



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Ethiopia 2013**

May 3, 2013 to May 26, 2013  
Phil Gregory & Merid Gabremichael

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, [please VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE.](#)*



*Though still relatively common, the endemic Rouget's Rail is considered near-threatened as it is declining due mainly to loss of its highland grassland habitat. (Photo by tour participants David & Judy Smith)*

Our Ethiopia 2013 tour was quite a trip, with scheduled leader Richard Webster unfortunately breaking his leg just a few days beforehand, leaving late addition co-leader Phil Gregory (yours truly) to step into the breach. I too was handicapped by a fall on the second Ghana tour which had damaged my shoulder, though I would have done the trip in a sling if need be as I was so keen to go! Happily we co-opted Merid Gabremichael, the co-author of one of the Ethiopian site guides, to come along as a local leader, and he was invaluable, as was the excellent Kibrom as facilitator and fixer. It was quite a team, and we were greatly helped by an enthusiastic and good-humored group, with four participants having their own scopes along too, which was very helpful, with my injury preventing me from scope-carrying.

I was most impressed by Ethiopia--it is clearly a country going places with the recent turbulent past now behind it, and it has friendly, welcoming people (plus great coffee in this, the home of the original coffee plant species, where they make a mean macchiato!). I have never seen so much livestock: our driver was adept at avoiding goats, cows, donkeys, horses, pedestrians, and other vehicles, but boy was he tested at times. Population pressure is worryingly high, especially on the highland plains around Addis, but much great wildlife remains and it is a terrific place for photography, with magnificent landscapes unfolding daily.

Hotels varied from the excellent to the merely bearable at Negelle, but everyone coped admirably and Kibrom did a wonderful job in expediting the meals and avoiding long delays, for which I for one was truly grateful.

We had one truly unusual experience one day on our early morning bird walk at Lake Awassa, where loud shouts coming from the lake and a couple of men waving from the water turned out to be a fishing boat capsized. By our alerting the hotel staff and getting them to check it out, three lives were saved, with one fishermen being a non-swimmer. That was a really great way to start the day, and how lucky it was that we were out there birding then.

Birding was excellent, though surprises for me were the relative lack of herons and pelicans despite many freshwater habitats. We did really well with the endemics and near-endemics, with Harwood's, Erckel's, Clapperton's, Chestnut-naped, and Moorland francolins, some wild Somali Ostrich, the rare Arabian Bustard near Bilen, Scissor-tailed Kite at Awash, no fewer than five species of owls seen in daylight, including Cape, Grayish, and Verreaux's eagle-owls and Abyssinian Long-eared, plus four species of nightjars including Star-spotted, Abyssinian, and Donaldson-Smith's. An amazing dust storm one afternoon en route to the Sombre Chat site saw us stopped on the main highway in zero visibility, beeping the horn the while to alert anyone silly or brave enough to be still moving, with no wind at all and then very heavy rain for just a brief period, quite bizarre and a surprise to the locals, too.

Otherwise we did really well for weather!

We were lucky enough to get great looks at Prince Ruspoli's and White-cheeked turacos, plus a terrific sighting of the elusive Yellow-fronted Parrot in the Bale Mts, with Black-winged Lovebird quite common. Stresemann's Bush-Crow did not disappoint, but White-tailed Swallow was a revelation, being much more striking than anticipated. Hard work and good luck at Yabello got us Red-naped Bush-Shrike and Scaly Chatterer, two elusive and easily missed species, whilst we basically cleaned up all the rare seedeaters/serins with very nice looks at Abyssinian Siskin, Ankober Serin, Yellow-throated and Yellow-rumped seedeaters, Northern Grosbeak-Canary, and fantastic looks at the rare Salvadori's Seedeater. A speculative check of a potential site near Negelle rewarded us with great looks at Juba (Salvadori's) Weaver, and Liben (Sidamo) Lark did not disappoint with wonderful views of a displaying bird.

The Bale Mts and Sanetti Plateau together were a fabulous area, and the day up there was truly memorable with both Chestnut-naped and Moorland francolins, Rouget's Rail, Wattled Crane, Spot-breasted Lapwing, and outstanding looks at the rare Simien Wolf, one of the most beautiful of all Canids, and its bizarre prey, the Giant Root-Rat. White-cheeked Turaco, Abyssinian Woodpecker, and the Bale form of Brown Parisoma on the way back were a nice plus too.

We also had a most memorable migration of African Beak Butterflies at the Haremma Forest, with thousands of them moving along the gravel roadway as we did a picnic lunch in the forest.

The extension to Lalibela was a really nice way to wind down the trip, with great looks at Lammergeier, Yellow-rumped Seedeater, and Erckels's Francolin as well as the extraordinary rock-hewn churches and their ancient artwork, and some nice interactions with local people.

I count myself fortunate to have been able to do this trip and strongly recommend it. My thanks to Maggie at the FG Office for good logistics, to Yayehirad for his assistance and overall management of the tour in country, and especially to Kibrom, Merid, and Wonde who did a fine job of looking after us and getting where we needed to go. Thanks also to a convivial group--we got on very well and had a terrific time, and thanks for sharing the scopes, too.

--Phil Gregory, Queensland, May 2013

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#### KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### Struthionidae (Ostrich)

**OSTRICH (SOMALI)** (*Struthio camelus molybdophanes*) – 8 birds were seen when we went out onto the Yangudy WR near Bilen, great to see wild ones. Later we had two entertaining young males hanging about the reception area at Awash NP, part of some reintroduction scheme, as were those at Abiata-Shalla. Split by many authorities these days too, as Somali Ostrich.

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna viduata*) – Just 4 day records with 30 at Lake Ziway the only notable count.

**WHITE-BACKED DUCK** (*Thalassornis leuconotus*) – 7 of this uncommon bird showed very well in the reeds at Lake Awassa.

**BLUE-WINGED GOOSE** (*Cyanochen cyanoptera*) – Five day records, the first on the Sululta Plains, where we later had a pair and 4 juvs. Around 30 were seen up on the Sanetti Plateau, where this curiously sheldgoose-like species resides. [E]

**EGYPTIAN GOOSE** (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) – Widespread in small numbers, very vocal by the hotel at Lake Langano in particular where they look to be nesting on the cliffs.

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – 10 of the beautiful species up on the small ponds on the Sanetti Plateau. always in pairs in this outpost of this mainly Palearctic wildfowl. 4 were seen when we did the transit across the plateau too.

**SPUR-WINGED GOOSE** (*Plectropterus gambensis*) – 30 at Lake Ziway and one at Lake Awassa.

**AFRICAN PYGMY-GOOSE** (*Nettapus auritus*) – Two at Lake Ziway, a pair at Awassa Fish Market Park and 4 by the hotel on the lakeshore as we came back.

**AFRICAN BLACK DUCK** (*Anas sparsa*) – Three on a river as we came towards Lake Keteka, we braved the awful traffic across the bridge to get a look at this unexpected addition.

**YELLOW-BILLED DUCK** (*Anas undulata*) – Just 4 day records, max 3 birds.

**HOTTENTOT TEAL** (*Anas hottentota*) – Three on Lake Keteka were the only record.

**CAPE TEAL** (*Anas capensis*) – Just a couple in with the flamingoes at Lake Abiata.

**SOUTHERN POCHARD** (*Netta erythrophthalma*) – A single female was on Lake Bishoftu.

**FERRUGINOUS DUCK** (*Aythya nyroca*) – One drake on Lake Bishoftu was totally unexpected, it seems very late for it to still be here but there it was!

### Numididae (Guineafowl)

**HELMETED GUINEAFOWL** (*Numida meleagris*) – Small numbers in the rift valley parks.

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**CRESTED FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus sephaena*) – A few seen at Bilen Lodge, and heard at several other sites in the rift valley.

**MOORLAND FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus psilolaemus*) – Great looks at this sometimes elusive species on both our trips to the Sanetti Plateau.

**SCALY FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus squamatus*) – Heard at Wondo Genet. [\*]



**ERCKEL'S FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus erckelii*) – A flock of 8 in a field en route to the Jemma Valley, then one flushed off the slopes there. Later fine views of 4 birds by the hotel at Lalibela, and heard calling on the slopes there. Nice to get wild ones, most people tick this in -wait for it- Hawaii! [E]

**CLAPPERTON'S FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus clappertoni*) – Merid performed wonders at Bekele Molla after one ran upslope and he went after it, eventually flushing it and causing it to land in view for a few seconds- yay!

**HARWOOD'S FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus harwoodi*) – This was hard, but we eventually heard them at Jemma Valley and then got quite moderate views as the local lads moved them through the scrub- we saw 6 flush and got a couple on the ground at some distance. [E]

**YELLOW-NECKED FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus leucoscepus*) – One was seen in Awash NP by a few, then there were 3 near Negelle.

**CHESTNUT-NAPED FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus castaneicollis*) – Great looks by the road across the Sanetti Plateau, with 5 birds one day and 10 on the day we drove right across. [E]

**HARLEQUIN QUAIL** (*Coturnix delegorguei*) – Merid and Joyce flushed one near Yabello late one afternoon.

#### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Five day records, small numbers only on some of the rift valley lakes.

#### Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

**GREATER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – Nice looks at Lake Abiata where they were greatly outnumbered by Lesser Flamingo, then 6 flying over L. Awassa on our early morning (and exciting!) bird walk where we saved 3 lives!

**LESSER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus minor*) – Around 2000 feeding at Lake Abiata, with some very nice views.

#### Ciconiidae (Storks)

**BLACK STORK** (*Ciconia nigra*) – Two in a damp field near Dinsho were an unexpected trip addition, and gave great views.

**ABDIM'S STORK** (*Ciconia abdimii*) – Eight day records from the rift valley sites, max 3 birds and mostly singles.

**WOOLLY-NECKED STORK** (*Ciconia episcopus*) – One at the Lomi River was a nice pick-up.

**SADDLE-BILLED STORK** (*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*) – One in flight by Bilen Lodge was a great trip addition.

**MARABOU STORK** (*Leptoptilos crumenifer*) – Eight day records, they seem fairly common at some of the rift valley lakes with 80 at Lake Awassa.

**YELLOW-BILLED STORK** (*Mycteria ibis*) – Five day records of ones and two's at the rift valley lakes.

#### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**GREAT CORMORANT (WHITE-BREASTED)** (*Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus*) – Small numbers <40 of the white-breasted race lucidus in the rift valley, sometimes split as White-breasted Cormorant.

**LONG-TAILED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax africanus*) – Seven day records from the rift valley lakes, max. 20 at Lake Awassa.

#### Anhingidae (Anhingas)

**AFRICAN DARTER** (*Anhinga rufa rufa*) – Singles at Lake Beseka and then Lake Ziway, seems oddly scarce.

#### Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**GREAT WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) – Four day records, max. 20 at Lake Ziway.

**PINK-BACKED PELICAN** (*Pelecanus rufescens*) – The only birds were at Lake Awassa with 10 up trees in the hotel grounds there.

#### Scopidae (Hamerkop)

**HAMERKOP** (*Scopus umbretta*) – Widespread in small numbers and a few of the huge untidy nests were seen.

#### Ardeidae (Heron, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**GRAY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*) – Just 4 day records of singles and twos in the rift valley.

**BLACK-HEADED HERON** (*Ardea melanocephala*) – Just 2 at Lake Keteka were the only sighting.

**GOLIATH HERON** (*Ardea goliath*) – A single on the Lomi River was the only sighting.

**PURPLE HERON** (*Ardea purpurea*) – Just a single in the swamp at Bilen Lodge.

**GREAT EGRET (AFRICAN)** (*Ardea alba melanorhyncha*) – Just 5 day records of singles in the rift valley.

**LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*) – Amazingly just two day records, with one at Lake Keteka and 3 at Lake Beseka.

**BLACK HERON** (*Egretta ardesiaca*) – Nice views of 2 at Lake Beseka, with one doing the umbrella shading technique, but they were the only sighting of the trip.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Unbelievably the only sighting was 3 distant birds at Lake Keteka, I am amazed at how scarce herons are in Ethiopia.

**SQUACCO HERON** (*Ardeola ralloides*) – One at Bilen Lodge was the only sighting.

**STRIATED HERON** (*Butorides striata*) – Singles at Lake Beseka on both days were the only record.

#### Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Ten at Lake Ziway were the only sighting.

**SACRED IBIS** (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) – Seven day records from the rift valley sites, max c. 30 birds.

**HADADA IBIS** (*Bostrychia hagedash*) – 9 day records, very small numbers only but always nice to hear them calling.

**WATTLED IBIS** (*Bostrychia carunculata*) – Ten day records, they are even seen in Addis, but the biggest total was about 60 up on the Sanetti Plateau. They have a loud raspy call and the white wing flash is very distinctive. [E]

**AFRICAN SPOONBILL** (*Platalea alba*) – Just one was seen at Lake Beseka by some.

#### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE** (*Elanus caeruleus*) – Just a couple of records from the Sululta Plains and Bilen Lodge.

**SCISSOR-TAILED KITE** (*Chelictinia riocourii*) – A single bird at Awash was a big surprise, it is late here for them and it showed very nicely hunting

over the plains.

**AFRICAN HARRIER-HAWK** (*Polyboroides typus*) – Singles at Abiata-Shalla NP and at Wondo Genet.

**LAMMERGEIER** (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – A fabulous adult flew right by the bus as we came back from Debre Birhan. An immature by the entrance to Bale Mts NP was a good omen, then the birds at Lalibela were just amazing. Our hotel had them going by at eye level, with 5 together at one point, and we saw at least 7 individuals here.

**EGYPTIAN VULTURE** (*Neophron percnopterus*) – Joyce and Judy saw an adult at Lalibela on the last morning, it seems very scarce in Ethiopia.

**WHITE-HEADED VULTURE** (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) – Just one bird in the mountains near Kibre Mengist as we came back from Negelle to Awassa.

**LAPPET-FACED VULTURE** (*Torgos tracheliotus*) – 2 near the Ethio-German Hotel early on, then a single on day 13, again very scarce.

**HOODED VULTURE** (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) – Still widespread, we saw them most days and had counts of 40-50 birds at several sites.

**WHITE-BACKED VULTURE** (*Gyps africanus*) – Just 3 days records from Awash (2), then Negelle (3) and finally one near Awassa.

**RUEPPELL'S GRIFFON** (*Gyps rueppellii*) – Six day records, the max being 9 at Abiata-Shalla.

**BATELEUR** (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) – A total of 4 birds over 3 days, most in Awash NP.

**BLACK-BREASTED SNAKE-EAGLE** (*Circaetus pectoralis*) – Just one bird, complete with snake, near Negelle.

**BROWN SNAKE-EAGLE** (*Circaetus cinereus*) – Likewise just a single near Yabello.

**CROWNED HAWK-EAGLE** (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*) – Two birds were seen at our lunch stop in the mountain forest near Kibre Mengist en route back to Awassa, with one perched up very nicely. This one takes monkeys and has been known to snatch small children....

**LONG-CRESTED EAGLE** (*Lophaelagus occipitalis*) – Six day records, mostly sat on poles near the roadside.

**WAHLBERG'S EAGLE** (*Hieraetus wahlbergi*) – Just one bird over the Haremma Forest.

**TAWNY EAGLE** (*Aquila rapax*) – Widespread in very small numbers, we saw one or two on 13 days, including some striking pale phase birds.

**AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLE** (*Aquila spilogaster*) – A fine adult over the valley at Sof Omar was a good trip bird, the white wing patches and dark underwing coverts are very distinctive.

**DARK CHANTING-GOSHAWK** (*Melierax metabates*) – Six day records from the rift valley sites.

**EASTERN CHANTING-GOSHAWK** (*Melierax poliopterus*) – One near Sof Omar and one near Negelle.

**GABAR GOSHAWK** (*Micronisus gabar*) – One adult flew past near Yabello one afternoon.

**AFRICAN GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter tachiro*) – Joyce and I saw one at the hotel at Goba, then we had a splendid adult sat up calling in the forest as we headed for the Bale Mts NP. Finally one flew over calling at Wondo Genet. Note this montane form unduliventer is a good candidate for a split.

**LITTLE SPARROWHAWK** (*Accipiter minullus*) – Joyce saw one at the hotel at Goba.

**RUFIOUS-CHESTED SPARROWHAWK** (*Accipiter rufiventris*) – One flew by near Agye Maryam, and Dean saw one near Negelle.

**BLACK GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) – A fine perched bird in the Haremma Forest.

**BLACK KITE (YELLOW-BILLED)** (*Milvus migrans parasitus*) – Seen on most days of the tour though no great numbers involved. Split by almost all except Clements these days.

**AFRICAN FISH-EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) – Seen at Lake Koka, Awash and Awassa.

**COMMON BUZZARD (STEPPE)** (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) – One was at the Lomi River, rather a late individual.

**AUGUR BUZZARD** (*Buteo augur*) – Widespread in the montane areas with a max of 15 on the Sanetti Plateau, the dark phase is by far the commonest here.

#### Otididae (Bustards)

**ARABIAN BUSTARD** (*Ardeotis arabs*) – We were struggling for this rare bird around Bilen, but a short foray out into the Yangudy WR got us a magnificent displaying adult that walked slowly away. Great.

**KORI BUSTARD** (*Ardeotis kori*) – One huge bird at Awash, then 5 out on the Liben Plains.

**BUFF-CRESTED BUSTARD** (*Eupodotis gindiana*) – Seen very well in Awash NP, then one at the birding stop 7km from Negelle.

**BLACK-BELLIED BUSTARD** (*Lissotis melanogaster*) – Two in flight from the bus at Abiata-Shalla.

#### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**ROUGET'S RAIL** (*Rougetius rougetii*) – Five day records, the first being 2 at a creek near Shashemene, then 4 up on the Sanetti Plateau on both trips, with 7 strutting about on short turf at a swamp area near Agye Maryam on both days we went past! The white undertail coverts are very striking. Phil saw this one from his hotel bedroom in Addis pre-trip! [E]

**BLACK CRAKE** (*Amaurornis flavirostra*) – Just one at Lake Ziway.

**EURASIAN MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Some saw this at lake Koka, then there were 7 at Lake Ziway.

**RED-KNOBBED COOT** (*Fulica cristata*) – One bird at Lake Bishoftu was a nice trip addition.

#### Gruidae (Cranes)

**BLACK CROWNED-CRANE** (*Balearica pavonina*) – Two fine birds at Lake Ziway were the only ones we saw. The crown pom-pom is a dull bronze on this one, not golden.

**WATTLED CRANE** (*Buceros carunculatus*) – A pair were inhabiting a marshy area up on the Sanetti Plateau and were probing intently into disturbed ground the first time we saw them.

#### Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

**SENEGAL THICK-KNEE** (*Burhinus senegalensis*) – Heard at Bilen Lodge and seen by a couple.

#### Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**SPUR-WINGED PLOVER** (*Vanellus spinosus*) – Small numbers were widespread.

**BLACK-WINGED LAPWING** (*Vanellus melanopterus*) – Just two birds on two days only, as we crossed the Sululta Plains.

**CROWNED LAPWING** (*Vanellus coronatus*) – Small numbers in the rift valley.

**WATTLED LAPWING** (*Vanellus senegallus*) – Just one bird south of Yabello.

**SPOT-BREASTED LAPWING** (*Vanellus melanocephalus*) – A count of 40 of this endemic up on the Sanetti Plateau, it's a very attractive bird. [E]

**KITTLITZ'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius pecuarius*) – 15 at Lake Abiata.

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – 3 at Lake Abiata. [b]

**THREE-BANDED PLOVER** (*Charadrius tricollaris*) – Just 4 birds in the Jemma valley.

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Singles at Lake Abiata and Lake Beseka.

**PIED AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) – Ten at Lake Keteka and then 15 at Lake Abiata.

*Jacanidae (Jacanas)*

**LESSER JACANA** (*Microparra capensis*) – A single bird skulking along the edge of the reeds at Lake Ziway eventually came out and showed very nicely.

**AFRICAN JACANA** (*Actophilornis africanus*) – Small numbers at the wetland sites.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa limosa*) – One bird at Lake Ziway, they sure look different to the melanuroides birds we get in Australia and a split is plausible. [b]

**LITTLE STINT** (*Calidris minuta*) – 3 at Lake Keteka, 2 at Lake Ziway and then 150 at Lake Abiata. [b]

**RUFF** (*Philomachus pugnax*) – 8 at Lake Keteka, then 4 at Lake Ziway and 70 at Lake Abiata. [b]

*Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)*

**THREE-BANDED COURSER** (*Rhinoptilus cinctus*) – This was a very nice find at the roadside stop 7km from Negelle, then we saw another at the Boran Cisticola site on the Negelle road near Mega.

**COLLARED PRATINCOLE** (*Glareola pratincola*) – Just 2 at Lake Abiata.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**GRAY-HOODED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*) – 6 at Lake Ziway and 5 at Awassa.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – One bird at Lake Keteka.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*) – One imm. at Lake Ziway, sadly a long way out and going away.

**LITTLE TERN** (*Sternula albifrons*) – A small tern at Lake Keteka is either this species or Saunders's Tern, but I don't think we got any photos good enough to distinguish the head pattern, though I thought it looked good for Little Tern. This is seemingly as yet unrecorded in Ethiopia!

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – 15 at Lake Keteka and one at Lake Beseka.

**WHITE-WINGED TERN** (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – Two fine summer adults at Lake Ziway. I hate the renaming, what was wrong with the highly descriptive White-winged Black Tern?

**WHISKERED TERN** (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – 14 at Lake Ziway.

*Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)*

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – A handful of sightings from Addis only. [I]

**SPECKLED PIGEON** (*Columba guinea*) – This was one of the few species seen every single day of the trip.

**WHITE-COLLARED PIGEON** (*Columba albitorques*) – A striking bird that was seen in Addis and then out in the surrounding highland plateaux, with 120 seen on the day we went from Debre Birhan to Ankober. Also seen up at Lalibela. [E]

**RAMERON PIGEON** (*Columba arquatrix*) – One sighting, a fine bird in the Harennna Forest.

**LEMON DOVE** (*Columba larvata*) – Also just one sighting, an obliging bird at Wondo Genet by the hot springs, just as we were going back to the hotel.

**DUSKY TURTLE-DOVE** (*Streptopelia lugens*) – Small numbers in the highlands, and quite common in Addis.

**MOURNING COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decipiens*) – I was quite surprised and how widespread they were down in the rift, we saw them on 8 days, and not tied to riverine habitats here.

**RED-EYED DOVE** (*Streptopelia semitorquata*) – Also quite widespread but not so much down in the rift.

**RING-NECKED DOVE** (*Streptopelia capicola*) – We saw these down in the southern rift in the drier country.

**VINACEOUS DOVE** (*Streptopelia vinacea*) – One was seen up in the hills above the Jemma Valley, it has a westerly distribution here.

**LAUGHING DOVE** (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) – Common in the lower lying regions.

**EMERALD-SPOTTED WOOD-DOVE** (*Turtur chalcospilos*) – Seen well at Melka Gebdu, Sof Omar and near Negelle and Yabello.

**BLUE-SPOTTED WOOD-DOVE** (*Turtur afer*) – Heard at Melka Gebdu, and a nice view of one at Wondo Genet.

**NAMAQUA DOVE** (*Oena capensis*) – Four day records from the Bilen-Awash area.

**BRUCE'S GREEN-PIGEON** (*Treron waalia*) – Nice views of two near Awash Lodge, with one on the way back to Nazaret.

*Musophagidae (Turacos)*

**WHITE-CHEEKED TURACO** (*Tauraco leucotis*) – Great views of these in the forest above the Bale Mts entrance gate, where a flock of 25 were attending one of the fruiting figs, and most of us saw at least half a dozen birds. This was the bluish-naped nominate form. It was also seen on three later dates by various folks, at Harennna and Wondo Genet. Almost endemic to Ethiopia with a tiny range into Sudan. [E]

**PRINCE RUSPOLI'S TURACO** (*Tauraco ruspolii*) – One of the great megas for Ethiopia, and we had a beauty right by the road en route to Negelle at the second spot when it was spotted from the front 4WD. It has a sort of pinkish-blond crest and a hard to see red patch on the nape. Great to get it under the belt right away as it freed us up next day to look for other species. [E]

**BARE-FACED GO-AWAY-BIRD** (*Corythaixoides personatus*) – Tom saw one from the bus en route to Yabello.

**WHITE-BELLIED GO-AWAY-BIRD** (*Corythaixoides leucogaster*) – Nine day records of ones, twos and threes from the drier lower areas.

**EASTERN PLANTAIN-EATER** (*Crinifer zonurus*) – A couple at Melka Gebdu.

### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**PIED CUCKOO** (*Clamator jacobinus*) – One at Bilen Lodge, and one near Yabello.

**LEVAILLANT'S CUCKOO** (*Clamator levaillantii*) – One called loudly at Wondo Genet but stayed out of sight. [\*]

**RED-CHESTED CUCKOO** (*Cuculus solitarius*) – A nice look at one south of Yabello, and heard at a few sites earlier.

**BLACK CUCKOO** (*Cuculus clamosus*) – Most folks got this one seen at Harena forest where it was very vocal.

**COMMON CUCKOO** (*Cuculus canorus*) – One at the Cape Eagle Owl site flew by, then perched out so we could see the largely dark bill, seems quite late for it to be still here.

**KLAAS'S CUCKOO** (*Chrysococcyx klaas*) – Heard on 4 days and singles seen on a couple of days at Awash NP.

**AFRICAN EMERALD CUCKOO** (*Chrysococcyx cupreus*) – A great look at a female at Harena Forest and heard near Kibre Mengist and Wondo Genet, sounding slightly different to birds elsewhere in Africa too.

**DIDERIC CUCKOO** (*Chrysococcyx caprius*) – One at Awash and a couple chasing around and calling on the Beseka lava flow walk.

**BLUE-HEADED COUCAL** (*Centropus monachus*) – Nice views at Lake Awassa.

**WHITE-BROWED COUCAL** (*Centropus superciliosus*) – One en route to Sof Omar for some of us, and a couple of sightings down around Yabello.

### Strigidae (Owls)

**AFRICAN SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus senegalensis*) – Heard at Bilen Lodge but not interested in my tape playback. [\*]

**CAPE EAGLE-OWL** (*Bubo capensis dillonii*) – We dipped on the way through to Debre Birhan, but I made a second stop on the way back at the rocky outcrop around km 90 and amazingly Kibrom located the owl sat in a big gum tree. Nice looks before it was regrettably disturbed and flew off, a very nice trip addition.

**GRAYISH EAGLE-OWL** (*Bubo cinerascens*) – A pair and a well-grown juv. were at the Webi Shebelle hotel near Lake Langan, obviously well-known by the locals.

**VERREAUX'S EAGLE-OWL** (*Bubo lacteus*) – This was actually a very nice bonus when we were chasing up the Abyssinian Long-eared Owl at Dinsho, although at the time it was disappointing! I am pretty sure we did actually see the Abyssinian Long-eared in flight, but then got switched onto this species.

**PEARL-SPOTTED OWLET** (*Glaucidium perlatus*) – One at Sof Omar showed very well, then we had what must have been two pairs very excited in the acacia scrub near Yabello one afternoon

**AFRICAN WOOD-OWL** (*Strix woodfordii*) – Two were roosting by the restrooms at Dinsho, a nice stakeout.

**AFRICAN LONG-EARED OWL** (*Asio abyssinicus*) – We contacted the local guide, who went off to check and came back with news of one sat in a Hagenia. We trekked up to the site but the bird had moved, then we saw a large brown owl in flight, which I thought looked worryingly large. This was flushed again, then we lost it before the guide located what proved to be a Verreaux's Eagle Owl. Nice, but..... Anyway, I asked him to check again later and call us if he found the Abyssinian, and sure enough on the Sof Omar day we got the call. Somewhat fearful we went back to Dinsho and walked up to the new site, and there to my delight was a magnificent Abyssinian Owl, a huge great thing more like an eagle owl than a Long-eared too. We had very good scope looks at it sat in a juniper, definitely my bird of the trip as owls are a particular favourite. I also suspect we did actually see this in flight on the first attempt as the large owl flying was too brown for a Verreaux's, and the size would actually be dead right.

### Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**DONALDSON-SMITH'S NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus donaldsoni*) – Great looks at one at a site along the Arero road, it was very tape responsive. You can actually hear them from the Yabello Motel as I found next morning!

**ABYSSINIAN NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus poliocephalus*) – I heard these calling from our hotel at Lalibela, so we tried next night, much to the puzzlement of other guests. Eventually a fine male proved very responsive and we got some nice flight views from the below the car park. I also saw this from my hotel in Addis pre-trip.

**STAR-SPOTTED NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus stellatus*) – A small dark nightjar in the road in front of the bus as we came back to Awash Falls Lodge sure looked interesting, and Merid actually went and picked it up so we got some useful photos. The choices come down to Plain or Star-spotted, but the size of the tail spots and dark spotting on crown and scapulars look good for Star-spotted, which is also well-known from Awash whereas Plain does not seem to be, being more westerly. The various books are quite confusing but the consensus seems to come down to this species. A great trip addition and a lifer for all- yay!

**SLENDER-TAILED NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus clarus*) – Very vocal at Bilen Lodge where we flushed one in daylight, and again at Lake Langan where they were calling by the hotel.

### Apodidae (Swifts)

**ALPINE SWIFT** (*Apus melba*) – One on day 2 in the highlands, and 4 en route to Dinsho, plus some folks saw it at Lalibela.

**MOTTLED SWIFT** (*Apus aequatorialis*) – A single with Common Swifts at Melka Gebdu, much larger.

**NYANZA SWIFT** (*Apus niansae*) – A couple of sightings around Addis and at Debre Birhan, and again at Sof Omar. They seemed to be nesting by the Wassamar Hotel in Addis.

**LITTLE SWIFT** (*Apus affinis*) – Surprisingly scarce with just 4 day records, mostly in the rift valley.

**HORUS SWIFT** (*Apus horus*) – 4 birds near Nazaret were a good trip addition.

**AFRICAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Cypsiurus parvus*) – I managed to miss the only sightings near Nazaret.

### Coliidae (Mousebirds)

**SPECKLED MOUSEBIRD** (*Colius striatus*) – Widespread in small numbers and seen most days.

**BLUE-NAPED MOUSEBIRD** (*Urocolius macrourus*) – Five day records, most from Bilen and Awash, then again at Yabello.

### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**HALF-COLLARED KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo semitorquata*) – A good trip for this uncommon bird, some folks saw one at Melka Gebdu, then we all got a fine perched bird at the Lomi River before a final one on the stream at Wondo Genet for some of us.

**MALACHITE KINGFISHER** (*Corythornis cristatus*) – Uncommon, with just 4 day records from Lake Koka, Lake Ziway and Awassa.



**AFRICAN PYGMY-KINGFISHER** (*Ispidina picta*) – Five day records starting at Melka Gebdu, then a couple at Bilen/Awash.

**GRAY-HEADED KINGFISHER** (*Halcyon leucocephala*) – Four day records, the most at Melka Gebdu.

**WOODLAND KINGFISHER** (*Halcyon senegalensis*) – Also four day records, seen at Awash and Awassa.

**STRIPED KINGFISHER** (*Halcyon chelicuti*) – This was heard at Abiata-Shalla but not seen this trip. [✱]

**GIANT KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle maximus*) – A great view of one hunting by the stream at Melka Gebdu.

**PIED KINGFISHER** (*Ceryle rudis*) – Small numbers on various lakes in the rift.

#### Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

**LITTLE BEE-EATER** (*Merops pusillus*) – Widespread but only in very small numbers.

**BLUE-BREASTED BEE-EATER** (*Merops variegatus lafresnayii*) – This large and quite distinctive bird was seen in the highland regions, and is a likely split as its much bigger and more orangey beneath than the usual Blue-breasted, more like Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater. [E]

**WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATER** (*Merops albicollis*) – This intra-African migrant was seen a few times down in the rift, with 30 at Bilen Lodge the most.

**MADAGASCAR BEE-EATER** (*Merops superciliosus*) – Five over at Lake Beseka were a useful trip addition.

**NORTHERN CARMINE BEE-EATER** (*Merops nubicus*) – Dean saw these on the way to Bilen Lodge.

#### Coraciidae (Rollers)

**EUROPEAN ROLLER** (*Coracias garrulus*) – A single late bird en route to the Lomi River.

**ABYSSINIAN ROLLER** (*Coracias abyssinicus*) – Up to 5 at Awash, a single at Abiata-Shalla, and some folks saw them at Negelle.

**LILAC-BREASTED ROLLER** (*Coracias caudatus lorti*) – Five day records of this fairly distinctive lilac-throated taxon, the first at Abiata-Shalla then a few singles around Negelle and Yabello.

**RUFIOUS-CROWNED ROLLER** (*Coracias naevius*) – Just two records, singles at Abiata-Shalla and near Negelle.

**BROAD-BILLED ROLLER** (*Eurystomus glaucurus*) – Two birds en route to Kibre Mengist were the only record.

#### Upupidae (Hoopoes)

**EURASIAN HOOPOE (CENTRAL AFRICAN)** (*Upupa epops senegalensis*) – Eight day records, mostly singles but 5 around Abiata-Shalla. Some of the southern birds seemed more richly coloured than the northern ones, but it seems the race involved is *senegalensis* and not *waibeli* which according to Terry's book is not yet known from Ethiopia.

#### Phoeniculidae (Woodhoopoes and Scimitar-bills)

**BLACK-BILLED WOODHOOPOE** (*Phoeniculus somaliensis*) – Five day records, it was quite widespread in the dry thorn scrub of the rift with the first at Abiata-Shalla, these ones showing some red at the base of the bill unlike all the later sightings. [E]

**BLACK SCIMITAR-BILL** (*Rhinopomastus aterrimus*) – Great looks at two of this uncommon bird at Abiata-Shalla.

**ABYSSINIAN SCIMITAR-BILL** (*Rhinopomastus minor*) – Two day records, with 2 at Awash and then a single near Yabello.

#### Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

**NORTHERN RED-BILLED HORNBILL** (*Tockus erythrorhynchus*) – Quite common in the rift valley.

**EASTERN YELLOW-BILLED HORNBILL** (*Tockus flavirostris*) – Just a few seen in the rift valley.

**VON DER DECKEN'S HORNBILL** (*Tockus deckeni*) – The first were at Abiata-Shalla, then again near Negelle.

**HEMPRICH'S HORNBILL** (*Tockus hemprichii*) – Two were perched on eucalyptus scaffolding by a new building at Debre Birhan, then a couple of sightings in the Bale Mts and again at Lalibela.

**AFRICAN GRAY HORNBILL** (*Tockus nasutus*) – Quite common in the dry rift valley parks.

**SILVERY-CHEEKED HORNBILL** (*Ceratogymna brevis*) – Four day records but no big numbers, first seen near Kibre Mengist then again at Wondo Genet.

#### Bucorvidae (Ground-Hornbills)

**ABYSSINIAN GROUND-HORNBILL** (*Bucorvus abyssinicus*) – A fantastic male was right by the road as we came into the Jemma Valley, then later another was very obliging near Kibre Mengist, before one at Abiata-Shalla and two near Yabello. Usually given their own family these days as they are so unlike regular hornbills.

#### Lybiidae (African Barbets)

**RED-AND-YELLOW BARBET** (*Trachyphonus erythrocephalus*) – Great views of a couple of them on termite mounds near Negelle.

**YELLOW-BREASTED BARBET** (*Trachyphonus margaritatus*) – This bird of the dry northern thorn scrub showed very nicely at Melka Gebdu, the Jemma valley and then again at Bilen Lodge, where Dean rescued one that was impaled in a thorn hedge!

**D'ARNAUD'S BARBET** (*Trachyphonus darnaudii*) – Nice views south of Yabello, where we saw at least 8 birds.

**RED-FRONTED TINKERBIRD** (*Pogoniulus pusillus*) – Great looks at Awassa lakeshore, and then one up at Lalibela.

**YELLOW-FRONTED TINKERBIRD** (*Pogoniulus chrysoconus*) – A nice look at one at Wondo Genet.

**RED-FRONTED BARBET** (*Tricholaema diademata*) – Four day records, with 3 south of Yabello the most we saw.

**BLACK-THROATED BARBET** (*Tricholaema melanocephala*) – Two records of singles, from Bilen and Lake Beseka lava flow.

**BANDED BARBET** (*Lybius undatus*) – We were getting antsy about this one as we had done much of the trip, but Merid knew a nest site at Lake Awassa, then we had them at Wondo Genet, Lake Bishoftu and Lalibela as well. [E]

**BLACK-BILLED BARBET** (*Lybius guifsobalito*) – Eight day records, the best at Melka Gebdu where a pair looked to be nesting.

**DOUBLE-TOOTHED BARBET** (*Lybius bidentatus*) – Seen at Hareenna Forest, then again at Wondo Genet, a spectacular bird.

#### Indicatoridae (Honeyguides)

**WAHLBERG'S HONEYGUIDE** (*Prodotiscus regulus*) – One at Lake Awassa was very unobliging and really all we saw was the small size and the white outer tail feathers.

**LESSER HONEYGUIDE** (Indicator minor) – A nice look at one at Lake Awassa Hotel gardens, and then another was persistently chasing an Eastern Grey Woodpecker at Wondo Genet.

**GREATER HONEYGUIDE** (Indicator indicator) – This was heard at Malka Gebdu. [E]

#### Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**RUFIOUS-NECKED WRYNECK** (Jynx ruficollis) – A fine bird at the Cape Eagle Owl spot was the only one we saw.

**NUBIAN WOODPECKER** (Campethera nubica) – A pair near Negelle showed very well that afternoon, then we had one near Yabello.

**ABYSSINIAN WOODPECKER** (Dendropicos abyssinicus) – A pair at Dinsho after our epic owl chase, then luckily another in the Bale Mts for Ethel who had missed the first pair. [E]

**CARDINAL WOODPECKER** (Dendropicos fuscescens) – Seen at Abiata-Shalla and then at Sof Omar.

**BEARDED WOODPECKER** (Dendropicos namaquus) – Two at Abiata-Shalla, and one near Yabello.

**GRAY-HEADED WOODPECKER** (Dendropicos spodocephalus) – Four day records, the first in Harennna Forest then great views at Awassa and Wondo Genet. Split from what Clements calls Grey-headed Woodpecker, (which is actually Picus canus from Europe anyway as even a casual search would soon reveal) as Eastern Grey Woodpecker in Stevenson and the IOC.

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**PYGMY FALCON** (Polihierax semitorquatus) – A fine male at Awash NP was the only sighting.

**EURASIAN KESTREL (EURASIAN)** (Falco tinnunculus rufescens) – Small numbers, with some good views at the Jemma Valley and Lalibela, the female seems to have a grey tail finely barred black, the male plain grey, and they sure don't look like Eurasian Kestrels.....

**FOX KESTREL** (Falco alopex) – A pair at a huge cliff face en route to the Jemma Valley, being mobbed by the local (Eurasian) rufescens Kestrels, they were much larger and longer tailed with very rufous underparts, a good bird to get.

**GRAY KESTREL** (Falco ardosiaceus) – Two sightings down near Negelle.

**EURASIAN HOBBY** (Falco subbuteo) – A pair were hunting at dusk at Awash Falls and showed very well, seems quite late for them to still be here.

**AFRICAN HOBBY** (Falco cuvierii) – Three day records, the first near Debre Birhan, then again at Lake Abiata where one streaked across the saltflats, and finally at Sof Omar.

**LANNER FALCON** (Falco biarmicus) – Just one in the Bale Mts this trip, they were amazingly scarce.

#### Psittacidae (Parrots)

**BLACK-WINGED LOVEBIRD** (Agapornis taranta) – This proved to be quite common and we had some great looks after the first at Lake Koka. [E]

**RED-BELLIED PARROT** (Poicephalus rufiventris) – Three day records of Orange-bellied Parrot (it's just plain not red whatever Clements says), the first at Melka Gebdu, then at Awash and Yabello.

**YELLOW-FRONTED PARROT** (Poicephalus flavifrons) – Phil scouted a new site for these pre-trip, but happily we ran into a noisy flock in the forest before the Bale Mts NP entrance and had great views of some 8 birds perched up in the eucalypts. This one has become harder and harder at Wondo Genet but we were in the happy position of not having to try for it there. [E]

#### Platysteiridae (Wattle-eyes and Batises)

**BROWN-THROATED WATTLE-EYE** (Platysteira cyanea) – Seen well at Harennna Forest, and heard at Wondo Genet.

**GRAY-HEADED BATIS** (Batis orientalis) – The first was a pair at the Lomi River, then at Bilen Lodge before finally at Sof Omar.

**BLACK-HEADED BATIS** (Batis minor) – Western Black-headed Batis taxon erlangeri were seen at Lake Langano, Awassa and L. Bishoftu, often split from Eastern minor these days.

#### Malaconotidae (Bushshrikes and Allies)

**BRUBRU** (Nilaus afer) – Heard at Bilen and seen nicely south of Yabello.

**NORTHERN PUFFBACK** (Dryoscopus gambensis) – A few sightings from the drier areas.

**BLACK-CROWNED TCHAGRA** (Tchagra senegalus) – Seen well at the Lomi River, then again up at Lalibela.

**THREE-STREAKED TCHAGRA** (Tchagra jamesi) – Just one bird was seen in a dense thorn bush south of Yabello, and very well hidden so not everyone got it.

**RED-NAPED BUSHSHRIKE** (Laniarius ruficeps) – A major want for Phil who'd not seen this in Kenya, we got onto one quite quickly south of Yabello and it hopped into a thorn tree where it showed fairly well for a short period. It was the race rufinuchalis with the red nape.

**TROPICAL BOUBOU (ETHIOPIAN)** (Laniarius aethiopicus aethiopicus) – Now split as Ethiopian Boubou, Tropical Boubou was broken up into 4 species in a study dating from 2008 which the Clements people seem to be unaware of. Nice to hear them duetting, and get some great looks at the Jemma Valley, Lalibela etc. [E]

**SLATE-COLORED BOUBOU** (Laniarius funebris) – Seen very well at Abiata-Shalla NP, and also south of Yabello along the Arero Road.

**ROSY-PATCHED BUSHSHRIKE** (Rhodophoneus cruentus) – Good looks in Awash NP, and then south of Yabello.

**SULPHUR-BREASTED BUSHSHRIKE** (Telophorus sulfureopectus) – One was taped in at Melka Gebdu and showed very well.

**GRAY-HEADED BUSHSHRIKE** (Malaconotus blanchoti) – A single en route to Kibre Mengist, the huge bill is quite striking and the orange on the chest shows it was the race approximans.

#### Laniidae (Shrikes)

**GRAY-BACKED FISCAL** (Lanius excubitoroides) – Just 5 at Abiata-Shalla NP.

**SOMALI FISCAL** (Lanius somalicus) – A total of 5 birds along the Oryx Plains loop in Awash NP, a lifer for most of us I believe.

**SOUTHERN FISCAL** (Lanius collaris) – Widespread in very small numbers.

**WHITE-RUMPED SHRIKE** (Eurocephalus rueppelli) – Seen at Bilen and then at Negelle and Yabello where there were some juvs.

#### Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

**DARK-HEADED ORIOLE** (Oriolus monacha) – Heard at Harennna Forest but then went quiet, but luckily it came good at Wondo Genet where we even saw it very nicely at the lodge. Usually called Ethiopian Oriole rather than the confusing and meaningless Dark-headed Oriole, and very rich



bright yellow bird, surprisingly distinctive. [E]

**AFRICAN BLACK-HEADED ORIOLE** (*Oriolus larvatus*) – Small numbers at Negelle and Yabello.

*Dicruridae (Drongos)*

**FORK-TAILED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus adsimilis*) – Seen on most days except in the highland areas.

*Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)*

**AFRICAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone viridis*) – Widespread, there was a nest with juvs at the Hilton Hotel.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**STRESEMANN'S BUSH-CROW** (*Zavattariornis stresemanni*) – One of the icon birds for this tour, the local guys kept assuring us we'd see it but we were almost into Yabello when I finally called a stop, and we got onto a dozen birds. Next day we had nice looks at 7 along the Soda Road, they unexpectedly did remind me of Piapiacs though, another colonial terrestrial corvid. Restricted range and threatened by land clearance/population pressure. [E]

**CAPE CROW** (*Corvus capensis*) – Small numbers hopping about on the short turf in the highlands.

**PIED CROW** (*Corvus albus*) – Very widespread, the default corvid for most of the trip.

**SOMALI CROW** (*Corvus edithae*) – We had one early sighting by the Yangudy WR, then got into them down around Negelle and Yabello. They do remind me very much of small Brown-necked Ravens.

**FAN-TAILED RAVEN** (*Corvus rhipidurus*) – Very widespread and vocal, a species most of us had seen in Oman but nice to get it in Africa

**THICK-BILLED RAVEN** (*Corvus crassirostris*) – This one took ages to come, with a bird flying away at Firga the really first rather unsatisfactory view, before we finally nailed them at Shashemene and had 3 near Goba. Singles also at Wondo Genet. This species has the biggest beak of any passerine and is one bizarre bird. [E]

*Alaudidae (Larks)*

**GILLETT'S LARK** (*Mirafraga gilletti*) – A great look at 2 singing birds near Awash Falls Lodge in the thorn scrub there. [E]

**SIDAMO LARK** (*Heteromirafraga sidamoensis*) – Merid knew exactly where to go, and we had one in display as soon as we got off the bus, getting some very good looks at one of Africa's rarest birds. Some breaking news is the larks at Jijiga in Eastern Ethiopia are now confidently identified as this species, and it is also the same as Archer's Lark of Somalia, now synonymised with this species, so the range is more extensive than thought but still very small and relict. [E]

**FOXY LARK** (*Calendulauda alpex*) – One singing bird along the Genale Dam Road, and some saw it south of Yabello. Now split from Fawn-colored Lark of old.

**CHESTNUT-BACKED SPARROW-LARK** (*Eremopterix leucotis*) – A flock of 8 en route to Bilen Lodge.

**CHESTNUT-HEADED SPARROW-LARK** (*Eremopterix signatus*) – Seen nicely at Bilen and Lake Beseka lava flows.

**ERLANGER'S LARK** (*Calandrella erlangeri*) – Nice looks at this handsome rufous-capped species on the Sululta Plains on our first outing. [E]

**SOMALI SHORT-TOED LARK** (*Calandrella somalica*) – Seen nicely on the Liben Plain, the pinkish bill a useful field character on good views.

**THEKLA LARK** (*Galerida theklae*) – Four day records from the Sululta Plains, Bale Mts and Lalibela, these birds may be a split as Short-crested Lark, a highland endemic.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**PLAIN MARTIN** (*Riparia paludicola*) – The Brown-throated Sand Martin was seen on six days in small numbers, down in the Rift Valley.

**BANDED MARTIN** (*Riparia cincta*) – 2 at the stream en route to Dinsho were the only record.

**ROCK MARTIN** (*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*) – Small numbers in the highlands.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Just one late migrant was at Lake Beseka.

**ETHIOPIAN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo aethiopica*) – Also quite sparse, we saw them at Awash and near Negelle.

**WIRE-TAILED SWALLOW** (*Hirundo smithii*) – Two at the Genale River bridge and one at Awassa, surprisingly uncommon.

**WHITE-TAILED SWALLOW** (*Hirundo megaensis*) – This was unexpectedly nice, a very striking and distinctive species, the male we had along the road to Soda was particularly striking, I was surprised at how bright the white was and how extensive. A rare and restricted range species which occurs alongside the Bush-Crow for much of its range. [E]

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** (*Cecropis daurica*) – Small numbers in the highlands, seen nicely at Lalibela too. These are melanocrissus, the resident race.

**LESSER STRIPED-SWALLOW** (*Cecropis abyssinica*) – Just four day records, seen at the Lomi River and Awassa.

**COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN** (*Delichon urbicum*) – One late migrant was at Melka Gebdu.

**BLACK SAWWING** (*Psalidoprocne pristoptera pristoptera*) – According to my Ethiopian Bird Atlas the birds at Harenna Forest are the same subspecies as those at Lalibela, the Blue Saw-wing, though I never got the light good enough to see the color of the gloss.

**BLACK SAWWING** (*Psalidoprocne pristoptera antinorii*) – The first were near Kibre Mengist where you could clearly see how brown they were, and we also had them at Wondo Genet. Potentially a split as Brown Saw-wing.

*Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)*

**WHITE-WINGED BLACK-TIT** (*Melaniparus leucomelas*) – A nice look at one at Abiata-Shalla NP.

**WHITE-BACKED BLACK-TIT** (*Melaniparus leuconotus*) – Nice looks at Dinsho, an unobtrusive and quite elusive bird. [E]

**SOMALI TIT** (*Melaniparus thruppi*) – Three at Sof Omar mobbing the Pearl-spotted Owlet, and one near Yabello.

*Certhiidae (Treecreepers)*

**SPOTTED CREEPER** (*Salpornis spilonotus*) – After quite a bit of tape playing Merid got us onto a fine bird at the Awassa hotel, sat motionless on a lichen branch where it was very well camouflaged.

*Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)*

**NORTHERN BROWNBUL** (*Phyllastrephus strepitans*) – A couple seen at Sof Omar, looking remarkably like giant *Acrocephalus*!

**COMMON BULBUL (COMMON)** (*Pycnonotus barbatus schoanus*) – This was the Common Bulbul around Addis and in the highlands, with the pale vent.

**COMMON BULBUL (COMMON)** (*Pycnonotus barbatus spurius*) – This one is usually called Dark-capped Bulbul and has yellow undertail coverts; we saw them in the rift valley. The IOC split all 4 taxa as *allospecies*, which seems reasonable.

**COMMON BULBUL (SOMALI)** (*Pycnonotus barbatus somaliensis*) – Dean found us a couple of birds at Bilen Lodge which had small white neck marks and blotchy chests, plus the white undertail coverts. Good enough I reckon, though there do seem to be narrow zones of intergradation between some of these taxa.

**COMMON BULBUL (DODSON'S)** (*Pycnonotus barbatus dodsoni*) – This was the one with the quite large white neck patch, yellow vent and mottled chest, first seen at Sof Omar, and fairly common around Yabello and Negelle.

#### Macrosphenidae (African Warblers)

**NORTHERN CROMBEC** (*Sylvietta brachyura*) – Three sightings from Melka Gebdu and Lake Langano and L. Abiata.

**RED-FACED CROMBEC** (*Sylvietta whytii*) – The first was at Melka Gebdu, then seen again at Lake Abiata and near Yabello.

#### Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

**BROWN WOODLAND-WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus umbrovirens*) – A nice view of a couple at Dinsho, a very dull brownish *Phyllosc.*

#### Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

**EASTERN OLIVACEOUS WARBLER** (*Iduna pallida*) – Phil saw one in the acacias at the Hilton just before the Brown Parisomas, but he is not sure if anyone else got it?

**AFRICAN YELLOW-WARBLER** (*Iduna natalensis massaica*) – One singing well at Lake Keteka was unexpected, and it showed very well. Usually called Dark-capped Yellow Warbler these days.

**SEDGE WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) – A late migrant at Lake Ziway.

**AFRICAN REED-WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus baeticatus*) – These were a surprise in rank montane herbage at 2200m in the Harenn Forest. We heard them singing, a typical *Acro* song, and got nice views of an unexpectedly rufous-looking typical reed warbler with a small supercilium. It seems an odd place for them to be and I wonder which taxon is involved, presumably *cinnamomeus*?

**LESSER SWAMP-WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus gracilirostris*) – A good view of one at Lake Ziway, and another at Lake Awassa.

#### Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

**CINNAMON BRACKEN-WARBLER** (*Bradypterus cinnamomeus*) – Seen well as we came out of the Bale Mts NP, and heard at the Ankober Serin site and Harenn Forest.

#### Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

**YELLOW-BREASTED APALIS** (*Apalis flavida*) – Seen very well on our afternoon 7km west of Negelle, and again south of Yabello. These latter two sites must involve one of the potentially splittable brown-tailed races, presumably *flavocincta*. The Negelle birds had a quite marked grey border to the yellow chest band, both above and below, and a small dark breast spot. I did not see the Yabello birds well.

**GREEN-BACKED CAMAROPTERA (GRAY-BACKED)** (*Camaroptera brachyura brevicaudata*) – Widespread and vocal, for once I agree with Clements in lumping these green and grey-backed taxa as they sound much the same. I still like Bleating Bush Warbler though for the common name.

**RED-FRONTED WARBLER** (*Urorhipis rufifrons*) – Vocal birds in Awash were hard to see, but eventually one popped out for most of us to get some great looks.

**GRAY WREN-WARBLER** (*Calamonastes simplex*) – Heard in Awash, and showed very nicely one afternoon near Negelle.

**RED-FACED CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola erythrops*) – Good looks at Awassa.

**SINGING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola cantans*) – Two showed well by the African Reed Warblers at Harenn Forest.

**BORAN CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola bodessa*) – This one took a bit of effort south of Yabello as it was calling far away, and then things got clouded when an Ashy *Cisticola* appeared close by, though the streaked crown eventually revealed its identity. Happily the plain brown-crowned Boran did come in and we got a fine scope view, though of course the call is the best feature!

**RATTLING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola chiniana*) – Quite widespread and vocal in the drier country.

**ASHY CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola cinereolus*) – One in Awash and one south of Yabello, clearly greyer than the Rattling and vocally different.

**WINDING CISTICOLA (ETHIOPIAN)** (*Cisticola galactotes lugubris*) – This was surprisingly common around Addis, also seen at Dinsho and then at Lalibela. The voice is quite distinct to the real Winding *Cisticola*, and most authorities split it these days. [E]

**SIFFLING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola brachypterus*) – Two by the roadside at the Fox Kestrel site.

**FOXY CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola troglodytes*) – A good view of two of these distinctive rusty birds by the huge cliff with Fox Kestrels, on the way down to the Jemma Valley. A good trip bird.

**ZITTING CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola juncidis*) – A great view of one on the Sululta Plains, a perfect match for the one in the book too with a pronounced plain pale buff nape. Heard around Bilen Lodge too.

**DESERT CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola aridulus*) – Two in Awash NP showed well and called nicely.

**PECTORAL-PATCH CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola brunnescens*) – One on the Sululta Plains and seen again on the Liben Plain.

**BUFF-BELLIED WARBLER** (*Phyllolais pulchella*) – Six day records, seen at Awash, Awassa, Lake Langano, Abiata-Shalla and Wondo Genet.

**TAWNY-FLANKED PRINIA** (*Prinia subflava*) – Widespread and vocal, we had one nest building in Harenn Forest.

**PALE PRINIA** (*Prinia somalica*) – A good look at two near Yabello on our late pm foray.

**YELLOW-BELLIED EREMOMELA** (*Eremomela icteropygialis*) – A great look 7km west of Negelle, and then seen again south of Yabello.

**GREEN-BACKED EREMOMELA** (*Eremomela canescens*) – One in the Lomi River valley was a nice trip addition and showed very well.

#### Sylviidae (Sylviids, Parrotbills and Allies)

**ABYSSINIAN CATBIRD** (*Parophasma galinieri*) – I was very taken by these vocal but elusive birds, we eventually got very nice looks at Dinsho and then as we came out of the Bale Mts NP, a monotypic endemic genus too. [E]

**BROWN WARBLER** (*Parisoma lugens*) – Two in the Acacia abyssinica trees in the Hilton gardens, they showed very nicely.

**BROWN WARBLER** (*Parisoma lugens griseiventris*) – A very good look at one in the Hagenia forest as we came out of the Bale Mts, I must say I was decidedly underwhelmed and can't see a split being realistic. [E]

**BANDED WARBLER** (*Parisoma boehmi*) – Two birds along the Soda road south of Negelle, but surprisingly flighty and hard to see well.

#### Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)

**BROAD-RINGED WHITE-EYE (MONTANE)** (*Zosterops poliogastrus poliogastrus*) – Nominate birds with black bills and white bellies plus yellowish forehead were widespread around Addis and in the Bale Mts, whilst up at Lalibela I was surprised to find quite bright yellow white-eyes which must presumably be the race kaffensis. I wonder how many splits may be in this group?

**WHITE-BREASTED WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops abyssinicus*) – We first got these at Lake Awassa (and Lake Langano for some), then there were a few seen daily up at Lalibela. We also had brief looks at the all yellow jubaensis along the Arero Road south of Yabello, and again one wonders about the split potential here? The pale bill and small eye-ring plus the greyish upperparts and whitish underparts with yellow chin and throat were distinctive on nominate birds.

#### Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes)

**SCALY CHATTERER** (*Turdoides aylmeri*) – These elusive birds were heard south of Yabello, and eventually showed really well, even scope views, as we were heading back to the bus, an excellent pick-up and a lifer for almost everyone.

**RUFIOUS CHATTERER** (*Turdoides rubiginosa*) – Nice looks at Melka Gebdu, then at Abiata-Shalla and finally south of Yabello.

**WHITE-RUMPED BABBLER** (*Turdoides leucopygia*) – Our first was the spectacular white-faced group of 4 on the way down to Melka Gebdu, then there was the group of 3 at Sof Omar with pale around the eye (maybe race lacuum), before the dark throated birds at Wondo Genet which are presumably omoensis. It was also heard at Lalibela. [E]

#### Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

**GRAYISH FLYCATCHER** (*Bradornis microrhynchus*) – This nondescript small flycatcher was seen at Awash, then Negelle and Yabello. It is usually called African Gray Flycatcher, not sure why Clements has rechristened it. The race pumilus has somewhat inexplicably been split as Ethiopian Grey Flycatcher in the past, but there are two other races here as well.....

**ABYSSINIAN SLATY-FLYCATCHER** (*Melaenornis chocolatinus*) – The first of this distinctive pale-eyed species was at the Trinity Church in Addis, then seen again at Dinsho, with a few folks seeing it at Lalibela. [E]

**NORTHERN BLACK-FLYCATCHER** (*Melaenornis edolioides*) – A few at Awash and Yabello.

**DUSKY-BROWN FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa adusta*) – Here we go again- African Dusky Flycatcher everywhere except Clements, where cultural imperialism is alive and well. We had some 7 day records of this other small nondescript flycatcher.

**RED-BACKED SCRUB-ROBIN** (*Cercotrichas leucophrys*) – We saw the white-winged red-backed race leucoptera at Bilen, Awash, Negelle and Yabello.

**RUEPPELL'S ROBIN-CHAT** (*Cossypha semirufa*) – Seen nicely at the Hilton, then Lake Langano, Wondo Genet and Lalibela.

**WHITE-BROWED ROBIN-CHAT** (*Cossypha heuglini*) – A nice one at Abiata-Shalla and another at Lalibela. Also called Heuglin's Robin-Chat.

**SPOTTED MORNING-THRUSH** (*Cichladusa guttata*) – This was heard south of Yabello. [\*]

**SEMICOLLARED FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula semitorquata*) – A surprise atop a small tree at the Hilton car park on May 8 was a late female-plumaged Semicollared Flycatcher, a tick for almost everyone including Phil.

**LITTLE ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola rufocinereus*) – The first was at Melka Gebdu, then we had 3 plus 2 juvs at Lake Langano, one adult of which was coming into the restaurant there. Also seen up at Lalibela, very like Forest Rock-Thrush in Madagascar I thought.

**AFRICAN STONECHAT (ETHIOPIAN)** (*Saxicola torquatus albobasatus*) – This seems hard in Ethiopia as we saw precisely one male as we were coming off the Sanetti Plateau, a striking black and white taxon. It seems illogical to split Madagascar and Stejneger's Stonechat but not this highland endemic.

**RUEPPELL'S CHAT** (*Myrmecocichla melaena*) – This black chat with the big white wing patch showed well at the Harwood's Francolin site, and then again at our hotel at Lalibela. [E]

**MOCKING CLIFF-CHAT** (*Thamnodia cinnamomeiventris*) – Amazingly common at the Harwood's Francolin site where we had at least 10 birds, then again at Lake Langano before finally at Lalibela.

**WHITE-WINGED CLIFF-CHAT** (*Thamnodia semirufa*) – Less common than the Mocking Cliff-Chat, but seen well at the the Harwood's Francolin site, then at Debre Birhan before the final ones up at Lalibela. [E]

**FAMILIAR CHAT** (*Cercomela familiaris*) – Three birds at the Lomi River consisted of a pair and at least one juv.

**SOMBRE CHAT** (*Cercomela dubia*) – Great looks at the lava flow at Lake Beseka, where I played Devil's Advocate as I never did clearly see the scalloped undertail which is supposed to be diagnostic. I thought Blackstart was much whiter beneath with paler undertail coverts, not that hard to tell once you sort out the distinctions. We saw some 4 birds here and it's a very good restricted range lifer. [E]

**BLACKSTART** (*Cercomela melanura*) – Pleasing to see this at Lake Beseka lava flow, where we had 2 birds on each visit, most of us had seen them in Oman before.

**MOORLAND CHAT** (*Cercomela sordida*) – This occurs even in Addis, and we saw a few on the Sululta Plains, and at the Bale Mts, but oddly none for sure at Lalibela.

**MOURNING WHEATEAR (SCHALOW'S)** (*Oenanthe lugens lugubris*) – Another taxonomic mess, this is split by Terry in his FG as Abyssinian Black Wheatear *O. lugubris*, with Schalow's Wheatear being an East African endemic. IOC lump these two, which is bizarre, and the whole complex badly needs unpicking. Anyway, we got nice views at Melka Gebdu and in the mountains by the Harwood's Francolin, then had a pair around our hotel at Lalibela. [E]

**RED-BREASTED WHEATEAR** (*Oenanthe bottae*) – I was surprised at how few we saw, with just a couple on the Sululta Plains, one en route to the Jemma Valley and one near Shashemene.

#### Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)



**ABYSSINIAN GROUND-THRUSH** (*Geokichla piaggiae*) – Most folks got to see this one at Dinsho, and it was also heard and seen by most at Kibre Mengist.

**GROUNDSCRAPER THRUSH** (*Psophocichla litsitsirupa simensis*) – This is a rather distinctive highland form and must be a good prospect as split. We saw 7 on the Sululta Plains, some en route to other highland sites, and some nice ones at Lalibela.

**ABYSSINIAN THRUSH** (*Turdus abyssinicus abyssinicus*) – The Abyssinian or Mountain thrush was the common thrush of the highlands.

**AFRICAN THRUSH** (*Turdus pelios*) – One was singing nicely at Awash NP and we had another near Negelle.

**AFRICAN BARE-EYED THRUSH** (*Turdus tephronotus*) – Good views near Negelle and then near Yabello where there was a juv. with a spotted front.

#### *Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**GREATER BLUE-EARED GLOSSY-STARLING** (*Lamprotornis chalybaeus*) – Seen almost every day of the trip, the default glossy starling here.

**RUEPPELL'S GLOSSY-STARLING** (*Lamprotornis purpuroptera*) – A few were seen in the Rift Valley.

**GOLDEN-BREASTED STARLING** (*Lamprotornis regius*) – Just two sightings, one near Negelle and another 2 near Yabello, a spectacular bird.

**SUPERB STARLING** (*Lamprotornis superbus*) – Quite common in the Rift Valley and the drier areas.

**SHELLEY'S STARLING** (*Lamprotornis shelleyi*) – We got into these near Negelle with some 30 seen, then had a couple more day records of small numbers near Yabello.

**VIOLET-BACKED STARLING** (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*) – Just a pair seen at Melka Gebdu, unexpectedly scarce.

**WHITE-CROWNED STARLING** (*Spreo albicapillus*) – This odd large starling was first seen near the Liben Plain, then a couple of times near Yabello where there was a buffy coloured leucistic bird with a yellow bill, in with a flock of normal birds and with the same markings shadowed in buff.

**RED-WINGED STARLING** (*Onychognathus morio*) – First seen at Yabello Motel, then at Wondo Genet and Lalibela.

**SLENDER-BILLED STARLING** (*Onychognathus tenuirostris*) – Five day records from the highlands, the first at the Ankober Serin site, then in the mountains at the Harwood's Francolin site, up in the Bale Mts before finally just a couple at Lalibela.

**BRISTLE-CROWNED STARLING** (*Onychognathus salvadorii*) – One spectacular bird, we managed some fine looks at Sof Omar, I'd forgotten just how large and spectacular this species really is! Also a couple along the Genale Dam road.

**WHITE-BILLED STARLING** (*Onychognathus albirostris*) – A fabulous pair drinking in the Lomi Valley, then quite widespread at Lalibela with a day count of 15 the most we saw. [E]

**MAGPIE STARLING** (*Speculipastor bicolor*) – Just a single bird en route to Genale Dam, a male looking black with a big white wing flash.

#### *Buphagidae (Oxpeckers)*

**RED-BILLED OXPECKER** (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) – Four day records but only singles and two's seen at Lake Langano and Negelle/Yabello.

#### *Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)*

**COLLARED SUNBIRD** (*Hedydipna collaris*) – A male at Awassa fish market was the only sighting.

**NILE VALLEY SUNBIRD** (*Hedydipna metallica*) – Six males and 3 females at Bilen Lodge, and 2 then two pairs in Awash NP. Some of us had seen it in Oman before but a nice bird to get.

**WESTERN OLIVE SUNBIRD** (*Cyanomitra obscura*) – Just one at Wondo Genet this trip.

**SCARLET-CHESTED SUNBIRD** (*Chalcomitra senegalensis*) – Eight day records with some nice males seen.

**HUNTER'S SUNBIRD** (*Chalcomitra hunteri*) – I still think the male with the purple shoulder patch at Awassa was this species, I don't believe Scarlet-chested can be so similar. We also saw a couple south of Yabello complete with purple rump.

**TACAZZE SUNBIRD** (*Nectarinia tacaze*) – Quite common in the highlands and a spectacular large bird it is too.

**BEAUTIFUL SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris pulchellus*) – Quite common in the Rift Valley and the dry acacia country.

**MARIQUA SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris mariquensis*) – A few seen in the drier Rift Valley zones.

**PURPLE-BANDED SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris bifasciatus*) – A male south of Yabello was distinctly small and short-billed, with a narrow purple pectoral band. Poorly known in Ethiopia.

**SHINING SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris habessinicus*) – Very nice looks at Melka Gebdu and then at Bilen and Awash. Most of had seen it in Arabia but good to log it for Africa.

**VARIABLE SUNBIRD (YELLOW-BELLIED)** (*Cinnyris venustus fazoqlensis*) – We saw this yellow-bellied taxon at the Jemma Valley, Bilen, Awassa and then up at Lalibela.

#### *Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)*

**MOUNTAIN WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla clara*) – Seen at Malka Gebdu, the Lomi River, Awash River and finally at Lalibela, one of the most graceful of all the wagtails.

**AFRICAN PIPIT** (*Anthus cinnamomeus*) – Just 5 day records with singles or pairs at the Sululta Plains, L. Keteka, and Abiata-Shalla.

**LONG-BILLED PIPIT** (*Anthus similis*) – Two at the Harwood's Francolin site, then several sightings from Lalibela, all quite dark looking and presumably hararensis. This whole complex could do with a proper re-evaluation as cryptic species are likely to be involved.

**PLAIN-BACKED PIPIT** (*Anthus leucophrys*) – Only seen at the Liben Plain where presumably the race omoensis, and again bearing a re-evaluation as regards its taxonomic status.

**ABYSSINIAN LONGCLAW** (*Macronyx flavicollis*) – I made this a priority on the Sululta Plains as I saw how few are reported on various trip reports, and sure enough we had nice looks at two the first visit and then saw no more. [E]

#### *Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)*

**STRIOLATED BUNTING** (*Emberiza striolata*) – The dull streak-throated and small looking buntings we saw on that first morning at our Lalibela hotel look likely to be this species, I think both this and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting occur here.

**CINNAMON-BREASTED BUNTING** (*Emberiza tahapisi*) – 4 at the Harwood's Francolin site, then some quite puzzling buntings at Lalibela, some of which were this species but others looked small and pale with streaky throats, so much so I think both this species and Striolated occur here.

**SOMALI BUNTING** (*Emberiza poliopleura*) – Four birds in all, seen at Awash, Negelle and Yabello.

*Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)*

**ANKOBER SERIN** (*Carduelis ankoberensis*) – A loose flock of about 20 birds was on the cliff face at Gemasa Gebdel, showing well in the scope and a great restricted range endemic to get, in a spectacular site with grazing Geladas and lads selling pungent goat wool hats and oregano! [E]

**YELLOW-CROWNED CANARY** (*Serinus flavivertex*) – Just two sightings, from Debre Birhan and then at Goba in the Bale Mts.

**YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY** (*Serinus mozambicus*) – The only ones were down in the Jemma Valley.

**ABYSSINIAN SISKIN** (*Serinus nigriceps*) – Quite common on the Sululta Plains and up on the Sanetti Plateau, with a nice tinkling Eurasian Goldfinch-like song [E]

**AFRICAN CITRIL** (*Serinus citrinelloides*) – Lots at Awassa and common up at Lalibela, with a few at Lake Keteka and Lake Langano.

**REICHENOW'S SEEDEATER** (*Serinus reichenowi*) – Seen well at Melka Gebdu, then at Awash and Negelle/Yabello, but only in very small numbers. A split from what was Black-throated Canary.

**YELLOW-RUMPED SERIN** (*Serinus xanthopygius*) – This elusive and rather nondescript endemic bird showed briefly by the roadside at the Fox Kestrel cliffs, then we had just one coming in to the hotel grounds at Lalibela. [E]

**WHITE-BELLIED CANARY** (*Serinus dorsostriatus*) – Two at Awash showed nicely, then we had one south of Yabello.

**YELLOW-THROATED SERIN** (*Serinus flavigula*) – Five birds at Melka Gebdu, one of the first species we saw there, with a singing bird by the river. [E]

**SALVADORI'S SERIN** (*Serinus xantholaemus*) – This one can be hard but was worth the 3-hour drive when we got 3 of them feeding on weed seeds by the new visitor centre at Sof Omar. Great looks too. [E]

**NORTHERN GROSBEAK-CANARY** (*Serinus donaldsoni*) – We left it late, but had a pair on the afternoon along the Arero road south of Yabello. [E]

**STREAKY SEEDEATER** (*Serinus striolatus*) – Quite common and widespread in the highland areas.

**BROWN-RUMPED SEEDEATER** (*Serinus tristriatus*) – One of the commonest endemics, even in Addis, and throughout the highland sites. [E]

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**SHELLEY'S RUFOUS SPARROW** (*Passer shelleyi*) – Seen near Negelle, then again along the Soda road south of Yabello.

**SWAINSON'S SPARROW** (*Passer swainsonii*) – Seen on almost every day of the tour, the dark grey underparts were quite distinct.

**CHESTNUT SPARROW** (*Passer eminibey*) – 15 at Lake Keteka were unexpected, then we had one at Awash.

**YELLOW-SPOTTED PETRONIA** (*Petronia pyrgita*) – Four day records, the first in the Jemma valley, then again at Negelle and Yabello.

**BUSH PETRONIA** (*Petronia dentata*) – Seen at Melka Gebdu and in the Jemma Valley.

*Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)*

**RED-BILLED BUFFALO-WEAVER** (*Bubalornis niger*) – Small numbers at Awash, Bilen and Negelle/Yabello.

**WHITE-HEADED BUFFALO-WEAVER** (*Dinemellia dinemelli*) – Quite common down in the Rift Valley, a kind of gaudy ugly looking thing.

**SPECKLE-FRONTED WEAVER** (*Sporopipes frontalis*) – Four in the Jemma Valley were a good trip tick.

**WHITE-BROWED SPARROW-WEAVER** (*Plocepasser mahali*) – Common down in the Rift Valley.

**GRAY-HEADED SOCIAL-WEAVER** (*Pseudonigrita arnaudi*) – Nice looks at around 30 of these down south of Yabello, where they were nesting with Black-capped Social-Weavers.

**BLACK-CAPPED SOCIAL-WEAVER** (*Pseudonigrita cabanisi*) – Seen at one site along the Soda road south of Yabello, nesting with Grey-headed Social-Weavers.

**RED-HEADED WEAVER** (*Anaplectes rubriceps*) – A pair were nesting at Sof Omar, also seen south of Yabello and at Awassa.

**BAGLAFECHT WEAVER** (*Ploceus baglafecht*) – Widespread and quite common at the higher altitudes, with a variety of plumage types including emini and the nominate.

**LITTLE WEAVER** (*Ploceus luteolus*) – Uncommon, seen at Melka Gebdu and then south of Yabello.

**SPECTACLED WEAVER** (*Ploceus ocularis*) – A handful of singles, from Awash and Awassa.

**VITELLINE MASKED-WEAVER** (*Ploceus vitellinus*) – Seen nesting at Lake Langano, and a couple near Yabello.

**RUEPPELL'S WEAVER** (*Ploceus galbula*) – This striking bird was first seen at Melka Gebdu, then was quite common in the northern rift at Bilen and Awash. Most of us had seen them in Oman, but nice to get breeding dress males.

**SPEKE'S WEAVER** (*Ploceus spekei*) – A nice nesting colony in Yabello near the motel, then it was seen again at Awassa.

**VILLAGE WEAVER** (*Ploceus cucullatus*) – Widespread in small numbers.

**SALVADORI'S WEAVER** (*Ploceus dichrocephalus*) – This was a major coup as I'd hoped to go along the Soda Road for it but got overruled, but a check at a possible site along the road to Genale Dam paid off nicely when it was the first bird I saw when I got off the bus!. There were some 5 males and a couple of females here, with a nest being seen too. More usually called Juba Weaver, and a great bird to get on the tour, if only we could get White-winged Dove which I suspect will be at this site too.

**CHESTNUT WEAVER** (*Ploceus rubiginosus*) – Nice looks at some breeding dress birds near Bilen Lodge and at Awash.

**RED-BILLED QUELEA** (*Quelea quelea*) – Seen in the Jemma Valley and at Bilen Lodge, where some were in breeding dress.

**ORANGE BISHOP** (*Euplectes franciscanus*) – The common bishop down in the rift, many of them in or close to full breeding dress. Northern Red Bishop is the name in Africa.

**YELLOW BISHOP** (*Euplectes capensis*) – Seen on three dates in the Sululta Plains and near Goba.

**WHITE-WINGED WIDOWBIRD** (*Euplectes albonotatus*) – Seen on the way to Sof Omar and near the Liben Plain.

**RED-COLLARED WIDOWBIRD** (*Euplectes ardens*) – Seen near Sof Omar by a couple, then one near Goba and finally a couple in non-breeding dress at our hotel at Lalibela.

**FAN-TAILED WIDOWBIRD** (*Euplectes axillaris*) – Only seen briefly twice, with one near Awassa the best.

**GROSBEAK WEAVER** (*Amblyospiza albifrons*) – Just one at Awassa on the last day there.

### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**YELLOW-BELLIED WAXBILL** (*Coccyzygia quartinia*) – Seen in the Haremma Forest, then a few up at Lalibela, also called East African Sweet and a very pretty little thing.

**CRIMSON-RUMPED WAXBILL** (*Estrilda rhodopyga*) – Seven day records, the first at Melka Gebdu then small numbers down in the rift.

**COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – Very few, seen at two sites at Awassa in small numbers and also at the stream en route to Dinsho.

**RED-RUMPED WAXBILL** (*Estrilda chamosyna*) – One bird in the dry thorn scrub along the Arero Road late afternoon, a good pick-up. More usually called Black-cheeked Waxbill rather than the confusing and unhelpful imposed Clementsism.

**RED-CHEEKED CORDONBLEU** (*Uraeginthus bengalus*) – Common in the drier areas.

**PURPLE GRENADIER** (*Granatina ianthinogaster*) – Uncommon in the drier areas, we saw it in Awash and near Yabello, but only singles except for a lovely pair near Yabello where Ethel finally got it!

**GREEN-WINGED PYTILIA** (*Pytilia melba*) – Tom got onto this at Awash but I think everyone else missed it.

**RED-BILLED FIREFINCH** (*Lagonosticta senegala*) – Widespread in small numbers, it seems to be the default firefinch in Ethiopia.

**AFRICAN FIREFINCH** (*Lagonosticta rubricata*) – Just two at Wondo Genet, the only ones we saw.

**CUT-THROAT** (*Amadina fasciata*) – Five day records, the first 8 at the Lomi River, the 2 at Bilen and Awash and 2 near Yabello.

**BRONZE MANNIKIN** (*Spermestes cucullatus*) – Surprisingly scarce, just 4 day records with the first at Melka Gebdu.

**AFRICAN SILVERBILL** (*Euodice cantans*) – Four day records, the first at the Jemma Valley then at Lake Keteka and Bilen.

### Viduidae (Indigobirds)

**PIN-TAILED WHYDAH** (*Vidua macroura*) – Widespread in small numbers with some fine males seen.

**EASTERN PARADISE-WHYDAH** (*Vidua paradisaea*) – Tom and Kristine saw this in Awash.

**STEEL-BLUE WHYDAH** (*Vidua hypocherina*) – A pair at Awash NP were a very nice surprise of an uncommon species.

**STRAW-TAILED WHYDAH** (*Vidua fischeri*) – Another nice surprise at Awash NP where this fine male showed very well. Dean saw one near Yabello later too.

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## MAMMALS

**BLACK-FACED VERVET MONKEY** (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) – More usually known as the Grivet, we saw them at Wondo Genet and Lalibela, where a troop would visit our hotel and pinch onions from the kitchen!

**VERVET** (*Cercopithecus pygerythrus*) – I think the vervets around Sof Omar and near Negelle and Yabello are this species, the whole complex has now been split.

**HAMADRYAS BABOON** (*Papio hamadryas*) – This Horn of Africa endemic was one I was very keen to see, and we were fortunate to have about 15 by the bridge en route to Bilen, although we were forbidden to take photos due to lingering bridge paranoia! We also saw them en route to Sof Omar, the pink-faced males with their big manes are very striking.

**OLIVE BABOON** (*Papio anubis*) – A few sightings from Bilen, Awash and Wondo Genet.

**GELADA** (*Theropithecus gelada*) – A trip highlight was watching about 40 of this strange distant relative of the baboons grazing on the short sward at Ankober, the males very striking with their long furry manes. A mother carrying her baby had the infant's tail wrapped around her own, something I'd never noted with baboons proper. [E]

**MANTLED GUEREZA** (*Colobus guereza*) – The Guereza Colobus was seen at Haremma, the Genaale Bridge and then near Kibre Mengist.

**SCRUB HARE** (*Lepus saxatilis*) – The hares we saw as we went to the Melka Gebdu Valley early morning seem most likely to be this species, sometimes called Ethiopian Hare.

**CAPE HARE** (*Lepus capensis*) – Hares at Bilen and Awash seem likely to be *Lepus (c.) fagani*, listed as a subspecies of Cape Hare or sometimes split as Abyssinian Hare.

**STARCK'S HARE** (*Lepus starcki*) – Nice looks at 3 of this striking and distinctive species on the Sanetti Plateau. [E]

**UNSTRIPED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Xerus rutilus*) – A couple at Bilen and then 3 at Yabello.

**STRIPED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Xerus erythropus*) – One was seen by some near Negelle.

**GAMBIAN SUN SQUIRREL** (*Heliosciurus gambianus*) – Two at Awassa seem likely to be this species.

**ETHIOPIAN MOLE-RAT** (*Tachyoryctes macrocephalus*) – This weird quite large blunt-headed creature was seen up on the Sanetti Plateau, with one actually sitting up in its burrow and foraging around the edge. Also called Giant Root-Rat and very pleasing to see them well. [E]

**SIMIEN FOX (ETHIOPIAN WOLF)** (*Canis simensis*) – A major trip highlight was seeing some 10 individuals of this, perhaps the most beautiful and certainly one of the rarest of all canids, on the Sanetti Plateau, with some really close to the bus and quite unconcerned with us. Great. [E]

**COMMON JACKAL** (*Canis aureus*) – One lovely animal was on the Sululta Plain one morning, also called Golden Jackal.

**SPOTTED HYAENA** (*Crocuta crocuta*) – Ethel and Kibrom plus the guard saw what was apparently this species at Dinsho.

**ROCK HYRAX** (*Procavia capensis*) – Not Rock Hyrax but *Procavia habessinica*, we saw 3 at the Ankober Serin site, with a diagnostic large dark spot on the back which makes it this species. A very dark animal was at the Lake Beseka lava flow, matching the lava in color, and there was one at Sof Omar.

**BUSH (YELLOW-SPOTTED) HYRAX** (*Heterohyrax brucei*) – One with a whitish belly was up a tree at Sof Omar and proves to be this species.

**WARTHOG** (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*) – A few at Awash and Bilen, and common in the Bale Mts.

**HIPPOPOTAMUS** (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) – Just 3 distant animals at Lake Ziway.

**MOUNTAIN NYALA** (*Tragelaphus buxtoni*) – About 20 of this rare and beautiful montane antelope were seen at Dinsho, including some large bucks. [E]

**MENELICK'S BUSHBUCK** (*Tragelaphus scriptus meneliki*) – This large rather densely furred bushbuck was seen well at Dinsho and is likely to be a split, the males are certainly very different to Common Bushbuck lacking stripes and spots. [E]

**LESSER KUDU** (*Tragelaphus imberbis*) – Just two were seen in Awash NP.

**BUSH (GRAY) DUIKER** (*Sylvicapra grimmia*) – Three singles from the Sululta Plain, Melka Gebdu and near Dinsho.



**BOHOR REEDBUCK** (*Redunca redunca*) – Seen twice at Dinsho, with one on the first trip and 5 on the second.

**BEISA ORYX** (*Oryx beisa*) – 2 at Awash one day and herds of 22 and 20 there next day.

**KLIPSPRINGER** (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) – I am pretty sure we saw one at Sof Omar, but it was a poor view.

**SALT'S DIK-DIK** (*Madoqua saltiana*) – Nice looks at a few at Bilen and Awash.

**GUENTHER'S DIK-DIK** (*Madoqua guentheri*) – Three sightings from south of Yabello.

**SOEMMERING'S GAZELLE** (*Gazella soemmerringi*) – A priority at Awash, where we got good looks at some 14 of this odd and scarce gazelle with the big white rump on the Oryx Plains loop. [\[E\]](#)

**GRANT'S GAZELLE** (*Gazella granti*) – A few at Abiata-Shalla were nice to see.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Favorite trip birds were a highly diverse bunch ranging from the obvious to the unexpected--barbets scored unexpectedly well with various great views and behaviors being popular. Turacos also featured, as did the Bush-Crow and the White-tailed Swallow, the latter much nicer than anticipated. I voted for Abyssinian Long-eared Owl, which was such an adventure and so lucky to get. Rouget's Rail was a hit, as was Wattled Crane and the Abyssinian Catbird, and the Simien Wolf was an absolute star, what a beautiful animal that one is.

One mammal we saw is not listed in the FG database, and that's the rare Bale Monkey, *Chlorocebus djamdjamensis*, which we saw remarkably well at Harennna Forest, with 3 animals including a mother and her baby sitting right out in the open for ages and only vanishing as I got my camera. Apparently they eat almost entirely bamboo shoots and this is the main site for them.

Another mammal lacking is *Arvicanthus blicki*, Blick's (Unstriped) Grass Rat, which was the common rodent on the Sanetti Plateau and must be a major food source for the Simien Wolf.

Nile Crocodiles, *Crocodylus niloticus*, were seen in the Jemma River and at Awash Falls, with young Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus* at Lake Ziway.

The very large Leopard Tortoise, *Geochelone pardalis*, was seen several times at Awash--I was amazed at how big they can get, almost up to Giant Tortoise size. Our driver Wonde moved one off of the main highway too.

## BUTTERFLIES

An unexpectedly good tour for them even compared to the riches of Ghana. The most amazing sight was the thousands of African Beaks migrating along the dirt road through the Harennna Forest, with a constant stream of dozens of them going by during our picnic lunch.

Other species identified included Citrus Swallowtail *Papilio demodocus*, Narrow Blue-banded Swallowtail, *Papilio nireus*, Red Tip, *Colotis antevippe*, at Bilen, Scarlet Tip, *Colotis danae*, at Sof Omar, African Orange Tip(?), *Colotis evenina*, at Awash, *Servona Acraea*, *Acraea servona*, at Debre Birhan, Eyed Pansy, *Junonia orithya*, at Harennna, One Pip Policeman, *Coeliades anchises*, at Yabello.

I used *Some Butterflies of Ethiopia* (a pocket photographic guide) by Kebede Tadesse as my primer, thank you, Tom!

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**Totals for the tour: 433 bird taxa and 31 mammal taxa**