



The stunning Shining-blue Kingfisher sits quietly at a forest pool in Ankasa Forest. (Nik Borrow)

FORESTS OF GHANA

17 – 26 APRIL 2013

LEADERS: NIK BORROW and ROBERT NTA KOR.

This was the twelfth BirdQuest tour to Ghana, once known as the Gold Coast and situated in the very heart of West Africa. The country's growing tourist industry has much to offer to visitors with its colourful and vibrant culture, a turbulent history and a coast lined with beautiful beaches and numerous slave forts still left standing to remind visitors of a grim past. However we were here to discover the country's avian riches and this short and sweet tour focused on a great selection of Upper Guinea forest endemic birds and one very special species in particular, the strange and bizarre Yellow-headed Picathartes or 'rockfowl'. Although we had to wait for a little over one hour before the birds appeared our success at seeing this often elusive and furtive creature was absolute with prolonged views of posing individuals at remarkably close range and this event was undoubtedly the highlight of the tour! Our itinerary included the savannas of Shai Hills and Winneba Plains and the forests of Kakum National Park and its famous canopy walkway, Ankasa, the butterfly sanctuary at Bobiri and the hills of the Atewa range. It was very hot and humid as the rains had not

yet really begun in earnest and sadly the only real rain of the tour was during lunch at Ankasa and our last morning at Atewa. An event that frustrated us in our attempts to see the Blue-moustached Bee-eater and brought the tour to a very damp and somewhat dismal end. However despite this loss we still managed to amass a very respectable 344 species of birds of which all but 18 were seen. We also managed to record 21 species of mammal.

Besides the bizarre Yellow-headed Picathartes (which many lists insist on naming White-necked Rockfowl despite the fact that the neck is strikingly yellow and only white in the desiccated corpses of old museum specimens!) other specialties such as Fraser's Eagle Owl, Brown Nightjar, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye and Red-fronted Antpecker were the lead players with a good supporting cast of Ghanaian specialties that included Stone Partridge, Latham's Francolin (heard only), Ahanta Francolin, Hartlaub's Duck, White-crested Tiger Heron, Congo Serpent Eagle (heard only), Red-chested Goshawk, Long-tailed Hawk (heard only), Nkulengu Rail (heard only), Violet Turaco, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Black-throated Coucal, Chestnut Owlet (heard only), Plain Nightjar, Black Spinetail, Blue-bellied Roller, White-bellied Kingfisher, Rosy Bee-eater, Forest Wood-hoopoe (heard only), Black Dwarf, Brown-cheeked and Black-casqued Hornbills, Bristle-nosed, Hairy-breasted and Bearded Barbets, Yellow-footed Honeyguide, African Piculet, Little Green, Melancholy and Fire-bellied Woodpeckers, Senegal Batis, West African Wattle-eye, Red-billed Helmet-shrike, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Forest Penduline Tit, White-throated, Western Bearded and Yellow-bearded Greenbills, Green-tailed and Grey-headed Bristlebills, Fanti Saw-wing, Preuss's Cliff Swallow, Kemp's Longbill, Sharpe's Apalis, Rufous-winged and Puvell's Illadopsis, Copper-tailed Starling, Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush, White-tailed Alethe, Western Forest Robin, Forest Scrub Robin (heard only), White-crowned Cliff Chat, Olivaceous, Little Grey and Ussher's Flycatchers, Reichenbach's, Carmelite, Brown and Buff-throated Sunbirds, Maxwell's Black Weaver and Red-vented Malimbe. To top this, the discovery of a Bronze-winged Courser along the Brenu Road was a great surprise and a long awaited lifer for Robert!

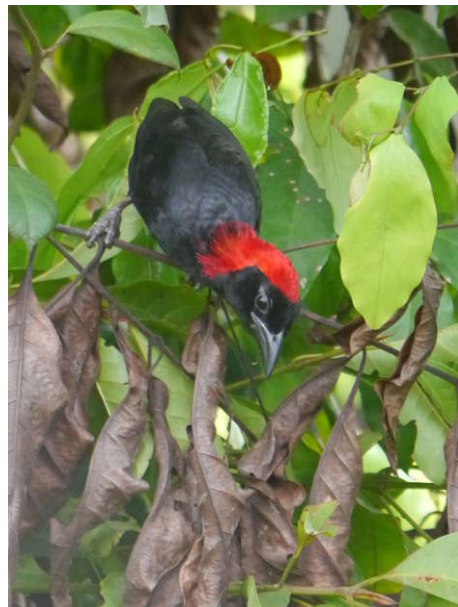
As the group arrived in Accra in Ghana the main question on everyone's lips (or at the very least that was in their minds) was "will we see it?" The 'it' referred to the totally bizarre rockfowl but it was going to be some time before the chance of seeing this very special bird would arise. Our arrival was in the evening for an overnight stop and a short night's sleep in a comfortable hotel on the outskirts of Tema for we were up early the next day at five for breakfast and driving the short distance towards the Shai Hills Reserve that comprises an interesting area of open grassland and rocky inselbergs.

The early morning was somewhat dull as there had been rain overnight that had turned the soft soils into clinging sticky mud! As we made our way around one of the well-vegetated inselbergs that rise up out of the surrounding scrubby plains we saw a covey of bantam-like Stone Partridges on the track ahead of us. Helmeted Guineafowl and Double-spurred Francolin sneaked through the grasses and we also discovered a juvenile Gabar Goshawk, Rufous-crowned (or Purple) Roller, Piapiac and Buffon's Kob. Eventually the track became too waterlogged for our vehicle and forced us to disembark and walk the remainder of the distance as by now it was fully light. In front of us extended a range of wooded hills that were covered in thick shrubbery and emergent trees where Violet Turacos, shaggy-crested Western Grey Plantain-eaters and Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, were feeding as Senegal Parrots screeched past. A Brown Snake Eagle was perched in one of the tall bare leafless trees and on the topmost boulders of the piled boulder rock-faces we saw a pair of striking White-crowned Cliff Chats. Rather more of a surprise was a couple of Greyish Eagle Owls sunning themselves upon the rocks and we presumed them to be an adult and youngster as one was rather more rufous. Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds hammered away as the piping calls of African Grey Hornbills sounded out and colourful Bearded and Vieillot's Barbets were seen in the wooded savannah along with African Pygmy Kingfisher, White-throated Bee-eater, Green Wood-hoopoe, Senegal Batis, White-shouldered Black Tit, Northern Crombec, Senegal Eremomela, Black-crowned Tchagra, Brubru, Northern Puffback and Bar-breasted Firefinch. A male Splendid Sunbird certainly lived up to his name and Scarlet-chested Sunbird was also seen along with the rather more unexpected Black Scimitarbill and Northern Red-billed Hornbill. In the dense thickets we struggled in vain to lure into view the local form of African Barred Owlet that is sometimes placed as a race of Chestnut Owlet. The bird called back at us repeatedly but was too far away in the dense vegetation to locate. An Oriole Warbler soon slipped away but we had better luck with Brown-crowned Tchagra, Common (or Brown-throated) Wattle-eye, African Paradise Flycatcher, Snowy-crowned Robin Chat and Grey (or Lead-coloured) Tit-flycatcher. In the open grasslands we saw our first Preuss's Cliff Swallows and enjoyed amazing views of Black-faced Quailfinch drinking at a puddle although the Croaking, Short-winged and Zitting Cisticolas did not raise as much enthusiasm. Returning to the bus we watched a trio of Bateleur and a pair of Beaudouin's Snake Eagle sailing over the hills. A Flappet Lark skulked in the grasses and just before we left the gorgeous Blue-bellied Roller put in an appearance.

Other species seen during this very productive first morning included Shikra, Lizard Buzzard, Red-necked Buzzard, Red-eyed, Vinaceous and Blue-spotted Wood Doves, Senegal Coucal, African Palm and Little Swifts, Fork-tailed Drongo, Purple Starling, Common Bulbul, Northern Black Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Village Weaver, Bronze Mannikin, Plain-backed Pipit and Tree Pipit.

After lunch we headed back towards Accra via Sakumono Lagoon where we found a number of Black Herons and a selection of Palearctic shorebirds and other waterbirds such as Little Grebe, Long-tailed Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Grey Heron, Western Reef, Little, Intermediate and Great Egrets, Grey Heron, African Swamphen, Black-winged Stilt, Spur-winged Lapwing, Grey Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank and Wood and Common Sandpipers.

The heavy traffic in and around the capital consumed us and the only birds apparent were numerous Western Cattle Egrets, Laughing Doves, Ethiopian Swallows, Northern Grey-headed Sparrows, Black-winged and Yellow-billed Kites, Hooded Vultures, Common Kestrel and the ubiquitous Pied Crow. Having finally escaped the long queues of traffic we arrived at the Winneba Plains for some late afternoon birding. On arrival there was little to be seen and it was very dry and the birding was rather slow. However, we kept trying and eventually found no less than three Black-bellied Bustards, several Senegal and African Wattled Lapwings, a pair of Marsh Tchagra, the fantastic Yellow-crowned Gonolek and an excitable Red-winged Warbler. A 'grey' cuckoo seen briefly appeared to be a lingering migrant Common Cuckoo but there was no mistaking the spiky-crested Levallant's Cuckoo. Palearctic migrant Whinchats still around and at this season the resident Yellow-mantled Widowbirds were still in their dowdy, sparrow-like non-breeding plumage. A superb African Hobby was spotted and we had great views of Green (or Guinea) Turaco and Yellow-billed Shrike. Other species recorded during the afternoon included Striped Kingfisher, Cardinal Woodpecker, Simple Leaflove (or Greenbul), Brown Babbler and Green-headed and Copper Sunbirds. Our short time here came to an end with the setting sun so we left and drove the remaining distance to the recently constructed 'Rainforest Lodge' near Kakum for a three nights stay.



Kakum birds: The rather warbler-like Fraser's Sunbird (left) and the striking Red-headed Malimbe (right) (Nik Borrow)

Our first day in the area was spent in the famous Kakum National Park. Although created in 1932, the park wasn't officially opened to the public until 1994. Covering an area of 347 square kilometres, it is a mixture of semi-deciduous and semi-evergreen rain forest although this has been 'selectively' logged in the recent past and anyone expecting to find pristine forest would be sadly disappointed. Kakum is perhaps most famous for it being the site of Africa's first and to date only rain forest canopy walkway. Constructed in 1995 it is comprised of about 350 metres of bridges suspended between six tree platforms that reach a height of up to 40 metres above the forest floor. Officially, it opens at 8.30 a.m. to a seemingly constant stream of whooping and screaming tourists that treat the whole thing like a funfair ride but we had arranged early entry into the park from dawn onwards that meant we had the place to ourselves during the most productive time of day. In the early morning half-light we started climbing the stone steps that led us up the hillside to the start of the walkway itself but we saw little else on the short climb before reaching the entrance. The walkway bounced and the platforms creaked and shifted and it was a strange feeling to be suspended underneath the main

canopy and amongst the boughs of the medium sized trees but high above the tops of the vine covered trunks and shrubbery below us. Speckled, Red-rumped and Yellow-throated Tinkerbirds pooped, trilled and squeaked all around us but were not always so easy to see. Two Upper Guinea endemic woodpeckers fell quickly and we all ticked off good looks at Little Green and Melancholy Woodpeckers. Velvet-mantled Drongos and African Pied Hornbills also proved easy to see and we were able to compare Western Black-headed and Black-winged Orioles. In the fruiting trees we were introduced to a confusing array of greenbuls that included Slender-billed, Little, Ansorge's, Plain, Yellow-whiskered, Golden, Honeyguide and Icterine Greenbuls. Below us Blue Malkohas (or Yellowbill) were seen gliding from vine tangle to vine tangle. Green Hyllias piped out their disyllabic call from thick vegetation that provided wonderful hiding places for Tambourine Dove, Grey Longbill and Blue-billed Malimbres which favoured the undergrowth whilst higher in the trees Red-headed Malimbres crept along the bare branches. A male Sabine's Puffback posed nicely for us and the spreading canopies allowed good foraging opportunities for the rather unassuming regional endemic Sharpe's Apalis and the vaguely hirundine-like Ussher's Flycatcher as well as Cassin's Honeybird, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Violet-backed Hyliota, Ashy Flycatcher and Grey-headed, White-breasted and Chestnut-breasted Nigritas (or Negrofinches). We were particularly fortunate to see the elusive Olivaceous Flycatcher. Liberal splashes of colour were provided by species such as African Green Pigeon, Yellow-billed Turaco, Klaas's Cuckoo, Black Bee-eater, Blue Cuckoo-shrike, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-mantled and Preuss's Weavers and a selection of sunbirds included Fraser's, Little Green, Collared, Blue-throated Brown, Olive, Johanna's and Superb Sunbirds. We had flight views of Copper-tailed Glossy Starling, Thick-billed Weaver, and Red-fronted Parrots as they passed overhead and there were Fanti Saw-wing, Lesser Striped Swallow, Cassin's and Sabine's Spinetails and lingering Palearctic migrant Common Swifts in the skies that also held African Cuckoo-hawk, Palm-nut Vulture and African Harrier Hawk. A Yellow-footed Honeyguide showed for a few lucky people but by now the day was warming up, the first sweat bees were emerging and the first stream of raucous tourists who treat the canopy walkway more like a fairground ride made their appearance. We then moved off the bouncy bridge and retreated into the cool of the forest where we enjoyed views of a male Rufous-sided Broadbill and some of us saw a White-tailed Alethe.



We did well to get amazing views of the stunning Pel's Anomalure (left) from the canopy walkway. The diminutive Tit-hyllia (right) lays claim to being the smallest bird in Africa. (Nik Borrow)

After a break for lunch at our hotel we returned to the canopy walkway in the late afternoon and waited for any evening activity. Yellow-spotted Barbets were hooting mournfully around us and Blue-throated Rollers hawked for insects. From far away the calls of the enormous and prehistoric-looking Black-casqued Hornbill reached our ears and we were fortunate to see a female in flight. Just before dark a Brown-cheeked Hornbill put in an appearance and as dusk fell a Brown Nightjar started calling below us and we soon located it in the torch beam. Flushed with this success we couldn't believe our eyes when a stunning Pel's Anomalure appeared in a nearby tree and stayed there transfixed for an astonishing length of time. A few Demidoff's Galagos seen on the walk down completed our evening activities.

The next morning we travelled to Antwikwaa, an area on the northern edge of the main Kakum forest. Cocoa farms, oil palm and other cultivation have eaten into the forest on this edge of Kakum but this sort of farmbrush can be surprisingly productive and we advanced along the track regularly adding new species. The cries of a Congo Serpent Eagle reached our ears but the bird remained hidden and firmly out of sight. Grey Parrots dashed past uttering their strange whistles and screeches. Luckily a Black Spinetail fluttered overhead and even more luckily a Thick-billed Cuckoo flew directly over us with quivering wing beats! We saw Green Crombecs singing their sweet songs as Swamp Palm Bulbuls cackled at us. Vieillot's Black Weavers of the striking *castaneofuscus* form, which has been treated historically as separate species were common. Striking Red-billed Helmet-shrikes and Hairy-breasted Barbets allowed scope views and the tiny Tit-hylia, which lays claim to being Africa's smallest bird also showed well. West African (recently split from Chestnut) Wattle-eyes were seen well in the cocoa plantations where a secretive Red-chested Goshawk was lurking. Forest Penduline Tits gave brief views as did a Willcocks's Honeyguide and a fly-over Narrow-tailed Starling. We had good looks at both Black-and-white and Magpie Mannikins feeding in the long grasses whilst other species for the morning included Woodland Kingfisher, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Little Grey Greenbul, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Olive-bellied Sunbird, Black-necked Weaver, Crested Malimbe and Orange-cheeked Waxbill.

As the day was getting hotter and the humidity was rising we moved on to a different area where numerous Preuss's Cliff Swallows were breeding under a culvert. A nearby river gave us the shining White-throated Blue Swallow as well as several Rock Pratincoles of the rufous-naped race *iberiae*.

After a short siesta, we visited another area on the edge of the Kakum forests ticking off Mosque Swallow on the way and started to walk a trail but there was little moving in the late afternoon. We managed some good looks at two Black Cuckoos and scope views of a Chocolate-backed Kingfisher and a Black Dwarf Hornbill. Spectacularly long-tailed White-crested Hornbills were a great hit and we vastly improved upon our views of the regional endemic Brown-cheeked Hornbill. Pretty Rufous-crowned Eremomelas showed well but a Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush was more elusive and only Robert saw two White-headed Wood-hoopoes that flew past. As we drove back in the dark we flushed a Long-tailed Nightjar off of the road.

The next day we started at the crack of dawn in farmbrush at the edge of Kakum where we had a profitable time sat in a thicket with a pair of Puvell's Illadopsis, a stunning Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, several Grey-headed Bristlebills and a colourful Blue-shouldered Robin Chat. A Lowland Sooty Boubou wasn't so obliging and only showed itself to one member of our group. A pair of Piping Hornbills sat up in a tree and in the weedy fields we found Red-faced Cisticola, Red-headed Quelea and Pin-tailed Whydah whilst overhead four Rosy Bee-eaters circled around before promptly disappearing. In the forest we added African Emerald Cuckoo, Naked-faced Barbet and a skulking Blackcap Illadopsis to the list.

We left Kakum and headed towards Cape Coast where we ate a fine lunch looking out to sea and a brief stop at the nearby lagoon produced a sighting of Orange Weaver, Striated Heron, Black Tern and Winding Cisticola before we headed on to Half Assini. Some other stops for sunbirds frustrated rather than succeeded although we saw a pair of Giant Kingfishers but the race was on to get to our hotel and we managed it literally two or three minutes before sunset and were overjoyed to find some Carmelite Sunbirds ready and waiting for us nearby.

The next day we were up at four in the morning for breakfast and then on to Ankasa Forest Resource Reserve a superb area of wet evergreen forest that between the years 1960 to 1974 only suffered relatively light logging. Four years ago we were the first organised birding group to visit this forest and following a series of productive visits we once again opted to stay in a hotel some distance away as accommodation in the park itself is basic and fallen into disrepair. Sadly the infrastructure for this reserve seems to get worse and worse each year and this tour we couldn't even take four-wheel drive vehicles into the park because the road was so bad. Instead we drove our sturdy bus as far as we could and then trekked into the interior. We flushed an African Finfoot from its hiding place on the river where a pair of Cassin's Flycatchers was busy feeding. Pale-breasted Illadopsis was seen, Square-tailed Saw-wings flew over and both Blue-headed Wood Dove and a Dwarf Bittern were flushed off from the track ahead of us. Tiny Sunbirds appeared and a Western Forest Robin brightened the morning with its luminous orange breast shining out from the undergrowth in the dim light. Several Red-billed Dwarf Hornbills were enticed into the trees above our heads and we marvelled at the nest-weaving capabilities of some Red-vented Malimbés. Inside the dense forests the cries of Shining Drongo brought our attention to a bird party and amongst already familiar species we teased out the Upper Guinea Forest endemic Yellow-bearded Greenbul, a species that is proving relatively easy to see at this site and perhaps more so than we have ever seen them in neighbouring Ivory Coast or on

the Sierra Leone tours. We also found a wonderful pair of Red-fronted Antpecker although a Green-tailed Bristlebill wasn't so obliging. The dark forest also yielded Brown-eared Woodpecker, Red-tailed Greenbul, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, Black-capped Apalis and White-tailed Ant Thrush. Taking a break for lunch was prolonged due to a seriously heavy and thunderous downpour of rain that lasted a little too long and the precious minutes of what remained of the afternoon ticked away before our eyes. We started walking to a series of pools as the last few drops were falling and saw some soaking wet Great Blue Turacos lumbering through the trees. Thankfully we managed good views of Hartlaub's Ducks and African Jacanas and then staked out one of the ponds to wait for whatever might appear. We were treated to a parade of kingfishers and studied Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Shining-blue Kingfisher and ultimately White-bellied Kingfisher in all their glittering detail! A superb Black-throated Coucal walked across the mud in front of us and a couple of our group saw a flushed White-crested Tiger Heron! Dusky-blue Flycatchers were present at the end of this very damp afternoon and it was a long walk back to the bus in the dark with no owls seen or heard but instead a rather nervous close encounter with some invisible Forest Elephants in the darkness that were fortunately just a fraction more scared of us than we were of them as they turned tail and fled into the forest.

The following morning we were back on the forest trails but it was extremely quiet. After a lot of hard work we managed excellent views of a pair of the rare and shy Rufous-winged Illadopsis. Some Western Bearded Greenbuls showed well but although we had another crack at the rare regional endemic Green-tailed Bristlebill it refused to show well and a singing but totally invisible Forest Scrub Robin also frustrated us.

We retraced our route back towards Kakum and this time successfully connected with the two coastal speciality sunbirds that had eluded us on the outward journey, namely Reichenbach's and Brown (or the more inappropriately named Mangrove) Sunbird. In the afternoon we broke our journey at an area of coastal scrub. As this was the dry season little was moving and we weren't really expecting too much either and so it was therefore a big surprise to everyone when amongst a flock of Black-rumped and Orange-cheeked Waxbills and African Firefinches we discovered a Bronze-winged Courser! This was possibly the first documented record from coastal Ghana and was even a lifer for Robert! The rest of the afternoon couldn't quite compete but nonetheless we added Singing Cisticola and Splendid Starling to the list. However it was not quite all over because a final evening stop produced the most desirable Fraser's Eagle Owl caught firmly in the torch beam as the day drew to a close.



Lesser Striped Swallows (left) are handsome birds seen along the Brenu Road but this Bronze-winged Courser (right) caused some real excitement! (Nik Borrow)

We spent the following morning birding at Aboabo on the northern edge of Kakum National Park. Obviously by now we had seen a good proportion of the forest species that we were likely to see and the forest here is in a sad state compared to the fine forest we had just seen at Ankasa. Some of the taller trees had been left standing proud of the surrounding logged forest but it was nonetheless very birdy in comparison to our recent experiences. We began with a hulking Blue-headed Coucal and a literally 'cracking' male Black-bellied Seedcracker that allowed prolonged scope views. We watched a Yellow-browed Camaroptera

inflating its bizarre blue frog-like neck pouches with every call, the diminutive African Piculet showed well and a spotty Western Nicator was discovered amongst thick foliage. After numerous 'heard only' records it really was a treat to finally enjoy wonderful views of a very friendly Kemp's Longbill that was most definitely 'tickable' for everyone. A large number of Maxwell's Black Weavers worked their way through the foliage and the striking Yellow-billed Barbet surrendered itself, as did several Fire-bellied Woodpeckers. In the skies we spotted high-flying Cassin's Hawk Eagle, Crowned Eagle and Lanner Falcon. In the tangles there were some skulking White-throated Greenbuls that showed well whilst up in the canopy a pair of Little Grey Flycatchers appeared although a trio of vocal Tessmann's Flycatchers sadly did not show for everyone and mysteriously disappeared far too soon. The morning activity subsided as soon as the temperature rose and the best of the day had passed leaving the forest quiet and pretty birdless and so we continued to Assin Foso for lunch.



The wonderful Fraser's Eagle Owl was seen on our way back to Kakum. (Nik Borrow). We watched the incredible Yellow-headed Picathartes (how can this bird be called "white-necked"?) at the usual site for one hour this year. (Phil Tizzard).

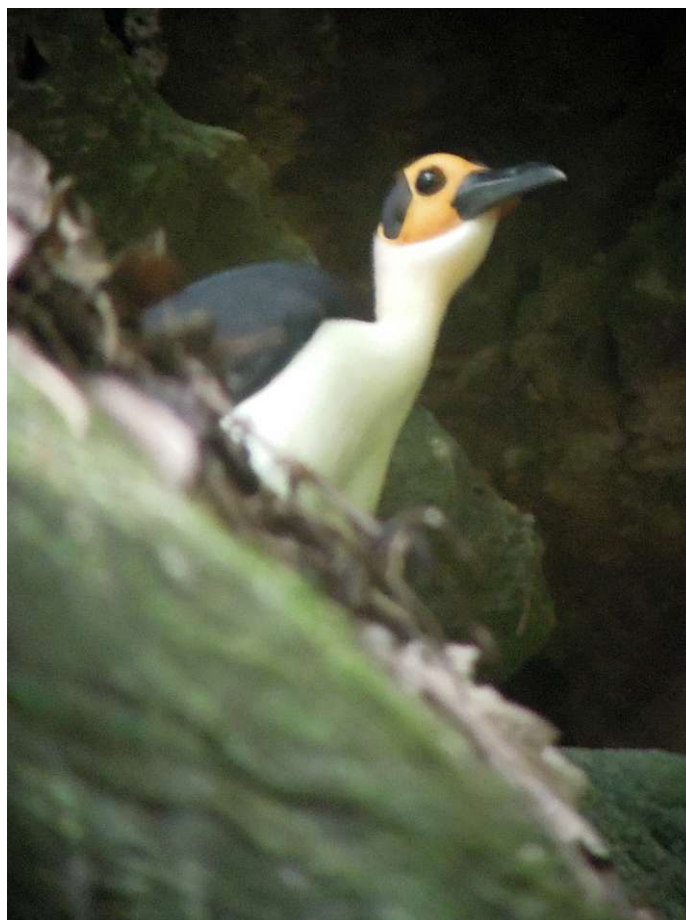
The time had now come for us to set off to a site where we all were hoping to find the main prize of the tour, namely the totally amazing Yellow-headed Picathartes. This species is rather unfortunately named White-necked Picathartes in some lists but the neck is certainly not white as the yellow colour of the skin shines through the feathers as if lit from within. This peculiar bird nests in the rainy season and makes swallow-like mud-cup nests that it attaches to the dry overhangs of the large granitic boulders and inselbergs that are such a feature of the region. We arrived at the nearest villages that benefit from the proceeds raised by visiting birders donating to the community-based project and met up with the guides that were to lead us to the rocks where the birds nest. The tension and excitement was certainly mounting and we embarked on an hour's relatively easy although undulating uphill walk with only the last few minutes being a climb up the steep slope to the rocks where the nests are situated. We arrived in good time at the colony to take our seats for the evening show. It was very dry in the forest and we waited for several hours before suddenly at around 17.00 one materialised as if by magic below the giant rocks where the birds nest. We watched at least four or five birds on and off for a period of one hour before we took our leave. During this time were able to really study the birds, as they stood stationary on the rocks around the nests and preening. Anyone who has ever seen the picathartes well has always been overwhelmed by their beauty and oddness. Indeed there is something mysterious and even spiritual about them and the sculptured rocks where they live and it is easy to see why they are revered in certain areas. It was then a long two and a half hours drive to our hotel in Kumasi for an overnight stop where there was much jollity and celebration with the Star beers flowing freely amongst those who hadn't collapsed into their beds.

The next morning we found ourselves at Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary a place that is usually blessed with good birds as well. However during this tour the woods were much quieter than usual and although a stunningly beautiful male Narina Trogon was a popular find, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher was seen and Grey Parrots put on a good show there was little else to be found and so it was just as well that the beautiful butterflies were a wonderful distraction!

In the afternoon, we made our first visit to the Atewa range of hills that rise to a grand height of 770m and are classed as a Forest Reserve but there has been some mining activity there for bauxite whilst the buzzing sound of chainsaws caused by the illegal logging is a familiar sound. During this first afternoon we had little time to venture far and so we settled for birding in the farmbrush and improved on the mornings glimpses by obtaining much improved scope views of the stylish Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher. In the grasses non-breeding Compact Weavers were feeding and in the farmbrush there were also African Yellow White-eye, African Thrush and very vocal Diederik Cuckoo and Whistling Cisticola. A singing Olive-green Camaroptera allowed staggeringly good views, the striking Western Bluebill was glimpsed and we finally caught up with the absolutely gorgeous Buff-throated Sunbird.

The next day we devoted to climbing up the hill to an area normally favoured by the Blue-moustached Bee-eater. It was a somewhat dull and misty morning and sadly the bee-eaters were nowhere to be seen. A Long-tailed Hawk started calling from close by but could not be persuaded to show itself. A Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher performed and we did flush a couple of Ahanta Francolin but they were gone all too quickly. Chestnut-winged Starlings were perched on the snags of a dead tree as we climbed higher in search of more bee-eaters. Having almost reached the next spot for the bee-eaters disaster fell in a cloudburst of rain and a tropical downpour then ensued for the next hour thus washing those bee-eaters right off the agenda. There was little else to do but sit it out and then miserably squelch back down to the bottom of the hill as our time had run out. In way of compensation we did see Green Sunbirds of the 'yellow-chinned' variety and another Yellow-footed Honeyguide was found but ultimately it was a rather dismal end to what had been a great trip.

Ghana is a friendly and stable country; the roads are mostly good although perhaps getting a little too potholed for comfort these days. The food is definitely tasty and the accommodation really quite comfortable. The Yellow-headed Picathartes is currently very reliably and usually seen extremely well and the sighting of a good number of the Upper Guinea regional endemics certainly made the visit more than worthwhile. With Liberia and Ivory Coast still out of the game and Sierra Leone in a state of recovery Ghana really does offer the visitor a chance to get to grips with one of the most charismatic of all West African birds in much more comfort and less time than anywhere else presently available. This tour is now a classic BirdQuest!



The Yellow-headed Picathartes (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).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

CR = Critical, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient.

BIRDS

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Sneaking through the grasses of Shai Hills.

Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus* 3 of these little 'rock chickens' were seen well at Shai Hills.

Latham's Forest Francolin *Peliperdix lathamii* (H) Heard at night in the forests. See note.

Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis* A pair was flushed at Atewa.

Double-spurred Francolin *Pternistis bicalcaratus* This large francolin was seen at Shai, Winneba and Brenu.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* A large flock in flight near Winneba.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii* 3 in Ankasa and another pair on the Ebi River. See note.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* A few at Sakumono and Cape Coast Lagoons.

White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucolopha* 1 was flushed and seen by Robert and Ian at Ankasa.

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii* 1 was flushed from the track in Ankasa.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* 1 at dusk at New Brimsu.

Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Sightings at Cape Coast, Ankasa and Ebi River.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* A few at Sakumono and Cape Coast Lagoons. See note.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Seen at Sakumono Lagoon and Ebi River.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* Scattered records from Sakumono Lagoon to Ebi River.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* Singletons at Sakumono and Cape Coast Lagoons.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* At least 6 at Sakumono Lagoon.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Identification is problematic but identified at Sakumono Lagoon.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* White phase birds are problematic but identified at Sakumono and Cape Coast.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Seen on Sakumono and Cape Coast Lagoons and Ebi River.

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides* No less than 3 individuals seen during this tour.

Black-winged Kite (B-shouldered K) *Elanus caeruleus* A few widespread roadside sightings.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* A commonly encountered and widespread species.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* Just 3 individuals at Kakum.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* (E) A commonly encountered and widespread species. See note.

Beudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beudouini* (V) A pair was seen well in flight at Shai Hills. See note.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* 1 at Shai Hills.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* (NT) A pair with a juvenile at Shai Hills on 18/4. See note.

Congo Snake Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (H) Heard at Antwikwaa.

African Harrier Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus* Widespread sightings. See note.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* A juvenile at Shai Hills. See note.

Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter toussenellii* 3 sightings in Kakum and Bobiri.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Singletons at Shai Hills and en route to Half Assini.

Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus* (H) Heard at Atewa but would not show itself.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* Singletons at Shai Hills and en route to Half Assini.

Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis* 5 widespread sightings during the tour.
Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus* 1 distant bird over Aboabo. See note.
Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus* (NT) A pair was displaying over Aboabo.
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* A few sightings on journeys.
Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* (NL) 1 seen en route to Half Assini.
African Hobby *Falco cuvierii* Good looks at Winneba and Atewa.
Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* Singletons at Aboabo and Atewa.
Black-bellied Bustard *Lissotis melanogaster* 3 at Winneba.
White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra* (H) Heard often but proved impossible to see.
African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis* 1 seen briefly at Ankasa.
Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus* (H) Heard in Ankasa, New Brimsu and Bonkro. See note.
Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra* (NL) 1 at Ankasa.
African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis* 2 at Sakumono Lagoon.
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers at Sakumono Lagoon.
Spur-winged Lapwing (S-w Plover) *Vanellus spinosus* 1 at Sakumono Lagoon.
Senegal Lapwing (Lesser Black-winged L/Plover) *Vanellus lugubris* 6 at Winneba.
African Wattled Lapwing (Wattled L) *Vanellus senegallus* Seen at Winneba and along the Brenu road.



African Wattled Lapwing seen well along the Brenu Road. (Nik Borrow)

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* One of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono Lagoon.
Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant at Sakumono and Ebi River.
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Ebi River on 23/4.
African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus* Widespread sightings in appropriate habitat.
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono and Ebi River.
Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Singletons of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono and Ebi River.
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 2 of these at Sakumono Lagoon.
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants at Sakumono and Ebi River.
Bronze-winged Courser (Violet-tipped C) *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* An amazing sighting at Brenu on 23/4.
Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis* 4 of the race *liberiae* on the Pra River.
Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus* Singletons out at sea at Sakumono and Cape Coast.
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants at Cape Coast.
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* 'Table' birds only.
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Common and widespread.

Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea* Just 1 seen at Shai Hills.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer* Small numbers seen.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistris* Commonly encountered in the forest.

Blue-headed Wood Dove *Turtur brehmeri* 1 flushed off the track in Ankasa.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered.

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* (V) 3 at Antwikwaa and 20+ at Bobiri where we had scope views of perched birds.

Red-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus gulielmi* Commonly seen over the forests.

Senegal Parrot *Poicephalus senegalus* Good numbers at Shai Hills.

Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata* 6 seen at Ankasa.

Green Turaco (Guinea T) *Tauraco persa* Seen well at Winneba.

Yellow-billed Turaco *Tauraco macrorhynchus* We had several chances to see this species well in the forests.

Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea* Small numbers at Shai Hills.

Western Grey Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator* Widespread sightings during this tour.

Black-throated Coucal *Centropus leucogaster* An amazing view of this skulking coucal at Ankasa.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis* Widespread sightings included the *epomidis* colour morph.

Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus* Seen at Aboabo.

Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill) *Ceuthmochares aereus* Regularly seen in the forests.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (H) Robert heard 1 at Brenu Road.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Oxylophus levaillantii* 4 sightings during this tour. See note.

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti* 1 seen flying over Antwikwaa.

Diederik Cuckoo (Didric C) *Chrysococcyx caprius* 1 at Atewa. See note.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas* A number of sightings in the forest zone. See note.

African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus* A few sightings in the forests.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus* 1 seen at Bonkro.

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* Seen at Kakum and Bobiri.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Brief views but presumably this Palearctic migrant at Winneba on 18/4.

Greyish Eagle Owl *Bubo cinerascens* An adult and a juvenile at Shai Hills.

Fraser's Eagle Owl *Bubo poensis* Excellent views of 1 at dusk upon our return to Kakum. See note.

Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum* (H) Heard only at Ankasa.

Chestnut Owlet *Glaucidium castaneum* (H) Heard only at Shai Hills.

Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* 1 seen at dusk from the canopy walkway.

Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus* 1 flushed off the road at night at Bonkro.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus* 1 flushed off the road at night at Kakum.

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri* Seen well at the Rainforest Lodge.

Black Spinetail *Telacanthura melanopygia* 1 seen well at Antwikwaa.

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini* Singletons seen at Kakum and Bobiri. See note.

Cassin's Spinetail *Neafrapus cassini* Pairs were seen over Kakum and Ankasa forests.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Common Swift *Apus apus* This Palearctic migrant was regularly seen over the forests.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina* A male at Bobiri. See note.

Purple Roller (Rufous-crowned R) *Coracias naevius* 1 at Shai Hills.

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster* This superb roller was seen well at Shai Hills.

Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis* Regular sightings in the forest zone.

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia* Scope views of 1 in the Kakum forests.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti* 1 at Winneba.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* Excellent views at Ankasa.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis* Widespread sightings and commonly encountered throughout the tour.

African Dwarf Kingfisher *Ispidina lecontei* (H) Heard only at Ankasa.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta* Scattered sightings during the tour.

White-bellied Kingfisher *Corythornis leucogaster* 1 of these brilliant little kingfishers was seen well at Ankasa.

Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus* Sightings at Cape Coast and Ebi River and along the Brenu Road.

Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribrachys* Seen exceptionally well at Ankasa.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* A pair at the Ebi River.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Small numbers in appropriate habitat.

Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis* A distant bird from the canopy walkway.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* A couple of sightings.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* Common and easy to see on this tour.

Rosy Bee-eater *Merops malimbicus* 4 lingering birds seen over the Kakum forests on 21/4.

Forest Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus castaneiceps* (H) Heard distantly at Aboabo.

White-headed Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus bollei* (LO) Robert saw 2 in the Kakum forests.

Green Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus* 1 at Shai Hills.

Black Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* 1 seen briefly in flight in Mole NP.

African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus* Common and easy to see on this tour.



African Pied Hornbills are common and easy to see on this tour (Nik Borrow)

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* Easily seen at Shai Hills.

Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* 1 seen at Shai Hills on 18/4 appears to be a range extension.

Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi* No less than 5 birds at 3 sites this tour.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus* Great views at Ankasa.

White-crested Hornbill *Tropicranus albocristatus* We enjoyed several good sightings in the forests.

Piping Hornbill *Bycanistes fistulator* First seen well in the Kakum forests.

Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus* Seen well in the Kakum forests.

Black-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna atrata* A female seen in flight from the canopy walkway.

Bristle-nosed Barbet *Gymnobucco peli* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus* A poor showing with just two seen in the Kakum forests.

Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* The most commonly seen tinkerbird in the forests.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus atroflavus* Often heard and seen at Antwikwaa.

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* Often heard in the forests and seen occasionally.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* seen well at Shai Hills.

Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui* Often heard in the forests and seen occasionally.

Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta* Often heard in the forests and seen occasionally.

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti* Seen well at Shai Hills and Atewa. See note.

Bearded Barbet *Lybius dubius* 2 of these marvellous birds were seen well at Shai Hills.

Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachylaemus purpuratus* Seen well at Aboabo.

Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis* This diminutive honeyguide was seen at Kakum and Atewa.

Yellow-footed Honeyguide *Melignomon eisentrauti* Sightings from the canopy walkway and at Atewa.

Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksii* 1 seen briefly at Antwikwaa. See note.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* (H) Heard only at Shai Hills.

African Piculet *Sasia africana* This little woodpecker was seen at Aboabo.

Little Green Woodpecker *Campethera maculosa* 3 individuals seen well in the Kakum forests.
Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivosa* Widespread sightings during this tour.
Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli* 1 seen at Ankasa.
Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* 1 seen briefly at Winneba.
Melancholy Woodpecker *Dendropicos lugubris* Sightings at Kakum and Ankasa.
Fire-bellied Woodpecker *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster* Finally seen well at Aboabo.
Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* 2 males were seen well at Kakum and Bonkro.
Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher (Vanga F) *Bias musicus* Spiky-crested males at Bobiri and Atewa.
Senegal Batis *Batis senegalensis* Seen well at Shai Hills.
West African Wattle-eye *Platysteira hormophora* Regularly seen in the forests.
Brown-throated Wattle-eye (Common W) *Platysteira cyanea* First seen well at Shai Hills.
Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Platysteira blissetti* 1 seen on the edge of the Kakum forests.
Red-billed Helmet-shrike *Prionops caniceps* Great views of these characterful birds in the Kakum forests.
Orange-breasted Bushshrike (Sulphur-b B-s) *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus (H)* Heard at Shai Hills and Brenu.
Marsh Tchagra *Bocagia minuta* Great looks at 2 pairs at Winneba.
Brown-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra australis* 1 seen at Shai Hills.
Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* Seen in the various savannas.
Sabine's Puffback (Large-billed P) *Dryoscopus sabini* A male was seen well from the canopy walkway.
Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis* A male was seen at Shai Hills.
Lowland Sooty Boubou (S B) *Laniarius leucorhynchus* Euan was lucky to see a calling bird on the edge of Kakum.
Yellow-crowned Gonolek (Common G) *Laniarius barbarus* First seen well at Shai Hills.
Brubru *Nilaus afer (H)* 1 seen well at Shai Hills.
Blue Cuckooshrike *Coracina azurea* Seen well from the canopy walkway and again at Bobiri.
Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea* A pair was seen at Shai Hills.
Purple-throated Cuckooshrike *Campephaga quiscalina* A male was seen from the canopy walkway.
Yellow-billed Shrike *Corvinella corvina* Great looks on the Winneba Plains.
Northern Fiscal *Lanius humeralis* Regularly encountered throughout the tour, often by roadsides.
Western Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus brachyrhynchus* Small numbers were seen in the forests.
Black-winged Oriole *Oriolus nigripennis* Seen well from the canopy walkway.
Shining Drongo *Dicrurus atripennis* A flock leader in the forests.
Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* Seen well at Shai Hills.
Velvet-mantled Drongo *Dicrurus coracinus* Replaces the previous species in the forests.
Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus nitens* Sightings of this skulking flycatcher at Ankasa and Atewa.
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher (Black-headed P F) *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Commonly encountered in the forests.
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Seen well at Shai Hills.
Piapiac *Ptilostomus afer* Just 1 at Shai Hills.
Pied Crow *Corvus albus* A common and widespread species.
White-necked Rockfowl (Yellow-headed Picathartes) *Picathartes gymnocephalus (V)* A total success! 4-5 birds.
Dusky Crested Flycatcher *Elminia nigromitrata* 1 seen well at Ankasa.
White-shouldered Black Tit *Parus guineensis* Good views of 3 at Shai Hills.
Dusky Tit *Parus funereus (H)* Heard only at Bobiri.
Forest Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus flavifrons* Sightings at Antwikwaa and Aboabo.
Western Nicator *Nicator chloris* Finally seen at Aboabo. See note.
Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* 1 seen well at Shai Hills.
Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* A ubiquitous species absent only from interior forest.
Slender-billed Greenbul *Stelgidillas gracilirostris* Scattered sightings in the forests.
Little Greenbul *Eurillas virens* Heard more often than the bird was seen in the forests.
Little Grey Greenbul *Eurillas gracilis* A small number of scattered sightings in the forests.
Ansorge's Greenbul *Eurillas ansorgei* A few sightings in the forests. See note.
Plain Greenbul (Cameroon Sombre G) *Eurillas curvirostris* Scattered sightings in the forests.
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Eurillas latirostris* Scattered sightings in the forests.
Golden Greenbul *Calyptocichla serina* Scattered sightings in the forests.
Honeyguide Greenbul *Baeopogon indicator* Scattered sightings in the forests.

Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus* (H) Heard flying over the Kakum forests.

Simple Greenbul (S Leaflove) *Chlorocichla simplex* First seen well at Winneba.

Swamp Palm Bulbul *Thescelocichla leucoptera* Scattered sightings in the forest zone.



A Swamp Palm Bulbul feasts on fruit at Ankasa. (Nik Borrow)

Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus* A regular member of mixed bird parties in the forests.

White-throated Greenbul *Phyllastrephus albigularis* A skulking flock seen at Aboabo.

Red-tailed Bristlebill (Common B) *Bleda syndactylus* (H) Often heard in the forests.

Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius* Frustrating glimpses for some at Ankasa.

Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapillus* Heard often and seen briefly a few times in the forests.

Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus* Excellent views at Ankasa.

Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus* Scattered sightings in the forests.

Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus* (V) Great looks at Ankasa and Atewa.

Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens* Easy to see at Ankasa and again at Atewa.

Fanti Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne obscura* Several seen in the Kakum forests.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A few of these Palearctic migrants were noted on the journey to Half Assini.

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Small numbers noted during the tour.

White-bibbed Swallow (White-throated Blue S) *Hirundo nigrita* A pair on the Pra and another on the Ebi Rivers.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica* Small numbers noted throughout the tour.

Red-breasted Swallow (Rufous-chested S) *Cecropis semirufa* (LO) Only seen by Nik on journeys.

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis* 1 seen on the edge of the Kakum forests.

Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon preussi* Seen well at their nesting site. See note.

Moustached Grass Warbler (African M W) *Melocichla mentalis* (H) Heard at Winneba.

Kemp's Longbill *Macrosphenus kempii* This skulker allowed us all first class views at Aboabo. See note.

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor* Regularly encountered in the forest zone.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura* Seen well at Shai Hills.

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens* More often heard than seen but we first had good looks at Antwikwaa.

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti* Singletons were seen from the canopy walkway and at Aboabo.

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mcallii* Seen well at Kakum and Bobiri.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina* Numerous opportunities to see this one in the forests.

Tit-hylia *Pholidornis rufica* This tiny bird was seen well at Kakum and Atewa.

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops* Heard more than seen.

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans* Seen along the Brenu Road.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis* Seen at Atewa.

Winding Cisticola *Cisticola marginatus* Seen at Cape Coast.

Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis* Easily seen at Shai Hills and Winneba Plains.

Short-winged Cisticola (Siffling F) *Cisticola brachypterus* Easily seen at Shai Hills, Winneba Plains and Brenu.
Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* Seen at Shai Hills.
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava* Widespread sightings.
Red-winged Warbler (R-w Prinia) *Heliolais erythropterus* 1 was seen on the Winneba Plains.
Black-capped Apalis *Apalis nigriceps* Singletons at Ankasa and Atewa.
Sharpe's Apalis *Apalis sharpii* Seen well in the various forests. See note.
Oriole Warbler *Hypergerus atriceps* Seen at Shai Hills.
Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Common and widespread but more often heard than seen.
Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris* More often heard than seen on the forest edges.



A Yellow-browed Camaroptera inflates its strange neck pouches with each call. (Phil Tizzard)

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota* More often heard than seen in the forests.
Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla* These pretty little warblers were easy to see at Shai Hills.
Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps* Canopy flocks encountered in the various forests.
Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri* Glimpses at Kakum and Ankasa.
Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens* (NT) Excellent views of a pair at Ankasa.
Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli* Seen well at Kakum and heard at Atewa. See note.
Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufipennis* Seen at Ankasa.
Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens* (H) Heard in several locations but always a little too distant.
Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus* Seen at Winneba.
African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis* Seen well at Atewa.
Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea* Poor flight views of a pair at Kakum.
Copper-tailed Starling *Hylopsar cupreocauda* Small numbers were seen in the Kakum forests.
Splendid Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus* Small numbers in the forest zone.
Purple Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus* Small numbers at Shai Hills.
Chestnut-winged Starling (Forest C-w S) *Onychognathus [fulgidus] hartlaubi* A small flock at Atewa.
Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeoptera lugubris* 1 flew over Antwikwaa.
White-tailed Ant Thrush (W-t Rufous T) *Neocossyphus poensis* 1 briefly at Ankasa.
Finsch's Rufous Thrush (F's Flycatcher T) *Stizorhina finschi* Just 1 sighting at Kakum. See note.
African Thrush *Turdus pelios* Seen well at Atewa.
White-tailed Alethe *Alethe diademata* Brief views at Kakum and Ankasa.
Western Forest Robin *Stiphornis [e.] erythrothorax* Seen well at Ankasa.
Blue-shouldered Robin-chat *Cossypha cyanocampter* We were lucky to see 1 on the edge of Kakum.
Snowy-crowned Robin-chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* Best views were along the Brenu Road.
Forest Scrub Robin *Erythropygia leucosticta* (H) Close but impossible to see at Ankasa.
Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Winneba.
White-crowned Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea coronata* A pair of these handsome birds at Shai Hills.
Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata* Sightings at Kakum, Aboabo and Atewa.
Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides* A pair at Shai Hills.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* 1 of these Palearctic migrants was seen at Shai Hills.

Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens* Pairs were seen from the canopy walkway and at Antwikwaa.

Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini* 1 pair at Ankasa.

Olivaceous Flycatcher *Muscicapa olivascens* 1 of these scarce flycatchers was seen well from the canopy walkway.

Little Grey Flycatcher *Muscicapa epulata* A pair was seen at Aboabo.

Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa comitata* Widespread sightings in the forests.

Tessmann's Flycatcher *Muscicapa tessmanni* 3 were seen at Aboabo but they disappeared very quickly. See note.

Ussher's Flycatcher *Muscicapa ussheri* A forest flycatcher often in the highest treetops. See note.

Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher (G-t F) *Myioparus griseigularis* Singletons seen at Kakum, Aboabo and Atewa.

Grey Tit-flycatcher (Lead-coloured F) *Myioparus plumbeus* Singletons seen at Kakum and Atewa.

Fraser's Sunbird (Scarlet-tufted S) *Deleornis fraseri* This atypical sunbird was seen well in the various forests.

Mangrove Sunbird (Brown S) *Anthreptes gabonicus* 1 was seen at Amansuri River.

Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi* Seen well in the various forests.

Grey-chinned Sunbird (Green S, Yellow-chinned S) *Anthreptes rectirostris* Seen at Atewa.

Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris* Common and widespread in the forests.

Reichenbach's Sunbird *Anabathmis reichenbachii* Seen at the Ebi River. See note.

Green-headed Sunbird (Olive-backed S) *Cyanomitra verticalis* First seen at our hotel near Shai Hills.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanoaema* Small numbers seen in the various forests.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* Common and widespread in the various forests.

Buff-throated Sunbird *Chalcomitra adelberti* This beauty was rather scarce this tour but we saw several at Atewa.

Carmelite Sunbird *Chalcomitra fuliginosa* At least 5 allowed great looks at Half Assini.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis* A male was seen at Shai Hills.

Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius* Easily seen in the forest zone.

Tiny Sunbird *Cinnyris minullus* Good looks at Ankasa.

Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* Excellent views of this sunbird that certainly lives up to its name.

Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae* This impressive sunbird was seen in the Kakum forests. See note.

Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus* This long-billed sunbird was seen well in the various forests.

Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cupreus* A few sightings in the savannas.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus* Widespread and mainly seen on journeys.

Thick-billed Weaver (Grosbeak W) *Amblyospiza albifrons* Best views were obtained at Atewa.

Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis* Small numbers seen in the forest zone.

Orange Weaver *Ploceus aurantius* Seen well at Cape Coast and the Ebi River.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* Common and widespread.

Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus* The distinctive race *castaneofuscus* was easy to see in the forest zone.

Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor* Our best views were from the canopy walkway.

Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha* First seen at Aboabo and again at Atewa. See note.

Compact Weaver *Ploceus superciliosus* 6 were seen well at Atewa.

Preuss's Weaver (P's Golden-backed W) *Ploceus preussi* 1 at Kakum and a pair at Aboabo.

Red-vented Malimbe *Malimbus scutatus* Watched building their amazing nests at Ankasa.

Blue-billed Malimbe (Gray's M) *Malimbus nitens* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus rubricollis* The most commonly seen malimbe in the forests.

Crested Malimbe *Malimbus malimbicus* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops* Small numbers of non-breeding birds in the Kakum farmbrush.

Black-winged Bishop (B-w Red B) *Euplectes hordeaceus* Breeding plumaged birds at Atewa.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura* Non-breeding plumaged birds at Winneba and Brenu road.

Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila rubrifrons* Great looks at a pair at Ankasa.

White-breasted Nigrita (W-b Negrofinch) *Nigrita fusconotus* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita (C-b Negrofinch) *Nigrita bicolor* Small numbers seen in the forests.

Grey-headed Nigrita (G-crowned Negrofinch) *Nigrita canicapillus* Commonly encountered in the forests.

Green Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula* A very secretive pair at Atewa.

Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus* No less than 4 sightings in farmbrush.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina* Secretive birds at Atewa.

Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta* First seen well at Shai Hills.

African Firefinch (Blue-billed F) *Lagonosticta rubricata* Easiest to see along the Brenu Road.
Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* Widespread sightings throughout the tour.
Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* Easiest to see along the Brenu Road.
Black-faced Quailfinch *Ortygospiza atricollis* Wonderful views on the ground at Shai Hills.
Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus* Common and widespread.
Black-and-white Mannikin *Spermestes bicolor* Flocks were seen in the forest zone.
Magpie Mannikin *Spermestes fringilloides* Excellent looks on the edge of Kakum, at Bobiri and Atewa.
Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* A few sightings of breeding plumaged birds.
African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.
Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* 1 at Shai Hills.
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* 2 of these Palearctic migrants at Shai Hills.



This Black-bellied Seedcracker sat and posed for us at Aboabo. (Nik Borrow)

MAMMALS

Olive Colobus *Procolobus verus* Seen well from the canopy walkway.
Olive Baboon *Papio anubis* Seen at Shai Hills.
Tantulus Monkey *Cercopithecus tantalus* Small numbers in Shai Hills. See note.
Lowe's Monkey *Cercopithecus lowei* Seen well from the canopy walkway.
Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey *Cercopithecus petaurista* Seen well from the canopy walkway.
Demidoff's Galago *Galagoides demidoff* Seen at night at Kakum.
Straw-coloured Fruit Bat *Eidolon helvum* Seen at the airport.
Hammer Bat *Hypsignathus monstrosus* (H) Heard at night at Ankasa.
Striped Ground Squirrel *Euxerus erythropus* 1 along the Brenu road.
Fire-footed Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus pyrropus* Seen at Atewa.
Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* Seen at Kakum, Aboabo and Bobiri.
Red-legged Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus rufobrachium* 1 at Ankasa.
African Giant Squirrel *Protoxerus stangeri* 1 at Ankasa.
Pel's Anomalure *Anomalurus peli* Amazing views of 1 from the canopy walkway.
Emin's Pouched Rat (E Giant P R) *Cricetomys emini* 1 pre-dawn en route to Aboabo.
Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguinea* 1 at Ankasa.
Common Cusimanse *Crossarchus obscurus* Seen at Ankasa.
Marsh Mongoose *Atilax paludinosus* 1 at Kakum.
Western Tree Hyrax *Dendrohyrax dorsalis* (H) Heard at night in the forests.
Maxwell's Duiker *Cephalophus maxwelli* (LO) Robert and Nik saw 1 at Ankasa.
Buffon's Kob *Kobus kob* A few at Shai Hills.

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. Gill, F and Donsker, D (Eds). 2012. IOC World Bird Names (v2.11). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

Latham's Francolin *Peliperdix lathamii*

Dr John Latham (1740-1837) was a British physician, naturalist and author of a *General History of Birds*.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*

Gustav Hartlaub (1814-1900) was a German ornithologist connected with the Bremen Natural History Society Museum. He had a specialist interest in the birds of West and East Africa.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

The name 'squacco' is derived from a purely local Italian name. In the absence of a native name, Willughby noted c. 1672 "*Ardea quam Squacco vocant in Vallibus dictis Malalbergi*"; this he had from the Renaissance encyclopaedist Ulisse Androvandi ('Ornithologia' 1599-1603). Ray ('The Ornithology of Francis Willughby' Translated into English, and enlarged by J. Ray, 1678) translated it as "the Heron which they call Sguacco in the Valleys of Malalbergo". Hill ('A General Natural History' 1748-52) erroneously spelt the name 'squacco'. Latham ('General Synopsis of Birds' 1781-5) took over this misspelling and added 'Heron'. The original name 'sguacco' supposedly imitates the husky call.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Eastern and southern African populations have been treated as a separate race *N. m. pileatus* but differences are clinal being smallest in the west to largest in the south and the species is perhaps best considered to be monotypic. In a very worrying development this species has been up-listed to 'Endangered' by BirdLife International. The species has experienced a very rapid decline due to hunting, persecution and indiscriminate poisoning.

Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*

Beaudouin was a French collector employed by the Verreaux family and he was known to be collecting in what is now Guinea-Bissau around about 1862.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

The name means ' juggler' in French and refers to the balancing mode of flight employed by this distinctive and spectacular birds! The Bateleur is also the magician or 'wand-user' of the Tarot Cards.

African Harrier Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus*

Also known as Gymnogene meaning bare-cheeked.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*

In this case the word Gabar is derived from two French words *garde* (guard) and *barré* (barred).

Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*

John Cassin (1813-69) was an American businessman and renowned systematic ornithologist. He became curator of ornithology and Vice-President of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences.

Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus*

According to local legend, the bird was a secretive spirit that supposedly once left the dark forest near a village for a chicken that it had fallen in love with. Unfortunately the bright sun burned its legs whilst it was mating with the bird. The spirit returned to its hiding place in a foul mood. Its cry is supposedly complaining that "My feet became red; I married a chicken!"

Levaillant's Cuckoo (African Striped C) *Clamator levaillantii*

François Levaillant (1753-1824), a great French taxidermist, collector and ornithologist who had a specialist interest in the birds of southern Africa. Levaillant's reputation is somewhat marred as he was proved to be something of a 'stringer' inventing not only new species but even the journeys on which he claimed to have found them!

Diederik (Didric) Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*

The name is based on an onomatopoeic rendering of the call and has been spelt various ways.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

Described by Stephens in 1853 the species is supposedly named after one of Francois Levaillant's Khoikhoi (Hottentot) servants.

Fraser's Eagle Owl *Bubo poensis*

Louis Fraser (1819-1866) was a British museum man, naturalist, explorer, author and member of the infamous ill-fated Niger River Expedition of 1841-42. He also collected specimens from Fernando Po (Bioko) and was eventually appointed British Consul at Ovidah in West Africa.

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini*

Edward Sabine (1788-1883) was an English scientist mainly interested in terrestrial magnetism and astronomy. He collected the spinetail and the puffback; both named after him, in Sierra Leone and donated them to the British Museum where J. E. Gray officially described the specimens.

Narina Trogon (Narina's T) *Apaloderma narina*

The species was described by Stephens in 1815 and was supposedly named after Levaillant's beautiful Khoikhoi (Hottentot) mistress! The story has it that Klaas was her husband!

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti*

Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1748-1831) was a French businessman forced to take refuge in the United States during the French Revolution and because of slave rebellions on San Domingo where he had his business in the spice trade. He had a consuming passion for ornithology dedicating his life to it.

Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksii*

General Sir James Willcocks (1847-1926) commanded the expedition to suppress the Ashanti rebellion of 1900.

Western Nicator (Yellow-spotted N) *Nicator chloris*

The name *Nicator* is derived from Greek and can be interpreted as 'conqueror'.

Ansorge's Greenbul *Andropadus ansorgei*

Dr William John Ansorge (1850-1913) was an English explorer and collected in Africa.

Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon preussi*

Paul Preuss (1861-1926) was a Polish-born German naturalist who collected in West Africa between 1886-98. He was responsible for constructing the botanical gardens at Limbe (formerly Victoria) in 1901.

Kemp's Longbill *Macrosphenus kempii*

It is currently uncertain as to exactly which family this unusual species is best placed. Robin (or Robert) Kemp (1871-?) was an accountant and amateur ornithologist and worked for a company building a railway in Sierra Leone where he collected during the years 1902-04.

Sharpe's Apalis *Apalis sharpii*

Richard Bowdler Sharpe (1847-1909) was a British zoologist with a specialist interest in classification and described over 200 species of birds.

Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli*

Pierre Puvel was Swiss and lived in Guinea-Bissau but little else is known about him.

Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschi*

Friedrich Hermann Otto Finsch (1839-1917) was a German ethnographer and naturalist who travelled widely. He was appointed Imperial Commissioner for the German colony known as 'Kaiser-Wilhelmland' that is now PNG. He was also co-author of *Die Vogel Ost Afrika* with Gustav Hartlaub.

Tessmann's Flycatcher *Muscicapa tessmanni*

Gunter Tessmann (1889-1971) was a German botanist and anthropologist who collected in both Guinea and Cameroon.

Ussher's Flycatcher *Muscicapa ussheri*

Herbert Taylor Ussher CMG (1836-1880) was at one time the Governor of Ghana (then known as the Gold Coast). His specimens were collected for him by a local man called Aubinn.

Reichenbach's Sunbird *Anabathmis reichenbachii*

Heinrich Gottlieb Ludwig Reichenbach (1793-1879) was an important German systematist and Director of the Dresden Natural History Museum.

Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae*

The species was formerly placed in the genus *Nectarinia*. Johanna Verreaux was the wife of Jules P. Verreaux.

Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha*

Sir Hubert Eustace Maxwell (1845-1937) was a Scot, important statesman and the grandfather of Gavin Maxwell. It was Boyd Alexander who named the species after him.

Tantalus Monkey *Cercopithecus tantalus* According to *Mammals of Africa* the population in the Shai Hills area are hybrids with Callithrix (or Green) Monkey *C. sabaeus*.