

# PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

## ETHIOPIA

6<sup>TH</sup> – 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2010

### TOUR REPORT

**LEADERS: Chris Doughty and Hirpo Dube.**

To the world at large; despite its ancient history, culture and natural beauty, Ethiopia is known for its wars, droughts and famines. However, for birdwatchers it is much more; it is a land with an amazing variety of species of birds, including many, that are found nowhere else in the world. Our tour to Ethiopia was a very memorable and enjoyable tour, in which we saw almost all of our target birds and also a good selection of African mammals. Ethiopia is one of the world's oldest countries, it is a mountainous country and the Great Rift Valley is the most prominent geographical feature. Birding highlights of the tour included the prehistoric-looking Wattled Ibis, the declining Blue-winged Goose, the highly localised Rouget's Rail, the elegant Spot-breasted Lapwing, huge flocks of White-collared Pigeons, small flocks of Yellow-fronted Parrots, very close Black-winged Lovebirds, many good looks at the enigmatic Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, great scope views of Banded Barbet, we managed to find the rare Abyssinian Woodpecker, the extremely rare Sidamo Lark, the charming Erlanger's Lark, the range restricted Somali long-toed Lark, the little-known White-tailed Swallow, the beautiful Abyssinian Longclaw, the highly localised Ruppell's Black Chat, the very handsome White-winged Cliff Chaff, the recently split Ethiopian Cisticola, the ubiquitous Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, the shy Abyssinian Catbird, the stunningly beautiful White-backed Black Tit, the dazzling Abyssinian Oriole, the very special Stresemann's Bush-Crow, the range restricted White-billed Starling, the endangered Yellow-throated Seedeater, the gorgeous Black-headed Siskin and the endangered Ankober Serin. Mammalian highlights included the endemic Ethiopian Highland Hare, the magnificent and endemic Ethiopian Wolf, the endangered and endemic Mountain Nyala, the very range restricted Salt's Dikdik and also the endangered and near endemic Sommering's Gazelle.

Following a long and tiring flight from Australia, we arrived in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia around mid-day. For centuries the Ethiopians have protected their Christian orthodox religion, but Islam is now spreading surprisingly fast, 40% of Ethiopians now follow Islam, and new mosques are being built all over the country. After settling into our hotel and enjoying a relaxing lunch, we were all keen to visit the nearby Geffarsa Reservoir and sample the first of many, Ethiopian birds. While driving through the maze of roads and backstreets that is Addis Ababa, we started our bird list with observations of a great many Hooded Vultures and Feral Pigeons. On reaching Geffarsa Reservoir, we birded along the roads close to the reservoir, which were literally alive with birds. On and around the reservoir we found small numbers of Blue-winged Geese, which were greatly outnumbered by the many Egyptian Geese, who in turn, were

outnumbered by the migratory Northern Shovelers. There were also a few Little Grebes, several Sacred Ibis and good numbers of the prehistoric-looking Wattled Ibis. Here we also found Cattle Egrets, a few Grey Herons, a solitary Pink-backed Pelican, several Great Cormorants, a few Common Kestrels, our first of many Lanner Falcons, many Yellow-billed Kites, the splendid African Fish-Eagle, the very attractive Augur Buzzard and a light morph Booted Eagle. We enjoyed watching a few flocks of Common Cranes; Ethiopia is the only regular wintering area for this species in Africa, we also saw Common Sandpiper and the very uncommon Half-collared Kingfisher.

In the fields and small groves of trees surrounding the reservoir we added Speckled and White-collared Pigeons, Dusky Turtle-Dove, Red-eyed Dove, Nyanza Swift, Common Fiscal, Cape Rook, Pied Crow, Rock Martin, Lesser Striped Swallow, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Common Bulbul, Montane White-eye, Red-billed Oxpecker, Groundscraper and Mountain Thrushes, Red-breasted Wheatear, Moorland Chat, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Swainson's Sparrow, Baglafaecht Weaver, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Yellow Wagtail, Abyssinian Longclaw, Black-headed Siskin, African Citril and Brown-rumped Seedeater.

The following morning we did some birding in the grounds of the Ghion Hotel, where we enjoyed watching an adult African Goshawk, several Speckled Mousebirds, a few beautiful Wire-tailed Swallows, we watched several Tacazze Sunbirds feeding on flowering shrubs and we also saw our first of many, Streaky Seedeaters. Heading north out of town the road started to climb and we passed through large stands of sterile Eucalypt plantations, which made us feel quite at home! The road then leveled out as we reached the amazing Sululta Plain, here birds came thick and fast and we did not know where to look first in this high altitude grassland. As we walked through the grassland, dotted with small pools and creeks, we encountered small flocks of Yellow-billed Ducks, which contained a solitary female Eurasian Teal. By far our best find here was a solitary Barbary Falcon, perched on top of an electricity pylon. The bird remained there for quite some time, enabling us to enjoy good scope views of it, and we were able to see in detail, all the plumage characteristics of this very uncommon bird. We also enjoyed great scope views of both perched and flying Lammergeyers, including one sitting inside a basketball court! There was also plenty of White-backed Vultures and a very uncommon African Marsh Harrier, there were flocks of Black-winged Lapwings, a few Green Sandpipers, a small flock of Ruffs, clouds of Plain Martins, enormous numbers of wintering Barn Swallows and after a great deal of searching, we managed to find a single Red-chested Swallow amongst them. We enjoyed watching the endemic Erlanger's Lark and both Ethiopian and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas. We saw our first of many Greater Blue-eared Starlings and large numbers of Isabelline and Pied Wheatears. We then saw a White-winged Widowbird, in partial breeding plumage, a few beautiful Red-billed Firefinches, a couple of White Wagtails and a number of species of pipits, which included the local Long-billed and Plain-backed Pipits, and best of all, a small flock of beautiful and migratory Red-throated Pipits.

We then drove along dirt roads for a couple of hours before making a birding stop at the Mukature River. Once again, new birds came thick and fast as we strolled through the acacia scrub. These included Hamerkop, Black-winged Kite, Tawny Eagle, Laughing

Dove, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, African Grey Hornbill, Isabelline Shrike, Common Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Brown Parisoma, Ruppell's Robin-Chat, the gorgeous Abyssinian Black Wheatear, the handsome White-winged Cliff-Chat, the stunning Black-winged Red Bishop, Village Indigobird, Grey Wagtail, very close looks at the migratory and very beautiful Ortolan Bunting and last but not least, the very attractive Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. We then drove to the small town of Alem Katerna, where we arrived after dark. Following a little confusion, we managed to find a hotel which could take all of us and following an interesting dinner, we all tucked ourselves in at the rather basic hotel!

The following morning birds around the hotel included a fine and endemic Banded Barbet, several Fan-tailed Ravens, a pair of very beautiful Red-cheeked Cordon-bleus and a female Pin-tailed Whydah.

We spent the morning birding at the splendid Jemmu Valley, which would have to be one of the birdiest places in Ethiopia. The beautiful Jemmu River flows through the valley and flying around the river or resting besides the river we found Yellow-billed and Woolly-necked Storks, African Harrier-Hawk, the endangered Lesser Spotted Eagle, Spur-winged Lapwing, Mottled Swift, Giant and Pied Kingfishers and the African Pied Wagtail. We then walked through an area of scrubland, which was very rich in birds; this area produced Black-billed Barbet, a fairly obliging Lesser Honeyguide, Black-crowned Tchagra, Stout Cisticola, Grey-backed Camaroptera, a couple of migrant Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, a migrant Common Whitethroat, Familiar Chat, Red-collared Widowbird, Cut-throat Finch and Black-cheeked Waxbill. We also found a troop of Grivet Monkeys in the Jemmu Valley. A stop at a small wetland produced several African Quailfinches, which is one of the most difficult African birds to get to grips with, so we were very pleased to see them so well.

We also visited an area known as Lemi Rocks, which are actually a part of the rocky cliffs which form the Jemmu Valley. This is the haunt of three endemic Ethiopian birds, and in no time at all we managed to find all three of them; the White-billed Starling, the delightful Ruppell's Black Chat and the very impressive Mocking Cliff-Chat. We made a birding stop close to the village of Mukature, where there was a large group of vultures feeding on a dead donkey. We saw three new species of vultures here, both Ruppell's and Eurasian Griffons, and the king of African vultures, the Lappet-faced Vulture. In this area we also saw Black-breasted Snake-Eagle, Dark Chanting-Goshawk, Namaqua Dove and the beautiful Abyssinian Roller.

We then drove to a recently opened hotel at the Debre Libanos Gorge, where we enjoyed our picnic lunch. Our main reason for visiting here was to see the endemic and spectacular Gelada Baboon. We were not to be disappointed; we enjoyed good close looks at a troop of baboons, including a very impressive adult male. We also picked out a single migratory Black Kite, amongst the many resident Yellow-billed Kites.

The next morning we started early and arrived at the Lemi Rocks not long after daylight. We spent a great deal of time looking for the endemic Harwood's Francolin, but unfortunately, failed to find it. However, all was not lost; we watched a fine troop of

Gelada Baboons and saw several new species of birds for the trip. These included a fine migrant Long-legged Buzzard, super close looks at the endemic Black-winged Lovebird, fine looks at Hemprich's Hornbill and the diminutive and uncommon Siffling Cisticola. We then did some birding close to Debre Birhan, which means 'Place of Light' and was founded by Emperor Zara Yaqob in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when he was inspired after viewing Halley's Comet from this spot. We also were inspired by a migrant Common Greenshank, which we saw here.

We then drove east to the spectacular Ankober Escarpment, on a quest to find the highly localised and endemic, Ankober Serin. This species was described recently as 1975 and lives exclusively on the vertical cliffs of the escarpment, and only rarely visits the farmland on top of the escarpment. While searching for this much sought-after endemic, we watched a Black Stork sail overhead and then watched a Great Sparrowhawk sail across the top of the cliffs; this black and white giant accipiter is a real stunner. We then enjoyed great scope views of a pair of very large Verreaux's Eagles, which were perched on the edge of the escarpment. Here we also saw our first Northern Wheatear and some members of the group were fortunate enough to observe a solitary Ankober Serin. We then drove to the nearby village of Ankober, that was once the capital of the Shoa Kingdom and we stayed at the very pleasant Ankober Lodge, which is built on the site of an old palace of Menelik II. In the grounds of the lodge, we saw our first flock of near endemic White-rumped Babblers.

The following morning we were up at first light and we managed to find an Erckel's Francolin calling in the grounds of our hotel, and we enjoyed good scope views of this near endemic species. We then drove to the nearby Ankober Escarpment, where we searched in vain for the Ankober Serin; however, all was not in vain, as we enjoyed good looks at a flock of Yellow-crowned Canaries. The rest of the day was taken up by the long drive northwards, to Awash National Park. During the long drive we came to a screeching halt, not far from Shano, where we found a couple of raptors along the roadside. Careful examination of the two raptors in the scope, confirmed that one was an Eastern Imperial- Eagle, a very uncommon migrant in Ethiopia, and the other raptor was a sub-adult Golden Eagle. This is a very rare resident in Ethiopia, which has recently been confirmed as a breeding species in Ethiopia, breeding in very small numbers, in the Bale Mountains. Later in the afternoon as we neared Awash National Park, a Slender Mongoose ran across the road in front of us and there was a small troop of Olive Baboons, along the roadside.

The following day, we had a full day in Awash National Park and we intended to make the most of it. The park was established in 1966 and contains a varied mix of habitats, which include wetlands, riverine forest, acacia woodlands, savannah grassland and rocky hills, making it a birdwatchers paradise. While having breakfast just after dawn, we spotted a Shikra in the trees, across the river and a Mountain Wagtail on the rocks, in the river. We were off to a good start. We had decided that during the morning we would search for one of Ethiopia's rarest endemics, the Yellow-throated Seedeater. This little-known species occurs in very small numbers, in acacia woodland on the flanks of Volcano Fantale. While driving through the park on our way to Volcano Fantale, new

birds for us included Northern White-crowned Shrike, Wattled, Ruppell's and Superb Starlings, White-browed Sparrow-weaver and White-headed Buffalo-Weaver. We also had to drive along the edge of part of Lake Beseka, where we added Marabou, Black-headed Heron and Black-winged Stilt. Just before arriving at Volcano Fantale, a little roadside birding produced Striped Kingfisher, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Cardinal Woodpecker and a new mammal, the Cape Hare. On our arrival at Volcano Fantale, we set off on foot in search of the rarely encountered Yellow-throated Seedeater and anything else that moved. It was very hot and it was going to get even hotter and we all found it hard work as we slowly climbed the gently sloping mountain. Fortunately, there were lots of birds in the acacia scrub, and we all enjoyed the birding. New birds for our ever growing list included Steppe Eagle, Bruce's Green-Pigeon, Grey-headed Batis, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Northern Crombec, Pale Flycatcher, Red-headed Weaver and Purple Grenadier. All of these birds were enjoyed by the group and we were very pleased to find them, but there was still no Yellow-throated Seedeater. I then spotted a solitary Desert Lark feeding on the ground in front of me, and I called those within hearing distance of me, to come and have a look at it. I then noticed a couple of small seedeaters in the branches of a small acacia and I realised that they were Yellow-throated seedeaters, and once again, those within hearing distance, were able to enjoy this seldom seen species. Unfortunately, by this stage the group was very spread out and not everyone got to see it.

In the afternoon we drove slowly along some of the well-maintained tracks in the park, making frequent stops to walk through the scrub. This proved very effective and new birds came thick and fast. These included several flocks of Helmeted Guineafowl, a few Crested Francolin, a splendid Pygmy Falcon, our fist African Mourning Doves, a flock of African Orange-bellied Parrots, our fist of many White-bellied Go-away-birds, one or two White-browed Coucals, small flocks of Blue-naped Mousebirds, good numbers of Little Bee-eaters, great looks at several very showy Eurasian Hoopoes, striking Abyssinian Scimitar-bills, many Red-billed Hornbills, a few Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills, a couple of stunning Woodchat Shrikes, many Fork-tailed Drongos, a couple of range restricted Foxy Larks, great looks at a Common Nightingale, a couple of female Common Rock-Thrushes, a large flock of Red-billed Queleas and a few splendid Eastern paradise-Whydahs in full breeding plumage. As we were in a national park, we also saw several new mammals, which included Black-backed Jackal, Common Warthog, Lesser Kudu and the range restricted Salt's Dikdik.

The following morning we drove slowly through the park, following the same pattern as the previous afternoon, and once again, this produced lots of new birds for us. New birds included a small group of Yellow-necked Francolins, a splendid male Pallid Harrier, a few Eastern Chanting Goshawks, a huge Kori Bustard, a few much smaller Buff-crested Bustards, many Ring-necked Doves, an Emerald spotted Wood-Dove, a small flock of very attractive Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, the migrant Tawny Pipit, a family party of White-crested Helmet-Shrikes, a stunning Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, the delightful Rosy-patched Bushshrike, a rather shy Slate-coloured Boubou, the recently split Ethiopian Boubou, a splendid Southern Grey Shrike, a closely related Somali Fiscal, the diminutive Desert Cisticola, the rather odd Grey Wren-warbler, the very attractive White-

browed Scrub-Robin, equally attractive Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds and the beautiful Green-winged Pytilia. New mammals included several troops of Vervet Monkeys, the very range restricted Sommering's Gazelle and the very attractive Beisa Oryx.

We decided to have lunch at the Kerelew Lodge; the lodge overlooks the Kirayawa Gorge with the River Awash flowing through it. We dined al fresco, enjoying the terrific scenery and a good numbers of birds. On one occasion, during lunch, a magnificent Bateleur flew right past us, as it flew above the gorge. In the afternoon we birded mainly on foot, in riverine forest, close to our lodge. Here, Joanna pointed out a pair of Senegal Thick-knees, which proved to be our only sighting of the tour, of this species. Other new birds included a very obliging Rufous-crowned Roller, several attractive Woodland Kingfishers, several Madagascar Bee-eaters and a few Spectacled and Village Weavers.

The following morning we reluctantly left Awash National Park, adding a Scrub Hare to our mammal list as we did so. We then headed for the famous lakes of the Great Rift Valley. However; we had one important birding stop before reaching the Rift Valley lakes and in order to reach this place, we had to drive along part of the shore of Lake Beseka. A quick look here produced three new birds for the tour, Spur-winged Goose, Great Egret and White-winged Black Tern. As the sun was rising above the arid plains we found ourselves in an inhospitable landscape, on the plains below the Fantale Volcano. Here a few brilliant green bushes had pushed their way up through a sea of solidified jet black lava. This inhospitable wasteland is home to two of Ethiopia's most important birds; the endemic and extremely range restricted Sombre Rock-Chat and the uncommon Blackstart. In no time at all, we were watching both birds in the scope, the dark undertail covets of the Sombre Rock-Chat were by far the best way to separate them from the Blackstarts, which have pure white undertail covets. Other new birds in this vicinity included African Palm-Swift, Ethiopian and Red-rumped Swallows, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark, Lesser Whitethroat and Bristle-crowned Starling. An Ethiopian Rock Hyrax was also seen by some members of the group. We then continued on towards the Rift Valley lakes. Round about mid-morning we came to a screeching halt when we spotted a family party of Abyssinian Ground Hornbills, not far from the town of Adana. While enjoying the hornbills we also saw our first Abyssinian White-eyes.

Following lunch we visited Lake Ziway, one of the famous birding lakes of the Rift Valley. The birding here was very enjoyable and new birds were numerous; small numbers of African Pgymy-geese could be observed amongst the beautiful lilac-coloured Water Hyacinth, several Squacco Herons tried to hide themselves, in the reedbeds, good numbers of Little Egrets were present, along with several Great White Pelicans. A handful of Long-tailed Cormorants flew by, and they were joined by a couple of African Darters. Patrolling Western Marsh-Harriers disturbed many of the waders who took off when they approached, but fortunately, quickly settled back along the shoreline. A few Black Crakes ventured out of cover and then, best of all, we enjoyed super scope views of an adult Lesser Moorhen who had an immature bird in tow, this is one of the most difficult of African birds to observe. African Jacanas were far easier to see, as were several Wood Sandpipers, as well as a number of species of gulls, which included Lesser Black-backed, Grey-headed, Black-headed and Slender-billed. A small number of Gull-

billed Terns were also present and we enjoyed good scope views of both Grey-headed and Malachite Kingfishers. Suddenly, a Grey-headed Woodpecker popped into view, we found a small flock of uncommon Mosque Swallows, roosting in the limbs of a bare tree along the edge of the lake, Rattling Cisticolas were much in evidence, we saw our first flock of Buff-bellied Warblers, a couple of migrant Sedge Warblers and a small flock of Ruppell's Weavers. We then drove to another of the Rift Valley lakes, Lake Langano, where we spent the night at Wenny's Lodge, on the shore of the lake. Here we added Hadada Ibis and Crowned Lapwing. At dusk, some members of the group observed a couple of Slender-tailed Nightjars flying around and calling as they did so. Just prior to dusk we also watched several Unstriped Grass Rats, as they emerged from their burrows.

Wenny's Lodge is situated right on the shore of Lake Langano. The lake itself is a magnet for wetland birds and it is surrounded by excellent woodland, thus ensuring superb birding in and around the grounds of the lodge, equal to anywhere in Ethiopia! We spent much of the morning and the late afternoon birding this area, which produced many new birds for us. Along the edge of the lake we observed Saddle-billed Stork, the aptly named Goliath Heron, both Common Ringed and Kittlitz's Plovers, a solitary Black-tailed Godwit and immense numbers of recently arrived Sand Martins. In the woodland we found small flocks of African Olive Pigeons, one or two Blue-spotted Wood-Doves, a flock of very uncommon and endemic Yellow-fronted Parrots, several superb and near endemic White-cheeked Turacos, Bare-faced Go-away-birds were plentiful, we enjoyed watching a couple of Black Scimitar-bills, large flocks of Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, a few Red-fronted Tinkerbirds, both Red-fronted and Double-toothed Barbets, a superb Red-throated Wryneck, the very beautiful Violet-backed Starling, the very striking Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, the equally impressive Grey-backed Fiscal, the very colourful Black-headed Oriole, the attractive White-winged Black Tit, a flock of Black Saw-wings, a few Slender-billed Starlings, the attractive Marico Sunbird, the very plain Bush Petronia, a few Little Weavers, a striking Crimson-rumped Waxbill, a flock of Bronze Mannikins and the range-restricted Reichenow's Seedeater. We also enjoyed many sightings of the very attractive Guereza Colobus, surely one of the most attractive monkeys, in the whole of Africa.

In the afternoon we did some birding in acacia scrub in Lake Abiata National Park. New birds to our ever growing list included a splendid Egyptian Vulture, which Ken was particularly pleased to observe. We also added Gabar Goshawk, Eastern Grey Plantain-eater, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Nubian Woodpecker, Black-headed Batis, Northern Puffback, Brubru, Red-faced Crombec, Common Redstart, Northern Black Flycatcher, African Paradise-Flycatcher and Beautiful Sunbird. Three daytime roosting Slender-tailed Nightjars gave excellent views, in the afternoon sun. We also observed several Grant's Gazelles in this area.

The following morning a little birding around Wenny's Lodge notched up Intermediate Egret, both Red-winged and Sharpe's Starlings, African Thrush and the beautiful Scarlet-chested Sunbird. We also added a new species of mammal here, the Gambian Sun Squirrel; in this the far eastern edge of this mammals range, they are almost black in colour, whereas in Gambia, in the far west of their range, they are pale grey in colour.

We then had a long day in our vehicle as we headed for the Bale Mountains National Park. A spot of lunch in Shashemene, produced a few endemic Thick-billed Ravens, at very close quarters. In the late afternoon, as we were driving through the Bale Mountains, we picked up two new birds along the roadside; a small flock of Red-billed Choughs, this is the only place in Africa, south of the Sahara, where this bird occurs, and we also saw our first African Stonechat. We also stopped to do some roadside birding at a small area of wetlands, where we added the endemic Rouget's Rail, a few Red-knobbed Coots, splendid endemic Spot-breasted Lapwings and a solitary Three-banded Plover.

The following day we spent the morning birding on foot, close to the headquarters, in the Bale Mountains National Park. With the aid of a local park guide we managed to find a few new birds for the tour which included two Ethiopian endemic birds, the beautiful White-backed Black Tit and the uncommon and somewhat retiring Abyssinian Catbird. Our local guide also showed us a pair of daytime roosting African Wood Owls, which we all very much enjoyed and we even managed to find a couple of African Dusky Flycatchers, all on our own! New mammals in the park included Bushbuck, Greater Kudu, and best of all, the endemic and uncommon, Mountain Nyala.

In the afternoon we birded an area of montane moorland, where we managed to find the near endemic Chestnut-naped Francolin and Africa's rarest species of vulture, the splendid White-headed Vulture.

Following an early morning breakfast, we headed out of Goba and climbed steadily, fortunately, in the bus, to the magnificent Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park. We spent the whole day in this sub-alpine environment birding mainly on the plateau, with Ethiopia's highest mountains forming a backdrop. This was one of those very unusual days when we actually found more new mammals, than we did new birds. The first new bird we found was a small group of Ruddy Shelducks, Ethiopia and neighboring Sudan are the only countries in Africa where this bird occurs. We then had a surprise find, of a single African Black Duck, on one of the small wetland areas, and we all enjoyed looking at it through the scope. We also enjoyed good close looks at a couple of small flocks of the very beautiful Wattled Crane, which was very much appreciated by Tom, as this was a bird he particularly wanted to see. The new mammals included the endemic Ethiopian Highland Hare, a couple of Giant Root-rats, large numbers of Blick's Grass Rats, a solitary Egyptian Mongoose, a couple of Klipspringers, this is a small species of antelope and last, but definitely not least, the much sought-after Ethiopian Wolf. This is a highly endangered canine that rather resembles a long-legged fox. It is omnivorous, but feeds mainly on the Giant Root-rat. Following a picnic lunch we did a little birding in the Haremma Forest, in the Bale Mountains, where we added the Malachite Sunbird, to our ever-growing list.

The following morning we reluctantly left the magical Bale Mountains and headed northwest towards Lake Awassa. Not far from Goba a little roadside birding provided us with our only observation of the Common Waxbill on the tour. Following lunch in Awassa, we spent a very enjoyable afternoon birding around the edge of Lake Awassa, yet another of the Rift Valley Lakes. New birds for the tour included a small flock of

White-faced Whistling-Ducks, a splendid Eurasian Hobby, which swooped low over the marsh we were watching and narrowly missed nailing a Common Snipe. A Long-crested Eagle sitting on a telegraph pole, was admired by all, we saw our first African Swampheens, several Common Moorhens, a few somewhat secretive wintering Eurasian Reed-warblers and Joanna pointed out our only look at the stunningly attractive White-browed Robin-Chat.

The following morning found us back at Lake Awassa, and this time we concentrated more on the acacia scrub, rather than the lake itself. We had a very enjoyable early morning, where new birds included the beautiful Blue-headed Coucal, a couple of wintering Willow Warblers and the Rufous Chatterer. We then had a very long drive in the bus, all the way to Yabello, in the far south of Ethiopia. After settling into our recently completed rooms in a new wing of the hotel, we did a little late afternoon birding. It was very exciting birding, as many of the birds we saw, were new to us, including one of Ethiopia's most sought-after birds, the stunningly attractive Stresemann's Bush-Crow. It was easy to see why this Ethiopian endemic had been selected to be the bird on the front cover of the recently published and excellent *Birds of the Horn of Africa*. Other new birds included the very striking D'Arnaud's Barbet, the uncommon and range restricted Shelley's Starling, the very large and also range restricted White-crowned Starling, the Spotted Palm-Thrush, Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Northern Masked Weaver and White-rumped Seedeater. We also enjoyed several sightings of the widespread Unstriped Ground Squirrel.

The following morning we had an early breakfast at our hotel in Yabello and then enjoyed some highly productive birding, in some very thorny scrubland which was interspersed with some impressively tall termite mounds. One of the first new birds of the day was the delightful Lilac-breasted Roller, which is always a treat to see. A Black-billed Woodhoopoe then flitted into view, which was enjoyed by the whole group. This was followed by a very good look at an obliging Black-throated Barbet. A little later, a Pygmy Batis popped into view and this was followed by a very smart grey and white Northern Grey Tit. We then found the bird that is often referred to as the smallest bird in Africa, the Mouse-coloured Penduline-Tit. Next, we spotted the bird we were most looking for, the endemic and little-known White-tailed Swallow. A flock of half a dozen or so birds would fly above an open area of acacia scrub, before returning to the same acacia bush, where they would all perch together. This pattern was followed several times, while we enjoyed watching them. We also enjoyed watching a Yellow-breasted Apalis, before playing hide-and-seek with a very secretive winter visitor, the very shy and equally uncommon Upcher's Warbler, which flushed from cover, every time we got close to it. A pair of Yellow-vented Eremomelas allowed us to get very close to them, before we were distracted by a nearby Banded Parisoma, which we also saw very well. We then stumbled across a large group of stunningly attractive Golden-breasted Starlings, which would have to be the most beautiful species of starling in the world. A Bare-eyed Thrush then popped into view, and this was followed quickly by a large flock of Grey-capped Social-Weavers, and also nearby, there was a large flock of closely related, Black-capped Social-Weavers. We also enjoyed a small flock of Lesser Masked Weavers and a solitary Grey-headed Silverbill, which is a very uncommon bird, in this

part of Africa. We also found a striking pair of White-bellied Canaries, before enjoying prolonged looks at a pair of very beautiful Somali Buntings. We also added a new species of mammal, the diminutive Guenther's Dikdik.

While having lunch in the gardens of our hotel, we were able to watch a small group of Viteline Masked Weavers, which was a new bird for us. In the afternoon, we birded another area of acacia scrubland and stumbled across a large dam, where the local people were collecting drinking water. As storm clouds gathered overhead, large numbers of migratory Common Swifts were moving in front of the storm. Suddenly, an adult Greater Honeyguide flew up in front of us and perched on a bare twig, it sat there for some time and we were able to enjoy prolonged scope views of it. A beautiful Grey-headed Bushshrike moved furtively in a very dense acacia bush and an adult Yellow-spotted Petronia perched on the ground in front of us, once again, allowing good scope views of it. As we were about to head off back to our hotel a small group of Speke's Weavers flew into a nearby tree, and this was a fitting end, to a very good birding day.

Early the following morning we left Yabello and headed east, for a full days drive to the small town of Negele. Throughout the day we came across large flocks of the very attractive Vulturine Guinea fowl, which were admired by all. At the small village of Wachile we stopped to do a little birding and new birds included the near endemic Dwarf Raven, the endemic Shelly's Rufous Sparrow and the range restricted Parrot-billed Sparrow. A little to the south of the small town of Melka Guda, the bus came to a screeching halt and we all jumped out to admire an immature Martial Eagle, which was circling overhead. As we neared the town of Negele, we reached the Liben Plain and took the opportunity in the late afternoon, to have a quick look for one of the world's rarest birds, the critically endangered Sidamo Lark, which occurs only on the Liben Plain and nowhere else in the world. The stronger walkers formed a line and set off in search of the lark, after an hour or so, strong rain sent us scurrying for the bus, but not before we had enjoyed very good looks at a family party of Temminck's Coursers and a flock of many hundreds of the range restricted Somali Short-toed Lark. Sue managed to find the Sidamo Lark, fairly close to the bus, while we were all striding out across the plains. We still had the following afternoon, were hopefully, we would all manage to see the lark.

The following morning we set out in search of Ethiopia's most wanted bird, Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. As we set off we came across an Abdim's Stork feeding in farmland and a little further into our journey, we found a Brown Snake-Eagle sitting on the top of a small mosque. On entering the restricted range of this Ethiopian endemic the habitat did not look dissimilar to many other areas of Ethiopia; a small watercourse snaked its way uphill and along its banks there were a few scattered fig trees. Within a few minutes we saw our first Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, and during the next hour, we saw half a dozen or so. This was without doubt one of the highlights of the tour. While watching the turacos, we found three more new birds; Red-and-yellow Barbet, Pringle's Puffbird and Collared Sunbird. While driving back to Negele for lunch, we observed a Wahlberg's Eagle flying overhead. In the afternoon, we drove to the nearby Liben Plain, where we once again spread out in a line and walked the plain in search of Sidamo Lark. This time we had a much more satisfactory sighting of a single bird, which was observed within a few

metres, by all members of our party. Later in the afternoon, we enjoyed watching a small flock of migratory and very uncommon, Lesser Kestrels.

The following day was very much a travel day, as we drove from Negele, in the far south of Ethiopia, to Wondo Genet, in the Rift Valley. The road works made the going very slow, and we only had time for one short birding stop, in montane forest, close to Kibre Mengist. Here we added African Emerald Cuckoo, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Abyssinian Oriole, Abyssinian Ground Thrush and Yellow Bishop.

Following an early morning breakfast at our hotel at Wondo Genet, we climbed high into the montane forest, where we spent the rest of the morning adding to our now very substantial bird list. We watched two of Africa's shyest, ground frequenting doves, Lemon Dove and Tambourine Dove. Small numbers of Alpine Swifts flew overhead, before we discovered the prize bird of this area, the endemic Abyssinian Woodpecker, which we saw very well indeed. Other new birds included the attractive Brown-throated Wattle-eye, a couple of Grey Cuckoo-shrikes, a single Brown Woodland Warbler, a pair of very uncommon Black-and-white Mannikins, as well as the highly sought-after Spotted Creeper.

Following lunch we visited Lake Abiata National Park, it was just as you would have thought a soda lake, in the Rift Valley should be. The edge of the lake was shimmering with thousands of pink birds that on closer inspection proved to be both Greater and Lesser Flamingoes. Here we also found Black-crowned Crane, Pied Avocet, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Grassland Pipit. In the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano, where we spent our last night, we added our last new bird of the tour, a solitary Grosbeak Weaver.

While having breakfast at the lodge the following morning, a solitary Oribi, a small species of antelope, joined us for breakfast and this was a fitting climax to a very enjoyable and memorable tour of Ethiopia.

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST**

### **PODICIPEDIDAE**

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Present on all of the Rift Valley lakes that we visited.

#### PELECANIDAE

**Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this species, on the Rift Valley lakes.

**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* This was by far the least numerous of the two species of pelicans on the tour, but we did see it on three separate occasions.

#### PHALACROCORACIDAE

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* We enjoyed many sightings of this widespread species of cormorant.

**Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* Small numbers were encountered in the Rift Valley lakes and at Lake Awassa.

#### ANHINGIDAE

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* A few of these birds were seen well at Lake Ziway, in the Rift Valley.

#### ARDEIDAE

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Commonly encountered in all wetland areas.

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* Small numbers scattered throughout the tour.

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* This, the world's largest species of heron, was observed on four separate occasions throughout the tour.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* There were scattered sightings, in a few wetland areas.

**Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* A single bird was observed along the shore of Lake Langano, close to Wenny's Lodge, and this was followed by a second sighting of a single bird at Lake Awassa.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers were seen well at all the Rift Valley lakes we visited.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Small numbers were encountered in wetland areas of the Rift Valley and also in the Awash area.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Observed on most days of the tour.

#### SCOPIDAE

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* This proved to be a common bird throughout Ethiopia, where their huge nests were both fascinating and conspicuous.

#### CICONIIDAE

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* A solitary bird was observed along the Jemmu River, in the Jemmu Valley, and this sighting was followed by a small flock at Lake Abiata, in the Rift Valley.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* This species is an uncommon Palearctic migrant to Ethiopia. We observed a single bird flying overhead, on one occasion, at the Ankober Escarpment

**Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* This species is a trans-equatorial African migrant, breeding north of the equator, including Ethiopia, from May-November and then migrating to the southern tropics of Africa from November-March. Up to three of these uncommon birds were observed in farmland, close to Negele. Bey El-Arnaut Abdim (1780-1827) was a Turkish governor of Dongola in the Sudan from 1821 until 1827. He was of great assistance to Ruppell on his North African expedition, and Ruppell named the stork after him, the type specimen of the stork was collected in the Sudan in 1823.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* A couple of these uncommon birds were observed along the Jemmu River, in the Jemmu Valley and then a single bird was observed along the roadside during the drive from Goba to Yabello.

**Saddle-billed Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis* This very beautiful species of stork was observed on two separate occasions at Lake Langano, in the Rift Valley.

**Marabou Stork** *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* Hundreds of birds were observed around the Rift Valley lakes, and roosting in trees in nearby towns. They were particularly numerous at Lake Awassa. The name is a 19<sup>th</sup> century French word, derived from the Arabic *murabit*, meaning holy man, the stork was regarded as holy.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

**Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* A common and widespread bird throughout Ethiopia. This species was considered sacred by the ancient Egyptians and was often mummified in huge numbers and placed in the tombs of the ancient pharaohs, as a representation of the god Thoth.

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* We enjoyed many good sightings of this common species. The name is based on an onomatopoeic rendering of the call.

**Wattled Ibis** *Bostrychia carunculata* A prehistoric-looking and noisy Ethiopian endemic. It is still common, but numbers of decreasing. We regularly encountered it in the highlands, it was particularly common in the Bale Mountains.

#### PHOENICOPTERIDAE

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* A small number were present amongst the thousands of Lesser Flamingoes, at Lake Abiata, in the Rift Valley.

**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor* Many thousands were present at Lake Abiata.

#### ANATIDAE

**White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata* A family party was observed on one occasion, at Lake Awassa.

**Blue-winged Goose** *Cyanochen cyanopterus* This Ethiopian endemic was observed on many occasions in the highlands.

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Seen almost daily, in most wetland areas.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* Small numbers were observed on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park. This is the most reliable site for this species in Africa.

- Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* We found small numbers scattered throughout a number of wetland areas.
- African Pygmy-goose** *Nettapus auritus* We enjoyed excellent looks at this beautiful bird at Lake Ziway and at Lake Awassa.
- African Black Duck** *Anas sparsa* A single bird of this very uncommon species of duck, was observed at a small pond on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park, where we enjoyed excellent scope views.
- Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* A migrant from the Palearctic, a single adult female was observed at a small wetland on the Sululta Plain, on the first day of the tour.
- Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* Without doubt the most common duck in Ethiopia; we recorded it in small numbers, in many wetland areas.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* A common Palearctic migrant; we observed a good number of birds in several wetland areas.

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

- Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* A few scattered sightings throughout the tour, mainly of birds along the roadside.
- Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* A fairly common Palearctic migrant, we observed small numbers throughout the tour.
- Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* A very common and widespread resident, which we saw on almost every day of the tour.
- African Fish-Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer* This species was commonly observed around the Rift Valley lakes. The distinctive call of this species is one of the most evocative sounds of Africa.
- Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* This is the most numerous and widespread vulture in Ethiopia, it was particularly common in urban areas.
- Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* Ethiopia is one of the easiest places in the world to observe this splendid species of vulture. We enjoyed several good sightings, including one bird sat in the middle of an outdoor basketball court! It is now well documented that this bird drops bones from a great height in order to smash them open, making the bone fragments more manageable to swallow and also enables the vulture to devour the nourishing marrow locked inside the bones.
- Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* Somewhat surprisingly, we only observed one of these birds, however, it was a splendid adult, in perfect breeding plumage, in Lake Abiata National Park. This species is now classified as endangered in *Threatened Birds of the World*, as the European and Indian populations are both rapidly declining. In Africa it is still common in some places, but the alarm bells are ringing there too.
- White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* The second most numerous species of vulture in Ethiopia, with up to 50 birds, observed almost daily, throughout the tour.
- Ruppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppellii* Up to a dozen or so birds were present amongst a large group of vultures, feeding on a dead donkey, close to Mukature Village, not far from the Jemmu Valley. Wilhelm Peter Eduard Simon Ruppell (1794-1884)

- was a German collector. He made two extended expeditions to northern and eastern Africa in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although he brought back large zoological and ethnographical collections, his expeditions impoverished him. He was also a collector in the broadest sense of the word and presented his collection of coins and rare manuscripts to the Historical Museum of Frankfurt, his home town.
- Eurasian Griffon** *Gyps fulvus* We enjoyed four sightings of this uncommon Palearctic migrant, during the tour.
- Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* We enjoyed very close looks at this uncommon species of vulture, feeding on the same carcass that the Ruppell's Vultures were, close to Mukature Village. This species is classified as 'vulnerable' in *Threatened Birds of the World* as it has a small, declining population. The main threats to this species are deliberate poisoning and persecution by man.
- White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* Somewhat surprisingly, we enjoyed a few very good sightings of this very uncommon species of vulture.
- Black-breasted Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus pectoralis* We saw our first perched on a telegraph pole, not far from Mukature Village. We enjoyed a second, much better sighting, of a bird in flight during our drive back to Negele, after having seen Prince Ruspoli's Turaco.
- Brown Snake-Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* Two mornings running, we enjoyed very close looks at presumably the same bird, perched on top of a mosque, in a small village, not far from Negele.
- Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* This is one of the world's most splendid raptors and is in fact an aberrant snake-eagle. While in Awash National Park, we were enjoying our lunch at the Kerelew Lodge, which overlooks the Kirayawa Gorge, with the River Awash flowing through it. We dined al fresco, enjoying the terrific scenery and a good numbers of birds, including a magnificent Bateleur which flew right past us, as it flew above the gorge. We also saw a second bird in flight, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.
- Western Marsh-Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* We enjoyed regular sightings of this Palearctic migrant throughout the tour.
- African Marsh-Harrier** *Circus ranivorus* This species is a very irregular wanderer to Ethiopia; nevertheless, an immature bird flew right past us, as we were birding on the Sululta Plain, on the first full day of the tour.
- Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* We were very fortunate to observe both an adult male and female, as well as a couple of immature birds of this Palearctic migrant.
- African Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* We observed a pair of birds in flight, in the Jemmu Valley. This was followed by a second sighting of an immature bird on the roof of a building, in Lake Abiata National Park.
- Dark Chanting-Goshawk** *Melierax metabates* This is a widespread and commonly encountered roadside bird, it avoids the far south.
- Eastern Chanting-Goshawk** *Melierax poliopterus* This species replaces the previous species in the south of Ethiopia. It too, was often observed perched along the roadside.

**Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar* We enjoyed good looks at an adult bird, during our first visit to Lake Abiata National Park. We also got very close to a very uncommon dark morph bird, at a large dam, not far from Yabello.

**African Goshawk** *Accipiter tachiro* We were very fortunate to enjoy two good sightings of this uncommon species of goshawk. The first sighting occurred in the grounds of the Ghion Hotel, in Addis Ababa, and this was followed by a second sighting by Tom and myself, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, at Lake Langano.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badius* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this widespread African and Asian species of accipiter.

**Great Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* We saw this uncommon raptor on two separate occasions. The first, was of a bird in flight, flying along the edge of the Ankober Escarpment, which was seen by some members of the group. The second sighting, also of a bird in flight, occurred in the Harena Forest, in the Bale Mountains National Park, and once again, it was only seen by some members of the group.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* This species is a uncommon Palearctic migrant and was observed by some members of the group in the Jemmu Valley.

**Augur Buzzard** *Buteo augur* A common and distinctive raptor throughout all upland areas of Ethiopia, we saw it well on many occasions.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* The Lesser Spotted Eagle is a very uncommon Palearctic migrant, to Ethiopia. Therefore, we were very fortunate to observe one at close quarters, flying along the banks of the Jemmu River, in the Jemmu Valley.

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* We regularly encountered this species throughout the whole of the tour.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* We also encountered this Palearctic migrant on a fairly regular basis throughout the tour, but it was particularly common in the Awash area.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* This species is a rare Palearctic winter visitor to Ethiopia. We were very fortunate to observe an immature bird along the roadside, not far from the town of Shano. It was in the company of a sub-adult Golden Eagle, also a rare species of raptor in Ethiopia. This bird is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The main threat to this species is the continuing clearance of mature native forest and deliberate shooting of this species in parts of Europe. The entire world population is thought to be only a few thousand pairs and has declined by more than 10% during the last three generations.

**Wahlberg's Eagle** *Aquila wahlbergi* Yet another uncommon species of eagle, which we saw very well indeed. As we were driving back from the Prince Ruspoli's Turaco area, we observed one of these birds flying directly overhead. Johan August

Wahlberg (1810-1856) was a Swedish naturalist and collector. He traveled and collected widely in southern Africa between 1838 and 1856, sending thousands of specimens home to Sweden. He was exploring the headwaters of the Limpopo River, when like Prince Eugenio Ruspoli, he was killed by a wounded elephant.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* A small resident population of Golden Eagles has been recently discovered in the Bale Mountains of Ethiopia. There are scattered records, mainly of immature birds in other areas of Ethiopia, which are presumed to be wanderers from the Bale Mountains. We observed a sub-adult bird in the company of an immature Eastern Imperial Eagle, along the roadside, not far from the town of Shano.

**Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxi* We enjoyed super scope views of an adult pair of this very handsome eagle, sat on a rocky pinnacle atop the Ankober Escarpment. The Verreaux family were French and consisted of a father and his three sons, who were all naturalists, collectors, taxidermists and most of all, dealers. They traded in Paris, from a huge emporium, dealing in stuffed birds and feathers, which they called the `Maison Verreaux` the largest ever known `Natural History Emporium`! The eagle is named after one of the sons, Jean Baptiste Edouard Verreaux (1810-1868).

**Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennatus* Michael pointed out a pale morph of one of these Palearctic migrants, on the first day of the tour, at Gefarsa Reservoir, not far from Addis Ababa.

**Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* This is one of the largest species of eagles in the world; we saw an immature bird circling overhead, close to the village of Melka Guda, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis* We enjoyed a few good looks at birds sat on telegraph poles, along the side of the road.

#### FALCONIDAE

**Pygmy Falcon** *Polihierax semitorquatus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this Diminutive, but very attractive species of falcon. The one we saw while birding along the Dawa River at Melka Gudu, allowed us to approach within a few metres.

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* A small flock of approximately 8 or so birds was observed very well, while we were birding on the Liben Plain, near Negele. This species has undergone a rapid decline since 1950 and is classified as vulnerable in `Threatened Birds of the World`. The world population is thought to be less than 60,000 and declining. Habitat loss is considered to be the major threat, but the use of pesticides, which reduces the numbers of the birds prey, is also a contributing factor.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* In Ethiopia this species is both a resident and a common Palearctic migrant; which we saw on most days of the tour.

**Grey Kestrel** *Falco ardosiaceus* A single Grey Kestrel was observed briefly at Lake Ziway, in the Rift Valley.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* This species is a fairly common passage migrant in Ethiopia. We watched an immature bird in flight, as it made a dive for a Common Snipe at Lake Awassa, fortunately for the snipe, the hobby narrowly missed!

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* We watched this large species of falcon on many occasions throughout the tour, I have never known it to be so common, anywhere else in the world.

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* This species is a very uncommon resident in Ethiopia. We were very fortunate to observe an adult bird perched on the top of a telegraph pylon, on the first day of the tour, on the Sululta Plain. We were able to enjoy prolonged scope views of the bird, which was very much appreciated by the whole group.

#### PHASIANIDAE

**Crested Francolin** *Francolinus sephaena* We enjoyed several sightings of this widespread species of francolin.

**Yellow-necked Spurfowl** *Francolinus leucoscepus* We watched a family party scratching around in dry scrub, during our time in the Awash National Park.

**Chestnut-naped Francolin** *Francolinus castaneicollis* This near endemic proved to be common in the Bale Mountains, where we enjoyed many sightings.

**Erckel's Francolin** *Francolinus erckelii* One morning, at first light, we enjoyed very good scope views of a calling bird, in the grounds of our hotel in Ankober. This bird is a near endemic, also occurring in Eritrea and the Sudan. Theodor Erckel (1811-1897) was a German taxidermist who became a servant and helper to Wilhelm Ruppell in 1825, and accompanied Ruppell on his second journey to Ethiopia in 1830. Ruppell described the francolin and named it after Erckel in recognition of his loyal service.

#### NUMIDIDAE

**Helmeted Guinea fowl** *Numida meleagris* We encountered several large groups, while birding in the Awash National Park.

**Vulturine Guinea fowl** *Acryllium vulturinum* We encountered several large groups of this prehistoric looking, but very attractive species of guinea fowl, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

#### GRUIDAE

**Black Crowned-Crane** *Balearica pavonina* We enjoyed flight views of three birds at Lake Abiata.

**Wattled Crane** *Buggeranus carunculatus* We had very good looks at two small parties on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The world population is estimated to be about 15,000 birds and unfortunately, declining rapidly. The main threat to the Wattled Crane is the degradation of wetlands as a result of expanding agriculture. The population in Ethiopia is only several hundred birds and is isolated from the main population, which occurs in southern Africa.

**Common Crane** *Grus grus* An occasional Palearctic winter visitor to Ethiopia, numbers fluctuate from year to year. This year must have been a good year for them, as we saw them regularly during the first half of the tour. We saw a surprisingly large

flock of approximately 130 birds, close to Mukature Village. Ethiopia is the furthest south that this species winters in Africa.

#### RALLIDAE

**Rouget's Rail** *Rougetius rougetii* We enjoyed many good looks at this endemic species of rail, during our time in the Bale Mountains, where we saw up to 20 birds on some days. Little is known about the person who first discovered the bird. J. Rouget (?-1840) was a French explorer who collected in Ethiopia between 1939-1940.

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostris* Yet another showy species of rail; we found it to be common at Lake Ziway and Lake Awassa.

**African Swampen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis* This species is a very uncommon bird in Ethiopia, so we were pleased to enjoy good sightings of a family party, on the edge of a reedbed at Lake Awassa.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* We observed a few family parties of this species, during our two visits to Lake Awassa.

**Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* It was a very nice surprise to see this rare intra-African breeding migrant at Lake Ziway. We very much enjoyed watching this seldom seen species through the telescope. We watched an adult which had an immature bird with it.

**Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* We encountered small numbers on most of the Rift Valley lakes.

#### OTIDIDAE

**Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori* We enjoyed watching this very large species of bustard; firstly, in Awash National Park and then we saw one during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

**Buff-crested Bustard** *Lophotis gindiana* We observed good numbers in the Awash National Park and during the drive from Yabello to Negele, in the far south of Ethiopia.

#### JACANIDAE

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africanus* This lily-trotter, proved to be common at all of the Rift Valley lakes that we visited.

#### RECURVIROSTRIDAE

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* We enjoyed many good sightings, in most of the wetlands we visited.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Our only sighting was of a large flock of birds along the edge of Lake Abiata.

#### BURHINIDAE

**Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis* Joanna pointed out a pair of these uncommon birds, along one of the rivers in the Awash National Park.

## GLAREOLIDAE

**Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii* We enjoyed a very fortunate encounter with a family group on the Liben Plain, near Negele, while searching for the Sidamo Lark. We had very close looks at a pair of adults, with three well grown young. Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778-1858) was a Dutch ornithologist, illustrator and collector. He was appointed the first Director of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, in Leiden, in 1820 and held that post until his death. He was a wealthy man who had a very large collection of specimens and live birds. His first task as an ornithologist was to catalogue his father's very extensive collection. His father was Jacob Temminck, for whom Le Vaillant collected specimens.

## CHARADRIIDAE

**Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* Common and widespread in most wetland habitats, especially along the Rift Valley.

**Black-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus melanopterus* We enjoyed many sightings throughout the highlands and on one occasion on the Sululta Plain, we found a flock which was in excess of 300 birds.

**Crowned Lapwing** *Vanellus coronatus* This species was particularly numerous in the Rift Valley, it is a bird of drier grasslands and often occurs far from water.

**Spot-breasted Lapwing** *Vanellus melanocephalus* This much sought after Ethiopian endemic, proved fairly common throughout the Bale Mountains.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants were scattered throughout the Rift Valley lakes.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* This species is an uncommon Palearctic passage migrant and winter visitor to Ethiopia. We found a couple of birds amongst the hundreds of waders along the shore of Lake Abiata, in Lake Abiata National Park.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* Good numbers of this resident species of plover, were encountered along the edge of some of the Rift Valley lakes. Friedrich Heninrich Freiherr von Kittlitz (1799-1874) was a Polish-born German artist, naval officer, explorer and ornithologist. He was a friend of Edward Ruppell, who encouraged his interest in natural history and he went with him to North Africa in 1831. Although he was not responsible for either collecting or describing this plover, his illustrations made from specimens that he shot in Egypt established the link between them.

**Three-banded Plover** *Charadrius tricollaris* A couple of birds frequented a small pond in the Bale Mountains, which we visited on three separate occasions.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* This species breeds along the coast of Eritrea, Djibouti and northern Somalia. During the months of September to March there is also an influx of Palearctic migrants, mainly to the coast. Small numbers also

occur on saline lakes in the Rift Valley, during these months. We were very fortunate to find a couple of birds amongst the hundreds of other waders along the edge of Lake Abiata, in Lake Abiata National Park

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants were seen very well along the edge of some of the Rift Valley lakes.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* We saw up to a dozen or so of these Palearctic migrants, along the edge of Lake Langano.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Up to a dozen of these Palearctic migrants were observed very well, in the shallows of Lake Abiata, in Lake Abiata National Park.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants were seen at widespread localities throughout the tour.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* We enjoyed widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant, they were unusually single birds along small pools and streams.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* Once again, we enjoyed widespread sightings of this Palearctic migrant, along the edge of several of the Rift Valley lakes.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* We had widespread sightings of this common Palearctic migrant throughout the tour.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant were observed at Lake Abiata and Lake Langano.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* Approximately 10 of these Palearctic migrants were observed along the edge of Lake Abiata, amongst the hundreds of other waders.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* We observed good numbers of these Palearctic migrants in appropriate habitat throughout the tour. Up to 300 birds were observed on one occasion at Lake Langano.

#### LARIDAE

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* A couple of distant immatures were observed in the scope at Lake Ziway. This species is an uncommon Palearctic migrant to Ethiopia.

**Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* We observed small numbers at Lake Ziway and Lake Abiata. These birds are non-breeding visitors, from further south in Africa.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* Small numbers of these Palearctic migrants were observed on a number of the Rift Valley lakes.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* This species is a fairly common Palearctic migrant, mainly to coastal areas. Small numbers do winter on the Rift Valley lakes and we saw one or two at Lake Ziway and Lake Abiata.

#### STERNIDAE

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Small numbers of this Palearctic migrant, were present on the Rift Valley lakes.

**White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Good numbers of these Palearctic migrants were observed in their non-breeding plumage, on the Rift Valley lakes.

## COLUMBIDAE

- Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* A few birds observed in some of the larger towns and cities.
- Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* This beautifully plumaged species of pigeon was seen on every single day of the tour and in most places, especially in the towns, it was abundant.
- White-collared Pigeon** *Columba albitorques* This Ethiopian endemic proved to be very common in all highland areas. We observed flocks of up to 500 birds in the Bale Mountains.
- African Olive Pigeon** *Columba arquatrix* We enjoyed several sightings of this beautiful species, it was particularly numerous in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, along the shore of Lake Langano.
- Lemon Dove** *Columba larvata* A particularly shy and uncommon species of dove, which we saw surprisingly well, feeding on the track, just a few metres ahead of us, in the montane forest at Wondo Genet.
- Dusky Turtle-Dove** *Streptopelia lugens* An abundant species of dove in all highland areas.
- African Mourning Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens* This pale-eyed species of dove proved to be common in the Awash area and in the Rift Valley.
- Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* This large species of dove was observed on almost every day of the tour.
- Ring-necked Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* An abundant dry country dove, which was particularly common in the south of the country.
- Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread, throughout the whole country.
- Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur chalcopilos* This is the dry country equivalent of the following species. We saw it on one occasion in Awash National Park.
- Blue-spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur afer* Our only sightings were of birds in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, along the shore of Lake Langano, where they were not uncommon.
- Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria* Glimpsed on a couple of occasions; firstly, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, along the shore of Lake Langano, and secondly, in the montane forest of Wondo Genet.
- Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* This very small species of dove proved to be common and widespread throughout the more arid areas of Ethiopia.
- Bruce's Green-Pigeon** *Treron waalia* This very colourful species of pigeon was encountered regularly throughout the tour. James Bruce was a Scottish explorer with an interest in birds, who discovered the source of the Blue Nile at Lake Tana.

## PSITTACIDAE

- Black-winged Lovebird** *Agapornis taranta* This attractive Ethiopian endemic proved to be widespread and common. This species is unique amongst lovebirds, for it is the only species of lovebird that uses its own feathers to line its nest.
- African Orange-bellied Parrot** *Poicephalus rufiventris* We enjoyed several good looks at this attractive species of parrot, we saw it particularly well in Awash National Park. Fortunately, it is doing rather better than our Orange-bellied Parrot!

**Yellow-fronted Parrot** *Poicephalus flavifrons* We saw this Ethiopian endemic very well indeed, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, at Lake Langano, which is by far the best place in the whole country to see this bird. We also saw it very well in the montane forest at Wondo Genet. Somewhat surprisingly, this species is not considered to be in danger in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. This is not the case at all, as suitable habitat for this Ethiopian endemic, is disappearing at an alarming rate!

#### MUSOPHAGIDAE

**White-cheeked Turaco** *Tauraco leucotis* We enjoyed numerous sightings of this attractive near endemic, whose range only just creeps into Sudan and Somalia.

**Prince Ruspoli's Turaco** *Tauraco ruspolii* The prince of Ethiopian birds; little wonder it was voted 'bird of the trip' by tour participants. We enjoyed prolonged sightings of up to half a dozen or so birds, close to Genale River, not far from Negele. This Ethiopian endemic is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It is estimated that there is a population of 10,000 birds, which is declining. The main threat to this species is the fragmentation and alteration to its woodland habitat. This delightful bird is named after Prince Eugenio Ruspoli (1866-1893), an Italian aristocrat and explorer who was in Ethiopia from 1891-1893. He collected the turaco in 1892 before he was killed by an elephant which he had wounded, taking to the grave the knowledge of where he had discovered the turaco. For 50 years, ornithologists searched in vain for the whereabouts of this stunningly beautiful, near-mythical beast. Finally, in 1940, a turaco was seen north of Yabello, although it was another 30 years before the heart of its range along the Genale River was finally discovered. Even today, most aspects of the bird's life, remains a mystery. You would be right in thinking that the chances of being killed by an elephant must be very small indeed. However, no fewer than three ornithologists who have birds named after them, Frank James, Johan Wahlberg and Prince Eugenio Ruspoli, all suffered the same fate!

**Bare-faced Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides personatus* We enjoyed several good sightings of this uncommon species.

**White-bellied Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides leucogaster* A most striking and common dry-country bird, which was amazingly common in areas of acacia scrubland.

**Eastern Grey Plantain-eater** *Crinifer zonurus* Scattered sightings throughout the tour. Despite its name, it would appear that plantains, do not appear on the menu for this species!

#### CENTROPODIDAE

**African Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx cupreus* Our first sighting of this uncommon resident was of a female bird in montane forest, close to Kibre Mengist. We all enjoyed very good scope views of this bird. The following day, we enjoyed prolonged looks at a stunningly plumaged adult male, in montane forest at Wondo Genet.

**Blue-headed Coucal** *Centropus monachus* Our first sighting of this species was of a pair of birds in a grassy area, on the edge of Lake Awassa. This was followed by a second sighting of a single bird, while we were watching Prince Ruspoli's

Turaco.

**White-browed Coucal** *Centropus superciliosus* More common and widespread than the previous species, we saw it a few times in open, dry country.

#### STRIGIDAE

**African Wood-Owl** *Strix woodfordii* We enjoyed wonderful scope views of a pair of these scarce residents, at their daytime roost, in the Bale Mountains National Park.

#### CAPRIMULGIDAE

**Slender-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus clarus* Observed flying around at dusk in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, at Lake Langano. We then enjoyed very close looks at three birds roosting on the ground in daylight hours, in Lake Abiata National Park.

#### APODIDAE

**African Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* We watched a solitary bird flying overhead, at close quarters, in Awash National Park.

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Small numbers of the resident *africanus* race were observed flying overhead, above montane woodland, at Wondo Genet.

**Mottled Swift** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* First observed in flight above Jemmu Valley, this was followed by a second sighting of a larger number of birds flying in a mixed species flock with Common Swifts, which were flying over a large dam, close to Yabello.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus* A large number of these common Palearctic migrants were flying with a smaller number of Mottled Swifts, above a large dam, close to Yabello.

**Nyanza Swift** *Apus niansae* A common and widespread resident, which we saw very well, on many occasions.

#### COLIIDAE

**Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus* A common and widespread resident, which we saw very well on many, many occasions.

**Blue-naped Mousebird** *Urocolius macrourus* Less common than the previous species, even so, we enjoyed many good sightings of this species, which occurs in drier habitat, than the previous species.

#### ALCEDINIDAE

**Half-collared Kingfisher** *Alcedo semitorquata* A shy and uncommon resident of well wooded streams and rivers. We were very fortunate to have a bird fly right by us, on the first day of the tour, at Geffarsa Reservoir, not far from the capital, Addis Ababa.

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata* This beautiful, small species of kingfisher, was particularly common around the Rift Valley lakes. We saw it particularly well at lakes Ziway and Awassa.

**Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this intra-African migrant during the tour.

**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* This attractive species of kingfisher was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* This dry country resident was seen well on many Occasions, throughout the tour.

**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* This may be the largest species of kingfisher in Africa, but it is one of the shyest and least common. We saw a single bird flying very close to us, above the Jemmu River, in the Jemmu Valley.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* This noisy species of kingfisher is always a pleasure to see, it was particularly common around the Rift Valley lakes.

#### MEROPIDAE

**Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* A common and widespread resident throughout all lowland areas of the tour.

**Blue-breasted Bee-eater** *Merops variegatus* This common resident replaces the previous species in the highland areas, we saw it very well on many occasions.

**Madagascar Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* A fairly common breeding intra-African migrant. We saw a party of 10 or so birds, in one of the camping grounds in the Awash National Park.

**Northern Carmine Bee-eater** *Merops nubicus* We enjoyed many fine looks at this exceptionally beautiful intra-African migrant.

#### CORACIIDAE

**Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinica* This very long-tailed and attractive species of Roller, was seen very well on several occasions.

**Lilac-breasted Roller** *Coracias caudata* Yet another very attractive species, which proved to be common in southern Ethiopia.

**Rufous-crowned Roller** *Coracias naevia* We enjoyed scattered sightings of this species, throughout the tour.

#### UPUPIDAE

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* We observed large numbers of the intra-African migrant race *senegalensis*, throughout the tour.

#### PHOENICULIDAE

**Black-billed Woodhoopoe** *Phoeniculus somaliensis* We enjoyed several good sightings of this near endemic, throughout the tour.

**Black Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this attractive species. We saw it particularly well in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, at Lake Langanu.

**Abyssinian Scimitarbill** *Rhinopomastus minor* We first observed this species in the Awash National Park and then it became quite common in the south.

#### BUCEROTIDAE

**Red-billed Hornbill** *Tockus erythrorhynchus* The most commonly encountered hornbill of the tour. It was particularly common in the Awash National Park and in the far

south of the country.

**Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill** *Tockus flavirostris* We enjoyed many good sightings of this species of hornbill, with the banana coloured bill.

**Von der Decken's Hornbill** *Tockus deckeni* We observed small numbers in Lake Abiata National Park, and we also saw it well, while we were watching the Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. Baron Carl Claus von der Decken (1833-1865) was a German explorer. His first expedition in 1860 was to Lake Malawi. He explored East Africa and was the first European to try to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. In 1861, together with a geologist, he visited the Kilimanjaro massif. A year later, he ascended the mountain to 13,780 feet, approaching its permanent snowcap and mapping the area. He also established its height to be about 20,000 feet. In 1863 he went to Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands. His final journey was to Somalia in 1865, when he sailed up the River Jubba until his ship, the Welf foundered in the rapids above Bardera. There he and three other Europeans were killed by Somalis.

**Hemprich's Hornbill** *Tockus hemprichii* We enjoyed several encounters with this species of hornbill, we saw it particularly well on the scenic cliffs of the Jemmu Valley. Wilhelm Friedrich Hemprich (1796-1825) was a German traveler and collector, principally of marine animals, but he also discovered many new birds. Hemprich died during a bout of Massawa fever, whilst on a collecting expedition in northeast Africa.

**African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus* The second most common hornbill of the tour. It was incredibly common in the Awash National Park, but it was also very common in the far south.

**Silvery-cheeked Hornbill** *Ceratogymna brevis* We enjoyed many encounters with this huge and very impressive species of hornbill. It was unbelievably common in the large fig trees surround Lake Awassa.

**Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill** *Bucorvus abyssinicus* We enjoyed three stunning sightings of these very impressive, `prehistoric-looking` birds.

#### CAPITONIDAE

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* This uncommon bird of wet forest was seen well in montane forest, close to Kibre Mengist and then again the following day, at Wondo Genet.

**Red-fronted Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus pusillus* This miniature barbet was seen well on a few occasions throughout the tour; it is the dry country representative of the above species.

**Red-fronted Barbet** *Tricholaema diademata* We enjoyed several good views of this striking species of barbet, we observed it particularly well in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

**Black-throated Barbet** *Tricholaema melanocephala* A fairly common resident of arid bush land, which we saw well on a couple of occasions, close to Yabello.

**Banded Barbet** *Lybius undatus* This beautiful endemic proved to be fairly common and we saw it well on several occasions.

**Black-billed Barbet** *Lybius guifsobalito* Yet another attractive species of barbet; we

saw it particularly well in the Jemmu Valley and we saw it again in the Awash National Park.

**Double-toothed Barbet** *Lybius bidentatus* We enjoyed many good looks at this particularly handsome species of barbet. Its very large bill, which gives this bird its name, is used mainly for eating figs.

**Yellow-breasted Barbet** *Trachyphonus margaritatus* We enjoyed some excellent looks at this restricted range species in dry thornbush country, in and around Awash National Park.

**Red-and-yellow Barbet** *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* We saw this bird very well on a couple of occasions, close to Negele.

**D'Arnaud's Barbet** *Trachyphonus darnaudii* We saw this species particularly well at Yabello, where it proved to be quite common. D'Arnaud was a French explorer and big-game hunter. His first trip was an Egyptian expedition looking for the source of the White Nile and he penetrated further than any other previous expedition. He also explored the Sudan from 1841-1842 and Ethiopia in 1843.

#### INDICATORIDAE

**Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* We enjoyed super looks at an adult male, of this uncommon species, at a large dam, close to Yabello.

**Lesser Honeyguide** *Indicator minor* A single bird was observed well, on one occasion, while we were birding in the Jemmu Valley.

#### PICIDAE

**Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* Some members of our group enjoyed watching a family party, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, at Lake Langano.

**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* This species is a fairly common passage migrant and winter visitor to Ethiopia. Tom saw one on one occasion, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

**Nubian Woodpecker** *Campethera nubica* This rather handsome, well spotted woodpecker was observed well, on several occasions.

**Abyssinian Woodpecker** *Dendropicos abyssinicus* One of the more difficult of the Ethiopian endemics to find. Fortunately, we saw an adult male very well indeed, in montane forest at Wondo Genet.

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* Surprisingly, this common and widespread species was only observed once, in Awash National Park.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Dendropicos spodocephalus* This near endemic species of woodpecker proved to be fairly common, and we saw it well on a few occasions.

#### ALAUDIDAE

**Foxy Lark** *Mirafra alopex* We saw a couple of these uncommon birds very well indeed, in the Awash National Park.

**Sidamo Lark** *Heteromirafra sidamoensis* Endemic to the Liben Plain, near Negele, where it is a very uncommon bird. Sue observed a single bird very well and fortunately, we all observed a bird very well indeed, the following day. This

species is classified as critically endangered in 'Threatened Birds in the World'. The total surviving population is estimated to be between 50-250 birds. The main threat to this bird in its small area of open grassland, is cultivation and human intrusion.

**Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix leucotis* We came across a large flock of these lovely looking birds, feeding on the ground, just a few metres in front of us, in Awash National Park.

**Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti* While searching for the Yellow-throated Seedeater on the flanks of Mount Fantale, in Awash National Park, some members of our group stumbled across a solitary bird feeding on the ground, just a few metres away.

**Erlanger's Lark** *Calandrella erlangeri* We enjoyed many great looks at this common Ethiopian endemic, which only occurs in highland areas. Baron Carlo von Erlanger (1872-1904) was a German collector from Ingelheim, in the Rhineland. He traveled to Tunisia and Ethiopia in 1893 and 1897 and published both trip reports.

**Somali Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella somalica* We saw enormous flocks of this near endemic species, numbering in the hundreds, on the Liben Plain, near Negele, while searching for the Sidamo Lark.

**Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae* We commonly encountered this distinctive species of lark during our time in the highlands. Thekla Brehm (1832-1858) was the daughter of the German ornithologist Christian Ludwig Brehm. Brehm wrote the description of the lark in 1858, the year in which his daughter died of heart disease.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

**Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* A common Palearctic passage migrant and winter visitor to Ethiopia; we saw enormous flocks of birds, numbering in the many hundreds at Lake Langano and Lake Abiata.

**Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* A common and widespread resident, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* Another common Palearctic passage migrant and winter visitor to Ethiopia. Somewhat surprisingly, only a single bird was observed, it was seen in the Jemmu Valley, by Ken.

**Rock Martin** *Hirundo fuligula* A common and widespread resident throughout all the highland areas of Ethiopia.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* An abundant Palearctic passage migrant and winter visitor to Ethiopia, we observed huge flocks of many hundreds of birds on many occasions throughout the tour.

**Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida* We searched through flocks of hundreds of migratory Barn Swallows, while birding on the Sululta Plain, a little to the north of Addis Ababa. Eventually, we found a single bird of this species, flying around with the Barn Swallows.

**Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica* Once again, a single bird was observed amongst a flock of Barn Swallows, along the edge of Lake Beseka, in Awash

National Park

- Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species of swallow, the sightings were scattered throughout the tour.
- White-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo megaensis* This beautiful, clean-cut species of swallow is endemic to a small area of southern Ethiopia, centered around Yabello. We were able to watch a small group flying around us, not far from Yabello; we could clearly see the white tail of the bird. The first nest of this species was discovered as recently as 1996. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened bird of the World'. Its population is unknown and the main threat to this species is the conversion of thornscrub into cultivated land.
- Lesser Striped-Swallow** *Hirundo abyssinica* We enjoyed many excellent sightings of this common and widespread species, during our time in Ethiopia.
- Mosque Swallow** *Hirundo senegalensis* A small flock was observed well perched in a large tree, on the edge of Lake Ziway. This species is not normally seen in Ethiopia during the months of September to November, so they probably had only just arrived from breeding grounds further to the south in Africa.
- Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* We saw a small number of this species during our time in Awash National Park.
- Black Sawwing** *Psalidoprocne holomelas* We enjoyed several flocks of this species, mainly at Lake Langano and Wondo Genet.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

- White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* This common Palearctic winter visitor, was frequently encountered throughout the tour.
- African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* A fairly uncommon bird in Ethiopia, we saw a pair of birds very well, along the edge of the Jemmu River, in the Jemmu Valley.
- Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* An abundant Palearctic migrant; we often encountered enormous flocks, numbering many hundreds of birds.
- Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* A fairly uncommon Palearctic migrant, which we saw well on a few occasions.
- Mountain Wagtail** *Motacilla clara* A fairly common resident of Ethiopia, which we saw well on a number of occasions throughout the tour.
- Abyssinian Longclaw** *Macronyx flavicollis* This splendid Ethiopian endemic is a fairly common bird of the highlands. We saw it very well at the Geffarsa Reservoir, close to Addis Ababa, on the first day of the tour. We also saw it well on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park.
- Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* A locally common resident, which we saw very well on a few occasions.
- Grassland Pipit** *Anthus cinnamomeus* Another common resident; surprisingly, we only observed a few birds in grassland, surrounding Lake Abiata, in Lake Abiata National Park.
- Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* A fairly common Palearctic migrant which we saw well on a number of occasions.
- Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* An uncommon bird of highland areas; we enjoyed great scope views of a pair of birds on the Sululta Plain.
- Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* A fairly common Palearctic winter visitor; we

enjoyed watching several flocks during our time in the highlands, some of the birds were still in breeding plumage, sporting brick red throats and faces.

#### CAMPEPHAGIDAE

**Grey Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina caesia* We enjoyed good looks at a pair of these fairly common residents, in montane forest, at Wondo Genet.

**Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike** *Campephaga phoenicea* This decidedly uncommon species was seen well on a few occasions in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* An abundant resident which we saw on almost every day of the tour.

#### TURDIDAE

**Common Rock-Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* We enjoyed a few very good sightings of this attractive Palearctic migrant.

**Abyssinian Ground-Thrush** *Zoothera piaggiae* We were very fortunate to enjoy two very good sightings of this secretive ground-dwelling species of thrush. The first sighting occurred in montane forest close to the town of Kibre Mengist and the second sighting occurred at Wondo Genet.

**Groundscraper Thrush** *Psophocichla litsipsirupa* This handsome species of thrush proved to be very common throughout the highlands of Ethiopia. On some days we must have seen up to 20 or so individuals of this species.

**Mountain Thrush** *Turdus abyssinicus* This species of thrush also proved to be very common and widespread throughout all the highland areas we visited.

**African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* This species replaces the mountain thrush in the western half of Ethiopia. We saw it very well on one occasion, in the ground of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

**Bare-eyed Thrush** *Turdus tephronotus* A bird of the drier areas of southern Ethiopia; we enjoyed good looks at a single individual, close to Yabello.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

**Rattling Cisticola** *Cisticola chiniana* A common species of cisticola in east Africa; we saw it very well on several occasions.

**Ethiopian Cisticola** *Cisticola lugubris* As the name would suggest, this species is endemic to Ethiopia where it is a common bird in the highlands. It is a fairly recent split, from the far more widespread Winding Cisticola *C. galactotes*.

**Stout Cisticola** *Cisticola robustus* A couple of family parties were observed well, during our time in the Jemmu Valley.

**Siffling Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus* We observed this fairly uncommon species in the Jemmu Valley and again, close to Yabello.

**Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* We observed this dry country species, on a couple of occasions, while birding in the Awash National Park.

**Pectoral-patch Cisticola** *Cisticola brunnescens* A fairly common bird of highland

grasslands, which we saw well on a few occasions.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* We enjoyed many good sightings of this common and widespread species.

**Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* We saw this dry country species very well on one occasion, close to Yabello.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata* We regularly encountered this small species of warbler, throughout the tour.

**Grey Wren-Warbler** *Calamonastes simplex* A bird of acacia scrub, which we saw well in Awash National Park and close to the village of Wathile, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

#### SYLVIIDAE

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* We enjoyed good looks at this common Palearctic migrant, at lakes Ziway and Awassa.

**Eurasian Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* We had prolonged looks at a few of these common Palearctic migrants, in a reedbed, along the edge of Lake Awassa.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* This Palearctic migrant was seen well in the Jemmu Valley and again, along the Dawa River, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

**Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languida* A very uncommon Palearctic migrant, which inhabits dry bush country during its time in Ethiopia. It can be a very skulking species, and this particular individual, was no exception. We played hide-and-seek with it, for some time in acacia country, close to Yabello. Sir Henry Morris Upcher JP (1839-1921), Deputy-Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk, was a close friend and travelling companion of H. B. Tristram. He was born at Sherringham Hall, near Cley, Norfolk, and was apparently the owner of the only private lifeboat in England in 1911. Ehrenberg described the warbler in 1833 but his original description is rather vague and Tristram redescrbed it in 1864, calling it Upcher's Warbler, after his friend.

**Buff-bellied Warbler** *Phyllolais pulchella* We saw this small species of warbler in dry acacia scrub, regularly throughout the tour.

**Yellow-vented Eremomela** *Eremomela flavicrissalis* This warbler was also seen well on a couple of occasions in dry acacia scrub, close to Yabello.

**Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* Frequently encountered throughout the drier, more arid areas of Ethiopia, that we visited.

**Northern Crombec** *Sylvietta brachyura* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this species, during our time in the Awash National Park.

**Red-faced Crombec** *Sylvietta whytii* We enjoyed several good looks at this species, at frequent intervals, throughout the tour.

**Brown Woodland-Warbler** *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* In Ethiopia this species occurs in highland *Juniper* forests; we saw an individual at very close quarters, while birding at Wondo Genet.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Seen well on a number of occasions, it was noticeably more common towards the end of the tour, so perhaps they were just arriving onto their wintering grounds.

- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* Another common Palearctic migrant, which we observed on a few occasions throughout the tour.
- Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* This is also a common Palearctic migrant, which we saw well, on a number of occasions.
- Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* This Palearctic migrant was observed well in the Jemmu Valley and in Lake Abiata National Park.
- Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* We enjoyed many sightings of this common Palearctic migrant.
- Brown Parisoma** *Parisoma lugens* We observed this bird on one occasion, in a large acacia tree, close to Mukature River, near the Jemmu Valley.
- Banded Parisoma** *Parisoma boehmi* This attractive and uncommon resident, was observed very well, at close quarters, in dry acacia scrub, close to Yabello.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

- Pale Flycatcher** *Bradornis pallidus* A common and widespread resident which we saw well on many occasions.
- Abyssinian Slaty-Flycatcher** *Melaenornis chocolatinus* This Ethiopian endemic proved to be common in all highland *Juniper* forests.
- Northern Black-Flycatcher** *Melaenornis edolioides* A common and conspicuous bird throughout Ethiopia.
- African Dusky Flycatcher** *Muscicapa adusta* This widespread resident is a small, dumpy and confiding species.
- Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* This fairly common Palearctic migrant, was observed well in the Awash National Park, and we enjoyed an even better look at a second bird, at Lake Ziway.
- Ruppell's Robin-Chat** *Cossypha semirufa* This very attractive resident, was seen well, on many occasions. Wilhelm Peter Eduard Simon Ruppell (1794-1884) was a German collector. He made two extended expeditions to northern and eastern Africa, during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although he brought back large zoological and ethnographical collections, his expeditions impoverished him. He was also a collector in the broadest sense of the word and presented his collection of coins and rare manuscripts to the Historical Museum of Frankfurt, his home town.
- White-browed Robin-Chat** *Cossypha heuglini* Very similar to the above species; it prefers lower altitudes and more open habitat than Ruppell's Robin Chat. Joanna pointed out a pair of these birds, which we watched for a while, on the edge of Lake Awassa.
- Spotted Palm-Thrush** *Cichladusa guttata* A common but shy resident in semi-arid country; we observed two separate individuals, very well indeed, during our time at Yabello.
- White-browed Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* A common and conspicuous resident, which we saw well, on a number of occasions.
- Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* We observed several of these Palearctic migrants, it was most common around Lake Langano, they were of the distinctive *samamisticus* race, which breeds from Turkey through to Iran.

- African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this resident species. It is a good looking bird and is distinctly different from the Siberian Stonechat.
- Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this common Palearctic migrant.
- Abyssinian Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugubris* We enjoyed many good sightings of this very handsome near endemic. We saw mainly white-bellied birds, but we did see a very fine black-bellied morph, as we were leaving Wondo Genet. In the past this species has been lumped with Schalow's Wheatear *O.schalowi*, and both are sometimes lumped with Mourning Wheatear *O.lugens*.
- Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* This Palearctic migrant was the second most numerous of all the wintering wheatears, we saw it on almost every day of the tour.
- Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* This was by far the most numerous of all the wintering wheatears. We recorded it on almost every day of the tour.
- Red-breasted Wheatear** *Oenanthe bottae* A very common bird of highland areas throughout Ethiopia.
- Familiar Chat** *Cercomela familiaris* We saw this uncommon resident, very well, on a couple of occasions, while we were birding in the Jemmu Valley.
- Sombre Rock-Chat** *Cercomela dubia* We enjoyed excellent views of this little-known endemic, in the Awash National Park, side-by-side, with the following species.
- Blackstart** *Cercomela melanura* Observed very well at the same location as the Sombre Rock-Chat, the two birds even look alike.
- Moorland Chat** *Cercomela sordida* This species proved to be an abundant, tame and endearing bird of the Ethiopian highlands.
- Ruppell's Black-Chat** *Myrmecocichla melaena* This attractive Ethiopian endemic, was easily located along the rocky escarpments of the Jemmu Valley.
- Mocking Cliff-Chat** *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris* This attractive species was also easy to see among the rocky escarpments of the Jemmu Valley.
- White-winged Cliff-Chat** *Thamnolaea semirufa* This splendid Ethiopian endemic was also easily observed among the rocky escarpments of the Jemmu Valley. It was often seen side-by-side, with the Mocking Cliff-Chat.

#### PLATYSTEIRIDAE

- Brown-throated Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea* We saw an adult female, very well indeed, in montane forest at Wondo Genet.
- Grey-headed Batis** *Batis orientalis* We enjoyed several good sightings throughout the tour.
- Western Black-headed Batis** *Batis erlangeri* We saw this species on two separate occasions; firstly, in Lake Abiata National Park, and secondly, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano. The Black-headed Batis has very recently been split into two species, Western and Eastern.
- Pygmy Batis** *Batis perkeo* We saw this diminutive species of batis in the far south of Ethiopia, around Yabello and Negele.

## MONARCHIDAE

**African Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* This attractive species was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

## TIMALIIDAE

**Rufous Chatterer** *Turdoides rubiginosus* We observed this species well on a few occasions; we saw it particularly well on one occasion, at Lake Awassa.

**White-rumped Babbler** *Turdoides leucopygius* We enjoyed several encounters with this striking near endemic. Ethiopia is the only place where this species can be observed, without putting ones life in danger; the alternative, is a visit to Somalia!

**Abyssinian Catbird** *Parophasma galinieri* We saw this Ethiopian endemic very well, in the Bale Mountains National Park.

## PARIDAE

**White-winged Black-Tit** *Melaniparus leucomelas* We saw this attractive species very well, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

**White-backed Black-Tit** *Melaniparus leuconotus* This very handsome Ethiopian endemic, was seen remarkably well, on two separate occasions, in highland *Juniper* forests, in the Bale Mountains.

**Northern Grey Tit** *Melaniparus thruppi* This dry country bird was seen very well on a couple of occasions, close to Yabello.

## CERTHIIDAE

**Spotted Creeper** *Salpornis spilonotus* This species is a very uncommon bird of highland forest. We saw it very well indeed, in montane forest at Wondo Genet.

## REMIZIDAE

**Mouse-colored Penduline-Tit** *Anthoscopus musculus* Along with Tit-hylia this species lays claim to being the smallest bird in Africa. We saw a few birds very well in acacia bushland, close to Yabello.

## NECTARINIIDAE

**Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes orientalis* We saw a bird very well in the Awash National Park, and this was followed by a second sighting of a pair of birds along the Dawa River, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

**Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* This species only occurs in southern Ethiopia. We observed a bird very well while watching Prince Ruspoli's Turaco near the Genale River, not far from Negele.

**Scarlet-chested Sunbird** *Chalcomitra senegalensis* We saw this particularly attractive species of sunbird on numerous occasions.

**Tacazze Sunbird** *Nectarinia tacazze* This very large species of sunbird proved numerous in the highlands of Ethiopia, from Addis Ababa to the Bale Mountains.

**Malachite Sunbird** *Nectarinia famosa* In Ethiopia the Malachite Sunbird is a very uncommon bird of the higher mountains, where it frequents moorlands and forest edge. We saw a single adult male very well, on one occasion, while birding in the

Harrena Forest, in the Bale Mountains.

**Beautiful Sunbird** *Cinnyris pulchellus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this fairly common sunbird, during our time in the Rift Valley.

**Marico Sunbird** *Cinnyris mariquensis* This species of sunbird was seen well on a number of occasions throughout the tour.

**Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus* We commonly encountered the yellow-bellied race *fazoqlensis* in the highlands, in the Bale Mountains. In the far south, we also encountered the white-bellied race *albiventris*.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

**Montane White-eye** *Zosterops poliogaster* A common species of white-eye, which we saw well on many occasions, during our time in the highlands of Ethiopia.

**Abyssinian White-eye** *Zosterops abyssinicus* Another common species of white-eye, which we saw well on several occasions, while birding in the lowlands.

#### ORIOLIDAE

**Abyssinian Oriole** *Oriolus monacha* This beautiful Ethiopian endemic was first seen by John, in the Harrena Forest of the Bale Mountains. Later in the trip, we saw it again in montane forest close to Kibre Mengist and again in montane forest at Wondo Genet.

**Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus larvatus* We observed this more widespread species of oriole in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano, and on a couple of occasions, close to Yabello.

#### LANIIDAE

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* We saw this fairly common Palearctic migrant on a few occasions, but only in the north of the country.

**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* We saw this Palearctic migrant very well on a number of occasions in the Awash National Park. It has recently been proposed that this race *pallidirostris* which is known as Steppe Grey Shrike, may be a valid species.

**Grey-backed Fiscal** *Lanius excubitoroides* This large, tail-wagging resident species of shrike was particularly common at lakes Langano and Awassa.

**Somali Fiscal** *Lanius somalicus* We observed this resident species on a few occasions, while birding in the Awash National Park.

**Common Fiscal** *Lanius collaris* We saw this bird every day when we were in the highlands of Ethiopia.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* This stunningly attractive Palearctic migrant was commonly encountered during our time in the Awash National Park.

**Northern White-crowned Shrike** *Eurocephalus anguitimens* A handsome and very common dry-country shrike, which we enjoyed on many occasions.

**Brubru** *Nilaus afer* This diminutive but handsome species of shrike was first observed in Lake Abiata National Park, we then saw one or two others in the Yabello area.

**Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis* We enjoyed several good sightings of this species of shrike.

**Pringle's Puffback** *Dryoscopus pringlii* In Ethiopia this very uncommon and elusive species of shrike is restricted in range to the semi-arid acacia woodlands in the far south of the country. John first saw this bird close to Yabello, fortunately, the rest of the group had really good looks at a bird, not far from Negele. Colonel Sir John Wallace Pringle (1863-1938) was the Chief Inspector of Railways in Uganda from 1891 until 1892.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this rather furtive species of shrike.

**Three-streaked Tchagra** *Tchagra jamesi* This scarce dry-country tchagra was observed by John, not far from Wathile.

**Ethiopian Boubou** *Laniarius aethiopicus* A common and widespread Ethiopian endemic, which is more often heard than seen. We saw it well on several occasions.

**Slate-colored Boubou** *Laniarius funebris* We also enjoyed many good sightings of this species of shrike.

**Rosy-patched Bushshrike** *Rhodophoneus cruentus* This very striking and beautiful species of dry-country shrike was observed very well in the Awash National Park and again in the far south, in the Yabello area.

**Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike** *Telophorus sulfureopectus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this very attractive species of shrike.

**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti* This uncommon and somewhat retiring species of shrike, was observed very well on one occasion, close to Yabello.

#### PRIONOPIDAE

**White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus* This attractive species of shrike is a dry-country species that always travels in small flocks. We very much enjoyed watching a flock in the Awash National Park and then a second flock, not far from Negele.

#### DICRURIDAE

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* This proved to be a common and widespread species throughout all the dry-country areas we visited.

#### CORVIDAE

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* We encountered probably the same small flock on three occasions during our time in the Bale Mountains National Park. Ethiopia is the only place where this species occurs south of the Sahara.

**Cape Rook** *Corvus capensis* An abundant highland species, which we saw on most days of the tour.

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* A common and widespread species throughout the whole of Ethiopia

**Stresemann's Bush-Crow** *Zavattariornis stresemanni* During our time at Yabello we

enjoyed many sightings of this much sought-after Ethiopian endemic. Observing this aberrant species of crow, was one of the great highlights of the tour. Described as recently as 1938 and restricted in range to an area of approximately 2,400 square kilometres surrounding Yabello, this stunning bird is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The estimated population of this bird is 10,000 and declining. Recent research indicates that tall acacia bushes in which this species nests, are being cleared for both firewood and to make grazing land, and this is having a negative impact on the bird. Professor Erwin Friedrich Theodor Stresemann (1889-1972) was an outstanding German ornithologist and collector in the Far East. He was chairman of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress and the Curator of Birds at the Berlin Natural History Museum. He wrote the highly regarded history of ornithology *Entwicklung der Ornithologie*.

**Dwarf Raven** *Corvus edithae* This near endemic was observed during the drive from Yabello to Negele. It was particularly common around Negele; at one time we observed a large flock of 60 or so birds feeding the ground on the Liben Plain.

**Fan-tailed Raven** *Corvus rhipidurus* A common and widespread species, which occurs throughout Ethiopia.

**Thick-billed Raven** *Corvus crassirostris* We enjoyed lots of encounters with this rather grotesque Ethiopian endemic; its incredible bill is truly over the top.

#### STURNIDAE

**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* Small flocks of this species were regularly encountered throughout the tour.

**Greater Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* This attractive species of starling was common to abundant, throughout the entire tour.

**Ruppell's Starling** *Lamprotornis purpuropterus* Another species of starling which was very common in the Awash area and in the Rift Valley.

**Golden-breasted Starling** *Lamprotornis regius* Perhaps the most beautiful species of starling in the world. We observed a few flocks while we were birding in the area around Yabello.

**Superb Starling** *Lamprotornis superbus* Another very attractive species of starling; it was abundant in all the dry-country areas we visited.

**White-crowned Starling** *Spreo albicapillus* This very large and stunning species of starling was regularly encountered in the far south of Ethiopia between Yabello and Negele. It occurs in large flocks which feed on the ground.

**Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio* Small numbers were scattered throughout the tour.

**Shelley's Starling** *Lamprotornis shelleyi* Small numbers of this species were observed in dry bush country around Yabello. In Ethiopia this species only occurs in the far south. Captain George Ernest Shelley, (1840-1910) was the nephew of the

famous poet, and was a geologist and ornithologist, he was also related to Mary Shelley, the authoress of *Frankenstein*. He joined the Grenadier Guards in 1863, retiring a few years later with the rank of Captain. He was an authority on sunbirds, traveled widely in South Africa and Ethiopia and was working on a series of volumes on the birds of Africa. He suffered a debilitating stroke which left him paralysed in 1906, and he was unable to complete the work, W. L. Sclater then completed the work. This meant that his travelling days were also over, but not before he had seven different species of birds named after him, including not one, but two species of sunbirds.

**Slender-billed Starling** *Onychognathus tenuirostris* This species was observed by some members of the group in the grounds of our hotel in Addis Ababa. It was observed a second time, again by only some members of the group, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

**Bristle-crowned Starling** *Onychognathus salvadorii* An uncommon bird throughout its entire range, it only occurs in semi-arid, rocky country. This was exactly the habitat where we saw a small number of birds, sitting in the few trees that were growing in the lava field, besides Lake Beseka, in Awash National Park.

**White-billed Starling** *Onychognathus albirostris* This attractive Ethiopian endemic, showed very well on the rocky cliffs of the Jemmu Valley.

**Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* We enjoyed watching this attractive species of starling, on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Sharpe's Starling** *Pholia sharpii* This is an uncommon species of starling, which only occurs in montane forest. We saw it well on two occasions, firstly, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano and again, in montane forest at Wondo Genet.

**Red-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species, throughout the tour.

#### PASSERIDAE

**Shelley's Rufous Sparrow** *Passer shelleyi* An uncommon and highly localised species of sparrow; we were fortunate to observe a few birds in the village of Wachile, during the drive from Yabello to Negele.

**Swainson's Sparrow** *Passer swainsoni* This species proved to be abundant throughout the whole tour. William Swainson (1789-1855) was a naturalist and bird illustrator. He was born in Liverpool, the son of a collector of customs duty. He served for 8 years from 1807-1815 with the army commissariat and amassed a very large collection of zoological specimens. At the end of the Napoleonic war he retired on half-pay. From 1816-1818 he traveled and collected extensively throughout Brazil. In 1840 he traveled to New Zealand and became the country's first Attorney General. Unfortunately, most of his collections of specimens were lost on the voyage to New Zealand, where he remained for the rest of his life.

**Parrot-billed Sparrow** *Passer gongonensis* In Ethiopia this sparrow only occurs in the far south of the country, in semi-arid bush country. We were fortunate to find a pair in the village of Wachile, while traveling between Yabello and Negele.

**Yellow-spotted Petronia** *Petronia pyrgita* A rather drab looking species; Michael observed one in the Jemmu Valley and this was followed by a couple of very good looks, in the Yabello area.

**Bush Petronia** *Petronia dentata* Another plain looking species, we saw it well on one occasion in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

#### PLOCEIDAE

**Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver** *Bubalornis niger* A bird of dry bush country, which we saw very well on several occasions, in and around the town of Yabello.

**White-headed Buffalo-Weaver** *Dinemellia dinemelli* A striking and very common bird of dry bush country, throughout Ethiopia.

**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** *Plocepasser mahali* Commonly encountered throughout the entire tour.

**Grey-capped Social-Weaver** *Pseudonigrita arnaudi* We enjoyed excellent looks at this attractive species of weaver, during our time spent birding at Yabello.

**Black-capped Social-Weaver** *Pseudonigrita cabanisi* Good numbers of this species were also observed in the area of Yabello, often in association with the previous species.

**Baglafecht Weaver** *Ploceus baglafecht* A very common weaver throughout the highlands of Ethiopia.

**Little Weaver** *Ploceus luteolus* An uncommon bird of acacia bush country; we saw it well in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano and close to Yabello.

**Lesser Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus intermedius* We enjoyed good looks at this species, during our time in the Yabello area.

**Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* We enjoyed scattered sightings of this very distinctive species of weaver, throughout the tour.

**Ruppell's Weaver** *Ploceus galbula* An uncommon and highly nomadic near endemic, of dry acacia savanna. Some members of the group saw it in the Awash National Park and then we all saw it very well at Lake Ziway.

**Northern Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus taeniopterus* This is an uncommon and highly localised bird of semi-arid bushland. It breeds colonially in reeds and low vegetation over water, foraging in adjacent areas. In Ethiopia it is confined to three small areas in the far south, fortunately, one of them, is the area around Yabello, where we observed a couple of birds in the grounds of our hotel.

**Viteline Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus vitellinus* Yet another weaver of dry bush country, which proved to be fairly common in the area around Yabello.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* Somewhat surprisingly, we only observed this common species of weaver on one occasion, when we stumbled across a few birds in the Awash National Park.

**Speke's Weaver** *Ploceus spekei* A very patchily distributed and uncommon bird in Ethiopia. We were fortunate to find a few birds while birding in the area around Yabello. Captain John Hanning Speke (1827-1864) was a British explorer. He

was the first European to see Lake Victoria and it was he who proved it to be the source of the Nile. Speke joined Burtons expedition to discover the source, not because he was particularly interested in finding it, but he was interested in the prospect of going big game hunting. Speke hunted to supply food for the expedition but he also observed the behaviour and ecology of birds, one of which was named after him. He was killed by his own shotgun when he stumbled over a stile whilst out shooting in England, however, it is widely believed that he committed suicide.

**Red-headed Weaver** *Anaplectes rubriceps* We enjoyed several scattered sightings of this species throughout the tour. Most were in non-breeding plumage, but one or two were in spectacular full breeding plumage, and then it really is a very beautiful bird.

**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea* We saw a couple of large flocks in flight, in the Awash National Park. It is claimed that this species is the world's most abundant wild bird, with an estimated population of around 1.5 billion birds. Flocks of this species are sometimes so large that they can block out the sun and take up to 5 hours to fly past!

**Black-winged Red Bishop** *Euplectes hordeaceus* We observed many full breeding plumaged males in the Jemmu Valley, where they were in the height of their display period.

**Yellow Bishop** *Euplectes capensis* A common bird of grassland, marshes and Cultivation. Somewhat surprisingly, we only observed this species on one occasion. A splendid male, in full breeding plumage was observed very well, close to the town of Kibre Mengist, during the long drive from Negele to Wondo Genet.

**White-winged Widowbird** *Euplectes albonotatus* A very uncommon bird of moist grassland and cultivation, in the highlands. We observed a male in partial breeding plumage, while birding on the Sululta Plain, north of Addis Ababa.

**Red-collared Widowbird** *Euplectes ardens* Small numbers of this highland species, were observed in the Jemmu Valley.

**Grosbeak Weaver** *Amblyospiza albifrons* This is a particularly uncommon species in Ethiopia; we observed an adult male on one occasion, in the ground of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

**Green-winged Pytilia** *Pytilia melba* An uncommon but widespread inhabitant of semi-arid acacia country; we saw this beautiful species very well on a couple of occasions, while birding in the Awash National Park.

**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala* A very common species which we saw everywhere throughout the tour, with the exception of the Bale Mountains.

**Red-cheeked Cordonbleu** *Uraeginthus bengalus* A common and widespread species of finch, this attractive species was observed throughout the tour.

**Purple Grenadier** *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster* A fairly common bird of semi-arid areas; we observed it in the Awash National Park and on several occasions in and around Yabello.

- Yellow-bellied Waxbill** *Estrilda quartinia* Small numbers were observed on a few occasions throughout the highlands.
- Crimson-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda rhodopyga* We observed this unobtrusive species of waxbill, on a couple of occasions, in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano.
- Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* Somewhat surprisingly, this common grassland species was only observed on one occasion; a few birds were admired in tall grass along the roadside, close to the town of Goba, in the Bale Mountains.
- Black-cheeked Waxbill** *Estrilda erythronotos* First encountered in the Jemmu Valley, then we enjoyed much better looks in the Awash National Park.
- Grey-headed Silverbill** *Lonchura griseicapilla* In Ethiopia this species is a very uncommon and patchily distributed bird in the far south of the country. We were very fortunate to observe an adult male very well, close to Yabello.
- African Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza fuscocrissa* This is a very uncommon bird of short grasslands and ploughed fields. It is always difficult to see, however, we did see a small flock fairly well, close to the village of Mukature.
- Bronze Mannikin** *Lonchura cucullata* A common and widespread species, which we saw well on a few occasions.
- Black-and-white Mannikin** *Lonchura bicolor* We enjoyed good looks at this uncommon species, while birding at Wondo Genet.
- Cut-throat Finch** *Amadina fasciata* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species of finch.

#### VIDUIDAE

- Village Indigobird** *Vidua chalybeata* We enjoyed many sightings of this brood parasite, its host is the Red-billed Firefinch.
- Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* We observed small numbers of this species, which parasites the Common Waxbill.
- Eastern Paradise-Whydah** *Vidua paradisaea* Seen very well indeed in the Awash National Park. This bird is nest parasitic on the Green-winged Pytilia, which we also only saw in the Awash National Park.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

- Black-headed Siskin** *Carduelis notata* This attractive Ethiopian endemic was seen in large flocks throughout all the highland areas we visited, it was particularly common in the Bale Mountains.
- Yellow-crowned Canary** *Serinus flavivertex* Another highland species, which we saw at Ankober and in the Bale Mountains.
- African Citril** *Serinus citrinelloides* This near endemic is restricted in distribution to southern Sudan and Ethiopia. We enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.
- White-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus leucopygius* An uncommon species in Ethiopia, we were very fortunate to observe a pair of birds, feeding on the ground, just a few metres in front of us close to Yabello.

- Yellow-throated Seedeater** *Serinus flavigula* A very rare and little-known species, which is endemic to the Shoa province of Ethiopia. At the end of a long, and very exhausting walk, on the flanks of Mt. Fantale, in the Awash National Park, a few lucky and persistent members of the group, enjoyed really close looks at a small flock of five birds. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World' and has an estimated population of less than 1,000 birds. The main threat to this species is the destruction of habitat by local tribesmen who are now cultivating large sections of its very small range
- Reichenow's Seedeater** *Serinus reichenowi* Regularly encountered throughout the tour. Dr. Anton Reichenow (1847-1941) was the German son-in-law of Cabanis. He dominated German ornithology for many years and was widely regarded as the leading expert of his time on African birds. Although he only visited Africa once, on a collecting expedition to West Africa from 1872-1873.
- White-bellied Canary** *Serinus dorsostriatus* We observed a small number of this species, close to Yabello, in dry acacia country.
- Brown-rumped Seedeater** *Serinus tristriatus* An abundant and easily seen highland near endemic. It only occurs in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.
- Streaky Seedeater** *Serinus striolatus* Yet another common highland species, which we saw on numerous occasions.
- Ankober Serin** *Carduelis ankoberensis* This Ethiopian endemic inhabits high altitude cliff-tops along the Ankober Escarpment. Some members of our group saw this bird in farmland, just inland from the escarpment. This species is classified as endangered in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The world population is estimated to be 10,000 and declining. The main threat to this species is increased grazing and cultivation.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

- Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* We enjoyed numerous opportunities to observe this attractive Palearctic migrant. Ethiopia is the main wintering ground for this species, which breeds in Europe and the Russian Steppes.
- Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* We observed this attractive species on the rocky cliffs of the Jemmu Valley, where it was common.
- Somali Bunting** *Emberiza poliopleura* This very attractive species was seen very well in dry country, close to Yabello.

#### MAMMALS

- Guereza Colobus** *Colobus guereza* We enjoyed many sightings of this very handsome

- species of monkey, with its long shaggy coat and tail. It was particularly numerous in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shore of Lake Langano.
- Olive Baboon** *Papio anubis* We enjoyed widespread sightings of this common species of baboon. Some of the troops we saw had up to 50 or so individuals in them.
- Gelada** *Theropithecus gelada* This endangered Ethiopian endemic is a splendid vegetarian baboon. We enjoyed many sightings in the Jemmu Valley and along the Ankober Escarpment. The alpha male of each troop is a wonderful looking animal, with a magnificent mane and beautiful pink eye-lids.
- Grivet Monkey** *Cercopithecus aethiops* The taxonomy of the Green Monkey complex is particularly complicated in Ethiopia, where no less than three species meet and hybridise. We saw monkeys in the Jemmu Valley which are ascribed to this species.
- Vervet Monkey** *Cercopithecus pygerythrus* Observed well on many occasions, they were particularly tame at Lake Awassa.
- Cape Hare** *Lepus capensis* This species of hare prefers completely open grassland, steppeland and subdesert. This is exactly where we observed an animal in daylight, close to Lake Beseka, in the Awash National Park.
- Scrub Hare** *Lepus saxatilis* We saw this species well on one occasion, in dry acacia country in the Awash National Park.
- Ethiopian Highland Hare** *Lepus starcki* This uncommon Ethiopian endemic was observed very well by some members of the group on the Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains National Park.
- Unstriped Ground Squirrel** *Xerus rutilus* This species of ground inhabiting squirrel, proved to be common in dry country, in the far south of Ethiopia.
- Gambian Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus gambianus* This widespread species of squirrel was seen very well in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano and then again in montane forest at Wondo Genet.
- Giant Root-rat** *Tachyoryctes macrocephalus* Not the prettiest of mammals, some members of the group saw a couple of these on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains.
- Unstriped Grass Rat** *Arvicanthis abyssinicus* Endemic to Ethiopia, we observed these mammals at dusk in the grounds of Wenny's Lodge, on the shores of Lake Langano and again at Lake Awassa.
- Blick's Grass Rat** *Arvicanthis blicki* This was the very common grass rat on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains.
- Black-backed Jackal** *Canis mesomelas* We enjoyed a couple of good looks at this handsome beast in the Awash National Park.
- Ethiopian Wolf** *Canis simensis* We were very fortunate to observe two of these highly endangered Ethiopian endemics and it was without doubt, one of the great highlights of the tour. It is thought that approximately 400 animals now survive in the Bale Mountains.
- Egyptian Mongoose** *Herpestes ichneumon* One of these large and attractive species of mongoose was seen briefly, along the roadside, while driving through the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park.

- Slender Mongoose** *Herpestes sanguinea* A solitary animal crossed the track in front of the bus on one occasion, very close to the Awash National Park.
- Common Warthog** *Phacochoerus africanus* We enjoyed many sightings of this mammal throughout the tour. It was particularly common in the Awash National Park and in the Bale Mountains.
- Bushbuck** *Tragelaphus scriptus* The endemic subspecies *meneliki*, was seen well in the Bale Mountains National Park, on a few occasions.
- Lesser Kudu** *Tragelaphus imberbis* We saw several of these attractive mammals, during our time in the Awash National Park.
- Greater Kudu** *Tragelaphus strepsiceros* We saw this large species of antelope very well in the Bale Mountains National Park.
- Mountain Nyala** *Tragelaphus buxtoni* This beautiful but unfortunately endangered Ethiopian endemic, was much admired in the Bale Mountains National Park.
- Oribi** *Ourebia ourebi* One of these small species of antelope was seen well from the dining room of Wenny's Lodge, while we were having breakfast, on the last morning of the tour.
- Klipspringer** *Oreotragus oreotragus* A couple were observed on the top of a small escarpment on the Sanetti Plateau, in the Bale Mountains National Park.
- Guenther's Dikdik** *Madoqua guentheri* This tiny species of antelope proved to be fairly common in the far south of Ethiopia.
- Salt's Dikdik** *Madoqua saltiana* This tiny species of antelope was observed very well on a number of occasions in the Awash National Park.
- Grant's Gazelle** *Gazella granti* We enjoyed good looks at this attractive species of antelope in Lake Abiata National Park.
- Sommering's Gazelle** *Gazella soemmerringi* Endemic to the Horn of Africa, we saw it well in the Awash National Park.
- Beisa Oryx** *Oryx beisa* This striking species of antelope, was seen very well on a number of occasions in the Awash National Park.