



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe

Rainforest Birds & Mammals

30th July to 24th August 2017 (26 days)

Trip Report



White-crested Tiger Heron by Glen Valentine

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader, Glen Valentine

Top 5 birds of the Sao Tome & Principe Extension as voted for by the tour participants:

1. Sao Tome Scops Owl
2. Sao Tome Olive (Maroon) Pigeon & Sao Tome (Dwarf Olive) Ibis
3. Sao Tome Oriole, Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher & Sao Tome Fiscal
4. Giant Sunbird & Black-capped Speirops
5. Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler

Honourable mentions: Sao Tome Shorttail, Sao Tome White-eye, Sao Tome Grosbeak, Principe Speirops, Principe Thrush & Giant Weaver

Top 10 birds of the main Gabon tour as voted for by the tour participants:

1. Lyre-tailed Honeyguide
2. Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk
3. Akun Eagle-Owl
4. Plumed Guineafowl, Black-headed Bee-eater & Finsch's Francolin
5. Gosling's Apalis & Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher
6. Long-tailed Hawk
7. Yellow-throated Nicator
8. Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike
9. Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye & Johanna's Sunbird
10. Red-bellied Malimbe

Honourable mentions: Black-rumped Buttonquail, Grey Pratincole, Yellow-throated & Olive Long-tailed Cuckoos, Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Red-chested Owlet, Bates's Swift, Bare-cheeked Trogon, Black-casqued and White-thighed Hornbills, Black Guineafowl, Spotted Honeyguide, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Angolan Batis, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Bates's Paradise Flycatcher, Sjöstedt's Greenbul, Black-collared Bulbul, Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Ja River Scrub Warbler, Salvadori's Eremomela, Blackcap Illadopsis, Congo Moor Chat, Black-chinned Weaver, Rachel's & Cassin's Malimbés, Woodhouse's Antpecker, Short-tailed Pipit & Black-faced Canary.

Top 5 birds of the Loango Extension as voted for by the tour participants:

1. Vermiculated Fishing Owl
2. Forbes's Plover & White-crested Tiger Heron
3. Violet-tailed Sunbird
4. African River Martin
5. White-crested Hornbill & Shining-blue Kingfisher

Honourable mentions: Hartlaub's Duck, African Finfoot, Damara Tern, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Pel's Fishing Owl, Bates's Nightjar, White-bellied Kingfisher, Loango Weaver & Rosy Bee-eater

Some of the top mammals seen during the tour: Red River Hog, Forest Elephant, Forest Buffalo, Black Colobus, African Palm (Tree) Civet, Sitatunga, Humpback Whale & Gabon Squirrel Galago



Grey Pratincole by Glen Valentine

Tour Summary

Sao Tome and Principe pre-tour extension:

Our 2017 birding adventure of Gabon and the offshore islands of Sao Tome and Principe kicked off with our pre-tour extension of the islands. Nestled in the Gulf of Guinea, these two tiny islands form the entirety of their own unique country, and harbour a staggering 27 endemic bird species. We were thrilled to be part of an immensely successful tour, by racking up an incredible 26 of the currently recognised 27 endemics during our short time on these tropical and endemic-rich islands. Some



Newton's Sunbird by Glen Valentine

authorities recognise as many as 34 endemics, and we managed to see an unprecedented 32 of these range-restricted species – *a marvellous achievement indeed!*

Beginning on the larger island of Sao Tome, the entire group arrived prior to the official start of the trip, which allowed everyone to rest a little and recover from their long-haul flights and jet-lag. A few short, exploratory walks around the lodge grounds and surrounds gave us our first taste of Sao Tome's wonderful array of endemics, with the likes of Sao Tome Prinia, Black-capped Speirops, Newton's Sunbird, Principe Seedeater (will probably be split as Sao Tome Seedeater in years to come), Sao Tome

Paradise Flycatcher, Sao Tome Spinetails flitting about at eye-level, our first of many Sao Tome Weavers and a wonderful surprise in the form of four Island Bronze-naped Pigeons that all showed extremely well. A nearby stream harboured Malachite Kingfisher (sometimes split as Sao Tome Kingfisher); while small tracts of grassland gave us White-winged Widowbird, Black-winged Red Bishop, a few non-breeding Golden-backed Bishops, Southern Masked and Village Weavers, Blue and



Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher by Glen Valentine

Common Waxbills, Bronze Manikin and Pin-tailed Whydah. Western Reef Herons occupied the shoreline; while White-tailed Tropicbirds entertained overhead on several occasions, and we were also treated to excellent views of Red-headed Lovebird and two gorgeous male Harlequin Quails in full view on the deck in the lovely late afternoon light.

One of the key birding sites that we visited on the tour was the Lagoa Amelia area, where we spent a full day and enjoyed a wonderful array of Sao Tome's endemics. The secondary forest and forest edge produced most of the species seen the day before, but we were also delighted to find the scarce Sao Tome White-eye, impressive Giant Sunbird and in the late afternoon: a small group of Sao Tome Olive (Maroon) Pigeons. The forest interior was fairly quiet, but did yield several Sao Tome Thrushes and Sao Tome Green Pigeon. A Sao Tome Scops Owl called tantalisingly close but remained hidden in some extremely dense and impenetrable vegetation, and would just have to wait until we ventured down to the south-east of the island.

With so many of Sao Tome's endemics already seen, we departed Sao Tome for the tiny island of Principe, which lies just to the north. Our base here was the delightful Bom Bom Island Resort, which offers excellent accommodation and food and some very good birding in and around the lodge grounds. Here we added target species like Principe Kingfisher (previously combined with White-bellied Kingfisher, currently lumped with Malachite Kingfisher but usually split as a Principe endemic), Principe Weaver, the musical and unique Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler, Principe and Splendid Starlings, Principe Speirops, Principe Sunbird, Velvet-mantled Drongo (often split as Principe Drongo), Blue-breasted Kingfisher (a visually distinctive and endemic subspecies) and the raucous Timneh Parrot.



Sao Tome Prinia by Glen Valentine

The next morning, we ventured out early on a boat to the remote beach of Praia de Maria Correa, situated on the densely forested south-west of the island. On the way there we made a short detour to a small, rocky, offshore island that held large numbers of Black and Common Noddies, as well as Brown Booby. As we neared the beach of Maria Correa, so the rain began to set in and we were all soaked before the hike up the mountain even began. Jan and I embarked on the strenuous hike up into the towering, forest-clad

mountains in search of the very rare and once mythical Principe Thrush; while Frank, Peter and Romney decided to hang out in the beachside vegetation in the hope of finding a flock of the extremely scarce Principe White-eye. The rain continued and did not stop until just after midday; and by mid-morning, we were absolutely drenched. But the mission continued and, finally, in the early afternoon,



Principe Weaver by Glen Valentine

after turning around to begin our way back down the trail, luck was finally on our side as we located the mega rare Principe Thrush sitting on a low branch near the edge of the trail. *Absolutely fantastic! Well done Jan, you certainly earned this one!* The entire group managed to obtain good views of the rare Principe race of Principe Seed-eater but, unfortunately, none of us were able to locate the extremely rare Principe White-eye. After a long, tiring and extremely wet day, we made our way back to the comfort of the resort and rested up for the remainder of the afternoon.

We left Principe on a high after scoring all but one of the island's currently recognised endemics, and were keen to get stuck into the final six of Sao Tome's prized endemic birds that were awaiting us in the extreme south of the island.

With our camping gear, chef, local guides and porters in tow, we made our way down to the remote south of Sao Tome for the final leg of this island's extension: our camping trip on Monte Carmo. Three extremely rare and only recently rediscovered endemics are restricted to the primary forests that cloak the mountains in the south of the island, and these are the Sao Tome Grosbeak, Sao Tome Fiscal and Sao Tome Ibis. These three species, along with the unique and bizarre Sao Tome Shorttail, Sao Tome Scops Owl and Giant Weaver were very high on our wish list and were our target species for our two days in the lush and seldom-birded forests around Monte Carmo.

After arriving at the forest edge and gathering all our belongings and camping gear, we struck out for the primary forest that cloaks the slopes of Monte Carmo and our campsite for the night. Soon after beginning the walk in, we were greeted by several male and female Giant Weavers – *a fantastic start to the trip*. Thereafter, we found several mixed flocks that harboured many of the island's more numerous endemics, such as Sao Tome Weaver and Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher. A Sao Tome Scops Owl was suddenly heard calling, and we quickly managed to track it down



Sao Tome Fiscal by Glen Valentine

and enjoyed excellent views of this much sought-after endemic. By late morning, we reached our campsite and enjoyed a welcome leg-rest and picnic lunch before continuing our quest for the remaining endemics. We managed to track down a pair of singing Sao Tome Shorttails; but a vocal Sao Tome Grosbeak would, unfortunately, not show itself as it remained hidden in the dense, tall canopy. Just before dusk, one of our guides was collecting water from the river for cooking and flushed a Sao

Tome Ibis. He called us over and we were treated to the most amazing perched views of this fabulous and very rare endemic! *What a day!* We were delighted with four of the six targets already under the belt, and this boded well for an early clean-up. After another surprisingly good meal, we listened out for Band-rumped (Madeiran) Storm-petrels just after dusk as they flew over the canopy, calling loudly on the way to their nesting sites in the upper reaches of these remote forests and mountains. *A thrilling experience indeed; and who knows, perhaps this unique population will soon be described as another Sao Tome endemic!*



Sao Tome Scops Owl by Glen Valentine

The next morning saw us up at dawn for a quick breakfast and a hike higher up the mountain in search of the rare, slope-specialist Sao Tome Fiscal. The walk was fairly challenging, but we were rewarded with excellent views of this recently rediscovered and little-known endemic shrike. With all but the grosbeak in the bag, we made our way back down to the campsite, hearing but unfortunately not seeing several grosbeaks along the way. However, when we reached the campsite, we heard the very close calls of a pair of grosbeaks right above the tents and Jan was able to achieve a view of one of the birds before they disappeared and then stopped calling – *as is so often the case with this very tricky species*. It was a tough but rewarding day-and-a-half in the forest; and in the late morning, we began making our way out of the forest and back to the main track, where our 4x4 Land Cruiser picked us up and transferred us back to the luxuries of the Omali Resort: where a hot shower and excellent dinner was well-appreciated.

After an almost impossibly successful and thoroughly enjoyable tour of Sao Tome and Principe, it was time to bid the islands farewell and begin our exciting birding tour of Gabon.

The main Gabon tour:

After a short flight for most of us from the small, offshore island of Sao Tome – and a much longer flight for Andrew and Niels – we all arrived at the Onomo Hotel in Libreville, eagerly awaiting the start of our exciting Gabon birding and wildlife adventure.

The next morning, we kicked off our Gabon main tour with a flight to the city of Franceville that straddles the south-eastern corner of the country near the Congolese border. Upon arrival, we boarded a comfortable minibus and with JP (central Africa's ultimate “fixer”) and the luggage piled into the SUV vehicle, we struck out for Bongoville and the tiny town of Léconi near the Congo Brazzaville border: our destination for the next four nights. Our scheduled afternoon birding stop was a patch of forest en route, and here we spent the



Sao Tome Thrush by Glen Valentine

final hours of the day enjoying a variety of exciting central and West African lowland forest species. Highlights were plentiful and included the large, attractive and localised Black-headed Bee-eater, the handsome Yellow-billed Turaco, African Pied, Red-billed Dwarf and Piping Hornbills, Grey-throated, Naked-faced and Yellow-spotted Barbets, Speckled, Yellow-throated and Red-rumped Tinkerbirds,



Congo Moor Chat by David Hoddinott

Willcock's Honeyguide, a shy and fleeting Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Western Nicator, Golden and Spotted Greenbuls, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Purple-headed and Splendid Starlings, Sooty and Fraser's Forest Flycatchers, Grey-chinned, Little Green, Blue-throated Brown and Green-throated Sunbirds, the scarce Fernando Po Batis, a brilliant, displaying male Black-bellied Seedcracker and the striking, vocal and obtrusive Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher.

Over the course of the next three days, we concentrated our efforts on finding Leconi's many prized birds. Ambling through the stunted Miombo woodland that dominates much of the area, we were

delighted to find Black-chinned and Black-necked Weavers, Black-collared Bulbul, Coqui Francolin, Red-necked Spurfowl, Black Scimitarbill, Rosy Bee-eater, Black-backed Barbet, Red-throated Wryneck, Golden-tailed Woodpecker (a very rare bird here at the north-western limit of its range), White-winged Black Tit, Red-throated and South African Cliff Swallows, Salvadori's Eremomela, a surprise Grey Penduline Tit, Copper, Amethyst, Green-headed and Western Violet-backed Sunbirds, a soaring Ayre's Hawk-Eagle, Cabanis's Bunting and the scarce and habitat-specific Wood Pipit; while areas of extensive grasslands yielded White-bellied Bustard, Rufous-naped (often split as Malbrandt's) and Flappet Larks, Sooty and Congo Moor Chats, Senegal Lapwing, a hunting African Hobby, the rarely-seen Black-rumped Buttonquail, extremely difficult Short-tailed Pipit (on the deck, which is almost unheard of!) and finally, after much searching, the scarce and range-restricted Finsch's Francolin.

The long "fingers" of gallery forest that meander their way through the extensive woodlands were also productive, and gave us excellent scope views of the usually difficult-to-see and incredibly shy Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, as well as good looks at Gorgeous (Perrin's), Luhder's and Bocage's Bushshrikes, the scarce and localised Angolan Batis, White-chinned Prinia, a male Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Pale-fronted and Chestnut-breasted Nigritas, Brown-throated Wattle-eye and displaying African Broadbill.

We also stayed out late most nights, and these nocturnal outings produced Fiery-necked, Swamp and Long-tailed Nightjars, as well as a female Pennant-winged Nightjar. A Southern White-faced Owl, a major surprise for the trip, emitted a single unmistakable call at dusk one evening but, unfortunately, could not be located.



Black-headed Bee-eater by Markus Lilje

We visited the productive forest patch near Bongoville on two more occasions during our time in the area; and these visits gave us many of the species seen on the first afternoon, as well as other notable specialities, such as the rare Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Cassin's Malimbe, a very shy and unobtrusive but extremely vocal and responsive Bare-cheeked Trogon, Green-backed, Yellow-crested and Gabon Woodpeckers, Black-winged and Western Orioles, the uncommon and range-restricted Yellow-



Short-tailed Pipit by David Hoddinott

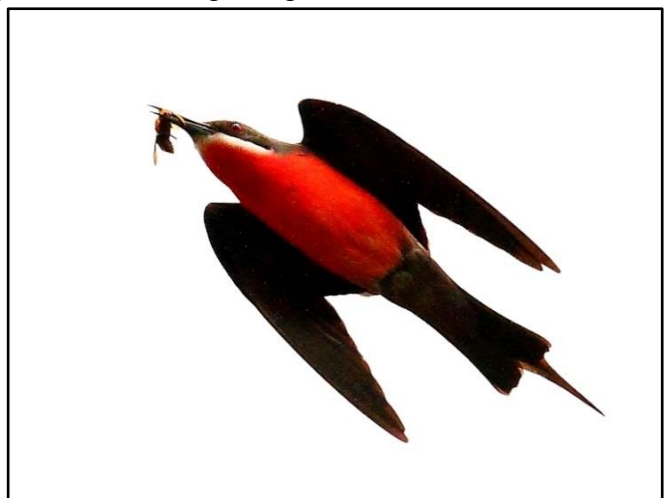
throated Nicator, an array of Greenbuls – including the rare and localised Sjöstedt's Greenbul – Yellow-billed Barbet, White-breasted and Grey-headed Nigritas, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, and the gorgeous Black Bee-eater. The distinctive and ultra-tantalising display calls of a Lyre-tailed Honeyguide were heard from the nearby forest, but the bird was unfortunately just too deep in from the road-edge for us to see it, and this extremely sought-after and rarely seen species would have to wait until Lope National Park.

Leaving behind the bird-rich Leconi area, we continued the trip by way of a train ride from Franceville to the tiny village of Lope, situated at the northern edge of the beautiful Lope National Park. Our train trip to Lope was fairly eventful and, unfortunately, a lot longer and more uncomfortable than last year's ride; but we did still end up arriving safely – *albeit hot and sweaty, sleep-deprived and three hours late!* At 04h30am, we crawled into the very sleepy Lope Station and were thankfully met by our hosts that transferred us the short distance to the nearby Lope Hotel, a wonderful place situated on the banks of the Ogooué River, and our very comfortable base for the next few nights.

We enjoyed a splendid three full days in the Lope National Park, and this leg of the trip yielded many of the trip's biggest highlights, both bird and mammal-wise. Lope is a very interesting and unique park, and its rolling hills of lush forest are punctuated by natural clearings of grassland, small marshes and dry savanna, at least in the north of the park (the section that is accessible and open to the public). The grassland and savanna mosaic is, however, amazingly sterile for the most part, and did not produce much of interest besides noteworthy mammals like Forest Elephant and Forest (African) Buffalo. The extensive tracts of gallery forest are, however, in stark contrast to the savanna, and harbour a wealth of awesome species!

We concentrated our efforts mostly on these forest pockets; and in so doing, turned up a superb list of Gabonese, Central African and West African lowland forest specialities that included

the handsome and scarce Long-tailed Hawk – *surely one of the world's best-looking raptors!* – Guinea Turaco, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Red-chested Owlet, the magnificent Black-casqued and White-crested Hornbills, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Spotted Honeyguide, Shining Drongo, Forest White-eye (recently split from African Yellow White-eye), the gorgeous Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, a flock



Rosy Bee-eater by Glen Valentine

of very smart Rufous-bellied Helmetshrikes, the handsome Narina Trogon, Blue-throated Roller, Brown-eared Woodpecker, pairs and family groups of attractive and friendly Chestnut-capped Flycatchers, Blue-billed, Cassin's, Crested and often-elusive Red-bellied Malimbés, Yellow-mantled and Dark-backed Weavers, Fraser's Rufous Thrush, Icterine and Red-tailed Greenbills, Green Hylia, a fly-by Blue-headed Wood Dove, the minuscule Yellow-footed Flycatcher, Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Blue Malkoha and Buff-throated Apalis.



Forest (African) Buffalo by Glen Valentine

Other highlights during our time in Lope included the rare Bates's Nightjar, river-specialist Cassin's Flycatcher, Blue-headed Coucal, Chattering, Croaking and Short-winged Cisticolas, Cassin's Spinetails, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, the very rare and extremely localised Ja River Scrub Warbler and regular, close and lengthy sightings of the superb Black-bellied Seedcracker, a tough species to see well almost everywhere else in its range.

We also explored the Lope Hotel grounds on a few occasions, and these short forays yielded the scarce and localised Black-faced Canary, superb Reichenbach's, Copper, Olive-bellied, Blue-throated Brown and Green-headed Sunbirds, Long-legged Pipit, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Square-tailed Saw-wing, Orange Weaver, Black-winged Bishop, Yellow-mantled Widowbird, the scarce Bates's Swift, Sabine's and Mottled Spinetails, Grey Parrot, the ubiquitous Palm-nut Vulture and African Harrier-Hawk, a Western Barn Owl one evening, and on the exposed rocks and sandbars in the river: our first of many Rock Pratincoles.

One of the absolute highlights of the entire trip came on our first morning at breakfast. We'd just sat down, admiring the awesome view and prolific birds and songs all around us – *and began forgetting about our long and exhausting train ride* – when a small accipiter flew into the tall, sparsely-vegetated tree close to the edge of the restaurant. My heart almost stopped as soon as I placed my bins on the subject as it was indeed a superb, adult Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk – *one of Africa's rarest and most elusive raptors!* We enjoyed fabulous, close views, even in the scope, for several seconds and were able to admire all its features before it was



White-crested Hornbill by Markus Lilje

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chased off by a flock of rowdy African Pied Hornbills. *Absolutely fantastic!* Our second mind-blowing moment in Lope came when the distinctive display calls of a Lyre-tailed Honeyguide were heard from a nearby forest patch. We jumped out of the open-air safari vehicle and with much suspense, excitement and anticipation, we scanned carefully over the forest canopy while the bird was emitting its distinctive flight call, but to no avail. On the second attempt, I managed to catch a glimpse as it flew extremely quickly, low over the nearby canopy back to its perch. *At least we now knew exactly where it*



White-bibbed Swallow by Markus Lilje

occasional Forest Elephant, Peters', Blue, Bay and Ogilby's Duikers, Bushbuck and Slender Mongoose. Primates are also very well represented in Lope, and we encountered regular troops of Grey-cheeked Mangabey, Moustached and Putty-nosed Monkeys and the rare Black Colobus that showed particularly well. The minuscule Demidoff's Dwarf Galago was also heard while waiting and watching for Bates's Nightjar to appear.

The final leg of our main Gabon birding adventure beckoned, and so we departed Lope for the short train trip to Boue, where we arrived in the early hours of the morning and crashed for a few hours before breakfast and our departure to Ipassa. The journey took us through almost continuous lowland forest – *so wonderful to see* – and a few very short birding stops along the way yielded noteworthy species like Great Blue and Yellow-billed Turacos, Banded Prinia, Black-and-white Mannikin, Piping Hornbill and another Long-tailed Hawk at the road-side. We arrived at Makokou in the early afternoon for a late-ish lunch and then made our way to Ipassa Reserve, where we spent the remainder of the late afternoon and early evening. We only had time for a short venture around the camp grounds but our short foray produced some quality species that included African Pygmy Kingfisher, Gabon Woodpecker, a brilliant pair of unusually showy Western Bluebill, the attractive but fairly shy Black-headed Waxbill, Simple Greenbul (Leaflove), Rufous-crowned Eremomela, a stunning male Johanna's Sunbird and hordes of Grey Parrots – *so great to see in the wild!* Our birding excursion at dusk along the entrance road was well-rewarded with a superb pair of the very rarely-seen Akun Eagle-Owl



Western Bluebill by Jonathan Russouw

showing brilliantly in the scope! *What a fantastic end to another excellent birding day in Gabon!*



African Skimmer by Glen Valentine

(Cameroon Sombre), Yellow-whiskered, Little, Xavier's, Golden, Spotted, Eastern Bearded and White-bearded Greenbuls, Yellow-lored (Lesser) Bristlebill, Green Hylia, stunning Rachel's and Crested Malimbos, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Fraser's Sunbird, Buff-spotted and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Red-tailed and White-tailed Ant Thrushes, Fraser's Rufous Thrush, Brown-chested and Fire-chested Alethes and Yellow-footed Flycatcher. Great Blue Turacos were especially vocal and obtrusive around the campgrounds, along with Grey Parrots, Swamp Palm Bulbuls, Piping and African Pied Hornbills and the occasional White-thighed Hornbill. This is also where we managed to find Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras, Banded Prinia, Green Crombec, Pale-fronted Nigrita, Red-eyed (Black-shouldered) Puffback and Scaly Francolin.

One of the absolute highlights of our time at Ivindo was a large flock of Plumed Guineafowl that crossed the track right in front of us late one morning. We also managed to obtain phenomenal views of Chocolate-backed Kingfisher and Blackcap Illadopsis; while another Yellow-throated Cuckoo was also heard and seen in flight.



Rock Pratincoles by Glen Valentine

On a second nocturnal outing, we managed to find a Fraser's Eagle-Owl that sat out in the open at close range for an extended period and afforded us unbeatable scope views! *Magical!* We also encountered some rarely-seen mammals in the forest during this night foray, such as Gabon Squirrel Galago, Thomas's Dwarf Galago and African Palm (Tree) Civet, which were all wonderful additions and well-received by all!

A late morning and early afternoon boat trip produced the main quarry in the form of several very responsive and showy Gosling's Apalis, as well as White-browed Forest Flycatcher and close views of Rock Pratincoles and African Skimmers. We also enjoyed watching a female African Finfoot that floated across the river in front of our canoe, as well as several brilliant-blue White-bibbed Swallows, Superb Sunbird and Slender-billed Weaver. Frank decided to skip the second boat trip and made his way back along the forest track; and this certainly paid off for him, as he was rewarded with a Black



Gabon Woodpecker by David Hoddinott

Guineafowl that scurried off soon after he spotted it at the edge of the track and was not to be seen again. *An incredibly lucky sighting!*

Forest Elephants were especially evident around the camp and along the forest tracks, and we even encountered one at night, which was a little hair-raising, as was the beautiful but immensely deadly Gaboon Viper that was found – *albeit already dead* – along the main track through the forest.

We departed Ipassa, extremely pleased with our results and with an amazing list of rarities and sought-after specials, and began the very long drive back to Libreville. We were scheduled to take the train back from Boue; but with the current unreliability of Gabonese trains coupled with our previous train experiences, we opted instead for the lengthy but scenic drive that also meant that we'd be able to stop in at the Ogooué River and add the localised and attractive Grey Pratincole to our ever-growing list. It was a long but fairly uneventful drive (which is always a good thing in

central and west Africa) back to the capital and we arrived at our now familiar and wonderfully comfortable hotel, where we enjoyed a farewell dinner and said our goodbyes to two of our fabulous team members – Andrew and Niels – before continuing on the post-tour extension to Loango National Park.

Loango post-tour extension:

Excitement built as we prepared for our early morning flight to Port Gentil to begin our post-tour voyage down to Loango National Park. Upon arriving in Gabon's oil district, we struck out for the harbour and boarded our boat destined for the magical Mphive Channel and Loango National Park.

We sped out of the lagoon and soon added Royal, Black, Little and Common Terns, a surprise Brown Booby, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank and Sanderling along the exposed mudflats, and African Skimmer. Yellow-billed and Woolly-necked Storks were also seen in



Hartlaub's Duck by Glen Valentine

flight along the way, together with dozens of Palm-nut Vultures, several African Spoonbills, Goliath Heron and Pink-backed Pelican. Rosy Bee-eaters were also wonderfully common and performed well during the entire journey. We finally reached the Mphive Channel in the late afternoon and it wasn't long before we were soon admiring the incredible White-crested Tiger Heron, of which we counted four during our short afternoon trip. We also encountered staggering numbers of several usually rare and serious quality species, like African Finfoot, Shining-blue Kingfisher, White-bibbed Swallow, Cassin's Flycatcher and Hartlaub's Duck.



Pel's Fishing Owl by Glen Valentine

We spent a most enjoyable four full days in Loango National Park, savouring the extensive and picturesque wilderness, wonderful birds and fantastic mammals that this iconic reserve has to offer. Our first morning saw us venturing back out to the Mphive Channel, where we were spoilt with further knock-out views of all the same species encountered the previous afternoon, as well as a pair of the rare and elusive Thick-billed Cuckoo, Black and Red-chested Cuckoos, Cassin's and Sabine's Spinetails, an incredible five Pel's Fishing Owls and two White-bellied Kingfishers! In the afternoon, we embarked on an open-air game drive through the forest-studded, open grassland across the river. Here we were thrilled to find Forbes's Plover, a very tricky species throughout its range. We also encountered several herds of Forest Buffalo, as well as a large sounder of Red River Hogs. The hogs performed really well and this major mammal target was certainly one of the many trip highlights!

We also made an early morning excursion to the nearby river mouth, where large numbers of African Skimmers blanketed the exposed sandbars. A Bar-tailed Godwit was also found along with small numbers of White-fronted Plover and at the river mouth, we added the localised and scarce Damara Tern to the list. Hippopotamus basked in the shallows while the flowering trees along the river-edge were scoured for sunbirds, and eventually turned up a few Mangrove Sunbirds along with the more numerous Carmelite and Reichenbach's varieties.

Our two days in the Akaka area towards the south of the national park gave us some of our most memorable and quality birds of the entire extension, and began with several Loango Weavers on a nearby island. Thereafter, we continued deeper into the heart of Loango National Park. Keeping our eyes and ears tuned for our target species, we began reeling them in one at a time. A gorgeous pair of Violet-tailed Sunbirds stole our hearts at the river's edge; while several African River Martins flew high overhead, their distinctive wing and body shape, size and colour giving them away. A juvenile Cassin's Hawk-Eagle passed by low overhead, a Little



Shining-blue Kingfisher by Glen Valentine

Bittern flushed up from some marshy vegetation and we also enjoyed watching the ubiquitous Winding Cisticola performing its display flight. Other noteworthy species encountered in the Akaka region included yet another Long-tailed Hawk and Blue-breasted Kingfisher, White-crested Hornbill, Red-



Vermiculated Fishing Owl by Glen Valentine

tailed and White-tailed Ant Thrushes, Chestnut Wattle-eye, Blue-billed Malimbe and hordes of noisy Black-casqued Hornbills, Purple-headed Starlings and Red-capped Mangabey along a forest trail. Star bird, however, probably went to the sensational Vermiculated Fishing Owl that was finally watched for ages at point-blank range after giving us a bit of a run-around during the early evening. We also finally managed to obtain excellent perched and flight views of the large and localised Bates's Nightjar, having previously only been seen briefly in flight in Lope National Park. After an immensely rewarding and unexpectedly comfortable stay at Akaka, we returned to the luxuries of Loango Lodge, enjoying several close and low-flying African River Martins along the way. *Brilliant!*

Our final day in Loango saw us venturing once more across the river in the morning and then back along the rack towards the Mphive Channel in the afternoon, in search of the few remaining new species that could be encountered in the area. We managed to find several of these that included Red-tailed Leaflove, African Wood Owl and Swamp Boubou, and we also enjoyed excellent views of a few species that we'd only seen once or twice previously, such as Blue-headed Wood Dove, White-browed Forest Flycatcher, Red-necked Buzzard, Senegal Lapwing, Forbes's Plover, Black-headed Bee-eater, Western Nicator and a female Johanna's Sunbird.

Mammal-wise, Loango gave us several new species for the trip that included Sitatunga (a beautiful, swamp-specialist antelope), as well as the already-mentioned Red River Hogs and Red-capped Mangabey, and we also enjoyed further encounters with Forest Elephant, Forest Buffalo and Moustached Monkey.

Extremely satisfied with our experiences and sightings, and rather exhausted after a long but immensely successful birding adventure of Sao Tome, Principe and Gabon, we departed Loango and began the journey back to Libreville, picking up a few new birds along the way, such as Quailfinch, Western Reef Heron, Sandwich Tern, Common Buttonquail and a Square-tailed Nightjar that flew overhead at our Libreville Hotel.

Thank you to everyone for your support, good company and humour, understanding and patience, especially during some challenging



African Finfoot by Glen Valentine

logistical situations. You all helped make this another extremely successful and enjoyable Rockjumper birding tour of Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe!

Annotated List of Bird Species recorded in Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe: 404 (388 seen 16 heard only)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows International Ornithological Congress *Birds of the World: A Checklist* (2016) version 6.4 Princeton University Press, with current updates and notes on Clements list.

Note: Species in *italics* refer to those only seen or recorded on either the Sao Tome and Principe Extension or the Loango Extension. Names in round brackets refer to the alternative name/s for the species. A note section is included for species where the taxonomy has recently changed or where there is a taxonomical difference between major authorities or where a possible future split exists.

Key:

E: Endemic to the islands of Sao Tome and Principe; H: Heard only

Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Small numbers in Loango.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*

Fair numbers throughout the Loango area. Three first seen at Ipassa.

Guineafowl Numididae

Black Guineafowl *Agelastes niger*

Frank was very fortunate to see one at Ipassa.

Plumed Guineafowl *Guttera plumifera*

A flock of around 20 at Ipassa.

Pheasants & Allies Phasianidae

Coqui Francolin *Peliperdix coqui*

Small numbers daily around Leconi.

Finsch's Francolin *Scleroptila finschi*

We finally saw this species in the Leconi area after several days of intensive searching.

Scaly Francolin *Pternistis squamatus*

Frank saw one at Ipassa.

Red-necked Spurfowl (Francolin) *Pternistis afer*

Two seen around Leconi.

Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*

Two males seen on the deck near Omali, Sao Tome.

Tropicbirds Phaethontidae

White-tailed Tropicbird*Phaethon lepturus*

Several seen around Omali, Sao Tome.

Northern Storm Petrels Hydrobatidae**Band-rumped (Madeiran) Storm Petrel***Oceanodroma castro*

Several heard overhead at dusk on Monte Carmo.

NOTE: The Band-rumped Storm Petrels breeding on Sao Tome apparently have a unique call and may represent a new species and could possibly be endemic to the Gulf of Guinea. Philip Verbeulen is currently doing work on these storm petrels and we'll see what comes of it.

Storks Ciconidae**Yellow-billed Stork***Mycteria ibis*

Seen daily in Loango area.

Woolly-necked Stork*Ciconia episcopus*

Small numbers at wetlands throughout.

Ibises, Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**Sao Tome (Dwarf Olive) Ibis (E)***Bostrychia bocagei*

Excellent perched views of two separate pairs on Monte Carmo.

NOTE: Sometimes lumped with the next species.

Olive Ibis*Bostrychia olivacea*

Seen in flight in the distance in the late afternoon at Mphive Channel.

Hadada Ibis*Bostrychia hagedash*

Small numbers throughout the Lope and Loango areas.

African Spoonbill*Platalea alba*

Six seen between Port Gentil and Loango.

Hérons, Bitterns Ardeidae**White-crested Tiger Heron***Tigriornis leucolopha*

An incredible 4 birds and then 5 the following day were seen at close range along the Mphive Channel, Loango.

Little Bittern*Ixobrychus minutus*

Flight views of two at Akaka, Loango.

Striated (Green-backed) Heron*Butorides striata*

Small numbers seen on Sao Tome.

NOTE: Recently split into three species: Striated, Lava and Green Herons.

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

One along the river at Ipassa.

Western Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Seen daily on the islands and then once at Loango.

NOTE: IOC has split Cattle Egret into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret *E. coromanda*. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers around Loango.

Goliath Heron*Ardea goliath*

A few in the Loango area.

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Small numbers at scattered wetlands.

NOTE: The Cape Verde Islands A. p. bournei is sometimes split off as Cape Verde Purple Heron or Bourne's Heron.

(Western) Great Egret

Ardea alba

Small numbers at scattered wetlands.

NOTE: The nominate Old World Great Egret is sometimes split from the New World A. a. egretta which would become American Egret. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements or IOC

Intermediate (Yellow-billed) Egret

Egretta intermedia

A few in the Loango area.

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Singletons at Lope and Loango.

Western Reef Heron (Egret)

Egretta gularis

Small numbers daily on the islands with one near Port Gentil.

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

One at Lope and several at Loango.

Pelicans Pelecanidae

Pink-backed Pelican

Pelecanus rufescens

Large numbers throughout Loango area.

Boobies & Gannets Sulidae

Brown Booby

Sula leucogaster

Several off Principe and then another one off Port Gentil.

Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

Reed (Long-tailed) Cormorant

Microcarbo africanus

12 on Sao Tome and two at Port Gentil.

Anhingas, Darters Anhingidae

(African) Darter

Anhinga rufa

Large numbers throughout Loango area.

NOTE: Both IOC and Clements recognise the four-way split of Darter/Anhinga.

Ospreys Pandionidae

Western Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Singletons in Loango.

NOTE: IOC splits Osprey into species: Western and Eastern Osprey respectively whereas Clements does not recognise this split.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Black-winged (-shouldered) Kite

Elanus caeruleus

Singletons in the Leconi area.

NOTE: Recently split into three species: Black-winged, Black-shouldered (Australian) and White-tailed Kites.

African Harrier Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus*
Common throughout Gabon.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*
Abundant throughout most of Gabon.

Ayres's Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*
Singletons at Leconi and Lope.

Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Aquila africana*
One in flight near Leconi and at Loango.

Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus*
Four sightings! Lope, en route to Ipassa, at Ipassa and in Loango.

Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter toussenelii*
One briefly at Ipassa.
NOTE: Sometimes lumped with African Goshawk.

Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk *Accipiter castanilius*
An absolute mega! Excellent perched and flight views of one adult at Lope Lodge.

Yellow-billed (Black) Kite *Milvus aegyptius*
Common on the islands and in the Leconi area.
NOTE: IOC now accepts the Black/Yellow-billed Kite split while Clements does not.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*
Common in Loango.

Red-necked Buzzard *Butea auguralis*
One seen at Leconi and another three in Loango.

Bustards Otididae

White-bellied Bustard (Korhaan) *Eupodotis senegalensis*
A few sightings around Leconi.

Flufftails Sarothruridae

White-spotted Flufftail (H) *Sarothrura pulchra*
Heard at Ipassa and in Loango.

Finfoots Heliornithidae

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*
Amazingly common in Loango with especially large numbers along the Mphive Channel. A usually rare species!

Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae

Black Crake (H) *Amaurornis flavirostra*
One heard in Lope NP.

Buttonquail Turnicidae

Common (Kurrichane/Small) Buttonquail *Turnix sylvaticus*
One flushed en route from Loango to Port Gentil.

Black-rumped Buttonquail*Turnix nanus*

Three separate sightings of this rarity in the Leconi area.

Stone-curlews, Thick-knees Burhinidae**Water Thick-knee***Burhinus vermiculatus*

Several at Lope and in Loango.

Plovers Charadriidae**White-crowned Lapwing (Plover)***Vanellus albiceps*

A few at Lope.

Senegal (Lesser Black-winged) Lapwing (Plover)*Vanellus lugubris*

Lope and Loango.

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover*Pluvialis squatarola*

One at Port Gentil.

Kittlitz's Plover*Charadrius pecuarius*

Two in Loango.

Forbes's Plover*Charadrius forbesi*

Two in Loango.

White-fronted Plover*Charadrius marginatus*

Eight in Loango.

Jacanas Jacanidae**African Jacana***Actophilornis africanus*

Large numbers in Akaka area of Loango NP.

Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

One at the estuary in Loango NP.

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

Port Gentil and Loango.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

One at Port Gentil and eight in Loango.

Wood Sandpiper*Tringa glareola*

One in Loango.

Common Sandpiper*Actitis hypoleucos*

Small numbers at scattered sites.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

Four at Port Gentil.

Little Stint*Calidris minuta*

A few in Loango.

Coursers, Pratincoles Glareolidae**Rock Pratincole***Glareola nuchalis*

Large numbers at most localities.

Grey Pratincole

Glareola cinerea

Two on the Ogooue River at Ndjole.

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Laridae

Brown Noddy

Anous stolidus

Ten off Principe.

Black Noddy

Anous minutus

Around 80 off Principe.

African Skimmer

Rynchops flavirostris

Large numbers at Loango and a few at Ipassa.

Royal Tern

Thalasseus maximus

Several around Port Gentil and Loango.

Sandwich Tern

Thalasseus maximus

One offshore between Loango and Port Gentil.

Little Tern

Sternula albifrons

Two off Port Gentil.

Damara Tern

Sternula balaenarum

Five (four in breeding plumage) at the Loango Estuary.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Small numbers in the Loango area.

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger

Two off Port Gentil and one at Loango.

Pigeons, Doves Columbidae

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)

Columba livia

Seen in large towns during the tour

Sao Tome Olive (Maroon) Pigeon (E)

Columba thomensis

Eight in the canopy at Bom Sucesso and one at Monte Carmo.

Western Bronze-naped Pigeon

Columba iriditorques

Small numbers in the Leconi area.

Island (Sao Tome) Bronze-naped Pigeon (E)

Columba malherbii

Several at Bom Sucesso and Monte Carmo, Sao Tome.

Lemon (Forest/Cinnamon) Dove

Columba larvata

Commonly seen on the islands.

NOTE: This species is sometimes lumped with Lemon Dove *C.larvata*. Neither Clements nor IOC accept this split.

Red-eyed Dove

Streptopelia semitorquata

Seen regularly throughout.

Laughing Dove

Spilopelia senegalensis

Common throughout the islands and a few in Gabon.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove

Turtur afer

Common throughout.

Tambourine Dove

Turtur tympanistria

One at Leconi and four at Ipassa.

Blue-headed Wood Dove *Turtur brehmeri*

One at Lope and another in Loango.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

One at Port Gentil.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus*

Common throughout.

Sao Tome Green Pigeon (E) *Treron sanctithomae*

Several were seen very well at Bom Sucesso and a few more at Mt. Carmo, Sao Tome.

Turacos Musophagidae

Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata*

Heard at Lope and commonly seen at Ipassa and in Loango NP.

Guinea (Green) Turaco *Tauraco persa*

Heard at Leconi and several at Lope and Loango.

Note: This species used to be lumped under the Green Turaco (T. persa), now split into four full species the others being Knysna Turaco T. corythaix, Livingstone's Turaco (T. livingstonii) and Schalow's Turaco (T. schalowi).

Yellow-billed (Verreaux's) Turaco *Tauraco macrorhynchus*

Seen on eight dates.

Cuckoos Cuculidae

Gabon Coucal (H) *Centropus anelli*

Extremely elusive! Heard on four dates.

Senegal Coucal (H) *Centropus senegalensis*

Heard twice at Leconi.

Blue-headed Coucal *Centropus monachus*

Seen on many occasions in various habitats.

Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill) *Ceuthmochares aereus*

Seen on six dates.

Note: Some authorities split this species into Green Malkoha, C. australis that occurs in East and Southern Africa and Blue Malkoha, C. aereus that we saw and occurs in West and Central Africa. Clements does not as yet accept this split.

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachyococyx audeberti*

A pair seen in flight at Mphive Channel, Loango.

Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*

Commonly seen throughout.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

Commonly seen throughout.

Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*

This rare cuckoo was seen near Leconi and at Ipassa.

African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*

One seen on Sao Tome with others heard and seen in Gabon.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus*

Good but brief views of one in the Leconi area. Also heard in Loango.

Black Cuckoo*Cuculus clamosus*

A few in Loango.

*NOTE: The distinctive west and central African race of Black Cuckoo that we saw may be split in future.***Red-chested Cuckoo***Cuculus solitarius*

Heard commonly and seen a few times.

African Cuckoo*Cuculus gularis*

Several around Leconi.

Barn-Owls Tytonidae**Western Barn Owl***Tyto alba*

One on Sao Tome and another at Lope.

*NOTE: The distinctive race of Barn Owl on Sao Tome may be split in future.***Owls Strigidae****Sao Tome Scops Owl (E)***Otus hartlaubi**Superb day-time views at Monte Carmo. Also heard there and at Bom Sucesso.***Southern White-faced (Scops) Owl (H)***Ptilopsis granti*

Heard at dusk in Leconi area.

Fraser's Eagle-Owl*Bubo poensis*

We had fantastic views of one at Ipassa

Akun Eagle-Owl*Bubo leucostictus*

Awesome views of a pair at Ipassa.

Pel's Fishing Owl*Scotopelia peli**An incredible 5 during the day along the Mphive Channel!***Vermiculated Fishing Owl***Scotopelia bouvieri**One of the top birds of the trip! A superb adult was seen at extremely close range at Akaka, Loango.***African Wood Owl***Strix woodfordii**A pair at Loango during the day.***Red-chested Owlet***Glaucidium tephronotum*

We had good scope views of one in Lope NP.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae**Fiery-necked Nightjar***Caprimulgus pectoralis*

Two at Leconi.

Swamp (Natal/Gabon) Nightjar*Caprimulgus natalensis*

Excellent views at Leconi and a few at Lope.

Bates's Nightjar*Caprimulgus batesi*

Brief flight views of one in Lope NP and good perched and flight views of another at Akaka, Loango.

Long-tailed Nightjar*Caprimulgus climacurus*

We had good views of several at Leconi.

Square-tailed (Mozambique) Nightjar*Caprimulgus fossii**One flew overhead at dusk on our last evening in Libreville.***Pennant-winged Nightjar***Caprimulgus vexillarius*

A female in flight at Leconi.

Swifts Apodidae

Sao Tome Spinetail (E) Common throughout Sao Tome.	<i>Zoonavena thomensis</i>
Mottled Spinetail Two at Lope.	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>
Sabine's Spinetail Common throughout forest areas.	<i>Rhaphidura sabini</i>
Cassin's Spinetail Common throughout forest areas.	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>
African Palm Swift Plentiful throughout the tour.	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Little Swift Common throughout.	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Bates's Swift Singletons in the Lope area.	<i>Apus batesi</i>

Mousebirds Coliidae

Speckled Mousebird Several en route to Ipassa.	<i>Colius striatus</i>
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Trogons Trogonidae

Narina Trogon Excellent views of several in Lope.	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>
Bare-cheeked Trogon Heard and seen briefly in flight on a few occasions near Leconi.	<i>Apaloderma aequatoriale</i>

Rollers Coraciidae

Blue-throated Roller A few in Lope.	<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>
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Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher Heard at several sites and seen well at Ipassa.	<i>Halcyon badia</i>
Brown-hooded Kingfisher A few in the Leconi area.	<i>Halcyon albiventris</i>
Striped Kingfisher Several around Leconi.	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
Blue-breasted Kingfisher Good views on the islands and at Loango. <i>NOTE: The distinctive and endemic race on Principe is sometimes split as Grey-capped Kingfisher.</i>	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>

Common throughout.

African Pygmy Kingfisher

Singletons at Ipassa.

Ispidina (Ceyx) picta

White-bellied Kingfisher

Flight views of two along Mphive Channel, Loango.

Corythornis leucogaster

Malachite Kingfisher

Common on Sao Tome and Principe and several at Loango.

Corythornis cristatus

NOTE: The distinctive and endemic races of Malachite Kingfisher on each of Sao Tome and Principe are sometimes split as Sao Tome and Principe Kingfishers respectively.

Shining-blue Kingfisher

One at Lope and many at Loango.

Alcedo quadribrachys

Giant Kingfisher

Several at wetlands throughout Gabon.

Megaceryle maxima

Pied Kingfisher

Abundant at Loango.

Ceryle rudis

Bee-eaters Meropidae**Black-headed Bee-eater**

Several on each visit to the forest site near Leconi and one at Loango.

Merops breweri

Black Bee-eater

Seen on eight dates.

Merops gularis

Little Bee-eater

Small numbers daily at Leconi

Merops pusillus

Blue-breasted Bee-eater

Common in Lope and Loango NPs.

Merops variegatus

White-fronted Bee-eater

Several in the Leconi area.

Merops bullockoides

White-throated Bee-eater

Six near Makokou.

Merops albicollis

Rosy Bee-eater

A few in flight at Leconi and commonly seen throughout Loango area.

Merops malimbicus

Hoopoes Upupidae**African Hoopoe**

One in the Leconi area

Upupa africana

Woodhoopoes Phoeniculidae**Black Scimitarbill**

Several in the woodland at Leconi.

Rhinopomastus aterrimus

NOTE: The new field guide for the region suggests that the scimitarbills around Leconi are in fact Common Scimitarbill. However, they look like Black Scimitarbills and IOC still recognizes the birds there as a race of Black Scimitarbill.

Hornbills Bucerotidae**African Pied Hornbill**

Lophoceros fasciatus

Common throughout forested areas in Gabon

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill*Lophoceros camurus*

Seen on seven dates.

Piping Hornbill*Bycanistes fistulator*

The commonest hornbill in Gabon with daily sightings in forested habitat

White-thighed Hornbill*Bycanistes albotibialis*

Small numbers were seen at Ipassa

Black-casqued (Wattled) Hornbill*Ceratogymna atrata*

Commonly seen throughout the tour.

White-crested Hornbill*Horizoceros albocristatus*

Heard near Leconi, first seen in Lope and later in Akaka area, Loango.

African Barbets Lybiidae**Grey-throated Barbet***Gymnobucco bonapartei*

Commonly seen at forest patch near Leconi.

Bristle-nosed Barbet*Gymnobucco peli*

A few near Leconi.

Naked-faced Barbet*Gymnobucco calvus*

Small numbers were seen in forest near Leconi.

Speckled Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*

A few near Leconi and another at Ipassa.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus atroflavus*

A few near Leconi and more at Loango.

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus subsulphureus*

Commonly heard and seen throughout.

Yellow (Golden) -rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus bilineatus*

Small numbers in the Leconi area.

Yellow-spotted Barbet*Buccanodon duchaillui*

Several near Leconi and also heard at Ipassa.

Hairy-breasted Barbet (H)*Tricholaema hirsuta*

Heard once near Leconi.

NOTE: The race that we heard near Leconi is visually and geographically distinctive.

Black-backed Barbet*Lybius minor*

Small numbers around Leconi.

Yellow-billed Barbet*Trachyphonus purpuratus*

Seen near Leconi and heard in Lope and Ipassa NPs.

Honeyguides Indicatoridae**Willcock's Honeyguide***Indicator willcocksi*

One near Leconi and heard in Lope NP.

Spotted Honeyguide*Indicator maculatus*

Two sightings in Lope NP.

Greater Honeyguide (H)*Indicator indicator*

We heard one calling at Leconi

Lyre-tailed Honeyguide

Melichneutes robustus

Top bird of the main Gabon tour! We enjoyed unbeatable flight and perched views of this very rarely seen species in Lope NP.

Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae

Red-throated Wryneck

Jynx ruficollis

Two at Leconi.

Golden-tailed Woodpecker

Campethera abingoni

One seen around Leconi.

Green-backed (Little Spotted) Woodpecker

Campethera cailliautii

Commonly seen in Leconi and Lope areas and one heard at Loango.

Buff-spotted Woodpecker

Campethera nivosa

One in a flock at Ipassa.

Brown-eared Woodpecker

Campethera caroli

A few at Lope and one at each of Ipassa and Loango NPs.

Yellow-crested Woodpecker

Chloropicus xantholophus

One briefly at forest near Leconi.

Cardinal Woodpecker

Dendropicus fuscescens

Common around Leconi.

Gabon Woodpecker

Dendropicus gabonensis

Two near Leconi and one male on consecutive days at Ipassa.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split from the Upper Guinea form - Melancholy Woodpecker D.lugubris.

Falcons and Caracaras Falconidae

African Hobby

Falco cuvierii

Two sightings at Leconi.

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

One perched in Leconi town.

African and New World Parrots Psittacidae

(African) Grey Parrot

Psittacus erithacus

Abundant throughout Gabon! Fantastic to see so many in the wild!

Timneh Parrot

Psittacus timneh

Around 20 daily around Principe.

NOTE: Recently split from the latter species. The birds on Principe fall somewhere between the two species both genetically and visually.

Old World Parrots Psittaculidae

Red-headed Lovebird

Agapornis pullarius

A total of eight on Sao Tome.

Broadbills Eurylaimidae

African Broadbill

Smithornis capensis

Two displaying males seen near Leconi.

Rufous-sided Broadbill

Smithornis rufolateralis

Superb perched views of a male in Lope NP.

Wattle-eyes, Batises Platysteiridae

Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher (Vanga Flycatcher)*Bias musicus*

Commonly seen at most locations.

Chin-spot Batis

Batis molitor

One at Leconi.

Western Black-headed Batis (H)

Batis erlangeri

Heard in the Leconi area.

NOTE: Recently split into Eastern and Western Black-headed Batises.

Angolan Batis

Batis minulla

A fabulous pair near Leconi.

Fernando Po (Bioko/West African) Batis

Batis poensis

Excellent views of one near Leconi, also heard at Ipassa.

NOTE: The race on Bioko island is sometimes split as a distinct endemic species from the mainland birds.

Chestnut Wattle-eye

Platysteira castanea

Heard near Leconi and several seen at Akaka, Loango.

NOTE: Recently split into two species: Chestnut and West African Wattle-eyes.

White-spotted Wattle-eye

Platysteira tonsa

A pair seen well at Ipassa.

Brown-throated (Common) Wattle-eye

Platysteira cyanea

Commonly seen.

Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye

Platysteira concreta

A cracking male at Ipassa!

Helmetshrikes Prionopidae

Rufous (Chestnut)-bellied Helmetshrike

Prionops rufiventris

We had fabulous views of a flock of 8 in Lope NP.

Bushshrikes Malaconotidae

Fiery-breasted Bushshrike

Malaconotus cruentus

This skulker was heard and seen briefly near Leconi.

Bocage's (Grey-green) Bushshrike

Chlorophoneus bocagei

Good views at Leconi.

Gorgeous (Four-coloured/Perrin's) Bushshrike *Telophorus viridis*

Eventually showed well at Leconi. A skulker!

NOTE: This species is sometimes split from Four-colored Bushshrike *T. quadricolor* and is known as Perrin's Bushshrike *T.v. viridis*, which we observed. Neither Clements nor IOC accept this split.

Black-crowned Tchagra

Tchagra senegalus

Several at Leconi.

Red-eyed (Black-shouldered) Puffback

Dryoscopus senegalensis

A few near Leconi and better views at Ipassa.

Northern Puffback Several at Leconi	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>
Lowland Sooty Boubou (H) This scarce skulker was only heard near Leconi and at Ipassa.	<i>Laniarius leucorhynchus</i>
Luhder's Bushshrike Excellent views at Leconi.	<i>Laniarius luehderi</i>
Swamp (Gabon) Boubou One at Loango.	<i>Laniarius bicolor</i>

Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae

Blue Cuckooshrike Heard and seen in flight at the forest near Leconi.	<i>Coracina azurea</i>
Purple-throated Cuckooshrike One male at Leconi.	<i>Campephaga quiscalina</i>

Shrikes Laniidae

Souza's Shrike (H) Heard at Leconi	<i>Lanius souzae</i>
Northern (Common) Fiscal Common throughout the Leconi area. <i>NOTE: Common Fiscal has recently been split into two species: Northern and Southern Fiscals.</i>	<i>Lanius humeralis</i>
Sao Tome Fiscal (E) <i>Superb views of a juvenile at Monte Carmo.</i>	<i>Lanius newtoni</i>

Figbirds, Orioles Oriolidae

Sao Tome Oriole (E) <i>Common at Monte Carmo with a few at Bom Sucesso, Sao Tome.</i>	<i>Oriolus crassirostris</i>
Western (Black-headed) Oriole Seen at most sites.	<i>Oriolus brachyrhynchus</i>
Black-winged Oriole One near Leconi and heard at Lope and Ipassa.	<i>Oriolus nigripennis</i>

Drongos Dicruridae

Square-tailed Drongo One at Leconi.	<i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i>
Shining Drongo A few at Lope, Ipassa and heard at Loango.	<i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>
Fork-tailed Drongo Two at Leconi.	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Velvet-mantled Drongo Two separate birds on Principe and several more seen at Leconi and Lope.	<i>Dicrurus modestus</i>

NOTE: The race on Principe is often split as Principe Drongo. IOC does not recognise this split.

Monarch Flycatchers Monarchidae

Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher (Monarch)	<i>Trochocercus nitens</i>
Good views near Leconi, also heard at Ipassa.	
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>
Leconi forest, Lope and Loango.	
Bates's Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone batesi</i>
Common at Ipassa.	
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
Common throughout.	
Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher (E)	<i>Terpsiphone atrochalybeia</i>
Common on Sao Tome.	

Crows, Jays Corvidae

Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Trash bird!	

Tits, Chickadees Paridae

White-winged Black Tit	<i>Melaniparus leucomelas</i>
Five in woodland at Leconi.	
NOTE: Most authorities split this complex into 2 full species. The nominate dark-eyed <i>M. l. leucomelas</i> remains White-winged Black-Tit and the more northern and western yellow-eyed <i>M. l. guineensis</i> becomes White-shouldered Black-Tit. Both IOC and Clements recognize this split.	

Penduline Tits Remizidae

Grey (African) Penduline Tit	<i>Anthroscopus caroli</i>
A major surprise! Excellent views of one at Leconi.	

Nicators Nicatoridae

Western (Yellow-spotted) Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>
A few near Leconi and one at Loango.	
NOTE: Sometimes lumped with Eastern Nicator.	
Yellow-throated Nicator	<i>Nicator vireo</i>
Good views of one in forest near Leconi.	

Larks Alaudidae

Rufous-naped (Malbrandt's) Lark	<i>Mirafra africana</i>
Small numbers were seen daily in the Leconi area.	
NOTE: This species is sometimes split as Malbrandt's Lark. <i>M. malbranti</i> . IOC and Clements do not as yet accept this split.	
Flappet Lark	<i>Mirafra rufocinnamomea</i>
We found several daily in the Leconi area including several displaying.	

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
A ubiquitous species!	
<i>NOTE: Another very confusing polytypic species complex. Several Asian and African forms have already been recognized as distinct species within the super-species.</i>	
Dark-capped (Black-eyed) Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>
Common in Leconi area.	
<i>NOTE: This species is sometimes split from Common Bulbul. Clements does not as yet accept this split.</i>	
Slender-billed Greenbul	<i>Stelgidillas gracilirostris</i>
Several around Leconi, at Lope and Ipassa.	
Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>
Recorded on 11 dates.	
Little Grey Greenbul	<i>Eurillas gracilis</i>
Seen in Lope and Ipassa NPs.	
Ansorge's Greenbul	<i>Eurillas ansorgei</i>
One near Leconi, one at Ipassa and one at Loango.	
Plain (Cameroon Sombre) Greenbul	<i>Eurillas curvirostris</i>
Heard near Leconi and seen at Ipassa.	
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>
Common throughout.	
Golden Greenbul	<i>Calyptocichla serinus</i>
Several near Leconi and at Ipassa	
Honeyguide Greenbul	<i>Baeopogon indicator</i>
A few heard and seen near Leconi and at Lope.	
Sjostedt's (Honeyguide) Greenbul	<i>Baeopogon clamans</i>
A rare and localised Greenbul! Seen fairly well at forest near Leconi on two occasions.	
Spotted Greenbul	<i>Ixonotus guttatus</i>
Common throughout.	
Simple Greenbul (Leaflove)	<i>Chlorocichla simplex</i>
A few at Ipassa.	
Yellow-throated Leaflove (Greenbul)	<i>Atimastillas flavicollis</i>
Common around Leconi and Lope.	
Swamp Palm Bulbul	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>
Abundant throughout!	
Red-tailed Leaflove	<i>Phyllastrephus scandens</i>
<i>Several seen in Loango NP.</i>	
Icterine Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus icterinus</i>
A few in Lope and Loango NPs.	
Xavier's Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus xavieri</i>
A few seen and heard at Ipassa.	
Yellow-lored (Lesser) Bristlebill	<i>Bleda notatus</i>
Excellent views at Ipassa. Also seen in Lope and Loango NPs.	
<i>NOTE: The Green-tailed Bristlebill complex is often split into 2 species, Green-tailed Bristlebill, B.eximius which occurs in the Upper Guinea area and Yellow-lored Bristlebill, B.notatus which occurs in Central Africa. Sometimes Yellow-lored (Lesser) Bristlebill is also split up further into Yellow-lored and Yellow-eyed Bristlebills.</i>	

Eastern Bearded Greenbul *Criniger chloronotus*

Heard on several occasions and seen well at Ipassa.

Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus*

Several seen in Lope NP.

White-bearded Greenbul *Criniger ndussumensis*

Heard and seen at Ipassa

Black-collared Bulbul *Neolestes torquatus*

Up to 20 were seen daily in the Leconi area.

Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae**African River Martin** *Pseudochelidon eurystomina*

Another mega and highly sought-after species! We had around 20 high overhead near Akaka, Loango and then finally had two low-flying birds in the same area. Awesome!

Square-tailed Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne nitens*

Common throughout.

Black (Petit's) Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne pristoptera*

Common at most sites.

NOTE: The Black Saw-wing complex is sometimes split up into several different species, the central African ones split as Petit's Saw-wing.

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudohirundo griseopyga*

A few at Lope and many in the Loango area.

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*

Common around Leconi and also seen at Loango.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

A few at Lope and Loango.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida*

A few probable individuals in Lope and one nesting at the Ogooue River, Ndjole.

Angolan Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*

A few around Leconi and in Lope.

White-bibbed (White-throated Blue) Swallow *Hirundo nigrita*

Common at Ipassa and in the Loango area.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*

Common throughout.

Red (Rufous)-breasted Swallow *Cecropis semirufa*

A few at Lope and in the Loango area.

Red-throated Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon rufigula*

A few around Leconi.

South African Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon spilodera*

Large numbers around Leconi.

Swallow sp.

Three adult swallows that looked exactly like Ethiopian Swallows were seen on a telephone wire at a police roadblock just west of Makokou. No photos were taken due to the situation but if these are Ethiopian Swallows then this either reflects a major range extension or a case of severe vagrancy!

Crombecs, African Warblers Macrosphenidae

Yellow Longbill Heard and seen briefly at Ipassa.	<i>Macrosphenus flavicans</i>
Grey Longbill A few heard and seen at a few localities.	<i>Macrosphenus concolor</i>
Red-capped Crombec One seen briefly at Leconi.	<i>Sylvietta ruficapilla</i>
Green Crombec Heard and seen throughout Gabon.	<i>Sylvietta virens</i>
Lemon-bellied Crombec One seen in the canopy in Lope NP.	<i>Sylvietta denti</i>

Yellow Flycatchers Erythroceridae

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher Excellent views in Lope and Ipassa NPs.	<i>Erythrocerus mccallii</i>
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Family Uncertain Incertae Sedis

Green Hylia Commonly heard and seen throughout.	<i>Hylia prasina</i>
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Grassbirds & Allies Locustellidae

Ja River Scrub Warbler This mega rarity was eventually seen and heard well in Lope NP.	<i>Bradypterus grandis</i>
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Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Whistling Cisticola (H) Several heard in Leconi area.	<i>Cisticola lateralis</i>
Chattering Cisticola Several at Lope and around Loango.	<i>Cisticola anonymus</i>
Winding Cisticola Small numbers in papyrus in Loango NP. <i>Note: The Winding Cisticola complex was recently split up into several species.</i>	<i>Cisticola marginatus</i>
Croaking Cisticola Heard commonly and seen a few times at Leconi and Lope.	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>
Short-winged (Siffling) Cisticola Common around Leconi and Lope.	<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>
Zitting (Fan-tailed) Cisticola Common in grassland around Leconi and a few in Loango NP.	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Pectoral-patch Cisticola (H) Heard around Leconi	<i>Cisticola brunnescens</i>
Tawny-flanked Prinia A few around Leconi and Lope.	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
Sao Tome Prinia (E)	<i>Prinia molleri</i>

Common throughout Sao Tome.

Banded Prinia*Prinia bairdii*

Seen en route to Ipassa, at Ipassa and in Loango.

NOTE: Banded Prinia was recently split into Black-faced and Banded Prinias.

White-chinned Prinia*Schistolais (Prinia) leucopogon*

A few seen in Leconi area.

Buff-throated Apalis*Apalis rufogularis*

Several in Lope and Ipassa.

Gosling's Apalis*Apalis goslingi*

A total of five along the river at Ipassa!

Grey-backed Camaroptera*Camaroptera brevicaudata*

Commonly heard and a few seen.

NOTE: Some authorities recognize the nominate green-backed forms of this widespread African warbler as distinct from the grey-backed forms C. brevicaudata. We encountered the grey-backed form in Gabon.

Yellow-browed Camaroptera*Camaroptera superciliaris*

Heard near Leconi and seen a few times at Ipassa.

Olive-green Camaroptera*Camaroptera chloronota*

Seen near Leconi and at Ipassa.

Salvadori's Eremomela*Eremomela salvadorii*

Brief but good views were had of one at Leconi. A rare bird throughout its limited range!

Green-capped Eremomela (H)*Eremomela scotops*

Heard once at Leconi.

Rufous-crowned Eremomela*Eremomela badiceps*

Good views of one at Ipassa.

Fulvettas, Ground Babblers Pellorneidae

Blackcap Illadopsis*Illadopsis cleaveri*

A superb sighting at Ipassa!

Brown Illadopsis (H)*Illadopsis fulvescens*

Heard at Ipassa

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler (E)*Horizorhinus dohrni*

Commonly seen on Principe.

White-eyes, Yuhinas & Allies Zosteropidae

Forest (African Yellow) White-eye*Zosterops stenocricotus*

One in Lope NP.

NOTE: IOC now recognizes the African Yellow/Forest White-eye split.

Principe Speirops (E)*Speirops leucophoeus*

Several flocks on Principe.

Black-capped Speirops (E)*Speirops lugubris*

Common on Sao Tome.

Sao Tome White-eye (E) *Zosterops feae*

Two flocks at Bom Sucesso, Sao Tome.

NOTE: Recently split into Sao Tome and Principe White-eyes respectively.

Starlings Sturnidae

Purple-headed Starling *Hylopsar purpureiceps*

Common throughout Gabon.

Splendid Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus*

Common on Principe and throughout Gabon.

Principe Starling (E) *Lamprotornis ornatus*

Common on Principe.

Violet-backed (Plum-coloured) Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Several around Leconi.

(Forest) Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus*

A few on Sao Tome and two more near Leconi.

Oxpeckers Buphagidae

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*

Common in Lope and Loango NPs.

Thrushes Turdidae

Red-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus rufus*

Good views at Ipassa and Loango.

White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis*

Brief views Ipassa and excellent views at Akaka, Loango.

Fraser's Rufous Thrush (Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush) *Stizorhina fraseri*

First seen Lope, several thereafter.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

Common around Lope and Ipassa.

Sao Tome (Gulf of Guinea) Thrush (E) *Turdus olivaceofuscus*

Common on Sao Tome.

NOTE: IOC now splits Gulf of Guinea Thrush into two species: Sao Tome and Principe Thrushes respectively.

Principe (Gulf of Guinea) Thrush (E) *Turdus xanthorhynchus*

We had to walk far and work really hard in the pouring rain for this mega-endemic but managed to find two separate birds in the forest above Praia Maria Correa Fantastic!

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe castanea*

Heard a few times and seen at Ipassa at an ant swarm.

NOTE: The Central & East African form is sometimes split from the nominate White-tailed Alethe of West Africa, becoming *A. castanea*.

White-browed Scrub Robin (H) *Cercotrichas leucophrys*

Heard at Leconi.

Fraser's Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*

Seen well near Leconi and around Lope.

White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*

Good views along the river at Ipassa and in Loango NP.

Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis*

One at Lope.

Grey Tit-Flycatcher (Fan-tailed/Lead-coloured Flycatcher) *Myioparus plumbeus*

One at Leconi.

Pale (Mouse-coloured/Pallid) Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus*

Four at Leconi

Cassin's (Grey) Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*

First seen Lope, then at Ipassa and finally common in Loango NP.

Yellow-footed Flycatcher *Muscicapa sethsmithi*

A few in Lope and Ipassa reserves.

Sooty Flycatcher *Muscicapa infuscata*

Common near Leconi and at Ipassa.

Brown-chested Alethe *Pseudalethe poliocephala*

One seen briefly at Ipassa.

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat (H) *Cossypha niveicapilla*

Heard around Leconi.

African (Common) Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

One at Lope and a few around Loango.

NOTE: Common Stonechat has recently been split into several species, African Stonechat being one of them.

Sooty Chat *Myrmecocichla nigra*

Common around Leconi.

Congo Moor Chat *Myrmecocichla tholloni*

A striking and range-restricted species that is common around Leconi.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae

Fraser's Sunbird *Deleornis (Anthreptes) fraseri*

This warbler/Greenbul-like sunbird was seen once at Ipassa.

NOTE: The species is sometimes lumped with the East African Grey-headed Sunbird D. axillaris.

Mangrove (Mouse-brown) Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus*

Two sightings at Loango.

Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

One male at Leconi.

Violet-tailed Sunbird *Anthreptes aurantius*

Four superb sightings in the Loango area!

Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*

A few seen near Leconi with another one at Loango.

Grey-chinned (Green) Sunbird *Anthreptes rectirostris*

Common throughout.

NOTE: IOC now splits Green Sunbird into two species: Grey-chinned Sunbird A. tephrolaemus and the nominate Yellow-chinned Sunbird.

Collared Sunbird Very common!	<i>Hedydipna (Anthreptes) collaris</i>
Reichenbach's Sunbird A few at Lope Lodge and several more around Loango.	<i>Anabathmis reichenbachii</i>
Principe Sunbird (E) Excellent views on Principe.	<i>Anabathmis hartlaubii</i>
Newton's Sunbird (E) Common throughout Sao Tome.	<i>Anabathmis newtonii</i>
Giant Sunbird (E) A few good sightings at Bom Sucesso and also seen at Monte Carmo, Sao Tome.	<i>Dreptes thomensis</i>
Green-headed Sunbird Seen throughout Gabon.	<i>Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) verticalis</i>
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird Common throughout Gabon.	<i>Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) cyanoaema</i>
(Western) Olive Sunbird Seen on Principe and throughout Gabon. <i>NOTE: Olive Sunbird is sometimes split into two species: Eastern and Western Olive Sunbirds respectively.</i>	<i>Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) olivacea</i>
Carmelite Sunbird First seen in Libreville we later had excellent views around Loango.	<i>Chalcomitra fuliginosa</i>
Green-throated Sunbird A few sightings around Leconi.	<i>Chalcomitra rubescens</i>
Amethyst (Black) Sunbird A few around Leconi.	<i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>
Olive-bellied Sunbird Common throughout Gabon.	<i>Cinnyris (Nectarinia) chloropygius</i>
Johanna's Sunbird A superb male at Ipassa and a female in Loango NP.	<i>Cinnyris johannae</i>
Superb Sunbird One at Leconi and at Ipassa	<i>Cinnyris (Nectarinia) superbus</i>
Copper Sunbird Common at most sites.	<i>Cinnyris (Nectarinia) cupreus</i>

Old World Sparrows Passeridae

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow Fairly commonly seen throughout. <i>NOTE: The Grey-headed Sparrow complex P. griseus has been split into five full species.</i>	<i>Passer griseus</i>
Yellow-throated Petronia A few around Leconi.	<i>Gymnoris superciliaris</i>

Weavers, Widowbirds Ploceidae

Black-chinned Weaver A total of nine of these rare and localised weavers were seen around Leconi.	<i>Ploceus nigriamentus</i>
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Slender-billed Weaver	<i>Ploceus pelzelni</i>
A female at Ipassa and then a few more in the Loango area.	
Loango Weaver	<i>Ploceus subpersonatus</i>
Good views of males and females on a small island near Loango Lodge.	
Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>
Common throughout!	
Orange Weaver	<i>Ploceus aurantius</i>
A few around Lope Lodge.	
Principe Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus princeps</i>
Common on Principe.	
Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>
Common on Sao Tome.	
NOTE: The “Southern” Masked Weavers on Sao Tome were originally placed with Vitelline Masked Weaver but is now placed with Southern Masked Weaver. The Southern Masked Weaver complex was recently split into several species.	
Village (Spotted-backed) Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Abundant throughout!	
NOTE: This widespread African complex is also a candidate for multi-species splitting.	
Giant Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus grandis</i>
Several seen around Monte Carmo.	
Vieillot's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>
Common throughout.	
Yellow-mantled Weaver	<i>Ploceus tricolor</i>
Three seen in Lope NP.	
Maxwell's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus albinucha</i>
Two separate sightings at Ipassa	
Dark-backed (Forest) Weaver	<i>Ploceus bicolor</i>
Several pairs in Lope NP.	
Sao Tome Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus sanctithomae</i>
Common on Sao Tome.	
Cassin's Malimbe	<i>Malimbus cassini</i>
A male near Leconi and a female in Lope NP.	
Rachel's Malimbe	<i>Maimbus racheliae</i>
A rare and seldom recorded species of lowland forest, we had a pair at Ipassa.	
Blue-billed (Grey's) Malimbe	<i>Malimbus nitens</i>
A few in Lope and Ipassa NPs.	
Red-bellied Malimbe	<i>Malimbus erythrogaster</i>
A very rarely seen species! We enjoyed good views of one in Lope NP.	
Crested Malimbe	<i>Malimbus malimbicus</i>
Two in Lope and another pair at Ipassa.	
Red-headed Quelea	<i>Quelea erythrops</i>
One bird in partial breeding plumage was seen on Sao Tome.	
Black-winged Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>
Several were seen near our hotel on Sao Tome with a few more at Lope.	

Golden-backed Bishop*Euplectes aureus*

At least six birds, all in non-breeding plumage, were seen well and ID'd as this species on Sao Tome.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird*Euplectes macroura*

Common in Lope and also seen elsewhere.

White-winged Widowbird*Euplectes albonotatus*

Two on Sao Tome.

Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae**Woodhouse's Antpecker***Parmoptila woodhousei*

One seen well but briefly in a bird party at Ipassa

White-breasted Nigrita (Negrofinch)*Nigrita fusconotus*

Several near Leconi.

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita (Negrofinch)*Nigrita bicolor*

A few around Leconi and one at Ipassa.

Pale-fronted Nigrita (Negrofinch)*Nigrita luteifrons*

Two at Leconi and two at Ipassa.

Grey-headed (-crowned) Nigrita (Negrofinch)*Nigrita canicapillus*

Leconi, Lope and Ipassa.

Black-bellied Seedcracker*Pyrenestes ostrinus*

One male displaying near Leconi and excellent views in Lope NP.

Western Bluebill*Spermophaga haematina*

An awesome pair at Ipassa!

African Firefinch*Lagonosticta rubricata*

One brief male at Leconi.

Blue Waxbill*Uraeginthus angolensis*

Common on Sao Tome.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill*Estrilda melpoda*

Common throughout Gabon.

Common Waxbill*Estrilda astrild*

Abundant everywhere.

Black-headed Waxbill*Estrilda atricapilla*

Two seen briefly at Ipassa and another one seen better en route to Ndjole.

(Black-chinned) Quailfinch*Ortygospiza atricollis*

Seven seen on our final morning leaving Loango NP.

Bronze Mannikin (Munia)*Lonchura cucullata*

Common throughout.

Black-and-white Mannikin (Munia)*Lonchura bicolor*

Common around Ipassa.

NOTE: IOC splits this complex two-ways: the southern and eastern Brown-backed Mannikin *L. nigriceps* and the northern and western nominate group, which would remain as Black-and-white Mannikin.

Indigobirds, Whydahs Viduidae**Pin-tailed Whydah***Vidua macroura*

A few on Sao Tome, around Lope and Ipassa.

Wagtails, Pipits Motacillidae

African Pied Wagtail

Motacilla aguimp

One at Ipassa and several at Loango.

Yellow-throated Longclaw

Macronyx croceus

Leconi, Lope and Loango.

Wood Pipit

Anthus nyassae

This rare pipit was seen well around Leconi.

NOTE: Fairly recently split from Long-billed Pipit.

Plain-backed Pipit

Anthus leucophrys

Common in the Leconi area.

Long-legged Pipit

Anthus pallidiventris

First seen near Leconi and then commonly at Lope and Loango NPs.

NOTE: Used to be part of Plain-backed Pipit.

Short-tailed Pipit

Anthus brachyurus

This very rarely seen pipit was seen unbelievably well on the deck and in flight on several occasions around Leconi. Fantastic!

Sao Tome Shorttail (Bocage's Longbill) (E)

Amaurocichla bocagii

A bizarre species! Seen well on several occasions at Monte Carmo, Sao Tome.

Finches Fringillidae

Principe Seedeater (E)

Serinus rufobrunneus

Common on Sao Tome and three seen at Praia Maria Correa on Principe.

NOTE: Principe Seedeater is likely to be split into at least two species: Principe and Sao Tome Seedeater.

Sao Tome Grosbeak (E)

Neospiza concolor

Heard a few times and seen briefly on one occasion, Monte Carmo, Sao Tome.

Black-faced Canary

Crithagra capistrata

Excellent views of a small flock of males and females around Lope Lodge.

Yellow-fronted (-eyed) Canary

Crithagra mozambica

Common on Sao Tome and around Leconi.

Buntings Emberizidae

Cabanis's Bunting

Emberiza cabanisi

A few around Leconi.

Annotated List of Mammal Species recorded

Taxonomy and nomenclature follows that of 'The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals' by Jonathan Kingdon, Academic Press, 2015.

Elephants Elephantidae

Forest (African) Elephant

Loxodonta cyclotis

Small numbers in Lope, Ipassa and Loango NPs.

NOTE: Most authorities now split African Elephant into two species: African (Bush) Elephant and Forest Elephant respectively.

Hyraxes Procavidae

Western Tree Hyrax (H) *Dendrohyrax dorsalis*
 Heard at Ipassa

Galagos Galagidae

Demidoff's Dwarf Galago (H) *Galagoides demidovii*
 Heard in Lope NP.

NOTE: This and the next species are often lumped together.

Thomas's Dwarf Galago *Galagoides thomasi*
 One seen well at Ipassa.

Gabon Squirrel Galago *Sciurocheirus gabonensis*
 Excellent views of one at Ipassa.

Old World Monkeys Cercopithecidae

Moustached Monkey *Cercopithecus cephus*
 Several troops seen in Lope and Loango NPs.

Mona Monkey (I) *Cercopithecus mona*
 Several on Principe.

(Greater) Putty-nosed Monkey *Cercopithecus nictitans*
 Small numbers daily in Lope NP.

Black Colobus *Colobus satanas*
 Excellent views of several in Lope NP.

Red-capped Mangabey *Cercocebus torquatus*
 Fairly common in the Loango area.

Grey-cheeked Mangabey *Cercocebus albigena*
 Fairly commonly seen in Lope NP

Apes Hominidae

Chimpanzee (H) *Pan troglodytes*
 A few heard at dusk in Lope NP.

Squirrels Sciuridae

African Pygmy Squirrel *Myosciurus pumilio*
 Singletons seen at Lope, Ipassa and Loango NPs.

Green Bush Squirrel *Paraxenus poensis*
 Several seen in Lope, Ipassa and Loango NPs.

Ribboned Rope Squirrel *Funisciurus lemniscatus*
 Niels saw this species in Lope NP.

Mongoose Herpestidae

Slender Mongoose*Herpestes sanguineus*

This mongoose is unknown from Gabon but the individual that we saw in Lope NP could only have been this species.

African Palm Civets Nandiniidae**African Palm (Tree) Civet***Nandinia binotata*

Great spotting by Frank produced this widespread but rarely seen nocturnal species.

Pigs Suidae**Red River Hog***Potamochoerus porcus*

Fabulous views of a large sounder of 16 of these striking hogs in Loango NP. This was certainly another trip highlight!

Hippopotamuses Hippopotamidae**Hippopotamus***Hippopotamus amphibius*

Four seen near the estuary in Loango NP.

Cattle, Antelope, Sheep, Goats Bovidae**Peters' Duiker***Cephalophus callipygus*

One seen in Lope NP.

Ogilby's (White-legged) Duiker*Cephalophus ogilbyi*

One in Lope NP.

NOTE: *Ogilby's Duiker's* often split into several species, the one we saw being *White-legged Duiker*.

Blue Duiker*Cephalophus monticola*

One briefly in Lope NP.

Bay Duiker*Cephalophus dorsalis*

One in Lope NP.

Dwarf Antelope*Neotragus batesi*

Frank had one at Ipassa.

African (Forest) Buffalo*Syncerus caffer*

Small herds were found in Lope and Loango NP.

NOTE: The very distinctive "Forest" Buffalo is apparently just a subspecies of African Buffalo.

Bushbuck*Tragelaphus scriptus*

A total of five in Lope NP.

Sitatunga*Tragelaphus scriptus*

Two separate sightings of females and a youngster in Loango NP.

Southern (Common) Reedbuck*Redunca arundinum*

Niels spotted one running away across the grassland at Leconi.

Fruit Bats Pteropodidae**Sao Tome Collared Fruit Bat***Myonycteris brachycephala*

One seen at dusk on Sao Tome.

Fruit Bat sp.*Myonycteris sp.*

Two unidentified fruit bats were seen at dusk at Ipassa and around another ten were seen in Loango NP.

Epauletted Fruit Bat sp. *Epomophorus sp.*

Four were seen roosting on a small island in Loango NP.

Leaf-nosed Bats Hipposideridae

Noacke's Leaf-nosed Bat

Four seen on Sao Tome.

Sao Tome Leaf-nosed Bat

Several seen on Sao Tome.

Leaf-nosed Bat sp. *Hipposideos sp.*

One unidentified leaf-nosed bat was seen in Lope NP.

Whales Balaenopteridae

Hump-backed Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*

At least 12 seen offshore en route from Loango to Port Gentil.

Reptile Species recorded

Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus*

Good numbers at night around Akaka, Loango NP.

African Slender-snouted Crocodile *Crocodylus cataphractus*

Brief views of one along the Mphive Channel, Loango NP.

African Rock Python *Python sebae*

Excellent close views of two en route to Akaka, Loango.

Orange-headed Rock Agama

Commonly seen throughout.

Snake sp.

A tiny, coral-like snake was seen trying to swallow a much larger worm lizard of sorts at Leconi.

Worm Lizard sp.

One was seen being devoured by the latter snake at Leconi.

Gaboon Viper

This beautiful but extremely venomous snake was seen along the track at Ipassa, unfortunately already dead.

Rockjumper Birding Ltd

Labourdonnais Village

Mapou

Mauritius

Tel: (USA & Canada) toll-free: 1-888-990-5552

Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com

Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com

Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com