

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO ETHIOPIA

Undiscovered Africa

07 – 21 October 2011



Leader: Gabor Orban

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A Personal Diary

Day 1: Friday, 7th October

Route: Direct flight from London to Addis Ababa.

The group depart from London on an overnight direct flight to Addis Ababa.

Day 2: Saturday, 8th October

Route: Addis Ababa – Gardens of hotel – Geffersa Reservoir – Addis Ababa

On arrival the next morning I met the group at Addis Ababa Airport where we loaded our minibus and transferred to our hotel. Our rooms were already available so we could change and leave our baggage in our rooms. A buffet breakfast was well appreciated, after which we were ready to go birding.

The morning was quite cool due to the fact that we were at around 2,400 m, but the day quickly warmed up and the temperature was between 20-25°C despite being overcast with some wind.

Firstly we looked around the hotel's gardens which offered a good introduction to Ethiopian birds. Just as we stepped out from the hotel there were plenty of Yellow-billed Kites and White-backed and Hooded Vultures in the air and soon we had our first endemic - Wattled Ibis. The flowering trees and bushes just in front of the main entrance of the hotel were regularly visited by Tacazze Sunbirds. A huge group of Speckled Mousebirds moved back and forth. A Brown-rumped Seedeater was seen shortly and a few Nyanza Swifts flew around. In the gardens themselves there were various trees and bushes, some in full flower, so there were plenty birds around. We saw Mountain White-eye, Common Bulbul, African Dusky Flycatcher, Rüppell's Robin-Chat and Swainson's Sparrow. We had our first Hooded Crows and Thick-billed Raven as well.

After lunch we headed out from Addis Ababa to the Geffersa Reservoir, some 20km northwest of the city. Although we pre-arranged permission to visit the area it took time to get in. Unfortunately, the water level was high, but we still we had views of Long-tailed Cormorant, African Darter, Grey Heron, various ducks including Yellow-billed and African Black Ducks. As well as Hooded and White-headed Vultures we saw our first White-backed Vultures as well, but the best raptor seen was a male Pallid Harrier.

At a little forest patch we had very good movement of different songbirds including Mountain Thrush, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Common Bulbul, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Dusky Flycatcher, Abyssinian Waxbill, but perhaps the best was another three great local endemics: Brown-rumped Seedeater, White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher.



Later, on the other side of the road, we visited a smaller reservoir where we found Sacred and Wattled Ibises and Blue-winged and Egyptian Geese. We had great views of White-collared Pigeon, Three-banded Plover, and Wood and Common Sandpipers as well.

Finally we returned to Addis Ababa to have dinner and spend the night at our hotel.

Birds Seen Today: 45 New Birds: 45 Total To Date: 45

Day 3: Sunday, 9th October

Route: Addis Ababa – Sululta Plains - Jemmu Gorge - Debre Libanos – Portuguese Bridge - Addis Ababa.

After another full buffet breakfast today we upgraded our minibus to a Toyota Cruiser where we had the luxury of having a full row of seats and even more room for each of us during the tour. Beside the excellent driver, Abayna, who knew all the places and road conditions very well, we also had a local guide, Sileshi with us, to help to sort out logistical matters.

After breakfast we set off north to Sululta Plains, Debre Libanos and the Jemmu Gorge. As we were leaving the bustling city of Addis the habitat changed and it soon became clear that the Sululta Plain is a great area for raptors and grassland species. We stopped alongside the road wherever we saw activity around. Birds seen along the way included White-headed Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite and some raptors familiar from home: Eurasian Kestrel and Western Marsh Harrier. Isabelline and Red-breasted Wheatears were showing very well. Very nice colourful additions were Fan-tailed Widowbird and Yellow Bishop.

We identified a Grassland Pipit and Groundscraper Thrush and Yellow Wagtail were quite abundant. Among the swallows flying around we identified Red-rumped and Barn. A Bronze Mannikin was new and we saw several Cape Rooks as well. We had extremely good views of Tawny Eagle and not just once, as one of them regularly come down to check-out fresh road kill. We spent some time witnessing some great flight shows and then later we found a Thekla Lark and saw an endemic, White-collared Pigeon flying around. Sacred Ibis was quite common and we saw several Wattled Ibis, Black-winged Plover, Speckled Pigeon and Dusky Turtle Dove.

After travelling a bit further we arrived at the Jemma escarpment, where we parked at a private property with fantastic panoramic views of the Valley of River Jemma, which joins the Blue Nile further north. We had an incredibly close calling Tawny Eagle about five metres away on a nearby tree. Some nice butterflies and wildflowers diverted our attention, but an amazingly close, eye-level Lammergeier stole the show and we were back to concentrating on birds. We were soon rewarded by a Verreaux's Eagle and a Lanner Falcon.

After these great experiences we went a bit further to the Debre Libanos area where we parked very close to the famous monastery. However, we were not visiting the monastery, but after crossing a little stream we walked up in a rocky trail to the forest, where we were pretty soon surrounded by interesting species. First we had Mountain White-eye and a very cooperative Grey-headed Woodpecker. Then we found a silent, lonely White-cheeked Turaco just above our head - what an amazing bird! Both African Paradise Flycatcher and Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher were seen. We first heard and then finally pinpointed the uniformly coloured Brown Woodland Warbler. We had good views of Tawny-flanked Prinia as well. We found the beautiful Banded Barbet and Rüppell's Robin-Chat. Common Bulbul was really common! Other birds we found included: Northern Crombec, Waxbill, Fork-tailed Drongo, Red-billed Firefinch and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu. We heard and briefly saw Hemprich's Hornbill. When we were about to sit back in the bus we found our first Black-winged Lovebirds, another near-endemic, well-camouflaged in the canopy.

Finally we retraced our steps to the Jemma escarpment but this time we stopped at the Portuguese Bridge. We ate our sandwiches at the viewpoint and we were careful with the Yellow-billed Kites which have learnt to steal sandwiches from your hand by special kamikaze attacks. We saw Verreaux's Eagle three more times, but it was hard to tell whether all were different individuals or just one. Lanner Falcon dashed through as well. Other highlights were an Ethiopian Boubou, another White-cheeked Turaco, European Bee-eaters and some Swainson's Sparrows.



On the way back to the capital we re-crossed the Sululta Plains where we located some of the birds we had seen before such as Red-breasted Wheatear, Thekla Lark, a couple of Augur Buzzards and Western Marsh Harrier, Pied Crow, Eurasian Kestrel, Dusky Turtle and Speckled Doves and Yellow Wagtail, but we added some new ones such as Yellow-headed Canary, Broad-billed Roller, Brubru, Isabelline Shrike and Red-billed Oxpecker, which we renamed as horsepecker, as this was the actual host-mammal! Talking about mammals I should have mentioned a troop of endemic Gelada Baboons alongside the road.

Finally we arrived back at Addis, and had an hour or so before dinner so we discussed what we had seen and how we planned to spend the next day. We decided to start with pre-breakfast birding and then travel south after breakfast.

Birds Seen Today: 64 New Birds: 38 Total To Date: 83

Day 4: Monday, 10th October

Route: Addis Ababa – Debre Zeit – Koka Lake and Dam – Betlehem - Lake Ziway – Langano

We started the day at 6am and checked out bird activity in the hotel gardens before breakfast. Plenty of Tacazze Sunbirds started the day early as well. We had really good views of African Paradise Flycatcher. Beside the common birds such as Mountain White-eye, Common Bulbul and Red-winged Starling, endemics were represented by Wattled Ibis and Thick-billed Raven.

After a full buffet breakfast we hit the road south towards the Rift Valley and its lakes. The hot and sunny day was enjoyable thanks to a regular breeze.



We drove through Akaki and Debre Zeit to reach our first stop at Lake Hora. Here we saw Pink-backed Pelican, Little Grebe, Long-tailed Cormorant, Rock and Plain Martins, Malachite Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-fronted Canary, Vitelline Masked Weaver, Rüppell’s Weaver, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Black-headed Batis, Red-billed Firefinch, Bronze Manakin, Village Indigobird and Northern Crombec.

Then we found a huge Monitor Lizard sunbathing close to the edge of the lake. Later on we followed it for a while as it moved among the lakeside vegetation. It was quite an impressive specimen.

As we walked back between the lake and the nearby wooded area we checked both directions and found further various species, including Tawny-flanked Prinia, Willow Warbler, Variable and Beautiful Sunbirds, Common Fiscal feeding fledged young, Great Egret, Nubian Woodpecker and African Paradise Flycatcher. We also added Laughing Dove, Swainson’s Sparrow, Speckled Mousebird, Blackcap and Chanting Goshawk to today’s list.

Leaving Lake Hora we travelled to Koka Dam and lake area and on the way we found an even better raptor, a very close Long-crested Eagle perched on a pole. We had marvellous views seeing its prominent crest and

great photo opportunities too. Later it carried out a stunning flight show as well. Arriving at Koka Dam and lake it was obvious that it must be an excellent fishing area: the number of African Fish Eagles, of all ages were just outnumbered by the Marabou Storks. Of course we also saw Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Hamerkop and Sacred Ibis and there were many Yellow-billed Storks as well. After a careful check we finally found some Bruce's Green-pigeons in the dense canopy of the roadside trees. On one of the bushes a fantastic Beautiful Sunbird posed for a while and a noisy group of Greater Blue-eared Starlings was around as well. Whiskered Tern flew above the water and there were Barn and Red-rumped Swallows too.

We broke the journey at Bethlehem's Restaurant, where after the great food and some refreshments we looked around in the garden where we found nests of Sparrow Weavers and of course the families of the birds as well. In front of the establishment on the tree we had a Namaqua Dove and, very close to the entrance, an African Hoopoe was searching for food, showed well

Walking down to the shore of Lake Ziway we found plenty of Marabou Storks, both White and Pink-backed Pelicans, African Jacana, Spur-winged Plover, Ruff, Common, Wood and Green Sandpipers, Three-banded Plover, Whiskered and White-winged Terns and Grey-headed Gull. An Egyptian Goose family was swimming at our feet with plenty of Hamerkops and Sacred Ibises around. Spur-winged Geese flew across above the Black-winged Stilts. But the show was stolen by two star kingfishers, a little Malachite Kingfisher and the huge Giant Kingfisher, both sitting out on the fence showing extremely well. Later in the afternoon we reluctantly left this bird-rich area. Alongside the road we noted some amazingly coloured birds such as Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Lilac-breasted Roller, Superb Starling and White-headed Buffalo-Weaver.

Our hotel had fully equipped rooms at a good birding habitat close to Lake Langano and we were happy to stay for two nights here, and after a lovely dinner in the stylish restaurant, we looked forward to tomorrow after a good night's sleep.

Birds Seen Today: 98

New Birds: 54

Total To Date: 137



Day 5: Tuesday, 11th October

Route: Lake Langano – Abiyata-Shalla National Park – Lake Langano

A walk before breakfast at the resort's property produced many good species. Firstly we found Beautiful Sunbird, had a great view of Black-billed Barbet, some noisy White-bellied Go-away Birds, beautifully showing Abyssinian Wheatear, some Greater Blue-eared Starlings. Well known birds from home included Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Common Whitethroat and Common Kestrel. Minutes later beneath a cliff and in the acacia woodland we had Village and Rüppell's Weavers, Mountain White-eye, Namaqua Dove, Speckled and Blue-naped Mousebirds. Then we found a Black-tipped Mongoose searching on the ground. This was followed by locating a Red-billed Hornbill in the distance, Lilac-breasted Roller and African Paradise-Flycatcher. A Lanner Falcon flew above the rocky edge as we were walking up the steps towards the restaurant. But before we reached it we were stopped by a pair of White-winged Black-Tit. As we looked down from the edge we could see some Grey-headed Gulls, Dusky Turtle Doves and Common Bulbuls before we finally went in for breakfast.



After a good, healthy breakfast we departed to different parts of the Abiyata-Shalla National Park. Here we were greeted by Somali Ostriches. In the dry area a small amount of water attracted a good number of birds, including flocks of Red-billed Firefinch, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu and Swainson's Sparrow. In the air we had Hooded and Rüppell's Vultures. We also saw African Hoopoe, White-winged Black-Tit and Fork-tailed Drongo.

Greater Blue-eared and Superb Starlings were in good numbers and we had some Blue-breasted and Little Bee-eaters as well. After spotting a White-headed Buffalo-Weaver we heard some tapping and soon we located a Bearded Woodpecker. We approached a Von der Decken's Hornbill and Striped Kingfisher in the Acacia trees and in the meantime we started to see our first Grant's Gazelles. In terms of mammals later on today we were to see Wart Hog and Abyssinian and African/Cape Hares as well.

Later on we drove to the edge of a huge cliff, parked and made a loop walk around a densely vegetated patch of the arid, rocky plateau. Perhaps it was the mix of two completely different habitats that resulted in such a wide range of species which included Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Namaqua Dove on a nest with two eggs in it, Fork-tailed Drongo, Northern Crombec, Crowned Plover, Northern, Pied and Isabelline Wheatears and Tawny Pipit. A well-hidden Black-crowned Tchagra caused a bit of headache to ID for a while. Another attractive bird was a near-endemic Abyssinian Oriole. Striolated Bunting was new, while raptors were represented by Augur Buzzard and Chanting Goshawk. As we were leaving this area we were stopped by great views of Abyssinian Ground Hornbills as well.



Next we drove down to Lake Abyata on a dirt road. Soon we had spectacular views of a Kori Bustard, really close-up with excellent photographic opportunities. A Northern Carmine Bee-eater was flying around to add some more colour. After a while we stopped to be on the safe side since we were driving on a dried out part of the lake. As we continued by walking towards the actual edge of the lake, even from a distance it was obvious that there was a huge mass of birds all over it. Thousands of Lesser Flamingos coloured the water, mixed with perhaps Greater ones. Hundreds of Pied Avocets and quite a lot of other shorebirds, waders and allies were around. There were about 60 Collared Pratincoles, plenty of Kittlitz's Plovers, Little Stints, Ruffs,

Sanderlings, Common Greenshanks, Long-tailed Cormorants, Great Egrets and Grey Herons. We also saw Yellow-billed and Marabou Storks, Sacred and Wattled Ibises and a lonely, but close Black Crowned Crane. Beside the common Egyptian Geese we saw Spur-winged Goose as well, while an African Fish Eagle was flying around. Common Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, plus Common and Curlew Sandpipers also were identified. Isabelline Wheatear was quite common as well. We were lucky that a huge dust storm just missed us, but just to be sure we decided to leave the area before dusk.

Birds Seen Today: 100 New Birds: 46 Total To Date: 184

Day 6: Wednesday, 12th October

Route: Lake Langanu – Dodola – Dinsho - Bale National Park/Mountain Nyala Reserve – Goba

Today we started with some pre-breakfast birding. First we have found almost all the birds we had seen yesterday morning: Beautiful Sunbird, Black-billed Barbet, White-bellied Go-away Birds, Abyssinian Wheatear, Common Whitethroat, Rüppell's Weavers, Speckled and Blue-naped Mousebirds, Common Kestrel, Laughing Dove, Speckled Pigeon, Barn Swallow, Black Redstart, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Greater Blue-eared Starling and White-winged Black-Tit. But we also managed to add a few new ones to the garden list as well such as Vitelline Masked Weaver, Rock Martin, Hemprich's Hornbill, Blue-checked Cordon-bleu, Little Rock Thrush, Northern Crombec, a nice male Pallid Harrier, Common and Little Swifts, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, Common Sandpiper, Swainson's Sparrow, Bronze Mannikin and Brown-rumped and Streaky Seedeaters.

After a really good breakfast we hit the road towards Dinsho and the Bale National Park. On the way we noted some species such as Lilac-breasted Roller, White-headed Vulture, Fan-tailed Raven and again a Long-crested Eagle. A pair of Silvery-cheeked Hornbills were seen, many Yellow-billed Kites, Pied Crows, Sacred and Wattled Ibises, Cattle Egrets and Egyptian Geese. Thekla Lark, Pied Kingfisher and African Pygmy Kingfisher were also identified. Beside the Common Kestrels we found nice groups of Lesser Kestrels as well, sometimes hunting just in front or above us.

We stopped at Dodola where we had two Thick-billed Ravens on the roof of a small house where a local woman smashed seeds in the old traditional way. We had a simple, but tasty lunch in a garden where we enjoyed the birds, which included Dusky Flycatcher, Common Chiffchaff and a couple of Tacazze Sunbirds, both males and females.

Later on we continued our way to Dinsho, stopping alongside the road wherever we saw some interesting birds. In this way we saw Thick-billed Raven, Red-collared Widowbird, Red-billed Chough, Golden Eagle, Fan-tailed Raven, Mountain Buzzard and Common Rock Thrush, but the most incredible sighting was a very close circling Lammergeier for which we all jumped out of the bus and enjoyed for several minutes. Later on a great Rouget's Rail posed on top of a rock for the photographers. At a small mountain lake we added Blue-winged Goose, Yellow-billed Duck, Sacred Ibis, Little Grebe and Red-knobbed Coot. Also, a very tame Thekla Lark was so obsessed with collecting more food in its beak that it almost stepped on our toes! We found a female Siberian Stonechat and on African Harrier Hawk practiced landing on a smallish tree. We saw our first Mountain Nyala outside of the protected area alongside the road.

Finally we arrived at Bale National Park's Mountain Nyala Reserve. This area is protected mainly because of the Mountain Nyala but we had seen some other interesting mammals as well, such as Menelik's Bushbuck, Grey Duiker, Wart Hog and Bohor Reedbuck. We heard an Abyssinian Catbird, but could not locate it. On the other hand another two endemic birds, Chestnut-naped Francolin and White-backed Black Tit were seen well.

At Goba when we arrived at our hotel we had to face a couple of problems as everybody was affected by the lack of electricity in the whole district, but fortunately the reception could provide candles, so we had a kind of "romantic dinner" and it was harder to check the daily species list with torches! However the food was good and we were all excited to prepare for the next day's birding. We exchanged information with another birding group and went to bed.

Birds Seen Today: 79 New Birds: 16 Total To Date: 200



Day 7: Thursday, 13th October

Route: Goba – Sanetti Plateau – Harenna Forest - Sanetti Plateau – Goba

After breakfast, while waiting for our bus to arrive with Abayna and Sileshi, beside the regular species we had some nice birds such as Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Streaky Seedeater and two Yellow-fronted Parrots that unfortunately crossed too fast.

Later we tried to cross Goba, which was not easy, because lots of people and animals were on the streets, most of them dragging loads of bamboo to the market. We also had to wait a while until we could gather a local National Park guide who was still sleeping in one of the huts. Finally we left the town and soon we were at Sanetti Plateau where it was obvious that it is strongly affected by the bamboo business, as well as by grazing, collecting, cutting and burning wood, so it is hard to believe that it is actually part of the Bale Mountains National Park! It was sad to realize that if it continues like this soon there will be nothing left to protect.

As we were climbing up with the bus we stopped for a few minutes and the local ranger called out Bale Parisoma, but we did not agree with this identification. But we added Moorland Chat to the list. Later on at a bushy area we saw Baglafaecht Weaver and first we heard and later we located an Abyssinian Catbird, which we missed yesterday. This was also the place where we had Abyssinian White-eye.

Once on the plateau we regularly saw Lobelia (*Lobelia rynchopetalum*) which gives the highland plateau a somewhat tropical look. We were crossing the area on the highest road in Ethiopia well above 4,000 m. During the journey we encountered many different species. On the raptor front we had a nice Verreaux's Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, a dark form of an African Goshawk, Augur Buzzard, Lesser Kestrel, Tawny Eagle, immature Golden Eagle, but perhaps the best was a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk beautifully perched with perfect light close to the road. Other birds included Dark-capped Bulbul, Tacazze Sunbird, Dusky Turtle Dove, Wattled Ibis and Mountain Thrush. We found Rouget's Rail again. Later we reached a rocky area with many upland lakes and streams, which was perfect habitat for Spot-breasted Plover. We had seen a couple of smaller and larger groups in quite misty conditions. Unfortunately, we did not find an Ethiopian Wolf, which has never happened before on our Ethiopia tours. However its main food source, the Giant Mole Rat was around in really good numbers.

Later on we drove down to the Harenna Forest. The habitat here was completely different - mature woods with dense understorey and despite the very humid air there was some bird activity. While eating our sandwiches we looked around and during a walk, drive and another walk, the following birds were seen:

Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, White-cheeked Turaco, African Dusky Flycatcher, Chestnut-naped Francolin, Variable Sunbird and Abyssinian Oriole.

On the muddy road one of us pointed out an interesting footprint, which perhaps belonged to a Lion, which has been heard here on previous tours. We also found a troop of Black and White Colobus Monkeys high in the canopy. We enjoyed watching them until it started to rain, first lightly, but later on quite heavily, so we all gathered below the largest trees. Although our bus was relatively close we could not ask it to roll towards us as it turned out we had a flat tire. Finally it was fixed and we left the area. We made our way back in the same way as we came and on the Sanetti Plateau we added Blue-winged Geese, Ruddy Shelduck, Thekla Lark, Black-winged Lovebird and our first Black-headed Siskins to the list. We had also much closer views of Spot-breasted Plover, with better light conditions than before. We also saw Menelik's Bushbuck, Blick's Grass Rat and briefly a hare, the ID of the latter species remained a mystery.

Finally we arrived back to Goba, again its roads were full of people and noisy traffic to which our simple hotel's garden seemed to be an oasis. After another candle-lit dinner we discussed today's sightings and the programme for tomorrow.

Birds Seen Today: 48

New Birds: 13

Total To Date: 213



Day 8: Friday, 14th October

Route: Goba – Sof Omar – Goba

In the morning when we looked up towards the Sanetti Plateau, we were happy that we visited that area yesterday. The clouds seemed quite low and dense, perhaps with zero visibility at the higher areas. But fortunately we headed off to Sof Omar some 100 km east of Goba on a dirt road and although it was cloudy the weather had not deteriorated further, so we had a good chance for raptors and more. The first excitement came in a form of a quick mammal sighting, which at first we hoped would be an Ethiopian Wolf, but it turned out to be a Silver-backed Jackal. Hooded Vultures and Fan-tailed Ravens were common, but one of our first birds was Thick-billed Raven. We also noted Common Fiscal, Swainson's Sparrow, Speckled Pigeon and Greater Blue-eared Starling. Several raptors were around such as Augur Buzzard, Yellow-billed Kite, Mountain Buzzard, Common/Steppe Buzzard and we had our first Black-winged Kite as well. A Shikra, Lanner Falcon and Common Kestrel were seen as well. We stopped at a variety of habitats, which resulted in Little Grebe, Groundscraper Thrush, Lilac-breasted Roller, our first two White-browed Coucals, European Bee-eater, Barn Swallow, Speckled Mousebird, White-bellied Go-away Bird, Northern White-crowned Shrike and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill being seen.

When we reached the little settlement of Sof Omar, we drove past and went down a hill. We parked and started to search first alongside the road and then we went into a side valley with sparsely wooded area. Despite a thorough search we did not find Salvadori's Serin but we added many nice interesting species to our list: first we followed Grey Tits and they led us to a stunning Red-headed Weaver. We found some Abyssinian Rock Hyraxes and Dave even managed to photograph one of them in the air, jumping from one rock to another. Later an Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove was found in the denser part of the forest. Then we drove further where at a dry area we saw our first Swayne's Dik-diks. We turned back and parked at one of the corners where we decided to have a lunch break. Whilst eating some of us walked around and in this way we found Bristle-crowned Starling, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Blue-breasted Bee-eater and Eurasian Oriole. As we were walking down some more birds were added, including White-crested Helmetshrike, Yellow-billed Hornbill, Ortolan Bunting, Woodland Kingfisher, Slate-coloured Boubou, Nyanza Swift, Red-billed Hornbill, Rock Martin, Dark-capped Bulbul, Mountain Thrush, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Spotted Flycatcher, Grey-headed Batis, Slate-coloured Boubou, Fork-tailed Drongo, White-headed Buffalo Weaver and Red-billed Firefinch.

We spotted a mystery mammal on the opposite end of the valley, which later on we identified as a large male Abyssinian Rock Hyrax.



Finally we started to travel back and on the way we had Black-winged Kite again, Rüppell's Vulture, Pallid Harrier, African Harrier Hawk, Augur Buzzard, and African Hobby. We also heard Common Quail and saw Sacred Ibis, Yellow Wagtail, Grassland Pipit, Red-breasted Wheatear, Groundscraper Thrush, Common Fiscal, Cape Rook, Superb Starling and Greater Blue-eared Starling. But surely the best new endemic species were our first and only Erlanger's Lark and a very cooperative Ethiopian Cisticola, singing as well. With all these interesting observations we ended the day.

Birds Seen Today: 61 New Birds: 21 Total To Date: 234

Day 9: Saturday, 15th October

Route: Goba - Dinsho – Shashameme –Wondo Genet

The night was quite hectic for some of us, as we had strong rain and water was pouring off the roof making a loud noise. Others woke up after a good night's sleep and had not been disturbed by the sound of running water. When we looked around outside it seemed that everything was under water in the garden. Today would have been impossible to drive up to the Sanetti Plateau or perhaps even to Sof Omar, so we were happy that we were leaving the area towards Wondo Genet.

Although we had our breakfast in time and the group was punctual as usual we could not leave on time. Our bus with Abayna and Sileshi were not in sight and I could not reach them on their phones. So we started to look around in the hotel gardens where we found Grassland Pipit, Brown-backed Seedeater, Mountain

Thrush, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and Cape Raven. After about half an hour later when they turned up and told that they were delayed by trying to fix the spare tyre. We also had to fill up the petrol tank, which proved to be difficult because of the electricity shortage not all the petrol stations functioned and some had run out of fuel.

Finally we hit the road and started to look for birds on the way. From the bus, we saw Common Kestrel, Hooded and Rüppell's Vulture, Yellow-billed Duck, Northern Shoveler, Common Sandpiper, Common Swift, Wattled Ibis, Cattle Egret, Egyptian Goose and Sacred Ibis. Then we stopped because we saw a big troop of Olive Baboons, of all ages and sexes. A couple of minutes later we saw a Mountain Nyala as well. Small flock of roadside Black-headed Siskins stopped us next where also on the road Ring-necked Doves were searching for food. Then a striking Yellow Bishop caught our eye and a Thick-billed Raven flew across while in the distance Pink-backed Pelicans were in the air. We briefly saw a cisticola, perhaps a Boran, but it escaped identification. Spotted Dove did not cause any excitement, but a nice Lammergeier did and another Rouget's Rail, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill and Chestnut-naped Francolin were other attractive endemics!

We saw Black Saw-wing, African Stonechat, Red-breasted Wheatear, Groundscraper Thrush and Mountain Thrush. But surely today's best bird was a Cape Eagle-Owl which spent the day not too far from the road at a cliff area, perching on a tree. We observed and photographed the sleepy bird which amused the locals.

Later on we also noted Thekla Lark, Wattled Ibis, Variable Sunbird, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Mountain Wagtail, Mountain White-eye, European Bee-eater, a nice male Pallid Harrier, our only African Goshawk and a Western Marsh Harrier before our lunch stop. When we started to feel the need of a lunch break, we stopped at an area where we could walk down to a stream and beyond to a forest patch. Firstly we saw an Augur Buzzard on a nearby big tree and we witnessed how it was attacked and chased away by a smaller raptor which turned out to be a Little Sparrowhawk. We scattered around and found Abyssinian Slaty, African Paradise and Dusky Flycatchers and on the stream African Black Duck. Later on we also saw Lesser Kestrel, Common Fiscal, Grey-backed Fiscal, Slate-coloured Boubou, Yellow-fronted Canary and Baglafaecht and Red-headed Weavers.

We finally arrived at Wondo Genet around 4.30 pm and shortly after we got our rooms we met again in the garden and looked around for birds, mammals and other wildlife. Before we could concentrate on birds our attention was diverted by monkeys; both Black-and-White Colobus Monkeys and Vervet Monkeys were around despite the heroic effort of the local warden to keep them away from the little fields which were supposed to provide fresh vegetable for the restaurant. Unfortunately he was not aware that we were about to look for birds which he also disturbed by throwing twigs and branches. Still we managed to see various sunbirds at the flowering trees and bushes, such as Tacazze Sunbird, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and Beautiful Sunbird. Also we added Swainson's Sparrow, Northern Black Flycatcher, White-cheeked Turaco, Woodland Kingfisher, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill and Grey-headed Woodpecker. Three species of wagtails were also around: Yellow, African Pied and Grey.

As the sun went down we started to feel the "distant call of dinner", which we had in the strange-shaped restaurant. Food was delicious and our rooms had a huge glass wall which provided an excellent view of the garden. We went to bed with full of expectations regarding tomorrow's birding.

Birds Seen Today: 70 New Birds: 9 Total To Date: 243

Day 10: Sunday, 16th October

Route: Wondo Genet – Yabello

Our usual routine started the day with pre-breakfast birding at 6am. We met with our local guide at the gate, but there were many other volunteers around as well. Firstly we went down to the hot springs to look for the Half-collared Kingfisher. The first kingfisher we found was actually a Woodland, but later we saw the other one dashing through the area. It took time while but with some patient searching we managed to find the Half-collared Kingfisher perched and we also found a Pied Kingfisher.



Later on we continued our walk on the right upstream trail all the way to a new water-bottling building. We had plenty of birds on this walk within a short distance starting with Blue-headed Coucal, then a beautiful Narina Trogon caused some excitement, followed by a near endemic, White-winged Cliff-chat. Then we compared Banded and Double-toothed Barbets, as both were on the same tree. We also added Red-fronted Barbet too! At the end of the trail at a rocky wall we saw another Half-collard Kingfisher, apparently it had a nest here. Common Swifts were around in good numbers as well. We also had some Yellow-fronted Parrots flying above. Then we saw Grey-backed Camaroptera White-cheeked Turaco and Baglafaecht Weaver. We unintentionally disturbed a couple of Scaled Francolins on the path. A continuous tapping lead us to a Nubian Woodpecker and there were a few Bruce's Pigeon as well. Strangely enough the only raptor we found was an Augur Buzzard. As we walked back we also found Lesser Honeyguide, Bronze Mannikin, Pintailed Whydah, Village Indigobird, Brown-rumped Seedeater, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-winged and Greater Blue-eared Starlings, White-rumped Babbler, White-cheeked Turaco, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Abyssinian Oriole, African Citril, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Tambourine Dove and Blue-spotted Wood-dove. Sunbirds were represented by Tacazze, Beautiful and Variable.

Around 8 am we returned back to the hotel to have a breakfast, but soon at 8.45 am we were again on a trail. This time we visited an area where it was obvious that formerly it was covered by woods, but just a few tall trees remained and most of the area was under strong human pressure. At the very beginning of the walk we found a Black-winged Lovebird peering out of its nest hole and soon on a huge, lonely tree a Spotted Creeper was singing loudly while we watched it. We found both male and female Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike; African Hill-Babbler was a nice new one as well. We again had Yellow-fronted Parrots, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills and White-cheeked Turacos. Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher was a common local endemic, but we saw Spotted and African Paradise Flycatchers as well. There were several Tacazze Sunbirds around and we also had European Bee-eater, Mountain White-eye, Swainson's Sparrow and Red-checked Cordonbleu. Around 10.30 am we returned again back to the hotel, packed and soon we started our long journey to Yabello.

As we arrived quite early, at around noon, in Dila, the place we had in our mind to break the journey for lunch, we decided to continue. But it turned out that Sileshi had miscalculated the distance and the necessary time – not to mention the frequent accidents on the road - to reach the other suitable restaurant, so we ended up having a quite late lunch after 3pm. As we were travelling further south to Yabello most of the birds we could see and identify from the bus were the usual 'suspects', such as Cattle Egret, Marabou Stork, Sacred Ibis, Yellow-billed Kite, Hooded, White-backed and Rüppell's Vultures, Augur Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Speckled Pigeon, Dusky Turtle Dove, Long-tailed Cormorant and Barn Swallow. But we also saw Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Rufous-crowned Roller, Red-billed Hornbill, Superb Starling, Common and Grey-headed Fiscals, Pied Kingfisher and Thick-billed Raven.

At the restaurant, it took a long time to get the food we ordered while we were sitting outside in a strong wind. Finally, after lot of hassle we got the main dish first, followed by the soup! The manager promised that at breakfast everything would be fine and they even started to fix some of the things we had problems with in our rooms.

Birds Seen Today: 74 New Birds: 17 Total To Date: 260

Day 11: Monday, 17th October

Route: Around Yabello – North of Yabello – South of Yabello and Negele Road - Yabello



First we took a walk close to the hotel, but just to be sure before we left we reinforced with the staff that we really wanted breakfast on time.

South of the town we visited a dry, bushy area where the first bird was a beautiful Rosy-patched Bush-shrike. Then we had an Abyssinian Roller and a skulking D'Arnaud's Barbet. White-bellied Go-away Bird behaved of course in the opposite way, being loud and noisy. We had a few Swayne's Dik-diks here as well. A large bird flew across above the town which turned out to be a Kori Bustard. Beside Superb Starlings we found White-crowned Starlings as well. We added to the morning's list: White-browed Coucal, Boran Cisticola, Northern Black Flycatcher, Grey-headed Batis, Beautiful Sunbird, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Fork-tailed Drongo, Reichenow's Seedeater, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Village Weaver, Hooded Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite and Red-billed Hornbill.

Finally we had to check whether the breakfast would be served on time and we witnessed a real miracle: it was not only on time, but each of us got such amount of fresh warm toast that surpassed the total amount we had seen during the whole tour! After decimating the pile of toast we were ready to look again for birds.

First we went north of Yabello and soon we had Northern White-crowned Shrike and a very active singing Boran Cisticola. Our first and only Foxy Lark and Somali Bunting were new additions. We also heard and then found a pair of African Orange-bellied Parrots in a small tree with dense foliage. We managed to approach close to them to get a good look. Later on a juvenile male Eastern Chanting Goshawk was seen perched close to the road. We had a nice selection of other birds of prey as well including Black-winged Kite, Augur Buzzard, Long-Crested Eagle, Lesser-spotted Eagle and Tawny Eagle. The latter a couple of times actually attacked Stresemann's Bush-Crow nests on top of a large tree. Later on we had some of the Stresemann's Bush-Crows searching for food on the ground just in front of us.

Nearby a beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller offered fantastic photo opportunities, so that at this area Isabelline and Northern Wheatears could not steal the show. Other birds that we noted were Black-billed Woodhoopoe, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Shelley's Rufous Sparrow, Beautiful Sunbird, Fan-tailed Raven, and Gabar Goshawk. Beside Barn Swallow we found a couple of White-tailed Swallows as well, flying really close to our group. We also added Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo-Weavers, Vitelline-masked Weaver, Crowned Plover, Bare-eyed Thrush and Common Swift.

On the way back we stopped for lunch and a short rest before we continued our journey in the direction of Negele. The dry, undulating, sometimes rocky area, revealed a couple of birds such as a White-browed Scrub-Robin, Marico Sunbird, White-crowned Starling, Northern Black Flycatcher. It was great to have an Abyssinian Roller and see another Gabar Goshawk close-up. Pale Flycatcher was new. It was obvious that in this dry area, a small pond or any water-source acts as a magnet for birds, so at one of these we found Abyssinian Oriole, Blue-breasted and Little Bee-eaters, Spotted Palm-Thrush. Today we also noted Glossy Ibis, Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Rufous-crowned Roller, Red-fronted Barbet. We saw African Orange-bellied Parrots, Chestnut Weaver and Grey-capped and Black-capped Social-Weavers. At all three main areas today we saw White-bellied Go-away Bird, Laughing Dove, Dusky Turtle Dove, d'Arnaud's Barbet, Common Bulbul, Superb Starling and Reichenow's Seedeater.

Finally we returned back to the motel where we had excellent service during dinner!

Birds Seen Today: 74 New Birds: 24 Total To Date: 284



Day 12: Tuesday, 18th October

Route: Yabello – Bake Cattle Market area – Lake Awassa – Awassa

Today the weather was quite changeable - from rain to overcast skies and then to perfect sunshine were all experienced. Fortunately we hit the road during the rainy periods, so it was harder for Abayna, but he was careful. At the beginning we saw Superb Starling, Long-crested Eagle, Tawny Eagle, White-bellied Go-away Bird and our final Stresemann's Bush-Crow.

Our first stop alongside the road was at Bake Cattle Market where we walked towards a wadi first in light rain which fortunately eased later on. Superb Starling was again around, than a distant tapping lead us to a Bearded Woodpecker close to the herds of camels. We had Von der Decken's and Red-billed Hornbills again. Close to the lake, in a shrubby wooded area, we saw female Spectacled Weaver, a beautiful Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Black-headed Batis, Northern Black Flycatcher and Nubian Woodpecker.

We also added Woodland Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater and Black-billed Woodhoopoe, Barn Swallow and three different sunbirds: Scarlet-chested, Beautiful and Variable, to the day's list. African Golden Oriole was a great new bird as well. Red-headed Weaver, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Village Indigobird, Common Swift and Abyssinian Oriole were also seen.

At a large lake we had close Common Sandpiper, Hamerkop and Sacred Ibis and more distant White Pelican, White Stork, Egyptian Goose and Egyptian and White-headed Vultures. After that we returned back to the road where our bus waited us. Further on the way we stopped at Dila to have lunch at a busy restaurant.

We continued to Awassa and on the way we had Hooded and Rüppell's Vultures, Rufous-crowned Roller, Crowned Plover and Abyssinian Ground Hornbill. Later on a very much needed bush-stop produced a great endemic we had not previously seen on the tour: White-winged Cliff Chat.

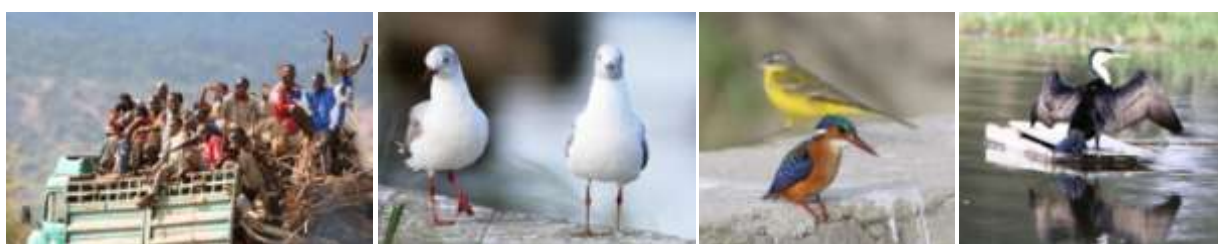
When finally we arrived at the busy city of Awassa we went first to the some gardens to visit at least the sea-shore and part of the garden. We also visited the Fish Market and decided to return there next morning, but use the 90 minutes of the day around the vicinity of our hotel. We built up a long list of birds at the these Awassa locations: Great Cormorant, Long-tailed Cormorant, African Darter, Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret,

our first and only Striated Heron, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Hamerkop, White and Marabou Storks, Glossy Ibis. Beside White-faced Whistling Duck we found a well-appreciated African Pygmy Goose as well. Kingfishers were represented by Pied, Woodland, Malachite and our first Common Kingfisher.

A couple of Blue-breasted Bee-eaters were just alongside our lake-side promenade. Both sides of the walk were interesting with many birds around. A nice female Montagu's Harrier hunted above an open, marshy area. There we had a couple of Black Crakes, Common Moorhen, African Jacana, Three-banded and Spur-winged Plovers, Ruff, Common and Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank. Grey-headed Gulls and Gull-billed Terns were in the air. Beyond the open marshy area at the edge of a forested patch we also spotted a Senegal Coucal on a tree. Later at a bushy area we had Upcher's Warbler, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Grey-backed Fiscal, Red-billed Firefinch and African Citril.

Finally we walked back to the gate of our hotel and got ready for the dinner. The food was delicious and we were disturbed by the call of an African Scops Owl. We searched after dinner, but it was not easy, so it took quite a long time to get a glimpse of one of the birds flying across the lights.

Birds Seen Today: 94 New Birds: 15 Total To Date: 299



Day 13: Wednesday, 19th October

Route: Awassa – Fish Market – Bilen Lodge.

Before breakfast we went to the Fish Market again. Most of the birds we had yesterday were around of course, such as White Pelican, Great and Long-tailed Cormorants, Squacco Heron, Cattle and Little Egrets, Grey Heron, Hamerkop, Marabou Stork, Sacred Ibis, Egyptian and Spur-winged Geese and White-faced Whistling Duck. We found an African Pygmy Goose family again, but instead of Striated Heron we saw a Little Bittern which flew across the reedy area. Yellow-billed Stork was also new for this site. Beside the usual Yellow-billed Kites, a loud African Fish-Eagle appeared as well. We spotted Black Crakes here as well, plus Common Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt and African Jacana, but what is more; we had finally found Lesser Jacana as well. We also had Three-banded, Common Ringed and Spur-winged Plovers, Ruff, Common and Wood Sandpipers and Common Greenshank. We added Black-headed Gulls to Grey-headed ones, and White-winged Tern was a new for the tour. This morning a Pied, a Common and a Malachite Kingfisher played with the photographers. Silvery-cheeked Hornbills were impossible to miss, while a distant Black Saw-wing and a skulking Lesser Swamp Warbler were much harder to identify, not like the familiar birds from home such as Common Whitethroat or Spotted Flycatcher. Other songbirds included Swainson's Sparrow, Baglaffeht Weaver, Red-billed Firefinch, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Village Indigobird, but the most exciting one was probably a new Cut-throat Finch.

After this good morning birding we went back to our hotel to have our breakfast and later we continued our journey north, towards the Awash region. We crossed the Central Rift Valley areas again, passing from south to north the lakes of Abiata, Shalla, Langano, later on Ziway and finally Koka.

During the journey from the bus we saw Grey Heron, Wattled Ibis, the always present Yellow-billed Kite, Hooded and Rüppell's Vultures, Western and two female Montagu's Harrier. We also added to the raptor list Dark-chanting Goshawk, Common Buzzard, Tawny Eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Common Kestrel and our first Booted Eagle. Beside numerous Speckled Pigeons and Dusky Turtle Doves we saw Namaqua Dove and Ring-necked Dove as well. Three different roller species: Lilac-breasted, Rufous-crowned and Abyssinian, plus several Northern Carmine Bee-eaters added more colour to today's birds. We also had Striped Kingfisher, Black-billed Woodhoopoe, plus Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill, Von der Decken's and Red-billed Hornbill. Rock Martin, Isabelline Wheatear, Abyssinian white-eye, Fan-tailed Raven, Thick-billed Raven,

Red-billed Quelea, Northern Red Bishop, Greater Blue-eared and Superb Starlings also were added to the list. But the best new species was perhaps Black-winged Red Bishop.

Then at the town of Mojo, instead of driving further towards Addis Ababa, we turned to the right to Awash town. Here we stopped for lunch and then we left the tumultuous road and turned north to travel a bit further on smaller roads towards our last accommodation at Bilen Lodge. It was obvious that this area, called the Afar Region has a much drier climate, so vegetation was much sparser and the ground drier than we had become used to over the past few days further south in the country. We were almost at the lodge when we drove past a close Arabian Bustard. We added another two new species for the tour: Senegal Thick-knee and Saddle-billed Stork. The lodge itself was a very quiet and comfortable place to stay. It had a very good restaurant with great food. But most importantly it had several birds around the lodge, where we had a walk down through the dry vegetation to a lake adding several species to our day-list such as Green Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Speckled Mousebird, Little Bee-eater, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Barn Swallow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver and White-headed Buffalo Weaver. There was a bit of confusion because the local guide, with his gun to protect us, wanted to march us around the lake and could not understand that our priority was birding and that sun direction was also an important factor. But we were happy to find several new species for the tour, such as Yellow-chested Barbet, Grey-rumped Swallow, Ethiopian Swallow, a juvenile Red-backed Shrike and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark.



During the day we had seen quite a nice array of mammal species as well at several different locations including Beisa Oryx, Soemmering's Gazelle, Swayne's Dik-dik, Black-tipped Mongoose, Olive Baboon, Black-and-white Colobus Monkey, African/Cape Hare and Unstriped Ground-squirrel.

We had an interesting day with a lot of travelling, but also plenty of birds, over 100 species today and some great wildlife and good scenery.

Birds Seen Today: 101 New Birds: 16 Total To Date: 315

Day 14: Thursday, 20th October

Route: Bilen Lodge – Ali Dege Plains– Ilala Sala Plains – Debre Zeit-Lake Cheleklea – Addis – Airport

During the night two of us in our huts were awoken by a strange roaring, which could have been a Lion! According to the people at the lodge they are regularly heard.

After our breakfast we started our travel towards Addis Ababa with three main stops planned, but before we hit any main roads we first stopped at a nearby pond and wetland area. Before we reached the place we got a glimpse of a Spotted Hyena which swiftly crossed a dyke and disappeared at the agricultural fields. At the pond we had many Yellow-billed Storks mixed in with some White Pelicans. There were some Black-winged Stilts and Common Sandpipers around as well.

When we hit the road first we made a small detour towards the Ali Dege Plains, where we stopped alongside the road and looked down on the huge, dry plains. There were a few grazing herds of Beisa Oryx and Soemmering's Gazelle and we also spotted a couple of Kori Bustards, but they were too far away and there was already a heat-haze reducing the visibility, so we decided to turn back and visit the southern part of the Awash National Park at Ilala Sala Plains.

Not long after that we crossed the National Park's entrance gate we stopped to admire a nearby Pygmy Falcon, sitting on a wire. Later on we found several Madagascar Bee-eaters which caused some debate since

according to some books they were out of season. Next we stopped at a campsite area and we walked around the riparian fig trees and acacias. We saw some common species such as Swainson's Sparrow, Rüppell's Starling, White-bellied Go-away-bird, but we also found new ones as African Grey Hornbill. Later as we continued our circle and left the denser woods and continued through the drier, scrubby-bushy area we were again at a "Shrike-shire", "Land of Shrikes" where beside those previously seen we added Woodchat Shrike and Somali Fiscal. Just before we left the area we spotted a raptor in the air which turned out to be a Black-chested Snake-Eagle.

Finally our last stop was at Debre Zeit town where first we had to struggle through small streets with our bus to reach the distant edge of the Lake Cheleklea. Then the final couple of hundred metres were through agricultural fields and finally we reached the shores of the lake. We had quite strong wind and thus big waves on the lake which was not ideal for birding. The nearby flowering bushes provided an excellent habitat for Red Bishops which offered perfect photo opportunity for those who were interested. We checked the waterbirds and waders, but soon we had to leave our final birding spot to arrive in time to Addis. We headed to a very busy restaurant where we had our table close to the podium. Unfortunately the loud music, dance and folklore programme made it impossible to do our birdlist here! The farewell dinner included a huge plate of the local speciality, injera - traditional Ethiopian bread but it was not to everyone's taste! We also had an interesting local drink, containing some herbs, honey and a bit of alcohol.

Finally we went to the airport and said goodbye to Ethiopia and our local hosts.



The total number of birds seen on the trip was 321 during 13 birding days. Of this figure 22 were endemics or near endemics out of a possible total of 28 on this route.

Day 15: Friday, 21st October

Route: Direct flight to London.

The group depart from Addis Ababa on a direct flight to London arriving in the early morning.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Abayna our driver and Sileshi our local 'fixer' for all their help and consideration during the tour. Many thanks to you all for coming on this trip and I hope you enjoyed your visit to this part of Undiscovered Africa. All photographs in this report were taken by Gabor Orban.

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June 2012

Itinerary & Weather

- 07 October Flight from London to Addis Adaba
- 08 October Addis Ababa – Hotel gardens – Geffersa Reservoir – Addis Ababa
Hot and sunny
- 09 October Addis Ababa – Sululta Plains - Jemmu Gorge - Debre Libanos – Portuguese Bridge - Addis Ababa
Sunny with a few clouds
- 10 October Addis Ababa – Debre Zeit – Koka Lake and Dam – Betlehem - Lake Ziway – Langano
Hot and breezy
- 11 October Lake Langano – Abiyata-Shalla National Park – Lake Langano
Hot and windy
- 12 October Lake Langano – Dodola – Dinsho - Bale National Park/Mountain Nyala Reserve – Goba
Hot with some cloud
- 13 October Goba – Sanetti Plateau – Harenna Forest - Sanetti Plateau – Goba
Sun, heavy rain later on
- 14 October Goba – Sof Omar – Goba
Cloudy
- 15 October Goba - Dinsho – Shashameme – Wondo Genet
Heavy rain overnight, with showers later
- 16 October Wondo Genet – Yabello
Sun and windy
- 17 October Around Yabello – North of Yabello – South of Yabello and Negele Road – Yabello
Sun and cloud
- 18 October Yabello – Bake Cattle Market area – Lake Awassa – Awassa
Rain, overcast & sun
- 19 October Awassa – Fish Market – Bilen Lodge
Sun and cloud
- 20 October Bilen Lodge – Ali Dege Plains – Ilala Sala Plains – Debre Zeit-Lake Cheleklea – Addis Airport
Sun and cloud
- 21 October Arrival in London

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN

The sequence & nomenclature mainly follow *Birds of the Horn of Africa* by Redman, Stevenson & Fanshawe.

Bold = Horn of Africa Endemic

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Somali Ostrich	<i>Struthio molybdophanes</i>
White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Long-tailed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>
Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>
Wattled Ibis	<i>Bostrychia carunculata</i>
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>
Blue-winged Goose	<i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i>
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>
White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>
African Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus auritus</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Hottentot Teal	<i>Anas hottentota</i>
Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>
African Black Duck	<i>Anas sparsa</i>
Black-winged (-shouldered) Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus parasiticus</i>
African Fish-Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Rüppell's Vulture	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>
Black-chested Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>
Eastern Chanting-Goshawk	<i>Melierax poliopterus</i>
Dark Chanting-Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Melierax gabar</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>
Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter rufiventris</i>
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>
Mountain Buzzard	<i>Buteo oreophilus</i>
Common (Steppe) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>

Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxi</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
African Hobby	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>
Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Scaly Francolin	<i>Pternistis squamatus</i>
Chestnut-naped Francolin	<i>Pternistis castaneicollis</i>
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>
Rouget's Rail	<i>Rougetius rougetii</i>
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Black Crowned Crane	<i>Balearica pavonina</i>
Kori Bustard	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
Arabian Bustard	<i>Ardeotis arabs</i>
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africana</i>
Lesser Jacana	<i>Microparra capensis</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Spur-winged Plover	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Spot-breasted Plover	<i>Vanellus melanocephalus</i>
Crowned Plover	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
Black-winged Plover	<i>Vanellus melanopterus</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Grey-headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
White-collared Pigeon	<i>Columba albitorques</i>
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Blue-spotted Wood-Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistris</i>
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Dusky Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia lugens</i>
African Orange-bellied Parrot	<i>Poicephalus rufiventris</i>
Yellow-fronted Parrot	<i>Poicephalus flavifrons</i>
Black-winged Lovebird	<i>Agapornis taranta</i>
White-cheeked Turaco	<i>Tauraco leucotis</i>
White-bellied Go-away Bird	<i>Corythaixoides leucogaster</i>
Bare-faced Go-away Bird	<i>Corythaixoides personata</i>
White-browed Coucal	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>

Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
Blue-headed Coucal	<i>Centropus monachus</i>
African Scops Owl	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>
Cape Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo capensis</i>
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Horus Swift	<i>Apus horus</i>
Nyanza Swift	<i>Apus niansae</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
Blue-naped Mousebird	<i>Colius macrourus</i>
Narina Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>
Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
Half-collared Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo semitorquata</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx picta</i>
Blue-breasted Bee-eater	<i>Merops variegatus</i>
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Madagascar Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>
Northern Carmine Bee-eater	<i>Merops nubicus</i>
Rufous-crowned Roller	<i>Coracias naevia</i>
Abyssinian Roller	<i>Coracias abyssinica</i>
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudata</i>
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
Black-billed Wood-Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus somaliensis</i>
African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa (epops) africans</i>
Abyssinian Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus minor</i>
Black Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>
Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus flavirostris</i>
Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>
Von der Decken's Hornbill	<i>Tockus deckeni</i>
Hemprich's Hornbill	<i>Tockus hemprichii</i>
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>
Silvery-cheeked Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna brevis</i>
Abyssinian Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>
Red-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i>
Red-fronted Barbet	<i>Tricholaema diademata</i>
Black-billed Barbet	<i>Lybius guifsobalito</i>
Double-toothed Barbet	<i>Lybius bidentatus</i>
Banded Barbet	<i>Lybius undatus</i>
d'Arnaud's Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus darnaudii</i>
Yellow-breasted Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus margaritatus</i>
Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>
Nubian Woodpecker	<i>Campethera nubica</i>
Bearded Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos namaquus</i>
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos spodocephalus</i>
Foxy Lark	<i>Mirafra alopex</i>
Erlanger's Lark	<i>Calandrella erlangeri</i>
Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida malabarica</i>
Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix signatus</i>
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Crecopsis daurica</i>
Grey-rumped Swallow	<i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i>
White-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo megaensis</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Ethiopian Swallow	<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>

Black Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne pristoptera</i>
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
Mountain Wagtail	<i>Motacilla clara</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Grassland Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>
Dark-capped (Common) Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor spurius</i>
Rüppell's Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha semirufa</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruos</i>
White-browed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>
Spotted Palm-Thrush	<i>Cichladusa guttata</i>
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola (torquatus) torquatus</i>
Red-breasted Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe bottae</i>
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>
Abyssinian Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugubris</i>
Moorland Chat	<i>Cercomela sordida</i>
White-winged Cliff Chat	<i>Thamnolaea semirufa</i>
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Psophocichla litsipsirupa</i>
Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
Little Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola rufocinerea</i>
Mountain Thrush	<i>Turdus (olivaceus) abyssinicus</i>
Bare-eyed Thrush	<i>Turdus tephronotus</i>
Lesser Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>
Upcher's Warbler	<i>Hippolais languida</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>
Northern Crombec	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Brown Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus umbrovirens</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Banded Parisoma	<i>Parisoma boehmi</i>
Brown Parisoma	<i>Parisoma lugens</i>
Bale Parisoma	<i>Parisoma griseiventris</i>
Ethiopian Cisticola	<i>Cisticola (galactotes) lugubris</i>
Boran Cisticola	<i>Cisticola bodessa</i>
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
Pale Prinia	<i>Prinia somalica</i>
Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis chokolatinus</i>
Northern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>
Pale Flycatcher	<i>Bradornis pallidus</i>
African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
Grey-headed Batis	<i>Batis orientalis</i>
Black-headed Batis	<i>Batis minor</i>
African Hill Babbler	<i>Pseudoalcippe abyssinica</i>
Abyssinian Catbird	<i>Parophasma galinieri</i>
Northern Grey Tit	<i>Parus thruppi</i>
White-winged Black Tit	<i>Parus leucomelas</i>
White-backed Black Tit	<i>Parus leuconotus</i>
Spotted Creeper	<i>Salpornis spilonotus</i>
Montane White-eye	<i>Zosterops poliogaster</i>
Abyssinian White-eye	<i>Zosterops abyssinica</i>
Tacazze Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia tacazze</i>
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia senegalensis</i>
Beautiful Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia pulchella</i>

Marico Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia mariquensis</i>
Variable Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia venusta</i>
Common Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
Somali Fiscal	<i>Lanius somalicus</i>
Grey-backed Fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitoroides</i>
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
Slate-coloured Boubou	<i>Laniarius funebris</i>
Ethiopian Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>
Rosy-patched Bush-shrike	<i>Rhodophoneus cruentus</i>
Grey-headed Bush-shrike	<i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i>
Northern White-crowned Shrike	<i>Eurocephalus rueppelli</i>
White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>
Abyssinian Oriole	<i>Oriolus monacha</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Stresemann's Bush-crow	<i>Zavattariornis stresemanni</i>
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Dwarf Raven	<i>Corvus edithae</i>
Cape Rook	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
Fan-tailed Raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>
Thick-billed Raven	<i>Corvus crassirostris</i>
Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
Red-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus morio</i>
Slender-billed Starling	<i>Onychognathus tenuirostris</i>
Bristle-crowned Starling	<i>Onychognathus salvadorii</i>
Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Superb Starling	<i>Lamprotornis superbus</i>
Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
White-crowned Starling	<i>Spreo albicapillus</i>
Shelley's Rufous Sparrow	<i>Passer shelleyi</i>
Swainson's Sparrow	<i>Passer swainsonii</i>
Yellow-spotted Petronia	<i>Petronia pyrgita</i>
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Grey-capped Social-Weaver	<i>Pseudonigrita arnaudi</i>
Black-capped Social-Weaver	<i>Pseudonigrita cabanisi</i>
White-headed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Dinemellia dinemelli</i>
Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Vitelline Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Spectacled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>
Rüppell's Weaver	<i>Ploceus galbula</i>
Baglafaecht Weaver	<i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i>
Chestnut Weaver	<i>Ploceus rubiginosus</i>
Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>
Red-headed Weaver	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>
Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>
Black-winged Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>
Northern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>
Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
Fan-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes axillaris</i>
Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
Yellow-bellied Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melanotis</i>
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Crimson-rumped Waxbill	<i>Estrilda rhodopyga</i>
Abyssinian Waxbill	<i>Estrilda (paludicola) ochrogaster</i>
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>

Cut-throat Finch	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
Village Indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>
Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>
Yellow-crowned Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
African Citril	<i>Serinus citrinelloides</i>
Black-headed Siskin	<i>Serinus nigriceps</i>
Reichenow's Seedeater	<i>Serinus reichenowi</i>
Brown-rumped Seedeater	<i>Serinus tristriatus</i>
Streaky Seedeater	<i>Serinus striolatus</i>
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
Striolated Bunting	<i>Emberiza striolata</i>
Somali Bunting	<i>Emberiza poliopleura</i>

MAMMALS

Grant's Gazelle	<i>Gazella granti</i>
Grey Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
Swayne's (Salt's) Dik-dik	<i>Madoqua saltiana</i>
Mountain Nyala	<i>Tragelaphus buxtoni</i>
Menelik's Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki</i>
Bohor Reedbuck	<i>Redunca redunca</i>
Spotted Hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>
Silver-backed Jackal	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>
Wart Hog	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>
Black-tipped Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>
Abyssinian Rock Hyrax	<i>Procavia habessinica</i>
Gelada Baboon	<i>Theropithecus gelada</i>
Olive Baboon	<i>Papio anubis</i>
Black-and-white Colobus Monkey	<i>Colobus guereza</i>
Vervet Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>
African/Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>
Abyssinian Hare	<i>Lepus habessinicus</i>
Blick's Grass Rat	<i>Arvicanthis blicki</i>
Giant Mole Rat	<i>Tachoryctes macrocephalus</i>
Unstriped Ground-Squirrel	<i>Xerus rutilus</i>

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.