

## PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

### GABON, SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

4<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011

#### TOUR REPORT

**LEADERS:** Chris Doughty and Patrice Christy

**GROUP MEMBERS:** Michael Doyle and Joanna Morgan

Our tour to Gabon and the far-flung islands of Sao Tome and Principe, was very enjoyable and we saw almost all of the hoped for specialities at each of the areas we visited. Highlights included Forbes's Plover, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Bare-cheeked Trogon, the rarely observed Willcocks's Honeyguide, the tiny African Piculet, the near-mythical African River Martin, Congo Moor Chat, Giant Sunbird and Red-headed Antpecker. Impressive mammals included both Elegant Needle-clawed and Demidoff's Galagos, African Forest Elephant, Atlantic Humpback Dolphin and the rarely observed Lesser Anomalure.

Following a long and gruelling flight from Australia, we arrived at Libreville airport in Gabon, just as it was getting dark. After completing custom formalities, we drove to our hotel, on the waterfront.

We were up at dawn the following morning to see what birds we could find in the grounds of our hotel. The well watered lawns of the hotel attracted good numbers of Cattle Egrets, African Thrushes, Northern Grey-headed Sparrows, over 60 Bronze Mannikin's and a solitary Blue-spotted Wood-Dove. The trees and shrubs in the garden attracted Woodland Kingfisher, Common Bulbul, Reichenbach's Sunbird and Village Weaver. Flying overhead were both Little and African Palm-Swifts. Along the edge of the bay, we added a couple of Common Sandpipers and a few Royal Terns.

We then got on a small boat for an hours long jaunt across the Gulf of Guinea, where rather disappointingly, there were no birds to be seen. However, as we neared our destination we entered a narrow estuary, with extensive mangroves on either side. Up to three Palm-nut Vultures were observed flying overhead and sitting in the mangroves was a solitary Whimbrel. On arrival at the landing site, we found two magnificent Rosy Bee-eaters perched on top of one of the mangroves. What a stunning bird it is, we all thought the tour was off to a splendid start. During the half hour drive to Nyonie Lodge, at Kobekobe, we added a Hamerkop, a few African Green Pigeons and both Blue-breasted and White-fronted Bee-eaters.

Following lunch we birded along the main track leading to the lodge. It was an interesting mix of rainforest interspersed with large stands of grassland. The birding was very good. In the grounds of the lodge we encountered Black Sawwing, huge flocks of several hundred Grey-rumped Swallows and large communal nesting trees of Vieillot's Black and Village Weavers. In the grassland we were pleased to find a couple of very uncommon Red-necked Buzzards, a single Lesser Black-winged

Lapwing, a Banded Martin, the highly localised Long-legged Pipit, African Stonechat and Zitting Cisticola. In the patches of rainforest we coaxed into view Woolly-necked Stork, African Harrier-Hawk, Red-eyed Dove, Grey Parrot, plenty of African Pied and Piping Hornbills, Speckled Tinkerbird, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Little Green, Carmelite, Olive-bellied and Copper Sunbirds, a superb pair of beautiful Black-necked Weavers and best of all, a few uncommon and highly localised Black-headed Bee-eaters. On the mammal front, we saw several Atlantic Humpback Dolphins just offshore and a solitary Moustached Monkey. After dinner we went spotlighting and were rewarded with good looks at the very uncommon Bates's Nightjar, which responded well to tape playback. We also enjoyed good looks at the almost unknown Lesser Anomalure, a species of flying-squirrel.

We spent the following morning mainly birding in nearby rainforest, on the way there; we had to walk past a large area of grassland and we were rewarded with good looks at an uncommon Black Coucal and the rarely observed Broad-tailed Warbler. In the rainforest we saw the very large Black-casqued Hornbill, Yellow-billed Turaco, Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher, Green-headed and Western Olive Sunbirds, the stunningly attractive Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike and Cassin's Malimbe, as well as the surprise sighting of the almost unknown Willcocks's Honeyguide. We added one mammal in this area, the range restricted Green Squirrel. A short walk along the edge of a nearby mangrove-lined creek, produced both Malachite and Giant Kingfishers. In the afternoon during the boat trip back to Libreville, new birds included Osprey, Ruff and Common Greenshank.

After breakfast at our hotel in Libreville, a single Grey-backed Camaroptera was added to the trip list, before setting off for Libreville Airport. On the way there, a few Feral Pigeons were spotted in town. Unfortunately, our flight to Sao Tome, in the Gulf of Guinea, was delayed by one and half hours. This meant that on our arrival at Sao Tome, we had to revise our travel plans, and it was decided that we would camp for the night in the recently created Obe National Park. During the drive to the park headquarters we added Yellow-billed Kite and Laughing Dove. We then set off up an extinct volcano, with only an hour of daylight left. Fortunately, it took us exactly one hour to reach our camp-site, where we settled in for the night. On the way, we saw a good variety of the more common Sao Tome endemics, as well as a few other new birds for the tour. Lemon Doves were surprisingly plentiful and ridiculously tame, they are never this tame on the mainland. Good numbers of Sao Tome Spinetails zipped by overhead, Sao Tome Prinias proved to be rather confiding, Sao Tome Speirops were literally everywhere, Principe Seed eaters roamed around in small flocks and one or two Sao Tome Thrushes also popped into view. All black male Sao Tome Paradise-Flycatchers were simply stunning, Sao Tome Sunbirds constantly popped into view, as did a small flock of Sao Tome White-eyes. We watched a Vitelline Masked Weaver at its recently completed nest, before enjoying a wonderful sighting of a Giant Weaver. As nightfall crowded in around us Sao Tome Scops-Owls began calling all around us, and in no time at all, we were enjoying a grey-morph bird in the spotlight, no more than a couple of metres away from us, in the middle of our camp site!

It rained during the night, but we were snug in our tents, on the side of the volcano. In the morning we walked higher up the flanks of the volcano, in search of still more Sao Tome endemics. We watched several Sao Tome Weavers climbing along branches searching for insects and then enjoyed watching a stunning Giant Sunbird, searching for insects in a nearby tree. A pair of Forest Chestnut-winged Starlings flew overhead and a Sao Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon suddenly flew in and perched right in front of us, just a few metres away, unfortunately it flew off just as quickly and only I got to see it. We finally got good looks at the Sao Tome Green-Pigeon and we glimpsed a Sao Tome Oriole. Around mid-day it started to rain heavily, just as we got back to the park headquarters. We then drove back down to Sao Tome township adding White-tailed Tropicbird as

we did so. As we were leaving the restaurant where we had eaten lunch, we enjoyed watching a superb adult male Yellow-fronted Canary. In the morning, while birding in the rainforest we also observed a good number of Noack's Roundleaf Bats, flying around in the forest in broad daylight.

Prior to breakfast the following morning, we went birding in a large area of grassland, which also had a large pond in the middle of it, which was adjacent to our hotel. New birds for the tour included a Long-tailed Cormorant, lots of Striated Herons, a good number of both pale and dark morph Western Reef-Herons, a single Common Moorhen, a delightful pair of Sao Tome Kingfishers and a large flock of out of plumage Golden-backed Bishops.

We then flew to the tiny island of Principe but there was little to see of the bizarre volcanic plugs which are so much a feature of the island, as there was low cloud and it was raining heavily. We soon arrived at the luxurious Bom Bom Island Resort just in time for lunch. In the afternoon a walk around the gardens of the resort and along the entrance road, produced almost all of the islands endemic birds. Blue-breasted and Principe Kingfishers were seen well along the beach, large numbers of Principe Glossy Starlings and Principe Golden Weavers were squabbling in the treetops and the strange Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler gave its explosive song from the bushes below, before it too was also observed very well. The Principe Sunbird was observed feeding on the flowers of a banana tree and roving parties of Principe Speirops reminded us of Varied Sittellas. We also enjoyed terrific looks at a troop of very attractive Mona Monkeys, which have been introduced to the island.

We spent the following morning birding in the Santo Trindade National Park, in the centre of the island. It was wonderful forest to go birding in and we were rewarded with close looks at the very uncommon Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch. In the afternoon we once again birded the entrance road to the resort and we were duly rewarded with a couple of perched Splendid Glossy Starlings, in full sunlight, sitting amongst a dozen or more Principe Glossy Starlings, for comparison. While having dinner in the evening we were joined by a Brown Rat, creeping around on the lawn.

The following morning we flew back to Sao Tome, where we did a little birding in savannah country, close to the airport. We were very pleased to find a pair of Harlequin Quail along the roadside, as it is a very difficult bird to find on the mainland. We then flew back to Libreville and drove for four hours to overnight at Ndjole.

At first light, directly opposite our hotel a sandbank in the middle of the Ogooue River hosted both Grey and Rock Pratincoles and African Skimmer. In the grounds of the hotel new birds for the tour included Black Crake, Speckled Mousebird, Square-tailed Sawwing, Lesser Striped Swallow, African Pied Wagtail and a pair of fairly co-operative Yellow-throated Leafloves. We then set off on a long drive to the research station in the superb Ipassa Reserve, where we would stay for the next five nights. We had time to make frequent birding stops along the way. A quick stop close to Laboka, yielded Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Green Turaco, Ansorge's Greenbul and a Rufous-crowned Eremomela. A short stop at a small pond held Little Grebe and a super White-throated Blue Swallow and a Cassin's Spinetail flew overhead. We stopped for a picnic lunch, close to Ovan, where we prized a few more new birds out of the surrounding forest, these included Blue-headed Wood-Dove, Mottled Spinetail, White-thighed Hornbill, a flock of Black-and-white Mannikins and best of all, the rarely observed Cassin's Honeybird flew right past us. Some late afternoon birding around our quarters in the Impassa Reserve produced Green-backed Woodpecker, very close Little Grey Greenbul, Western Nicator, splendid African Paradise-Flycatchers, Black-and-white Flycatcher, Blue-throated, Brown and Superb Sunbirds and a single Mackinnon's Shrike.

The accommodation in Impassa Reserve is situated on high ground overlooking the Ivindo River, with a beautiful panoramic view overlooking the river and the surrounding forest. Many species of forest-edge birds are attracted to the clearing and at first light new birds here included a gorgeous African Pygmy Kingfisher, Little Greenbul, Simple Leaflove and a brilliant Great Blue Turaco, a very impressive species of bird. A wide track runs through the reserve and we spent a very productive morning wandering slowly along the track. One by one, we picked up new birds before we stumbled across a mixed species feeding party, where new birds came thick and fast. A single Black Guinea fowl was much appreciated, a Yellowbill reluctantly showed itself, along with a very attractive White-crested Hornbill, Yellow-whiskered, Icterine and Red-tailed Greenbuls, all showed well, a Yellow-footed Flycatcher sat out in the open, a Sooty Flycatcher showed well in the canopy, along with Bates's Paradise-Flycatcher and a pair of Shrike Flycatchers. We enjoyed both male and female White-spotted Wattle-eye, a rather drab Fraser's Sunbird, in sharp contrast we enjoyed the very beautiful Johanna's Sunbird, a couple of Chestnut-capped Flycatchers, a lone Forest White-eye and our first Velvet Mantled Drongo.

The afternoon birding can often be slow, but today new birds just kept coming; a small flock of Red-billed Dwarf Hornbills responded very well to tape playback, as did Buff-throated Apalis and Black-shouldered Puffback. We also enjoyed super looks at a male Chestnut Wattle-eye and a male Collared Sunbird. New mammals today included a couple of sightings of Lady Burton's Rope Squirrel and we also observed a couple of Blue Duikers, which were feeding along the main track.

Another morning deep in the forest at Ipassa proved rewarding, as we regularly picked up new birds throughout the morning. These included Blue-throated Roller, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Golden, Spotted and Eastern Bearded Greenbuls, Lesser Bristlebill, the stunning Eastern Forest Robin, great looks at a Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush, the diminutive and extremely range restricted Verreaux's Batis, the attractive Western Black-headed Oriole and best of all, a tiny Red-headed Antpecker, pecking away at an ants nest.

In the afternoon we birded our way along the entrance road to the reserve, which is a more open area, and once again the birding was exceptionally good. A pair of Red-fronted Parrots flew above us, we watched the absolutely stunning Blue-headed Bee-eater, which was perched close by on telegraph lines, a Red-rumped Tinkerbird popped into view and eventually a Cameroon Sombre Greenbul showed well, giving us an astonishing total of 13 species of bulbuls for the day! We also saw a Banded Prinia very well, along with Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Sooty Boubou, Purple-headed Glossy Starling, Crested Malimbe, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Western Bluebill and best of all, a flock of three very rarely observed Violet-backed Hyliotas, which we saw extremely well.

We spent the following day birding along the road to Belinga, where particularly large trees line the little-used roadway, and we made good use of the scope and very much enjoyed the canopy birds. A good number of rather sedate Afep Pigeons perched in the tops of the trees, a beautiful Yellow-throated Cuckoo posed wonderfully in the scope, a pair of monstrous Gabon Coucals reluctantly showed in the undergrowth and we all enjoyed great looks at a Black Bee-eater which was perched on telegraph lines. A Yellow-throated Tinkerbird showed well, but the Yellow-spotted Barbet was only seen in flight. The diminutive African Piculet, suddenly appeared right in front of us, this was a real bonus, as this species of woodpecker, is only the size of a sparrow! An Elliot's Woodpecker was observed well, along with a couple of Slender-billed Greenbuls and the rarely observed White-bearded Greenbul also showed off in the tree tops. A Chattering Cisticola popped up in the roadside vegetation, the tiny Yellow-browed Cameroptera duly obliged, as did a Little Grey Flycatcher. A pair of Green Sunbirds were scoped well, as was a Black-capped Apalis.

A picnic lunch by the Zadia River was followed by the much anticipated Gosling's Apalis, an extremely range restricted species, which was our main target bird here. Other new birds seen at this lovely spot included Black-collared Lovebird, Grey-throated Barbet, Green Crombec, Black-headed Waxbill and a superb pair of Pin-tailed Whydahs. Following dinner we did a little spotlighting, which produced excellent sightings of both Demidoff's and Elegant Needle-clawed Galagos.

Our last day at Ipassa started with a bang, while having breakfast, our local guide Patrice came rushing in, saying bring your binoculars and come outside. We very much enjoyed watching a small group of four African River Martins flying above us, we were all very pleased to observe this little known and almost mythical species. The rest of the morning birding inside the dense forest of the reserve was almost as impressive, as we continued to observe a number of very uncommon species. A Bare-cheeked Trogon was eventually tracked down, we were thrilled to watch the Rufous-sided Broadbill performing its unique short circular display flight, accompanied by its distinctive trill, which it produces by vibrating its outer primaries. A Lemon-bellied Crombec was seen in flight and the rarely observed Rachel's Malimbe was also seen well. Other new birds during the morning walk included Tambourine Dove, Didric Cuckoo, Green Hylia, West African Batis, Shining Drongo, Red-headed Malimbe and White-breasted Negrolark.

An afternoon meander along the entrance road to the reserve produced a pair of very skulking Black-faced Rufous Warblers, the tiny Olive-green Camaroptera and a rather furtive Dusky Crested-Flycatcher.

The following day we left Ipassa and started on the long dirt-road drive to Lekoni, on the Babeke Plateau, close to the border with the Congo. Driving along the entrance road to Ipassa we flushed a pair of Scaly Francolins from the roadside. A little roadside birding close to the village of Mohoba produced a very fine Gabon Woodpecker. Under the bridge over the river Sebe, at Okondga, there were lots of nesting Red-throated Cliff Swallows, which performed extremely well for us. Close to Franceville a Senegal Coucal flew across the road, in front of our vehicle. We arrived at the Babeke Plateau mid way through the afternoon. The sharp demarcation between the rainforest and the northern extension of the vast woodlands of southern Africa that penetrates, as a wedge into the equatorial rainforest zone, is startlingly abrupt, almost as though someone had drawn a line on a map. It is a very special area, an unusual mixture of Miombo-like woodland, open grasslands and heath-like scrub, quite unlike anywhere else in Africa. The birds are equally special. We began by finding the most special bird of them all, the extremely range restricted Congo Moor Chat, which proved to be common. There was also a supporting cast of other new birds which included a Swamp Nightjar flushed from the grassland in broad daylight, a Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, wintering South African Cliff Swallows, Sooty Chat, Common Fiscal, Fork-tailed Drongo, Pied Crow and Yellow-mantled Widowbird.

Today we began our search in earnest to find the special birds of the Babeke Plateau. The plateau is named after the tribe of Bantu people that have lived here for countless generations. A red-necked Francolin flushed from our feet, a Klaas's Cuckoo popped up for us and an African Cuckoo flew close by us. A Brown-hooded Kingfisher perched on telegraph wires, a Striped Kingfisher perched in the tops of a nearby tree, Little Bee-eaters sallied for insects and a large flock of White-fronted Bee-eaters flew overhead, at this time of year they should have already have staked out breeding territories in the Sahel zone, just south of the Sahara Desert. The very beautiful Red-throated Wryneck was greatly admired, as was a Black Wood-Hoopoe. We enjoyed good scope views of a Greater Honeyguide and a few Cardinal Woodpeckers. A Flappet Lark performed its floppy wing display for us and a Rufous-chested Swallow flew over our heads. A Plain-backed Pipit was new

for our list, as was the small Short-tailed Pipit. A couple of Yellow-throated Longclaws added much colour to the day list and the Black-collared Bulbul which we saw very well, is one of the many specialities of this area. Trilling, Piping and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas were all seen well and another speciality of the area, the Salvadori's Eremomela was much appreciated. One or two Pale Flycatchers showed well, as did the attractive Common Wattle-eye. A pair of Western Violet-backed Sunbirds was a welcome addition, along with a few Amethyst Sunbirds. Both Bocage's and Luder's Bushshrikes were very welcome additions to the list and the male Violet-backed Starling was a real stunner. Another of the plateau specialities popped into view, in the form of the Black-chinned Weaver and last but not least, was a small flock of Fawn-breasted Waxbills. On arrival back at our hotel at dusk, we found a Bat Hawk flying around the building, which was a very fine ending, to a particularly fine days birding.

The next morning found us tramping the open moorlands, looking for a number of open grassland species. A pair of Coqui Francolins flushed from cover and flew right past us. A Little Buttonquail exploded at my feet and flew away from us and we flushed up to six or more White-bellied Bustards. Other new birds included Rufous-naped Lark and Dambo Cisticola. A large flock of Common Swifts flew overhead which had recently arrived from northern Europe. Joanna pointed out a Broad-billed Roller flying overhead, also a migrant, but this one is a visitor from southern Africa. We watched a pair of Woodland Pipits feeding on the ground ahead of us, a White-browed Scrub-Robin responded well to tape playback and perched on the top of a small bush. A pair of Short-winged Cisticolas flew past us and a Lead-coloured Flycatcher suddenly appeared in front of us, before disappearing just as quickly. We watched a fine pair of Chin-spot Batis and a few diminutive Grey Penduline-Tits. We admired a pair of Yellow-throated Petronias and a very handsome Cabanis' Bunting.

In the afternoon we were driving across the plateau, when an African Hobby took off from a tree by the side of the track and in no time at all disappeared beyond the horizon. A little later we flushed a Finche's Francolin from the side of the track, and he too disappeared beyond the horizon. We then paid a visit to Crocodile Lake at the foot of the attractive 'Lekoni Canyon'. Here we found a Croaking Cisticola and a Marsh Widowbird in the vegetation beside the lake.

Back onto the plateau the following morning where we worked a patch of gallery forest. We had good looks at a Lizard Buzzard soaring overhead and a pair of very attractive Black-backed Barbets, a very scarce bird in Gabon. Suddenly, a Golden-tailed Woodpecker flew into a nearby tree, giving excellent views. There are only a handful of records of this bird in Gabon. A delightful pair of Green-capped Eremomelas responded well to tape playback, as did the very uncommon Red-capped Crombec. A little later we enjoyed good looks at Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Western Black-headed Batis and White-winged Black-Tit.

In the afternoon we birded a different patch of gallery forest, where we enjoyed a pair of White-chinned Prinias and a pair of Petit's Cuckoo-shrikes. Following a great deal of persistence we managed to coerce a Western Bronze-naped Pigeon into full view, so buoyed with our success, we decided to try and do the same with an Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo which was calling deep inside the gallery forest. Following even greater persistence, we had brilliant success with the cuckoo, on two separate occasions it flew out of the gallery forest and perched just above the tape recorder. On the way back to town a very impressive male Long-tailed Nightjar flew up from the dirt track in front of us. We had experienced a really great days birding.

On our last day on the Babeke Plateau, we visited Crocodile Lake, in the morning. As we were nearing the lake we flushed a pair of Temminck's Coursers from the side of the track, and try as we

may, we were unable to relocate them. Several Ring-necked Doves were observed around the lake, this is the only place in Gabon where this species occurs. A solitary White-rumped Swift, was seen flying along the edge of the lake. We then tried for one of the most difficult birds in Africa, the Locust Finch. As we were walking through very long grass along the edge of the lake three birds flushed from cover, just in front of Patrice. Three Locust Finches circled us once before flying off, this very rare species is almost never seen on the ground, only in flight. In the afternoon a walk through a disturbed area of scrub, produced two new birds for the tour, the uncommon Whistling Cisticola and the incredibly skulking and very aptly named, Gorgeous Bushshrike, which after a great deal of perseverance eventually popped up for all to see. Little wonder that this bird was voted bird of the trip by tour participants. This was a perfect ending, to a wonderful time on the Babeke Plateau.

The following day we drove from the Babeke Plateau to Lope National Park. We stopped for lunch in Lastoursville, where rather surprisingly we added three more species to the ever growing trip list. We admired a Tawny-flanked Prinia, a small flock of very uncommon Bates's Swifts and a beautiful male Black-faced Canary. On our arrival in Lope National Park we paid a visit to a small pond, where there was a stunning Forbes's Plover.

We had a few hours birding in Lope National Park the following morning which produced a flurry of new birds. A very obliging Shining-blue Kingfisher, a couple of Red-chested Swallows, flight views of a Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, great looks at a pair of Tiny Sunbirds, a flock of Yellow-billed Oxpeckers flew overhead and best of all, we had very close looks at some particularly obliging Black-chinned Quailfinches, which are normally very hard to observe.

We then headed back to Libreville. We stopped for lunch in Ndjole, on the Ogooue River, where our final bird of the tour, was the very attractive White-headed Lapwing. We had enjoyed a very pleasant tour through the rainforests of West Africa, observing literally hundreds of species of birds and none of this would have been possible without the very able assistance of Patrice Christy, our local birding guide in Gabon.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### PODICIPEDIDAE

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* First observed on a small forest pool close to the village of Koumamiyoug. A second sighting of a single bird was also enjoyed at Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau.

### PHAETHONTIDAE

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* This very beautiful tropical seabird was observed very well floating gracefully in the skies above the township of Sao Tome, on a couple of occasions.

### PHALACRORACIDAE

**Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus* A solitary bird was observed well at a small lake in grassland in Sao Tome Township. A second sighting of a solitary bird followed, at a small forest pool, close to the village of Koumamiyoug.

### ARDEIDAE

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Commonly observed on the islands, but only recorded around Libreville, in Gabon.

**Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* Up to a dozen or more individuals were observed very well in a small patch of grassland in Sao Tome Township.

**Western Reef-Egret** *Egretta gularis* Large numbers were observed in a small patch of grassland in Sao Tome township and a dark morph bird had taken up residence at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on the island of Principe.

### SCOPIDAE

**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta* First observed at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe and it was also observed in the Ipassa Reserve and in Lope National Park.

### CICONIIDAE

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* A single individual was observed in flight during our time at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

**Hadada Ibis** *Bostrychia hagedash* Joanna observed one of these birds in flight, in Lope National Park.

### PANDIONIDAE

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* A single bird observed in flight not far from Nyonie Lodge, at Kobekobe, during the boat trip back to Libreville.

### ACCIPITRIDAE

**Bat Hawk** *Macheiramphus alcinus* We were very fortunate to watch one of these birds flying around our hotel at Lekoni, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Yellow-billed Kite** *Milvus aegyptius* The only raptor on the islands, where it proved to be very common.

**Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* This strikingly patterned raptor was commonly encountered throughout the tour. It is predominately a frugivore and almost certainly not a species of vulture!

**African Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides typus* Also known as Gymnogene, which means naked cheeks, this double-jointed raptor was commonly encountered on the mainland.

**Lizard Buzzard** *Kaupifalco monogrammicus* A single individual was observed flying above the moorlands, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* This uncommon species of raptor was observed very well at the Nyonie Lodge, at Kobekobe and again flying over the moorlands, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii* Observed very well indeed, soaring above the rainforest, close to the village of Laboka, during the drive from Mdjole to Makokou. Later in the tour we watched distant hawk-eagles soaring, which were also probably of this species.

Thomas Ayres (1828-1913) was a British-born, collector and naturalist. He went to Pinetown in Natal, South Africa in 1850 and set about collecting birds. He visited Australia and tried his luck in the gold fields in 1852, but then returned to South Africa and settled in Potchefstroom as a hunter and trader. He collected birds, beetles, butterflies and moths. His house was named 'The Ark,' as it was long, low and stuffed with animals and birds. At one time he operated a brewery in South Africa for a couple of years making Ayres XX Pale Ale. Most unfortunately, Ayres had to close down the brewery when the government changed the law and it became illegal for private people to brew beer on a commercial basis.

#### FALCONIDAE

**African Hobby** *Falco cuvierii* This species is a very rare bird in Gabon; we were very fortunate to flush a bird from the roadside while driving on the Babeke Plateau. There are only a handful of records for Gabon.

#### PHASIANIDAE

**Harlequin Quail** *Coturnix delegorguei* We were very fortunate to be able to watch a pair of birds feeding along the roadside, in farmland on the edge of Sao Tome township. Hartlaub described the endemic race in 1849, but the species was probably introduced for food, from Angola.

**Coqui Francolin** *Francolinus coqui* A bird flushed from our feet while walking through moorland, on the Babeke Plateau. We saw it very well.

**Finsch's Francolin** *Francolinus finschi* Flushed on two separate occasions, while driving in our vehicle, both sightings occurred close to Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau. Friedrich Hermann Otto Finsch (1839-1917) was a German ethnographer, naturalist and traveller. He travelled in the Balkans, Lapland, Turkistan, northwestern China, the Marshall Islands and North America. In 1884 Bismarck appointed him Imperial Commissioner for the German Colony of 'Kaiser- Wilhelm-Land', in what is now Papua New Guinea. He founded the town of Finschhafen there in 1885.

**Scaly Francolin** *Francolinus squamatus* First recorded while driving along the entrance road to the Ipassa Reserve, at Makokou and this was followed by a second sighting of birds along the roadside, during the drive from Lekoni to Lope National Park.

**Red-necked Francolin** *Francolinus afer* A single bird was flushed from cover, while we were walking on the moorlands, on the Babeke Plateau. A couple of days later, we observed three birds feeding on the ground, also on the Babeke Plateau.

#### NUMIDIDAE

**Black Guinea fowl** *Agelastes niger* I observed a single bird of this species during our time in the Ipassa Reserve, at Makokou.

## TURNICIDAE

**Little Buttonquail** *Turnix velox* A single bird was flushed on the Babeke Plateau, which was seen by all of us.

## RALLIDAE

**Black Crake** *Amaurornis flavirostra* This species was observed on two separate occasions, at a small pond, in the grounds of our hotel at Ndjole.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Only observed on one occasion, a single bird was observed at a pond surrounded by grassland, next to our hotel, in Sao Tome Township.

## OTIDIDAE

**White-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis senegalensis* These bustards are very wary, as they are hunted by the locals, however, we managed to enjoy some very good flight views, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. This race of White-bellied Bustard is often split off, as Barrow's Bustard, but is not split off in Clement's Checklist of the Birds of the World.

## GLAREOLIDAE

**Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii* A pair of birds were flushed on the moorlands of the Babeke Plateau. 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.

**Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis* Small numbers observed along the Ogooue River, at Ndjole, followed by up to 100 or more, along the Ivindo River, in the Ipassa Reserve.

**Grey Pratincole** *Glareola cinerea* One or two birds were present along the Ogooue River, at Ndjole, on both of our visits there.

## CHARADRIIDAE

**Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi* A solitary, most welcome individual, was observed very well at a small pond in Lope National Park. William Alexander Forbes (1855-1883), was a British zoologist who collected in Brazil and West Africa and became a member of the Zoological Society in London. He died in 1883, while collecting along the Upper Niger River.

**White-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps* This was the last species of bird we added to the trip list, while watching birds along the Ogooue River, at Ndjole.

**Lesser Black-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus lugubris* A solitary bird was observed in grassland, close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe, we also found a second bird, on the Babeke Plateau.

## SCOLOPACIDAE

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* A small flock of Ruffs was observed feeding on floating vegetation, during the boat trip from Nyonie Lodge in Kobekobe, to Libreville.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* Small numbers were observed in the Gulf of Guinea, close to Nyonie Lodge and small numbers were observed at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on the island of Principe.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* A solitary bird was observed feeding on floating vegetation during the boat trip from Nyonie Lodge in Kobekobe, to Libreville.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers in and around the Hotel Alize in Libreville, at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe, at the Bom Bom Island Resort on the island of Principe and in Lope National Park.

#### STERNIDAE

**Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus* A handful of birds were observed in the Gulf of Guinea, off Libreville.

#### RYNCHOPIDAE

**African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* Small numbers along the Ogooue River at Ndjole and there was also small numbers along the Ivindo River, in the Ipassa Reserve.

#### COLUMBIDAE

**African Green-Pigeon** *Treron calvus* We found good numbers throughout Gabon and on the island of Principe.

**Sao Tome Green-Pigeon** *Treron sanctithomae* We saw this endemic species of green-pigeon very well on a number of occasions during our time in the Obo National Park, on Sao Tome.

**Blue-headed Wood-Dove** *Turtur brehmeri* A beautiful but secretive dove, which we saw only in flight, on a few occasions.

**Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria* Another secretive dove, which we saw well in flight, on a number of occasions. The name refers to the rhythm of the bird's bouncing song.

**Blue-spotted Wood-Dove** *Turtur afer* In Gabon this is a very common species of small dove, which we saw well on many occasions.

**Western Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba iriditorques* This very large species of pigeon is also very shy and uncommon. We were very fortunate that one responded incredibly well to tape playback, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Sao Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon** *Columba malherbii* This uncommon endemic was only observed by myself, for a few seconds, in Obo National Park, on Sao Tome.

**Afep Pigeon** *Columba unicincta* We enjoyed large numbers of perched birds along the road between Belinga and Makokou. The name of this subtly coloured large species of pigeon is derived from its Cameroonian name in the Bulu language.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* A common bird in all the villages and towns in Gabon and both Sao Tome and Principe.

**Lemon Dove** *Columba larvata* Throughout mainland Africa this species is an incredibly shy and retiring species. However, on the islands of Sao Tome and Principe, it is very common and extremely confiding.

**Red-eyed Dove** *Streptopelia semitorquata* Commonly encountered throughout Gabon.

**Ring-necked Dove** *Streptopelia capicola* Small numbers observed around Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau. This is the only place in Gabon, where this species occurs.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* This species proved to be very common on the islands of Sao Tome and Principe.

#### PSITTACIDAE

**Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus* This beautiful species of parrot was very common throughout Gabon and on the island of Principe.

**Red-fronted Parrot** *Poicephalus gulielmi* A pair of these rare residents, screeched noisily as they flew past us in the Ipassa Reserve, at Makokou.

**Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus* While enjoying our picnic lunch at a bridge over the Zadia River, on the road from Makokou to Belinga, a pair of these rare birds screeched noisily just over our heads.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* Michael saw a few birds of this species close to the Hotel Alize, in Libreville. These are descendants of birds that escaped from captivity and have now built up a feral population.

#### MUSOPHAGIDAE

**Great Blue Turaco** *Corythaeola cristata* This stunning looking bird was readily encountered during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou and again in the Lope National Park.

**Green Turaco** *Tauraco persa* More often heard than seen, however, we saw it well in rainforest at Laboka and in the Ipassa Reserve.

**Yellow-billed Turaco** *Tauraco macrorhynchus* This uncommon species of turaco was seen well at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

#### CUCULIDAE

**African Cuckoo** *Cuculus gularis* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this intra-African migrant on the Babeke Plateau. It is known to parasitise drongos.

**Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus* This rare species of cuckoo responded incredibly well to tape playback on the Babeke Plateau, twice it flew out of the gallery forest and over the tape recorder. This bird is so rare that the host species are unknown.

**Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* Yet another rare species of cuckoo which also responded well to tape playback along the road between Belinga and Makokou, where we obtained excellent scope views of this very attractive species. The host species of this bird are also unknown.

**Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* Observed very well on a few occasions during our time on the Babeke Plateau. This species mainly parasitises warblers and sunbirds. Klaas was the Hottenot manservant of the ornithologist and collector Levaillant. The story goes that his wife was a beautiful servant girl named Narina, the Narina Trogon is named in her honour, she also just happened to be Levaillant's mistress.

**Didric Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius* Seen well on a number of occasions throughout the tour. This species of cuckoo parasitises weavers, bishops and sparrows. The 'didric' is an onomatopoeic rendering of the call and is based on an Afrikaans spelling 'diederik'.

**Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus* We saw this African malkoha on a couple of occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou and on one occasion on the Babeke Plateau.

**Gabon Coucal** *Centropus anselli* Although this range restricted endemic is fairly common within its limited range, it is a real skulker. Fortunately, a pair responded well to tape playback along the road between Belinga and Makokou, both showing very well.

**Black Coucal** *Centropus grillii* This uncommon inhabitant of rank grassland and marshy areas was seen very well on one occasion close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis* The common coucal of the area, which we saw well on a number of occasions.

#### STRIGIDAE

**Sao Tome Scops-Owl** *Otus hartlaubi* A grey morph of this tiny species of owl was seen very well in the spotlight, at our campsite in the Obo National Park, on Sao Tome, where it is endemic. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It has a population of less than a thousand birds and is threatened by clearing of rainforest below 1,500 metres, as the bird does not adapt well to secondary forest.

## CAPRIMULGIDAE

**Bates's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus batesi* This large uncommon species of forest nightjar responded very well to tape playback at the Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe. George Latimer Bates (1863-1940) was born in Illinois, and travelled in West Africa between 1895 -1931. He wrote a *Handbook of the Birds of West Africa* in 1930 and a number of articles which were published in *Ibis* notably *Birds of the Southern Sahara and adjoining countries* in 1933. An African member of the nettle family, *Pouzolzia batesii*, is also named after him.

**Swamp Nightjar** *Caprimulgus natalensis* We enjoyed some excellent views of this nightjar in broad daylight, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus* We had a couple of sightings of males flushing from the side of the track, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

## APODIDAE

**Sao Tome Spinetail** *Zoonavena thomensis* Endemic to the Gulf of Guinea Islands, we saw it very well on both Sao Tome and Principe.

**Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini* It was easily seen fluttering above the forest canopy in and around the Ipassa Reserve. Joseph Sabine (1770-1837) was the English Zoologist who's younger brother was Sir Edward Sabine. He travelled with his more famous brother on an expedition in search of the Northwest Passage lead by John Ross in 1818. Joseph was co-founder of the Linnean Society and was the first Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society, which was founded in 1803.

**Mottled Spinetail** *Telacanthura ussheri* One was observed flying above the forest canopy, close to the village of Ovan, during the drive from Ndjole to Makokou.

**Cassin's Spinetail** *Neafrapus cassini* We often encountered this peculiar looking, almost tail-less species of spinetail flying above the forest canopy. John Cassin (1813-1869) was a Quaker businessman and the unpaid Curator of Ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia for over a quarter of a century. He is regarded as one of the giants of American ornithology. He described 198 species of birds, many of them from his own expeditions around the world.

**African Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* Recorded on all but one day of the tour.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus* We observed a large flock of this Palearctic migrant, on one occasion on the Babeke Plateau. This species is mainly a passage migrant through Gabon, preferring to winter further south in Africa.

**Bates's Swift** *Apus batesi* We were very fortunate to observe this rare and highly localised species of swift while eating lunch on the verandah of the dining room of a hotel in Lastoursville.

**White-rumped Swift** *Apus caffer* This uncommon intra-African migrant was only observed on one occasion, when a solitary bird was observed well in flight, at Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Seen almost daily both on the mainland and on the Gulf of Guinea Islands.

## COLIIDAE

**Speckled Mousebird** *Colius striatus* Several good sightings throughout the tour. These unique and ancient birds belong to the Coliiformes the only order of birds that is endemic to the Afrotropics.

## TROGONIDAE

**Bare-cheeked Trogon** *Apaloderma aequatoriale* This uncommon species was tracked down in the Ipassa Reserve, but unfortunately, not everyone got to see it well.

## ALCEDINIDAE

- Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* Regularly encountered on the Babeke Plateau, where this bird is at the very edge of its range.
- Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica* This uncommon species was seen very well on a couple of occasions at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on Principe Island.
- Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis* Regularly encountered throughout the tour.
- Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti* This species proved to be common on the Babeke Plateau.
- African Pygmy-Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* This species was always present around the park headquarters at Ipassa.
- Principe Kingfisher** *Alcedo nais* We enjoyed great looks at this Principe endemic, during our time at the Bom Bom Island Resort.
- Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristatus* The sighting of a bird in mangroves at Nyonie Lodge, was our only sighting.
- Sao Tome Kingfisher** *Alcedo thomensis* We were fortunate to enjoy a couple of these endemic kingfishers, in grassland next to our hotel in Sao Tome Township.
- Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadibrachys* This is an exceedingly shy species of kingfisher, therefore we were very fortunate to enjoy prolonged views of a perched bird in Lope National Park.
- Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maximus* This widespread African kingfisher was observed well at Nyonie Lodge and again at our picnic spot on the Zadia River, not far from Makokou.

## MEROPIDAE

- Black-headed Bee-eater** *Merops breweri* This large, sluggish and heavy-billed bee-eater is a rare and range restricted endemic of West Africa. We enjoyed very good close looks at this species in rainforest close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe. Although currently placed in the genera *Merops* this bird looks and behaves more like the Asian genera *Nyctyornis* and *Meropogon* and may indeed be the only African representative of one of these genera.
- Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri* We enjoyed a very good look at this rare species of bee-eater on one occasion, while birding in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis* We saw this scarce species of bee-eater on two separate occasions. Our first sighting took place by the roadside between Belinga and Makokou and the second, also a roadside sighting, took place during the drive from Lekoni to Lope National Park.
- Little Bee-eater** *Merops pusillus* This common and widespread African bee-eater was very common on the Babeke Plateau.
- Blue-breasted Bee-eater** *Merops variegatus* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.
- White-fronted Bee-eater** *Merops bullockoides* We also enjoyed many good sightings of this species throughout the tour.
- White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* We found small numbers present on the Babeke Plateau, which is a little odd, as at this time of year they should be breeding in the Sahel, just south of the Sahara Desert.
- Rosy Bee-eater** *Merops malimbicus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this extraordinarily beautiful bee-eater during the tour.

## CORACIIDAE

- Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis* Another beautiful bird, which we saw well on a few occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* This is not a common bird in Gabon, however, we did enjoy a couple of sightings, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

## PHOENICULIDAE

**Black Wood-Hoopoe** *Rhinopomastus aterrimus* A dry season visitor to Gabon, where it occurs almost exclusively on the Babeke Plateau, which is where we saw it on a couple of occasions.

## BUCEROTIDAE

**White-crested Hornbill** *Tockus albocristatus* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this very impressive species of hornbill.

**Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus* This small species of hornbill was seen very well on a few occasions during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**African Pied Hornbill** *Tockus fasciatus* A very common species of hornbill in Gabon, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

**Piping Hornbill** *Ceratogymna fistulator* This species is also very common in Gabon and once again, we saw it on most days of the tour.

**White-thighed Hornbill** *Ceratogymna albotibialis* Far less common, however, we did enjoy a few good sightings throughout the tour.

**Black-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata* A magnificent species of hornbill, which we saw well on a few occasions.

## CAPITONIDAE

**Grey-throated Barbet** *Gymnobucco bonapartei* We only saw this uncommon species on one occasion, along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou.

**Speckled Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* Regularly encountered throughout the tour.

**Red-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus atroflavus* Only seen on one occasion, we had a good look at a bird in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus subsulphureus* More often heard than seen, we saw it well on one occasion, along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou.

**Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* This bird proved to be common on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it on a daily basis.

**Yellow-spotted Barbet** *Buccanodon duchaillui* We only saw this handsome bird on one occasion, along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou.

**Hairy-breasted Barbet** *Tricholaema hirsuta* An uncommon species, which we saw well on one occasion, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Black-backed Barbet** *Lybius minor* In Gabon this very scarce species of barbet only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where it is at the very northern edge of its range. Therefore, we were fortunate to enjoy good scope views of a pair of birds during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Double-toothed Barbet** *Lybius bidentatus* Somewhat surprisingly, this species was only observed by myself as it flew in front of the bus, in the outer suburbs of Libreville.

## INDICATORIDAE

**Cassin's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus insignis* This very scarce resident flew right past us, as we were standing on a bridge at Ovan.

**Greater Honeyguide** *Indicator indicator* A very handsome male was observed very well in the scope on one occasion on the Babeke Plateau.

**Willcock's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi* We saw this rare and very rarely observed species of honeyguide incredibly well on the edge of the rainforest, close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe. General Sir James Willcocks (1847-1926) commanded the Ashanti expedition of 1900, which was to assist in the suppression of the Ashanti Rebellion led by Yaa Asantewa, a woman. He wrote *From Kabul to Kumassi – Twenty Four Years of Soldering and Sport*, in 1904. In 1914 he commanded the Indian Army Corps in the British Expeditionary Force in France during the First World War. However, he resigned in 1915, following differences with the Commander, Sir Douglas (later Earl) Haig. He became Governor of Bermuda from 1917 to 1922. He died in India at Bharatpur.

#### PICIDAE

**Red-throated Wryneck** *Jynx ruficollis* We enjoyed very good scope views of one of these beautiful birds, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**African Piculet** *Sasia africana* We enjoyed very good scope views of one of these rare and diminutive species of woodpeckers, along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou.

**Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* In West Africa, this is a very rare species; in Gabon it is only known from the Babeke Plateau, where fortunately, we enjoyed great scope views of one of these individuals.

**Green-backed Woodpecker** *Campethera cailliautii* Seen well on a number of occasions throughout the tour.

**Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosa* Seen well on one occasion in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Gabon Woodpecker** *Dendropicos gabonensis* Seen well on one occasion at Mohoba, during the drive from Makokou to Lekoni.

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens* This small species of woodpecker proved to be common on the Babeke Plateau.

**Elliot's Woodpecker** *Dendropicos elliotii* We enjoyed good scope views of this species along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou. Daniel Giraud Elliot (1835-1915) was Curator of Zoology at The Field Museum in Chicago and was one of the founders of the American Ornithologist's Union. He had a great interest in ornithology and was independently wealthy and this enabled him to produce a series of bird books illustrated by magnificent colour plates, including his own excellent work, long after most publishers employed smaller formats and cheaper techniques. Elliot, could also afford to commission the best bird artists of the day, including Josef Wolf and Josef Smit, both formerly employed by John Gould. The lithograph series include works on pittas, pheasants, hornbills and birds of prey.

#### EURYLAIMIDAE

**Rufous-sided Broadbill** *Smithornis rufolateralis* We very much enjoyed watching the impressive display of this species, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

#### ALAUDIDAE

**Rufous-naped Lark** *Mirafra africana* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this species, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Flappet Lark** *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* We regularly encountered this species displaying, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. The name refers to the mechanical sound made in flight during display.

## HIRUNDINIDAE

**African River Martin** *Pseudochelidon eurystomina* One of the least known species of African birds; a highly localised, intra-African migrant. It is known to breed at two or three areas along the west coast of Africa, in Gambia, Gabon and The Congo and it also breeds along the Congo River, in The Congo. Therefore, we were very fortunate to watch four birds flying overhead above the clearing at the park headquarters, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Square-tailed Sawwing** *Psalidoprocne nitens* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Black Sawwing** *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* Also commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Banded Martin** *Riparia cincta* Small numbers encountered at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe and again, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* This uncommon species of swallow, occurred in the hundreds at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

**Rufous-chested Swallow** *Cecropis semirufa* Small numbers of this large and distinctive swallow were observed during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Lesser Striped-Swallow** *Cecropis abyssinica* By far the commonest hirundine throughout Gabon.

**Red-throated Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon rufigula* This highly localised species was seen well, nesting under a large bridge over the River Sebe at Okondga. We also saw a few birds in Lope National Park.

**South African Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon spilodera* In Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where it is an intra-African migrant at the very northern edge of its wintering grounds, its breeding grounds, as the name would suggest, are in South Africa.

**White-throated Blue Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita* This very beautiful species of swallow was regularly encountered along the waterways of Gabon.

**Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida* This species is a very rare intra-African migrant to Gabon. Therefore, we were very fortunate to see a few birds very well, during our time in Lope National Park.

## MOTACILLIDAE

**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* Regularly encountered throughout the tour.

**Woodland Pipit** *Anthus nyassae* In Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well.

**Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* Once again, in Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where it proved to be common.

**Long-legged Pipit** *Anthus pallidiventris* As the name implies, this long-legged and range restricted species occurs throughout the whole of Gabon.

**Short-tailed Pipit** *Anthus brachyurus* An uncommon and difficult to see species, which we saw well during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Yellow-throated Longclaw** *Macronyx croceus* Regularly encountered in the grasslands of the Babeke Plateau.

## CAMPEPHAGIDAE

**Petit's Cuckoo-shrike** *Campephaga petiti* This uncommon forest species was observed well on a couple of occasions, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. Louis Petit (1856-1943) was a French naturalist who collected in Angola between 1876 and 1884.

## PYCNONOTIDAE

**Little Greenbul** *Andropadus virens* An abundant species throughout Gabon, which is far more often heard than seen.

- Little Grey Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilis* Regular encounters in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Ansorge's Greenbul** *Andropadus ansorgei* A couple of this uncommon species were seen well along a narrow forest trail, close to the village of Laboka. Dr. William John Ansorge (1850-1913) was an English explorer and collector who was active in Africa in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote *Under the African Sun* in 1899.
- Cameroon Sombre Greenbul** *Andropadus montanus* We enjoyed a few sightings of this species, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Slender-billed Greenbul** *Andropadus gracilirostris* Seen well along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou and again, on the Babeke Plateau.
- Yellow-whiskered Greenbul** *Andropadus latirostris* Seen well on a couple of occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Golden Greenbul** *Calyptocichla serina* This rather attractive species of greenbul was seen well on a couple of occasions during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Spotted Greenbul** *Ixonotus guttatus* Usually seen in large restless flocks, we saw many of these during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Simple Leaflove** *Chlorocichla simplex* A rather shy species of greenbul, which we saw well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Yellow-throated Leaflove** *Chlorocichla flavicollis* Very vocal, we saw it easily on a number of occasions, throughout the tour.
- Swamp Palm Bulbul** *Thescelocichla leucopleura* A large, noisy bulbul which normally occurs in flocks, it was regularly encountered throughout the tour.
- Icterine Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus icterinus* This rather pleasant looking greenbul was observed well on a few occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Lesser Bristlebill** *Bleda notatus* A shy forest inhabitant, which we saw well in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Eastern Bearded-Greenbul** *Criniger chloronotus* Yet another species of greenbul which we saw well on a couple of occasions, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Red-tailed Greenbul** *Criniger calurus* This attractive species of greenbul was regularly encountered during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- White-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger ndussumensis* Very similar to the preceding species, we saw it very well on one occasion, along the roadside between Belinga and Makokou.
- Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* Regularly encountered throughout the tour.
- Black-collared Bulbul** *Neolestes torquatus* In Gabon this uncommon and range restricted primitive species of bulbul, only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a number of occasions. Recent DNA studies proved that the bird is in fact a bulbul and not a species of bushshrike.
- Western Nicator** *Nicator chloris* We saw this attractive species very well on a number of occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. Recent DNA studies also confirm that the nicators are indeed bulbuls.

#### TURDIDAE

- Eastern Forest Robin** *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* We enjoyed very close looks at this stunning bird, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou, when an individual responded very well to tape playback.
- Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat** *Cossypha niveicapilla* One flew across the road in front of our vehicle, in Lope National Park.
- Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush** *Neocossyphus fraseri* We saw this uncommon species very well on a few occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- White-browed Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* We saw this species very well on one occasion on the Babeke Plateau.

- African Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* We enjoyed scattered sightings of this species throughout the tour.
- Congo Moor Chat** *Myrmecocichla tholloni* This highly range restricted species, proved to be common on the Babeke Plateau, where we enjoyed many good sightings.
- Sooty Chat** *Myrmecocichla nigra* This species shared the same habitat as the preceding species and also proving to be common on the Babeke Plateau
- Sao Tome Thrush** *Turdus olivaceofuscus* We enjoyed several good looks at this Gulf of Guinea endemic, during our time on the island of Sao Tome.
- African Thrush** *Turdus pelios* This is a very common species in Gabon, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

- Whistling Cisticola** *Cisticola lateralis* This widespread species of tall grassland was observed well on one occasion, on the Babeke Plateau.
- Chattering Cisticola** *Cisticola anonymus* This West African endemic was seen well on a few occasions in the Makokou area.
- Tinkling Cisticola** *Cisticola tinniens* Endemic to the central areas of southern Africa; in Gabon, this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on one occasion.
- Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis* This widespread species of cisticola was easily located, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.
- Short-winged Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus* This widespread species of cisticola also favours extensive areas of grassland, we saw it very well on one occasion, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.
- Piping Cisticola** *Cisticola fulvicapilla* A widespread species throughout southern Africa; in Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.
- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* This very widespread species was observed well on several occasions during our stay at the Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.
- Dambo Cisticola** *Cisticola dambo* This is an extremely range restricted species; in Gabon it only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on one occasion.
- Pectoral-patch Cisticola** *Cisticola brunnescens* Another range restricted species; this species proved to be common on the Babeke Plateau.
- Tawny-flanked Prinia** *Prinia subflava* Only observed in the grounds of the hotel, where we had lunch at Lastoursville.
- Sao Tome Prinia** *Prinia mollerii* A very common and attractive bird, which we saw on many occasions during our time on the island of Sao Tome.
- Banded Prinia** *Prinia bairdii* This handsome species of prinia was observed very well on a couple of occasions, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- White-chinned Prinia** *Schistolais leucopogon* Seen very well on one occasion, on the Babeke Plateau.
- Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps* A very attractive species of warbler, which we saw well in the treetops along the Belinga Road, not far from Makokou.
- Buff-throated Apalis** *Apalis rufogularis* One of the few species of birds whose name is taken from the plumage of the female, rather than the male. We saw it well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Gosling's Apalis** *Apalis goslingi* A pair of birds responded well to tape playback affording us excellent looks at this range restricted species, at a bridge over the Zadia River, on the road between Belinga and Makokou. Captain G.B. Gosling (1872-1906) was an explorer and zoologist. He followed the Uele River, exploring and collecting from the Niger to the Nile, in 1904, on Boyd Alexander's expedition.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brevicaudata* This common species was observed on a number of occasions throughout the tour.

**Yellow-browed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera superciliaris* A lover of vine tangles and thickets, which we saw well on a couple of occasions, in the Makokou area.

**Olive-green Camaroptera** *Camaroptera chloronota* We enjoyed one good look at this secretive species, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

#### SYLVIIDAE

**Black-faced Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus rufus* This incredible shy species, reluctantly showed itself on one occasion, during our time at the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Broad-tailed Warbler** *Schoenicola platyurus* An inconspicuous bird of tall grassland; we were very fortunate to find one sat on the top of a grass stem, close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

**Salvadori's Eremomela** *Eremomela salvadorii* We enjoyed really good looks at a pair of these West African endemics, which responded well to tape playback, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. Count Adelardo Tommaso Paleotti Salvador (1835-1923) was an eminent Italian physician, author, educator and ornithologist. He was Vice Director of the Museum of Zoology at the University of Turin, from 1879 until 1923. He was also medical office in Garibaldi's battalion during his second `expedition` in Sicily. His collection was donated to the Natural Science Museum of Villa Vitali. He wrote *Catalogo Sistematico Degli Uccelli di Borneo*, in 1874, and *Ornitologia della Papuasias e delle Molucche*, in 1880.

**Green-capped Eremomela** *Eremomela scotops* In Gabon, this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

**Rufous-crowned Eremomela** *Eremomela badiceps* We observed this West African endemic, very well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Red-capped Crombec** *Sylvietta ruficapilla* A recent addition to the Gabonese list, where it only occurs on the Babeke Plateau. We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at an individual during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Green Crombec** *Sylvietta virens* A fairly common bird of the forest edge; this West African endemic was observed well on one occasion, along the road between Belinga and Makokou.

**Lemon-bellied Crombec** *Sylvietta denti* Another West African endemic, we saw it well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster* A widespread and locally common species throughout Africa; in Gabon, it only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

**Violet-backed Hyliota** *Hyliota violacea* This uncommon West African endemic, was observed very well on one occasion, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina* A small and inconspicuous bird of the forest canopy, which is not always easy to see. Therefore, we were fortunate to see one very well indeed, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

## MUSCICAPIDAE

**Fraser's Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria ocreata* This fairly common West African endemic, was observed catching insects caught in spiders webs, in the windows of our dining room, at the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. Louis Fraser (1810-1866) was a British zoologist and collector. He was also variously a curator, explorer, zoo keeper, consul, author, dealer and taxidermist. He collected in Nigeria between 1841 and 1842, in Ecuador in 1859 and in California in 1860. He published *Zoologica Typica* in 1860. Fraser was Consul of the Bight of Benin (Nigeria) from 1852 until 1853. At some stage of his life, he was Curator of the Museum of the Zoological Society of London and took charge of Lord Derby's zoological collections at Knowsley.

**Pale Flycatcher** *Bradornis pallidus* This widespread African species proved to be very common throughout the Babeke Plateau.

**Little Grey Flycatcher** *Muscicapa epulata* This very scarce West African endemic, was observed very well on one occasion, along the road between Belinga and Makokou.

**Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* This lovely West African endemic was seen well on a couple of occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Dusky-blue Flycatcher** *Muscicapa comitata* We were very fortunate to observe this rare forest inhabitant very well, on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Sooty Flycatcher** *Muscicapa infuscata* This inconspicuous species of flycatcher was observed very well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Lead-coloured Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* This widespread African species of flycatcher, was observed very well on one occasion, on the Babeke Plateau.

## MONARCHIDAE

**Chestnut-capped Flycatcher** *Erythrocercus mccallii* This delightful West African endemic, proved to be fairly common in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Dusky Crested-Flycatcher** *Elminia nigromitrata* This uncommon and shy species of flycatcher was observed very well on one occasion, during our time at the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**African Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis* This stunning species proved to be rather common throughout Gabon.

**Sao Tome Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone atrochalybeia* This glossy blue-black species of paradise-flycatcher, proved to be common in the Obo National Park, of Sao Tome .

**Bates's Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone batesi* Proved to be common at the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Seen well on a couple of occasions in rainforest at Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

## PLATYSTEIRIDAE

**Shrike Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus* This very attractive species proved to be fairly common in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Black-and-white Flycatcher** *Bias musicus* This spectacular species proved to be common throughout Gabon.

**Chestnut Wattle-eye** *Platysteira castanea* This very attractive species was seen well on a few occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. This species is also named after the plumage of the female, rather than the male.

**White-spotted Wattle-eye** *Platysteira tonsa* This West African endemic was seen well on a few occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Common Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea* Not a common species in Gabon, however, we did see it very well on one occasion, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Chinspot Batis** *Batis molitor* In Gabon, this widespread African species, only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

**Western Black-headed Batis** *Batis erlangeri* An uncommon bird in Gabon; we saw a pair very well on one occasion, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Verreaux's Batis** *Batis minima* This extremely range restricted and scarce species of batis, was observed very well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. Jules Pierre Verreaux (1807-1873) was a French natural historian, a nephew of Delalande and married to the latter's sister. He was employed as an ornithologist and plant collector for the Musee of d'Histoire Naturelle, in Paris, which sent him to Australia in 1842. He returned to France, around 1851, with a collection of natural history specimens, reported to number 115,000 items.

**West African Batis** *Batis occulta* This scarce West African endemic, was seen well on one occasion, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

#### TIMALIIDAE

**Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler** *Horizorhinus dohrni* We very much enjoyed watching this very obliging Principe endemic. To say that it is of 'uncertain affinities' is somewhat of an understatement. Heinrich Wolfgang Ludwig Dohrn (1838-1913) was a German politician and entomologist, who collected on Principe in 1865.

#### PARIDAE

**White-winged Black-Tit** *Melaniparus leucomelas* In Gabon this uncommon species, only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

#### REMIZIDAE

**Grey Penduline-Tit** *Anthoscopus caroli* Once again, in Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we enjoyed a few good observations.

#### NECTARINIIDAE

**Western Violet-backed Sunbird** *Anthreptes longuemarei* Once again, in Gabon this widespread African species, only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it very well on a couple of occasions.

**Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes rectirostris* This uncommon West African endemic was observed close to Makokou and again on the Babeke Plateau.

**Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi* This uncommon West African endemic was observed well on one occasion, close to the Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.

**Fraser's Sunbird** *Deleornis fraseri* This fairly common West African endemic was seen very well on a number of occasions in rainforest in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Reichenbach's Sunbird** *Anabathmis reichenbachii* An uncommon inhabitant of mangroves, coastal forests and adjacent clearings. It is endemic to West Africa, we saw it well at scattered localities throughout the tour. Dr. Heinrich Gottlieb Ludwig Reichenbach (1793-1879) was a German zoologist and botanist. He founded the Dresden Botanical Gardens, which can still be enjoyed today. He researched very extensively and his legacy included over 6,000 drawings, most of them his own work. He was director of the Natural History Museum in Dresden between 1822 and 1870, he was a versatile and important systematist who devised his own unique method of botanical classification.

**Principe Sunbird** *Anabathmis hartlaubii* This island endemic, proved to be common at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on Principe.

**Sao Tome Sunbird** *Dreptes thomensis* An abundant endemic on the island of Sao Tome.

- Giant Sunbird** *Dreptes thomensis* This spectacular species of sunbird, is the world's largest species of sunbird. We enjoyed very good looks at this species during our brief camping trip in the Obo National Park, on Sao Tome. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It has a very small range and its population is thought to number no more than 1,000 individuals.
- Green-headed Sunbird** *Cyanomitra verticalis* This widespread African species was observed at scattered localities throughout the tour.
- Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** *Cyanomitra cyanolaema* This West African endemic proved not uncommon in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Western Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra obscura* Commonly encountered throughout the rainforests of Gabon and it was also observed on one occasion, on Principe Island.
- Carmelite Sunbird** *Chalcomitra fuliginosa* This uncommon West African endemic of coastal areas, was observed well on a few occasions close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe.
- Amethyst Sunbird** *Chalcomitra amethystina* A common and widespread species throughout southern Africa; in Gabon this species only occurs on the Babeke Plateau, where it was commonly encountered.
- Collared Sunbird** *Hedydipna collaris* A common and widespread African species, which we saw well on a number of occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Olive-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris chloropygius* A common and widespread West African endemic, which we saw well on many occasions.
- Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus* This very scarce West African endemic, was observed well on one occasion, in Lope National Park.
- Johanna's Sunbird** *Cinnyris johannae* This common West African endemic was observed well in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou and again on the Babeke Plateau. Johanna Verreaux was the wife of Jules P. Verreaux (1807-1873). He and E. Verreaux named the sunbird in her honour.
- Superb Sunbird** *Cinnyris superbus* This common West African endemic, was observed regularly throughout the tour.
- Copper Sunbird** *Cinnyris cupreus* A fairly common and widespread African species, which we saw well on many occasions throughout the tour.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

- Forest White-eye** *Zosterops stenocricotus* Once considered to be a race of Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*, the vocalisations of this West African endemic forest species, is quite unlike those of the savannah dwelling Yellow White-eye. We saw this species very well on a couple of occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Sao Tome White-eye** *Zosterops ficedulinus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this island endemic. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The species has declined in numbers between 1970 and 1990 and the population now numbers less than 1,000 birds. Continued clearance of primary forest, is the main threat to this species.
- Sao Tome Speirops** *Speirops lugubris* We enjoyed many good sightings of this delightful and very common Sao Tome endemic.
- Principe Speirops** *Speirops leucophoeus* We enjoyed several small flocks of this Principe endemic, in and around the Bom Bom Island Resort, on the island of Principe.

#### LANIIDAE

- Common Fiscal** *Lanius collaris* An abundant species in the more open habitat of the Babeke Plateau.

**Mackinnon's Shrike** *Lanius mackinnoni* Fortunately for us, a pair of this delightful species had taken up residence in the clearing at the reserve headquarters, at Ipassa. It is a very attractive species of shrike. Archibald Donald Mackinnon CMG, OBE (1864-1937) served as a medical officer in Uganda from 1894 to 1897 and was then Director of Transport there from 1898 to 1899. Sharpe described the shrike from a specimen collected in Kenya by F.J. Jackson.

#### MALACONOTIDAE

**Bocage's Bushshrike** *Telophorus bocagei* We enjoyed one glimpse and then one good sighting of this attractive species of bushshrike, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. Jose Vicente Barboza du Bocage (1823-1907) was Director of the National Zoological Museum of Lisbon, Portugal, which is now named in his honour. He became known as the father of Angolan ornithology and wrote *Ornithologie d'Angola*. He also collected sponges and other specimens.

**Gorgeous Bushshrike** *Telophorus viridis* This stunningly attractive species of bushshrike is the ultimate skulker. However, following much persistence, one gave itself up and we saw it very well indeed, while birding the Babeke Plateau. The bird's name is very appropriate and it is little wonder that the bird was named 'Bird of the Tour' by our participants.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus* We enjoyed several good sightings of this species of bushshrike, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Black-shouldered Puffback** *Dryoscopus senegalensis* This West African endemic was seen well on a number of occasions while we were birding in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus* This West African endemic was observed very well on one occasion, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Luhder's Bushshrike** *Laniarius luehderi* Another skulker, however, we did see it well on one occasion, on the Babeke Plateau. W. Luhder (1847-1873) was a German naturalist who collected in Cameroon in 1872. He wrote an article, *Notizen uber den Bock*, in 1871.

#### PRIONOPIDAE

**Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike** *Prionops rufiventris* We very much enjoyed watching a flock of these birds in rainforest close to Nyonie Lodge at Kobekobe and again in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. It is without doubt one of the most beautiful birds, in the whole of Africa.

#### ORIOLIDAE

**Western Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus brachyrhynchus* This West African endemic was seen well on a number of occasions, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Sao Tome Oriole** *Oriolus crassirostris* Following a great deal of searching we finally caught up with this species in the Obo National Park, on the island of Sao Tome, where it is endemic. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. It is estimated that the population of this species is no higher than 1,000 individuals. The main threat to this species is the continued clearance of primary rainforest.

#### DICRURIDAE

**Shining Drongo** *Dicrurus atripennis* We only observed this West African endemic on one occasion, deep inside the forest at Ipassa, at Makokou.

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis* An open country species, which we saw on a daily basis on the Babeke Plateau.

**Velvet-mantled Drongo** *Dicrurus modestus* This West African endemic was observed very well on a number of occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

## CORVIDAE

**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus* We enjoyed a few scattered sightings, throughout the tour.

## STURNIDAE

**Forest Chestnut-winged Starling** *Onychognathus fulgidus* A small flock was observed in flight, in the Obo National Park, on the island of Sao Tome and it was also observed in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Purple-headed Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureiceps* We enjoyed many good sightings of this West African endemic.

**Principe Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis ornatus* This Gulf of Guinea endemic was observed in large flocks at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on Principe Island, often associating with the following species. Fortunately, we were able to observe them side-by-side, thanks to Michael's keen eyes.

**Splendid Glossy-Starling** *Lamprotornis splendidus* Small numbers observed on Principe Island and then observed daily in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Violet-backed Starling** *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* Small numbers were observed on a daily basis, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

## BUPHAGIDAE

**Yellow-billed Oxpecker** *Buphagus africanus* We observed small numbers of this species during our time in Lope National Park.

## PASSERIDAE

**Northern Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer griseus* In Gabon, this species occurs wherever there is human habitation.

**Yellow-throated Petronia** *Petronia superciliaris* This southern African species, just crosses the border into Gabon, on the Babeke Plateau, where we saw it well on a couple of occasions.

## PLOCEIDAE

**Black-chinned Weaver** *Ploceus nigrimentus* This rare and extremely range restricted species only occurs at low densities on the Bailundu Highlands of western Angola and on the Babeke Plateau of the Congo and Gabon. Therefore, we were very fortunate to enjoy a few good looks at this attractive species, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis* We enjoyed several widespread sightings throughout the tour.

**Principe Golden-Weaver** *Ploceus princeps* Without doubt, the most common bird at the Bom Bom Island Resort, on Principe.

**Vitelline Masked-Weaver** *Ploceus vitellinus* Originally introduced to the island of Sao Tome, from Angola. We enjoyed many sightings during our time on Sao Tome Island.

**Vieillot's Black Weaver** *Ploceus nigerrimus* An abundant species throughout Gabon, which we saw on every day of the tour. Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot (1748-1831) was a French ornithologist and businessman who lived in Haiti for a number of years. He and his family eventually fled to the United States during the French Revolution, but later he returned to France, where he died in poverty. His fellow Frenchmen Buffon and Cuvier largely overshadowed him but his contributions to ornithology are very significant and Lesson described him as a genius. In Vieillot's time a number of ornithologists mistook juveniles, females or moulting individuals of known birds for new species. Vieillot was the first to study these plumage changes, which was in itself a major breakthrough in accurate identification. He was also an early proponent of studying live birds and not only the dead skins housed in museum collections. During his lifetime he described a great many species and his name appears in the scientific name of many more, such as that of the Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo *Saurothera vieilloti*.

**Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus* An abundant species throughout Gabon, which we saw on a daily basis. We also observed this species on the island of Sao Tome, which presumably were introduced to the island from Angola, many years ago.

**Giant Weaver** *Ploceus grandis* This colourful Sao Tome endemic is the world's largest species of weaver. We saw it very well in the Obo National Park.

**Sao Tome Weaver** *Ploceus sanctithomae* This attractive and very common Sao Tome endemic was observed on a number of occasions creeping along trunks and branches, like a nuthatch.

**Crested Malimbe** *Malimbus malimbicus* This West African endemic was observed very well on one occasion in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Cassin's Malimbe** *Malimbus cassini* We enjoyed scattered sightings of this West African endemic, throughout the tour.

**Rachel's Malimbe** *Malimbus racheliae* This uncommon and highly range restricted species, is also a stunning looking bird. We very much enjoyed a single but very good sighting of this species, in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou. The American ornithologist John Cassin (1813-1869) named this beautiful bird after his daughter Rachel.

**Red-headed Malimbe** *Malimbus rubricollis* This species was seen very well on one occasion, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Golden-backed Bishop** *Euplectes aureus* A large flock, all in non-breeding plumage was observed in grassland next to our hotel in Sao Tome township. This species was originally introduced from Angola, many years ago.

**Yellow-mantled Widowbird** *Euplectes macroura* We observed birds in non-breeding plumage, on the Babeke Plateau and in Lope National Park.

**Marsh Widowbird** *Euplectes hartlaubi* A male bird was seen very well on a couple of occasions at Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

**Red-headed Antpecker** *Parmoptila woodhousei* We enjoyed an excellent look at this very uncommon West African endemic, on one occasion, during our time in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita bicolor* We enjoyed a very good look at one of these uncommon West African endemics in the Santo Trindade National Park, on the island of Principe.

**White-breasted Negrofinch** *Nigrita fusconotus* We saw this species well in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou and again, on the Babeke Plateau.

**Black-bellied Seedcracker** *Pyrenestes ostrinus* Often seen flying up from the side of the road as we drove along in the vehicle. However, we did see them well along the Belinga Road, close to Makokou.

**Western Bluebill** *Spermophaga haematina* Once again, this West African endemic was mainly observed flying up from the roadside as we drove along in our vehicle. However, we did see it well on one occasion, while we were birding the entrance road to the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.

**Fawn-breasted Waxbill** *Estrilda paludicola* We enjoyed a couple of small flocks of this species, during our time on the Babeke Plateau.

**Orange-cheeked Waxbill** *Estrilda melpoda* This West African endemic proved to be very common throughout Gabon.

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* A few were observed in the Ipassa Reserve, but on the Gulf of Guinea Islands, they were extremely abundant.

**Black-headed Waxbill** *Estrilda atricapilla* Small numbers were observed in the Makokou area.

**Locust Finch** *Paludipasser locustella* We saw a small family party of these tiny little finches, in long grass alongside Crocodile Lake, on the Babeke Plateau. It is a very difficult species firstly, to find and secondly, to see well.

**Black-chinned Quailfinch** *Ortygospiza gabonensis* We enjoyed some very close up views of these unusual and uncommon birds, as they fed on the lawn, close to our tents, in Lope National Park.

**Bronze Mannikin** *Spermestes cucullatus* This is an abundant species throughout Gabon and both Sao Tome and Principe.

**Black-and-white Mannikin** *Spermestes bicolor* We enjoyed a few small flocks, mainly in the Makokou area.

#### VIDUIDAE

**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura* We enjoyed a few good sightings in the Makokou area. This species is nest parasitic, using mainly waxbills as the host.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

**Black-faced Canary** *Serinus capistratus* We scoped a magnificent male in full breeding plumage, at our lunch stop in Lastoursville.

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Serinus mozambicus* Small numbers observed well on the Babeke Plateau and on the island of Sao Tome.

**Principe Seedeater** *Serinus rufobrunneus* We saw good numbers of this island endemic on the island of Sao Tome.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

**Cabanis's Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi* We saw this attractive species very well on a few occasions, during our time on the Babeke Plateau. Jean Louis Cabanis (1816-1906) despite his French sounding name, he was a German ornithologist who was born in Berlin and became the Director of the Berlin University Museum. Although he never visited Africa himself, various collectors sent skins to him at the Berlin Museum. Reichenow, who succeeded him at the museum and described the bunting, was his son-in-law.

## MAMMALS

- Mona Monkey** *Ceropithecus mona* This species was introduced to the Gulf of Guinea Islands, from the mainland. We saw a few troops very well during our time on Principe Island.
- Putty-nosed Monkey** *Ceropithecus nictitans* We saw small numbers of this monkey along the side of the road, in Lope National Park.
- Moustached Monkey** *Ceropithecus cephus* First observed at the Nyonie Lodge and then again in the Ipassa Reserve.
- Elegant Needle-clawed Galago** *Euoticus elegantulus* We saw this delightful primate on many occasions, during our night walks in the Ipassa Reserve.
- Demidoff's Galago** *Galagoides demidoff* We had a couple of brief sightings of this very small species of galago, during our night walks in the Ipassa Reserve. This species prefers to remain hidden in very dense tangles, low down in the forest.
- Straw-coloured Fruit Bat** *Eidolon helvum* While having dinner on the last night of the tour in Libreville, a solitary bat of this species was observed flying northwards, along the coast.
- Noack's Roundleaf Bat** *Hipposideros ruber* This was the daytime flying bat that we saw on many occasions on Sao Tome.
- Lady Burton's Rope Squirrel** *Funisciurus isabella* A few were seen well in the Ipassa Reserve.
- Green Squirrel** *Paraxerus poensis* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this uncommon squirrel throughout the tour.
- Lesser Anomalure** *Anomalurus pusillus* We were very fortunate to observe this seldom seen species of flying-squirrel for a long period in the spotlight, this occurred in rainforest close to Nyonie Lodge.
- Brown Rat** *Rattus norvegicus* One joined us for dinner, at the very exclusive Bom Bom Island Resort, one evening.
- African Forest Elephant** *Loxodonta cyclotis* We observed a couple of small groups, in Lope National Park.
- Blue Duiker** *Cephalophus monticola* Seen well on a couple of occasions in the Ipassa Reserve at Makokou.
- Atlantic Humpback Dolphin** *Sousa teuszii* Small numbers were observed just offshore, from the Nyonie Lodge, on the first day of the tour.