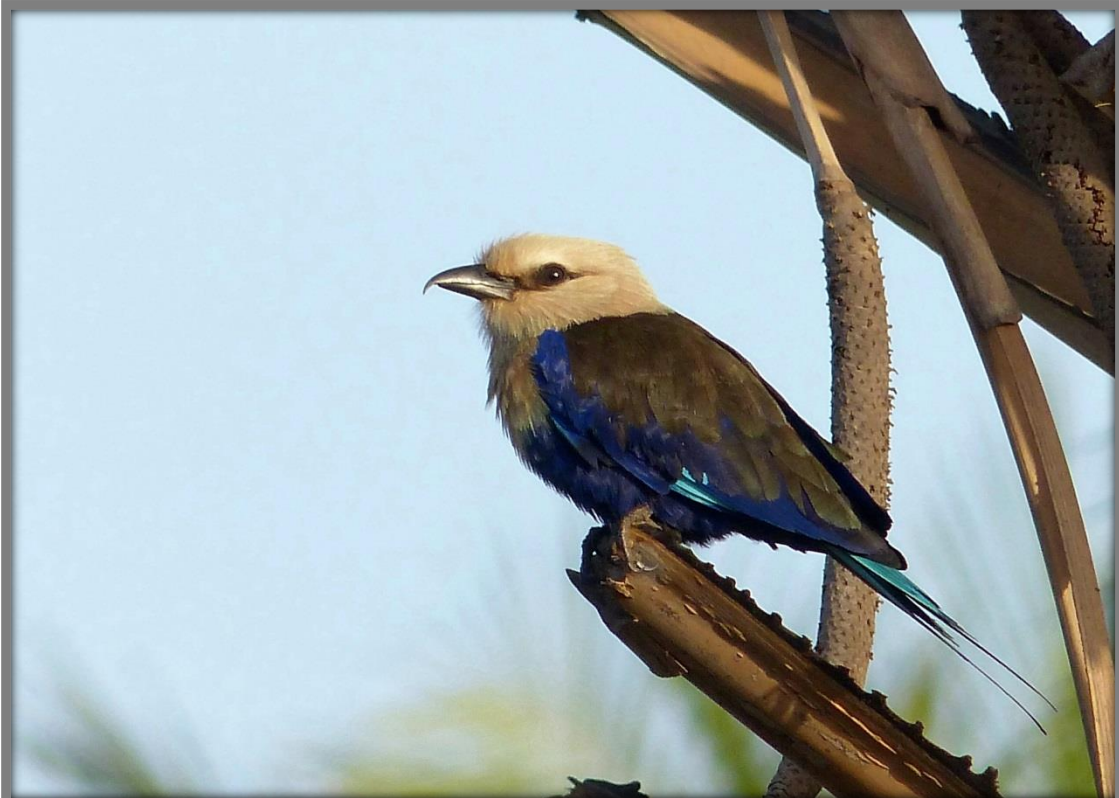


# ***THE GAMBIA***

***20<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013***

***Coursers, Rollers and Raptors***



***David Bowman***

## INTRODUCTION

This week long trip was planned for eight people, with the usual suspects present: Dave Steel, Kenny McNiffe, Tony Ormond, Mike Miles, Roger Benbow, John Ireland, Roger Haughton and myself. The idea was to do something cheap and cheerful, with plenty of birds, not too much driving and therefore loads of time in the field. The Gambia fitted the bill in every way and had the added bonus of allowing me to meet up again with a friend I'd met while ringing in Senegal, who is now working as a bird guide in both The Gambia and Senegal, Babageleh (Baba) Bah. As half of us were already fairly familiar with Gambian birds, from previous trips, the idea was to just employ Baba for a day or two to find some of the trickier species, particularly the owls and coursers.

I booked a package deal through Thomas Cook for £515 per person for flight and hotel, bed and breakfast only. The cheapest hotel available was the Palma Rima and this is what we settled for. It has definitely seen better days and the rooms are plain and dowdy but clean. The pool area looked OK but apart from Kenny and Tony, after their "big night out", we only saw it in the dark as we were leaving or coming back from our birding jaunts. As a birding base, though, it is perfect. The famous Cycle Track, which runs from the hotel to the Kotu Stream is a pleasant stroll and can easily deliver a hundred species without too much effort. Most organised birding parties choose to stay at the Senegambia Beach Hotel, which is more expensive but really nice and has the added bonus of putting food out for the Vultures and Kites, at 11.30 am each day, so you can sit and watch the feeding frenzy with a cold beer in your hand. It also has a nice suite of garden birds plus both Green Vervet and Red Colobus Monkeys. The nice thing is that the hotel is very welcoming to non-residents and we passed the heat of the day there on several occasions, combining good food, cold beers and birding.



*Dave Steel outside the Palma Rima Hotel*

## LOGISTICS

The Gambia is a small country and you can really do it some justice in a week. There is excellent birding within walking distance of the tourist hotels and even more within a short taxi drive. Even some of the more distant sites, such as Kartong and Tendaba Camp, are now easily reachable, due to the improved state of the roads. Local tourist taxis are cheap, particularly if you are sharing and are freely available. It's better to hook up with one reputable driver for the week and to negotiate a deal for this, which you can easily do at the taxi rank outside the Senegambia Beach Hotel. We used Baba's driver, Omar, and his 14-seater minibus for all our main trips and he was excellent – reliable, affable and willing, literally, to go the extra mile. You will hear a lot about hassle in the Gambia but I would take it with a pinch of salt. The people are out-going, friendly and in tourist areas out to "make a buck" but respond well to a friendly chat, a hand-shake and a firm "no"!! The food is excellent and there is a wide range of choice. We found Luigi's Italian restaurant, just down the road from the Palma Rima to be extremely accommodating, with superb food. Expect to pay the equivalent of £10 for a good meal with a few beers thrown in.

In terms of information, the Gosney guide tells you most of what you need to know. We used the Borrow & Demey field-guide, which is more than adequate and also the African Bird Club (ABC) Checklist of the Birds of The Gambia, which you can download for free at [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org)



*Western Grey Plantain-eater in the garden of the Palma Rima Hotel*

## DAY 1 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013

After assembling at Manchester Airport and doing the usual catching up, we were soon on board our flight for a fairly timely departure at 8.30 am. Planned arrival was for 2.35 pm but with a following wind and a smooth flight, we touched down just after 2.00 pm, bins at the ready. Hooded Vultures

were soaring as we came down the steps, alongside plenty of Yellow-billed Kites, with a dozen or so Cattle Egrets on the grassy verges and the ubiquitous House Sparrows on the terminal roof. Transit through the tiny airport was speedy and we were soon heading for our coach. The heat was welcome after chilly England and I'd guess the temperature was in the region of 30 degrees C. Lovely!! Strolling out towards our coach, a flowering bush held a stunning male Beautiful Sunbird, while Speckled Pigeons, African Palm Swifts and Pied Crows added to the spectacle of soaring vultures and kites.

After a twenty minute coach journey we pulled up at the Palma Rima, to find Baba waiting to greet us. After the quickest possible check-in we met him outside and decided to wander down the Cycle Track to the Kotu Stream. This is a spectacular site to have on your hotel doorstep and during migration it feels as if anything can turn up. The concrete track runs through an area of open palms before the terrain becomes wetter with small pools. After a mile or so it reaches a bridge over the Koto Stream, which is excellent for water-birds. Common birds encountered straight away included; Western Grey Plantain-eaters, White-billed Buffalo Weavers, Piapiacs, Spur-winged Plovers, Cattle Egrets, Hooded Vultures, Red-eyed Doves, Vinaceous Doves, Common Bulbuls, Laughing Doves, Senegal Coucals, Squacco Herons and loads of Wood Sandpipers.



***Wood Sandpiper***

Among the commoner stuff we picked out an Intermediate Egret, a couple of Blue-bellied Rollers, Black-headed Heron, Black Heron, Sacred Ibis, a nice flock of 60 White-faced Whistling Ducks, Western Reef Heron, Caspian Tern, Double-spurred Francolins, Rufous-crowned Roller, Senegal Parrot, Bronze Mannikins and a dashing Shikra. Ambling further towards the bridge, Grey-headed Gulls were swirling over-head and lots of Whimbrels, Greenshanks and Wood Sandpipers were feeding actively. Reaching the bridge, you look out over mangroves and sandbars, with plenty of waders to scan through. Black-winged Stilt, Common Sandpipers, Grey Plover, Common Redshank, loads of Ringed Plovers, 10 African Wattled Lapwings, Curlew Sandpipers and 3 Senegal Thick-knees were quickly picked up. Other water-birds included: Blue-bellied Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Long-tailed Cormorant and Grey Heron, while Yellow-crowned Gonolek and Wire-



tailed swallows were other nice additions. Baba then suggested walking to the Gambian Birdguides Association (GBA) garden and tower hide, where you can get a cold drink in the shade. We cut through some small fields to the south-east of the Kotu Bridge and walked the half-mile or so to this pleasant place to sit and chill, picking up several gorgeous Little Bee-eaters, Red-billed Hornbills, Tawny-flanked Prinias, African Jacanas and Village Weavers en route. We then bought some cold drinks, put our feet up and found some more birds. Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, Black-necked Weavers, a pair of Grey Woodpeckers, and an African Thrush were new species added while we rested. It was then back to the hotel, with the light starting to fade, for a quick turn around and a trip to Luigi's and, for me, a superb Pasta Matriciana - spicy, tomatoey and so good I had it nearly every night – plus a good handful of the local Julbrew beers, sitting on an open, first floor veranda, listening to a Pearl-spotted Owlet calling madly. A really great start to the trip and, with so much more to come, a relatively early night.



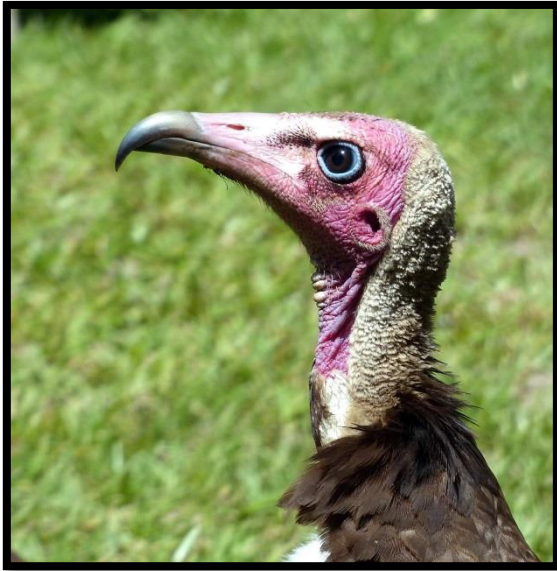
*Pied Kingfisher at the Kotu Bridge*

## **DAY 2 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013**

After a tough but rewarding first day, we decided to just have a local one today. So, it was up at first light to bird the Cycle Track again before getting back to the hotel at 9.00 ish for breakfast. Again, it was excellent and all of the previous day's species were seen again, though, between us we managed to add the following: Greater Painted Snipe, Royal Tern, Great White Egret, Rose-ringed Parakeet, African Spoonbill, Fork-tailed Drongo, Stone Partridge, Harrier Hawk, Lanner Falcon, Palm-nut Vulture, Palm Swift, Speckled Pigeon, Giant Kingfisher and Red-necked Falcon – the latter at a nest across the road from the hotel entrance.

After a nice enough breakfast and a couple of cups of coffee we were ready for anything. The decision was to head for the Senegambia Beach Hotel, to see the vulture-feeding session and then to explore the adjacent reserve at Bijilo Forest. The Senegambia Beach is a very pleasant hotel and

welcoming to non-residents. We found ourselves a sort of shaded, wooden gazebo which overlooks the feeding area, ordered some early beers and settled down for a very pleasant interlude. Bits of meat and bone are scattered onto the lawn and Hooded Vultures and Yellow-billed Kites pile in to enjoy the feast. While they were battling for scraps, a large Monitor Lizard crept out of the bushes to pinch a bit, before being chased off by the vultures. With Kenny in sun-bathing mode and the



***Hooded Vulture***



***Monitor Lizard***

others enjoying a quiet beer, I slipped off to do some birding. The grounds of the hotel have a good reputation and, sure enough, it wasn't long before I'd caught up with White-crowned Robin Chats, Black-capped Babblers, Grey Hornbill and lots of Village and Black-necked Weavers. In addition, alongside the common Green Vervet Monkeys, I had an enjoyably close encounter with a troop of Red Colobus Monkeys. Eventually, bumping into Roger B, who'd had the same idea, we went back to round up the others and decided to set off for the Bijilo Forest, which is virtually next door to the hotel and accessed via a short walk along the beach.

Undeterred by the fact that the mercury must have been touching 35 degrees C and with Kenny deciding that this called for some torso and head-baring, off we went. We soon caught up with all the birds I'd seen earlier and also picked up several Broad-billed Rollers. We also bumped into some German birders (more of whom, later!) who told us they'd been watching a Pearl-spotted Owlet, which we couldn't then re-find. Breaking out onto the beach, we must have looked a stranger sight than usual, all in our birding gear, with 'scopes, cameras, rucksacks etc. picking our way through the semi-naked bodies on the bake-hot sand. A few hundred yards of sandy trudging led us to the path which leads up to the reserve entrance. En route, we had already picked up Great White Pelican, White-breasted Cormorant, Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Yellow-legged Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Palm-nut Vulture and Yellow-crowned Gonolek.

After paying our nominal entrance fee and reassuring the guides at the entrance that we didn't need their services, we set off down the forest track. It is maybe a two mile circular walk, mainly through nice, old forest with some open areas. In the heat of the day, not many birds were moving but we

managed to find Grey-backed Cameroptera, Snowy-crowned Robin Chat, Brown Babbler, Little Bee-eater, Red-billed Hornbill, Grey Hornbill, Village Weaver, Black-necked Weaver and Lavender Waxbill, with Osprey and Lanner Falcon over-head. Perhaps the most interesting find was a small perched raptor which Roger H picked up, perched on a palm tree. It was dark rufous, heavily streaked and clearly a falcon. Eventually, with reference to the field-guide and after seeing it fly, we realised we'd been watching a Common Kestrel of the race *rufescens*. This is a resident, though little is known about its distribution in Senegambia, due to confusion with the nominate *tinnunculus*, which is a winter visitor/passage migrant. We also saw a flock of Hooded Vultures feeding on the carcass of an unidentified Cetacean, which had been washed up on the beach and which stank to high heaven!



***Hooded Vultures on Cetacean carcass***

Hungry now, we decided to find some food and after exiting the reserve saw the entrance to a beach club across the road. We were made welcome and settled for cheesy-chips with some – yes you've guessed it – pints of Julbrew! A very pleasant, not-really-birding hour passed before we were ready to re-start the hunt. Walking back through the grounds of the Senegambia Beach Hotel, Dave Steel managed to locate the elusive Pearl-spotted Owlet and we enjoyed some really nice views.



Then, it was back to the Palma Rima and a last hour's birding along the Cycle Track. Lavender Waxbills and Red-billed Firefinches were among the many species seen, with raptors including 1 Lanner, 2 Shikras, 3 Palm-nut Vultures, 2 Harrier Hawks, 1 Red-necked Falcon and scores of Hooded Vultures and Black Kites. Then, it was off to Luigi's for the inevitable Pasta Matriciana and enough Julbrews to round off a brilliant day. Oh, and before I forget, back to the Germans. When we were watching the Pear-spotted Owlet, our German friends had joined us and we had chatted for a while. We told them about our plans to get up early next day and go to Kartong, near the Senegalese border. They were a little envious and as we had room in the van, we invited them to come along, arranging to pick them up outside the Senegambia Beach Hotel, where they were staying, at 6.30 am. So, off to bed, having arranged to meet Baba and his driver at 6.00 am.



*The Cycle Track at sunset*

### **DAY 3 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013**

By 6.00 am we were all ready outside the hotel, having picked up our packed breakfasts and lunches, which one of the waiters had been kind enough to arrange (for a small tip). Unfortunately, there was then more than an hour's delay, due to Baba's late arrival, which meant that we had to change our plans, as we had been keen to get to Kartong at first light. Eventually, the van arrived with Omar at the helm and we opted to go to the Abuko nature reserve, followed by lunch at Lamin Lodge. First, though, we dashed to the Senegambia Beach Hotel, to see if our German friends were still waiting for us. Unhappily, they had obviously given up on us and we had no way of contacting them to apologise. Abuko is one of the Gambia's prime birding spots and just a short taxi drive from the tourist areas. It consists of lush, gallery forest with some reedy pools and can be well covered in a morning. It has a large hide over-looking the main pool, which is a good place to eat your pic-nic during the heat of the day – it was here we bumped into our German friends who looked dubious when we explained why we'd left them standing outside their hotel this morning!

Birds seen included: Snowy-crowned Robin Chat, African Thrush, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Black Crake, African Darter, African Jacana, Purple Heron, Black-headed Heron, Shikra, Grey Hornbill, Palmnut Vulture, Giant Kingfisher, Hammerkop, Violet Touraco, Little Greenbul, Malachite Kingfisher, Black-necked Weaver, Yellow-wattled Plover, Village Weaver, Grey Woodpecker, Squacco Heron, Senegal Coucal, Grey Plantain-eater, Palm Swift, Red-chested Swallow, Piapiac, Yellow-



fronted Tinkerbird, Vinaceous Dove, Fanti Sawwing, Pied Crow, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Western Bluebill, Common Wattle-eye, Pied Hornbill, Collared Sunbird, Green Touraco, White-crested Helmetshrike, Lanner, Splendid Sunbird, Green Hylia, Red-billed Firefinch and Whimbrel.



***Squacco Heron, Abuko***

After a very rewarding morning's birding in Abuko, we headed off for lunch at Lamin Lodge. This used to be one of the jewels of a trip to the The Gambia – a pretty, rickety lodge built on stilts, jutting out into the mangroves of the River Gambia. Good for birds, fresh fish and a cool beer. It was disappointing to find it closed for “health and safety” reasons, so we grabbed a drink at a nearby bar while mulling over our options. I then remembered reading about Mandina River Lodge at Makasutu, a new place which had recently opened further up river, near to Brikama. Omar knew the place and we were soon underway. We then drove through some wonderful habitat of dry bush, acacia woodland and open grassland before arriving to a friendly enough welcome. A troop of Olive Baboons, which were lazing in the shade outside the lodge gave notice that we were in a more “up-river” kind of habitat, with the possibility of some new birds to boot.

What then followed was a frustrating half-hour of negotiations, firstly with the pleasant receptionist and later with the manager. The issue was that the lodge catered primarily for organised, pre-booked parties and had a set fee (of about £20 per person) for access, lunch, local dancing and a boat trip. We just wanted food, birds and beer, though not necessarily in that order! They wouldn't budge and neither would we. Eventually, we piled into the van, disappointed and started the engine – only for the receptionist to come chasing out. She'd persuaded the manager to let us have access and lunch for the equivalent of £6.00 per head, which was more like it. What followed was a very civilised few hours, with a nice buffet lunch, plus beers, before sitting out birding on a shady terrace over-looking the mangrove swamps of the Mandina Bolong. Birds included; Pied Hornbill, Purple Glossy Starling, Long-tailed Starling, African Golden Oriole, Little Swift, Brown Babbler, Beautiful Sunbird, White-backed Vulture, Hooded Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite, Pied Kingfisher, Northern Puffback, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Red-eyed Dove, Vinaceous Dove and Village Weaver.

Eventually, we had to tear ourselves away and were given a really warm send-off! We then decided to have a good walk through the enticing habitat outside the lodge and asked Omar to follow us

down the track in the van. Raptors were much in evidence, with African Hawk Eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Lanner, Black-shouldered Kite, Osprey, Hooded Vulture, White-backed Vulture and Harrier Hawk. Other sightings included: Palm Swift, Fanti Saw-wing, Bronze Mannikin, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Bearded Barbet, Double-spurred Francolin, Black-bellied Wood Dove, Blue-bellied Roller, Yellow Wattled Plover, Mottled Spinetail, Piapiac, Red-chested Swallow, Abyssinian Roller, Grey Hornbill and Black-headed Heron.



***Osprey at Makasuto***

Then it was back to the hotel for a last hour's birding before another excellent meal, a few beers and an early night.

#### **DAY 4 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013**

The plan today was to meet Baba and Omar at first light and to go looking for owls. After a delayed start, due to Baba's late arrival, we headed off to Bonto Forest, a place which Baba described as his local patch. This is a superb piece of old forest, which is close to Farasuto but doesn't seem to figure in the Gosney guide. Baba's stake outs for owl roosts worked a treat and we were soon enjoying brilliant views of White-faced Scops Owl, the scarce African Wood Owl and Verreaux's Eagle Owl. Other birds seen included: Yellow-breasted Apalis, Common Wattle-eye, Pied Hornbill, Green Hylia, Blackcap Babbler, Harrier Hawk, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Collared Sunbird, Snowy-crowned Robin Chat, Booted Eagle, Pied Hornbill, Red-eyed Dove, Village Weaver, Klass's Cuckoo, Bronze Mannikin, African Golden Oriole, African Paradise Flycatcher, Lizard Buzzard, Violet Touraco, Fanti Saw-wing, Blue-bellied Roller, Beautiful Sunbird, Ahanti Francolin (calling but not seen), White-crested Helmetshrike, Red Bishop, Grey-headed Sparrow, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Orange-cheeked Waxbill and Lavender Waxbill.

Then it was on to Faraba Banta, which is a well-known place for raptor watching. A track leads across open savannah, with some thicker stands of trees in places. While driving along the rough track en route, I managed to pick up a Striped Kingfisher, which we all managed to see. Baba then led us down the Faraba Banta track to his stake out for the uncommon Greyish Eagle Owl. We were

all eventually able to get excellent views. Interestingly, the bird was more rufous than we'd expected it to be, suggesting a juvenile. On the walk back we picked up Yellow-fronted Canary, Splendid Sunbird, Purple Glossy Starling and best of all, Kenny got reasonable views of a Bataleur passing rapidly over.

As if the day hadn't been good enough already, Baba had further delights in store for us, with a trip to the adjacent Farasuto Forest. This is a new community forest reserve and at the entrance has a water drip set up, where you can sit with a cold drink and easily see some of the more skulking forest species. It also has an open area with a pool and a viewpoint onto riverine mangroves and mudflats.



***Senegal Thick-knee at Farasuto***

As we were approaching the reserve, a single Beaudouin's Snake Eagle was soaring over-head, while the forest offered first-class birding. Sightings included: Spotted Honeyguide, Oriole Warbler (call only), Northern Crombec, Red-rumped Swallow, Black-billed Wood Dove, Purple Glossy Starling, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Greater Honeyguide, African Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Black-necked Weaver, Green Touraco, Harrier Hawk, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Northern Puffback, Common Wattle-eye, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, African Goshawk, Senegal Thick-knee, Black-crowned Night Heron, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Shikra, Mottled Swift, Yellow-billed Stork, Pink-backed Pelican, Black-shouldered Kite, Gull-billed Tern, Turnstone, Common Sandpiper, Grey Heron, Grey Plover, Redshank, Spur-winged Plover, Crested Lark and Lanner. Other wildlife included West African Crocodile, Sun Squirrel and a humungous Forest Cobra which Baba and I nearly trod on!

It had been a fantastic day's birding and then it was back to the hotel for a quick shower before yet another good meal and a few beers. For some of us bed was then calling but, still high on the adrenalin from the day, someone (!) suggested that we should dip into the liveliest of the local bars for a "quick one"! I'll draw a veil over what followed as Kenny, Tony, John, Roger H, Dave S and I dipped our toes into the Gambian night-life, other than to say I really thought my sides were going

to split with laughing. Dave was the first to see sense and leave, John, Roger and I followed at midnight while, under Tony's watchful eye, Kenny proceeded to stay and do his inimitable fraternisation. My understanding is that the evening ended in the wee small hours, when Kenny and Tony challenged the locals to a three-legged race back to the hotel, winning by a scarily short margin! They then decided to keep the night barman company, drinking him out of beer by 5.00 am before gracefully retiring.

#### **DAY 5 24<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

It was no surprise to find two of our party missing for the pre-breakfast birding. In their absence, we ambled down the cycle track to the Koto Bridge, where the birding was as good as ever. Among the usual species we managed to see Pearl Spotted Owlet, Senegal Parrot, Harrier Hawk, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater, Shikra and Lanner. After a quick breakfast, with no further sign of our compadres, we decided to stay local and give them a ring after they'd stirred. The Old Cape Road seemed to offer some good possibilities, with a saline lagoon, mangroves and mudflats, so we grabbed a couple of taxis and set off. This really is a good site, with large gull/tern roosts, raptors over-head and plenty of bird movement through the roadside scrub and mature baobabs.



***Little Bee-eater, the Old Cape Road***

Species seen included: Slender-billed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Grey-headed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Great White Egret, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Whimbrel, Spur-winged Plover, Pied Kingfisher, Lanner, Red-chested Swallow, Greenshank, Rose-ringed Parakeet, African Mourning Dove, Laughing Dove, Little Swift, Grey Plover, Palm Swift, Abyssinian Roller, Marsh Harrier, Senegal Wattled Plover, Grey Heron, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Northern Crombec, Beautiful Sunbird, Osprey, Blue-bellied Roller, Olivaceous Warbler, Long-billed Cormorant, Senegal Eremomela, Great White Pelican, White-faced Whistling Duck, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Ringed Plover, Zitting Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Yellow-legged Gull, Anhinga, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Harrier Hawk, Little Egret and Little Bee-eater.



Having had a great morning, we then adjourned to the Senegambia Beach Hotel for lunch and beers. Settled in our gazebo with a cold one in hand, we carried on our fruitless attempts to phone Kenny and Tony. Assuming (correctly) that they were in recovery mode and having digested another nice meal, we decided to go hunting for the scarce Black-headed Plover on the Fajara Golf Course. It was now very hot but undeterred we gave it a good go without any luck. A few Black-billed Wood Doves and a couple of hunting Shikras were all that was moving in the heat of the day, so we repaired to the GBA hut for some shade and a cold drink. A few Piapiacs and Village Weavers kept us company before we weakened – despite Roger H's protestations – and asked one of the GBA guides to find us the Black-headed Plovers. Sure enough, he did and we followed this with some brilliant views of Painted Snipe on the Kotu rice paddies. Walking back to the hotel through the Kotu Sewage Works – we managed to end the day by picking up Black Crake and Yellow Wagtail, along with Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, White-faced Whistling Duck as well as loads of the commoner species. A shower and then we hooked up with Kenny and Tony for a quick beer, a catch up and a meal which was up to the usual high standards. It was then early to bed for the much anticipated trip to Kartong in the morning.



*Spur-winged Plover, Kotu Sewage Works*

#### **DAY 6 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

We were up and out at 6.00 am, meeting Omar with his van for the much-anticipated trip to Kartong. Gosney describes the Kartong "Sand Mines" as offering some of the best birding in The Gambia and he's not wrong. It is situated near the Senegalese border, about an hour's drive south from the tourist areas. It consists of shallow pools and large reed-beds, with some lovely open grassy areas and was created as a result of sand extraction. It is a BTO Observatory and ringing station, run by a Brit, Colin Cross, more of whom later. It is easy to see a hundred + species in a morning and we managed that despite becoming slightly distracted from birding as the morning wore on. We arrived just after first light, pulling alongside some shallow pools where Purple

Gallinules with young were the first birds to greet us. We then proceeded to wander round this wonderful reserve, racking up new birds every step of the way. This is not an exhaustive list but we saw (101 species by my reckoning): Purple Gallinule, Harrier Hawk, Osprey, Broad-billed Roller, African Crake, Hammerkop, Moorhen, Western Reef Egret, Pink-backed Pelican, African Jacana, Senegal Thicknee, White-faced Whistling Duck, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, Gull-billed Tern, Grey Plantain-eater, Grey Heron, African Spoonbill, Great White Egret, Grey Heron, Squacco Heron, Pied Crow, Senegal Coucal, Black Heron, Brown Babbler, Little Bee-eater, Common Bulbul, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Village Weaver, Blue-bellied Roller, Abyssinian Roller, Hooded Vulture, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Palm Swift, Green Wood-hoopoe, Caspian Tern, Beautiful Sunbird, Bronze Manikin, African Green Pigeon, Greenshank, Piapiac, Yellow Wagtail, Speckled Pigeon, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Northern Crombec, Senegal Eremomela, Little Swift, Crested Lark, Yellow-billed Kite, Red-chested Swallow, Marsh Harrier, Little Ringed Plover, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Whimbrel, African Golden Oriole, Blackcap Babbler, House Martin, Palmnut Vulture, Pied Kingfisher, Rufous-crowned Roller, Purple Heron, Black-shouldered Kite, Reed Warbler, Great White Pelican, Giant Kingfisher, Tawny Eagle, Little Bittern, Splendid Glossy Starling, Purple Glossy Starling, Black-headed Bush-shrike, Lavender Waxbill, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Black Crake, Willow Warbler, Barn Swallow, Royal Tern, African Mourning Dove, Grey Kestrel, African Hobby, Lanner, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, Common Snipe, Black-billed Wood Dove, Black-headed Heron, Cattle Egret, Shikra, Double-spurred Francolin, Black-winged Stilt, Senegal Wattled Plover, Spur-winged Plover, Grey-headed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Red-eyed Dove, Laughing Dove, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Red-billed Hornbill and African Grey Hornbill.



*Chilling out at Kartong Bird Observatory*

With the day starting to really heat up, we decided to call at the Observatory to see if Colin Cross was at home. Given that he didn't know any of us and hadn't been warned of our coming, Colin's welcome and his hospitality (and that of his charming wife, Binta) was fantastic. We started with a really good natter about birds, bird ringing and mutual acquaintances, moved on to accept Colin's offer of a beer and then of another one.....and another....and so on. In the end Colin asked us to stay for lunch and sent out to the village to replenish his stocks of beer. Binta made us all bacon butties – except for Dave and Kenny who had cheese – while Colin brewed a large pot of tea. With Colin and Mike discovering that they had a mutual acquaintance back in Norfolk, the two raconteurs hit full flow and had the rest of us in tucks. The beers arrived and on we went. It turned into one of the most enjoyable afternoons possible – relaxing, chatting, drinking, birding, in good company and a great setting. As the afternoon wore on Colin decided that we'd have to stay for tea and asked Binta if she'd make us a goat curry, which she did. A few more beers, some of Binta's wonderful curry and the light started to fade, with bats of all sizes emerging to hawk the pool in front of us. Colin was telling tales about the joys of ringing at Kartong, with rabid bats and crocodiles in the ringing rides, when our thoughts turned back to birding. We hadn't yet caught up with Long-tailed Nightjar so Colin offered to take us lamping for them. We duly had close views of several warming themselves on a sandy track and then found ourselves saying fond farewells to Colin and Binta and regretfully hitting the road for home, where a few beers and a bite to eat rounded off a fantastic day.

#### **DAY 7 26<sup>th</sup> March**

While most of the trip reports indicated that visiting Tendaba Camp, the prime birding site up the River Gambia, necessitated at least one over-night stop, Baba begged to differ. He had told us that, with the improvement in the road, it was easily possible to do it in a day. Slightly reluctantly – as we didn't want to spend more time driving than birding – we had agreed to meet him at 5.00 am to give it a go. Having been threatened with death or worse if he didn't arrive on time, we were soon underway, heading for one of the best possible birding days.



*John and Roger on the River Gambia*



The road to Tendaba Camp proved to be just as Baba had said and the only untoward incident was early on when a Barn Owl was unfortunate to fly out in front of us and be hit by the van – not the best way to get a trip tick. The birding en route was good and as the sun rose over tiny villages and acacia and baobab savannah, we started building our day list: Grey Kestrels, Yellow-billed Kites, Grey Plantain-eaters, Harrier Hawks, Palm Swifts, Red-chested Swallows, Namaqua Doves, Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Grasshopper Buzzard, Pied Crows, Grey Hornbills, Great White Egrets, Abyssinian Rollers, Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, Blue-eared Glossy Starlings, Bush Petronias, Red-billed Hornbills, Double-spurred Francolins and Grey Herons were among the species noted. By 7.30 am we were pulling in to Tendaba Camp, where a simple breakfast and hot drinks were waiting. Don't, by the way, expect the kind of standards you'd get at a Kenyan safari lodge. Tendaba is a rustic kind of place – OK as a birding base and in a superb setting but of a very basic standard. We rushed through breakfast, keen to get underway, with Bronze-winged Courser definitely in our sights.

Baba had arranged a motorised canoe to take us across the river and down some of the smaller tributaries, which proved highly productive. Gull-billed Terns, African Darters, Little Swifts, Pied Kingfishers and Common Bulbuls were among the commoner birds as we were piling into the canoe. Once out on the broad expanse of river, a flock of 19 Spur-winged Geese flew overhead and we were soon nosing down a narrow tributary, where Common Wattleye, Mouse-brown Sunbird, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, two stunning Fairy Blue Flycatchers, Whimbrels galore, Abyssinian Rollers, Senegal Parrot, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Goliath Heron, Common Sandpiper, Spur-winged Plover, Striated Heron, Greenshank and Yellow-billed Kite were noted. We then reached an open area on the north bank, where seasonally flooded grassland stretched in to the distance and acacia and baobab woodland nearby.



***Bronze-winged Courser, near Tendaba***



Almost the first bird seen, after we decamped onto the north bank of the river, was an impressive Martial Eagle soaring over the open grassland. A Redstart was then a nice reminder of home, looking incongruous in an acacia alongside Beautiful Sunbirds and Black-billed Wood Doves. A hunting Gabar Goshawk pitched into the top of a tree beside us, while other raptors included two Shikras, African Hawk Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Montague's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Hooded Vultures, Osprey and White-backed Vulture. Moving through a burned area, we had great views of Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Blue-bellied Rollers, Pygmy Sunbirds, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Grey-headed Sparrows before finally nailing our quarry. Baba's stake out for Bronze-winged Courser finally paid off, with one allowing stunningly close views as it pretended to be invisible!

Then, it was back into the canoe for some more riverine birding. Great White Pelicans were numerous, alongside Senegal Thicknees, Redshanks, more Whimbrels, Black-crowned Night Heron and African Fish Eagle. Then, it was back to Tendaba, as Baba had other sites lined up for us.



***Immature African Fish Eagle from the canoe at Tendaba***

Baba's plan was to start heading homewards, stopping for lunch at Kampanti for raptors and then to take us to a breeding site for Temminck's Courser. Kampanti is on the main road about twenty-five miles west of Tendaba. It doesn't look much different from much of the country-side you pass through – a roadside village with an open, shady area of mature trees with a small pool – but it is a magnet for raptors. Having settled under the trees, Baba went off to get us a simple lunch of

bananas, tinned sardines and fresh loaves. John then entertained the local women, who were washing clothes at the pool, by spilling an entire tin of oily sardines down the front of his trousers. Despite my best efforts and the willing cooperation of the local women, he refused to let them de-bag him and wash them for him. He's such a spoilsport!



*John enjoying lunch at Kampanti*

Back to the birding, though, which was superb. In an hour we saw: 2 Grasshopper Buzzards, 2 Western Banded Snake-eagles, 1 Brown Snake Eagle, 2 Bateleurs, 2 Dark Chanting Goshawks, 2 Shikras, 2 Palmnut Vulture, 4 Harrier Hawks, 1 Grey Kestrel, 2 Long-crested Eagles plus scores of Yellow-billed Kites and Hooded Vultures. In addition, a very nice Viellot's Barbet was in an adjacent baobab. Eventually, we had to tear ourselves away and go looking for Temminck's Courser. The site for this is close to the main road at Faraba. Interestingly, like the Bronze-winged Courser site at Tendaba, it consisted of scrubby grassland, with scattered acacias and baobabs, with large burned off areas. I'd like to report that we found the Temminck's but after giving it a good try, we didn't. The ancillary birding, though, was excellent, with: Vitelline Masked Weaver, Yellow-fronted Canary, Yellow Penduline Tit, Little Weaver, Woodchat Shrike, Whinchat, Greenland Wheatear, Variable Sunbird, Lanner, Beaudouin's Snake-eagle, Harrier Hawk, Marsh Harrier, Yellow-wattled Plover, Hooded Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite and Red Bishop.

Then, as an interesting diversion, Baba invited us for our evening meal to his cousin's house. The drive there, after dark, gave us some glimpses of the thronging street life in the more urban parts of the Gambia. We then enjoyed a fabulous home-made curry, with a couple of beers and some excellent Gambian hospitality. Eventually, we made our way back to the hotel, then out for our last night for a few more beers and – for the more cautious eaters among us - another bite to eat!

#### **DAY 7 27<sup>th</sup> March**

With just a few hours of daylight before boarding our coach for the airport, opinions were divided as to how to use the time. John and Roger opted for a return to Abuko, while the rest of us plumped for the Old Cape Road. Both parties had great mornings, with John and Roger picking up Oriole



Warbler among some other good forest specialities and the rest of us enjoying the tern and gull roosts, with counts of: 35 Caspian Terns, 6 Royal Terns, 350 Slender-billed Gulls, 250 Grey-headed Gulls, 6 Sandwich Terns, 1 Striated Heron, 1 Marsh Harrier, 2 Grey Woodpeckers, 3 Gull-billed Terns, 81 Ringed Plover, 1 Grey Plover, 1 Northern Crombec, 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 20 Bronze Mannikins, 1 Sedge Warbler, 2 Tawny-flanked Prinias, 1 Willow Warbler, 3 Chiffchaffs, 6 Little Bee-eaters, 2 Yellow-crowned Gonoleks, 1 Osprey, 2 Lanners, 5 Red-billed Hornbills, 6 Speckled Pigeons, 2 Yellow Wagtails, 1 Wheatear, 23 Red-chested Swallows, 25 Whimbrels and 4 Pied Crows. Then it was back to the hotel and off to the airport. The general view was that this was maybe the best trip yet. I know we say that every time but we also mean it every time! The Gambia is certainly special, with its friendliness, the volume and variety of special birds within easy travelling distance and the excellent climate. It'll take a bit of beating but we'll just have to try!



***Grey Woodpecker, the Old Cape Road***

## ***SPECIES LIST***

	<b><i>English name</i></b>	<b><i>Scientific name</i></b>	<b><i>Sightings</i></b>
	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	1 off the Senegambia Beach Hotel on 21/3
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	1 at Kotu Bridge on 21/3
	Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	Daily up to 12 in Kotu area and 4 at Farasuto on 23/3
	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>	Small numbers at Koto, Abuko, Kartong , 11 at Tendaba on 26/3
	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelicanus onocrotalus</i>	
	Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelicanus rufescens</i>	
	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	1 at Kartong on 25/3
	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2 at Abuko, 2 at Farasuto, 3 at Tendaba and 2 on Old Cape Road on
	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Single figure counts from all wetlands on all dates.
	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Common at all wetlands. Highest counts of 24 at Kotu, 15 at Kartong on and 40 at Tendaba
	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	4 at Tendaba, 1 at Old Cape Road
	Black heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	Single figure counts at Kotu, Farasuto, Kartong and Old Cape Road. Highest count of 11 at Kartong on 25/3
	Western Reef Egret	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	Up to 8 daily at Kotu, 2 at Farasuto, 14 at Kartong and 12 at Tendaba
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	2 at Kotu on 24/3, 1 at Tendaba
	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Present at all wetlands with maxima of 14 at Kotu on 24/3, 10 at Kartong and 12 at Tendaba
	Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	Single figure counts at all wetlands with maxima of 8 at Kartong and 9 at Tendaba
	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	One or two at Kotu, Farasuto, Kartong and Tendaba.
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Single figure counts from all wetlands, maximum of 9 at Kartong
	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	Single figure counts from all wetlands, with maximum of 7 at Kotu
	Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Small numbers at all wetlands, maximum of 7 at Kartong
	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	1 at Farasuto
	Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	6 at Kotu, several dates, 1 at Farasuto and 1 at Old Cape Rd



	African Spoonbill	<i>Platalea alba</i>	10 at Kotu and 2 at Kartong on
	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Present daily at Kotu, max 95, Old Cape Road, max 220 and Kartong 230.
	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectopterus gambensis</i>	23 at Tendaba
	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Up to 5 seen on six dates at Old Cape Rd, Abuko and Kartong
	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	One or 2 at Makasuto, Farasuto, Kartong and Faraba Banta
	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans migrans</i>	1 at Koto, 2 at Senegambia Hotel on two dates
	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius parasitus</i>	Common everywhere, with max of 66 over Old Cape Road
	African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	One immature at Tendaba
	Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Up to four, daily at all coastal sites plus 2 at Kampanti
	Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Common everywhere, max of 110 over Old Cape Rd
	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	Singles at Makasuto, Faraba Banta and Tendaba
	Beaudouin's Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus beaudouini</i>	Singles at Bonto Forest and Faraba
	Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	1 at Kampanti
	Western Banded Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinerascens</i>	2 at Kampanti
	Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	1 at Faraba Banta and 2 at Kampanti
	African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	Small numbers daily at all sites, max 10 at Kampanti
	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	1 at Tendaba and 1 at Faraba
	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	3 at Old Cape Rd, 3 at Kartong and 2 at Faraba
	Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronis gabar</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Dark Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>	1 at Old Cape Rd, 2 at Kampanti
	Red-chested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter toussenelii</i>	1 at Farasuto
	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius sphenerus</i>	Up to six daily at most sites
	Red-thighed Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter erythropus</i>	A possible was photographed at Abuko on 27/3
	Grasshopper Buzzard	<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>	4 at Kampanti
	Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammus</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	1 at Kartong
	African Hawk Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>	1 at Makasuto, 1 at Tendaba
	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	1 at Makasuto, 2 at Faraba Banta
	Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Common Kestrel	<i>F. tinnunculus rufescens</i>	3 at Bijilo Forest, 1 at Faraba Banta and 3 at Kampanti
	Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	Singles at Kartong and Kampanti
	Red-necked Falcon	<i>Falco chiquera</i>	Daily at Kotu, nesting in palms outside Palma Riva Hotel
	African Hobby	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>	Single at Kartong and

			Kampanti
	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	One or two daily at most sites
	Stone Partridge	<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>	One at Kotu on 24/3
	Ahanta Francolin	<i>Francolinus achantensis</i>	One calling at Bonto Forest
	Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	High single figure counts at Kotu, Faraba Banta, Bonto Forest, Abuko and Makasuto.
	African Crake	<i>Crex egregia</i>	1 at Kartong on 25/3
	Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>	4 at Kotu Ponds, 1 at Abuko
	Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio madagascariensis</i>	24 at Kartong including adults with young
	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	3 at Kotu and 3 at Kartong
	African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	Up to 12 at Kotu Creek, 2 at Farasuto, 18 at Kartong including adults with young
	Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Max of 5 at Creek and adjacent Rice Fields
	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Max of 12, Kotu area
	Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	11 at Kotu, 21 at Farasuto, 4 at Kartong and 15 at Tendaba
	Bronze-winged Courser	<i>Rhinoptilus chalcopterus</i>	1 at Tendaba on 26/3
	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1 at Kartong on 25/3
	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Max of 21 Kotu area, 14 at Old Cape Rd and 3 at Kartong
	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1 at Kotu, 2 at Farasuto and 3 at Old Cape Road
	African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegalensis</i>	Max of 51 in whole Kotu area
	Black-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tectus</i>	1 at Kotu Creek near Golf Course
	Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	Up to 30 in Kotu area, 40 at Kartong, smaller numbers at Farasuto and Tendaba
	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	1 at Old Cape Road
	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	4 at Koto Creek, 22 at Old Cape Road
	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1 at Kartong
	Iceland Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus islandicus</i>	Up to 10 at Kotu area, 14 at Old Cape Rd and 2 at Tendaba
	European Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus phaeopus</i>	8 at Farasuto
	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>	Max of 7, Kotu area
	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	High single figure counts daily at Kotu, Kartong and Tendaba
	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	One or two at Kotu, 5 at Kartong
	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Low double figure counts at Kotu and Kartong
	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	10 at Kotu, 3 at Farasuto
	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	20 at Farasuto
	Grey-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>	300 at Old Cape Road, up to 50 at other coastal sites
	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	6 at old Cape Road on 27/3
	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Croicocephalus genei</i>	800 at Old Cape Road on two dates
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus intermedius</i>	1 at Old Cape Rd

	Baltic Gull	<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	93 at Kartong on 25/3
	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	1 at Koto, 3 off Senegambia Beach Hotel and 2 at Old Cape Road
	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Up to 8 at Farasuto, Old Cape Road, Kartong and Tendaba
	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Max 35 at Old Cape Road and 15 at Kartong
	Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	Up to 12 at Old Cape Road, Senegambia Hotel, Koto area and Kartong
	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	8 at Old Cape Road
	African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>	2 at Kartong on 25/3
	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>	Max 20 at Makasuto, Farasuto, Faraba Banta and Tendaba
	Black-billed Wood Dove	<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>	1 at Makasuto, 5 at Bonto Forest, 2 at Abuko.
	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	8 at Tendaba, 2 en route
	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	Regular throughout, max of 30 at Kartong and 15 Old Cape Road
	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia torquata</i>	Common at all coastal sites with max count of 41 at Kartong
	African Mourning Dove	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>	Fairly common coastally with max count of 20 at Kotu area
	Vinaceous Dove	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	26 at Kartong
	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	Common at all sites with regular counts of 30+
	Senegal Parrot	<i>Poicephalus senegalensis</i>	High single figure counts at all sites
	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Single figure counts at Kotu, Bijilo, Makasuto, Old cape Rd, Kartong and Tendaba
	Green Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa buffoni</i>	2 at Abuko, 3 at Bonto Forest and 1 at Kampanti
	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	5 at Abuko, 8 at Bonto Forest and 5 at Kampanti
	Western Grey Plantain-eater	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	High single figure counts at all sites
	Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	High single figure counts at all sites
	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Unhappily, one was struck at dawn by our van en route to Tendaba
	Northern White-faced Owl	<i>Ptilopsis leucotis</i>	2 at Bonto Forest
	Greyish eagle Owl	<i>Bubo cinarescens</i>	1 at Faraba Banta
	Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	African Wood Owl	<i>Strix woodfordii nuchalis</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Pearl-spotted Owlet	<i>Glaucidium periatum</i>	Calling nightly at hotel, two sightings, at Senegambia Hotel from Luigi's Restaurant balcony
	Long-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>	1 heard at Kotu, 3 lamped

			after dark at Kartong
	Mottled Spinetail	<i>Telecanthura ussheri</i>	14 at Makasuto, 8 at Faraba Banta and 5 at Old Cape Road
	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	Low double figure counts from all sites except at Tendaba, where 40+ were noted
	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis aerobates</i>	Single figure counts from all sites except Tendaba were 30 were noted
	Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	2 at Kartong
	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	One or two daily at Kotu, 1 at Farasuto
	Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>	1 at Faraba Banta
	Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	2 on three dates at Kotu, 1 at Abuko and 2 at Kartong
	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	1 at Kotu, 2 at Abuko and 2 at Kartong
	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Seen at all wetlands with max of 14 at Tendaba
	Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	Seen daily with max of 14 at Kotu
	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	5 at Farasuto, 3 at Old Cape Rd
	Rufous-crowned Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>	Single on 4 dates at Kotu
	Blue-bellied Roller	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	Seen on all dates with max of 6 at Kotu
	Abyssinian Roller	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	1 at Makasuto, 2 at Old Cape Rd, 6 at Kartong and 14 at Faraba Banta
	Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Low single figure counts at Kotu, Senegambia Hotel, Old Cape Rd and at Kartong
	Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	Double figure counts from all sites except Tendaba. Max of 40 at Kotu
	Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus kemp</i>	High single figure counts at all sites with max of 14 at Faraba Banta
	African Pied Hornbill	<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	3 at Abuko, 4 at Makasuto and 6 at Bonto Forest
	African Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	Seen daily at all sites, with max of 10 at Faraba Banta
	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>	2 at Bonto Forest, 1 at Abuko
	Vieillot's Barbet	<i>Lybius vieilloti</i>	1 at Kampanti
	Bearded Barbet	<i>Lybius dubius</i>	2 at Makasuto and 2 at Faraba Banta
	Spotted Honeyguide	<i>Indicator maculatus</i>	2 at Farasuto
	Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>	1 at Farasuto
	Buff-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Campothera nivosa</i>	1 calling at Bonto Forest, not seen
	Grey Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>	Max of 3 at Kotu, Makasuto, Farasuto and Old Cape Rd
	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	1 at Farasuto
	Fanti Saw-wing	<i>Psaldoprocne obscura</i>	4 at Abuko and 3 at Farasuto
	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	2 at the Old Cape Rd



	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	11 at Kotu, 3 at Farasuto and 5 at Kartong
	Red-chested Swallow	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	Double figure counts at Farasuto, Kartong and Tendaba with max of 20 at Kotu
	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2 at Kartong, 3 at Old Cape Rd
	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	2 at Kartong
	British Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla f. flavissima</i>	5 at Kartong, 2 at Old Cape Rd
	Spanish Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla f. iberiae</i>	2 at Kartong
	Little Greenbul	<i>Andropadus virens</i>	1 at Abuko and 1 at Farasuto
	Grey-headed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda canicapillus</i>	3 at Abuko, 1 at Farasuto
	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Fairly common in forested areas with max of 20 at Abuko and Farasuto
	Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	3 at Abuko, 2 at Bonto Forest and 2 at Bijillo
	White-crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha albicapillus</i>	7 at Senegambia Hotel, 4 at Abuko, 2 at Bonto Forest
	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1 at Faraba
	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	3 at Old Cape Rd
	Greenland Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe o. leucorhoa</i>	1 at Faraba
	African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	Mainly single figure counts from Farasuto, Old Cape Rd and Faraba Banta, though 11 noted at Abuko
	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1 at Old Cape Rd
	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	2 at Kartong
	Western Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>	1 at Old Cape Rd
	Senegal Eremomela	<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>	2 at Bonto Forest, 1 at Faraba Banta and 2 at Old Cape Rd
	Northern Crombec	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>	One or two seen or heard in all forests
	Green Crombec	<i>Sylvietta virens</i>	2 at Bonto Forest
	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1 at Bonto Forest, 3 at Old Cape Rd and 2 at Kartong
	Scandinavian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus c. abietinus</i>	1 at Kotu, 1 at Kartong and 2 at Old Cape Rd
	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Max 10, Old Cape Rd
	Green Hylia	<i>Hylia prasina</i>	1 at Abuko and 2 at Bonto Forest
	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	6 at Old Cape Rd, 5 at Kartong and 1 at Faraba Banta
	Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	Small numbers daily at Kotu, Bonto Forest, Old Cape Rd Bijilo, max 6 at Kartong
	Yellow-breasted Apalis	<i>Apalis flavida</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Green-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyuran</i>	2 at Bijilo Forest
	Oriole Warbler	<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>	1 heard in Bonto Forest and 2 seen at Abuko
	African Blue Flycatcher	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>	1 at Tendaba
	African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	3 at Abuko, 2 at Bonto Forest
	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	5 at Abuko and 3 at Bonto Forest

	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platyrsteira cyanea</i>	Small numbers at Abuko, Bonto Forest and Faraba Banta
	Senegal Batis	<i>Batis senegalensis</i>	1 at Bonto Forest
	Brown Babbler	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>	Common at Koto, smaller numbers at all other sites except Tendaba
	Blackcap Babbler	<i>Turdoides reinwardtii</i>	6 at Senegambia Hotel, smaller numbers at Bijilo, Bonto Forest and Farasuto.
	Yellow Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus parvulus</i>	2 at Faraba
	Mouse-brown Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>	2 at Tendaba
	Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>	1 at Makasuto and 2 at Bonto Forest
	Pygmy Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna platura</i>	4 at Tendaba
	Beautiful Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>	The commonest sunbird, seen throughout with max counts of 23 Old Cape Rd and 20 at Kartong
	Variable Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	1 at Tendaba
	Splendid Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i>	3 at Makasuto, 2 at Kartong and 1 at Faraba
	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	1 at Faraba
	Yellow-billed Shrike	<i>Corvinella corvina</i>	Noted at Old Cape Rd, Kotu, Bonto Forest, with a max of 20 at Makasuto
	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalis</i>	1 at Kartong
	Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	2 at Makasuto, 1 at Bonto Forest
	Yellow-crowned Gonolek	<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	Recorded in small numbers at all sites except Tendaba
	White-crested Helmet-shrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	3 at Abuko and 2 at Bonto Forest
	African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oratus</i>	Small numbers from all forest areas
	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	Present at all sites with max count of 12 at Bonto Forest
	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Recorded at all sites with counts of 40+ at Bijilo and Kampanti and Kartong
	Piapiac	<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>	Common at all sites, with max count of 40 at Kotu
	Purple Starling	<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>	Small numbers at Kotu and Farasuto, 20 at Kartong and 30 at Kampanti
	Splendid Starling	<i>Lamprotornis splendens</i>	2 at Kartong
	Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>	1 at Kartong
	Long-tailed Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>	Present at all sites except Tendaba, max count of 30 at Kampanti
	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>	3 at Kartong
	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	1 at Bonto Forest, 6 at Faraba and Tendaba
	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	8 at the Airport, 1 at Abuko
	Bush Petronia	<i>Petronia dentate</i>	20 en route to Tendaba
	White-billed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>	Common at coastal sites with

			80 at Kotu
	Little Weaver	<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>	1 at Faraba
	Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	Present at all sites except Abuko and Kampanti. Counts of 20 at Bonto Forest and 30 at Kartong
	Vitelline Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus vitellinus</i>	1 at Faraba
	Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	Common at all sites except Tendaba, with several counts of 40+
	Red-headed Quelea	<i>Quelea erythrops</i>	12 at Old Cape Rd
	Black-winged Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>	12 at Bonto Forest
	Northern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	1 at Faraba
	Lavender Waxbill	<i>Estrilda caerulescens</i>	Small numbers at several coastal sites and a max of 12 at Kotu
	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	2 at Makasuto
	Black-rumped Waxbill	<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>	6 at Bonto Forest
	Western Bluebill	<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	5 at Abuko
	Red-cheeked Cordonbleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	10 at Makasuto, 60 at Faraba Banta
	Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonostica senegala</i>	25 Kotu, 10 at Farasuto
	Orange-breasted Waxbill	<i>Amandava subflava</i>	4 at Bonto Forest
	Bronze Mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Common throughout e.g. 70 at Abuko, 60 at Makasuto and 30 at Faraba Banta
	Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>	30 at Faraba Banta, 11 at Faraba

## OTHER WILDLIFE

1. Forest Cobra
2. Agama Lizard
3. Frogs – several unidentified sp.
4. Fiddler Crabs
5. Mud Skippers
6. West African Crocodile
7. Bats – numerous unidentified sp.
8. Giant Rat
9. Ground Squirrel
10. Sun Squirrel
11. Cetacean sp (dead!)
12. Olive Baboon
13. Green Vervet Monkey
14. Red Colobus Monkey