

The Gambia & Senegal

13 - 27 November 2009



Goliath Heron (© A. Lloyd)

Leader / Guides:

John Muddeman (The Travelling Naturalist)

Junkung Jundung & Mussa (guides) & Baba Nyassi (driver)

Youssuf Saar (Keur Saloum boat trip)

[Redacted text block consisting of two columns of blacked-out text]

Introduction

The Gambia is basically unique in W Africa in having been a British enclave and in still speaking English as its principal language (but not forgetting the more widely spoken tribal languages including Mandinka and Wolof). This combined with its warm to hot climate with two quite well-defined wet and dry seasons (we go fairly early in the dry season), plus its incredibly friendly and welcoming people has made this an increasingly popular destination for British tourists. And particularly so for those looking for wildlife given the 575 bird species recorded there, and though most of the largest mammals have gone, a few hippos, hyenas and other mammals, reptiles and amphibians, plus a plethora of dragonflies, butterflies and other invertebrates still occur, adding to the biodiversity of this small country.

But this is still very much Africa, and very poor, with Western standards rarely found at best. Even receiving bank notes had most of us wondering how they could be so filthy, but after just a short while travelling the often hot and extremely dusty roads upriver, this becomes abundantly clear! The roads, while very pot-holed in places were actually better than most of us feared, with the possibility that within just a year (or two?!), most of both the South and North Bank Roads – the country's two arterial routes for going upriver – will be almost completely remade and resurfaced! And hopefully, with these improvements the accommodation and ferry crossings will follow suit! It also left me wondering what is further upriver still, since the boundaries will be pushed and hopefully the extraordinary market town of Basse won't stay as 'the end of the line' as seems to be suggested by most of the guide books.

The end of our trip coincided with *Tobaski*, one of the biggest (Muslim) festivals of the year, and all those families that can afford it, slaughter a ram on the Friday (the day we left). As a result, many people were on the move from a few days before this, especially those Senegalese crossing the Gambia in both directions, adding a considerable degree of spice to the journey and the human aspect of the trip. It also provided us with some unique sights of hundreds of rams in huge roadside markets, rams packed into water taxis, rams on car roof-racks, even rams in buckets on the backs of bicycles...

While potentially fearful of the hordes of kids who come to ask for pens, sweets or empty water bottles, we also found them to be generally extremely well behaved, but resisting giving them something was impossible on occasions despite the guide books' suggestion that it only encourages begging!

The contrast of dowdy huts and low houses with the vibrant colours of the clothes and daily hustle and bustle has to be seen to be enjoyed, and so we did, and while the report concentrates on our wildlife experiences, all of us will have just as many memories of social events or images which greatly enriched our journey.

Daily Diary:

Friday 13th November
Rainy Gatwick, hot and humid Banjul.

Transfer to Senegambia Beach Hotel

We all met in good time at Gatwick airport, and despite the threat of a long wait in security, it actually went smoothly. As indeed did the flight, once the pilots had decided to drop our altitude and get out of very high levels winds giving light turbulence. This meant great views of S Spain, Morocco and the Sahara as we continued, and the coastal Sahelian zone of Senegal appeared remarkably well populated from the air, but the sheer width of the mouth of the Gambia River where it should lead out into the sea (but the fresh / salt- water divide is actually some 200 km inland!), was a great surprise to the first-time visitor.

After what seemed a long time waiting in humid heat, all the luggage finally appeared, and the local porters helped several of us out slightly faster though the security check. Met by a Gambia Experience rep, we were soon taken to our transfer coach, where after receiving a free bottle of water and hand-made palm-leaf fan for those who wanted, were on our way.

The area had quite green from the air, with plenty of open ground amongst the scattered houses, and we were pleasantly surprised by the relative lack of development as we headed towards the hotel some 35 minutes away. And African sights and sounds were all there, including a few good birds along the route including on the wires, a Black-shouldered Kite, single Blue-bellied and Abyssinian Rollers, and

lots of pigeons and doves (mostly Laughing Doves) among lots more things we were unable to identify as the tour rep chatted along.

The hot, still and humid conditions at the hotel meant that we were more than happy to have the porters take us to our air-conditioned rooms, which being mostly in D-block some way from the reception within the 8-acre grounds was crucial! Several people couldn't resist getting out, and the first of numerous excellent birds were seen, including Western Plantain-eaters, a pair of Mosque Swallows and Senegal Coucal among others, though our planned walk at 6:30 pm was at least half an hour too late, with just enough time on the way to reception to watch adult Shikra and calling male Beautiful Sunbird, but almost none just afterwards when actually with the group! Never mind, we walked down as far as the patio looking over the beach and re-adjourned at 7:30 before going into dinner.

Saturday 14th

Bijilo Forest, plus Kotu area

Very light broken cloud & breezy am, stiller and very hot pm

After a 7 am breakfast we were off just after 7:45, though this was delayed by various Green Monkeys, plus a pair Bearded Barbets and a low-flying adult African Harrier-hawk for a few, and all from just in front of the hotel entrance!

The closed canopy of the first part of the largely evergreen Bijilo Forest trail was a bit misleading, since we fairly soon came out onto the edge of the shorter dune scrub. But there was far more activity in the latter (and much longer) part, and after tracking down our first noisy Brown and Blackcap Babblers and a large group of Green Woodhoopoes (though they really were NOT green in that light!), a couple of raptors were noted. Firstly, a juvenile falcon flew out from a nest site (leaving a sibling behind), only to return and show itself off as a Eurasian Kestrel. But according to the book they don't breed here, supposedly! Secondly, a lovely grey raptor did a jinking flight and then pitched into a tree very close to Phil. A stunning Lizard Buzzard, which then gave prolonged views for everyone. African Grey and Red-billed Hornbills, Common Bulbuls, Grey Woodpeckers and our first Little Bee-eaters adorning some bush tops kept is very busy. A distant Osprey was probably the same that later came in with folded garfish in its talons and other fly-bys included a Hamerkop and Reed Cormorants, though they seemed somewhat out of place here!

But it was certainly not just the birds that impressed though, with large numbers of butterflies appearing in the increasing heat, and a few dragonflies were also collecting in the lee of the taller forest. Several huge swallowtail species and a number of African Tigers were the most impressive, but in numbers terms the whites and especially the tiny African Grass Blues were abundant. Several of the African orange-tips were also present, including a stunning Scarlet-tip, while the dragonflies remained unidentified, but included a couple of exquisite, small wing-banded species (*Palpopleura portia* as I later found out). And a superb male Red-flanked Skink was also, and rightly, well admired, while the baby Yellow-headed Agama lizard on various trees was treated more as a curiosity.

The return to the bus was much faster, since we needed to get water, but as we approached the entrance, so we passed through a large group of Green Monkeys, small babies included, and just beside the entrance, two gorgeous Red Colobus monkeys, including a large male plonked down into the tangle of boughs right over the main trail, his long tail almost inviting a few tugs as we passed! Needless to say, unfortunately the sign by the gate had been completely ignored and the animals were coming to feed on the peanuts being handed out by visitors, one man even having a Green Monkey on each shoulder as he walked along... And to think that they can carry Hepatitis B and rabies!

The nearby Kotu cycle track was terrific, though we had to slow down even more so as not to overlap too much with the *Limosa* group also there. The trees and scrub along the edge to the rice fields on either side were excellent habitat for small birds, and included wintering migrants such as Western Olivaceous and Subalpine Warblers and Chiffchaff as well as several Tawny-flanked Prinias, Beautiful Sunbirds and Bronze Mannikins of more local origin. Wading birds were much in evidence too, including Squacco, Purple and Grey Herons, Cattle, Western Reef and Great Egrets, while a Spur-winged Plover on lilies in a pond looked a little out of place, but not so the Reed Cormorants there. A huge female Forest-spider on its web also attracted cautious interest, plus the two other tiny spiders

(possibly a male and a different parasitic species) beside it, while the abundant dragonflies impressed almost all, but were too complex to even try and begin to sort out, but with red- and blue- bodied scarlets, darters and chasers predominating! The walk back also produced a superb Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird feeding in an acacia where it appeared to have a nest and a Woodland Kingfisher trying to hide in the shade of a palm on the other side.

Lunch was taken at the very hot Kotu Point Beach Bar, hotter than normal given we had to walk out (and back) along a stretch of the beach! However, a couple of lovely Purple-brown Hairstreak butterflies on the bar's vines and a couple of passing Slender-billed Gulls along the shore were among the rewards, along with a simple but fine buffet lunch, including our first taste of delicious *domoda* – meat stewed in a peanut purée.

After an hour back at the hotel, where we largely simply re-gathered our thoughts, we were out again, this time to Kotu Creek and the adjacent Fajara Golf Course. The view from the bridge was extremely rewarding, with Senegal Thick-knee, Wattled and Spur-winged Lapwings, Grey and Common Ringed Plovers, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank and Common Sandpipers, plus several Pied Kingfishers, a brief Blue-breasted Kingfisher which grabbed a large fiddler crab (!) and a small flock of Grey-headed Gulls. The walk was very hot, and a little tricky between rice paddies and then along a muddy trail crossing the mangroves, but also gave views of our first Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, while those who also walked over the golf course also enjoyed a fine group of Black-headed Lapwings and one of a group of three African Pied Hornbills, though the calling Pearl-spotted Owlet kept out of sight. A flock of White-faced Whistling Ducks and two Black Egrets flew along the creek, but landed out of sight.

We finally returned exhausted after a long hot, but very rewarding first full day, where we'd clocked-up some 90 species.

Sunday 15th

Abuko Reserve, Lamin Lodge plus rice fields

Cool cloudy start, hot and sunny pm

A little watching in the hotel grounds before breakfast was toned down by the quite heavy cloud, but this perhaps was responsible for the passing Black-crowned Night Herons going to roost late! Northern Grey-headed Sparrows and Black-necked Weavers gave good views, while two juvenile Yellow-billed Shrikes performed superbly. There were also plenty of birds out to sea, but these were distant, but Sandwich Terns and even fishing Yellow-billed Kites were noted!

The Abuko Forest is quite tall and varied, and despite being hemmed-in on a couple of sides by habitation, is still an important forest island. Plenty of bird noises were heard throughout, though finding these, particularly the smaller species, was often tricky. But with patience we found plenty of birds, including plenty of new species. A look from the raised floor of the Darwin Research Centre (!) showed little at first, though a few Black-crowned Night Herons were sitting in the vegetation at the back, as were a good number of Black-headed Herons in the trees. A bird flying past was a huge female Giant Kingfisher, and despite hiding at first, later gave excellent views both perched and in flight. Something moving among the floating mats was a fine African Jacana, but the first of a number of Fanti Saw-wings in the reserve was so small and cryptic against the dark background, that it was not easy to see, despite being below us! A Red Colobus monkey in a distant tree was good, but soon disappeared, as did a Violet Turaco, though a two of the latter were soon found down below us feeding among brushwood and we all marvelled at their astonishing 'tropical' head colours! A decent sized Nile Crocodile surfaced for a short moment, before vanishing as it had appeared, without a ripple...

More birds began to be seen as we continued through more open areas, including Blue-spotted Wood Doves, Little Greenbul, Brown-throated Wattle-eye and both of the Paradise Flycatchers. Calling Grey-backed Camaropteras refused to sit in the open, only allowing flight views, a Variable Sunbird was all to brief, and calling Guinea Turacos and Klaas's Cuckoo refused to show, but we were kept very busy!

We finally all met up again for a very welcome drinks break, plus overly interested Green Monkeys, at the reserve's animal 'orphanage', and also took the opportunity to look at various caged animals there, including hyenas and Patas Monkeys, though single fly-over Beaudouin's Snake-eagle and Lanner

Falcon were both very brief. It was also difficult to spot other raptors among the many dozen Hooded Vultures constantly in the sky, though at least three Pink-backed Pelicans soared with them for a while.

The return was very hot, but also interesting, with a stunning African Pygmy Kingfisher performing perfectly for all to admire, a fly-off African Golden Oriole was only glimpsed, but not so three Western Bluebills which came in in response to our guide's whistling, from beside a pool where a super Black Crake fed. Peter also noted the green wings on a firefinch, which turned out to be a young Red-billed Firefinch and not anything else more exciting as hoped!

We finally pulled ourselves away and went to the extraordinary Lamin Lodge, which is a small complex of buildings set on poles into the edge of the mangrove and with views directly across the Lamin Creek. Even the walk down on a bund and bridge allowed us to admire the huge number of fiddler crabs and abundant mudskippers, while a small group of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were just visible on the far side adorning the dead top of a mangrove bush. After a terrific simple buffet meal again we stood for a short while to watch the passing birds, which included two more Beaudouin's Snake-eagles and when Mussa returned from the stake-out we soon left. But we had hardly exited when we had to stop again when a pair of Lanner Falcons buzzed a Black-shouldered Kite on a treetop, with an aerial dog-fight ensuing! Just shortly ahead we again got out, this time to walk up an incredibly bird-rich piece of track, with constant noisy twitterings revealing the numbers of small birds in the scrub and grasses. Orange-cheeked Waxbills, Northern Red Bishops and Village Weavers were the commonest, though peering into a small tree with the scopes revealed a superb Northern White-faced Owl at roost, and as we left, Mussa's whistling drew out a superb Pearl-spotted Owlet which was mobbed by a female Northern Puffback amongst other species! Hornbills, plantain-eaters and a few sunbirds almost completed the round-up, though the stragglers missed a passing Western Marsh Harrier.

We finished the day with a walk into some nearby rice fields. This turned into a bit of a bonanza, with both Splendid and the rather rare Green-headed Sunbirds, a Double-spurred Francolin in flight, African Mourning Dove, Wood and Green Sandpipers and calling Fine-spotted Woodpecker and Levaillant's Cuckoo. A small croc sunbathed in a rice paddy, an Intermediate Egret tried to hide amongst Cattle Egrets and we even took time to look at the flowers used to make the local sweet red juice which was so tasty at breakfast! Despite the intense heat it was a terrific way to finish the day.

Or so we thought, since en route back, we stopped for a Rufous-crowned Roller in a tree, only to also find a more distant perched Grey Kestrel and a lucky few also noted a Black-winged Bishop male perched in the grasses!

Monday 16th

Marakissa savannah–Darsilami route

Clear and hot until mid-pm, then thin cloud helping it cool slightly.

The bus appeared slightly later than expected since JJ returned; his car accident from two evenings before had fortunately left him without lasting problems. We headed off through Serekunda and then onto a long bush track, or in Gambian terms, a minor road! This eventually left almost all the people and houses behind, though we stopped for a few birds en route, including an adult Dark Chanting Goshawk, which led to the discovery of a Singing Cisticola and three grey Kestrels amongst others. Other pauses for Red-rumped Swallows and rollers en route were slowing us down though, so we pushed on until well into semi-closed savannah.

Walking in along workers' trails was fun, and we soon heard a number of birds and enjoyed views of Piapiacs, Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, a more elusive Levaillant's Cuckoo, male Northern Puffback and Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher amongst others. A brief Pied-winged Swallow was missed by the group, though a few Red-chested Swallows were widely spread. A calling Klaas's Cuckoo remained unseen all day, but a juvenile Red-chested Cuckoo was a good find and gave good views, as did a few groups of the delightful Red-cheeked Cordonbleu. Other glossy starlings included both Purple and Greater Blue-eared, a few Blue-bellied Rollers were as gorgeous as ever, while a number of Yellow-billed Shrikes clearly found the savannah habitats more to their liking along with a few Fork-tailed Drongos. Three more Grey Kestrels and a tricky circling *Accipiter*, this being the Travelling Naturalists first Ovambo Sparrowhawk for this tour, plus two adult Dark Chanting Goshawks and a very dull

immature Palm-nut Vulture in flight added more variety to the raptor list. At the other extreme, we also finally got views of the tiny and restless Grey-backed Camaroptera and Senegal (formerly Green-backed) Eremomelas, having heard them daily until now!

The walk back was also along mostly narrow trails hemmed in by tall grass, making the sensation of heat even more intense, especially in a humid area beside one pool, but a few pauses for birds helped, including for a distant soaring Western Banded Snake-eagle and we eventually made it back onto the road and walked the short, but hot, distance to the Marakissa River Lodge. Taking refreshing drinks in the shade of a thatched hut while watching the birds coming to drink was a well-earned reward, especially when we noted a small Brown-flanked Skink, very large Nile Monitor and furtive Gambian Sun Squirrel too! The local White-crowned Robin-chats also performed well, though the star bird was undoubtedly a melanistic Gabar Goshawk which came into the Village Weaver colony and tried grabbing at a few nests before finally dashing off. A passing Giant Kingfisher and Nile Croc hauled out on some mud a few minutes' walk away were also enjoyed by some.

The wait for the excellent buffet lunch was well worth it, even more so when several of us took a siesta under the thatch again afterwards to 'kill' the heat of the day.

At 3:15 we started to move again, and were very grateful of the thin high cloud which was veiling the sun slightly. Good searches of a couple of wet areas along the river close to the centre revealed Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Common Snipe and Spur-winged Plover, a couple of African Jacanas, Giant and Malachite Kingfishers, an African Darter and a couple of skittish Black Crakes of most note, while beside the track a superb male Black-winged Red Bishop sat up proud a few times to highlight the differences compared to his northern cousins!

The remainder of the afternoon was taken up with the drive through the rest of the savannah and a few birds observed from the vehicle, including a superb pair of Abyssinian Rollers and another Lizard Buzzard, plus three passing African Harrier-hawks. But another dark raptor in a tree way off, when clearly viewed through the scope was a terrific Long-crested Eagle, though bizarrely, behind it passed two fishing Caspian Terns!

This was our clue as to the presence of the vast Darsilami wetland, which lies completely within the savannah, and though the track crossing it needs care (as witnessed by the large lorry lying at a worrying angle up to its axle in mud where it had strayed just too far to one side), this gave superb views over the adjacent areas. Black-winged Stilts vied with Pied Kingfishers, numerous Senegal Thick-knees and Spur-winged Lapwings, a Slender-billed Gull and two Marsh Sandpipers for most attention, while flying Intermediate and Black Egrets were all too brief. Two hunting Gull-billed Terns were terrific though. After walking the short stretch to the bus, we also watched another Giant Kingfisher 'splash' into the water, a Hamerkop and two more African Harrier-hawks fly past and listen to a whistling Lizard Buzzard. A super finale!

Tuesday 17th Camalou Corner, Cape Point Creek, Bund Road, Bacchus Beach, Brufut Forest Clear, sunny start, mostly cloudy later with some heavy showers.

The now usual post-breakfast gathering at 7:45 to take the bus took us this time to nearby Camalou Corner. The first birds of note were no less than 20 lovely White-faced Whistling Ducks, those these soon rose, and with a stiff breeze blowing, it meant finding small birds was difficult. One muddy rice paddy had a line of herons and egrets, with Intermediate Egret, Squacco and Grey Herons and Western Reef Egret in a line, though once they too had flown, a skulking Striated Heron also flapped out of the adjacent reeds along with a rather more lethargic-looking Purple Heron. A passing Black Egret and distant flying Great White Egret and Black-headed Herons meant it was almost the clean egret / heron sweep! A Northern Wheatear looked rather out of place as it perched on the mangroves!

Crossing the road showed that the mangroves at half-tide were very quiet, and skulking Subalpine and Reed (or was it African Reed?) Warblers were either only seen by a few or no-one! At least a couple of African Darters and distant Black-winged Stilts kept us busy before we returned to the bus.

So round the corner we went to the Cape Point Creek area. Despite the interest in form of the huge Baobabs lining the road, this too appeared rather quiet at first, but fortunately, near the bridge, a large

roost of gulls and terns was present. But as western Europeans, not a lot can prepare you for the sight of hundreds of massed Caspian Terns and Grey-headed Gulls, with a good smattering of Sandwich and a few Royal terns, plus a single Lesser Crested Tern amongst them. Indeed, when we returned, an estimated 350 Caspian Terns were present! A single Slender Gull was good too, as was a Pink-backed Pelican which swam around ignoring us.

Walking across the flats glinting with salt crystals, we also aimed towards an area where more herons and egrets could occasionally be seen flying. The short salt-marsh vegetation and flats were ideal for the numerous Spur-winged and Wattled Lapwings and Senegal Thick-knees present, while the scattered bushes and reedbeds housed a few other birds, including Little Bee-eaters, Black-billed Wood Doves, Abyssinian Roller and a lone Red-billed Quelea, plus a few fly-over Yellow Wagtails. A gorgeous butterfly was refusing to sit still when even distantly approached by photographers, but unfortunately was not too agile on the wing, a Little Bee-eater flashing in and plucking from the air beneath our noses! A Yellow-throated Longclaw was only glimpsed by Phil as it flipped from a muddy paddy over into longer vegetation, but the 'chase' over a couple of drainage channels and along the bunds between rice fields was fun! The walk back also rewarded us with a female Subalpine Warbler and three Black-headed Lapwings in among the Spur-winged.

With some time to spare we also decided to look along the Bund Road. Despite a high and still rising tide, several new birds were present, including our first views of perched Black Egrets, including one 'umbrella-ing', a couple of Black-tailed Godwits, great views of perched Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters (and some 40 or more present in total along the wires) and close-up views of Little Swifts coming to their nests in the window frames of the old pumping station. Indeed, views from the top of the station were excellent, allowing us to make out Barra on the far shore of the Gambia River and also appreciate the scale of the huge sweep of the bay inland from Banjul. As ever, watching the locals was also high on the list, with a wading bare-footed fisherman throwing a circular net skilfully into the river below us (despite almost going in over his head at one point), plus one worker had also caught a few evilly-spined swimming crabs for lunch, which we safely admired as they lay menacingly in a large bucket!

The Bacchus Beach Bar for lunch was reached early, but once again we were more than happy to relax to a drink or two, and a few of us were quick enough on the draw to see a dark morph Arctic Skua pass, followed later by a pale morph Pomarine Skua. Most of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls cruising past were, perhaps oddly, adults, while it also became apparent that an important butterfly movement was under way, with dozens of African Caper Whites and small Orange Acraeas, plus a few small yellow butterflies, all beating their way gently into the light breeze as they headed N along the beach. And lunch was terrific too, with a few of us also succumbing to the temptation to buy either cashews or honey-roast peanuts (which we later discovered were not available upriver!) from the ladies along the beach, and the bar manager amusing us by saying that "lunch would be in 2 minutes GMT: Gambian Maybe Time!", but then delivering true to word.

After a little more rest we were off again at 13:30 and this time to the Brufut forest. A different type of savannah to the day before, but given some high cloud, the temperature was very bearable and the birds more active than expected. Perhaps the siestas on the bus en route had helped us recover too?! Whatever the case, almost straight away we heard a Black-crowned Tchagra (some seeing one briefly later), and soon latched onto a Singing Cisticola giving terrific views and then a Dideric Cuckoo also in full view until it flushed when we were really too close (despite some possibly missing it as they admired a strange four-horned caterpillar). But beside a larger cross-track ahead, JJ's owlet imitation got the local sunbirds upset, and in came Splendid and Variable Sunbirds, plus a Striped Kingfisher, two Northern Crombecs, a pair of Grey-backed Camaropteras and another Singing Cisticola! African Pygmy and Grey-headed Kingfishers vied with a stunning male Splendid Sunbird for attention with our short return walk only punctuated by a fairly obliging Melodious Warbler.

We returned to the hotel by 16:15 so that Baba could go off and spend the night in the queue for the first Banjul-Barra ferry, and between receiving laundry, paying room bills and organising ourselves for our early exit the following day, still managed to get a fair bit of birding in within the grounds, including the Mosque Swallows, White-crowned Robin-chats, Lesser Blue-eared and Bronze-tailed Glossy Starlings and Senegal Coucals, amongst others, but also two Red Colobus monkeys for lucky Pauline (though they were making a din on her roof!).

Wednesday 18th

Banjul-Barra ferry + N to Keur Saloum

(Very) Warm, humid and overcast all day.

We all met as planned outside at 6 am and loaded the transfer bus with our luggage. Working our way into the centre of Banjul, we finally reached a point where it was time to download it and walk through to meet Baba, who'd been there since just after midnight, and was number 7 for boarding the ferry. Main luggage went on the roof and the rest plus the picnic breakfasts and lunches inside was an excellent start. Just standing outside waiting was great fun, with a growing accumulation of people, of all sorts, all on their way N. But with no sign of the ferry moving by 7, things were not looking quite so good, and the rumour was that only one of the three ferries was actually working! And so it was, though thankfully this left from our side, and after boarding on the vehicle, we got out to stand on the upper deck and watch the "working chaos" around.

Once all the vehicles and its passengers were on board, so a flood of foot passengers, who pay perhaps 10 dalasis each, poured out of the offices and filled most of the remaining gaps. It was fascinating! Indeed, one poor lady sheltered between two large vehicles and put two blankets over herself in the face of the 'cold', which we of course were savouring, while one vehicle, with soft suspension and loaded to well beyond the gunnels had to be roped down as it swayed dangerously from side to side! The journey was quiet for birds and wildlife, despite lots of Grey-headed Gulls, a couple of Arctic skuas and terns, numbers of Pied Crows also moving N and even two White Wagtails which overtook the boat, but fascinating for the people. And as we came in to dock at Barra – where we had to walk off part of the way given the melee of foot passengers stopping us from boarding the bus – it was incredible to see large flocks of goats on the shore and even in small water taxis ready to be transported across the River Gambia to the capital in time for its annual festival.

After changing money on the bus (aided by one of Baba's contacts), we were off again, and now drove N along an excellent road (apparently this was surfaced last year) until finding a spot for breakfast on a wide area adjacent to the road. Despite an ever-growing crowd of children, these stayed patiently on the roadside and not one came to 'bother' us. Their reward was the left-over food, and even the smallest was handed out his share from an older boy.

The next stop was for three Northern Anteater-chats in roadside trees, and we got out to look at these in the scopes after they flew across the road. This was good fortune, since not only were there a couple of Yellow-crowned Gonoleks flying actively around (for John O, in particular), but JJ also noticed that both Bruce's and African Green Pigeons were around, and both were seen in the scopes (albeit invariably briefly each time). And then 3 Four-banded Sandgrouse flew across and dropped onto the verge, before returning and coming down in a harvested crop field. Walking in, we finally located them on the ground and had stunning views, but not before an adult Martial Eagle had flown across! Walking into a harvested peanut field also revealed a few birds, including more fly-by pigeons, Senegal Parrots, three Black-headed Lapwings and various glossy starlings, but also a fine Vieillot's Barbet, and two distant Bush Petronias.

Continuing, we barely stopped until reaching the Senegalese border. But even here the visits to both the Gambian and Senegalese Immigration Offices went without a hitch, and after simple stampings of the passports, we were on our way again. And thankfully, given some noticeably increased levels of hassling by street vendors on this side of the border. The villages now were very distinct from what we'd seen so far in The Gambia, both in the more dowdy nature of its villages and houses and the colours of the people's clothes, and an almost complete lack of side roads or tracks!

We eventually pulled ourselves away and continued N, with a brief roadside stop when Phil noted that he'd seen a monkey in some trees, and as we reversed a little, so we found a troop of obliging Red Patas monkeys in the woodland, and which even stayed to have their pictures taken!

First a pair and then a single Brown Snake Eagle, all from within the vehicle, were then seen, though another short walk along a very promising track was sadly thwarted when we were stopped by a guy in military uniform who said that we were within the Keur Saloum National Park (despite being in un-signposted savannah), and we had to leave (the office to ask for permits was 2 hours away!), despite having seen Greater Honeyguide, Mottled Spinetail and for a lucky few, a few flying White-crested Helmet-shrikes in just a few minutes. At least a distant perched Martial Eagle some km to the N made

up for it a little!

After a stop by a small wetland, where no less than six Woodland and single Pied and Malachite kingfishers, Broad-billed and Abyssinian Rollers and an African Jacana were noted, lunch came upon us and was taken on the roadside in open savannah. A small flock of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and a pair of Abyssinian Rollers graced different trees, plenty of rose-ringed Parakeets were zooming around, and a few other odds and ends were admired.

Soon afterwards we reached our hotel, and despite considerable confusion among the porters as to which rooms we were actually staying in, we finally got off to our huts with almost 2 hours to spare before meeting again.

Re-adjourning at 4 pm we looked around the grounds a little, very unsuccessfully, and then headed down towards the quay where our boatman suggested that we board early. However, since we'd arranged to meet at five, it was almost that time when we got off, but little did we realise how good it was going to be! The tide was rising, and slowly covering the vast areas of mangroves and mudflats as we motored upstream.

The first sighting, almost by the wharf was surprising, given that two Double-spurred Francolins were out on the mud! Small numbers of birds were to be seen on the flats, with a selection of waders including both Eurasian Oystercatchers and Bar-tailed Godwits, but our boatman pointed out a distant adult Palm-nut Vulture in the top of a mangrove (!), while an Osprey was more expected. A brown bird creeping along the mangrove edge was our first major find, and once we'd cut off another speeding pirogue to show them it too, we all enjoyed superb close views of a White-crested Tiger Bittern and a lifer even for our guide JJ! Some tall birds along the route were one of Gwyn's requests, and as a huge Goliath Heron took off and slowly flapped towards us, everyone was suitably impressed, though this was just the first of at least 8! Our next treat sat high in a large Baobab, its white front visible even from great distance, and an adult African fish Eagle posed regally before finally flapping off and moving to another tree-top. But the biggest surprise was still in store. Phil beckoned to me and asked (though already knowing), if the two huge birds way ahead on the mud were Saddle-billed storks or not... And when JJ saw them, his yells of delight made us think that he was perhaps going overboard after them! With a close-ish approach we could see that they were male and female based on the size difference, and they made a fabulous sight as they feed along the water line, even eclipsing the two Goliath Herons present!

Time was finally running along, so we turned and headed towards our principal goal, noting three Sacred Ibis in flight, and despite having to punt over one section of very shallow water when the motor cut out (the silence was most welcome!), we soon reached a small mangrove island where the lower parts of the trees were white and rather smelly. The accumulated whitewash from large numbers of roosting birds was impressive, but nothing compared to the spectacle of 100s of birds already present and many, many more coming in to roost, enjoyed not just by us, but also by three other boatloads of tourists in the end! To give an idea, the figures are compared to those in the 2006 report (these and 2005 figures in parentheses):

Pink-backed Pelican	4-6	(80; -)
Western Reef Heron	5-600	(200; 250)
Little Egret	5-6	(12; 10)
Cattle Egret	2500	(200; 500)
Intermediate Egret	0	(2; 1)
Great White Egret	3	(5; 1)
Long-tailed Cormorant	70-80	(150; 10)
Pied Kingfisher	40-50	(200; 20)

This was an awesome spectacle, one of the great highlights of all Travelling Naturalist trips, and truly on a par with the Scarlet Ibis roost in Trinidad, only here we watched from just 50 m away, and the birds were absolutely unaffected by the other boats being moored just 20-30 m away! We returned to

the hotel shortly before 7:30, just in time for a quick shower, drink (plus a free plate of the superb barbecued local oysters for those drinking beer!) and good evening meal.

Thursday 19th

Along Dakar road am, Missirah road pm

Largely cloudy, warm to hot and humid.

In the light of the 2006 trip report, a quick check was made of the mud below the restaurant just before breakfast, and incredibly, revealed possibly the same Marsh Mongoose which had also walked across then, and was at least seen by Gwyn this time! Extended views of two more feeding in mangroves at the end of the day were also superb!

We started by heading N along the Dakar road, stopping at various likely-looking spots on the way, or, mostly, where we also saw birds. Given the increasing heat and decreasing cloud throughout the morning, water was a prime feature, especially when treats such as a small flock of Pink-backed Pelicans, or a female Greater Honeyguide, our first Little Ringed Plovers, or a pair of Red-chested Swallows (our first ever on this tour) were enjoyed. Six Woolly-necked Storks, which most of us had to wake up for on our return (!), were possibly the same as those we'd seen earlier hunting through some rough fields, where a pair of Red-necked Falcons dashed off a tree, a superb pair of Montagu's Harriers quartered for prey close to the bus and the usual Abyssinian Rollers delighted as ever! The furthest lake was very dry, but even as we pulled up to scan, so a fine Crested Lark watched from the ground below us, giving far better views than a flying Black Stork which should have come down to a nearby wetland instead!

Raptors were quite in evidence today, none more so than a good scattering of elegant Scissor-tailed Kites over the drier savannah, which gave us lovely views, starting with some near a flowering *Acacia* where a few Little Weavers and the first of several Vieillot's Barbets were perched. A single Black Kite was also new for this tour, though a female-type kestrel was actually a Lesser Kestrel, but no-one decided to get out to see it. Three adult Dark Chanting Goshawks were terrific, as were an adult African Harrier-hawk, Western Marsh Harrier and an adult Beaudouin's Snake Eagle. The latter was seen briefly over a series of small pools where several gorgeous Namaqua Doves were present, and other visiting birds included two Eurasian Turtle Doves, plenty of Sudan (non-)Golden Sparrows, a few Red-billed Quelea, a Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark and a fly-over White-crowned Lapwing of most note.

Another larger lake had attracted quite a crowd of insect eaters, mostly House Martins, but numerous Red-chested and Wire-tailed Swallows were there too, giving good views as they perched in the reeds, while the various swifts overhead included Mottled Spinetail (which we'd also enjoyed earlier) and a Pallid or two. The lovely flickering flight of the numerous Banded Groundling dragonflies was also a real feature here.

Only about half the road is now bumpy as compared to even last year, but the intense heat after the very long day yesterday saw almost all of us doze off, so missing a sand snake which slithered rapidly across the road in front.

A full lunch was taken back at the lodge, and after a siesta we re-adjourned at 4 pm to go for a more local drive. A Village Indigobird gave great views as it sat on the end of television aerial, thankfully, since we'd already missed three others so far, and we wondered whether they were actually sold as part of the television connection package! In fact, we didn't get too far, concentrating on a mangrove inlet (where we found the mongooses) and a walk along tracks in the adjacent savannah fields. In hot muggy conditions it was a bit tricky, but there was lots of bird activity, from the Spur-winged and Wattled Lapwings and Senegal Thick-knees in the creek to pigeons (including Bruce's Green ones!) and doves and various kingfishers, right down to diminutive Black-rumped Waxbills and a skittish (apparently) Short-winged Cisticola. A female Scarlet-chested Sunbird came in to JJ's owl call, and a singing Yellow-fronted Canary then joined it in the same treetop. Even a wintering Tree Pipit flew over calling at the end just to add variety to what had been our most species-rich day so far, with just over 120 species recorded.

Friday 20th

Transfer from Keur Saloum via Farafenni to Tendaba

Hot & sunny but very hazy.

An earlier breakfast and we bade our farewells to Keur Saloum at 7:30 am. With a long journey ahead we pushed on, shortly reaching the border, and once again, after quick visits to both the Senegalese and Gambian Immigration offices, we were quickly on our way. Almost back in Barra we turned onto the "Taiwan Highway" or as it's more colloquially known, the North Bank Road. This took us eastwards through The Gambia and largely disturbed savannah with numerous fields of peanuts and couscous. The round-topped huts which had characterised the villages in Senegal were also noticeable here, though the more smiling faces and open friendliness of the Gambians was quite evident.

Red Patas Monkeys and a pair of Lanners over a village were probably the highlights in Senegal, though we noted a wide array of birds en route, with intermittent stops when seeing something of particular interest throughout the day. The weather was slightly cooler with a NE breeze in the morning, and plenty of Pallid and a few African Palm Swifts were flying into this at height. Further ahead we suddenly came across the first of a number of Grasshopper Buzzards keeping watch over the harvested peanut fields, and a different field yielded a pair of Four-banded Sandgrouse and a small flock of Black-headed Plovers. A fly-over African Golden Oriole was the first of two during the day, though neither was seen perched, while one of three African Cuckoos, new for this tour, was very lucky not to become a victim of the bus as it flashed across the road!

Various wetlands of different types along the route provided the main focus of our stops, yielding an African Sacred Ibis, three adult Great White Pelicans, a fly-over group of European Bee-eaters and at one particularly large wetland, superb views of a couple of Quail-finches on the ground, a few Great Cormorants (of the local white-fronted form), a Purple Swamphen swimming across a pool and small groups of passing White-winged Black Terns and Collared Pratincoles, though given the very hazy conditions, the views of these were unfortunately not the best. A few close dragonflies including *Trithemis kirbyi* and a blue-tailed damselfly were very different from what we'd seen until now, while a (highly distinctive) Guinea fowl butterfly was the first of two during the day.

Though simple, our tasty packed lunch was taken by the weighbridge shortly before the Farafenni Ferry, in the shade of some trees and so also avoiding most of the dust on the tracks. These were clearly good for reptiles, since a good number of often large Yellow-headed Agamas were present, though Phil fortunately spotted a stunning stripy tree snake moving not far from us, which appears to have been an only mildly venomous species, and of course tried hard not to be seen and then when photographed, slipped quite quickly away into the crown. The birds were excellent here too, with a few Red-rumped and Mosque Swallows, passing Marabou Storks and Pink-backed Pelicans, and probably best of all, a pair of gorgeous Cut-throat Finches.

After the Farafenni Ferry, complete with loads of hassling from local sellers and an adult African Fish Eagle perched in the riverside trees, a few egrets, herons, Hamerkops and a circling Woolly-necked Stork were seen along the exit road. But then, at the Soma wetland en route, a stunning and very unexpected Egyptian Plover ran across the road and then gave repeated fabulous views as it perched below the bus on the edge of the water! The colour combination in the plumage really has to be seen to be believed, especially the pale blue of the upperparts and legs off-set against the various black lines and peachy colour of the underparts. Wow! A perched Brown plus a flying Beaudouin's Snake Eagle together later also gave scope views, which was an excellent break along a very poor section of road, and were well worth waking up for!

After checking in to Tendaba Camp we re-adjourned later for a short but very quiet evening walk, though this included close calling Stone Partridges, two Bruce's Green Pigeons, a small flock of Senegal Parrots of most note. A large Nile Monitor lizard gave most a fright as it suddenly rushed noisily past us through the dry undergrowth! A huge ant-lion with soft mottled wings fluttering around the night lights was spectacular, while plenty of African Toads, including one in Pat's room were hanging around after dinner!

Saturday 21st

Kiang West 4x4 trip am, mangrove boat trip pm

Cool start, hazy and hot later.

The usual 7 am breakfast was followed by an 8 am departure on an open-topped truck. A rather peculiar-looking vehicle with round cover above the passenger's seat reminding us of a tank turret... However, apart from the occasional ducks to avoid passing branches, especially the viciously thorny Acacias, as we worked our way round into the park proper it was cooler than inside a vehicle, especially given a cool start to the day.

Plenty of Abyssinian and a couple of Rufous-crowned Rollers, Grasshopper Buzzards, two superb Lanner Falcons and a Whinchat were the most notable birds at the start, while a short walk through dry forest lead to views over a very full water-hole, but no birds or mammals. Returning, we continued on to the end of the track by a large wet area, where Woolly-necked Storks, single Palm-nut Vulture, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle and Long-crested Eagles were the most outstanding amongst a variety of mostly wetland birds.

We came back and took a short, and now rather warm walk through the dry savannah woodland, but persistence was rewarded with a few small birds in the trees, including a pair of Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds, Grey-backed Camaropteras and an African Yellow White-eye. Very brief Brown-rumped Bunting and Bateleur were both missed by the group though, and the heat eventually forced our return. A few more odd stops were made on the way back, but we largely kept going since we arrived a few minutes late for midday lunch.

After a good siesta we met again by the quay and boarded our pirogue for the afternoon boat trip through the mangroves. Crossing the river we entered the 'wall' of tall mangroves, where a large Peregrine cruised off, but soon started to work our way along a winding series of channels through woodland, scrub and even past huge areas of dead flat mud coated in short salt-marsh vegetation. The tiny Mangrove Sunbirds were very flighty, but one or two paused long enough for views, a Goliath Heron gave lovely repeated views, lots of Darters lined the creeks and either flew off or simply plunged into the water at our approach, while other specialities included a good number of Blue-breasted Kingfishers, 3 adult and four juvenile White-backed Night Herons together, with another adult later, and in one open area, a fine concentration of wading birds including a few Pied Avocets, single Glossy, 3 Hadada and at least 15 Sacred Ibis as well as numerous Intermediate Egrets. The return was longer and more convoluted than expected, but still terrific, and we returned with just an hour free before the 8 pm dinner.

But our day wasn't over yet, and the more intrepid decided to go on a night drive ostensibly to look for nightjars. Unsuccessfully as it turned out, despite one flickering off from beside the track at one point, but it was certainly worth the try, and seeing Baba take the bus down grass-lined tracks which we wouldn't even have thought you could take a car down, was very interesting indeed!

Sunday 22nd

Transfer via S bank road to Baobolong Camp

Very hot and sunny from mid-morning.

After a male African Golden Oriole over breakfast, we started upriver along the S bank road. This was largely in the process of being (re-)built, and so having the (still unfinished) new road adjacent to the old meant that thick red dust was coating the roadside vegetation making birding close to the road difficult.

However, persistence and JJ's local knowledge meant that we soon headed off down some narrow tracks and emerged at the end of a large lake where we got out to watch and also walk a little. Several Woolly-necked Storks were of most note in the marsh, while a small flock of Bush Petronias gave good views on the edge of the savannah. A Brown-headed Parrot in flight was a little distant but good, while three Zitting Cisticolas popped up just in front for most, giving good views. A little ahead we again found 'our' Egyptian Plover on the roadside near Soma, and then started the long haul east.

As the sun climbed, so did the temperature, but stopping at two waterholes, including one where we took lunch, was very productive, with numerous drinking doves, plus Black-rumped Waxbills, a couple of cut-throat Finches, smart Chestnut-backed Sparrow-larks, single adult male Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs at each – with their incredible tails – plus single Mottled Spinetail, Sand Martin and White-

rumped Swift, were some of the birds seen. A dead Verreaux's Eagle-owl on the roadside by one was a sad sight, but we were delighted by seeing two healthy adults in some tall trees by one village. Other roadside stops were made for the raptors seen, including Beaudouin's, Brown and a Western Banded Snake Eagle, our closest Dark Chanting Goshawks, and also for the first of a number of African White-backed Vultures, including one lovely adult. Marabou Storks started to increase in number, while another stop on the roadside was for a small group of exquisite Green Bee-eaters, which also led to us finding a female African Golden Oriole, and our second stripy tree-snake, this time being mobbed by several Grey-backed Camaropteras.

Despite the early afternoon heat we also took a walk along the edge of a lovely lake area, this one covered in white and blue lily flowers. And the perfect habitat for the 8 or more African Pygmy Geese in the open water there, while 6 Northern Pintail, a good number of the stunningly coloured Scarlet-breasted Sunbirds and a pair of comparatively very dowdy White-rumped Seedeaters were also enjoyed. Another great sighting was of a Black Crowned Crane flying slowly past over another wetland site as we passed.

The mid-afternoon heat in the bus was now approaching 35°C despite the air-con, and when we were woken by the news that we were in the Jakhaly Rice fields, we actually enjoyed getting out to cool off a fraction in the breeze! Despite the heat there were masses of bishops in the rice, including a few male Northern Red Bishops still with most of their breeding plumage and one or two male Yellow-crowned Bishops at least with their orange tails and some yellow body feathers. Several Yellow Wagtails gave excellent views too, though the Quail-finches and flock of Ruff at the second stop were only visible to most from inside the vehicle.

We finally reached the southern Georgetown (=Janjangbureh) ferry – which is hand-pulled across by its passengers! – around 5 pm and then stood around wondering why nothing was happening... The skipper was off for lunch! However, the wait by the terminal was terrific, since a couple of fruiting figs meant we had stunning views of both Bruce's Green Pigeons and a pair of Yellow-throated Leaf loves amongst others. Crossing on foot before Baba and the bus, we also had time to see a few more birds in the cooling conditions, including Bearded Barbets, African Grey Woodpecker and even a passing Four-banded Sandgrouse for Pauline.

We turned into the Baobolong Camp just minutes later, and after taking showers and sorting out the small problems of being in a small camp, including brief power cut and the need to try 5 fans for one person, we re-adjourned for call-over and dinner outside, where it was cooling nicely.

Monday 23rd **Cool start, hot and windy am, hot pm**

Bansang to Basse and back

The night had been interesting, with some British workers talking until late and then the call to prayers from the town's minaret, just outside the compound, starting at 5:15 and continuing for an hour... The local bats and insects were also remarkably noisy, just adding their touch. This wouldn't be a problem except that, of course, there is no glass in the windows, only mozzie screens across the frames, with a very thin cloth 'curtain' inside. Every time someone took a shower my toilet bubbled, and tiny worms came up through the cracks in the floor after I showered, though unfortunately the tiny tree frog on the wall hadn't budged to eat these possible prizes! However, since one could potentially actually combine the loo, with a shower and brushing ones teeth at the same time, this was efficiency at its best, albeit African style!

We headed east upriver along the S bank road, after crossing on the hand-pulled ferry; this was a huge saving of 2 dalasis a head, while the pigeons and leafloves were in attendance again for those with free hands! The road to Basse is now rather pot-holed and very dusty, with passing vehicles leaving us in a tunnel of red 'smoke' and the adjacent vegetation coated red too. Perhaps this was good camouflage for the small troop of Red Colobus monkeys high in a Baobab! Bansang, with two Red-throated Bee-eaters, was left quickly behind and stopping was limited for a few birds, mainly raptors, though we found nothing new despite a confusing juvenile African Harrier-hawk, and a couple of us noted our first Blue-bellied Rollers for a few days.

The remarkable town of Basse, with its large market of ramshackle stalls and melee of colourfully dressed people was finally reached around 10:30, and after buying some bananas to boost lunch, we headed off past the ferry terminal and into the scrub beyond, again taking the bus to sites we didn't think possible even for a much smaller car! We stepped out into the hot and breezy conditions, and despite lots of the always stunning Abyssinian Rollers, could see very little else of interest. However we persisted, and noted distant Black-shouldered Kite and Western Marsh Harrier. However, we were just starting to return when JJ called out something about bee-eaters. Scurrying back, there in his scope were two red dots, and a pair of Northern Carmine Bee-eaters posed in a treetop. After a walk across damp rice fields and dry grassy areas we finally started to get good views, finally approaching down to some 40 m or so and gaining stunning views of these bizarrely coloured birds, with blue faces and vents, red bodies and pink chests! This was further highlighted when an Abyssinian Roller landed and sat right behind one of them, in a riot of colour!

The wait and walk also paid off with three new raptors for the trip, with an adult Bateleur drifting along the river, a stunning black-and-white adult African Hawk-eagle circling over and as we returned, a small flotilla of Rüppell's and African White-backed Vultures passing over heading E among scores of Hooded Vultures. The latter movement continued over lunch, which was taken from the relative comfort on the shaded first floor balcony of a large, but very spartan guesthouse whilst overlooking the ferry, washerwomen and the Gambia river.

We left in the heat at 2:15 pm to start the slow drive back, again noting a few commoner raptors along the way, though after an hour or so pulled up to get out and watch a water hole and the birds coming to drink. This was terrific with a few Cinnamon-breasted Buntings and a Red-winged Pytilia along with 'old acquaintances' in the shape of a couple of male Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs, lots of Bush Petronias, Northern Grey-headed Sparrows, Yellow-fronted Canaries and Vinaceous Doves, plus a few Chestnut-backed Sparrow-larks, Cut-throat Finches, Red-cheeked Cordonbleus, Black-rumped Waxbills and Fork-tailed Drongos. A fantastic sight.

We finished with a walk around the famous Bansang quarry and the only known Red-throated Bee-eater colony in The Gambia! But some 200 or more of these simply exquisite birds were present giving lovely views, and as we left, so two juvenile Gabar Goshawks played hide-and-seek in nearby scrub upsetting the local hornbills and rollers!

Thinking that this would effectively be the end of the day, we were wrong. Reaching the ferry with just one pick-up in front of us looked good. Very good. But only this vehicle was allowed to board, due to the low tide levels and so we had to wait until it crossed slowly, and returned even slower... OK, so a couple of Bruce's Green Pigeons in the fig trees again tried to distract us, but it was getting later by the minute. Then, just as it was arriving, so a pair of new white pick-ups with tinted windows arrived, and just as Baba was thinking of boarding, the first blew his horn loudly and they were shown on preferentially, despite protestations, and we had to wait all over again. Dusk was now approaching and despite the large Yellow-winged Bats beginning to appear and various herons and egrets flying over and going to roost – except for the Black-crowned night Herons which were naturally doing the opposite! – the best thing was when a couple of Swamp Flycatchers were noted fly-catching from under a couple of trees overhanging the river, one of which gave great views.

We finally got on, much to our relief and started pulling, but as we approached the far bank the word went out to get up a head of steam, only to see our effort thwarted as the metal draw-plate on the front, instead of sliding up the concrete ramp, dug into it and flaked off a large chunk of material! So, out into the river we had to go, to then come back even faster, and with all hands at work this time we succeeded and the gantry sheet slid up the ramp much to our delight (and relief). OK, it had only been an hour, largely of fun and people-watching, and when we heard that the Limosa group had had to turn round at the Farafenni Ferry after a 2-hour wait since one of those ferries had stuck on a mud bank and blocked access for either to run, it made ours seem more good fun than anything else!

The call-over one again showed that we had seen over a hundred species during the day and were now on some 275 birds recorded on the trip, including some nine species we'd never recorded before!

Tuesday 24th

Baobolong rice fields & camp am, Safari Bird Camp Road

Hot and sunny, light breeze.

Another cool start was very pleasant and the short distance to the local rice fields meant it was lovely to be out for a change in the cool.

Plenty of birds were present, including a pair of African Hawk-eagles, a perched pair of Wahlberg's Eagles, two fly-by adult Palm-nut Vultures, a couple of Western Marsh Harriers, a juvenile and an adult African Harrier-hawk, and a melanistic Gabar Goshawk among the raptors. Masses of weavers and bishops were in the scrub between us and the river, but nearly all in non-breeding plumage and too far to ID. A couple of Red-billed Queleas were far easier though, still sporting their bright red beaks! Senegal Coucals and Long-tailed Glossy Starlings brightened things up further, while the usual noisy Spur-winged Lapwings and also a few smart Black-headed Herons added variety. For colour, the numerous Ring-necked Parakeets and Senegal Parrots were hard to beat!

Returning to camp to drop off bits and bobs, we then walked out towards the end of the island and the main river. Birds were few at the beginning, but a large snake, somewhat trapped by us being spread out in a line, sped up and down a wall, only for the owner to see it, and try to kill it by lobbing a large rock on top. Fortunately, despite rushing back across the track past us, it rapidly disappeared into a pile of brushwood and apparently escaped from the locals descending on it!

A distant Black-shouldered Kite and passing Grey Kestrel were good, a few African Jacanas on a lake added variety, while a small brown martin overhead was a Brown-throated Martin, a rarely recorded bird according to the books and the tenth new species to the cumulative TN list for this trip. A few House Martins were also present to confuse, so when they disappeared, we concentrated on trying to see some of the small birds coming down to drink in a small creek. But with too much water around, they didn't come down, though we managed good views of three Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs in a treetop, a few Black-rumped Waxbills and Red-cheeked Cordonbleus and a lone Western Olivaceous Warbler fidgeting around an *Acacia*. A flash of orange on the tail of a bird diving into the tree in front belonged to a Common Redstart, but this failed to show.

The walk back through the scrub gave poor views of a couple of Eurasian Turtle Doves, but slightly better views of a flying Great Spotted Cuckoo, which was also seen again briefly as it nipped off, but a small pipit we disturbed sadly disappeared without trace. The river yielded almost nothing except for a Woodland Kingfisher, a Black-crowned Night Heron and a couple of Squacco Herons on the far bank, while the back markers did at least note a couple of White-crowned Robin-chats hopping around in the deep shadows of some scrub. A fine Village Indigobird gave great views as we walked back and were met by the local kids who escorted us, as amiably as ever, back to the entrance before finally asking for pens and/or sweets.

Lunch, taken in the camp was at a little after noon, and then given the heat, we decided to go out late, from 5 pm to combine a late afternoon walk with looking for nightjars from dusk. The break at least allowed a few of us the chance to look through some butterfly pictures and the bat roost in the trees in grounds as well as a sleep! The walk itself seemed quite quiet, despite plenty of noise, but a Violet Turaco, Purple Glossy Starlings, Gambian Sun Squirrel and a troop of gorgeous Red Colobus monkeys, as well as a couple of furtive Green Monkeys, were excellent. Stopping at a wide part of the track on our return, we soon saw a female Long-tailed Nightjar on the ground in the vehicle lights, but this didn't allow scope views before disappearing. A calling African Scops Owl sadly went quiet too, all too soon. However, while JJ went off to search with a small flashlight, so a long-tailed male nightjar flew across the end of the track in the lights to at least confirm what we'd seen and make a few mozzie bites suffered worthwhile!

A Pearl-spotted Owlet called from the trees above us after dinner and another huge Scarab Beetle which flew into my back when attracted to the lights, rounded off our stay here. For those able to sleep though, given the all-night piping of the bats and various loud insects, intermittent nocturnal calls to prayers and the fact that some had not showered, since we'd had no towels all day! Just perhaps some did hear the African Scops Owl calling from nearby at c. 10:30 pm?!

Wednesday 25th
Hot, windy, max. 38°C

N road to Farafenni ferry then S road to Kololi

“T.I.A.” as the guides had said on a trip to South Africa two years ago while 2/3 of the way through cooking dinner when the electricity suddenly cut: “This is Africa”. With the huge annual festival of *Tobaski* looming, kids off school (so thwarting our option of visiting one to make a visit and donation), large numbers of people and rams (for slaughter) in transit and minor grief with the various ferries – the Banjul to Barra route had only one in operation, one of the two at Farafenni had got stuck on a mud bank a few evenings before and so blocked both, causing huge tail-backs, and even the low tide problems of the one just S of Janjangbureh – we decided that (and despite the roadworks on the S bank road !!!), our best route back would be to take the N bank road to Farafenni, cross S and then take the notoriously bad S bank road back to the coast... However, with much of the S bank road now under repair and being resurfaced, it was only really the 30 km from Farafenni to the newly graded and resurfaced sections which could be trouble. Or so we hoped!

The first ferry N of Janjangbureh was fine, and we started along the superb North Bank Road in cool and breezy conditions, with lots of bird activity visible from the bus. Rollers, weavers and perched raptors formed the bulk, including a number of Grasshopper Buzzards and Grey Kestrels, while a medium-sized circling raptor was a fine Red-necked Buzzard. Though only seen distantly in the scopes, the features of the latter were clear, but seen better still while only using binoculars from the bus for a second individual about 15 minutes later! A couple of stops were made at some nice roadside wetlands en route, allowing excellent views of a range of water-birds, including a couple of juvenile Common Moorhens on some lilies, and a fine group of African Pygmy Geese at another. The morning’s final wetland, at Kaur, was rather dry and extremely busy with people harvesting (and scaring off the birds), and so rather poorer for birds than hoped, but even so several hundred Collared Pratincoles gave excellent views, as did nine Kittlitz’s Plovers in a wet muddy patch. Various other waders, including a large group of Ruff, provided a fine supporting cast. Our final stop was at a grassy and bushy area, in the hopes of perhaps finding bustards, but lots of people were in the fields, and the hot and windy conditions meant it was hard work for JJ and I to walk through the vegetation. Most though saw two small birds fly up and drop down again on a couple of occasions, these being elusive Flappet Larks and a good find.

We now headed for the Farafenni ferry and met what we feared most: a near stationary queue of traffic 100s of metres long in two lanes leading to the terminal! Chaos reigned, with tempers rising with the heat outside, but after a few consultations by our driver and guide, we were waved through one part (despite oncoming drivers refusing to pass in a tight spot so collapsing the system further!), and then on again to another. Another long wait, during which we recapped on some of the trip and also bought a number of colourful cloths from the local women, despite their far superior bargaining abilities, we were finally waved through to the final compound. Here, another wait ensued, during which we ate our meagre sandwiches and topped up lunch with bananas and a few biscuits (readily available from the dozens of boys selling on foot here), and once we’d happily made space for JJ’s brother-in-law, wife and their baby, who happened to be trying to cross at the same time, we finally boarded. We could now see the light at the end of the tunnel, and indeed we disembarked and headed out between two long parallel lines of stationary traffic on the opposite shore, a little over 2 ½ hours after we’d started!!

We now began the hot (it was 38°C near the ferry when we had a ‘bush break’) and very bumpy drive back. Just a couple of brief stops were made to look from the bus, including at one lovely wetland with a group of Spur-winged Geese as the stars, but we pressed on.

We finally started to approach the coast and at last got off the rippled road surface, which had made it so uncomfortable – a minor problem with the air conditioning fan having been solved by Baba by tying up a broken bracket using some tough local grass! – and back onto tarmac, and after dropping off JJ and his firewood (!) en route, finally arrived just after 7:15 pm A long, but successful and rewarding day!

Thursday 26th

Makasutu Forest; hotel from 5 pm

Cooler overcast start, hot and humid later.

Our last full day, though we planned to return earlier to give our guide and driver a chance to organise their festivities better and also think about our packing!

With the party down to just 8 for various reasons, we left at 8 and picked up JJ en route. Reaching the entrance after driving a long, unmarked sandy track, Ron immediately noted that the little doves on the ground were Blue-spotted Wood Doves, and they gave terrific views before we disembarked. Here we were also met by our principal guide to the forest, which having been bought in various parts at different times by two Englishmen who 'discovered' the site in 1992, now totals 1500 ha and is being developed as a community-based cultural project for visiting tourists.

After noting the remarkable number of Guinea Baboons wandering very close around us, we were even more surprised to learn that three troops inhabit the forest and total some 500 animals! The potentially very aggressive nature of the big males was also demonstrated when a youngster started screaming at our presence and a big male rushed in to charge us twice to say "Keep off". However no-one has been hurt to date and despite a few threats made to them by the workers to keep them away from buildings, the bar, food and occasionally, visitors, they are left to roam and generally ignore visitors, allowing some great looks at them and their often highly amusing behaviour.

After the first of several pauses, including a look at a creek where a Spotted Redshank fed, we boarded a dug-out and were paddled around a short loop. The very low tide meant the boatman often stepped out to push, but this gave superbly close views of a range of birds along the edges, including Malachite, Pied and Great Kingfishers, Senegal Thick-knees, Reed Cormorant, Western Reef Heron and a Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, though once again, the Mangrove Sunbirds refused to sit in view!

We disembarked and took a drinks break, where a couple of Gambian Sun Squirrels and Variable, Beautiful and Splendid Sunbirds all appeared at flowers, then took a walk through the now suddenly rather hot forest and scrub to look around. A small mixed flock was excellent, including a couple of Oriole Warblers, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Brown-throated Wattle-eye and Yellow-breasted Apalis, though a Fine-spotted Woodpecker AGAIN gave us the slip later on. We rounded off with a small demonstration of how the palm wine is collected, including goes by a few of us to climb part way up a palm after having sampled a little of it (much to John O's delight).

Baba drove us back to the main part of the camp where we passed through the little market, only to find that the hassling (all part of the Gambian nature) actually put us more off buying than to open our wallets. However, finally escaping we returned to the lovely music and singing from the local *kora* player (in this case 21 strings coming down from a central pole and strummed over a hollow half gourd), which thankfully helped take our minds off the long wait for lunch! However, a few drinks and the good company meant that time slipped past and we left early, though shortly after some local ladies had come to perform traditional song and dance, in order to start to get ourselves ready for our departure the following day, and also a good hour's birding in the hotel grounds in the evening!

And meeting at 5 pm the grounds of the Senegambia Beach hotel excelled. A good mixed flock of glossy starlings fed just yards away and a couple of Yellow-billed Shrikes hunted from perches above, with a West African Thrush searching the grass for worms. A Red-billed Hornbill on the grass added a further exotic flavour as did a typically loosely plumaged Senegal Coucal. Time was already starting to slip away, but round the corner we stopped again, this time for photos of a superb Blue-breasted Kingfisher hunting from a little bridge completely in the open! But the majority of our time was spent close to a thicket with running water underneath, and the adjacent trees over the main lawn. Three Yellow-crowned Gonoleks and three White-crowned Robin-chats sometimes gave stunning close range views, at least 4 woodpeckers were present including (finally!) our first two Fine-spotted Woodpeckers, various glossy starlings adorned the grass and Beautiful and Splendid Sunbirds some more open trees. Fantastic!

Phil and I rounded off with 10 minutes by the beach, and the seawatch produced single distant Kelp Gull, plus Pomarine and Arctic Skuas among more numerous fare including Grey-headed Gulls and Sandwich Terns. What a superb end to the day!

Friday 27th

Tujureng Savannah and Tanji Beach

Warm to hot, light cloud at first breaking 10:30 to hot sun and wind.

With the need to be out of rooms, packed, by noon, we all took a shorter, mostly walking trip out in the morning. Tujureng savannah is only c. 30 minutes from the hotel, and after a quick roadside stop to look at a Yellow-billed Kite roost, complete with one Black Kite, we arrived in warm, still and slightly overcast conditions, ideal for birdwatching.

A singing Black-crowned Tchagra finally showed to everyone, with two African Black Flycatchers coming down onto a path to feed also good. The high grasses flanking the path were not so good, but we quickly saw how the cooler temperatures were keeping the hundreds of African Caper White and Orange Acraea butterflies down, these rising in fluttering groups as we passed and making a beautiful sight. A rather plain yellow weaver popped into the top of a tree and was actually a Heuglin's Masked Weaver given its yellow eye, the only one of the trip. But this was only the first of a number of new species, and in quite quick succession, especially at one patch of trees, we also came across singing and flying Common Nightingales, a Garden Warbler, Black Scimitarbill, a White-winged Black Tit, two Yellow Penduline Tits and our first views of (admittedly very flighty) a pair of Klaas's Cuckoos. A fine supporting cast also included a couple of very brief Lavender Waxbills, 3 Variable Sunbirds, Melodious Warbler and a female Blackcap, though a squashed adult and dodderly baby Slender Gerbil on different paths were a great mammal tick!

With the sun coming out, the wind suddenly picking up and time running on, we made a swift exit, but with a stop beside the village of Tanji. Large numbers of birds were present along the shore here, which at least provided plenty of distraction from the powerful smell of the large quantities of fish spread out in the open air to dry here, which if in itself were not enough to put you off from possibly trying some somewhere, the sight of a few Cattle Egrets and Hooded Vultures wandering about on it would! Yuck! However, amongst the massed gulls (Grey-headed and varied shades of Lesser Black-backed), a small group of Sanderlings scurried along the shoreline and a few Ruddy Turnstones picked their way across some exposed rocks. Sandwich, Royal and Caspian terns completed the scene apart from good numbers of the smart Pied Crows, here visible at close range and showing just how raven-like they are in build.

After lunch at the hotel from 1 pm, we boarded our buses and headed to the airport. Check-in was chaotic given that the conveyor belt taking the checked luggage to the baggage handlers failed, and a number of us were correspondingly required to form an ever-growing queue and have our main cases cursorily checked by hand! Clearly, despite being a waste of time, this started to break down, so it was a relief when the belt suddenly came back to life and everyone backed-up had to scramble to hand over their luggage when the checkers seemingly evaporated into thin air!

But this is Africa, and even the airport wait turned up a bonus, with a couple of birders spotting a small bird stood wagging its tail under some little shrubs just outside the lounge windows. A superb Plain-backed Pipit, enjoyed by all present, and usually while using someone else's binoculars!

The flight left late but arrived quickly, and once we'd reclaimed our bags at Gatwick, quickly went on our way to catch our various transport onwards given it was nearly midnight. I hope that you all had good onwards journeys home.

Species Lists

The various species lists below use the following references:

Birds: We use the worldwide English names and systematic order as recommended by the I.O.C., and published in *Birds of the World – Recommended English Names 2nd Ed.* (Gill, F. & Wright, M., 2008).

Also: *Helm Field Guide - Birds of The Gambia & Senegal* (Barlow, C. & Wacher, T., 1997).

Mammals: *Mammals of the World, A Checklist* (Duff, Andrew & Lawson, Ann, 2004).

Also: *Small Mammals of West Africa* (Booth, A., 1960)

Reptiles & Amphibians: Taken from resources on Internet!

All identifications checked or made by Dr Mark-Oliver Rödel (and to whom a huge thanks!).

Butterflies: *West African Butterflies and Moths* (Boorman, J., 1970).

We also used a superb S African guide! And the web includes the useful (with reservations!) pool of African butterfly pictures at: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/africanbutterflies/pool/page1> (+ others)

All important identifications checked or made by Dr Torben Larsen (and to whom a huge thanks!).

Dragonflies & Damselflies: <http://www.africa-dragonfly.net/>

ALL: Alternative names are separated by '/' and optional names are enclosed by '[.]'.

Species marked before the vernacular name with a '*' are new for this tour.

BIRDS - AVES

GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae

Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus* : Heard Tendaba Camp on 20th and several heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

***Ahanta Francolin** *Pternistis achantensis* : Heard Abuko Forest on 15th and Marakissa Savannah on 16th.

Double-spurred Francolin *Pternistis bicalcaratus* : Noted on 12 days, and though mostly heard, a total of 18 seen either on the ground or mostly in flight.

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* : Noted on 7 days with 21 Kotu Creek on 14th, 20 Camalou Corner plus 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 2 plus c.8 ducklings Dakar Road on 19th, 35 various sites en route on 22nd, 6 Bansang on 23rd, 7 Baobolong rice fields on 24th and c. 15 North Bank Road plus 10+ South Bank Road on 25th.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis* : Noted on 3 days: 7-8 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 31 plus 1 plus 6 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 7 South Bank Road on 25th.

***Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* : 6 en route on 22nd is our only record.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* : 8+ en route on 22nd and 11 North Bank Road on 25th.

STORKS - Ciconiidae

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* : 12 in flight Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* : 1 in flight Dakar Road on 19th is our only record.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* : Noted on 5 days: 6+6 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 Farafenni ferry on 20th, 3 Kiang West Park + c.20 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 15-20 en route on 22nd, 1 Farafenni on 25th.

***Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* : A pair Keur Saloum were a stunning find on 18th.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* : 4 plus 7 Farafenni ferry on 20th, 25-30 various sites en route on 22nd, 1 distantly in flight North Bank Road on 25th.

IBISES & SPOONBILLS - Threskiornithidae

African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* : Noted on 3 days: 3 Keur Saloum on 18th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 15+ Tendaba Camp on 21st.

***Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* : 4 Tendaba Camp on 21st, heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* : 1 very distant bird Tendaba Camp on 21st is our only record.

HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae

White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucolopha* : 1 stunner along mangrove edge Keur Saloum on 18th.

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus* : 4 adult plus 4 juveniles Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* : Noted on 6 days: 7-8 Senegambia Beach hotel plus 5-6 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1-2 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 2 Georgetown Ferry on 22nd, 4-5 there on 23rd, 1 Baobolong Camp plus heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 1 Georgetown Ferry on 25th.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* : Quite common, widespread and noted in small number on 11 days, with 5-6 various sites on 14th and several various sites on 16th.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* : Common and widespread, seen on 13 days, with max 6-8 various sites on 16th, 6+ various sites on 17th and plenty various sites on 22nd.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* : Common, widespread and noted on 15 days, with max 2500-3000 Keur Saloum on 18th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* : Common and widespread; noted on 13 days with max plenty Tendaba Camp on 21st and plenty various sites on 22nd.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* : Scarcer, but still noted on 10 days, with max 6 Abuko Forest on 15th and 6+ various sites North Bank Road on 20th.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* : 8 Keur Saloum on 18th and 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* : Noted on 7 days with 1 juvenile Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Camalou Corner on 17th, 5-6 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 5-6 various sites en route on 22nd, 1 Georgetown Ferry on 23rd, 1 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Great [White] Egret *Ardea alba* : Common and widespread, noted on 11 days with max plenty various sites on 20th, lots various sites on 21st and plenty various sites on 22nd.

Yellow-billed/Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* : Noted on 6 days: 1 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 2 Darsilami on 16th, 2 various sites on 17th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, lots Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* : Noted on 4 days: 2 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Darsilami on 16th, 5-6 Bund Road and area on 17th, 1 juvenile Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* : Small numbers noted on 7 days: 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 4-5 Keur Saloum on 18th, 2-3 various sites on 19th, several various sites on 20th, several Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2-3 en route on 22nd, 1 North Bank Road on 25th.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* : Common and widespread, and while most were dark morph birds, one was a full white morph and a good number had a variable number of white feathers in the primaries and primary coverts, in particular; noted on 13 days with max 500-600 Keur Saloum roost on 18th, and plenty various sites on 20th, 21st and 22nd.

HAMERKOP - Scopidae

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* : Common and widespread; noted on 12 days with max plenty various sites on 20th, 21st and 22nd.

PELICANS - Pelecanidae

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* : 3 adults North Bank Road on 20th, 1 in flight en route on 25th.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* : Noted on 8 days: 3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 5-6 various sites on 17th, 5-7 Keur Saloum on 18th, 35+ various sites on 19th, 200+ various sites including 'tree-fulls' Tendaba Camp on 20th, lots various sites on 21st, plenty various sites on 22nd, a few en route on 25th.

CORMORANTS - Phalacrocoracidae

Reed/Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* : Quite common and widespread; noted on 11 days with max 20+ various sites on 14th, 70-80 Keur Saloum on 18th and 10-12 various sites on 19th.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* : 6+ en route North Bank Road on 20th, 4 Tendaba Camp on 21st.

ANHINGAS / DARTERS - Anhingidae

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* : Quite common and widespread; noted on 10 days with max of 25+ Tendaba Camp on 21st and 4-5 en route on 25th.

FALCONS & allies - Falconidae

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* : 1 only seen from the bus along the Dakar Road on 19th.

Common/Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* : Noted on 4 days, with 2 juveniles Bijilo Forest on 14th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th and singles en route North Bank Road plus South Bank Road on 25th.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* : Quite common and widespread; noted on 11 days with max 3 en route plus 3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, and 10+ various sites on 25th.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* : Just 2 along the Dakar Road on 19th.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* : Noted on 4 days, with a pair Lamin Lodge on 15th, 2 Brufut woods on 17th, 2 en route in The Gambia on 20th, 2-3 Kiang West Park on 21st.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* : 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st is our only record.

HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* : Small numbers seen on 10 days, with max 1 en route in Senegal plus 5-6 Keur Saloum on 18th and several Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Black-winged/-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* : 1 en route to Senegambia Beach Hotel on 13th, 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 1 Basse on 23rd, 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Scissor-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii* : 12-15 Dakar Road on 19th were fabulous.

***Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* : Singles Dakar Road (with a rounded tail!) on 19th and Tanji on 27th.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptus/parasitus* : Common and widespread and noted every day in small to moderate number at numerous sites.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* : Noted on 3 days: 1 adult Keur Saloum on 18th, 1 adult Farafenni ferry on 20th and heard calling Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* : Noted on 7 days: 1 adult Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 juvenile Marakissa Savannah plus 2 adults Darsilami on 16th, 1 adult Keur Saloum on 18th, 1 juvenile in The Gambia on 20th, 1 near adult Kiang West Park on 21st, 1 adult en route plus 2 Georgetown Ferry on 23rd, and 2 adults Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* : Remarkably common near the coast and again at Basse, but seen daily in moderate to large number (up to several hundred) throughout.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* : Noted on 5 days: 1 Kiang West Park on 21st, 20-25 various sites on 22nd, 30-35 Basse on 23rd, 7 Baobolong Camp on 24th, 7 North Bank Road on 25th.

Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* : 15+ Basse on 23rd is our only record.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* : One North Bank Road on 25th failed to hide amongst the White-backed!

Beudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beudouini* : Noted on 7 days: 1 adult Abuko Forest plus 1 adult & 1 immature Lamin Lodge on 15th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, a pair North Bank Road plus 1 Farafenni ferry on 20th, 1 adult Kiang West on 21st, 3-4 en route on 22nd, 5-6 various sites on 23rd and 2 en route on 25th.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* : Noted on 5 days: 2 + 1 en route on 18th, 1 Farafenni ferry on 20th, 1 Kiang West Park plus 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 en route on 22nd and 1 South Bank Road on 25th.

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens* : Single adults Marakissa Savannah on 16th and en route on 22nd.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* : 1 adult Basse on 23rd is our only record.

[Western] Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* : Noted on 8 days: 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 1 juvenile Marakissa Savannah plus an adult male Darsilami on 16th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, several en route North Bank Road on 20th, several various sites on 22nd, 2 Basse on 23rd, 2 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 2 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* : A 'pair' Dakar Road on 19th gave superb views, while a ringtail, either this species or possibly a Pallid passed over Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

African Harrier-Hawk / Gymnogene *Polyboroides typus* : Quite common and noted on 9 days, with 1 adult Senegambia Beach hotel on 14th, 5 various sites on 16th, 1 en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 adult Dakar Road on 19th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 1 en route on 22nd, 1 juvenile en route on 23rd, 1 adult plus 1 juvenile Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 1 adult en route South Bank Road on 25th.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* : Also quite common and noted on 7 days: 3 adults Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2-3 adult Dakar Road on 19th, 2 en route North Bank Road on 20th, a few Kiang West Park on 21st, 6+ en route on 22nd, 6-7 en route on 23rd, a few various sites on 25th.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* : A melanistic bird Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2 juveniles Bansang Quarry on 23rd, 1 melanistic bird Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* : Common and widespread; noted on 13 days, with max 5 adults various sites on 16th, 2-3 en route on 18th and several various sites on 21st.

***Ovambo Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter ovampensis* : 1 immature Marakissa Savannah on 16th is our only record.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* : Widespread in small number; noted on 11 days with max 5-6 various sites on 16th, and 2-3 en route on 18th and 23rd, and 2-3 en route in The Gambia on 20th.

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis* : Seen on 6 days: 6 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 3+ Kiang West Park on 21st, 3-4 en route on 22nd, 5-6 en route on 23rd, 2 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 10+ North Bank Road on 25th.

***Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* : 2 en route North Bank Road on 25th were excellent.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* : Although I first confused it with a Wahlberg's Eagle, 1 flying over the Missirah Road on 19th is our only record.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* : 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 1 en route Kiang West Park on 21st, 3 en route on 22nd, 1 en route on 23rd, single pairs Baobolong rice fields plus Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

African Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus spilogaster* : 1 adult Basse on 23rd and a pair Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* : An immature plus an adult en route in The Gambia on 18th.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis* : Just singles Darsilami on 16th and Kiang West Park on 21st.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* : Noted on 6 days: 1 Abuko Forest on 15th, 3+ Marakissa Savannah on 16th, heard en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 juvenile en route on 22nd, heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 6-7 North Bank Road on 25th.

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* : 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* : 2 North Bank Road on 25th.

CRANES - Gruidae

Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina* : 1 in flight en route on 22nd is our only record.

STONE-CURLEWS / THICK-KNEES - Burhinidae

Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis* : Common, widespread, noted on 12 days; max 15-20 Crown Point Creek on 17th, plenty various sites on 22nd and a few en route plus 70+ Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

OYSTERCATCHERS - Haematopidae

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* : 25-30 Keur Saloum on 18th is our only record.

STILTS & AVOCETS - Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* : Widespread in small number at wetlands; noted on 11 days with max 6 Crown Point Creek on 17th, several Keur Saloum on 18th, several various sites on 19th, several various sites on 20th, plenty various sites on 22nd and several Kaur Wetlands+ on 25th.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* : 4 Tendaba Camp on 21st is our only record.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

Spur-winged Lapwing/Plover *Vanellus spinosus* : Very common and widespread. Noted on 14 days with max 30-40 Crown Point Creek+ on 17th, abundant various sites on 20th & lots various sites on 22nd and 25th.

Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus* : Fairly widespread in small number and noted on 8 days: 14+ Kotu Creek on 14th, 3 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 3 en route in Senegal on 18th, 4 Dakar Road on 19th, 4+ North Bank Road on 20th, 2 en route on 22nd, 4-5 Baobolong Camp on 24th, 2 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

White-crowned Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps* : 1 in flight Dakar Road on 19th is our only record.

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus* : Noted on 8 days, with 4+ Kotu Creek on 14th, 5-6 various sites on 16th, 30+ Crown Point Creek on 17th, 1 Missirah Road on 19th, lots en route on 22nd, 1 en route on 23rd, 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, lots various sites on 25th.

Grey/Black-bellied Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* : Small numbers at wetlands; seen on 5 days with 3 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th, several Keur Saloum on 18th, 3-4 en route on 22nd, 3-4 Tanji on 27th and heard Tendaba Camp on 21st.

[Common] Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* : 22 Kotu Creek on 14th, 25-30 Crown Point Creek on 17th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* : 10-12 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* : 9 Kaur Wetlands on 25th is our only record.

JACANAS - Jacanidae

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* : Quite widespread in generally small number: 1 adult Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 adults Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 1 adult en route Senegal on 18th, lots various sites on 22nd, several various sites on 24th, 15+ various sites North Bank Road on 25th.

SANDPIPERS, SNIPES & allies - Scolopacidae

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* : Noted on 4 days with 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 7 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd and 1 Basse on 23rd.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* : 2 Bund Road on 17th, 30+ South Bank Road on 25th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* : 25-30 Keur Saloum on 18th is our only record.

[Eurasian] Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* : Common and widespread, particularly in mangroves. Noted on 10 days with max several various sites on 17th, several Keur Saloum on 18th, several various sites on 19th, plenty Tendaba Camp on 21st, several en route on 22nd and several Makasutu on 26th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* : Noted on 6 days: several Kotu Creek on 14th, 2 Lamin Lodge on 15th, several various sites on 17th, plenty Keur Saloum on 18th, heard various sites on 19th + en route on 22nd.

***Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* : 1 Makasutu on 26th.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* : Widespread in small number at wetland sites: 2-3 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, a few various sites on 17th, lots Keur Saloum on 18th, a few various sites on 19th, 2 en route North Bank Road on 20th, a few Tendaba Camp on 21st, 1 Makasutu on 26th.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* : 2 Darsilami on 16th.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* : Quite common and widespread in small number at wetlands. Noted on 10 days with max 3-4 various sites on 17th, several Keur Saloum on 18th, a few various sites on 19th and a few Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* : Noted on 7 days: 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 2 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 Kiang West Park on 21st, 1 Bansang Quarry on 23rd, 1 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 1 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* : Seen on 6 days with 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 2 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2 Camalou Corner on 17th, 1 Dakar Rd on 19th, 2-3 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd, 2 Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* : Common and widespread: noted on 10 days with max 5+ Kotu Creek on 14th, several various sites on 20th and 40+ Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* : 10+ Tanji on 27th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* : 25+ Tanji on 27th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* : 3 Dakar Road on 19th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* : Noted on 3 days: 12 in flight Tendaba Camp on 21st, 11-12 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd, and 100+ Kaur Wetlands plus 30 South Bank Road on 25th.

COURSERS & PRATINCOLES - Glareolidae

Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius* : One noted on two days at Soma Wetland on 20th and 22nd.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* : 35+ North Bank Road on 20th and 300+ Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* : 1 distantly Senegambia Beach Hotel on 26th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* : Plenty Bacchus Beach Bar on 17th, a few Banjul on 18th, 2 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, 30+ Tanji on 27th.

Grey-hooded/-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* : Noted mainly at the coast, with 7 Bijilo Forest plus 20+ Kotu Creek on 14th, a few Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th and 26th, lots Crown Point Creek+ on 17th, 100s Banjul on 18th, plenty North Bank Road on 20th, 100s Tanji on 27th.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* : Seen on 6 days: 2 Kotu Beach on 14th, 1 immature Darsilami on 16th, 1 adult Crown Point Creek on 17th, a few Keur Saloum on 18th, a few Dakar Road on 19th, plenty en route North Bank Road on 20th.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* : 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 2 Darsilami on 16th, several Banjul plus Keur Saloum on 18th, several Keur Saloum+ on 19th, 2-3 en route on 20th.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* : Noted on 7 days: 2 Darsilami on 16th, 350+ Crown Point Creek on 17th, 300+ Barra plus a few Keur Saloum on 18th, 1 Keur Saloum on 19th, 2 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 3 en route on 22nd, 5 Tanji on 27th.

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* : 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* : Several Senegambia Beach Hotel plus Lamin Lodge on 15th, 30+ Crown Point Creek on 17th, several Banjul on 18th, a few Senegambia Hotel on 26th, 15+ Tanji on 27th.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* : 1 Kotu Beach on 14th, 10-12 Crown Point Creek on 17th, a few Banjul+ on 18th, 5 Tanji on 27th.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* : 1 Keur Saloum on 18th.

***White-winged [Black] Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* : 15+ en route North Bank Road on 20th.

SKUAS - Stercorariidae

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* : 1 Bacchus Beach on 17th, 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

Arctic Skua / Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* : One dark morph Bacchus Beach on 17th, 2 Banjul on 18th, 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

SANDGROUSE - Pteroclididae

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus* : 7 en route in The Gambia on 18th, 2 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 1 Georgetown Ferry on 22nd, and 2 + 5 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae

Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* : Small numbers at various sites noted on 9 days.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* : Remarkably common and noted widely daily.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* : 3 Dakar Road on 19th, and 2 Baobolong Camp plus 6 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

[African] Mourning [Collared] Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* : 1 plus several heard Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, and several Marakissa Savannah on 16th.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* : Abundant, widespread and seen daily.

Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea* : Common and widespread and noted on 10 days.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* : Abundant, widespread and recorded daily.

Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus* : Common, widespread and noted daily except on 13th.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* : 2-3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 4 Makasutu on 26th.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* : Quite common and widespread upriver. Noted on 7 days with 3-4 Dakar Road on 19th, and max 12+ various sites on 20th, lots en route on 22nd, plenty various sites on 23rd and 15+ North Bank Road on 25th.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* : 4-5 en route in The Gambia on 18th, 3 Missirah Road on 19th, 4-5 various sites on 20th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 4-5 Georgetown Ferry on 22nd and 10+ there on 23rd, 2 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, several en route on 25th.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* : Just 5-6 en route in The Gambia on 18th.

PARROTS & allies - Psittacidae

Rose-ringed/Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* : Common, widespread and noted daily from 15th.

Brown-necked Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis* : Heard Kiang West Park on 21st, 1 in flight en route on 22nd.

Senegal Parrot *Poicephalus senegalus* : Common, widespread and noted in variable number on 12 days.

TURACOS - Musophagidae

Guinea Turaco *Tauraco persa* : Only heard Abuko Forest on 15th.

Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea* : 6+ Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

Western Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator* : Common, widespread and seen daily at numerous sites.

CUCKOOS - Cuculidae

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis* : Quite common and widespread in small number; noted on 12 days.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* : 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii* : Heard Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th.

Dideric Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* : 1 Brufut woods on 17th, 1 en route in Senegal on 18th.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* : Heard Abuko Forest on 15th and Marakissa Savannah on 16th, and a pair briefly Tujureng on 27th.

***Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* : A super juvenile Marakissa Savannah on 16th.

***African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* : 3 en route North Bank Road on 20th.

OWLS - Strigidae

African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* : Heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

Northern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis leucotis* : 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus* : 2 en route on 22nd.

Pearl-spotted Owllet *Glaucidium perlatum* : Noted on 7 days: heard Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, heard Keur Saloum on 19th and 20th, heard Baobolong Camp on 23rd, heard Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, heard Baobolong Camp on 25th.

NIGHTJARS - Caprimulgidae

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* : A 'pair' Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

SWIFTS - Apodidae

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri* : Uncommon over savannah; noted on 5 days with 1 en route in Senegal on 18th, several Dakar Road on 19th, several en route North Bank Road on 20th, several Kiang West Park on 21st, a few en route on 22nd.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* : Common, widespread and seen in variable number daily.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* : 2 Kotu Creek on 14th, 2 Dakar Road on 19th, lots North Bank Road on 20th.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* : Common, widespread and noted daily except on 15th.

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* : Just 1 en route on 22nd.

ROLLERS - Coraciidae

Purple / Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevius* : Widespread in small number and seen on 10 days: 2 en route on 15th, 1 en route on 16th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 en route in The Gambia on 20th, 2-3 Kiang West Park on 21st, several en route on 22nd, several en route on 23rd, 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th, several en route on 25th, 2-3 en route on 27th.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus* : Commonest in savannah and upriver and noted on 11 days, with max lots various sites on 19th and 20th, plenty Kiang West Park+ on 21st, and lots various sites on 22nd, 23rd, 24th and en route on 25th.

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster* : Widespread in smaller number, but seen on 12 days with one to a few except for max dozens various sites on 16th and 11 en route on 27th.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* : Remarkably, the most regularly seen, and noted daily. With the roost at the Senegambia Beach Hotel, up to a dozen there daily from 13th - 17th, and again from 25th - 27th, plus 1 (Senegal) Dakar Road on 19th and several Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

KINGFISHERS - Alcedinidae

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* : Singles Brufut woods on 17th, Missirah Road on 19th, and Baobolong Camp (John H) on 24th.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* : Noted on 4 days: 1 Brufut woods on 17th, heard en route in Senegal on 18th, heard Missirah Road on 19th, 2 Kiang West Park on 21st.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* : Noted on 7 days: 1 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 plus heard Keur Saloum on 18th, heard Tendaba Camp on 20th, 5-6 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 en route on 22nd, 1 Makasutu plus 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, 1 Bijilo Forest on 27th.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* : Recorded on 6 days, with 1 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th, 1 Darsilami on 16th, 6+ en route in The Gambia on 18th, several various sites on 19th, 2 Baobolong Camp on 24th.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta* : 3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Brufut woods on 17th.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata* : Widespread in small number: 1 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 en route plus 1 Keur Saloum on 18th, 1 Missirah Road on 19th, 2 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 1 heard Baobolong Camp on 24th, 3 Makasutu on 26th.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* : Noted on 4 days: 1 female Abuko Forest on 15th, 1-2 Marakissa Savannah plus 1 Darsilami on 16th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 female Makasutu on 26th.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* : Common, widespread and noted on 12 days, with max 40-50 Keur Saloum on 18th plus lots various sites on 17th, 19th, 20th, and 21st.

BEE-EATERS - Meropidae

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus* : 1 Bijilo Forest on 14th, 3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Kiang West Park on 21st.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* : Widespread and noted on 8 days, with c. 10 Bijilo Forest plus 1 Kotu Beach plus 17 Kotu Creek on 14th, plenty various sites on 15th, 8-10 Crown Point Creek on 17th, a few en route on 18th, a few Kiang West Park on 21st, 4 Basse on 23rd, 2 Makasutu on 26th, 10 Bijilo Forest on 27th.

Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bulocki* : 200+ Bansang Quarry on 23rd is our only record.

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* : 4-5 en route on 22nd.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* : Seen on 6 days: 4 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 40-50 Bund Road on 17th, 4 en route plus c.15 Keur Saloum on 18th, several various sites on 20th, 12+ Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 Makasutu on 26th.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* : Recorded on 3 days: 2 groups totalling c. 25 birds various sites on 20th, 150+ various sites on 21st, several en route on 22nd.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* : 2 Basse on 23rd, 40+ North Bank Road on 25th.

WOODHOOPES - Phoeniculidae

Green/Red-billed Woodhoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* : Seen on 4 days: dozens Bijilo Forest plus plenty Kotu Creek on 14th, a few en route on 16th, 5-6 en route on 22nd, and 1 Makasutu on 26th.

Black Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* : 1 Tujureng on 27th is our only record.

HORNBILLS - Bucerotidae

African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus* : 3 Kotu Creek on 14th.

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* : Common, widespread and seen daily in variable number.

Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* : Also common, widespread and seen daily in variable number.

TOUCANS & BARBETS - Ramphastidae

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* : Recorded on 6 days: 1 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, heard Keur Saloum on 18th, 2 Kiang West Park on 21st, heard en route on 23rd, heard Baobolong Camp on 24th, heard Makasutu on 26th.

Viillot's Barbet *Lybius viilloti* : Noted on 4 days: 1 en route in The Gambia on 18th, 4-5 various sites on 19th, heard Kiang West Park on 21st, 1 en route on 22nd.

Bearded Barbet *Lybius dubius* : Widespread in small number. Noted on 10 days, with max pair Senegambia Beach hotel plus pair Kotu Creek on 14th, 6 various sites on 20th, and a few Tujureng on 27th.

HONEYGUIDES - Indicatoridae

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* : 1 in flight from bus en route on 25th is our only record.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* : Noted on 4 days: 3 females en route in The Gambia and Senegal on 18th, 1 female Dakar Road on 19th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st.

WOODPECKERS - Picidae

Fine-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera punctuligera* : Heard Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 2 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

African Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae* : Common, widespread and noted on 9 days in The Gambia, with max 3-4 Bijilo Forest plus pair Kotu Cycle Track plus 1 male Kotu Creek on 14th, and 2 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

WATTLE-EYES & BATISES - Platysteiridae

Brown-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira cyanea* : Recorded on 3 days: 5 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 plus plenty heard Tendaba Camp on 21st, 1 male plus another heard Makasutu on 26th.

HELMETSHRIKES, BUSHSHRIKES - Malaconotidae

White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus* : 7-8 briefly en route in Senegal on 18th is our only record.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* : 1 Brufut woods on 17th, 2 Tujureng on 27th.

Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* : 1 female Lamin Lodge on 15th, 1 male plus 2-3 females Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 male Georgetown Ferry on 23rd, 1 female Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* : Widespread in small number and noted on 12 days, with max 3 Bijilo Forest on 14th, several en route in The Gambia and Senegal on 18th, a few various sites on 19th, several various sites on 24th and 3 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

Brubru *Nilaus afer* : One heard en route on 22nd is our only record.

SHRIKES - Laniidae

Yellow-billed Shrike *Corvinella corvina* : Quite common and widespread and recorded on 10 days, with max plenty various sites on 16th and 17th, 6-7 en route on 23rd.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* : 1 Missirah Road on 19th is our only record.

OLD WORLD ORIOLES - Oriolidae

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus* : Recorded on 5 days: 1 male Abuko Forest on 15th, heard Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 1 male Tendaba Camp plus 1 female en route on 22nd, 1 male Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

DRONGOS - Dicruridae

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* : Widespread in small number and noted on 10 days, with 1-2 except for 2 pairs Tendaba Camp on 20th and a few en route on 25th.

MONARCH-FLYCATCHERS - Monarchidae

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer* : 2 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2-3 Makasutu on 26th.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* : 2 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae

Piapiac *Ptilostomus afer* : Widespread and quite common, and noted on 11 days, with plenty seen on several dates, especially nearer the coast.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* : Generally abundant, widespread and noted on 13 days, though very scarce in Senegal and up river.

TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae

White-winged Black Tit *Melaniparus leucomelas* : 1 Tujureng on 27th.

PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae

Yellow Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus parvulus* : 2 Tujureng on 27th.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae

Fanti Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne obscura* : 5-6 Abuko Forest on 15th.

***Brown-throated/Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* : 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th was a good record.

Sand Martin / Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* : 1 en route on 22nd.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida* : The common swallow and noted on 7 days: several Kotu Creek on 14th, several Marakissa Savannah on 16th, several en route on 18th, lots various sites on 19th, plenty various sites on 20th, a few en route on 22nd, several North Bank Road on 25th.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* : Also quite widespread but in smaller number; noted on 6 days with 2 Kotu Creek on 14th, a few en route on 16th, several Crown Point Creek on 17th, a few en route on 18th, several various sites on 19th, several various sites on 20th.

[Common] House Martin *Delichon urbicum* : 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th, 100s Dakar Road on 19th, a few Baobolong Camp on 24th.

***Red-breasted Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* : 2 Dakar Road on 19th.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* : Noted on 11 days; pairs of this large swallow were seen widely, including almost every evening while at the Senegambia Beach hotel from 13th, plus 2 Keur Saloum on 18th, 4-5 Dakar Road on 19th, 2-3 Farafenni ferry on 20th, several Kiang West Park on 21st, a few en route on 22nd, plenty Bansang Quarry on 23rd.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* : Noted commonly and widely upriver; noted on 6 days with 2 en route North Bank Road plus 4 Farafenni ferry on 20th, several Kiang West Park on 21st, and lots various sites on 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th.

LARKS - Alaudidae

***Flappet Lark** *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* : 2 briefly in flight en route North Bank Road on 25th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* : 1 Dakar Road on 19th.

Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark / Finch-lark *Eremopterix leucotis* : 1 female Dakar Road on 19th, 4-5 en route on 22nd, several en route on 23rd, several en route North Bank Road on 25th.

CISTICOLAS & allies - Cisticolidae

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* : 2 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis* : 2 Brufut woods on 17th is our only record.

Short-winged Cisticola *Cisticola brachypterus* : 1 Missirah Road on 19th.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* : 1 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, heard Crown Point Creek on 17th, 3 en route on 22nd, 1 Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* : Noted on 5 days: 3-4 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, 2-3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, heard en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flava* : 2 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 Makasutu (Gwyn) on 26th.

Oriole Warbler *Hypergerus atriceps* : 2-3 Makasutu on 26th.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* : Noisy but very small and elusive! Noted on 9 days with most heard, but a few Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2 Brufut woods on 17th, 1 en route in Senegal on 18th, 2 Kiang West Park on 21st, 3-4 en route on 22nd, 1 Makasutu on 26th, 2-3 Tujureng on 27th.

BULBULS - Pycnonotidae

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* : Abundant, widespread and noted daily except on 13th.

Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens* : 3 seen plus plenty heard Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 Makasutu on 26th.

Yellow-throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla flavicollis* : 2 Georgetown Ferry on 22nd and 2-3 there on 23rd.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae

[Eurasian] Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* : One heard Tendaba Camp on 21st is our only record.

Western Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais opaca* : 5 singles noted: Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, Lamin Lodge on 15th, Tendaba Camp on 20th, heard Kiang West Park on 21st, and Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* : Noted on 6 days: heard Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Brufut on 17th, heard en route in The Gambia on 18th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 20th, heard Kiang West Park on 21st, 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina* : Heard Abuko Forest on 15th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* : 1 Lamin Lodge on 15th, herd Brufut on 17th, 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* : 2 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, several various sites on 19th, 2 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 1 en route on 22nd, 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th, 2 Tujureng on 27th.

Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla* : 2 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Brufut woods on 17th, 2 Tendaba Camp on 21st.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* : 2 Brufut woods on 17th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* : 1 male Bijilo Forest on 14th, 1 female Tujureng on 27th.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* : 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* : 1 Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 male Camalou Corner plus 1 female Crown Point Creek on 17th, a few various sites on 19th.

BABLERS & PARROTBILLS - Timaliidae

Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii* : Noted on 6 days, with several Bijilo Forest on 14th, heard Abuko Forest on 15th, a few Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 3 Georgetown Ferry on 22nd, several Basse on 23rd, 1 Tujureng on 27th.

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus* : Commoner and noted on 10 days, with several Bijilo Forest on 14th, a few Abuko Forest on 15th, 5 Senegambia Beach Hotel on 17th, 3 en route in Senegal on 18th, and variable numbers at different sites on 19th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th.

WHITE-EYES - Zosteropidae

African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis* : 1 Kiang West Park on 21st is our only record.

STARLINGS - Sturnidae

Greater Blue-eared [Glossy] Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* : Noted on 6 days: several Senegambia Beach hotel on 14th, 3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, several en route in Senegal on 18th, a few Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 1 en route North Bank Road on 25th, several Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

Lesser Blue-eared [Glossy] Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus* : Apparently commoner and noted on 10 days at numerous sites, including the Senegambia Beach hotel and especially upriver.

Bronze-tailed [Glossy] Starling *Lamprotornis chalcurus* : 3 Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th, plenty Senegambia Beach hotel on 17th.

Purple [Glossy] Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus* : Noted on 5 days: 3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, several en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 Missirah Road on 19th, 8-10 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, a few Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

Long-tailed [Glossy] Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus* : Very common, widespread and easily identifiable! Seen on 14 days at numerous sites.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* : Noted on 7 days: 4-5 en route in The Gambia on 18th, 5 Missirah Road on 19th, several en route in The Gambia on 20th, 25+ Kiang West Park on 21st, 2-3 en route on 22nd, 2+ en route on 23rd, a few en route on 24th.

THRUSHES - Turdidae

African Thrush *Turdus pelios* : Overlooked and only noted on 4 days, with 1 Bijilo Forest on 14th, a few Abuko Forest on 15th, several Makasutu plus Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 27th.

OLD WORLD CHATS & FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* : 2 seen plus heard singing Tujureng on 27th.

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* : Only heard Abuko Forest on 15th.

White-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha albicapilla* : Much commoner and noted on 8 days: 2 Senegambia Beach hotel on 13th and 14th, 3-4 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Senegambia Beach hotel plus 2-3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 3-4 Senegambia Beach hotel on 17th, heard en route in Senegal on 18th, 2 Baobolong Camp on 24th, 3 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* : 1 in flight Baobolong Camp on 24th is our only record.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* : 1 Kiang West Park on 21st.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* : 1 Camalou Corner on 17th.

[Northern] Anteater Chat *Myrmecocichla aethiops* : 3 en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, 6 en route various sites on 20th.

Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides* : 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 1 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2 Tujureng on 27th.

Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica* : 2-3 Georgetown Ferry on 23rd is our only record.

SUNBIRDS - Nectariniidae

Mangrove Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus* : Several, but mostly in flight Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 in flight Makasutu on 26th.

Pygmy Sunbird *Hedydipna platura* : 1 male in flight Kiang West Park on 21st.

***Green-headed Sunbird** *Cyanomitra verticalis* : 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th was an excellent record.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* : 1 female Missirah Road on 19th, 6+ en route on 22nd, 1 Baobolong Camp plus 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 1 male North Bank Road on 25th.

Beautiful Sunbird *Cinnyris pulchellus* : By far the commonest sunbird and widespread. Noted on 11 days in both The Gambia and in Senegal, adult males were particularly impressive.

Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* : 1 male + 2 female Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, 3-4 Brufut woods on 17th, 1 female Makasutu plus a pair Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, a few Tujureng on 27th.

Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus* : 1 male Lamin Lodge on 15th, 2 males plus 2 females Brufut woods on 17th, 3 Tujureng on 27th.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* : Several Banjul docks on 18th, 1 Tanji on 27th.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* : Common, widespread and generally seen in small to moderate number on 14 days, though lots en route on 22nd and 23rd.

Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus* : Lots Dakar Road on 19th, though no adult males.

Bush Petronia *Gymnoris dentata* : 2 very distantly en route in The Gambia on 18th, 1 Dakar Road on 19th, lots en route on 22nd, lots en route on 23rd, plenty en route on 25th.

WEAVERS & WIDOWBIRDS - Ploceidae

White-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris* : Common and widespread, their large stick nests in trees were quite a feature of some areas; noted on 9 days.

Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus* : 2-3 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 male Kiang West Park on 21st.

Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis* : 3-4 Bijilo Forest on 14th, plenty Abuko Forest plus Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th.

Heuglin's Masked Weaver *Ploceus heuglini* : The single weaver seen well at Tujureng on 27th was retrospectively identified as this species as it had a yellow (and not orange eye).

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* : Just singles en route and at Basse (John H) on 23rd.

Village/Spotted-backed Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* : Abundant and noted on 14 days at numerous sites. With no 'yellow' weavers left at breeding sites, and many roving and skittish flocks of juvenile and non-breeding plumaged birds, it was remarkably difficult to find virtually any other species within these flocks, but Village was the commonest.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea* : 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 2-3 Dakar Road on 19th, 1 North Bank Road on 20th, 4-5 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd, 2-3 en route on 23rd, 3-4 Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

Yellow-crowned/Golden Bishop *Euplectes afer* : 2-3 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus* : Single males en route on 15th and Marakissa Sav. on 16th.

Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus* : Noted on 9 days: lots Lamin Lodge on 15th, a few en route on 16th, several various sites on 17th, a few en route in Senegal on 18th, plenty Missirah Road on 19th, 100s Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd, plenty Georgetown Ferry on 23rd, plenty Baobolong rice fields on 24th, lots various sites on 25th.

WAXBILLS, MUNIAS & allies - Estrildidae

***Red-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia phoenicoptera* : 1 en route on 23rd at a watering hole.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* : Excellent views and noted on 4 days: a pair Farafenni ferry on 20th, 2 en route on 22nd, 6-7 en route on 23rd, 2 males plus 1 female en route North Bank Road on 25th.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina* : 3 Abuko Forest on 15th.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* : Common, widespread and noted almost daily at numerous sites.

Red-cheeked Cordonbleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* : Delightful! Noted on 8 days, with 2 Abuko Forest on 15th, 10+ various sites on 16th, several Dakar Road on 19th, several Tendaba Camp on 20th, plenty en route on 22nd, 15 en route on 23rd, a few various sites on 25th, several Tujureng on 27th.

Lavender Waxbill *Estrilda caerulescens* : 1 Baobolong Camp (Anita & Pauline) on 24th and 2 briefly Tujureng on 27th.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* : 2 Abuko Forest plus 4 Lamin Lodge on 15th.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* : C. 10 Missirah Road on 19th, 6+ en route on 22nd, 6+ en route on 23rd, a few Baobolong Camp on 24th.

African Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis* : 1 Crown Point Creek on 17th, great views of 3 en route North Bank Road on 20th, and 8 Jakhaly Rice Fields on 22nd.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata* : Abundant on 14th, plenty on 15th, plenty various sites on 16th, 2 en route on 23rd, 6+ Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, a few Tujureng on 27th.

INDIGOBIRDS & WHYDAHs - Viduidae

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata* : Seen on 6 days: 1 Keur Saloum on 19th, 1 Kiang West Park on 21st, 3 various sites on 23rd, 2-3 various sites on 24th, a few various sites on 25th, 1 Makasutu on 26th.

Sahel Paradise Whydah *Vidua orientalis* : 1 male en route North Bank Road (Gwyn) on 20th and 5-6 male Paradise Whydahs seen in flight near water holes along the North Bank Road on 25th were apparently this species! Although the assumption is that all those on the N bank are this species, both the host species are present here too, and it is likely that both Sahel and Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs are present too.

Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta* : Birds we were happy with as definitely this species were 2 males en route on 22nd, 2 males en route on 23rd, and 2-3 males plus 1 female Baobolong Camp on 24th.

WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* : One of the commonest 'European' migrants: noted on 8 days with 4-5 Crown Point Creek on 17th, 2 en route North Bank Road on 20th, 6-7 various sites on 22nd, 2 Basse on 23rd, 1 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, a few various sites on 25th, 2 Makasutu on 26th, 1 Tanji on 27th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* : Noted on 5 days with 2 flying over Barra ferry on 18th, 2 Dakar Road on 19th, 4-5 various sites on 20th, 3 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 Kaur Wetlands on 25th.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus* : 1 briefly (Phil) Crown Point Creek on 17th is our only record.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* : 1 Yundum airport as we waited for the plane was a terrific and unexpected last-minute addition on 27th!

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* : 1 flying over Missirah Road on 19th is our only record.

FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae

White-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra leucopygia* : 2 en route on 22nd is our only record.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica* : 1 Missirah Road on 19th, lots various sites on 22nd, lots en route on 23rd.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* : 4-5 en route plus 1 Bansang Quarry on 23rd.

MAMMALS - MAMMALIA

RABBITS & HARES - Leporidae

African Savannah Hare *Lepus victoriae* : 1 Marakissa Savannah plus 1 Darsilami on 16th.

SQUIRRELS - Sciuridae

Striped Ground Squirrel *Xerus erythropus* : 1 corpse en route in Senegal on 18th.

Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* : Noted on 7 days with 1 Kotu Golf Course on 14th, several various sites on 16th, 1 en route in Senegal on 18th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 22nd, 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 1 en route on 25th, 5-6 Makasutu on 26th.

MICE, RATS, VOLES & GERBILS - Muridae

Gambian Giant Pouched Rat *Cricetomys gambianus* : Singles Senegambia Beach hotel on 15th and 16th.

***Gracile Tateril / Slender Gerbil** *Taterillus gracilis* : A dead adult and a wobbly baby at Tujureng on 27th were indeed almost certainly of this species.

MONGOOSEES - Herpestidae

Marsh/Water Mongoose *Atilax paludinosus* : 1 Keur Saloum plus 2 Missirah Road on 19th.

OLD WORLD FRUIT-BATS - Pteropodidae

Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat *Epomorphorus gambianus* : Abundant and widespread, and noted on 11 days. Most of those feeding on the figs (I think!) at the Senegambia Beach hotel from 13th – 17th, and those in the colonies at Keur Saloum and Baobolong Camp were this species of fruit bat, the white tufts at the bases of the ears and furry pouches on the males being particularly visible. Very noisy, their piping calls could be heard all night...

“Yellow-winged Bat” Unknown species : Heard during the Tendaba Camp pirogue trip on 21st, but several seen at dusk at the Georgetown Ferry on 23rd, where their yellowish wings could clearly be seen. I can't track this down despite having found a list of Gambian bats on the web.

OLD WORLD MONKEYS - Cercopithecidae

Western Red Colobus *Piliocolobus badius* : Seen on 5 days: 2 Bijilo Forest on 14th, 3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Senegambia Beach hotel on 16th, 5+ en route on 23rd, and 8-9 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.

Guinea Baboon *Papio papio* : 5-6 en route on 22nd, 30-40 (including a 'protective' male) Makasutu on 26th.

Green/Callithrix Monkey *Chlorocebus [aethiops] sabaues* : Quite frequent and noted on 7 days: lots Senegambia Beach hotel plus Bijilo Forest on 14th, lots Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Missirah Road on 19th, 2 Tendaba Camp on 20th, 2-3 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th, 6-7 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th, 1 few Bijilo Forest on 27th.

Patas Monkey *Erythrocebus patas* : Though scarcer, still noted on 6 days with 8-9 en route in Senegal on 18th, 15+ various sites on 19th, several en route in Senegal and 1 along the South Bank Road on 20th, 12 en route on 22nd, 6+ en route (Anita) on 23rd, and a large troop en route North Bank Road on 25th.

REPTILES - REPTILIA

Yellow-headed Agama *Agama agama* : Common, widespread and noted on 12 days at numerous sites.

***Daytime / Ugandan Dwarf Gecko** *Lygodactylus gutturalis* : 1 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 female Marakissa Savannah on 16th, and 2 over lunch Senegambia Beach hotel on 27th.

***Fig Tree Gecko** *Tarentola ephippiata* : The very large well-marked gecko at Keur Saloum on 19th.

***Orange-flanked Skink** *Trachycephalus (=Mabuya) perotetii* : A superb male Bijilo Forest on 14th.

***Brown-flanked Skink** *Trachycephalus (=Mabuya) affinis* : 2 were climbing around the thatched shelter at Marakissa River Lodge on 16th, 1 Kiang West on 22nd., 1 Baobolong on 24th.

Savannah/Bosc's Monitor *Varanus exanthematicus* : Bosc's Monitor is smaller, brown and duller than the Nile Monitor, the reverse of what I'd thought, and although though we did see a couple of small dark monitors somewhere, I now can't remember where, and all monitor records, the great majority of which pertain to Nile Monitor are listed under the following species.

Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus* : Noted on 9 days (though see above): 1 Kotu Cycle Track & 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 14th, 2-3 Abuko Forest on 15th, 2 Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 20th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 21st, 2 Georgetown Ferry presumably this species on 22nd, 1 Baobolong rice fields on 24th, 3 Makasutu and 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 26th and 1 Senegambia Beach hotel on 27th.

***Olive Grass/Sand Snake/Racer // Rukwa Sand Racer** *Psammophis phillipsi // rukwae* : 1 Baobolong Camp on 24th.

***Slender African Beauty Snake** *Psammophis elegans* : Noted as probably being The Gambia's commonest snake, two of these striped, tree-living beauties seen: 1 Farafenni ferry on 20th, 1 en route on 22nd.

West African (Nile) Crocodile *Crocodylus (niloticus) suchus* : 1 Abuko Forest plus 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th and 1 Marakissa Savannah (John H) on 16th; this is now often treated as a separate species.

AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

African Toad *Amietophrynus* (= *Bufo*) *regularis* : Noted on 6 days: 3 Keur Saloum on 19th, plenty Tendaba Camp, including 1 in Pat's room on 20th, plenty Tendaba Camp on 21st, and plenty Baobolong Camp on 22nd, 23rd and 24th.

African Bullfrog *Pyxicephalus adspersus* : Noted on 5 days: 1 Kotu Creek on 14th, 1 Lamin Rice Fields on 15th, several Marakissa Savannah on 16th, plenty of froglets en route in Senegal on 18th.

"Bog Frog" *Croakus toiletus* : 1 John M's toilet Baobolong Camp on 23rd and 1 small species in / around Pauline's toilet and shower room there on 23rd and 24th.

***Tree-frog sp.** *Hyperolius spatzi* : One tiny one aestivating in John M's room, Baobolong Camp from 22nd - 24th.

BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS - LEPIDOPTERA

SKIPPERS - Hesperidae

***African Marbled Skipper** *Gomalia elma* : One photographed by Anita.

***Grey Elfin** *Sarangesa laelius* : Two photographed by Anita.

***Dromus Grizzled Skipper** *Spialia dromus* : One photographed by Anita at Tujureng on 27th.

***Twin Swift** *Borbo gemella* : One photographed by Anita Baobolong Rice Fields on 23rd.

SWALLOWTAILS & allies - Papilionidae

White Lady Swallowtail *Graphium angolanus baronis* : One or two at different sites, including at a mixed group supping at a waterhole.

Citrus Swallowtail *Papilio demodocus* : A few of supposedly the commonest swallowtail in The Gambia.

Chequered Swallowtail / Lime Butterfly *Papilio demoleus* : One or two of these swallowtails too, which look very similar to the above.

***Narrow-banded Green Swallowtail** *Papilio nireus* : The black swallowtail with blue-green band at a few sites, including Bijilo Forest on 14th and Abuko Forest on 15th were undoubtedly this species.

WHITES, YELLOWS & SULPHURS - Pieridae

Caper / Brown-veined White *Belenois aurota* : This was the commonest of the two whites with striped underwings, with 100s in the coastal area at the start and especially end of the tour, when 1000s were everywhere, looking like "Gambian snow" on 27th.

***African Caper White** *Belenois creona* : Plenty were supping in at least one water hole, and photographed.

***Pointed Caper White** *Belenois gidica* : A slightly larger species with more complex underwing pattern was this species; at least one seen, but probably went largely unnoticed among the much more abundant *B. aurota*.

***African Wood White sp.** *Leptosia medusa / alcesta* : A small, round-winged weak-looking woodland white noted at one or two sites, inc. Bijilo.

***Tiny Orange-tip** *Colotis evagore antigone* : One of the commonest orange-tips and a few at various sites, including at least one photographed by Anita. Other species possibly seen include *Colotis evenina* and *Colotis evippe*, but none of the photos prove them!

***Scarlet-tip** *Colotis danae* : A few males of this striking species at one or two sites including Bijilo Forest on 14th and 1 Makasutu on 26th.

***African Small White sp.** *Dixeia orbona* : One photographed Bijilo Forest on 14th.

African Migrant *Catopsilia florella* : 1 male Kotu Beach on 14th, a few at different sites / dates and 1 Tujureng on 27th.

***Small Grass Yellow** *Eurema brigitta* : Marakissa Savannah on 16th, 2-3 Tujureng on 27th.

***Common Grass Yellow** *Eurema hecabe* : One photographed in flight at a watering hole by Anita on 24th.

***Zebra White** *Pinacopteryx eriphia* : A few at various sites.

METALMARKS, HAIRSTREAKS, COPPERS & BLUES - Lycaenidae

***Desert Babel Blue** *Azanus ubaldus* : At male was photographed supping at a water hole by Anita.

- ***Babault's / Jeanell's / Common Zebra Blue** *Leptotes babaulti / jeanelli / pirthous* : A single 'Zebra Blue' was seen and photographed at a water hole on one day, though it looks very unlike the European Lang's Short-tailed (=Common Zebra) Blue to me! Another also photographed in a mixed species group somewhere!
- ***Kiki / Le Gras' / Mediterranean Blue** *Tarucus kiki / legrasus / rosaceus* : At least one photographed by Anita Tujureng on 27th!
- ***African Grass Blue** *Zizeeria knysna* : Very common and widespread, and almost the only true blue seen.
- ***Purple-brown Hairstreak** *Hypolycaena philippus* : 2-3 Kotu Beach on 14th.

BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES - Nymphalidae

- Plain Tiger / Lesser Wanderer / African Monarch** *Danaus chrysippus* : Common, widespread and noted on most days, the very pale hindwings being characteristic of the subspecies in The Gambia.
- ***Pearl Charaxes** *Charaxes varanes* : 1 rather bird-eaten individual at a rotting fruit skin Brufut on 17th.
- ***Sahel Charaxes** *Charaxes epijasius* : A 4-horned caterpillar with two eye spots on its back at Brufut Woods on 17th belongs to this species! (with thanks to Dr H Boersma).
- Guineafowl Butterfly** *Hamanumida daedalus* : 2 en route on 20th, a few Tujureng on 27th.
- ***Glider sp.** *Neptis cf morosa* : A few of these beautiful and graceful black-and-white gliding species at a few sites.
- ***Painted Lady** *Vanessa cardui* : 2-3 Marakissa Savannah on 16th.
- Dark Blue Pansy** *Junonia oenone* : A few at various sites of this lovely open ground butterfly.
- ***Blue Pansy** *Junonia orithya* : One Missirah road on 19th.
- ***Orange Acraea** *Acraea serena* : Abundant throughout, including hundreds at Tujureng on 27th.

HAWK-MOTHS - SPHINGIDAE

- Hawkmoth spp.** Sphingidae : At least 3 different species around the vine at the Georgetown Ferry on 23rd included the green *Basiothea medea* which was also seen at Tendaba Camp on 22nd, plus a large species was seen Baobolong rice fields on 24th.

DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA

- ***Ubiquitous Bluetail** *Ischnura senegalensis* : 1 male on the boat trip Makasutu on 26th.
- A pygmy damselfly sp.** Genus unknown : 1 Janjangbureh Bird Safari road on 24th.
- Large orange damselfly sp.** Genus unknown : Several at a few sites, including Makasutu on 26th.
- ***Grizzled Pintail** *Acisoma panorpoides* : A few at odd sites but plenty at Abuko Forest on 15th.
- ***Vagrant / Lesser Emperor** *Anax ephippiger / parthenope* : A very few individuals of one or both species seen at a few sites including 1 Makasutu on 26th.
- ***Banded Groundling** *Brachythemis leucosticta* : Lots at various sites, all up river, including dozens around our feet at a few sites on 16th.
- ***Broad Scarlet [Darter]** *Crocothemis erythraea* : Small numbers at various sites on a few days, including Makasutu on 25th.
- ***Black Percher** *Diplacodes lefebvrii* : A few at freshwater wetlands upriver.
- ***Epaulet Skimmer** *Orthetrum chrysostigma* : A common mid-sized blue skimmer dragonfly seen at a few sites on various days.
- ***Portia / Shadow-bridge Widow** *Palpopleura portia* : A very common small dragonfly with extensive dark markings on the wings seen at numerous sites on various dates.
- ***Phantom Flutterer** *Rhyothemis semihyalina* : 1 Basse around the treetops on 23rd is our only record.
- ***Keyhole Glider** *Tramea cf basilare* : Dozens of a brown glider species with large basal hindwing patch were present at numerous sites, usually foraging in groups in the lees of tree crowns, but never seen well, despite clearly being a Tramea sp. and apparently most probably this species.
- ***Violet Dropwing** *Trithemis annulata* : One or two at freshwater wetlands near Tendaba.
- ***Orange-winged Dropwing** *Trithemis kirbyi* : At least one at a freshwater wetland upriver.
- ***Blue Basker** *Urothemis edwardsii* : A few males photographed at a couple of sites.

OTHER SELECTED TAXA

Swimming Crab *Callinectes latimanus* : Several evilly-clawed and spiny individuals in a fisherman's bucket along Bund Road on 17th were for lunch!

West African Fiddler Crab *Uca tangeri* : This was one of the several different species of fiddler crabs seen 10 days at different sites, including well upriver in the mangroves and mud-flats, including at Kotu Creek, Lamin Lodge, Keur Saloum, Tendaba Camp, and especially Makasutu, with at least 3 species.

Atlantic Mud-skipper *Periophthalmus barbarus* : Noted commonly on 9 days in mangrove mudflats, from Kotu Creek to Keur Saloum and upriver to Tendaba Camp.

Forest-spider sp. *Nephila senegalensis* : These (harmless) huge orb-web spiders were noted on 5 days, with a huge female plus two other tiny spiders in her web (a male + a parasitic spider?) Kotu Cycle Track on 14th, 1 Abuko Forest on 15th, a few various sites on 16th, 1 Tendaba Camp on 20th and a few there on 21st.

Giant Millipede Diplopoda : Large but not truly giant millipedes were found quite commonly, though only noted on 4 days with 1 Abuko Forest on 15th, 1 dead Missirah Road on 19th, 1 Baobolong Camp (Pauline) on 23rd and a few Baobolong Camp on 24th.

Praying Mantis Mantoidea : Singles Missirah Road & Keur Saloum on 19th & Baobolong Camp (Peter) on 22nd.

Ant-lion sp. Myrmeleonidae : Apart from pits with larvae almost everywhere in sandy / dusty sites, 1 adult photographed by Anita in Bijilo on 14th and one large marbled-winged species at Tendaba Camp on 20th.

Scarab Beetle Scarabaeidae : Single huge individuals Tendaba Camp on 20th and Baobolong Camp on 24th.

This was a terrific trip, with a remarkable 299 bird species recorded. The abundant tall grass this year, after good rains it seems, meant that looking for ground-dwelling species was often impossible, and so we'll have to return some other time for the ground hornbill, coursers and bustards. What a terrific excuse! But it certainly wasn't just the birds, but a whole host of other wildlife which back these up, such as the numerous butterflies and dragonflies daily (despite the former apparently being far more abundant in the wet season!), plus of course, lovely repeated sightings of 3 species of monkeys, the Guinea Baboon, Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bats and even Marsh Mongoose, too, which makes it obvious why this is such a great destination. Seeing crocodiles, snakes, lizards, skinks, geckos, toads and frogs all from a safe distance, was also reward for the time put in, plus probably, part recompense for the heat endured at times!

The variety of sites visited and wide range of experiences over the 15 days naturally mean it is impossible to pick out one particular highlight for everyone, as we all have our own special memories, but the first pirogue trip at Keur Saloum came out tops for both individual birds – White-crested Tiger Heron and Saddle-billed Storks (“on stalks!”) being star species for some – as well as for the trip as a whole, including of course the visit to the fantastic heron and egret roost. But the overall range of ‘best’ birds varied from the ‘perfection’ of the stunning Egyptian Plover, the colour and size of the Goliath Heron, the lovely colours of the Blue-bellied Rollers in flight, the Giant Kingfisher, gaudy Yellow-crowned Gonolek, ‘cheeky’ Pearl-spotted Owlet, the stunning colours of the Northern Carmine and Red-throated Bee-eaters to the elegance of the Scissor-tailed Kite. For sites and places, in addition to the pirogue trip, seeing the Carmine Bee-eaters for the first time, the visit to Abuko and particularly the ‘vigil’ from the Darwin Hide all scored one vote each. But the social side of things also naturally came heavily into play, and the experiences of the hand-pulled Georgetown Ferry, the fright I got when a squirrel silently approached at high speed at head height along a wall (thanks Phil!) and even as Pauline summed-up, “the whole 2 weeks”, all got votes. But perhaps the most poignant was near Baobolong when three boys approached with a donkey pulling a cart full of firewood, was followed-up by their greeting of “Hello, white people!”, their smiles, friendly hand-shaking (while carrying machetes in the other) and then an attempt to sell us something, with a “\$50 for the donkey?!”. I'm sure I've not mentioned one or two of your favourites, but I hope the images stay fresh in your mind for a long time.

With a big thank you to JJ for his remarkable birdwatching talents, Baba for his excellent driving, all the staff at the different hotels and camps, and to West African Tours for their organisation. Thanks too to all of you too, who made this trip the success it was. I hope to see you all on another trip, sometime in the not-too-distant future.

John Muddeman, December 2009

Photo gallery : a random selection of Senegambia wildlife / scenes
(All photos © John L. Muddeman or © Anita Lloyd – “AL” - if stated)



Bruce's Green Pigeon



Egyptian Plover



Daytime / Ugandan Dwarf Gecko



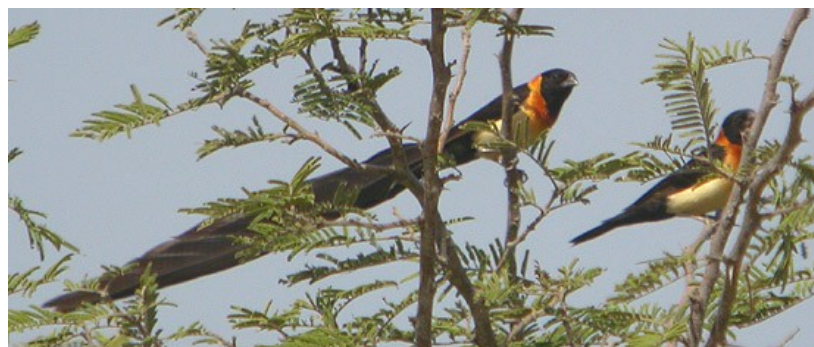
Slender African Beauty Snake



Desert Babel Blue



Common & Small Grass Yellows, Caper & African Caper Whites, White Lady Swallowtail



Exclamatory Paradise Whydah males



Male Red-flanked Skink (AL)



Orange Acraea (AL)



Orange Acraea (different morph) (AL)



Palpopleura portia female



Eurema brigitta (AL)



White-crested Tiger Heron (AL)



Zebra White (AL)



Lizard Buzzard



Red-billed Hornbill



Little Bee-eater



Orange Acraea



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater



Northern Carmine Bee-eaters



Swallow-tailed Bee-eater



Black-headed Lapwing



Green Bee-eater



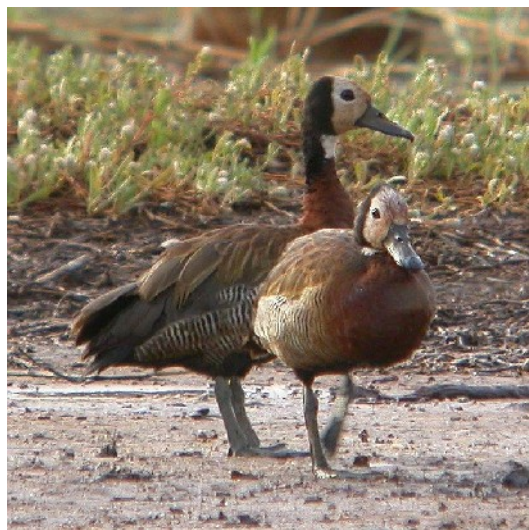
Grizzled Pintail



Grey Kestrel



Green Monkeys



White-faced Whistling Ducks



Abyssinian Roller pair



Blue Pansy



Whistling Cisticola



Dideric Cuckoo



Caper White



Nephila senegalensis



Keur Saloum Delta woodland (including Baobabs)



Marsh Mongooses



Tiger Blue sp. Dromus Grizzled Skipper Tiny Orange-tip Twin Swift Purple-brown Hairstreak
(all butterflies © A. Lloyd)



Blue-breasted Kingfisher Green Hawkmoth sp. Georgetown hand-pulled ferry



African Pygmy Goose How to get a ram off a roof-rack! Gambian Fruit Bat Yellow-billed Shrike



Red-throated Bee-eaters Squacco heron + *Tilapia* Senegal Parrot

Other resources:

EMMS, CRAIG, MALANG DK JAMBANG, OUSMAN BAH, BINTA MANKALI, MARK-OLIVER RÖDEL & LINDA K. BARNETT. 2005. *The amphibian fauna of The Gambia, West Africa*. Herpetological bulletin. 94: 6-16.

GAMBLES, R.M.(†) & MOORE, N.W. & HÄMÄLÄINEN, M. & PRENDERGAST, E.D.V. 1998. *Dragonflies from The Gambia: an annotated list of records up to the end of 1980*. Odonatologica 27, 25-44.