



*The stunning Ruspoli's Turaco did not disappoint this year – just one of the many superb Ethiopian endemics seen during this action-packed trip! (Carlos Grande Flores)*

## **BEST OF ETHIOPIA**

**1 – 12 OCTOBER 2019**

**LEADERS: NIK BORROW**

Ethiopia is a classic sub-Saharan destination with a wide range of habitats and an impressive list of species, including more endemics than almost any other comparable region of Africa. For many years in BirdQuest's history, the challenge of finding all the endemic Ethiopian birds on a 'regular' basis has been one of our main aims. One of the problems is that the taxonomy continuously evolves and more endemics and near-endemics are found to confound the challenge! The exact number of actual endemics varies with the vagaries of modern taxonomy. *Birds of the Horn of Africa* by Nigel Redman *et al.* recognises 15 and lists Blue-winged Goose, Harwood's Francolin, Spot-breasted Lapwing, Yellow-fronted Parrot, Ruspoli's Turaco, Archer's (Sidamo) Lark, Erlanger's Lark, White-tailed Swallow, Abyssinian Longclaw, Abyssinian Catbird, Stresemann's Bushcrow, Yellow-throated Seedeater, Salvadori's Seedeater, Ethiopian Siskin, and Ankober Serin and of these we encountered them all except the Yellow-throated Seedeater which was at a location outside the scope of this shorter tour. In addition to these there is also the virtually mythical Nechisar Nightjar

(described from the remains of a single decomposing wing in 1990) that still awaits confirmation and may or may not be an endemic species. This 'highlights' tour added the chance to see another virtual endemic (there is one historic record from the Kenyan side of the border) to the list in the form of the recently split (from Chestnut-naped) Black-fronted Francolin and our success was total with great views enjoyed. Our main battle was with the weather and the road conditions and although the country claims thirteen months of sunshine we saw remarkably little of it as rain plagued us during every single day except the last. Progress was slow on the roads and once again some tribal tensions affected us this year in the south and we were forced to miss out the Dawa River area which lost us a few species.



*Ethiopia is a country of contrasts and dramatic scenery. The view across the Sanetti Plateau is jaw-dropping! (Bob Proniewych)*

Our journey started with a bang as we journeyed to Debre Birhan and found our first endemics such as White-winged Cliff Chat by the roadside. On the Ankober escarpment where despite the thick cloud that came rolling in over the rugged cliffs, we still managed excellent views of Ankober Serins, White-billed Starlings and Gelada Baboons on the impressive heights. In the deep and wide Jemma Valley, which is part of the Blue Nile drainage system of jaw-dropping valleys and gorges we found the endemic Harwood's Francolin as well as Rüppell's Black Chat, Abyssinian Wheatear and the somewhat dowdy Yellow-rumped (or White-throated) Seedeater. Descending into the Rift Valley for a stay at a comfortable lodge on the shores of Lake Langano a wonderful walk through the surrounding countryside allowed us to see numbers of Yellow-fronted Parrots coming to gorge themselves in the numerous fig trees where Banded Barbets were also present along with Black-winged Lovebird and White-cheeked Turaco. At night we found Slender-tailed Nightjar as well as African Scops and Northern White-faced Owls. Climbing up into the cooler air of the South Ethiopian highlands we stopped at the Bale Mountains Park HQ where approachable Mountain Nyala found sanctuary under the enormous juniper and Hagenia trees that also sheltered Abyssinian Woodpecker, White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Catbird. In the same area Blue-winged Goose, Wattled Ibis and Abyssinian Longclaw showed well and both Abyssinian Owl and Cape Eagle Owl were found during the day at known roosts. Our day on the Sanetti Plateau was spoiled by thick cloud and rain reducing visibility to a matter of metres however the following day was clear and we enjoyed close views of the elegant Spot-breasted Lapwing whilst comical Rouget's Rails ran around amongst the grey cushion plants where Chestnut-naped and Moorland Francolins were also found. Sadly, we missed the Ethiopian Wolf this year as an outbreak of distemper had hit this endangered species hard but we did manage to see its favoured prey, the bizarre Giant Mole Rat! We stopped briefly in the Haremma Forest for Ethiopian Oriole whilst a two night's



stay in Negelle gave us the opportunity to see the extremely rare and endangered Archer's Lark and White-tailed Swallows collecting nesting material on the Liben Plains and after a four hour's search Salvadori's Seedeater eventually showed well. Bad weather and security issues between Negele and Yabello meant that we had to make a long detour and it cost us a few species but along the way in some well-vegetated scrubby hillsides Ruspoli's Turacos were seen exceptionally well which went some way to make up for the hardship. In the Yabello area we had one full day to hunt out the very special Stresemann's Bushcrow, which certainly did not disappoint and we also enjoyed wonderful scope views of the recently split and virtually endemic Black-fronted Francolin. Other goodies included Somali Courser, Scaly Chatterer, Pringle's Puffback, Red-naped Bushshrike and Northern Grosbeak Canary whilst at night Donaldson Smith's Nightjar allowed amazing views. A brief visit to Lake Awassa produced the hoped for African Spotted Creeper and a super Allen's Gallinule but our visit to Lake Abiata was curtailed because our bus could not manage the broken access road. Of the other specialties encountered on the tour we saw Clapperton's and Erckel's Francolins, Bare-faced (sometimes split as Brown-faced) Go-away-bird, White-collared Pigeon, Mountain Buzzard, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, the *Iafresnayii* form of Blue-breasted Bee-eater (sometimes split as Ethiopian Bee-eater), Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Grey-headed Batis, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Three-streaked Tchagra, Ethiopian Boubou, Taita and Somali Fiscals, Somali Crow, Thick-billed Raven, Foxy, Short-tailed, Blanford's (sometimes split as Erlanger's) and Somali Short-toed Larks, Dodson's Bulbul, 'Blue' and 'Brown' Black Saw-wings, Somali Crombec, Brown Woodland Warbler, Boran and Ethiopian Cisticolas, Pale Prinia, White-rumped Babbler, Abyssinian, Pale and Heuglin's White-eyes, Golden-breasted, Shelley's, White-crowned and Bristle-crowned Starlings, Abyssinian Ground, Groundscraper (sometimes split as Ethiopian) and Bare-eyed Thrushes, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Little Rock Thrush, Red-breasted Wheatear, Tsavo Sunbird, Shelley's, Swainson's and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Rüppell's Weaver, African Citril, Brown-rumped Seedeater and Ethiopian Siskin.



*The steep, vertical cliffs of the Ankober escarpment often clothed in dense cloud are home to the endemic Ankober Serin. (Nik Borrow)*

Having landed in Addis Ababa after a tiring overnight flight yet rejuvenated by seven years as the country still operates on the Julian rather than Gregorian calendar, we found a few birds at the airport including our first regional specialties such as Heuglin's White-eye, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Swainson's Sparrow and Brown-rumped and Streaky Seedeaters alongside the following Palearctic migrants; Eurasian Wryneck, Eurasian Reed Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and a handsome male *samamisticus* Common (or Ehrenberg's) Redstart. We then wriggled our way through a congested Addis Ababa and escaping the city headed northeastwards to the town of Debre Birhan. The journey enabled us to see our only White-winged Cliff Chat of the tour and other regional endemics such as White-collared Pigeon, Wattled Ibis, Thick-billed Raven, Ethiopian Cisticola, the 'Ethiopian' form of Groundscraper Thrush, Red-breasted Wheatear and Ethiopian Siskin. More widespread species included Egyptian Goose, Speckled Pigeon, Dusky Turtle and Red-eyed

Doves, Marabou Stork, Hooded, White-backed and Rüppell's Vultures, Tawny Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, Augur Buzzard, Speckled Mousebird, Northern Fiscal, Cape and Pied Crows, Barn Swallow, Rock Martin, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Abyssinian Thrush, Moorland Chat, Mocking Cliff Chat, Tacazze Sunbird, Baglafecht Weaver and Yellow Bishop. On the outskirts of Debre Birhan we saw our first Bearded Vulture (or Lammergeier).

We wasted little time checking into our hotel and straight after lunch headed further north to the dramatic escarpment at Gemassa Gedal, where we hoped to find another endemic; the unassuming Ankober Serin. The species was described as recently as 1979 and is in appearance somewhat similar to the Yemen Serin just a few hundred kilometres to the east on the other side of the Red Sea. This dowdy finch dwells pretty much exclusively on the vertical cliffs of the Ankober escarpment and only seldom visits the tops. Finding the birds is not usually a problem, but the weather certainly can be; when the hot air from the Danakil Depression far below meets the colder air of the plateau, thick cloud often forms, ensuring that the vegetation clinging on to the edge of the escarpment remains lush year-round. This year we were greeted by a thick bank of cloud that obscured our vision. Gelada Baboons grazed on the slopes above us and disappeared and reappeared as the cloud came and went but amazingly enough we only had to wait a short time before a small group of serins were found feeding by the roadside at astonishingly close range.



*The Gelada or 'Bleeding Heart Monkey' is not actually a baboon but the only member of the genus Theropithecus and is surely one of the must see mammals in Ethiopia. (Nik Borrow)*

Once in a while the pea-soup cloud would part and when it did the scenic views were nothing short of astounding. We looked around for other species to entertain us and were pleased to see good numbers of tame White-billed Starlings and White-collared Pigeons (both near-endemics) and some (Ethiopian) Rock Hyraxes whilst in the skies we saw an African Hobby chasing migrating dragonflies and our first Nyanza, Mottled and Alpine Swifts. Erckel's Francolin and Fan-tailed Raven were also new for the list but the day had been long enough for those that had arrived on overnight flights so we headed back to Debre Birhan noting Western Marsh and Pallid Harriers along the way.

We were up well before dawn the following day, setting off in a damp dark night for a full day trip to the Jemma Valley and it was just getting light as we reached the top of the huge, deep and wide valley. The poorly maintained dirt road wound and twisted steeply downwards and it was already light when we stopped at a place where we were hoping to see the endemic Harwood's Francolin. Although several Erckel's Francolins were calling it was a little while before a Harwood's was heard but then a pair was quickly spotted standing out in the open seemingly trying to keep clear of the wet vegetation. although a little distant we



were treated to scope views as the male shouted out his raucous calls across the valley. Other specialties nearby included Black-winged Lovebird, Rüppell's Black Chat and Abyssinian Wheatear.



*Francolins in the Jemma Valley: the endemic Harwood's Francolin (left) and Erckel's Francolin (right) (Nik Borrow)*

We continued to the bottom of the valley taking in breeding plumaged Red-collared Widowbirds and Black-winged Red Bishops along the way until we found a site suitable for what was by now a late breakfast. Hemprich's Hornbills were seen well upon arrival and we left Merid to prepare one of his legendary picnic breakfasts whilst we went birding. A small stream ran through the river valley and held Common Sandpiper, Hamerkop, Wire-tailed Swallow, Grey and Mountain Wagtails. However, in particular we were on the lookout for a regional endemic, the rather plain Yellow-rumped (or perhaps more suitably named White-throated) Seedeater and scoured the thorny acacias for our quarry. After a little searching we found the seedeater but it was flighty and kept its distance.

After breakfast we returned to the bush but as it was getting hotter by the second we sought the cool shade of the river where some large fig trees provided cover and food. Here we found our first Blue-breasted Bee-eaters of the distinctive *lafresnayii* race sometimes split as Ethiopian Bee-eater, Grey-headed and African Pygmy Kingfishers and iridescent Greater and Lesser Blue-eared Starlings which were all colourful additions to the list. Vinaceous, Laughing and Namaqua Doves and Blue-spotted Wood Dove were seen along with Bruce's Green Pigeon. Long-tailed African Paradise Flycatchers flitted to and fro and the overhanging bushes provided cover for small birds coming down to drink and during our watch we noted Diederik Cuckoo, Black-billed Barbet, Black-crowned Tchagra, Ethiopian Boubou, Common Bulbul, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Abyssinian White-eye, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Variable Sunbird, Sahel Bush Sparrow, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Village Weaver, Red-billed Quelea, Cut-throat Finch, African Firefinch, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, African Silverbill, Village Indigobird, Pin-tailed Whydah, Yellow-fronted Canary and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. There was also evidence of Palearctic migration with familiar species such as Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Willow and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, Eurasian Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Northern, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Western Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit and Ortolan Bunting.

Along the Jemma River we found Senegal Thick-knee, Spur-winged Lapwing, Yellow-billed Stork, Little Egret, African Fish Eagle and Giant and Pied Kingfishers whilst other species noted in the valley included Wahlberg's Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Northern Red-billed and Grey Hornbills, Little Bee-eater, Common Kestrel, Black (sometimes split as Blue) Saw-wing, Common House Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Singing Cisticola, Little Rock Thrush and Long-billed Pipit. We also managed good views of the nominate race of Stout Cisticola which lives here in acacia scrub on the hillsides and although seemingly identical to

the races further south on the grasslands plains of East Africa sounds very different which suggests that a cryptic species is lurking. Before returning to Debre Birhan we stopped to scan the wide-open fields that cover the flat table lands where we hunted out Blanford's (sometimes split as Erlanger's) and Thekla's Larks and also spotted our first Blue-winged Geese.

We headed out of Debre Birhan the next day and back towards Addis Ababa before turning south down into the Rift Valley where we paid a visit to the first of a series of lakes that are all of very different characters. The first stop was at Lake Cheleleka on the outskirts of Bishoftu (the town previously known as Debre Zeit). Because of all of this season's heavy rain the lake was full to bursting and perhaps strangely because of the abundance of water there was not much in the way of waterfowl. A lone Southern Pochard was seen briefly before it dived never to re-emerge but we had better luck with a few White-backed Ducks and a single female Maccoa Duck although they were all distant. A pair of desirable Black Crowned Cranes performed a decent fly-by before disappearing completely in the well vegetated marsh and other waterbirds included Fulvous Whistling Duck, Spur-winged Goose, Knob-billed Duck, Red-knobbed Coot, Little Grebe, Green Sandpiper, African Sacred Ibis and Squacco Heron. Both Northern Red and Yellow-crowned Bishops were in stunning breeding plumage buzzing around like little fireballs and giant bumble-bees respectively. A Black Sparrowhawk dashed through whilst Western Marsh Harriers quartered the lake and Palearctic migrant Black Kite, European Bee-eater, Sand Martin and Red-throated Pipit were seen. A single female Chestnut Sparrow was noted and the rain meant that Beautiful Sunbird and Rüppell's and Chestnut Weavers were all in breeding plumage.



*Around the Rift Valley lakes, we found breeding plumaged Rüppell's Weavers (left) and on fresh water Lake Ziway a moulting Black-necked Grebe (right) was found! (Nik Borrow)*

Further south we stopped for a tasty lunch on the shores of fresh water Lake Ziway where a moulting plumaged Black-necked Grebe was a little unexpected. During our al fresco lunch under the huge fig trees we could carry on birding and noted Western Black-headed Batis, Northern Puffback, Red-faced Crombec, Rattling Cisticola, Rüppell's Starling and Little Weaver whilst out on the lake itself we found African Pygmy Goose, Mourning Collared Dove, Black-winged Stilt, African Jacana, Grey-headed Gull, Whiskered Tern, Reed and White-breasted Cormorants, African Darter, Striated Heron, Black Heron, Woodland and Malachite Kingfishers, Red-billed Oxpecker and Palearctic migrant Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull and Black-headed Wagtails.

The long journey had taken us through a varied landscape and birds seen on the journey included Pied Avocet, Crowned Lapwing, African Spoonbill, Western Cattle Egret, Black-headed Heron, Great and Intermediate Egrets, Purple, Lilac-breasted and European Rollers, Brown-throated Martin, Superb Starling,



White-headed Buffalo-Weaver and White-browed Sparrow-Weaver. We were to see many of these again on the trip but a few were bus only ticks as it was not always easy to stop on the busy roads and we were severely limited by time constraints. We did however try to relocate a pair of Clapperton's Francolins that flew towards the bus and landed nearby in a crop field but our efforts were thwarted by the throng of children that always seem to appear at such times! We arrived at Langano at the end of the day and settled into our cabins for a two night's stay.

We were up at dawn to await the arrival of the Yellow-fronted Parrots. This is one of the best places to see this increasingly threatened endemic, and they appeared on cue as the sun rose. Initially these colourful birds only allowed some fly-by views but by the late morning we finally managed to see some perched individuals. During the day we explored the various habitats that the area had to offer. Our morning walk took us through open acacia scrub into some thick, cool woodlands and a wide variety of species were added to our list. Due to the high number of fruiting figs frugivores were conspicuous and we saw the near-endemic White-cheeked Turaco, Banded and Double-toothed Barbets, the endemic 'brown-faced' form of Bare-faced Go-away-bird, which is treated as a separate species by some authors as well as pretty little endemic Black-winged Lovebirds, enormous Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, African Olive and Bruce's Green Pigeons and Blue-spotted Wood Dove.



*A morning of sunshine allowed us great opportunities to see regional endemic White-cheeked Turaco (left) and the nominate form of Bare-faced Go-away-bird sometimes split as Brown-faced Go-away-bird (right) which in turn becomes an Ethiopian endemic. (Nik Borrow)*

The open acacia woodland held a wealth of birds and in particular we were pleased to find a group of near endemic White-rumped Babblers showed well along with near-endemic Black-billed Wood Hoopoes. Some showy Red-throated Wrynecks posed nicely for us and more widespread species included Crested Francolin, Ring-necked Dove, Western Banded Snake Eagle, Black Scimitarbill, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Striped Kingfisher, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Red-fronted Barbet, Brown-backed Honeybird, Lesser and Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Nubian, Cardinal and Eastern Grey Woodpeckers, Grey Kestrel, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Brubru, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Grey-backed Fiscal, Glossy-backed Drongo, White-winged Black Tit, Mosque Swallow, Buff-bellied Warbler, Rufous Chatterer, Violet-backed, Red-winged and Slender-billed Starlings, African Thrush, Northern Black and Grey Flycatchers, Collared Sunbird, Thick-billed Weaver, Spectacled and Red-headed Weavers and Reichenow's Seedeater. Palearctic migrants included two Semi-collared Flycatchers as well as Common (Steppe) Buzzard, Eurasian Hoopoe, Eurasian Hobby, Icterine Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Common Nightingale.

Nearby in the tall dark woodlands, we found Scaly Francolin, Lemon Dove, Green Malkoha, Narina Trogon, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Rüppell's Robin-Chat and Red-capped Robin-Chat whilst down at the lakeshore there was a selection of familiar wetland species such as Senegal Thick-knees resting on the rocky shore as well as new species that included Common Ringed Plover, Common Greenshank, Hadada Ibis and Grey and Purple Herons.

We broke for a lunch break but the afternoon brought heavy rain again and it was mostly a wash out although a juvenile Klaas's Cuckoo being fed by its host parent, a Tawny-flanked Prinia was a fascinating find. Fortunately, it was a dry evening and a male Slender-tailed Nightjar started the ball rolling for a night time session. We were treated with some marvellous views of a singing male perched above our heads as an African Scops Owl started calling. We tracked it down quite quickly and again watched it singing perched on a large bough above our heads and once everyone had had their fill we went on to look for a Northern White-faced Owl that had been heard calling the previous night. Once again, our luck was in as the bird appeared in response to playback and this beautiful owl also allowed some amazing views.



Night birding at Langano produced both African Scops Owl (left) and the lovely Northern White-faced Owl (right) (Nik Borrow)

The next day we swiftly departed for the long journey into the Bale Mountains. It is a fascinating drive that leads up out of the Rift Valley past giant flowering *Echinops* thistles and hulking Silvery-cheeked Hornbills and then through seemingly endless wheat fields before climbing up into the thin air of the Bale Mountains themselves. Casual roadside stops produced our only somewhat distant Black-winged Lapwings of the trip as well as Black-winged Kite, African Harrier-Hawk, Whinchat and Fan-tailed Widowbird. In the Gaysay grasslands Blue-winged Geese were finally seen well and at close quarters and our first comical Rouget's Rails were seen. As we searched for elusive Abyssinian Longclaws we found the striking *albofasciatus* race of African Stonechat and plenty of Ethiopian Cisticolas, breeding plumaged Yellow Bishops and Common Waxbill.

At the park headquarters we admired the bold and tame Mountain Nyala and a few Menelik's Bushbuck before being taken to see a family of African Wood Owls at their daytime roost. A tame Abyssinian Ground



Thrush allowed prolonged looks and amongst the tall junipers and mighty *Hagenia* trees we sought out the noisy endemic Abyssinian Catbird, a party of near-endemic White-backed Black Tits, pretty Brown Woodland Warblers as well as Heuglin's White-eye, Abyssinian Thrush and Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher. During what proved to be a somewhat longer hike than first imagined to a stake-out for the *dillonii* form of Cape Eagle-Owl (sometimes split as part of a separate species Mackinder's Eagle-Owl) we also saw our first Chestnut-naped Francolins and a splendid little female Abyssinian Woodpecker. Of the highly desirable Abyssinian Owl there was sadly no sign at all and as the dull and damp afternoon was doing little to help our birding we continued the journey to our hotel in Goba.



Birds of the Bale Mountain forests included the striking Abyssinian Ground Thrush (left) and the desirable regional endemic Abyssinian Woodpecker (right) (Nik Borrow)

One of the highlights of the trip is a visit to the magical Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains National Park, but the next day the cloud and rain had closed in and as our coaster bus started climbing the highest all-weather road in Africa we became so engulfed in low cloud or fog to the extent that we could see virtually nothing from the windows of the bus. We drove across the plateau and fortunately found some endemic Spot-breasted Lapwings right next to the bus and a party of Red-billed Chough and a Lanner Falcon was seen but the weather seemed to be turning worse rather than better so it seemed best to cut our losses and head back down to the park headquarters. We stopped along the way and obtained good views of the *griseiventris* race of Brown Parisoma, which was once mooted as being worthy of specific status as the rain came tumbling down.

Back down below the cloud the rain ceased and some good news came to tell us that the local guide at the park headquarters had located an Abyssinian Owl. The slopes of the forest were by now a mud bath and the walk to the bird was not easy but eventually we reached the spot and the owl, high in a *Hagenia* tree was safely ticked off! We spent the rest of the afternoon back on the grasslands where we soon located a fine Abyssinian Longclaw but there was little else new seen that day.

We woke to a better and more promising day as we could see from our hotel that the tops of the mountain were clear and this meant that we had the chance to salvage some of what was lost. We climbed up through a zone of giant heath and *Hypericum* before this gave way to the tussock grass, cushion plants and Giant Lobelias of the afro-alpine zone. Where the plateau levels out at around 4,000 metres in the distance we could see Tullu Deemtu (4,377m), the second highest peak in Ethiopia. In the fresh morning air, we spotted a single Montane Francolin which allowed prolonged study and some of the many small marshes held Yellow-billed Duck and Ruddy Shelduck, a mostly Palearctic species that occur in the Bale Mountains at their only sub-Saharan outpost. All around us Blick's Grass Rats raced across the ground only to dive down

a burrow as soon as we clapped eyes on them but we did manage to get good looks at the most peculiar Giant Mole Rat during the rare occasions that it ventures out of its burrow. However, of its main predator the endangered Ethiopian Wolf there was tragically no sign and distressingly we learned that an outbreak of distemper had killed off a number of animals and seemingly the population alongside the road across the plateau had been hit most hard.



*We caught up with the highly desirable Abyssinian Owl (left) in the Bale Mountains at our second attempt. If split from populations on Mount Elgon on the Ugandan/Kenyan borders then the Moorland Francolin (right) becomes another Ethiopian endemic. (Nik Borrow)*

It was time to leave the Bale Mountains and head south to Negele, we continued on past Tullu Deemtu with panoramic views every way we looked and then headed down the steep sides of the plateau into what is left of the once magnificent Harenna Forest. Most of the huge *Hagenia* trees on the higher slopes with their moss-encrusted, gnarled old trunks have long since been cut down as the human population has grown and now threatens the tall and dense forests lower down. At some brief stops in the middle of the forest we had success in finding Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Ethiopian Oriole, Dark-capped Bulbul, 'Brown' Black Saw-wing, African Hill Babbler and Black-and-white Mannikin.

After leaving the forest the drive took us through some rolling hills and wild and remote bush country. We were hoping to reach a site for Ruspoli's Turaco but the poor state of the road meant that our slow progress was greatly hindered and we sadly did not arrive there before nightfall. A few birds were seen from the moving vehicle such as White-bellied Go-away-bird, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Abyssinian Ground and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills and Red-and-yellow Barbet but basically, we were unable to stop simply because we had to reach our destination of Negele which we managed to do but well into the evening.

The morning found us on the Liben plains at first light scanning the grasslands for larks. The songs and calls of Somali Short-toed Larks could be heard as soon as we arrived on the plains and we quickly managed some superb views. We were on the lookout for a critically endangered species that has undergone a change in its taxonomy in recent years. Once known as Sidamo or Liben Lark it is now thought that this particular form is synonymous with the 'almost mythical' Archer's Lark and the two forms are now currently



lumped as a monotypic species. We headed towards a distant figure who was already tracking down the lark for us and happily this year the bird proved easy to find. We watched it displaying in full song flight, hanging in the air with dangling legs and parachuting back down to the short grass plains where it was a treat to admire its intricately patterned, quail-like plumage and we were able to study this highly localised and particularly endangered species for as long as we wished. Also, out on the plains we found the striking White-crowned Starling as well as Kori Bustard, Temminck's Courser, Steppe Eagle, Pallid Harrier, Pectoral-patch Cisticola and Plain-backed Pipit before enjoying one of Merid's splendid bush breakfasts.



*The 'Critically Endangered' Archer's Lark was seen fairly easily this year but this species surely leads a fragile existence and we wondered how much longer it can survive. (Nik Borrow)*

After breakfast we explored the more bushed areas of the plains by bus and were particularly pleased to find some endemic White-tailed Swallows gathering mud for their nests from the edges of a large puddle. In the same area were also Helmeted Guineafowl, Yellow-necked Spurrow, White-browed Coucal, Lilac-breasted Roller of the blue-breasted form *lorti*, Taita Fiscal, Boran Cisticola, Shelley's Sparrow and Grey-capped Social Weaver. However, we were keen to move on to another area of bush country where we hoped to see Salvadori's Seedeater, another Ethiopian endemic. The thornbush was initially quiet but after some searching we came across an active bird party which we followed for quite a while. The seedeater evaded us but we did see a wonderful selection of species including 'Central African' Eurasian Hoopoe, Grey-headed Batis, Three-streaked Tchagra, White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed Oriole, Fork-tailed Drongo, Acacia Tit, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Dodson's Bulbul, Northern Brownbul, Somali Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Pale White-eye, White-browed Scrub Robin, Tsavo Sunbird, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, Purple Grenadier and Somali Bunting. The day was really heating up by now and we still had not seen the prize bird so Merid suggested moving to a slightly different area and after a short while we heard a Salvadori's Seedeater calling and soon after we finally set eyes on a pair of the birds. It had taken almost



four hours to find but happily the outcome had been a successful one and the struggle was immediately purged from our memories (well... almost!). We headed back to Negele on a mission to find some White-winged Collared Doves at a new site that Merid had found but sadly the birds did not seem to be at home and the only new species that we added before dusk fell were Slate-coloured Boubou and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver.



*Endemics in the Negele area; White-tailed Swallow (left) collecting mud for its nest and Salvadori's Seedeater (right) a pretty little finch that was finally seen after a long search! (Nik Borrow)*

Our next destination was to be Yabello but the route that we were hoping to take was not open to us because of the heavy rains and worries about security along the way so we had no choice but to stick with the main roads which meant a huge diversion heading northwest and then doubling back south. We also had problems with fuel as there was no electricity in the town which meant that the fuel stations were out of action so our departure from Negele was somewhat delayed. Eventually we managed to get enough fuel to get us to the next town and we were on our way.



*The gorgeous endemic Ruspoli's Turaco (left) was encountered on the long diverted drive towards Yabello, a journey that also enabled us to see some roadside White-headed Vultures (right) (Nik Borrow)*



One advantage of this route was that it gave us the chance of catching up with the previously missed Ruspoli's Turaco, the jewel in the crown of the Ethiopian endemics. This rare species has a very restricted range and we now found ourselves in the midst of it. Our success was almost instantaneous and we enjoyed some close views of no less than four individuals of this attractive species. The Prince had collected the turaco in either 1892 or 1893 but was then promptly killed by an elephant without ever passing on the details of the type locality! Fortunately, we were spared his fate! The journey to Yabello was somewhat tedious and uneventful birdwise, the highlight perhaps being the enormous near-endemic Thick-billed Ravens outside the hotel that we stopped at for breakfast and some close White-headed and Lappet-faced Vultures on a carcass by the roadside were a treat! We reached Yabello after dark however and settled into our rooms for a two night's stay.

With just one full day in the Yabello area we chose to start our first day on a quest to see the recently split (from Chestnut-naped) Black-fronted Francolin. Our journey took us to a rocky escarpment in the Mega Mountains where we ensured that we arrived very early in order to pinpoint the francolins calling from the cliffs. The site made another great picnic breakfast location and while Merid saw to the eggs and porridge we tried to spot at least one of the calling birds on the escarpment above us. The slopes were densely vegetated and at first all of the calling birds seemed to be hidden inside the bushes but fortuitously we were situated in a good place for a francolin started calling and posed nicely for us out on the top of the rocks so that excellent scope views were had by all and our success was suitably celebrated with a super breakfast surrounded by francolins!



*In the Mega area, the recently split and virtually endemic Black-fronted Francolin (left) showed well for us as did an obliging Bare-eyed Thrush (right) (Nik Borrow)*

Also seen in this area we watched a Peregrine Falcon sat up on the cliff tops and small numbers of Bristle-crowned Starlings were seen. Noisy Spotted Palm Thrushes were conspicuous and an obliging Bare-eyed Thrush showed well. A pair of Black Cuckooshrike was a good find as this is an uncommon bird in Ethiopia and a 'grey-headed' sparrow was deemed to show more characters of Parrot-billed Sparrow than Swainson's. Colourful Vitelline Masked Weavers were seen and a juvenile Gabar Goshawk was possibly hunting them whilst overhead we spotted Common Swift and a lone Egyptian Vulture.

We next visited the Soda Plains where we found another primary target, the must-see Stresemann's Bushcrow. Described as recently as 1938 and confined to an area of about 6,000 sq. km around Yabello, the bird's extremely restricted range has long been a puzzle, but it is now thought to be climate related. The precise area that it inhabits is slightly cooler and drier than areas of apparently similar habitat in southern Ethiopia. We watched a family party of these splendid creatures for as long as we wished and then looked

around in search of more birds and were treated to great views of the pretty little Banded Parisoma as well as Blue-naped Mousebird, Pygmy Batis, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Somali Fiscal, Foxy Lark, Grey Wren-Warbler and White-browed Scrub Robin.



*There is nothing else quite like a Streseemann's Bushcrow in Africa and we were treated to marvellous views of this very special Ethiopian endemic. (Nik Borrow)*

It had been fairly dry up till now but once again the showers of rain started which interrupted our views of a small party of some fine Somali Coursers. Fortunately, they stayed around until the rain had stopped and this sighting was quickly followed by a flock of obliging Short-tailed Larks busy attacking the soil for food with their heavyweight bills. Our discovery of some Shelley's Starlings also disturbed a pair of Three-banded Coursers and we watched these beautiful birds until a heavy deluge drove us back to the shelter of the bus. Not too much further on more endemic White-tailed Swallows made an appearance and when the rain stopped we enjoyed better views of Shelley's Sparrow and Somali Crow as well as Pale Prinia and Black-capped Social Weavers.

Moving on to a very different habitat we enjoyed some sunshine and a rush of new species gave us a showy pair of Red-naped Bushshrikes and some skulking Scaly Chatterers as well as Buff-crested Bustard, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Red-bellied Parrot, Red-fronted Warbler, Hunter's and *albiventris* (white-bellied) Variable Sunbirds, Green-winged Pytilia, White-bellied Canary and the hulking Northern Grosbeak Canary. Continuing to play hide and seek with the sun some other roadside stops gave us a pair of Pringle's Puffback, a single Tiny Cisticola and some nesting Speke's Weavers before rain stopped play for the last time that day.



We spent the late afternoon back at our lodge where a last flurry of species revolved around a Pearl-spotted Owlet that attracted in a number of small birds including Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Upcher's Warbler, Golden-breasted Starling, Eastern Violet-backed and Marico Sunbirds. Just as dusk fell a pair of White-rumped Swift flew over and in the darkness, we hunted out a lovely little Donaldson Smith's Nightjar that allowed close approach. With the weather conditions it had been a challenging day but we had certainly seen the cream of what the area had to offer.

It was time to leave the south and head northwards to Awassa taking in a roadside Woolly-necked Stork en route. The road was still under construction for a good proportion of the latter half of the journey, which slowed our progress but we still managed to reach Awassa for lunchtime. During that afternoon and before breakfast the following morning we explored the garden of our hotel and the reedy fringes of Lake Awassa itself. Fortunately, the much-wanted African Spotted Creeper fell very quickly and performed extremely well and we also found the hulking Blue-headed Coucal and colourful White-browed Robin-Chat as well as some Horus Swifts flying overhead. By the lakeside itself, the jetty and shore were heaving with local people enjoying the ambience of a rainy afternoon by lake but despite the noise and activity a number of very tame species were seen. Dainty African Pygmy Geese floated on the lake amongst the same lily pads that the African Jacanas trotted across and the squeals and clatters from countless Marabou Storks and yodelling cries of African Fish Eagles filled the air. Black Crakes skittered everywhere and there were also White-faced Whistling Duck, Pink-backed Pelican, African Swamphen and Allen's Gallinule and Bronze Mannikin.



*Two much-wanted birds were seen at Lake Awasa; Allen's Gallinule (left) was on the lake shore and the superb African Spotted Creeper (right) was found inside our hotel garden. (Nik Borrow)*

Our final day took us back north but we attempted to make a short detour into Lake Abiata National Park. The roads unfortunately proved unsuitable for our coaster bus and we were thwarted in our attempts to reach the lake shore. Small numbers of Bright's (split from Grant's) Gazelles were seen but little else during our brief visit. A lunch time stop at Lake Ziway also produced nothing new and then it was simply a long drive back to Addis Ababa where our tour ended.

Despite the daily rain and the problems that came with it this had been a very successful trip. Ethiopia has been given a terrible reputation to recover from with the damage done by its wars, droughts and famines. This is a country of immense beauty, fertility and history although with an estimated population of over 113 million (with a median age of 18.8!) this trip had seemed more like a 'birds and people tour' at times! With the population growing at a staggering estimated 2.9% the pressure on the country's poorly protected National Parks, reserves and natural world will surely intensify. It is perhaps particularly telling that this year very few oxpeckers and fewer vultures were seen and populations of Blue-winged Geese, Wattled Ibis and



Stresemann's Bush-crow seemed significantly lower than previous tours. Perhaps this is yet another destination that should be seen before it is too late? Many thanks must be given to Merid and our driver who worked long hours and made it possible to see most of the popularly accepted endemics possible on the route as well as many other much sought-after species. As always, the variety and grandeur of the scenery had been awesome and the people were friendly and welcoming. With its tame and abundant avifauna, a trip to Ethiopia is surely one of the best birding experiences available and this trip will certainly be remembered for many years to come.



*Lake Shala viewpoint – a last look over Ethiopia! (above)*

*Our group birding on the Liben Plains under clear blue skies (below) (Nik Borrow)*







The pretty little Donaldson Smith's Nightjar that allowed such amazing views at Yabello. (Nik Borrow)

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

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

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

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

### BIRDS

Total of bird species recorded: 419

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* Just a few widespread sightings.

**Moorland Francolin (Montane F)** *Scleroptila psilolaema* Just one male was seen well in the Bale Mountains.

**Crested Francolin** *Dendroperdix sephaena* First seen well at Lake Langano.

**Scaly Francolin** *Pternistis squamatus* 1 seen briefly running away through the forest at Lake Langano.

**Clapperton's Francolin** *Pternistis clappertoni* A pair in flight seen by some from the bus at Lake Langano.

**Harwood's Francolin** *Pternistis harwoodi* Excellent scope views of a pair in the Jemma Valley.

**Chestnut-naped Francolin** *Pternistis castaneicollis* This regional endemic was easy to see in the Bale Mountains.

**Black-fronted Francolin** *Pternistis atrifrons* Excellent views of this endemic in the Mega area.

**Erckel's Francolin** *Pternistis erckelii* Great looks at Gemassa Gedal and in the Jemma Valley.

**Yellow-necked Spurfowl (Y-n Francolin)** *Pternistis leucoscepus* Small numbers in the Negele area.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* (H) Heard only in the Bale Mountains.

**White-faced Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* 40+ on Lake Awassa.

**Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* Small numbers on Lakes Cheleleka and Ziway.

**White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leuconotus* 2 were scoped on Lake Cheleleka.

**Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*** Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley Lakes.  
**Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*** 40+ on Lake Cheleleka.  
**Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyanoptera*** Endemic; only in the highlands and still appears to be declining.



*Crested Francolin at Langano (left) and the endemic Blue-winged Goose on the Sanetti Plateau (right) (Nik Borrow)*

**Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*** Common and widespread throughout the tour.  
**Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*** Small numbers were seen in the Bale Mountains.  
**African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*** 1 at Lake Ziway and a pair on Lake Awassa.  
**Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*** 3 on the Sanetti Plateau were seen by all.  
**Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*** 1 briefly on Lake Cheleleka.  
**Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*** 1 female on Lake Cheleleka.  
**Donaldson Smith's Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni*** Great views of a male in the Yabello area.  
**Slender-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus clarus*** A singing male seen well at Langano.  
**Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*** Small numbers over Gemassa Gedal and Mega.  
**Mottled Swift *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*** Small numbers over Gemassa Gedal.  
**Common Swift (Eurasian S) *Apus apus*** Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant over Mega.  
**Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae*** Seen at Gemassa Gedal.  
**Horus Swift *Apus horus*** Seen over Lake Awassa.  
**White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*** 2 for Nik and Carmine over our lodge at Yabello.  
**White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis*** Our best views of this regional endemic were at Langano.  
**Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*** Amazing close views of this endemic in the Negelle area.  
**Bare-faced Go-away-bird (Brown-f G-a-b) *Corythaixoides personatus*** Great views, an endemic species if split.  
**White-bellied Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster*** A most distinctive dry country species.  
**Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*** At least 12 of these large bustards were seen on the Liben Plains.  
**White-bellied Bustard (Northern W-b B) *Eupodotis senegalensis* (H)** Heard on the Liben Plains.  
**Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana*** 3 seen in the Yabello area including a displaying male.  
**Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus*** Seen well at Awassa.  
**White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*** Small numbers seen at Negele and in the Yabello area.  
**Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares australis*** 1 was seen in the forest at Langano.  
**Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*** 1 in the Yabello area.  
**Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius*** Seen in the Jemma Valley and again at Lake Abiata.  
**Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*** A juvenile being fed by a Tawny-flanked Prinia at Langano, heard elsewhere.  
**Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*** A few Palearctic migrants seen in the Jemma Valley and again at Lake Abiata.  
**Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*** Only 'domestic' birds noted.  
**Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*** Hang your binoculars up if you miss this one in Ethiopia!



**White-collared Pigeon** *Columba albitorques* An abundant regional endemic of the highlands.  
**African Olive Pigeon (Rameron P)** *Columba arquatrix* 1 in flight at Langano.  
**Lemon Dove (Cinnamon D)** *Aplopelia larvata* (LO) 2 sightings at Langano but leaders only.  
**Dusky Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia lugens* An abundant species in the highlands.  
**Mourning Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens* Seen well at Lakes Ziway and Awassa.  
**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* A common and widespread species.  
**Ring-necked Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* A common dry country dove constantly telling us to “work harder”!  
**Vinaceous Dove** *Streptopelia vinacea* Seen well in the Jemma Valley.  
**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* A common and widespread species.  
**Emerald-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur chalcospilos* Only seen at Yabello.  
**Blue-spotted Wood Dove** *Turtur afer* Seen in the Jemma Valley and at Langano.  
**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Small numbers in appropriate habitat.  
**Bruce’s Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia* First seen in the Jemma Valley and again at Langano.  
**Rouget’s Rail** *Rougetius rougetii* This regional endemic was confiding in the Bale Mountains.



*Rouget’s Rail (left) and White-collared Pigeon (right) are both endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea. (Nik Borrow)*

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostra* Easily seen at Lake Awassa.  
**African Swamphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* 1 was seen well at Lake Awassa.  
**Allen’s Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* An adult was seen well at Lake Awassa.  
**Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C)** *Fulica cristata* Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes and in the Bale Mountains.  
**Black Crowned Crane** *Balearica pavonina* A pair was seen at Lake Cheleleka.  
**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.  
**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* A moulting adult was seen on Lake Ziway.  
**Flamingo sp.** *Phoenicopterus roseus* / *Phoeniconaias minor* Distant unidentified birds on Awassa and Abiata.  
**Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis* Seen in the Jemma Valley and Langano.  
**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* (NL) Just 1 seen by some at Lake Ziway.  
**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* (NL). Bob saw 1 from the bus on Lake Koka.  
**Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* Common and widespread in suitable habitat.  
**Black-winged Lapwing (B-w Plover)** *Vanellus melanopterus* A poor showing with just 1 small flock in the highlands.  
**Crowned Lapwing (C Plover)** *Vanellus coronatus* Seen in appropriate habitat from the Rift Valley to Yabello.  
**Spot-breasted Lapwing** *Vanellus melanocephalus* Small numbers of this endemic on the Sanetti Plateau.  
**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Langano.  
**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* Easy to see on the Rift Valley lakes.  
**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* 1 of these Palearctic migrants on Lake Ziway.  
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*** Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant in suitable habitat.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*** Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Lake Ziway.

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*** 1 of these Palearctic migrants at Langano.

**Somali Courser *Cursorius somalensis*** Good looks at 4 on the Soda Plains.

**Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*** At least 15 on the Liben Plains and 6 at Lake Abiata.

**Three-banded Courser (Heuglin's C) *Rhinoptilus cinctus*** A pair seen well on the Soda Plains.

**Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*** 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen at Lake Ziway.

**Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*** Small numbers on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*** 1 seen at Lake Ziway.

**Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*** Small numbers seen in the Rift Valley.

**Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*** 1 seen en route to Yirga Chefe.

**Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer*** Common around the Rift Valley lakes and towns.

**Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus*** Small numbers were seen mainly on Lake Ziway.

**White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*** Small numbers on the lakes Ziway, Langano and Awassa.

**African Darter *Anhinga rufa*** Small numbers on Lake Ziway.

**African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*** A common and widespread bird in the highlands and Rift Valley.

**Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*** Small numbers were seen mainly around the Rift Valley lakes.

**Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata*** A regional endemic regularly encountered in the highlands.



A pair of Three-banded Coursers were watched 'wading' on the Soda Plains (left) Wattled Ibis is a common and easily seen regional endemic (right) (Nik Borrow)

**African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*** Small numbers noted on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata*** Singletons at Lake Ziway.

**Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*** Good numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*** Regularly encountered in suitable habitat throughout the tour.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*** A few were seen at Lake Langano.

**Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala* (NL)** 1 was seen by some in the Rift Valley en route to Langano.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*** Small numbers encountered at lakes Langano and Awassa.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba*** Small numbers were seen on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Intermediate Egret (Yellow-billed E) *Ardea [intermedia] brachyrhyncha*** 1 on Lake Koka.

**Black Heron (Black E) *Egretta ardesiaca*** 1 was seen at Lake Ziway.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*** Small numbers were seen mainly on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*** Commonly encountered at any wetland habitat throughout the tour.

**Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*** Seen well on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*** Small numbers at Lake Awassa.

**Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*** Just 2 roadside sightings during the tour.

**African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus*** A scattering of widespread sightings during the tour.



**Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus*** 2 immature birds seen at Debre Birhan and Jemma Valley.  
**Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*** 1 near Mega.  
**Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*** The most numerous and widespread vulture.  
**White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*** Widespread sightings in small numbers during the tour.  
**Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli*** Just a couple were seen as we travelled towards Debre Birhan.  
**White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*** 3 as we drove from Kibre Mengist to Dilla.  
**Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*** Small numbers between Kibre Mengist to Dilla and south of Yabello.



*White-headed Vulture (left) and Lappet-faced Vulture (right) are sadly now both seriously endangered species. (Nik Borrow)*

**Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*** 1 was seen well at Langanjo.  
**Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraetus wahlbergi*** 1 was seen in flight high over the Jemma Valley.  
**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle *Hieraetus ayresii*** 1 in flight over the Hareenna Forest.  
**Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*** The most commonly encountered eagle during this tour.  
**Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*** This Palearctic migrant was seen over the Liben Plains and in the Yabello area.  
**Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*** 1 juvenile at Mega.  
**Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*** Just 3 widespread sightings.  
**Eastern Chanting Goshawk (Eastern Pale C G) *Melierax poliopterus*** Small numbers in the south.  
**Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*** Singletons in flight over Cheleleka Lake and the Bale Mountains.  
**Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*** Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant during the tour.  
**Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*** Just 3 sightings of this Palearctic migrant during the tour.  
**Black Kite *Milvus migrans*** Possibly overlooked but 1 was seen at Lake Cheleleka.  
**Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*** Common to abundant throughout the tour.  
**African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*** Easily seen around the Rift Valley lakes.  
**Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus*** 4 of these Palearctic migrants flying over Langanjo.  
**Mountain Buzzard *Buteo oreophilus*** A pair was seen displaying over the Hareenna Forest.  
**Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*** Both morphs of this common and distinctive raptor in the highlands.  
**African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*** Great views of 1 at night at Langanjo.  
**Northern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis leucotis*** A fantastic nocturnal encounter at Langanjo.  
**Cape Eagle-Owl *Bubo capensis*** Superb scope views near Dinsho at a known stakeout.  
**African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii*** Daytime views of roosting birds in the Bale Mountains.  
**Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*** This diurnal owl was seen well at Yabello.  
**Abyssinian Owl *Asio abyssinicus*** Superb views in the Bale Mountains at the second attempt.  
**Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*** Common and widespread but avoids dry bush country.  
**Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus*** Small numbers seen by all in the Yabello area.  
**Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina*** A pair with a juvenile was seen well at Langanjo.  
**Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*** Sightings of Palearctic migrants at Langanjo.  
**Central African Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] senegalensis*** Resident birds were common in appropriate habitat.  
**Black-billed Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus somaliensis*** Frequent garrulous groups first seen at Langanjo.

**Black Scimitarbill (B Wood-hoopoe) *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*** Seen well at Langano.

**Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor* (NL)** The race *cabanisi* seen by some in the Yabello area.

**Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus*** Seen well on the drive to Negele and again in the Yabello area.

**Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus*** Becoming more common in the far south.

**Von der Decken's Hornbill *Tockus deckeni*** Small numbers from Langano and the Negele area.

**Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris* (NL)** Seen by some on the non-stop drive to Negele.

**Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichii*** First seen well in the Jemma Valley.

**African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*** Only small numbers in the Jemma Valley.

**Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis*** Especially common in the enormous fig trees at Langano.

**Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R) *Coracias naevius*** Just 3 sightings, all during journeys.

**Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus*** The blue-breasted race *lorti* was seen well.

**European Roller (Eurasian R) *Coracias garrulus*** 2 of these Palearctic migrants seen on journeys.

**Grey-headed Kingfisher (Chestnut-bellied K) *Halcyon leucocephala*** Seen in the Jemma Valley and at Abiata.

**Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*** Seen from Langano onwards.

**Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*** Small numbers at Lake Awassa.

**African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus*** Seen in the Jemma Valley and at Lake Awassa.

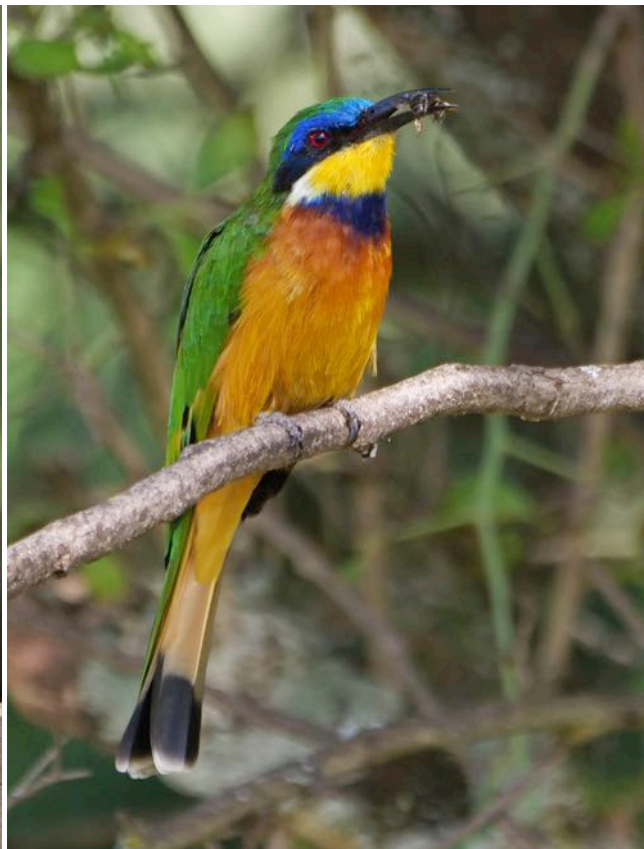
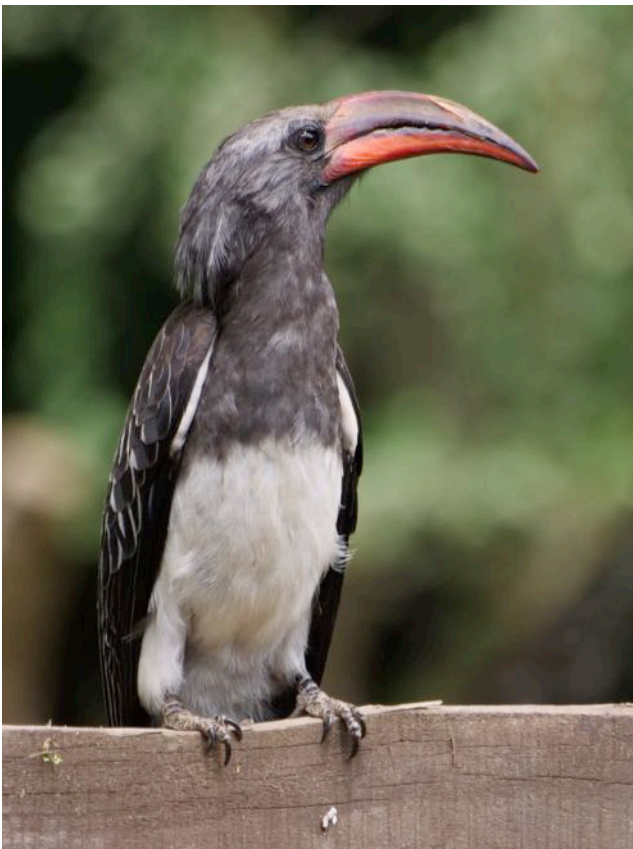
**Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*** Very common in the Rift Valley lakes.

**Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*** 1 was seen in the Jemma Valley.

**Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*** A conspicuous bird and a feature of the Rift Valley lakes.

**Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*** The brightly coloured local *cyanostictus* race seen first in the Jemma Valley.

**Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops [variegatus] lafresnayii*** Split by BirdLife *et al* as Ethiopian Bee-eater.



We had a number of chances to see Hemprich's Hornbill well! (left). Blue-breasted Bee-eaters of the distinctive race *lafresnayii* (right) are treated as a separate species by some taxonomists. (Nik Borrow)

**European Bee-eater (Eurasian B-e) *Merops apiaster*** Numbers of Palearctic migrants were regularly encountered.

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus*** First seen well at Langano.

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*** Seen in the Harena Forest.

**Red-fronted Barbet *Tricholaema diademata*** Sightings at Langano and south of Yabello.



**Black-throated Barbet** *Tricholaema melanocephala* The race *stigmatothorax* was seen well in the Yabello area.  
**Banded Barbet** *Lybius undatus* A regional endemic seen at Langanu and Awassa.  
**Black-billed Barbet** *Lybius guifsobalito* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat during the tour.  
**Double-toothed Barbet** *Lybius bidentatus* Seen at Langanu and Awassa.  
**Red-and-yellow Barbet** *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* Several seen during the race to get to Negele.  
**D'Arnaud's Barbet** *Trachyphonus darnaudii* Great views in the in the Yabello area.



The Banded Barbet (left) is endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea whereas the colourful D'Arnaud's Barbet seen in the Yabello area can be found throughout northeast Africa. (Nik Borrow)

**Brown-backed Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* 1 seen well at Langanu was a good sighting.  
**Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* At least 4 seen well at Langanu.  
**Scaly-throated Honeyguide** *Indicator variegatus* A singing bird seen well at Langanu.  
**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* 2 sightings of this Palearctic migrant at the airport and Lake Ziway.  
**Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* Wonderful views at Langanu and again at Awassa.  
**Nubian Woodpecker** *Campethera nubica* A number of widespread sightings during the tour.  
**Abyssinian Woodpecker** *Dendropicos abyssinicus* A regional endemic seen well in the Bale Mountains.  
**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* Singletons at Langanu and in the Yabello area.  
**Eastern Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos spodocephalus* Good views at Langanu and in the Yabello area.  
**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* Probably just the resident *rufescens* was recorded in the Jemma Valley.  
**Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiaceus* Singletons at Langanu and Lake Ziway.  
**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* A few sightings of this Palearctic migrant from Langanu to Yabello.  
**African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* An individual watched catching migrating dragonflies at Gemassa Gedal.  
**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* Sightings from the Bale Mountains.  
**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* 1 on the cliffs at Mega looked like a Palearctic migrant, probably *calidus*.  
**Yellow-fronted Parrot** *Poicephalus flavifrons* Good views of this Ethiopian endemic at Langanu also in the Bale.  
**Red-bellied Parrot (African Orange-b P)** *Poicephalus rufiventris* Fly-bys en route to Negele and the Yabello area.  
**Black-winged Lovebird** *Agapornis taranta* A regional endemic with widespread sightings throughout the tour.  
**Grey-headed Batis** *Batis orientalis* Seen and heard in the Negele and Yabello areas but voice is the best i.d. feature.  
**Western Black-headed Batis** *Batis erlangeri* Seen and heard well at widespread locations from Langanu to Ziway.  
**Pygmy Batis (P Puff-back Flycatcher)** *Batis perkeo* Seen well in the Yabello area.  
**Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W)** *Platysteira cyanea* Family groups at Langanu and Awassa.  
**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* (H) Heard distantly in the Negele and Yabello areas.  
**Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B)** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* Several widespread sightings.  
**Rosy-patched Bushshrike** *Telophorus cruentus* Seen well in the Yabello area.  
**Three-streaked Tchagra** *Tchagra jamesi* (NL) Carmine saw 1 in the Negele area.

**Black-crowned Tchagra (B-headed T) *Tchagra senegalus*** Seen in the Jemma Valley and at Langanu.

**Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis*** A number of widespread sightings during the tour.

**Pringle's Puffback *Dryoscopus pringlii*** This secretive bird was seen well in the Yabello area.



*Black-winged Lovebird (left) is a regional endemic that proved easy to see. Pringle's Puffback (right) is an inhabitant of the vast swathes of Commiphora thornbush of northeast Africa and isn't always as obliging as this showy male! (Nik Borrow)*

**Slate-coloured Boubou *Laniarius funebris*** A common bird of thorn bush in the Negele and Yabello areas.

**Red-naped Bushshrike *Laniarius ruficeps*** Great looks at showy birds in the Yabello area.

**Ethiopian Boubou (Tropical B) *Laniarius aethiopicus*** Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat throughout.

**Brubru *Nilaus afer*** Excellent views at Langanu and the south.

**White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus*** Close views of a family group in the Negele area.

**Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava*** Excellent views of a pair at Mega.

**Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea*** 4 seen at Langanu.

**Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli*** Common and easy to see in dry bush country.

**Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitoroides*** Commonly encountered in the Rift Valley.

**Taita Fiscal *Lanius dorsalis*** Seen well in the Negele and Yabello areas.

**Somali Fiscal *Lanius somalicus*** Common and easy to see in the Yabello area.

**Northern Fiscal *Lanius collaris*** Common and widespread throughout the highlands.

**Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*** Palearctic migrants seen in the Jemma Valley, Langanu and Awassa.

**Ethiopian Oriole (Abyssinian O) *Oriolus monacha*** A regional endemic in the Harennna Forest and Awassa.

**Black-headed Oriole (Eastern B-h O) *Oriolus larvatus*** Seen in the Negele and Yabello areas.

**Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis*** Exact limits unknown. See note.

**Glossy-backed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus divaricatus*** Exact limits unknown. See note.

**African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*** Commonly seen throughout the tour.

**Stresemann's Bushcrow *Zavattariornis stresemanni*** Wonderful views of this very striking Ethiopian endemic.

**Red-billed Chough *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*** A group of 4 in the Bale Mountains.

**Cape Crow (Cape Rook) *Corvus capensis*** Common to abundant in the highlands.

**Pied Crow *Corvus albus*** Very common and widespread.

**Somali Crow (Dwarf Raven) *Corvus edithae*** Most easily seen in the far south.

**Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus*** Common and widespread.

**Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris*** A characterful regional endemic.

**White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas*** Seen well at Langanu.

**White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus*** Great looks at this regional endemic in the Bale Mountains.

**Acacia Tit (Northern Grey T) *Parus thruppi*** Several chances to get good looks in the south.

**Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus musculus*** Just 1 seen in the Negele area.



**Foxy Lark** *Mirafra alopex* Seen well in the Yabello area.



*White-backed Black Tit (left) is an Ethiopian-Eritrean endemic whereas Foxy Lark (right) ranges throughout East Africa. (Nik Borrow)*

**Archer's Lark (Sidamo L, Liben L)** *Heteromirafra archeri* Seen easily on the Liben plains with local help.

**Short-tailed Lark** *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* A small flock of about 10 birds was seen well on the Soda Plains.

**Thekla's Lark** *Galerida theklae* An easily seen highland species.

**Blanford's Lark (Erlanger's L)** *Calandrella [blanfordi] erlangeri* An endemic form seen in the Debre Birhan area.

**Somali Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella somalica* 40+ seen on the Liben Plains.

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* White-vented birds from the west highlands and the Rift Valley.

**Dodson's Bulbul** *Pycnonotus dodsoni* The dry thorn bush version.

**Dark-capped Bulbul** *Pycnonotus tricolor* Yellow-vented birds in the southeastern highlands.

**Northern Brownbul** *Phyllastrephus strepitans* Easily seen near Negelle.

**Black Saw-wing (Blue S)** *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] pristoptera* Apparently breeding in the Jemma Valley cliffs.

**Black Saw-wing (Brown S)** *Psalidoprocne [pristoptera] antinorii* Brief views in the Hareenna Forest.

**Brown-throated Martin (Plain M)** *Riparia paludicola* Most numerous in the Rift Valley.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* This Palearctic migrant was abundant and obviously on the move.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* Scattered sightings in small numbers often associated with water.

**White-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo megaensis* Small numbers of this endemic on the Liben Plains and the Yabello area.

**Rock Martin** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* Widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

**Lesser Striped Swallow** *Cecropis abyssinica* A few seen during the journey to Yabello.

**Mosque Swallow** *Cecropis senegalensis* Seen well at Langanano.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* The resident *melanocrissus* in the Bale Mountains.

**Red-faced Crombec** *Sylvietta whytii* Good views at lakes Ziway and Langanano.

**Somali Crombec (S Long-billed C)** *Sylvietta isabellina* Easily seen in the far south this tour.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at widespread locations.

**Brown Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* Seen well in the Bale Mountains and 1 at Mega.

**Lesser Swamp Warbler** *Acrocephalus gracilirostris* Easily seen at Lake Awassa.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* This Palearctic migrant was seen at the airport on arrival!

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* Singletons in the Jemma Valley and at Negele.

**Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languida* Good looks at this Palearctic migrant at Yabello.

**Cinnamon Bracken Warbler** *Bradypterus cinnamomeus* (NL) 1 for Bill in the Bale Mountains.

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythropus* (H) Heard in the Gibe Valley.

**Singing Cisticola** *Cisticola cantans* Seen well in the Jemma Valley.

**Rattling Cisticola** *Cisticola chiniana* Seen from the Rift Valley southwards.

**Boran Cisticola** *Cisticola bodessa* Seen well near Negele. Best identified from Rattling Cisticola by voice.

**Ethiopian Cisticola** *Cisticola lugubris* This regional endemic was seen well in the Bale Mountains.

**Stout Cisticola** *Cisticola robustus* Good views at the Jemma Valley. See Note.  
**Tiny Cisticola** *Cisticola nana* Seen briefly south of Yabello.  
**Pectoral-patch Cisticola** *Cisticola brunnescens* Seen well on the Liben Plains.  
**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* Widespread sightings.  
**Pale Prinia** *Prinia somalica* Seen well in the Yabello area.  
**Buff-bellied Warbler** *Phyllolais pulchella* This diminutive species was easy to see in dry acacia woodlands.  
**Yellow-breasted Apalis (Brown-tailed A)** *Apalis [flavida] viridiceps* Vocally different from *flavida*, split by BirdLife.  
**Red-fronted Warbler** *Urorhipis rufifrons* Just 1 seen in the Yabello area.  
**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Common and widespread throughout the tour.  
**Grey Wren-Warbler** *Calamonastes simplex* Seen well in thorn bush in the Yabello area.  
**Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* Seen well in the Negele and Yabello areas.  
**Scaly Chatterer** *Turdoides aylmeri* Good views of a skulking group south of Yabello.  
**Rufous Chatterer** *Turdoides rubiginosa* First seen well at Langano.  
**White-rumped Babbler** *Turdoides leucopygia* A regional endemic first seen well by all at Langano  
**Abyssinian Catbird** *Parophasma galinieri* Great views of this endemic in the Bale Mountains.  
**African Hill Babbler** *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* This sweet songster was seen in the Harena Forest.  
**Eurasian Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the Jemma Valley.  
**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Langano.  
**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* Very small numbers of this Palearctic migrant from Addis to the Rift Valley.  
**Brown Parisoma** *Parisoma lugens* The race *griseiventris* in the Bale Mountains.  
**Banded Parisoma** *Parisoma boehmi* Seen well south of Yabello.



*White-rumped Babbler* (left) were seen at various localities mainly in the Rift Valley. The *Banded Parisoma* (right) is a very attractive *Sylviid warbler*. (Nik Borrow)

**Abyssinian White-eye** *Zosterops abyssinicus* Grey-bellied birds found in the north.  
**Pale White-eye (P Scrub W-e)** *Zosterops [abyssinicus] flavilateralis* Yellow-bellied birds in the south.  
**Heuglin's White-eye (H's Montane W-e)** *Zosterops poliogastrus* Easy to see in the highlands.  
**African Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis salvadori* Great views of this much-wanted species at Awassa.  
**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* (LO) Nik saw a fly-by flock during the journey to Langano.  
**Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Common and widespread.  
**Lesser Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chloropterus*. Good numbers in the Jemma Valley.  
**Rüppell's Starling (R Long-tailed S)** *Lamprotornis purpuroptera* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.  
**Golden-breasted Starling** *Lamprotornis regius* Briefly for some en route to Negele but great views at Yabello.  
**Superb Starling** *Lamprotornis superbus* An abundant and beautiful starling of the drier country.  
**Shelley's Starling** *Lamprotornis shelleyi* 2 seen briefly in the Yabello area. Relocating them was stopped by rain.  
**White-crowned Starling** *Lamprotornis albicapillus* Impossible to miss this attractive starling in the far south.  
**Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* 1 lone male at Langano.  
**Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.



**Slender-billed Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris*** Large flocks at Langano and in the Bale Mountains.  
**Bristle-crowned Starling *Onychognathus salvadorii*** Small numbers in the Mega area.  
**White-billed Starling *Onychognathus albirostris*** This regional endemic was easily seen, first at Gemassa Gedal.



The female White-billed Starling is a handsome bird (left) African Spotted Creeper (right) is still easily seen at Awassa. (Nik Borrow)

**Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*** Small numbers seen at Ziway and en route to Goba.  
**Abyssinian Ground Thrush *Geokichla piaggiae*** 1 was seen well in the Bale Mountains.  
**Groundscraper Thrush *Turdus [litsisirupa] simensis*** A regional endemic split as Ethiopian Thrush by BirdLife *et al.*  
**African Thrush *Turdus pelios*** Scattered sightings at lower altitudes.  
**Bare-eyed Thrush *Turdus tephronotus*** Seen well between Mega and Yabello.  
**Abyssinian Thrush (Mountain T) *Turdus abyssinicus*** A common highland species.  
**White-browed Scrub Robin (Red-backed S R) *Cercotrichas leucophrys*** Easily seen in thorn bush country.  
**Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus*** A regional endemic seen well in the Bale Mountains.  
**Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides*** Widespread sightings in small numbers.  
**African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus*** A common bird of dry bush country.  
**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*** Widespread sightings of these Palearctic migrants, probably *neumanni*.  
**African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*** A common and confiding bird of the highlands.  
**Rüppell's Robin-Chat *Cossypha semirufa*** Small numbers in the highlands and northern Rift.  
**White-browed Robin-Chat (Heuglin's R-C) *Cossypha heuglini*** Seen well at Awassa.  
**Red-capped Robin-Chat *Cossypha natalensis***. Great looks at 1 at Langano.  
**Spotted Palm Thrush (S Morning T) *Cichladusa guttata*** Small numbers seen well between Mega and Yabello.  
**Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*** 3 widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.  
**Semicollared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*** 2 of these Palearctic migrants were seen at Langano.  
**Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*** Palearctic migrants of the distinctive race *samamisticus*.  
**White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa*** A regional endemic seen well en route to Debre Birhan.  
**Little Rock Thrush *Monticola rufocinereus*** A male seen well in the Jemma Valley.  
**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***. 1 of these Palearctic migrants en route to Goba.  
**Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*** 2 of these Palearctic migrants was seen in the Jemma Valley.  
**African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*** The distinctive race *albofasciatus* was seen well in the highlands.  
**Moorland Chat (Alpine C, Hill C) *Pinarochroa sordida*** Exceedingly common in the highlands.  
**Mocking Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*** Seen in the Jemma Valley and near Mega.  
**Rüppell's Black Chat *Myrmecocichla melaena*** A regional endemic seen well in the Jemma Valley.  
**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*** Small numbers and widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.  
**Red-breasted Wheatear *Oenanthe bottae*** A roadside bird in the highlands.  
**Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*** Small numbers and widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Just 2 sightings of this Palearctic migrant.  
**Abyssinian Wheatear (A Black W)** *Oenanthe lugubris* Seemingly common in the Jemma Valley.  
**Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes orientalis* Just 1 pair at Yabello.  
**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* A few at Langanu.  
**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis* Widespread sightings but nowhere common.  
**Hunter's Sunbird** *Chalcomitra hunteri* 2 sightings in the Yabello area.  
**Tacazze Sunbird** *Nectarinia tacazze* Common in the highlands with birds in breeding plumage.  
**Beautiful Sunbird** *Cinnyris pulchellus* Widespread sightings mainly in the Rift Valley with birds in breeding plumage.  
**Marico Sunbird (Mariqua S)** *Cinnyris mariquensis* 1 male and 2 females at Yabello.  
**Tsavo Sunbird** *Cinnyris tsavoensis* The 'purple-banded' sunbirds in the Negele area appear to be this species.



A very confiding Abyssinian Ground Thrush (left) in the Bale Mountains. The 'purple-banded' sunbirds in the Negele area appear to be Tsavo Sunbird (right) contra the field guide. (Nik Borrow)

**Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus* Easy to see *fazoqlensis* in the highlands and in the far south *albiventris*.  
**Shelley's Sparrow (S Rufous S)** *Passer shelleyi* Seen well in the south and associated with whistling thorn.  
**Swainson's Sparrow** *Passer swainsonii* Abundant throughout.  
**Parrot-billed Sparrow** *Passer gongonensis* An individual in the Mega area appeared to be this species.  
**Chestnut Sparrow** *Passer eminibey* A female seen at Lake Cheleleka.  
**Sahel Bush Sparrow (B Petronia)** *Gymnoris dentata* Seen well in the Jemma Valley.  
**Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow (Y-s Petronia)** *Gymnoris pyrgita* A bird of the dry bush country in the south.  
**Red-billed Buffalo Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* Good numbers in the south.  
**White-headed Buffalo Weaver** *Dinemellia dinemelli* A striking bird from the Rift Valley south.  
**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** *Plocepasser mahali* A common bird in the Rift Valley and the south.  
**Grey-capped Social Weaver** *Pseudonigrita arnaudi* Seen on the Liben Plains and in the Yabello area.  
**Black-capped Social Weaver** *Pseudonigrita cabanisi* Inactive colonies in the Yabello area.  
**Speckle-fronted Weaver** *Sporopipes frontalis* This pretty little bird was seen well in the Jemma Valley.  
**Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak W)** *Amblyospiza albifrons* A male was seen at Langanu and breeding at Awassa.  
**Baglafaecht Weaver** *Ploceus baglafaecht* Small numbers were noted throughout the highlands.  
**Little Weaver** *Ploceus luteolus* Small numbers seen at Ziway, Langanu and Awassa.  
**Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* A few seen at Langanu and Lake Awassa.  
**Rüppell's Weaver** *Ploceus galbula* Seen well in the Rift Valley with males in breeding plumage.  
**Vitelline Masked Weaver** *Ploceus vitellinus* Seen in the Yabello area with males in breeding plumage.  
**Speke's Weaver** *Ploceus spekei* Breeding plumaged birds seen in the Yabello area.  
**Village Weaver (Black-headed W)** *Ploceus cucullatus* Breeding colonies at Langanu.  
**Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* First seen at Langanu with more in the Negele and Yabello areas.



**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* Most numerous in the Rift Valley with males in breeding plumage.

**Yellow-crowned Bishop** *Euplectes afer* Breeding plumaged birds seen by all at Lake Cheleleka.

**Black-winged Red Bishop** *Euplectes hordeaceus* Breeding plumaged birds in the Jemma Valley.



An advantage of the heavy rains was that all the bishops, weavers and whydahs were in plumage; Black-winged Red Bishop in the Jemma Valley (left). The Abyssinian Longclaw is an endemic that allowed good views in the Bale Mountains (right). (Nik Borrow)

**Northern Red Bishop** *Euplectes franciscanus* Breeding plumaged birds in the Rift Valley.

**Yellow Bishop** *Euplectes capensis* Breeding plumaged birds in the highlands.

**Red-collared Widowbird** *Euplectes ardens* Breeding plumaged birds in the Jemma Valley and highlands.

**Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch)** *Pytilia melba* Seen in the Yabello area.

**Cut-throat Finch** *Amadina fasciata* Widespread sightings in dry bush country.

**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* Common and widespread except in the Bale Mountains.

**African Firefinch (Blue-billed F)** *Lagonosticta rubricata* A male seen well in the Jemma Valley.

**Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu** *Uraeginthus bengalus* A common and widespread species.

**Purple Grenadier** *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster* Small numbers were seen in the south.

**Yellow-bellied Waxbill** *Coccyzygia quartinia* Seen in the Bale Mountains.

**Crimson-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda rhodopyga* Seen well in the Jemma Valley.

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* Seen well in the Bale Mountains.

**African Silverbill** *Euodice cantans* Small numbers in the Jemma Valley.

**Bronze Mannikin** *Spermestes cucullata* Small numbers at Lake Awassa.

**Black-and-white Mannikin** *Lonchura bicolor* A small flock in the Harenna Forest.

**Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* Widespread sightings and some in breeding plumage.

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* Widespread sightings and some in breeding plumage.

**Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* A very common Palearctic migrant.

**Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed W)** *Motacilla [flava] flava* Small numbers identified.

**Western Yellow Wagtail (Black-headed W)** *Motacilla [flava] feldegg* Seen at Lake Ziway.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant in the Jemma Valley and Harenna Forest.

**Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara* This elegant wagtail was first seen in the Jemma Valley.

**Abyssinian Longclaw *Macronyx flavicollis*** This endemic was seen well in the Bale Mountains.

**Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*** Seen well in the Jemma Valley.

**Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*** Seen well on the Liben Plains.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*** Palearctic migrants at scattered locations.

**Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (NL)** Bill saw this Palearctic migrant at Lake Cheleleka.

**African Citril *Crithagra citrinelloides*** Small numbers at widespread localities.

**Yellow-rumped Seedeater (White-throated S) *Crithagra xanthopygia*** Just 1 in the Jemma Valley.

**Reichenow's Seedeater (Kenya Y-r S) *Crithagra reichenowi*** First seen well at Langano.

**Salvadori's Seedeater *Crithagra xantholaema*** After a long search we saw a pair of this endemic in the Negele area.

**Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica*** Easily seen in the Jemma Valley.

**White-bellied Canary *Crithagra dorsostriata*** Easily seen in the Yabello area.

**Ankober Serin *Crithagra ankoberensis*** Excellent looks at Gemassa Gedal.

**Northern Grosbeak-Canary *Crithagra donaldsoni*** Good looks at a male in the Yabello area.

**Brown-rumped Seedeater *Crithagra tristriata*** Easy to see this regional endemic in the highlands.

**Streaky Seedeater *Crithagra striolata*** A common species in the highlands.

**Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus flavivertex*** A common species in the highlands.

**Ethiopian Siskin (Black-headed S) *Serinus nigriceps*** This endemic is a very common bird in the highlands.

**Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*** A few of these Palearctic migrants in the Jemma Valley.

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (C-b Rock Bunting) *Emberiza tahapisi*** Very common in the Jemma Valley.

**Somali Bunting (Somali Golden-breasted B) *Emberiza poliopleura*** Seen well in the Negele and Yabello areas.



*Streaky Seedeater (left) is a common bird of the highlands and the colourful Somali Bunting (right) is easy to see in the thorn bush of the south. (Nik Borrow)*





*The Mountain Nyala (or Gedemsa) is an impressive beast and endemic to Ethiopia. (Nik Borrow)*

## MAMMALS

Total of mammal species recorded: 25

**Rock Hyrax** *Procavia capensis* Widespread sightings.

**Grivet Monkey** *Chlorocebus aethiops* Hybrids confuse the situation but we mainly encountered this form.

**Guereza (Eastern Black-and-white Colobus)** *Colobus guereza* Seen from Langanano to Awassa.

**Olive Baboon** *Papio anubis* Widespread sightings.

**Gelada Baboon** *Theropithecus gelada* An excellent encounter at Gemassa Gedal and also in the Jemma Valley.

**Abyssinian Hare** *Lepus habessinicus* Seen in the Yabello area.

**Ethiopian Highland Hare** *Lepus starcki* Seen in the Debre Birhan area.

**Blick's Grass Rat** *Arvicanthis blicki* Positively identified in the Bale Mountains where it is abundant.

**Giant Mole Rat** *Tachyoryctes macrocephalus* 1 of these bizarre creatures seen on the Sanetti Plateau.

**Gambian Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus gambianus* Seen at Langanano.

**Unstriped Ground Squirrel** *Xerus rutilus* Seen in the Negele and Yabello areas.

**Slender Mongoose (Common S M)** *Herpestes sanguineus* 2 seen by some in the Yabello area.

**White-tailed Mongoose** *Ichneumia albicauda* 1 at night en route to Yabello.

**Spotted Hyaena** *Crocuta crocuta* Seen at night en route to the Jemma Valley and heard elsewhere.

**Common Genet** *Genetta genetta* 1 south of Yabello.

**Black-backed Jackal** *Canis mesomelas* 2 at night en route to Yabello.

**Plains Zebra (Common Z)** *Equus quagga* 4 of the race *boehmi* before dawn driving away from Yabello.

**Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* Easily seen in the Bale Mountains.

**Gerenuk (Southern G)** *Litocranius walleri* (NL) Seen by Bob south of Yabello.

**Guenther's Dik-dik** *Madoqua guentheri* A few seen in the south.

**Grant's Gazelle (Bright's G)** *Nanger [granti] notatus* Seen well at Lake Abiata.

**Bohor Reedbuck** *Redunca redunca* Small numbers seen on the Gaysay Grasslands.

**Common Duiker (Bush D)** *Sylvicapra grimmia* A few in the Dinsho area.

**Mountain Nyala (Gedemsa)** *Tragelaphus buxtoni* Tame and habituated animals in the Bale Mountains.

**Bushbuck (Ethiopian Highlands B, Menelik's B)** *Tragelaphus [scriptus] meneliki* Seen in the Bale Mountains.

## NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

### **Fork-tailed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus adsimilis* and Glossy-backed Drongo (Common D) *Dicrurus divaricatus***

The IOC list follows the taxonomy in a recent paper (2017) by Jérôme Fuchs, Dawie H. De Swardt, Graeme Oatley, Jon Fjelsdå and Rauri C. K. Bowie entitled *Habitat-driven diversification, hybridization and cryptic diversity in the Fork-tailed Drongo (Passeriformes: Dicruridae: Dicrurus adsimilis)*. In this paper it is suggested that there are two species of Fork-tailed Drongo in Ethiopia, which presumably follow the already described races *lugubris* and *jubaensis* which are assigned to Glossy-backed Drongo *Dicrurus divaricatus* and Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* respectively. However, the only actual specimen from Ethiopia that was sampled by their team was that of one *jubaensis* and the presence of any other form in Ethiopia is therefore presumed or subjective. The morphological differences are slight, *jubaensis* which was described by van Someren in 1931 has not always been recognised but is reportedly recognised by a greener gloss and a less deeply forked tail than *lugubris*. The drongos seen in the Negele area were presumably of this form (*Dicrurus adsimilis jubaensis*) whilst those seen in the Rift Valley (and elsewhere?) were of what is currently being called Glossy-backed Drongo *Dicrurus divaricatus lugubris*.



*Presumed Glossy-backed Drongo Dicrurus divaricatus lugubris at Langano (left) and nominate race Stout Cisticola (right) (Nik Borrow)*

### **Stout Cisticola *Cisticola robustus***

The nominate race in Ethiopia has very different vocalisations and habitat preferences to those races elsewhere in Africa and it is possible that cryptic species are involved however currently nobody has picked up the challenge to look into this further.