

SOMALILAND & DJIBOUTI TOUR REPORT

2023

12 - 31 October 2023

by Mark Beaman

Our 2023 Somaliland & Djibouti tour was our third to these two little-birded countries and was highly successful, turning up all the hoped for endemics and near-endemics and a large number of other speciality birds. Not to mention some very special mammals.

Arrival in Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital and the seat of administration in the old British colonial days, certainly set the scene! 'Welcome to Somaliland' countless total strangers called out to us in the street! Yes, this was to be one of the most friendly countries I have ever visited! The Somalilanders are not rich people but they are proud of their culture and country and welcoming to outsiders (just don't get involved in the ins-and-outs of grazing rights...)

Birding started right in the city with Somali Crows and an unexpected Abdim's Stork perched on a pylon.

Our first real birding not far from Hargeisa turned up a lovely and very unafraid pair of near-endemic Little Brown Bustards, a number of near-endemic Somali Bulbuls and lots of smart, range-restricted Somali Coursers, Somali Bee-eaters and Somali Fiscals, not to mention the superb Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Gillett's Lark, Pale Prinia, Black Scrub Robin and Shining and Nile Valley Sunbirds. Just how tame most birds are in Somaliland soon became obvious to us. The Somalilanders do not generally hunt or eat birds, so the situation is so very different from many parts of the world. A bonus here was Somali Sengi (or Somali Elephant Shrew) although it would just not stay still to be photographed! We also encountered our first African Golden Wolves.

An afternoon attempt to find the beautiful endemic Beira gazelle failed, but we did come across our first near-endemic Somali Wheatears.

The next morning we were back in the 'Beira Hills' early and this time we lucked out as we met the local mayor who promised to find some Beira for us in return for a gratuity! Well, he was as good as his word for when we arrived back in an hour or so he led us straight to where two of these really cute little animals were grazing on a hill! My goodness, Beiras are beautiful creatures! Mind you, those little Speke's Gundis (or Speke's Pectinators) were pretty cute as well. This proved a good area for mammals with Salt's Dik-diks and long-necked Gerenuks both prominent.

After that we started on our long drive, but mostly on fast tar roads, to the town of Burco (or Burao).

We stopped off for lunch at the port city of Berbera where we had the chance to look for coastal species and do a bit of seawatching, turning up Brown Booby, Bridled Tern, our only two Saunders's Terns of the tour and our first White-eyed Gulls.

After leaving Berbera we crossed the dramatic coastal range at Shiikh (or Sheikh), where we found our first Ethiopian Boubous, Little Rock Thrushes, Blackstarts and Brown-rumped Seedeaters, but even before reaching the mountains an absolutely torrential rainstorm started and surprisingly quickly all the normally-dry wadis in the area filled up with rainwater. At a stop to admire the rare raging torrent at one of these, we turned up a Bat-eared Fox. We also noted that Dodson's Bulbuls had now replaced the Somali Bulbuls.

We were greeted at our hotel in Burco by about 1000 Chestnut Weavers and smaller numbers of Red-billed Quealeas crammed into a few trees!

From Burco we headed out into the ever drier country to the southeast.

Our first stop was in a hilly area of thornbush where, finally, after several hours of searching we came across those much-wanted, near-endemic Philippa's Crombecs. Lots of things are 'near-endemic' in Somaliland but the thing is you cannot safely travel to the bits of other countries where they occur, so they are effectively Somaliland endemics as far as birders are concerned. Other good birds in this area were Arabian Warbler and Northern Grosbeak-Canary.

Further on we came across our first huge and stately Heuglin's Bustards before arriving at a remote village where we planned to camp. After a discussion with the villagers, we were very kindly allowed to camp in the walled compound of their local clinic. We found this was so typical of the generous Somalilanders. Looking after guests is the local tradition.

We were up before larkrise the next morning and driving out into the red sand country further south, and it was not long before we encountered the first near-endemic Collared Lark! My goodness were we pleased! And then there was another, and then more and more until we had amassed about 15 of these much-wanted birds, many of which were song-fighting in the early morning golden light! What a great day this was!

Other goodies in this region included Donalson-Smith's Nightjar, not an easy bird to get on one's life list, 'Ethiopian' Little Owl, the smart Red-naped Bushshrike, Three-streaked Tchagra, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Scaly Chatterer, White-crowned Starling, the gorgeous Golden-breasted Starling, Hunter's Sunbird, Swainson's Sparrow and the near-endemic Somali Sparrow.

From the red sand country, we headed northwards towards the Ban Cade plains, finding Speke's Gazelle and the near-endemic Desert Warthog along the way. We also came across our first endemic Lesser Hoopoe-Larks. Now I know I should not say this about a localized endemic, but for anyone brought up with Greater Hoopoe-Larks with their spectacular wing-pattern, Lesser Hoopoe-Larks are a bit dull...

At the wild Ban Cade plains we soon found lots of Spotted Sandgrouse and some Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse coming to drink at some pools and the pools also attracted unexpected migrants including a Garganey and two Red-necked Phalaropes! Taking rather longer to track down were a fine pair of endemic Somali Larks, but these impressive critters were well worth the wait. Ban Cade was a 'larkfest' for sure with Short-tailed, Rufous-capped and Somali Short-toed Larks also present.

Now, as we headed north to the remote town of Ceerigabo (or Ceerigavo) we knew we were approaching a very exciting part of Somaliland, but for sure the most challenging part, the Daallo Forest.

Daallo Forest is the richest area for woodland endemic species in Somaliland but heavens we needed our five nights in this area! The scenery at Daallo is truly magnificent with great limestone cliffs towering above the coastal plain far below and magnificent juniper forests still thriving (unlike at the Forêt du Day in Djibouti). The toll you pay for exploring this wonderful area is bad, bumpy roads.

The easy endemic at Daallo is Somali Thrush. They were everywhere. Even the endemic Archer's Buzzard was regularly obliging (and they do not look much like Augur Buzzards so it will be interesting to see if the lump persists).

No, the two challenging endemics are Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak and Warsangli Linnnet. To say these birds are scarce is an understatement. They are almost always tough to find. This visit we did better early on with the linnets, finding a total of three on two different days, but the grosbeak made us go down to the wire, with a pair on the very last morning for those stoic souls in our group willing to try yet again!

Another rather easy 'endemic' at Daallo is the scops owl discovered by Nik Borrow and the 2010 Birdquest group. We had great views of this obliging creature which sounds rather like an Arabian Scops Owl. The form here is not yet described but may turn out (when DNA analysis is carried out) to be a distinct species, Daallo Scops Owl, rather than an isolated population of Arabian.

Other birds of note at Daallo included the undescribed 'Daallo' Cisticola (we are still no nearer to resolving that one), Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, Grey-headed Batis, Fan-tailed Raven, a migrant Menetries's Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye and Abyssinian Wheatear. We had seen small numbers of range-restricted Somali Starlings earlier, but the hundreds here were impressive. Hamadryas Baboons were common in Daallo and there were quite a number of 'Somali' Klipspringers.

We spent one of our nights down on the spectacularly arid, mountainous coast at Maydh. No Somali Pigeons could be found (this was my original hope) but Masked Booby offshore and African Collared Doves were additions. A male wheatear seen briefly in a wadi near the coast was identified by John and Tim as a Hooded, which would be only the 3rd record for subSaharan Africa.

After the trials of Daallo, we headed back to Burco and then Berbera, turning up the restricted-range Yellow-breasted Barbet and Brown-tailed Rock Chat along the way.

In the arid hills near Berbera, we finally connected with the smart endemic Somali Pigeon as well as Striolated Bunting, but our intention to find Somali Crombec the next morning was frustrated by our flight to Djibouti from Hargeisa being brought forward many hours!

My first impressions of Djibouti City were not very positive, A massive building boom, including Chinese-built shopping malls, a whole series of foreign military bases, huge port developments and a population not nearly as friendly as the Somalilanders. But once out in the countryside of Djibouti, it is very different and much nicer.

Birding around Djibouti City is still excellent for coastal species, although the amount of accessible habitat is diminishing. The star of stars is of course the striking Crab-plover, the sole member of its

family. We had absolutely awesome views of this much-wanted bird and lots of them. White-eyed and Sooty Gulls were both numerous and we saw plenty of White-cheeked Terns, another 'mega' of this part of the world. Other species of note included several Goliath Herons and a couple of Caspian Gulls at the southern edge of their winter range.

Landbirding though is getting tough around the city owing to over-development. It took time to track down Arabian Golden Sparrows, but those who persisted were rewarded with a flock of 60. Other highlights were a 'Steppe' Great Grey Shrike and a number of Greater Hoopoe-Larks. We also found a lot more Rüppell's Weavers in Djibouti than in Somaliland.

The other area of Djibouti we visited was the well-known Forêt du Day in the Goda Mountains. As soon as we left Djibouti City we realised the city is just an over-developed pimple in what is an unspoiled and dramatic part of the Horn of Africa. The landscapes around the Gulf of Tadjoura were dramatic, although there were few landbirds other than White-crowned Wheatears in the inhospitable environment. Far more exciting birding came from the sea as we turned up some great seabirds, especially on the return leg when gale force northeasterly winds were howling in and stragglers included Brown Booby, Jouanin's Petrel, Persian Shearwater, Sooty Tern and even a Red-billed Tropicbird of the form *indicus* (a proposed split as Arabian Tropicbird).

The remote Goda Mountains were the antidote to the city. Peaceful, wild and sparsely inhabited. The only sad thing here was the number of dead juniper trees in the Forêt du Day. There are, however, many surviving junipers and dead trees are heavily concentrated on ridgetops and south-facing slopes, so I suspect climate change resulting in lower rainfall and enhanced desiccation may be the root cause of the forest's decline.

Unlike some visitors to the area, we found the endemic Djibouti Francolin both common and pretty easy to observe for a basically shy critter. The Forêt du Day and its surroundings are not just about the special francolin, however, as we also encountered the range-restricted and highly localized Sombre Rock Chat, the range-restricted Yellow-rumped (or White-throated) Seed-eater (Birdquest discovered the isolated population here in 2010) and the highly localized Gambaga Flycatcher. A pair of Verreaux's Eagles and a Bonelli's Eagle at its only sub-Saharan outpost were also notable.

By the time we headed for home, we had all seen so much in a little-birded part of Africa.

BIRDS/MAMMALS OF THE TOUR

1st Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak

2nd Collared Lark

3rd= 'Daallo' Scops Owl

3rd= Beira

3rd= Little Brown Bustard

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Bird 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).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follows Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P. (Eds). **2023. IOC World Bird List (v13.2)** (this was the current version when the checklist for the tour report was created).

BIRDS

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* a female or immature at a pool on the Ban Cade plains was unexpected.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Six hiding under roadside trees en route to Ban Cade.

Crested Francolin (Kirk's F) *Ortyornis [sephaena] rovuma* Widespread in small numbers in Somaliland.

Djibouti Spurfowl ◊ *Pternistis ochropectus* Quite easy to see in the Forêt du Day, with up to 12 seen and heard daily.

Yellow-necked Spurfowl (Y-n Francolin) *Pternistis leucoscepus* Common in Daallo Forest.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* One in Djibouti.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* That migrant at Djibouti City that was taken in mid-air by a migrant Peregrine Falcon sure was a wonderful moment until it became an 'Oh No!' moment!

Donaldson Smith's Nightjar ◊ *Caprimulgus donaldsoni* One seen at dusk in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Localized in Somaliland but up to 100 in a day.

Common Swift (Eurasian S) *Apus apus* 300 in the dry country southeast of Burco was the only record.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* Fairly widespread in Somaliland with up to 100 in a day.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Scattered records from both Somaliland and Djibouti, but up to 60 in a day.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* Two northeast of Hargeisa.

White-bellied Go-away-bird *Crinifer leucogaster* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Heuglin's Bustard ♦ *Neotis heuglinii* A total of three in the dry country southeast of Burco. Possibly now in decline.

White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis* A female in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Little Brown Bustard ♦ *Heterotetrax humilis* Two nice pairs seen well in Somaliland.

Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana* Widespread in small numbers in eastern and southern Somaliland.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* One in Daallo Forest was the only record.

Jacobin Cuckoo (Black-and-White C) *Clamator jacobinus* Two singles in Djibouti.

Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* One heard in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus* One hepatic bird in Daallo Forest and three singles in Djibouti.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* Fairly widespread in Somaliland with up to 80 in a day.

Spotted Sandgrouse ♦ *Pterocles senegallus* We did well for this species in Somaliland with three separate sightings including 300 at Ban Cade.

Rock Dove (introduced) (Rock Dove) *Columba livia* Common at Hargeisa and Djibouti City.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common and widespread in both countries.

Somali Pigeon ♦ *Columba oliviae* A total of 6 near Berbera. A very localized endemic.

African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P) *Columba arquatrix* Common at Daallo Forest.

African Collared Dove ♦ *Streptopelia roseogrisea* Scattered records of small numbers from both countries.

Mourning Collared Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* Common and widespread in much of Somaliland.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common at Daallo Forest.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola* Common and widespread in Somaliland but just a single in Djibouti.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread in both countries.

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* One in the mountains between Berbera and Burco.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Widespread in small numbers in both countries.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* The only sighting was one in the Goda foothills below the Forêt du Day.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* Up to 11 at Berbera.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* A total of 10 seen near Ceerigabo.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* Two in Djibouti.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* A single at Ban Cade.

Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover) *Vanellus spinosus* A few records of up to eight from both countries.

Crowned Lapwing (C Plover) *Vanellus coronatus* Widespread and fairly common in Somaliland.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Up to 12 recorded in a day at Berbera and Djibouti City.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Up to 10 recorded in a day at Berbera and Djibouti City.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Nine at an ephemeral wetland southeast of Burco.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Two at Berbera and six at Djibouti.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Seen at both Berbera and Djibouti, with up to 40 in a day at the latter.

Tibetan Sand Plover *Charadrius atrifrons* Seen at both Berbera and Djibouti, with up to 20 in a day at the latter.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* A few in Somaliland and up to 13 in a day in Djibouti.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* Small numbers in Somaliland and up to 15 in a day in Djibouti.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Four in Djibouti.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Small numbers in both countries.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* 20 in Djibouti.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Small numbers in Somaliland.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Small numbers in Somaliland and 10 in Djibouti.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* A single in Djibouti.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Small numbers in Somaliland and a total of 26 in Djibouti.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* One at Ban Cade.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Two on a pool at the Ban Cade plain were unexpected!

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Up to 20 in a day at Berbera and up to 104 at Djibouti.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers in both countries.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Small numbers at wetlands southeast of Burco.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* Small numbers in both countries.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Small numbers in both countries.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers in both countries.

Crab-plover ♦ *Dromas ardeola* A fantastic total of 140 in a day around Djibouti City and exceptional views!

Somali Courser ♦ *Cursorius somalensis* Patchily distributed in the open plains of Somaliland but up to 50 in a day.

Double-banded Courser (Two-b C) *Rhinoptilus africanus* A total of eight on the Ban Cade plains.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Common locally off the Somaliland coast and three seen in Djibouti.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* A total of 18 in Djibouti.

White-eyed Gull ♦ *Ichthyaetus leucophthalmus* Small numbers along the Somaliland coast but more common in Djibouti, with up to 40 in a day.

Sooty Gull ♦ *Ichthyaetus hemprichii* Small numbers along the Somaliland coast but more common in Djibouti, with up to 36 in a day

Caspian Gull ♦ *Larus cachinnans* Two in Djibouti.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Heuglin's G) *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* Common along the coasts of both countries.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Fairly common in both countries.

Greater Crested Tern (Swift T) *Thalasseus bergii* Common along the coasts of both countries.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* Common along the coasts of both countries.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* A total of nine in Djibouti.

Saunders's Tern ♦ *Sternula saundersi* We had just two at Berbera, carefully identified.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* An adult off Berbera and a juvenile twice off the Djibouti coast two days apart, perhaps the same individual.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* Common along the coasts of both countries.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Small numbers at Berbera.

White-cheeked Tern ♦ *Sterna repressa* We saw over 60 in Djibouti.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* One off Berbera.

Red-billed Tropicbird ♦ (Arabian T) **Phaethon [aethereus] indicus** An adult off the coast of Djibouti in very high winds. The form *indicus* is a proposed split as Arabian Tropicbird.

Persian Shearwater ♦ *Puffinus persicus* One off the Djibouti coast.

Jouanin's Petrel ♦ **Bulweria fallax** Six off Berbera and two close inshore off the Djibouti coast in strong winds.

Abdim's Stork ♦ *Ciconia abdimii* A few in eastern Somaliland.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* Two off Berbera and plenty off Djibouti.

Masked Booby ♦ *Sula dactylatra* Two off Maydh, below Daallo.

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Locally common in Somaliland.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Three in Djibouti.

Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* A single in Djibouti.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Just one in Djibouti!

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Small numbers in both countries.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* A total of four in a day at Djibouti.

Great Egret (Western G E) *Ardea [alba] melanorhynchos* Six in flight in Djibouti.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* One at Djibouti put on all the usual extraordinary antics!

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* One at a wetland southeast of Burco was the only record.

Western Reef Heron (W R Egret) *Egretta gularis* A few along the Somaliland coast and fairly common at Djibouti.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Scattered records of one or two in Somaliland.

Osprey (Western O) *Pandion [haliaetus] haliaetus* Fairly common in Djibouti.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Just the one on the way to Ceerigabo.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Just two in northern Somaliland, where until relatively recently they were common, but still common in the Goda Mountains.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* Small numbers survive at Hargeisa and Burco. All vultures are becoming rare in the region.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos* Two on the Ban Cade plains.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* One in the rocky hills northeast of Hargeisa and a few in the Goda Mountains. This species is now known to be a regular winter visitor to the region.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* One was seen southeast of Burco.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* A pale morph at Daallo Forest.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* Singles near Ban Cade and around Ceerigabo.

Verreaux's Eagle (Black E) *Aquila verreauxii* A pair at the Goda Mountains.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* A fine adult in the Goda Mountains was seen very well and photographed.

African Hawk-Eagle *Aquila spilogaster* A pair in Daallo Forest.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* One southeast of Burco and two in Daallo Forest.

Eastern Chanting Goshawk (Eastern Pale C G) *Melierax poliopterus* Widespread in small numbers in Somaliland.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* A migrant female at the Forêt du Day. This is about as far south as they come.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* This is a mysteriously uncommon bird in the region. Just one on the coast below Daallo Forest.

Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus* One heading south over Daallo Forest so probably migrating.

Augur Buzzard ♠ (Archer's B) *Buteo [augur] archeri* Up to three in a day at Daallo Forest.

Little Owl ♠ (Ethiopian L O) *Athene [noctua] spilogastra* Fairly widespread in small numbers.

'Daallo' Scops Owl ♠ *Otus pamela* or *Otus sp. nov.* One seen very close and another heard at Daallo Forest. This isolated and undescribed form could turn out to be a distinct species, Daallo Scops Owl, or it may be an isolated population of Arabian Scops Owl.

Greyish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens* One at Burco.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Ketupa lactea* One at an ephemeral wetland southeast of Burco.

Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus* Common in thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] epops* Widespread in small numbers in both countries.

Eurasian Hoopoe (Central African H) *Upupa [epops] senegalensis* Just a few identified in Somaliland.

Black-billed Wood Hoopoe ♠ *Phoeniculus somaliensis* Small numbers at Daallo Forest.

Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor* Widespread in small numbers in thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* Common and widespread in Somaliland. One in the Goda Mountains.

Von der Decken's Hornbill *Tockus deckeni* *Small numbers in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.*

Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Hemprich's Hornbill ♦ *Lophoceros hemprichii* Fairly common in Daallo Forest and in the Forêt du Day.

Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R) *Coracias naevia* Singles en route Hargeisa-Berbera, in Daallo Forest and in the Forêt du Day.

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* Widespread in small numbers in Somaliland.

European Roller (Eurasian R) *Coracias garrulus* Patchily distributed, mostly in small numbers, in both countries. An exceptional count of 40 on the coast below Daallo Forest was clearly a migrant 'fall'.

Grey-headed Kingfisher (Chestnut-bellied K) *Halcyon leucocephala* Singles in both countries.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* A few in Somaliland.

Somali Bee-eater ♦ *Merops revoolii* Fairly common and fairly widespread in Somaliland.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* A total of 10 in Djibouti, where they overwinter.

Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* Fairly common to the southeast of Burco and in Daallo Forest.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* Six near Burco were the last of these Afrotropical visitors.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* Fairly common in Daallo Forest.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala* Scattered records of one or two from Somaliland.

Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* Quite common in thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Yellow-breasted Barbet ♦ *Trachyphonus margaritatus* Small numbers in the mountains between Berbera and Burco and the Goda Mountains.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* Two singles in Daallo Forest.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* A single not far from Hargeisa.

Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica* Scattered one or twos from Somaliland.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Fairly common and fairly widespread in both countries.

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* Fairly common in the thornbush region southeast of Burco. Also one heard bellow Daallo Forest.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Fairly common in Daallo Forest, the mountains between Burco and Berbera and the Goda Mountains.

Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides* Small numbers while crossing the Ban Cade and associated plains.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Scattered records from both countries.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Two near Burco.

Peregrine Falcon (Barbary F) *Falco [peregrinus] pelegrinoides* I believe the one that caught the Egyptian Nightjar in Djibouti was this form, as it looked relatively small rather than like a big migrant *calidus*.

Red-bellied Parrot (African Orange-bellied P) *Poicephalus rufiventris* Fairly common in the thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* This introduced or ship-assisted bird is common in Djibouti City.

Grey-headed Batis ♦ *Batis orientalis* Common in Daallo Forest and also recorded southeast of Burco and near Shiikh.

Pygmy Batis *Batis perkeo* Small numbers in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Grey-headed Bushshrike *Malaconotus blanchoti* One not far from Hargeisa.

Rosy-patched Bushshrike ♦ *Telophorus cruentus* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Three-streaked Tchagra ♦ *Tchagra jamesi* One in dry country southeast of Burco.

Black-crowned Tchagra (Black-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus* Small numbers in Daallo Forest and the Forêt du Day.

Slate-colored Boubou *Laniarius funebris* Small numbers in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Red-naped Bushshrike ♦ *Laniarius ruficeps* Two in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Ethiopian Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus* Small numbers in the mountains between Berbera and Burco and in the Forêt du Day.

Brubru *Nilaus afer* Widespread and fairly common in Somaliland.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* A female at an isolated 'oasis' south of Ban Cade.

Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* Common and widespread in both countries.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Fairly common in Daallo Forest.

Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus ruppelli* One not far from Hargeisa.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* Scattered singles in both countries.

Great Grey Shrike ♦ (Steppe G S) *Lanius [excubitor] pallidirostris* Just one in Djibouti.

Somali Fiscal ♦ *Lanius somalicus* Very common and widespread in Somaliland.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* An adult female and a young bird at an ephemeral wetland southeast of Burco.

Isabelline Shrike (Daurian S) *Lanius isabellinus* Scattered singles in both countries.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Two individuals in Djibouti.

Red-tailed Shrike (Turkestan S) *Lanius phoenicuroides* Common and widespread in Somaliland but only one in Djibouti.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* Common at Berbera and around Djibouti City, where a ship-assisted colonist.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* A few in Somaliland.

Somali Crow ♦ (Dwarf Raven) *Corvus edithae* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* Small numbers in both countries. Widely scattered in mountain areas and even elsewhere.

Acacia Tit (Northern Grey Tit) *Melaniparus thruppi* Scattered records of small numbers in Somaliland.

Mouse-colored Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus musculus* Scattered records of small numbers in the thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* A total of nine in Djibouti.

Lesser Hoopoe-Lark ♦ *Alaemon hamertoni* Fairly common in the Ban Cade plains and adjacent areas.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* Widespread and fairly common in both countries.

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* Widespread in arid plains in both countries.

Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark ♦ *Eremopterix signatus* 15 in the dry country southeast of Burco and two more en route to Ban Cade.

Foxy Lark ♦ *Calendulauda alopex* Scattered records of small numbers in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Gillett's Lark ♦ *Mirafra gilletti* Scattered records of small numbers in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Collared Lark ♦ *Mirafra collaris* No fewer than 15 of these range-restricted birds, mostly display-fighting, in the arid country southeast of Burco. A fantastic result!

Somali Lark ♦ *Mirafra somalica* Wonderful views of a pair of these endemics at the Ban Cade plains. They did take a bit of work but it was well worth it.

Short-tailed Lark ♦ *Spizocorys fremantlii* Common on the Ban Cade plains and in adjacent areas.

Thekla's Lark *Galerida theklae* Common and widespread in northeastern Somaliland.

Rufous-capped Lark ♦ *Calandrella eremica* Common on the Ban Cade plains and in adjacent areas.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* One in Djibouti. A winter visitor to the region.

Somali Short-toed Lark ♦ *Alaudala somalica* Common on the Ban Cade plains and in adjacent areas.

Dodson's Bulbul ♦ *Pycnonotus dodsoni* Common in the thornbush region southeast of Burco and in Daallo Forest.

Somali Bulbul ♦ *Pycnonotus somaliensis* Common in eastern Somaliland and Djibouti.

Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta* Common in Daallo Forest. A few in the Goda Mountains.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Fairly common but scattered records from both countries.

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Scattered records from Somaliland with up to 10 in a day.

Western House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Small numbers at Daallo Forest.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Common at Daallo Forest.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* Fairly common in Daallo Forest.

Philippa's Crombec ♦ (Somali Short-billed C) *Sylvietta philippae* A total of eight of these near-endemics in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* One at Daallo Forest.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* One at Daallo Forest and fairly common in Djibouti.

Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* Fairly common at Daallo Forest and in the Forêt du Day.

Common Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Two migrants in Djibouti.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* Scattered records of small numbers from both countries.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* Scattered records of small numbers from both countries.

Ashy Cisticola *Cisticola cinereolus* Five south of Ceerigabo.

Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus* A few in the dry plains in Somaliland and one in Djibouti.

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis* Common in Djibouti but just a single in Somaliland at Berbera.

'Daallo Cisticola' *Cisticola ssp. nov. or sp. nov.* A couple of singles seen. This undescribed form is rather shy for a cisticola.

Pale Prinia ♦ *Prinia somalica* Common in the dry thornbush southeast of Burco but just a single further east.

Red-fronted Prinia (R-f Warbler) *Prinia rufifrons* Fairly widespread in small numbers in Somaliland.

Yellow-breasted Apalis (Black-breasted A) *Apalis flavida* One in the thornbush region southeast of Burco.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Fairly common in Daallo Forest and the Forêt du Day.

Grey Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes simplex* Small numbers in the thornbush region southeast of Burco.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* Widespread in small numbers in Somaliland.

Yellow-vented Eremomela ♦ *Eremomela flavicrissalis* Six in the thornbush region southeast of Burco.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Small numbers in Djibouti. Just one in Somaliland, in the mountains between Berbera and Burco.

Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria* Singles in the thornbush country southeast of Burco and in Djibouti.

Banded Parisoma *Curruca boehmi* Scattered records of two or three in thornbush areas in both countries.

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* A single in Djibouti.

Arabian Warbler ♦ *Curruca leucomelaena* Pairs in the thornbush southeast of Burco and the Goda Mountains.

Menetries's Warbler ♦ *Curruca mystacea* Single males in Daallo Forest and the Forêt du Day.

Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis* Scattered records of small numbers from both countries.

Abyssinian White-eye ♦ *Zosterops abyssinicus* Common in Daallo Forest and the Forêt du Day. A single in the mountains between Berbera and Burco.

Scaly Chatterer ♦ *Argya aylmeri* Up to five at two locations in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* Five near Ceerigabo.

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* One near Hargeisa.

Golden-breasted Starling ♦ *Lamprotornis regius* Fairly common in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

White-crowned Starling ♦ *Lamprotornis albicapillus* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Small numbers in eastern Somaliland.

Somali Starling ♦ *Onychognathus blythii* This near-endemic was common in both countries, especially at Daallo Forest (where we recorded up to 200 in a day) and in the Goda Mountains.

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Scattered records of up to eight from Somaliland.

Somali Thrush ♦ *Turdus ludoviciae* This endemic species is common in Daallo Forest.

Black Scrub Robin ♦ *Cercotrichas podobe* One near Hargeisa and one in Djibouti.

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (R-tailed Bush Chat) *Cercotrichas galactotes* Fairly widespread in small numbers in Somaliland but just a single in Djibouti.

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (African S R) *Cercotrichas [galactotes] minor* Scattered records of singles from both countries.

White-browed Scrub Robin (Red-backed S R) *Cercotrichas leucophrys* Fairly widespread in small numbers in the thornbush regions of Somaliland.

African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Widespread in small numbers in both countries.

Gambaga Flycatcher ♦ *Muscicapa gambagae* This highly localized species is much sought-after as many have missed it elsewhere. A total of three in the Goda Mountains.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Small numbers in Daallo Forest.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* One in Djibouti. A scarce migrant this far south.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **A couple in Daallo Forest and small numbers in Djibouti.**

Little Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola rufocinereus* Common in Daallo Forest and singles in the mountains between Berbera and Burco and in the Goda Mountains.

Common Rock Thrush (Rufous-tailed R T) *Monticola saxatilis* Fairly common and widespread in both countries.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* One in the mountains between Burco and Berbera and one in the Goda Mountains.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* One near Ceerrigabo.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* An adult male in Djibouti.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Common and widespread in both countries.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* A male wheatear seen briefly in the stark desert mountains near the coast at Maydh was identified as a Hooded Wheatear by John and Tim. If accepted this would be the third record from the Horn of Africa, where there are two records from Djibouti.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Scattered records of a few from the dry country southeast of Burco, near Ceerrigabo and from Djibouti.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Fairly common and widespread in both countries.

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe leucomelaneura* A migrant male in the Goda Mountains.

Somali Wheatear ♦ *Oenanthe phillipsi* This near-endemic was common and widespread in Somaliland.

Blackstart ♦ *Oenanthe melanura* Common and widespread in upland rocky areas in both countries.

Brown-tailed Rock Chat ♦ *Oenanthe scotocerca* Two of this range-restricted birds in the mountains between Burco and Berbera. Originally misidentified as Sombre Rock Chat in 2010 but Nik later checked his photos carefully.

Sombre Rock Chat ♦ *Oenanthe dubia* Two of these highly range-restricted birds in the Goda Mountains.

White-crowned Wheatear ♦ *Oenanthe leucopyga* Fairly common in lower very arid areas in Djibouti.

Abyssinian Wheatear ♦ (A Black W) *Oenanthe lugubris* Common in and around Daallo Forest.

Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis* Three not far from Hargeisa.

Nile Valley Sunbird ♦ *Hedydipna metallica* Fairly common in the Hargeisa region and in Djibouti.

Hunter's Sunbird ♦ *Chalcomitra hunteri* Common in the thornbush region southeast of Burco.

Shining Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris habessinicus* Common and widespread in both countries.

Variable Sunbird (Yellow-bellied S) *Cinnyris venustus* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow (Y-s Petronia) *Gymnoris pyrgita* Small numbers in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Swainson's Sparrow ♦ *Passer swainsonii* Fairly widespread and fairly common in Somaliland.

House Sparrow (introduced) *Passer domesticus* Scattered records of this invading species, including hybrids with Somali Sparrow.

Somali Sparrow ♦ *Passer castanopterus* Scattered records from both countries, but with up to 50 in a day.

Arabian Golden Sparrow ♦ *Passer euchlorus* A nice flock of 60 showed for those who kept on looking for it in Djibouti City. In severe decline owing to habitat destruction.

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger* Scattered records of small numbers from Somaliland.

White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli* Common and widespread in Somaliland.

Rüppell's Weaver ♦ *Ploceus galbula* Fairly common in Djibouti but just one in eastern Somaliland.

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* Four in the thornbush country southeast of Burco.

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* Scattered records of small numbers from Somaliland.

Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus* A huge roost of 1000 or more in Burco!

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* 100 at Burco in the Chestnut Weaver roost, 3 on the Ban Cade plain and 15 in the Goda Mountains.

Purple Grenadier *Granatina ianthinogaster* Three not far from Hargeisa.

Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch) *Pytilia melba* Scattered records of a few from Somaliland.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* Just two near Hargeisa.

Long-tailed Paradise Whydah (Eastern P W) *Vidua paradisaea* A couple of singles in the thornbush regions of Somaliland.

Western Yellow Wagtail (form unidentified) *Motacilla flava* A single southeast of Burco.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* One in Daallo Forest.

African Pipit (Grassland P) *Anthus cinnamomeus* One near Ceerigabo.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* A few on the Ban Cade and associated plains.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Small numbers in mountain country in both countries.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* A couple of singles in Daallo Forest.

Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak ◊ *Rhynchostruthus louisae* We were down to the wire with this elusive endemic but we eventually scored on a nice pair, the male singing away. Thank goodness!

Yellow-rumped Seedeater ◊ (White-rumped S) *Crithagra xanthopygia* Up to 25 in a day at the Forêt du Day, an isolated outpost of this Horn of Africa endemic.

White-bellied Canary *Crithagra dorsostrata* Scattered records of small numbers from the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Northern Grosbeak-Canary ◊ *Crithagra donaldsoni* A total of three in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

Brown-rumped Seedeater ◊ *Crithagra tristriata* Common in Daallo Forest and in the mountains between Berbera and Burco.

Warsangli Linnnet ◊ *Linaria johannis* The other really elusive endemic of Daallo Forest region, but we scored twice with a single and a pair turning up. Another big sigh of relief.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Three in the Goda Mountains.

Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* One near Berbera.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (C-b Rock Bunting) *Emberiza tahapisi* Small numbers at Daallo Forest.

Somali Bunting (Somali Golden-breasted B) *Emberiza poliopleura* Small numbers in the thornbush country of Somaliland.

MAMMALS

Bush Hyrax *Heterohyrax brucei* Up to eight in the mountains between Berbera and Burco and in Daallo Forest.

Rock Hyrax *Procavia capensis* Up to 9 in a day at Daallo Forest.

Somali Sengi (S Elephant Shrew) *Elephantulus revoilii* One of these cute critters not far from Hargeisa.

Common Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguineus* One in the mountains between Berbera and Burco and one at the Forêt du Day.

Somalian Slender Mongoose *Herpestes ochraceous* A total of 3 in the dry country southeast of Burco.

White-tailed Mongoose *Ichneumia albicauda* One at Burco.

African Golden Wolf *Canis lupaster* Two not far from Hargeisa, two in the dry country southeast of Burco and two on the Ban Cade plains.

Bat-eared Fox *Otocyon megalotis* A shy one at the 'flash flood' river southeast of Berbera.

Desert Warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* Scattered records of up to 8 across the drier parts of Somaliland.

Beira *Dorcatragus megalotis* Two of these very beautiful little gazelles northeast of Hargeisa. They were worth the effort!

Dorcas Gazelle (Pelzeln's Gazelle) *Gazella [dorcas] pelzelni* Quite common in the coastal lowlands below Daallo and one near Berbera.

Speke's Gazelle *Gazella spekei* Quite common from the dry country southeast of Burco northwards towards the Ceerigabo region.

Gerenuk (Northern Gerenuk) *Litocranius [walleri] sclateri* Fairly common in the thornbush areas of Somaliland.

Guenther's Dik-dik *Madoqua guentheri* Small numbers in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Salt's Dik-dik (Lawrence's Dik-dik) *Madoqua [saltiana] lawrencei* Common and widespread across Somaliland.

Klipspringer (Somali K) *Oreotragus [oreotragus] somalicus* Fairly common in Daallo Forest.

Yellow-winged False-vampire *Lavia frons* One in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Hamadryas Baboon (Sacred B) *Papio hamadryas* Common in Daallo Forest and also seen near Berbera, between Berbera and Hargeisa, and at the Forêt du Day.

Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus* Scattered records of small numbers across Somaliland.

Speke's Gundi (S's Pectinator) *Pectinator spekei* Fairly common in Daallo Forest and the Goda Mountains and four northeast of Hargeisa.

Unstriped Ground Squirrel *Xerus rutilus* Widespread in small numbers in both countries.

Maned Rat (Crested R) *Lophiomyi imhausi* One at our guesthouse in the Goda Mountains.

Neumann's Grass Rat (Somali G R) *Arvicanthis neumanni* One in the dry country southeast of Burco.

Somali Pygmy Gerbil *Microdillus peeli* One in the dry country southeast of Burco.