ *Galerida modesta* Small numbers in Mole NP and another at Tono Dam.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* A ubiquitous species absent only from interior forest.

Slender-billed Greenbul *Stelgidillas gracilirostris* Commonly encountered in the various forests.

Little Greenbul *Eurillas virens* Heard more often than the bird was seen in the forests.

Little Grey Greenbul *Eurillas gracilis* Just a few seen in the various forests.

Ansorge's Greenbul *Eurillas ansorgei* 1 sightings at Kakum. See note.

Plain Greenbul (Cameroon Sombre G) *Eurillas curvirostris* A very skulking greenbul in the forests.

Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Eurillas latirostris* Commonly heard and occasionally seen in the forests.

Golden Greenbul *Calyptocichla serina* 1 seen for some from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.

Honeyguide Greenbul *Baeopogon indicator* Scattered sightings in the forests.

Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus* A small flock seen well at the edge of the Kakum forests.

Simple Greenbul (S Leaflove) *Chlorocichla simplex* Scattered sightings in farmbush habitats.

Yellow-throated Leaflove *Atimastillas flavicollis* A pair seen well in Mole NP.

Swamp Palm Bulbul *Thescelocichla leucoptera* Commonly encountered in the forest zone.

Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus* A common member of mixed bird parties in the various forests.

White-throated Greenbul ♀ *Phyllastrephus albicularis* Skulking individuals seen in Bobiri Forest and at Kalakpa.

Red-tailed Bristlebill (Common B) *Bleda syndactylus* Heard more often than the bird was seen in the forests.

Green-tailed Bristlebill ♀ *Bleda eximius* (NT) (H) A poor year and only heard at Atewa.

Grey-headed Bristlebill ♀ *Bleda canicapillus* Heard often and seen a few times in the forests.

Western Bearded Greenbul ♀ *Criniger barbatus* Heard often and seen a few times in the forests.

Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus* Heard often and seen a few times in the forests.

Yellow-bearded Greenbul ♀ *Criniger olivaceus* (V) Brief views in Ankasa NP.

Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens* small numbers in Ankasa NP and at Atewa.

Fanti Saw-wing ♀ *Psalidoprocne obscura* Small numbers seen over the Kakum forests.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* This Palearctic migrant was commonly encountered in good numbers.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida* Easily seen in the north.

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Commonly noted during the tour particularly on journeys in the south.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* Easily seen in the north.

White-bibbed Swallow (White-throated Blue S) *Hirundo nigrita* Singletons on the Pra and Ebi Rivers.

Pied-winged Swallow ♀ *Hirundo leucosoma* 1 by the Volta as we returned to Accra.

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Just 2 at Shai Hills.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* This Palearctic migrant was most numerous in Mole NP.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* Small numbers in the Kakum area.

Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested S) *Cecropis semirufa* A pair at Atewa.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* 1 en route to Kakum.

West African Swallow ♀ *Cecropis domicella* Small numbers in the Tongo Hills and at Sapeliga.

Preuss's Cliff Swallow ♀ *Petrochelidon preussi* Seen well at their nesting site north of Kakum.

Moustached Grass Warbler (African M W) *Melocichla mentalis* Seen in Mole NP and at Kalakpa.

Kemp's Longbill ♀ *Macrosphenus kempfi* This skulker allowed us to get great views at Nsuta.

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor* Regularly encountered in the forest zone.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* 1 seen well at Tono Dam.

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens* More often heard than seen but we first had good looks at Antwikkwa.

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti* Singletons were seen at Nsuta and Atewa.

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocercus mccallii* Seen well in Kakum NP and at Atewa.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina* Numerous opportunities to see this one in the forests.

Tit Hylia *Pholidornis rushiae* We enjoyed several encounters with this tiny bird.



A singing Moustached Grass Warbler in Mole NP (left) and the diminutive Tit Hylia at Atewa (right). (Nik Borrow)

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the north.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* 2 of these Palearctic migrants were seen at Tono Dam.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Atewa.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* 2 of these Palearctic migrants were seen in the Atewa farmbush.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the savannahs.

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* Heard more often than seen in the farmbush and savannahs.

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* Seen in Mole NP.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis* Seen well in the farmbush and savannahs.

Rock-loving Cisticola *Cisticola emini* After a long search we saw 1 at Tongo Hills.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* Easily seen at Shai Hills and Kalakpa.

Short-winged Cisticola (Siffling F) *Cisticola brachypterus* Easily seen in the farmbush and savannahs.

Rufous Cisticola ♀ *Cisticola rufus* 2 seen in Mole NP.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* Seen at Sakumono Lagoon.

Black-backed Cisticola ♀ *Cisticola eximius* 1 seen well at Tono Dam on 3rd December.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Widespread sightings.

Red-winged Warbler (R-w Prinia) *Heliois erythrophrys* Singletons on the Winneba Plains and in Mole NP.

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavidus* Singletons in Mole NP.

Black-capped Apalis *Apalis nigriceps* High in the canopy at Atewa.

Sharpe's Apalis ♀ *Apalis sharpii* Seen well in the various forests.



Red-winged Warbler on the Winneba Plains (left, Hans Nicolai) and a female Sharpe's Apalis in Kakum NP (right, Nik Borrow)

Oriole Warbler ♀ *Hypergerus atriceps* Skulking but noisy birds seen in Mole NP.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Heard more often than seen in the farmbush and savannahs.

Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris* More often heard than seen on the forest edges.

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota* More often heard than seen on the forest edges.

Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla* These pretty little warblers were easy to see at Shai Hills and in Mole NP.

Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps* Canopy flocks encountered in the various forests.

Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri* Seen well in Ankasa NP.

Rufous-winged Illadopsis ♀ *Illadopsis rufescens* (NT) Excellent views of a pair in Ankasa NP.

Puvel's Illadopsis ♀ *Illadopsis puveli* Seen well at the edge of the Kakum forests.

Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufipennis* Seen well in Ankasa NP.

Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens* Seen at Antwakwa.

Brown Illadopsis ♀ (Moloney's I) *Illadopsis [fulvescens] moloneyana* The distinct brown-throated form at Kalakpa.

Capuchin Babbler ♀ *Phyllanthus atripennis* A flock of at least 3 skulking birds at Kalakpa.

Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii* Sightings at Shai Hills, Winneba and in Mole NP.

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus* Groups seen in Mole NP.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Atewa.

African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis* Widespread sightings in the farmbush and savannahs.

Violet-backed Hyliota ♀ *Hyliota violacea* Good views of pairs from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.

Copper-tailed Starling ♀ *Hylopsar cupreocauda* (NT) Small numbers were seen in the various forests.

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* A few seen at Sapeliga.

Lesser Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* Small numbers in Mole NP.

Splendid Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus* Commonly encountered in the forest zone.
Purple Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus* A few widespread sightings including Mole NP.
Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus* Easily seen in the north.
Chestnut-bellied Starling ♀ *Lamprotornis pulcher* A few were seen in the far north.
Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Scattered sightings in the south.
Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus [fulgidus] hartlaubi* Small numbers in the Kakum forests.
Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* Just 2 at Sapeliga.
White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* (H) Never more than heard in the various forests.
Finsch's Rufous Thrush ♀ (F's Flycatcher T) *Stizorhina finschi* Often heard and occasionally seen in the forests.
African Thrush *Turdus pelios* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.
White-tailed Alethe ♀ *Alethe diademata* Often heard and occasionally seen in the forests.



Upper Guinea forest endemics; Finsch's Rufous Thrush (left) and a juvenile White-tailed Alethe (right). (Nik Borrow)

Forest Scrub Robin ♀ *Cercotrichas leucosticta* No more than glimpsed at Atewa.
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin ♀ (African S R) *Cercotrichas [galactotes] minor* Great looks at 1 near Sapeliga.
Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata* Sightings at Nsuta and Atewa.
White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens* A pair at Ebi River.
Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher (G-t F) *Myioparus griseigularis* Several seen in the forests.
Grey Tit-flycatcher (Lead-coloured F) *Myioparus plumbeus* Widespread sightings in the farmbush and savannahs.
Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides* 1 at Shai Hills with more in Mole NP.
Pale Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus* Widespread sightings in the farmbush and savannahs.
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* These Palearctic migrants were seen at Shai Hills and Winneba.
Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica* Several in Mole NP including adults with young.
Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini* 1 pair in Ankasa NP.
Little Grey Flycatcher ♀ *Muscicapa epulata* Good views of 1 from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.
Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa comitata* Small numbers seen in the various forests.
Ussher's Flycatcher ♀ *Muscicapa ussheri* A forest flycatcher often in the highest treetops.
Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter* (H) Heard on the edge of the Kakum forests.
Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* Widespread sightings in the farmbush and savannahs.
White-crowned Robin-Chat ♀ *Cossypha albicapillus* Several seen in Mole NP.
Forest Robin ♀ (Western F R) *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] erythrothorax* Seen in Ankasa. See note.
Forest Robin ♀ (Ghana F R) *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] inexpectatus* (H) Heard in Kakum NP. See note.
Forest Robin ♀ (Dahomey F R) *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] dahomeyensis* (H) Heard at Kalakpa. See note.
European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.
Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Singletons of these Palearctic migrants at Winneba and Mole NP
White-crowned Cliff Chat ♀ *Thamnolaea coronata* A male at Shai Hills and a pair at Tongo Hills.
White-fronted Black Chat ♀ *Oenanthe albifrons* 2 seen well in Mole NP.
Familiar Chat *Oenanthe familiaris* 1 seen well in Mole NP.

Fraser's Sunbird (Scarlet-tufted S) *Deleornis fraseri* This atypical sunbird was seen well in the various forests.

Mangrove Sunbird ♀ (Brown S) *Anthreptes gabonicus* A pair was seen at the Ebi River.

Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi* Regularly encountered in the various forests.

Grey-chinned Sunbird ♀ (Green S, Yellow-chinned S) *Anthreptes rectirostris* Just 1 sighting at Kakum.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* Common and widespread in the forests.

Pygmy Sunbird ♀ *Hedydipna platura* Small numbers seen well in the north.

Reichenbach's Sunbird ♀ *Anabathmis reichenbachii* Seen well at the Ebi River.

Green-headed Sunbird (Olive-backed S) *Cyanomitra verticalis* (NL) Seen by some at our Kakum lodge.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanolaema* Regularly encountered in the various forests.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* Common and widespread in the various forests.

Buff-throated Sunbird ♀ *Chalcomitra adelberti* A beautiful sunbird, regularly encountered in the various forests.

Carmelite Sunbird ♀ *Chalcomitra fuliginosa* A male seen well at Half-Assini.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* Common in the north.

Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius* Regularly encountered in the various forests.

Tiny Sunbird ♀ *Cinnyris minullus* Close views of a pair from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.



The Upper Guinea endemic Buff-throated Sunbird (left) and a male Tiny Sunbird (right). (Nik Borrow)

Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus* Small numbers in the north.

Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* Excellent views of this sunbird that certainly lives up to its name.

Johanna's Sunbird ♀ *Cinnyris johannae* This impressive sunbird was seen in the Kakum forests and at Atewa.

Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus* This long-billed sunbird was seen well in the various forests.

Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus* Small numbers in the savannas.

Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus* Small numbers in Mole NP.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* A male was seen at Shama. A recent addition to the Ghanaian list.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Widespread and mainly seen on journeys.

Bush Petronia *Gymnoris dentata* Common in the north.

White-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris* Seen at nest sites at Sapeliga.

Speckle-fronted Weaver *Sporopipes frontalis* 2 seen well near Sapeliga.

Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak W) *Amblyospiza albifrons* Small numbers were seen at Atewa.

Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus* 3 sightings in the far north.

Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis* Commonly encountered in the south.

Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius* Seen well en route to Ankasa.

Heuglin's Masked Weaver ♀ *Ploceus heuglini* At least 4 in non-breeding plumage seen well in Mole NP.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* Common and widespread.

Vieillot's Black Weaver ♀ (Chestnut-and-black W) *Ploceus [nigerrimus] castaneofuscus* Common in the south.



Orange Weaver (left) and Vieillot's Black Weaver (right) sometimes split a separate species, Chestnut-and-black Weaver. (Nik Borrow)

Black-headed Weaver (Yellow-backed W) *Ploceus melanocephalus* Small numbers at Nasia Swamp.

Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor* Our best views were from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.

Maxwell's Black Weaver ♂ *Ploceus albinucha* First seen in Kakum NP and again at Atewa.

Compact Weaver *Ploceus superciliosus* 3 were seen well at Atewa.

Preuss's Weaver ♂ (P's Golden-backed W) *Ploceus preussi* A pair in Kakum NP from the canopy walkway.

Red-vented Malimbe ♂ *Malimbus scutatus* Easily seen in the various forests.

Blue-billed Malimbe (Gray's M) *Malimbus nitens* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus rubricollis* Easily seen in the various forests.

Crested Malimbe *Malimbus malimbicus* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* 1 was seen well in Mole NP.

Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops* Small numbers of non-breeding birds in farmbush in the south.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* Abundant at Nasia Swamp and the far north.

Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer* (LO) Nik saw 1 at Nasia Swamp.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus* Breeding plumaged birds in farmbush in the south.

Northern Red Bishop (Orange B) *Euplectes franciscanus* Non-breeding birds at Nasia Swamp and the far north.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura* Breeding plumaged birds at Winneba and farmbush in the south.

White-breasted Nigrita (W-b Negrofinch) *Nigrita fusconotus* Small numbers seen in the various forests.

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita (C-b Negrofinch) *Nigrita bicolor* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Grey-headed Nigrita (G-crowned Negrofinch) *Nigrita canicapillus* Commonly encountered in the forests.

Red-winged Pytilia ♂ *Pytilia phoenicoptera* 2 sightings in Mole NP.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* 1 near Sapilega.

Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus* A female in Ankasa NP and a male at Atewa.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina* 2 seen on the edge of the Kakum forests.

Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta* A poor showing, just 2 in Mole NP.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Small numbers in the north.

African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* Seen at Offinso and Atewa.

Black-faced Firefinch ♂ *Lagonosticta larvata* 3 seen in Mole NP.

Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* Commonly encountered in the north.

Lavender Waxbill *Estrilda caerulescens* Small numbers in Mole NP.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* Widespread sightings in farmbush in the south.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* Small numbers in the far north.

Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis* 3 seen in flight at Tono Dam.

African Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Small numbers in the far north.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* Common and widespread.

Black-and-white Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor* Flocks were seen in the forest zone.

Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringilloides* 1 seen briefly in Bobiri Forest.

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata* At least 1 male in breeding plumage seen in the far north.

Wilson's Indigobird ♀ *Vidua wilsoni* 2 at Brenu Road. Many unidentifiable indigobirds in the north.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* A few widespread sightings included breeding plumaged birds.

Exclamatory Paradise Whydah ♀ *Vidua interjecta* 1 breeding plumaged male in Mole NP and 2 at Nasia Swamp.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A flock of about 40 flying to roost at Tono Dam, subspecies unknown.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* 2 at Shai Hills.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in Mole NP.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Critchagra mozambica* 1 at Winneba but most common in the north.

Gosling's Bunting ♀ *Emberiza goslingi* Common at Tongo Hills.

Brown-rumped Bunting *Emberiza affinis* A singing male in Mole NP.

Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi* An immature male in Mole NP.



A male Exclamatory Paradise Whydah in breeding plumage in Mole NP (left) and Gosling's Bunting at Tongo Hills (right). (Nik Borrow)

MAMMALS

Demidoff's Dwarf Galago *Galagoides demidovii* Seen at night in the various forests.

Northern Lesser Galago (Senegal G) *Galago senegalensis* Singletons seen at night at Kalakpa.

West African Potto *Perodicticus potto* 2 seen at night in Kakum NP.

Olive Baboon *Papio anubis* Seen at Shai Hills and Mole NP.

Patas Monkey *Erythrocebus patas* Small numbers seen in Mole NP.

Green Monkey (Callithrix M) *Cercopithecus sabaeus* Seen at Shai Hills and Mole NP.

Mona Monkey *Cercopithecus mona* (H) Heard at Kalakpa.

Lowe's Monkey *Cercopithecus lowei* (H) Heard in Ankasa NP.

Spot-nosed Monkey *Cercopithecus petaurista* 1 seen in Kakum NP.

Straw-coloured Fruit Bat *Eidolon helvum* Common in Accra.

Hammer Bat *Hypsignathus monstrosus* Seen at dusk in Kakum and Ankasa.

Gambian Fruit Bat *Epomophorus gambianus* Roosting at Tamale.

African Savanna Hare (Scrub H) *Lepus victoriae* Seen at night in Mole NP.

Pel's Anomalure (P Scaly-tailed Squirrel) *Anomalurus peli* 2 seen at night in Kakum NP.

Striped Ground Squirrel *Euxerus erythropus* Sightings in Mole NP and at Kalakpa.

Red-legged Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus rufobrachium* Seen from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.

Small Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus punctatus* 1 seen at Antwikkwa.

Forest Giant Squirrel (African G S) *Protoxerus stangeri* Several sightings in the forests.

Slender-tailed Squirrel *Protoxerus aubinnii* Seen well in Ankasa NP.

Fire-footed Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus pyrropus* Seen in Ankasa NP and Bobiri Forest.

Kintampo Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus substriatus* 2 sightings in the north.

Green Bush Squirrel *Paraxerus poensis* 1 seen in Bobiri Forest.
 Emin's Pouched Rat (E Giant P R) *Cricetomys emini* 1 at night in Kakum NP.
 African Palm Civet *Nandinia binotata* (H) Heard at night in Ankasa NP.
 Marsh Mongoose *Atilax paludinosus* 3 in Mole NP.
 Common Slender Mongoose *Galerella sanguinea* (LO) Nik saw 1 at Tongo Hills.
 White-tailed Mongoose *Ichneumia albicauda* 1 in Mole NP.
 Common Cusimanse *Crossarchus obscurus* (LO) Paul saw 3 in Ankasa NP.
 Western Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax dorsalis* Heard at night in the forests.
 African Savanna Elephant *Loxodonta africana* At least 8 in Mole NP.
 Long-tailed Pangolin *Manis tetradactyla* Amazing views of 1 from the canopy walkway in Kakum NP.
 Common Warthog *Phacochoerus africanus* Easily seen in Mole NP.
 Central Bushbuck *Tragelaphus phaleratus* Small numbers in Mole NP.
 Buffon's Kob *Kobus kob* 1 at Shai Hills but common in Mole NP.
 Defassa Waterbuck *Kobus defassa* 6 in Mole NP.
 Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equinus* 1 in Mole NP.
 Red-flanked Duiker* *Cephalophus rufilatus* Small numbers in Mole NP.



Gambian Fruit Bat at Tamale (left) and Roan Antelope in Mole NP (right, Nik Borrow) Paul Mensah & Nik Borrow looking for Egyptian Plovers (bottom left, Yvon Princen) A Dwarf Crocodile in the oily waters of a forest pool (bottom right, Nik Borrow)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Thick-billed Honeyguide *Indicator conirostris*/Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* An individual seen in gallery forest at Kalakpa was problematic and was perhaps intermediate between the two species. Vocationally the bird only responded to *I. conirostris*. Thick-billed Honeyguide is usually associated with humid forest and Lesser Honeyguide with savannah. The race of Thick-billed Honeyguide occurring in Ghana is *I. conirostris ussheri*, which is much paler below than other populations of *conirostris* and is indistinguishable in the field from Lesser Honeyguide. Many authors are of the opinion that the two species are conspecific.

Singing Bush Lark *Mirafra cantillans*

A pair was seen at Tono Dam on 3rd December 2016. This is perhaps only the second documented record of this species in Ghana the first being at Tono Dam on the 3rd and 24th April 2013.



One of a pair of Singing Bush Larks at Tono Dam on 3rd December. (Nik Borrow)

Forest Robin *Stiphrornis [erythrothorax] erythrothorax*

Taxonomy of Forest Robins is a complicated subject of much debate. Three species have very recently been described from Ghana. Western Forest Robin *S. erythrothorax* to be expected at Ankasa, Ghana Forest Robin *S. inexpectatus* from the Kakum region and Dahomey Forest Robin *S. dahomeyensis* possible in the east. Alternatively the extrazonal Eastern forms are split off as two separate species, Olive-backed Forest-robin *S. pyrrholaeus* and Yellow-breasted Forest-robin *S. xanthogaster* with the western birds being renamed Orange-breasted Forest-robin *S. erythrothorax*.