

**ORNITHOLIDAYS' BIRDWATCHING TRIP  
TO ETHIOPIA  
organized and led by Ecotours Worldwide**



7<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>th</sup> October 2011



This report is a record of a bird-watching trip made to Ethiopia for 16 days from 7<sup>th</sup> October to 21<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

**ITINERARY AND TRAVEL NOTES**

Text & Pics by Gabor Orban – tour leader for Ornitholidays

What follows is a summary of the places and various sites visited on our trip to Ethiopia together with details of some of the birds and other wildlife seen and heard. For complete details of all the birds seen, please refer to the attached Systematic Lists.

### Day 1: Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> October

Route: Direct flight from London to Addis Ababa.

After a relatively smooth and easy direct flight during the night we arrived early next morning to Addis Ababa.

### Day 2: Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> October

Route: Addis Ababa – Gardens of Ghion Hotel – Geffersa Reservoir – Addis Ababa

We were greeted by the tour leader, Gabor Orban at the Addis Ababa airport who escorted us to our minibus which transferred us to the Ghion Hotel. Here we got our rooms already in the morning, so we could change and leave our stuff in the rooms. A buffet breakfast was also well appreciated, after which we were ready to look for the birds.

The morning was quite cool due to the fact that we were cca. 2400 metres above sea level, but quickly warmed up and the daily temperature was between 20-25Celsius with some wind and overcast.

First we looked around in the Ghion Hotel's Garden which offered a good introduction of the Ethiopian birds. Just as we stepped out from the hotel there were plenty of Yellow-billed Kites, White-backed and Hooded Vultures in the air and soon we had our first endemic, Wattled Ibis as well. The flowering trees and bushes just in front of the main entrance of the hotel were regularly visited by Tacazze Sunbirds. A huge group of Speckled Mousebirds moved back and forth. A Brown-rumped Seed-eater was seen shortly and a few Nyanza Swifts flew across.

In the garden there were various trees and bushes, some in full flowers, so there were plenty birds around. We had Mountain White-eye, Common Bulbul, African Dusky Flycatcher, Rueppell's Robin-Chat, Swainsson's Sparrow. We had our first Hooded Crows and Thick-billed Raven as well.

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

At a little forest patch we had very good movement of different songbirds such as Mountain Thrush, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Common Bulbul, Rueppell's Robin-Chat, Tawny-flanked Prinia, African Dusky Flycatcher, Abyssinian Waxbill, but perhaps the best was another 3 great local endemics: Brown-rumped Seed-eater, White-backed Black Tit and Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher.

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

Finally we returned to Addis Ababa to spend the night at the Ghion Hotel and have dinner there.

Birds Seen Today: 45

New Birds: 45

Total To Date: 45



### Day 3: Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> October

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

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

After breakfast we set off to go north to Sululta Plains, Debre Libanos and the Jemmu Gorge.

As we were leaving the bustling city of Addis soon the habitat changed and it became clear that the Sululta Plain is a great area for raptors and grassland species. We have stopped alongside the road wherever we had a good activity around. Birds seen along the way included White-headed Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite and some raptors familiar from home: Eurasian Kestrel and Marsh

Harrier. Isabelline and Red-breasted Wheatears were showing very well. Very nice colourful additions were Fan-tailed Widowbird and Yellow Bishop.

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

After travelling a bit further we arrived to the Jemma escarpment, where we parked at a private property with fantastic panoramic view of the Valley of River Jemma which is actually joining to the Blue Nile further North. We had an incredibly close Tawny Eagle about 15 feet away on a nearby tree, sometimes even calling. Some nice butterflies and wildflowers tried to divert our attention, but an amazingly close, eye-level Lammergeier stole the show and we were back concentrating on birds. We were awarded by a Verraux Eagle and a Lanner Falcon soon.

With all this great experiences we went a bit further to the Debre Libanos area where we parked very close to the famous monastery. However we were not about to visit the monastery itself, but after crossing a little stream we walked up in a rocky trail to the forest, where we were pretty soon surrounded by interesting species. First we had Mountain White-eye and a very cooperative Grey-headed Woodpecker. Then we found a silent, lonely White-cheeked Turaco just above our head. What an amazing bird! Both African Paradise Flycatcher and Abessinian Slaty Flycatcher were around. We first heard and then finally pinpointed the uniformly coloured Brown Woodland Warbler. We saw well Tawny-flanked Prinia as well. We found the beautiful Banded Barbet and Rupell's Robin-chat. Common Bulbul was really common! ☺ Other birds we found included Northern Crombec, Waxbill, Drongo, Red-billed Firefinch and Cordonbleau. We heard and shortly seen Hemprich's Hornbill as well.

When we were about to sit back in the bus we found our first Black-winged Lovebirds, another near-endemic well camouflaged in the canopy.

Finally we retraced our steps to the Jemma escarpment but this time we stopped at the Portuguese Bridge. We ate our sandwiches at the viewpoint and strangely enough not just we checked the birds, but they were controlling us as well: Yellow-billed Kites learned how they can steal full or part of our sandwiches from our hand with special kamikaze attacks. We had seen 3 times Verraux Eagle again, but it was hard to tell whether all were different individuals or a returning one. We enjoyed the view anyway. Lanner Falcon dashed through as well. Other highlights were a Boubou, another White-cheeked Turaco, European Bee-eaters and some Swainson's Sparrows.

On the way back to the capital we crossed again the Sululta Plains where we again located some of the birds we had seen before such as Red-breasted Wheatear, Thekla Lark, couple of Augur Buzzards and Marsh Harriers, Pied Crow, Eurasian Kestrel, Dusky Turtle and Speckled Dove, Yellow Wagtail, but we also could add some new ones like Yellow-headed Canary, Broad-billed Roller, Boubou, Brubru, Isabelline Shrike and Red-billed Oxpecker which we renamed as Horsepecker according to the actual host-mammal! ☺

Talking about mammals we should have mentioned a troop of endemic Gelada Baboons alongside the road.

Finally we arrived back to Addis, had an hour or so before dinner when we had enough time to discuss what we had seen and also how we planned to spend the next day. We decided to have a prebreakfast birding first and than after breakfast travelling South.

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



#### Day 4: Monday, 10<sup>th</sup> October

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

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

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



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

Then we found a nearby huge Monitor Lizard sunbathing close to the edge of the lake. Later on we could follow it for a while as it moved among the lakeside vegetation. Was quite an impressive specimen for sure.

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

Leaving Lake Hora we travelled to Koka Dam & Lake area and an even better raptor was an upclose Crested Eagle perched on a pole on the way. We had marvellous view with a prominent crest, great photo opportunities and the bird later on carried out a stunning flight show as well.

Arriving at Koka Dam & Lake it was obvious that it must be an excellent fishing area: the number of African Fish Eagles, all ages were outnumbered just by the Marabou Storks. Of course we have not missed Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Hamerkop, Sacred Ibis either and there were many Yellow-billed Storks as well.

After a careful check we finally found some Bruce's Green-pigeon in the dense canopy of the roadside trees. On one of the bushes a fantastic Beautiful Hummingbird posed for a while and a noisy group of Greater Blue-eared Starlings was around as well. Whiskered Tern flew above the water and there were Barn and Red-rumped Swallows around.

We broke the journey at Bethlehem's Restaurant, a clean, nice place which actually offers good rooms as well in a walking distance from the Lake Ziway. After the great food and some refreshments we looked around in the garden where we have found nests of Sparrow Weavers and of course the families of the birds as well. In front of the establishment on the tree we had a Mamaqua Dove and very close to the entrance an African Hoopoe was searching food, showing well.

Walking down to the shore of Lake Ziway we found plenty of Marabou Storks, both White and Pink-backed Pelicans, African Jacana, Spur-winged Plover, Ruff, Common -, Wood & Green Sandpipers, Three-banded Plover, Grey-headed Gull, Whiskered Tern, White-winged Tern. An Egyptian Goose family was swimming at our feet with plenty of Hamerkops and Sacred Ibises around. Spur-winged Geese flew across above the Black-winged Stilts. But the show was stolen by 2 star Kingfishers, a little Malachite Kingfisher and the huge Giant Kingfisher, both sitting out on the fence showing extremely well.

Later in the afternoon we reluctantly left this bird-rich area towards our accommodation. Alongside the road we noted some amazingly coloured birds such as Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Lilac-breasted Roller, Superb Starling and Buffalo Weaver.

Our hotel for the next nights was different than what we have planned, because at the Bekele Molla Hotel the government overtook all the reserved rooms, but we were aware of that so drove directly to the Sabanna Beach Resort, which turned out to be an excellent change, a well-appreciated upgrade. The resort had fully equipped, nice rooms at a good birding habitat close to Lake Langano. We were happy to stay for two nights here and after a lovely dinner in the stylish restaurant we looked forward to tomorrow after a good nights sleep.

Birds Seen Today: 98

New Birds: 54

Total To Date: 137



**Day 5: Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> October**

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



A walk before breakfast at the resort's property produced many good species. First around our houses we found Beautiful Sunbird, had a great view of Black-billed Barbet, some noisy White-bellied Goaway Birds, beautifully showing Abyssinian Wheatear, some Great Blue-eared Starlings. Well known birds from home included Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Whitethroat and Common Kestrel. Minutes later beneath a cliff and in the acacia woodland we had Village and Ruppel's Weavers, Mountain White-eye, Namaqua Dove, Speckled & Blue-naped Mousebirds. Then we found 2 interesting mammals, Black-tipped Mongoose searching on the ground. This was followed by locating a Red-billed Hornbill in a distance, Lilac-breasted Roller and African Paradise-flycatcher. Lanner Falcon flew above the rocky edge as we were walking up the steps towards the restaurant. But before we reached it we were stopped by a pair of White-winged Black-Tit. As we looked down from the edge we could see some Grey-headed Gulls, Dusky turtle Doves and Common Bulbuls before we finally went for the breakfast.

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

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

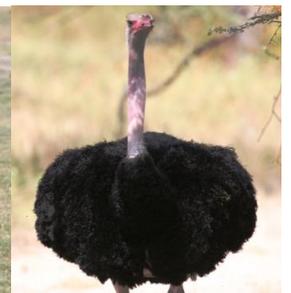
Later on we were driving to the edge of a huge cliff, parked and made a loop walk around a densely vegetated patch and at the arid, rocky plateau. Perhaps this mix of 2 completely different vegetation patches resulted so wide range of species like Blue-spotted Wood-dove, Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, Namaqua Dove on a nest with 2 eggs in it, Fork-tailed Drongo, Northern Crombec, Crowned Plover, Northern, Pied and Isabelline Wheatear, Tawny Pipit. A well-hidden Black-crowned Tchagra caused a bit of headache to ID for a while. Another attractive bird was a near-endemic Abyssinian Oriole. Striolated Bunting was new, while raptors were represented by Augur Buzzard and Chanting Goshawk. As we were leaving this area we were stopped by great views of Abyssinian Ground Hornbills as well.

Next we were driving down to Lake Abyata on a dirtroad. Soon we had spectacular views of a Kori Bustard, really upclose with excellent photographic opportunities. Northern Carmine Bee-eater was flying around to add some more colour. After a while we stopped to be on the safe side since we were driving actually at the dried out part of the lake. As we continued by walking towards the actual edge of the big lake even from a distance it was obvious that there was a huge mass of birds all over. Thousands of Lesser Flamingoes coloured the water, mixed with perhaps Greater ones. Hundreds of Pied Avocets and quite a lot of other shorebirds, waders and allies were around. We were among circa 60 Collared Pratincoles, plenty of Kittlitz Plovers, Little Stints, Ruffs, Sanderlings, Greenshanks, Long-tailed Cormorants, Great Egrets, Grey Herons. We also saw Yellow-billed Stork, Marabou Stork, Sacred and Wattled Ibises, a lonely, but nearby Black Crowned Crane. Beside the common Egyptian Goose we saw Spur-winged Goose as well, while African Fish Eagle was flying around. Common and Little Ringed Plovers, plus Common and Curlew Sandpipers also were identified. Isabelline Wheatear was quite common as well. We were lucky that a huge dust storm just missed us, but just to be sure we decided to leave the area, we had anyway many great experiences and really good number of birds under our belt before dusk.

Birds Seen Today: 100

New Birds: 46

Total To Date: 184





### Day 6: Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> October

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

Today we started again with a pre-breakfast birding. First we have found almost all the birds as yesterday morning: Beautiful Sunbird, Black-billed Barbet, White-bellied Goaway Birds, Abyssinian Wheatear, Whitethroat, Ruppel's Weavers, Speckled & Blue-naped Mousebirds, Common Kestrel, Laughing Dove, Speckled Pigeon, Barn Swallow, Black Redstart, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Great Blue-eared Starling and White-winged Black-Tit. But we have managed to add a few new ones to the garden list as well such as Vitelline Masked Weaver, Rock Martin, Heimprich's Hornbill, Blue-checked Cordonbleau, Little Rock Thrush, Northern Crombec, a nice male Pallid Harrier, Common and Little Swift, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinia, Common Sandpiper, Swainson's Sparrow, Bronze Mannikin, Brown-rumped and Streaky Seedeater.

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

We stopped at Dodola for a lunch where we also wanted to look around in a little garden for birds. After some strong arguments our driver has managed to make the local people open the closed area, however it was not really birdy at all, partly perhaps because of the strong wind, partly it was not the best time of the day. Still we had 2 Thick-billed Ravens on the roof of a small house where a local woman smashed seeds in an old traditional way. We had a simple, but tasty lunch in a garden where in the meantime we enjoyed the birds around which included Dusky Flycatcher, Chiffchaff and a couple of Tacazze Sunbirds, both males and females.

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

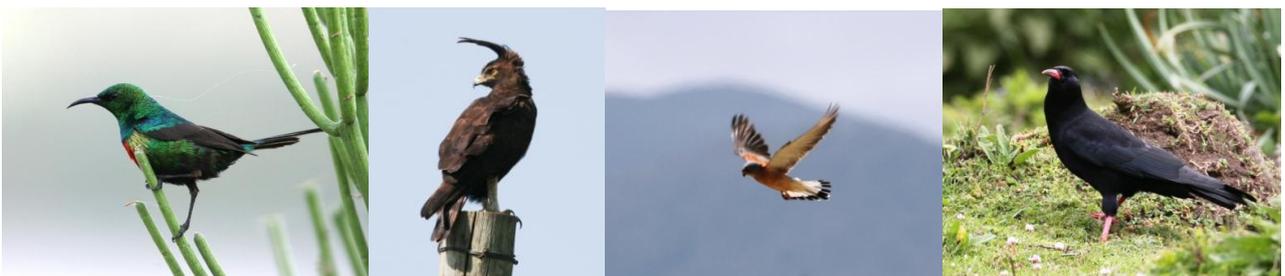
Finally we arrived to the Bale National Park's Mountain Nyala Reserve. However this area is protected mainly because of the Mountain Nyala, we had seen some other interesting mammals as well, such as Menelik's Bushbuck, Grey Duicker, Wart Hog or Buhor Reedbuck. We heard an Abyssinian Catbird, but could not locate it. On the other hand another 2 endemic birds, Chestnut-naped Francolin and also White-backed Black Tit was seen well. Otherwise birding was quite slow and hard with limited activity, perhaps because as later on it turned out a long night rain was on the way.

At Goba when we arrived to our hotel, Whabi Sebelle we had to face a couple of problems, it turned out that they just had not enough rooms, so Gabor volunteered to be in a staff room without bathroom. But everybody was effected by the lack of electricity in the whole district, but fortunately the reception could provide at least candles, so we had a kind of "romantic dinner" and for sure it was harder to check the daily species list with torches. But the food was good and we were all excited to prepare for the next day's birding. We exchanged infos with another birding group and tried to have some sleep.

Birds Seen Today: 79

New Birds: 16

Total To Date: 200





### Day 7: Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> October

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

After breakfast during waiting for our bus to arrive with Abayna and Sileshi beside the regular species we had some nice birds such as Ruppell's Robin-chat, Streaky Seedeater and 2 very quick Yellow-fronted Parrots also crossed unfortunately too fast.

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

As we were climbing up with the bus we stopped for a few minutes where the local ranger called out Bale Parisoma, but we could not agree with that, nor the photos proved it. But we added Moorland Chat to the list. Later on at a bushy area we saw Baglafaecht Weaver and first we heard and later we located an Abyssinian Catbird, which we missed yesterday. This was also the place where we had Abyssinian White-eye.

Once on the Plateau we saw regularly a Lobelia (*Lobelia rynchopetalum*) which gave the highland plateau a somewhat tropical look. We were crossing the area on the highest road in Ethiopia gradually well above 4000 metres.

During that journey we encountered quite a lot of different species. On the Raptor front we had a nice Verraux's Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, a dark form of an African Goshawk, Augur Buzzard, Lesser Kestrel, Tawny Eagle, immature Golden Eagle, but perhaps the best was a Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk beautifully perched with perfect light close to the road. Other birds included Dark-capped Bulbul, Tacazze Sunbird, Dusky Turtle Dove, Wattled Ibis, Mountain Thrush. We have found again Rouget's Rail. Later we reached a rocky area with many upland lakes and streams which was perfect habitat for Spot-breasted Plover. We had seen a couple of smaller and larger groups in quite misty conditions. Unfortunately we have not met with the Ethiopian Wolf, which has never happened before on our Ethiopia tours, however its main foodsource, the Giant Mole Rat was around in really good numbers.

Later on we were driving down to the Harena Forest. The habitat here was completely different, mature woods with dense understorey and despite the very humid air there was some bird activity. During eating our sandwiches we already looked around and a further walk, drive and another walk resulted the following birds: Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Ruppell's Robin-chat, White-cheeked Turaco, African Dusky Flycatcher, Chestnut-naped Francolin, Variable Sunbird, Abyssinian Oriole.

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

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

Birds Seen Today: 48

New Birds: 13

Total To Date: 213





### Day 8: Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> October

Route: Goba – Sof Omar – Goba

When in the morning we looked up towards the Sanetti Plateau we were happy that we visited that area yesterday. The clouds seemed quite low and dense, perhaps with zero visibility at the higher areas. But fortunately we headed off to Sof Omar some 100 km east of Goba on a dirt road and although it was cloudy it not deteriorated further, so we had a good chance for raptors and more. The first excitement came in a form of a quick mammal sighting, which first we hoped to be an Ethiopian Wolf, but it turned out to be a Black-backed Jackal. Hooded Vultures and Fan-tailed Ravens were common, but one of our first birds was Thick-billed Raven. We also noted Common Fiscal, Swainson's Sparrow, Speckled Pigeon and Great Blue-eared Starling. Several raptors were around such as Augur Buzzard, Yellow-billed Kite, Mountain Buzzard, Common/Steppe Buzzard and we had our first **Black-shouldered Kite** as well. A Shikra, Lanner Falcon and Common Kestrel were seen as well. We stopped at various habitats which resulted Little Grebe, Groundscraper Thrush, Lilac-breasted Roller, our first 2 White-browed Coucals, European Bee-eater, Barn Swallow, Speckled Mousebird, White-bellied Goaway Bird, Northern White-crowned Shrike and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill was a nice addition.

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

We spotted a mystery mammal quite a large distance half-hidden on the opposite end of the valley which we later on identified as a large male Abyssinian Rock Hyrax.

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

With all these interesting observations we ended a nice day and were about to spend a last night at our not so attractive hotel.

Birds Seen Today: 61

New Birds: 21

Total To Date: 234





### Day 9: Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> October

Route: Goba - Dinsho – Shashameme –Wondo Genet

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

Although we had our breakfast in time and the group was punctual as usual we could not leave in time. Our bus with Abayna and Sileshi were not in sight and Gabor could not reach them on their phones.

So we started to look around in the hotel gardens where we found Grassland Pipit, Brown-backed Seedeater, Mountain Thrush, Yellow-bellied Waxbill and Cape Raven. After more than half an hour later when they turned up they told that they were delayed by trying to fix the spare tire. We also had to go to fill up the tank, which proved to be hard because of the electricity shortage not all gas stations functioned and some also run out of gasoline.

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

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

Later on we also noted Thekla Lark, Wattled Ibis, Variable Sunbird, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Mountain Wagtail, Mountain White-eye, European Bee-eater, a nice male Pallid Harrier, our only African Goshawk and a Western Marsh Harrier before our lunch stop.

When we started to feel the need of a lunch break we stopped at an area where from the road we could walk down to a stream and beyond a forest patch. The first what we saw on a nearby big tree was an Augur Buzzard and we witnessed how it was attacked and chased away by a smaller raptor which turned out to be a Little Sparrowhawk. We scattered around and found Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher and on the stream African Black Duck. Later on we also saw Lesser Kestrel, Common Fiscal, Grey-backed Fiscal, Slate-coloured Boubou, Yellow-fronted Canary, Baglafetch and Red-headed Weaver.

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

As the sun went down we started to feel the "distant call of the dinner", which we had in the strange-shaped restaurant. Food was delicious and although the rooms were nothing special the huge glass wall provided an excellent view of the garden. We went to bed with full of expectations regarding tomorrow's birding.

Birds Seen Today: 70

New Birds: 9

Total To Date: 243

**Day 10: Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> October**

Route: Wondo Genet - Yabello



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

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

Around 8 o'clock we returned back to the hotel to have a breakfast, but soon at 8.45 we were again on a trail. This time we visited an area where it was obvious that formerly it was covered by nice woods, but just a few tall tree remained and most of the area was under strong human pressure. Still at the very beginning of the walk we found a Black-winged Lovebird peering out of its nesthole and soon on a huge, lonely tree Spotted Creeper was singing loud while we stared at it. We found here Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, both male and female. African Hillbabbler was a nice new one as well. We had again Yellow-fronted Parrots, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills and White-cheeked Turacos. Abyssinian slaty Flycatcher was a common local endemic, but we saw Spotted and African Paradise Flycatcher as well. There were several Tacazze Sunbirds around and we also had European Bee-eater, Mountain White-eye, Swainson's Sparrow and Red-cheeked Cordonbleau. Around half past 10 we returned again back to the hotel, packed shortly and soon we started our long journey to Yabello.

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

At Yabello Motel almost everybody had some serious problems with either the room or the bathroom or both. Wet towels, moisty bedlinen, flooded bathrooms and missing handles made hard to use the rooms. But one of us could not even leave the room for a while, because it was not possible to open from inside! But the worse just waited us at the restaurant, where it took more than 2 hours to get the food we ordered while we were sitting outside in a strong wind. Finally, after lot of hassle we got the main dish first, followed by the soup! We were fighting strong and finally the manager promised that at breakfast everything will be fine and they even started to fix some of the thing at our rooms.

Birds Seen Today: 74

New Birds: 17

Total To Date: 260

**Day 11: Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> October**

Route: Around Yabello – North of Yabello – South of Yabello &amp; Negele Road- Yabello





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

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

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

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

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

On the way back we stopped for lunch and a short rest and continued our journey on the road in the direction to Negele. The dry, undulating, sometimes rocky area revealed a couple of birds such as a great White-browed Scrub-Robin, Marico Sunbird, White-crowned Starling, Social Weaver, Northern Black Flycatcher. It was great to have an Abyssinian Roller and see up close another Gabar's Goshawk. Pale Flycatcher was new. It was obvious that at this dry area a small pond or any water-source can be a magnet, so at one of these we found Abyssinian Oriole, Blue-breasted and Little Bee-eater, Spotted Palm-Thrush, plus some other birds we had earlier today. Today we also noted Glossy Ibis, Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbill, Rufous-crowned Roller, Red-fronted Barbet. We had again African Orange-bellied Parrots, plus we have found Chestnut Weaver, White-capped and Balck-capped Social Weavers. At all 3 main areas today we had White-bellied Go-away Bird, Laughing Dove, Dusky Turtle Dove, d'Arnaud's Barbet, Common Bulbul, Superb Starling and Reichenow's Seed-eater.

Finally we returned back to the Yabello Motel where we had much more prompt service during the dinner than the previous evening.

Birds Seen Today: 74

New Birds: 24

Total To Date: 284



**Day 12: Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> October**

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

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

Our first major stop alongside the road was at Bake Cattle Market where we walked towards a wadi first in light rain which fortunately eased later on. Superb Starling was again around, then a distant tapping lead us to a Bearded Woodpecker close to the herds of camels. We had here Von der Decken's and Red-billed Hornbill again. Close to the lake at a bushy-forested area we had very good activity of birds with female Spectacled Weaver, a beautiful Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike, Red-cheeked Cordonbleau, Black-headed Batis, Northern Black Flycatcher, Nubian Woodpecker.

We also added Woodland Kingfisher, Little Bee-eater and Black-billed Woodhoopoe, Barn Swallow, 3 different Sunbirds such as Scarlet-chested, Beautiful and Variable. African Golden Oriole was a great new bird as well. Red-headed Weaver, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Village Indigobird, Common Swift and Abyssinian Oriole also were added to the today's list.

At a large lake we had nearby Common Sandpiper, Hamerkop, Sacred Ibis and at the distant end White Pelicans, White Storks, Egyptian Goose. Egyptian and White-headed Vultures were around as well. After that we returned back to the road where our bus waited us.

Further on the way we stopped at Dila to have lunch at a busy restaurant. Had no problem with the food, but the restroom was another adventure.

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

When finally we arrived to the busy city of Awassa we went first to the Midroc Hotel gardens where we had to fight a bit with a local warden to visit at least the sea-shore and part of the garden. We also visited the Fish Market and decided to return there next morning, but use the last hour and the half of this day to discover our hotel's, United Africa's vicinity. We built up a long list of birds at the above Awassa locations: Great Cormorant, Long-tailed Cormorant, African Darter, Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, our first and only Striated Heron, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Hamerkop, White Stork, Marabou Stork, Glossy Ibis. Beside White-faced Whistling Duck we found a well-appreciated African Pygmy Goose as well. Kingfishers were represented by Pied, Woodland, Malachite and our first Common Kingfisher.

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

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

Birds Seen Today: 94

New Birds: 15

Total To Date: 299

**Day 13: Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> October**

Route: Awassa – Fish Market – Bilen Lodge.

Before breakfast we went to the Fish Market again. Most of the birds we had yesterday were around again of course, such as White Pelican, Great Cormorant, Long-tailed Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Hamerkop, Marabou Stork, Sacred Ibis, Egyptian Goose, Spur-winged Goose and White-faced Whistling Duck. We have found an African Pygmy Goose family again, but instead of Striated Heron now we had a Little Bittern which flew across the reedy area. Yellow-billed Stork was also new for this site. Beside the usual Yellow-billed Kites a loud African Fish-Eagle appeared as well. Now we spotted Black Crakes here as well, plus Common Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt and African Jacana, but what is more, we had finally Lesser Jacana as well. We also had Three-banded Plover and Common Ringed Plovers, Spur-winged Plover, Ruff, Common and Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank. We added Black-headed Gulls to Grey-headed ones, and White-winged Tern was a new for the tour. This morning a Pied, a Common and a Malachite Kingfisher played with the photographers. Silvery-

cheeked Hornbills were impossible to miss, while a distant Black Saw-wing and a skulking Lesser Swamp Warbler was much harder to identify, not like the familiar birds from home, Common Whitethroat or Spotted Flycatcher. Other songbirds included Swainson's Sparrow, Baglafetch Weaver, Red-billed Firefinch, Red-cheeked Cordonbleau, Village Indigobird, but the most exciting one was probably a new Cut-throat Finch.

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

During the journey we saw from the bus Grey Heron, Wattled Ibis, the always present Yellow-billed Kite, Hooded and Ruppell's Vultures, Western and 2 female Montagu's Harrier. We also added to the raptor's list Dark-chanting Goshawk, Common Buzzard, Tawny Eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Common Kestrel and our first Booted Eagle. Beside numerous Speckled Pigeons and Dusky Turtle Doves we had Namaqua Dove and Ring-necked Dove as well. 3 different Roller species Lilac-breasted, Rufous-crowned and Abyssinian Roller, plus several Northern Carmine Bee-eaters added more colour to today's birds. We also had Striped Kingfisher, Black-billed Woodhoopoe, plus Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill, Von der Decken's and Red-billed Hornbill again. Rock Martin, Isabelline Wheatear, Abyssinian white-eye, Fan-tailed Raven, Thick-billed Raven, Red-billed Quelea, Northern Red Bishop, Greater Blue-eared and Superb Starlings also were added to the list. But the best new species was perhaps Black-winged Red Bishop.

Than at the town of Mojo instead of driving further towards of Addis we turned to the right to Awash town. Here we stopped for a lunch where by the time we got our food Abayna and Sileshi had finished and perhaps even forgot their own. After passing the ever-busy town of Awash we left the tumultuous road and turned North to travel a bit further on smaller roads towards our last accommodation at Bilen Lodge. It was obvious that this area, called the Afar Region has a much drier climate, so vegetation was much sparser and the ground drier than we had become used to over the past few day further south in the country. We were almost at the lodge when we drove past a nearby Arabian Bustard, which confused us for a moment. We added another 2 new species for the tour: Senegal Thick-knee and Saddle-billed Stork. The lodge itself was a very quiet and comfortable place to stay. It had a very good restaurant with great food. But most importantly it had several birds around at and nearby the lodge, where we had a walk down through the dry vegetation to a lake and back to the lodge adding several species to our day-list such as Green Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, Speckled Mousebird, Little Bee-eater, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Barn Swallow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed Buffalo Weaver. There was a bit of confusion because the local guy with a simple gun who was supposed to protect us wanted to march us around the lake and could not understand that our priority was birding and sun direction was also important factor. But we were still quite happy to find several new species for the tour as well, such as Yellow-chested Barbet, Grey-rumped Swallow, Ethiopian Swallow, a juvenile Red-backed Shrike and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark.

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

We had an interesting day with a lot of travelling, but also plenty of birds, over hundred species today and great wildlife at various sceneries.

Birds Seen Today: 101

New Birds: 16

Total To Date: 315



#### Day 14: Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> October

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

During the night 2 of us in our huts were awoken by a strange roaring, which could have been a Lion! According to the people at the lodge they are regularly around.

After our breakfast we started our travel towards Addis Abeba with 3 main stops planned, but before we hit any main roads we first stopped at a nearby pond & wetland area. Before we reached the place we got a glimpse of a Spotted Hyena which swiftly crossed a dyke and disappeared at the agricultural fields. At the pond we had loads of Yellow-billed Storks mixed with some White Pelicans. There were some Black-winged Stilts and Common Sandpipers around as well.

When we hit the road first we made a small detour towards the Ali Dege Plains where we stopped alongside the road and looked down on the huge, dry plains. There were a few grazing herds of Beisa Oryx and Soemmering's Gazella, we also spotted a couple of Kori Bustards, but distances were too huge and we already felt quite a strong heat-waves which weakened the visibility, so we decided to turn back and visit the Southern part of the Awash National Park, Ilala Sala Plains.

Not long after that we crossed the National Park's entrance gate we stopped to admire a nearby Pygmy Falcon, sitting on a wire. Later on we have found several Madagascar Bee-eaters which caused some debate since according to some books they were out of season. Next we stopped at a campsite area and we walked along the riparian fig trees and acacias. We have seen some common species what we had before such as Swainson's Sparrow, Ruppell's Starling, White-bellied Go-away-bird, but we also found new ones as African Grey Hornbill.

Later as we continued our circle and left the denser woods and continued through the drier, scrubby-bushy area we were again at a "Shrike-shire", "Land of Shrikes" where beside the previously seen ones we added Woodchat Shrike and Somali Fiscal. Just before we left the area we spotted a raptor in the air which turned out to be a Black-chested Snake-Eagle.

Finally our last stop was at Debre Zeit town where first we had to struggle through small streets with our bus to reach the distant edge of the Lake Cheleklea. Then the final couple of hundred meters we made through agricultural fields and finally we reached the shores of the lake. We had quite strong wind and thus big waves on the lake which was not ideal for birding. The nearby flowering bushes provided an excellent habitat for Red Bishops which offered perfect photo opportunity for those who were interested. We checked the waterbirds and waders, but soon we had to leave our final birding spot to arrive in time to Addis. Gabor checked individually whether anyone would like to use a day-room at the Ghion Hotel to change for a small extra, but the majority opted not to, so we headed directly to a very busy restaurant where we had our table very close to the podium. This loud music, dance and folklore programme made it impossible to make our birdlist here. The farewell dinner was a huge plate of the local speciality, injera, which was not for everybody's taste. We also got an interesting local drink, containing some herbs, honey and a bit of alcohol.

Finally we went to the airport which was just a 10 minutes ride and said goodbye to Ethiopia and our local hosts.



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