



*Just one of the star birds of this short tour was this stunning Sjöstedt's Barred Owlet watched hunting insects on the forest floor! (Nik Borrow)*

# GABON'S LOANGO NATIONAL PARK

**23 – 31 AUGUST 2022**

**LEADER: NIK BORROW**

This was a new tour to the Birdquest repertoire with the aim of seeing one of Africa's ultimate birds, the much-wanted African River Martin. This is a nomadic and unpredictable species that breeds in coastal Gabon but apparently not in exactly the same places every year making seeing it a little bit of a challenge! The tour was timed to hit their arrival when large numbers can gather before dispersing again to form large breeding colonies which may or may not be easily accessible. Our week in the park was spent focusing on searching out these birds in pristine wilderness areas where Forest Elephants and Lowland Gorillas roam! Fortunately, we succeeded in seeing the first arrivals at a known roost site with tens at first and then hundreds on our last evening when we watched mesmerised by the whirling 'murmurations' as the African River Martins joined huge numbers of Rosy Bee-eaters pre-roost as the sun went down. Spectacular indeed! During the week we stayed in two extremely comfortable safari style camps in large walk-in 'tents' with en suite facilities. The food was delicious and the inclusive drinks complemented them beautifully. N'Dola Camp in the savanna region on the coast was quite luxurious but the other (Akaka Camp) was situated deeper into the forest and more exciting with elephants regularly in the camp itself. Here Vermiculated Fishing Owl was (dare we say?) easy to see as were African Finfoot, Hartlaub's Ducks and lovely Violet-tailed Sunbirds. A

super juvenile Long-tailed Hawk seen from the camp itself was a highlight as was a superb Sjöstedt's Barred Owllet watched hunting during the day. Between forest and savannah, we found the impressive Black-headed Bee-eater sitting quietly at the forest edge and the marvelous Forbes's Plover out on the sandy plains. In the mangroves a mighty Pel's Fishing Owl was seen. A colony of Loango Weavers were found on a small island and numbers of African Skimmers and Damara Terns gathered on the beautiful beach near our second camp.



*Forest Elephants are a feature of the park and we had numerous – often close encounters! (Nik Borrow)*

Our adventure began in Libreville from where we took a short flight down to Port Gentil where two vehicles met us and we embarked on a three-hour drive to the park where we spotted some Senegal Lapwings and Long-legged Pipits on arrival before being met by a boat that took us into the heart of the forest where the small but extremely comfortable Akaka Camp is situated. Firstly, we sped across a wide lagoon but as the river narrowed around us, we slowed the pace and began our birding. Almost immediately vicious tsetse flies began to plague us and in all honesty were something more than a nuisance and when they became too bad the boat would speed up and blow them away until we had collected a new gathering and it was in this manner that we made our way along the waterways.

The river was of course an excellent place to view kingfishers and we noted Woodland, Malachite, Shining-blue, Giant and Pied Kingfishers. Beautiful Rosy Bee-eaters crisscrossed all around us whilst sombre little Cassin's Flycatchers and glittering White-bibbed Swallows flitted from low protruding branches by the water's edge. Several African Finfoot were seen but they were generally shy, skittering away from our boat as we approached whereas the numerous Palm-nut Vultures and African Fish Eagles held their ground for longer. African Pied, Black-casqued and White-thighed Hornbills could be seen as they moved from treetop to treetop and brightly red-tailed Grey Parrots screeched overhead. Other species seen during the journey included White-faced Whistling Duck, Sabine's and Cassin's Spinetails, African Palm Swift, Great Blue Turaco, Senegal Coucal, Red-eyed Dove, Tambourine Dove, African Jacana, West African Crested Tern, Yellow-billed and Woolly-necked Storks, African Darter, Hadada Ibis, Western Cattle Egret, Purple Heron, Great and Intermediate Egrets, Hamerkop, Pink-backed Pelican, Black Sparrowhawk, Pied Crow, Common Bulbul, Winding Cisticola, Purple-headed Starling, Village and Vieillot's Black Weavers and African Pied Wagtail.

At our camp we enjoyed a tasty late lunch which set a precedent for some superb food during this trip and the all-inclusive drinks washed it all down nicely! There was no rush to get to our spacious walk-in tents anyway as the views over the swamp forest were amazing and a Forest Elephant was foraging quietly between the tents preventing access until it had moved on. In the late afternoon we were out on the boat

again and as dusk fell so Hartlaub's Ducks became more active patrolling the length of the river which was bordered by high forest. Travelling back in the dark we spotlighted the river banks where many Central African Slender-snouted Crocodiles were basking until we found our first, incredibly tame Vermiculated Fishing Owl hunting low near the water's edge. Elated we made our way back to camp only to have our evening meal interrupted by the wailing of an immature perched near the dining area! It had been a long but eventful day!



*Our first two Vermiculated Fishing Owls; an adult (left) and an immature (right) (Nik Borrow)*

Next morning we birded on foot along an old logging trail but were prevented from going far because of nearby elephants. Fortunately we found a superb Sjöstedt's Barred Owlet here which we watched at length as it fed on insects on the forest floor. We also found a Chocolate-backed Kingfisher and a bird party that included Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Shining Drongo, Spotted, Icterine and Eastern Bearded Greenbuls, Red-tailed Ant Thrush and Olive Sunbird. Cruising up and down the waterways during the afternoon session produced our first looks at the lovely Violet-tailed Sunbird and we also saw Blue-headed Coucal, Diederik and Red-chested Cuckoos, African Green Pigeon, Water Thick-knee, Little Bittern, Goliath Heron, Western Osprey, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Grey-throated Barbet, Yellow-throated Tinkerbird, Collared and Superb Sunbirds and Green Crombec.

Breakfast the next day was enlivened by the presence of a juvenile Long-tailed Hawk opposite the camp and some excellent scope views were obtained before it flew away. The rest of the day was taken up by another river cruise and exploring the area around the Lowland Gorilla trekking base. Strict rules are in place to ensure that diseases aren't spread to these animals and covid tests are still required before one can enter the forest where the habituated troop lives. As the troop ranges widely and there are numerous elephant and buffalo in the forest a medical certificate of fitness is also required if one is over 65. Walking through swamp forest is not easy and neither is running from an enraged elephant in such circumstances and unfortunately

only one of our group that wished to see the gorillas met the stringent requirements. The rest of us left him to his own personal adventure with the gorilla researchers and the rest of us went on to explore the nearby mangrove and swamp forest where we were lucky enough to flush an enormous Pel's Fishing Owl from its day roost.



*Beautiful swamp forest in Loango National Park. (Nik Borrow)*

It is often hard work finding birds in these Central African forests and this day was no exception particularly when we were mostly confined to the boat but we had good looks at duetting Lowland Sooty Boubous, spotted Mangrove and Reichenbach's Sunbirds (western African specialties) and enjoyed phenomenal views of a Black Spinetail flying around our boat. A pair of Black Bee-eaters and a nest-building female Blue-throated Brown Sunbird enlivened our lunch break and other species added to the list included Klaas's Cuckoo, Striated and Squacco Herons, Speckled Tinkerbird, 'Streaky-throated' Hairy-breasted Barbet, Chestnut Wattle-eye, African Paradise Flycatcher, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Yellow-whiskered Greenbul, Barn, Wire-tailed and Lesser Striped Swallows, Greater Swamp Warbler, Green-headed Sunbirds, Slender-billed Weaver and Common Waxbill.



*African Finfoot was regularly encountered along the river. (Nik Borrow)*



*A pair of Black Bee-eaters – always a joy to see! (Nik Borrow)*

Another morning was spent trying to access some forest along another old logging trail. This time there were no elephants to block our path but the dark trees were sadly very quiet and the only new species added were Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Slender-billed and Golden Greenbuls, Yellow-lored Bristlebill and Fire-crested Alethe. The latter two being skulkers took time to see well.



*The amazing Black-headed Bee-eater was one of the major 'must-see' targets! (Nik Borrow)*

In the afternoon we packed up and prepared to move to a new camp situated on the coast. Apart from some splendid Yellow-billed Turacos, it would have been a very quiet afternoon indeed if it wasn't for the sight of one special bird in particular. Dimitri, our guide had assured us that we could see the highly desirable Black-headed Bee-eater in his village and so after leaving Akaka we made a bee-line straight for it. We arrived in good time and arrived while it was still hot only to find little moving. We checked all of the potential spots in the surrounding farmbrush and forest edge where he expected to see it but repeatedly drew a blank and returned to the village about to give up when suddenly there the bird was – in the very village itself! Opening the sundowner box of drinks suddenly became a celebratory occasion and we continued to our next camp extremely content.



*The coastal savannahs around N'dola Camp are very different in nature to the swamp forests at Akaka. (Nik Borrow)*

We were woken in the morning to some very showy Red-tailed Leafloves around our camp at N'dola where the coastal savannahs and forest are of a very different nature to the swamp forests at Akaka and we began our day exploring some nearby forest patches hoping for some early morning activity but true to form the sombre tall trees were very quiet. We did however gain incredible views of a Blackcap Illadopsis and also noted Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Piping Hornbill and Olive-bellied Sunbird. Grey-rumped Swallows were preparing to breed on the sandy flats behind the camp and out on the lagoon we could see Eurasian Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Sandwich Tern, Grey Heron, Little Egret and Western Reef Heron. We finished our day at a known roost where Rosy Bee-eaters and the highly desired African River Martin were known to frequent when they first arrive back in the coastal breeding areas. To date there had been no sightings of the martins but as we neared the roost island in the late afternoon a mass of Rosy Bee-eaters lifted out of the trees and with them could be seen (and heard) some African River Martins. We watched them from the boat anchored just offshore from the island until dusk fell and reckoned on there to be up to forty martins present, so these were clearly the first arrivals. Thus, it was a huge relief to know that our visit was not too early, the bird had duly been ticked and we vowed to return again.



*Two large herds of Red River Hog were seen in the savannahs near N'dola. (Nik Borrow)*

Exploring the savannahs by car from our camp we embarked on a drive across the sandy grassy flats in search of Red River Hogs and Forbes's Plover. Even though it was very dry, we found two groups of the hogs quite easily and although they kept their distance, we saw them well. The encounter with the plover was a great success with views down to just a few feet. On the way, we also came across a duetting pair of Swamp Boubou, Pectoral-patch Cisticola, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Wood Sandpiper and Copper Sunbird.



*The prolonged views of the striking Forbes's Plover simply could not have been bettered! (Nik Borrow)*

In the afternoon we visited the beach where large numbers of African Skimmers and West African Crested Terns were gathered along with good numbers of Damara Tern and a few Black Terns. It wasn't until processing photos after the end of the tour that it was realised that a breeding plumaged Arctic Tern had also been present!! New waders for the trip included Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and a walk after dark looking for nightjars produced plenty of Square-tailed Nightjars but sadly nothing else.

Our final morning in the park was spent on foot in the forested areas near the camp where we saw a splendid pair of White-crested Hornbills, Tiny Sunbird and a handsome White-browed Forest Flycatcher. We

then searched the mangroves in vain for White-crested Tiger Heron which had avoided us throughout the trip. Some mud banks at low tide yielded White-fronted Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Bar-tailed Godwit and also paid a visit to a colony of Loango Weavers. We finished our day back at the African River Martin roost which proved to be a spectacular event with hundreds more birds mixed with increased numbers of Rosy Bee-eaters and we stayed with them until it was virtually dark watching the hypnotic pre-roost murmurations – surely a wonderful way to end this short and focussed tour!



*African River Martins and Rosy Bee-eaters put on a dynamic pre-roost display during two evenings of our visit. (Nik Borrow)*



*The recently split West African Crested (or African Royal) Tern. (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).

### BIRDS

**Total of bird species recorded: 170**

**White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* Small numbers in the Akaka area.

**Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubi* Small numbers in the Akaka area.

**Black Guinea fowl** *Agelastes niger* (H) Heard in the Akaka area.

**Square-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus fossii* Easily seen around N'dola Camp.

**Black Spinetail** *Telacanthura ussheri* 1 seen well in the Akaka area.

**Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini* Common in the Akaka area.

**Cassin's Spinetail** *Neafrapus cassini* Somewhat less common than Sabine's in the Akaka area.

**African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* Commonly encountered in areas with palms.

**Great Blue Turaco** *Corythaeola cristata* Widespread.

**Yellow-billed Turaco** *Tauraco macrorhynchus* Heard more often than it was seen.

**Gabon Coucal** *Centropus anselli* (H) Heard only and not common.

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis* Heard more often than it was seen.

**Blue-headed Coucal** *Centropus monachus* Seen in the Akaka area and probably the most common of the coucals.

**Blue Malkoha (B Yellowbill)** 1 seen on the outward journey by some.

**Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C)** *Chrysococcyx caprius* Several seen.



Hartlaub's Duck (left) and Black Spinetail (right) (Nik Borrow)

- Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* 1 seen in the Akaka area and heard elsewhere.  
**African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* (H) Heard only.  
**Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* Heard more often than it was seen.  
**Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* Scope views of 1 in the N'dola area.  
**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common.  
**Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer* (NL) Strangely silent!  
**Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria* Small numbers in the Akaka area.  
**African Green Pigeon** *Treron calvus* Easily seen.  
**African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis* Regularly seen on the rivers in the Akaka area.



Female African Finfoot. (Nik Borrow)

- Water Thick-knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus* 2 seen in the Akaka area.  
**Senegal Lapwing** *Vanellus lugubris* Small numbers in the N'dola area.  
**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* (NL) Seen by Nick on the journey.  
**Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* Amazing views in the N'dola area.  
**White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus* 2 in the N'dola area.  
**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* Common in the Akaka area.  
**Eurasian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the N'dola area.  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in the N'dola area.  
**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* (NL) 1 of these Palearctic migrants seen by Nick on the beach.  
**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* 1 of these Palearctic migrants in the N'dola area.  
**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* 8 of these Palearctic migrants seen on the beach.  
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*** 1 of these Palearctic migrants in the N'dola area.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*** 4 of these Palearctic migrants in the N'dola area.



*Large numbers of African Skimmers gathered on the beach at N'dola. (Nik Borrow)*

**African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*** Hundreds gathered on the beach at N'dola.

**West African Crested Tern *Thalasseus albidorsalis*** Large numbers, mainly on the beach at N'dola.

**Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*** A couple of these Palearctic migrants at N'dola.

**Damara Tern *Sternula balaenarum*** 78 were counted on the beach at N'dola.



*78 Damara Terns were counted on the beach at N'dola. (Nik Borrow)*

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*** Large numbers in non-breeding plumage gathered on the beach at N'dola.

**Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* (LO)** 1 in breeding plumage on the beach identified in photographs after the tour!

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias nigra* 4 of these Palearctic migrants on the beach at N'dola.

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* Small numbers seen on the journey and at Akaka.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia [episcopus] microscelis* Widespread sightings in small numbers.

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* Common along the waterways.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* Common and noisy along the waterways.

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* (NL) A male of the African race *pavesii* seen by some at Akaka.

**Striated Heron (Green-backed H)** *Butorides striata* 2 sightings only.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* 1 sighting only at Akaka.

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Mainly on the journeys but also in the N'dola area.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Just a few sightings.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* Just a few sightings.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* Small numbers.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Most common in the Akaka area.

**Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E)** *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha* Several sightings in the Akaka area.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Good numbers on the coast but white morph birds difficult to separate.

**Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* Small numbers on the coast.

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* Common throughout.

**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* Small numbers noted.

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Akaka.

**African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogone)** *Polyboroides typus* Small numbers noted.

**Palm-nut Vulture (Vulturine Fish Eagle)** *Gypohierax angolensis* Common along the waterways.

**Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus* Wonderful scope views of a juvenile from Akaka Camp itself.

**Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* 1 was seen in the Akaka area.

**African Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* Most numerous in the Akaka area.



*Palm-nut Vultures (left) and African Fish Eagles (right) were commonly encountered. (Nik Borrow)*

**Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* 1 for the first car on the journey back to Port Gentil.

**Sjöstedt's Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium sjostedti* A wonderful sighting in the Akaka area.

**Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli* 1 was flushed and seen well in flight near the gorilla camp.

**Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri* 4 were seen and 2 others heard in the Akaka area.

**African Pied Hornbill (Congo P H)** *Lophoceros fasciatus* Small numbers in the Akaka area.

**Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Lophoceros camurus* Good views in the Akaka area.

**Piping Hornbill (Eastern P H)** *Bycanistes [fistulator] sharpii* Seen well in the N'dola area.

**White-thighed Hornbill** *Bycanistes albotibialis* Small numbers in the Akaka area.

**Black-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata* Good numbers in the Akaka area.

**White-crested Hornbill (Eastern Long-tailed H)** *Horizocerus [albocristatus] cassini* A pair in the N'dola area.

**Chocolate-backed Kingfisher** *Halcyon badia* 1 seen in the Akaka area and heard near N'dola.

**Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* Heard more often than seen.

**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* Common in the Akaka area.

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus* Small numbers in the Akaka area.

**Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys* Commonly encountered along the rivers.



Shining-blue Kingfishers were regularly encountered during the tour. (Nik Borrow)

**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* Regularly encountered during the tour.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Common along the rivers.

**Black-headed Bee-eater** *Merops breweri* Excellent views of a pair of these retiring bee-eaters.

**Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis* 2 pairs were seen.

**Blue-breasted Bee-eater** *Merops variegatus* More common in the N'dola area.

**Rosy Bee-eater** *Merops malimbicus* Exceedingly common – particularly on the last evening.

**Grey-throated Barbet** *Gymnobucco bonapartei* (NL) 1 seen by some at Akaka.

**Speckled Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* Heard more often than it was seen.

**Red-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus atroflavus* Brilliant views at N'dola.

**Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* Heard more often than it was seen.

**Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta* Seen in the Akaka area.



Yellow-throated Tinkerbird (left) and Red-rumped tinkerbird (right) (Nik Borrow)

- Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Pardipicus nivosus* 1 in a bird party at Akaka.
- Little Green Woodpecker** *Campethera maculosa* 1 in the N'dola area.
- Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus* A familiar bird during the tour.
- Chestnut Wattle-eye** *Platysteira castanea* Small numbers seen.
- Brown-throated Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea* Heard more often than seen.
- Sabine's Puffback** *Dryoscopus sabinii* (H) 1 heard.
- Lowland Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus* A pair was seen in the Akaka area.
- Swamp Boubou (Gabon B)** *Laniarius bicolor* A pair was seen in the N'dola area.
- Shining Drongo** *Dicurus atripennis* Seen in bird parties in the Akaka area.
- Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Seen in the Akaka area.
- African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* More commonly seen than the previous species.
- Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* Seen on journeys to and from Loango National Park.
- Western Nicator** *Nicator chloris* (H) Heard only.
- Slender-billed Greenbul** *Stelgidillas gracilirostris* A couple of sightings.
- Golden Greenbul** *Calyptocichla serinus* A couple of sightings.
- Red-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda syndactyla* (H) Heard only in the Akaka area.
- Yellow-lored Bristlebill** *Bleda notatus* A pair in the Akaka area.
- Spotted Greenbul** *Ixonotus guttatus* Flocks in the Akaka area.
- Swamp Palm Bulbul** *Thescelocichla leucopleura* Surprisingly few in the Akaka area.
- Eastern Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger chloronotus* Great views in the Akaka area.
- Red-tailed Greenbul** *Criniger calurus* (H) Heard only.
- Little Greenbul** *Eurillas virens* Extremely common on call but only occasionally seen.
- Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *Eurillas latirostris* More often heard than seen.
- Icterine Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus icterinus* Seen in a bird party at Akaka.
- Red-tailed Leaflove** *Phyllastrephus scandens* Easily seen at N'dola.
- Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* Seen every day.
- African River Martin** *Pseudocheilidon eurystomina* At least 200 seen by the end of the tour.
- Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* Apparently preparing to breed in the N'dola area.
- White-bibbed Swallow (W-throated Blue S)** *Hirundo nigrita* Commonly encountered in the Akaka area.
- Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* Small numbers seen.
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants were seen.
- Red-breasted Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* 2 seen briefly in the Akaka area were thought to be this species.
- Lesser Striped Swallow** *Cecropis abyssinica* Small numbers in the Akaka area.
- Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens* Commonly heard and occasionally seen.



Eastern Bearded Greenbul (left) and Blackcap Illadopsis (right) both keep inside the shadowy forests. (Nik Borrow)

**Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina* (H) Heard only in the Akaka area.

**Greater Swamp Warbler** *Acrocephalus rufescens* 1 seen and heard in the swamps.

**Winding Cisticola** *Cisticola marginatus* Common in the swamp forest.

**Pectoral-patch Cisticola** *Cisticola brunnescens* Seen in the N'dola savannahs.

**Banded Prinia** *Prinia bairdii* (H) Heard only.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* (H) Heard only.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Heard more often than seen.

**Blackcap Illadopsis** *Illadopsis cleaveri* Spectacular views in the N'dola area.

**Purple-headed Starling** *Hylopsar purpureiceps* Small numbers seen mainly flying over.

**Splendid Starling** *Lamprotonis splendidus* Seen well in the N'dola area.

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus* Seen well on buffalo in the N'dola area.

**Fraser's Rufous Thrush** *Stizorhina fraseri* (H) Heard only in the Akaka area.

**Red-tailed Ant Thrush** *Neocossyphus rufus* Seen well in the Akaka area.

**African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* Seen in the N'dola area.

**Fire-crested Alethe** *Alethe castanea* 1 seen in the Akaka area.

**White-browed Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria cinerascens* 1 seen well in the N'dola area.

**Cassin's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa cassini* Easily seen along the rivers.

**Red-capped Robin-Chat** *Cossypha semirufa* (H) Heard in the N'dola area.

**African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* Seen in the savannahs.

**Mangrove Sunbird** *Anthreptes gabonicus* Seen along the rivers.

**Violet-tailed Sunbird** *Anthreptes aurantius* Seen along the rivers.

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* Widespread sightings.

**Reichenbach's Sunbird** *Anabathmis reichenbachii* Commonly encountered.

**Green-headed Sunbird** *Cyanomitra verticalis* 2 sightings.

**Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** *Cyanomitra cyanoaema* Great views of a female nest building.

**Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra olivacea* More often heard than seen.

**Carmelite Sunbird** *Chalcomitra fuliginosa* Small numbers seen in Port Gentil and in the N'dola area.

**Olive-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris chloropygius* Just a couple seen.

**Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus* A male seen at N'dola.

**Superb Sunbird** *Cinnyris superbus* A pair seen in the Akaka area.

**Copper Sunbird** *Cinnyris cupreus* A few seen in the N'dola area.

**Northern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer griseus* Seen on journeys to and from Port Gentil.

**House Sparrow (Introduced)** *Passer domesticus* Seen on journeys to and from Port Gentil.

**Slender-billed Weaver *Ploceus pelzelni*** Seen in Port Gentil and along the rivers.

**Loango Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus*** We visited a small colony of this restricted range species.



*Loango Weavers, a male (left) and an immature bird (right) (Nik Borrow)*

**Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*** Large numbers seen.

**Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*** Small numbers mixed in with the previous species.

**Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata*** Seen at Port Gentil.

**Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*** Just a small flock seen along the river.

**Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*** Breeding plumaged en route back to Port Gentil.

**African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*** Small numbers.

**Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris*** Common in the savannahs.



*Rosy Bee-eaters were common but never very approachable. (Nik Borrow)*



*We experienced a number of wonderful encounters with Forest Elephants. (Nik Borrow)*

## **MAMMALS**

**Total of mammal species recorded: 11**

**Forest Elephant** *Loxodonta cyclotis* Wonderful encounters.

**Red River Hog** *Potamochoerus porcus* Several large groups were seen.

**Forest Buffalo** *Syncerus [caffer] nanus* Mostly seen in the N'dola area.

**Central Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus [scriptus] phaleratus* 1 seen in the N'dola area.

**Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibius* Fascinating creatures seen along the river.

**Franquet's Epauletted Fruit Bat** *Epomophorus franqueti* Seen along the river.

**Red-capped Mangabey** *Cercocebus torquatus* Repeated views of this attractive monkey.

**Moustached Monkey** *Cercopithecus cephus* Small numbers seen.

**Putty-nosed Monkey** *Cercopithecus nictitans* Just 2 sightings.

**Lowland Gorilla** *Gorilla gorilla* Only Jesper went on the trek to see a habituated group of 8 animals.

**Demidoff's Galago** *Galagoides demidoff* 1 seen at night in the Akaka area.



*Hippopotamus (Nik Borrow)*