



Somali Lark is one of the very special larks of Somaliland. (Nigel Redman)

DJIBOUTI & SOMALILAND

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The second Birdquest tour to Djibouti and Somaliland proved to be as great a success as the first, and our intrepid, well-travelled group was able to enjoy all of the Somaliland endemics and specialities, as well as experience one of the least-known countries in the world. A total of 303 species was a good tally for this itinerary and included no fewer than 63 'diamond' species (birds considered special for various reasons). The highlights of the tour were undoubtedly the suite of endemics and near-endemics: Archer's Buzzard, Djibouti Francolin, Little Brown Bustard, Somali Pigeon, Somali and Collared Larks, Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Wheatear, Sombre Rock Chat, Somali Thrush, Philippa's Crombec, Somali Starling, Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak and Warsangli Linnet. Apart from the endemics, Somaliland is perhaps best known for its wealth and diversity of larks, and we saw 15 species, several of which are very poorly known indeed. In addition, we also enjoyed a good number of rather special, localized species that are often hard to see elsewhere such as

Heuglin's and Arabian Bustards, White-eyed Gull, Somali Bee-eater, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Somali Crombec, Arabian Warbler, Gambaga Flycatcher, Nile Valley Sunbird, Red-naped Bush-shrike, Golden-breasted, Shelley's, Magpie and White-crowned Starlings, Somali and Arabian Golden Sparrows, Northern Grosbeak-Canary and White-throated Seedeater. We were also pleased to find the 'Daallo Scops Owl', an owl discovered on the 2010 tour that sounds like Arabian Scops Owl but which may prove to be a distinct species. We also had our own little discovery with a new cisticola for the country – it is possible that this may also represent a new taxon to science! Not surprisingly, for a region so rarely visited by birders, we achieved a few range extensions and were able to fill a number of empty squares in the excellent Somali atlas (*Birds of Somalia* by Ash & Miskell, 1998). In addition, our Purple Heron would appear to be the first ever for Somaliland. Mammals were well represented too, with 22 species seen on the tour. Most memorable was a thrilling encounter with a Caracal, and a delightful little group of Beira – a very special antelope that is virtually endemic to Somaliland, and of course very little known! The rock-loving Speke's Pectinator was recorded at a much higher altitude than was hitherto known, and it was indeed a pleasure to see large groups of endemic Speke's Gazelles apparently thriving alongside the ubiquitous herds of sheep and goats.



Several White-throated Bee-eaters (left) were seen on our way to the Somaliland border, but our main target of the day was the localized Arabian Bustard. (Nigel Redman)

The tour began at Djibouti airport where we squeezed into an ancient dilapidated minibus with a missing door for the short journey to Loyada, the Somaliland border. With various stops for birds on the way, the journey took longer than expected, but we were soon enjoying our first Graceful Prinias and large numbers of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. We also found a few White-throated Bee-eaters in the same area. The border formalities were very straightforward, but we had time to notch up a few good species while we waited for our passports to be processed. The trees next to the customs hut provided welcome shade from the midday sun, both for us and for a number of migrant warblers, including a Lesser Whitethroat (a rare species in Somaliland). In the same trees, our first 'Somali Sparrows' turned out to be hybrids with House Sparrows, showing rufous crowns, white cheeks and white underparts, but we would later find plenty of normal ones with yellow underparts. We also enjoyed a striking White-crowned Starling, the first of many for this common Somali species, and a pair of African Collared Doves. The latter were to prove to be rather uncommon. With the formalities completed, our adventure began in earnest. We did not have far to go, as our first camp was a secluded area of coastline near Saylac, only a few kilometres away. Our cook and camp helpers were already installed and we were soon enjoying a late but welcome lunch under the shade of a large clump of bushes. By the time we had finished eating, the intense heat had diminished a little and we ventured out into the bush. Here we found our first Chestnut-bellied and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, and a splendid male Heuglin's Bustard. Our target was the localised Arabian Bustard and it did not take long before we found two individuals, with several elegant Spotted Thick-knees as a bonus. We didn't neglect the smaller birds, the most notable of which were a superb male Red-backed Shrike, a Yellow-breasted Barbet and a pair of Rosy-patched Bush-shrikes. In the more open areas we found many Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks and a few striking Greater Hoopoe-Larks. We continued to the coast where the extensive mudflats were teeming with shorebirds. There were waders as far as the eye could see, with many hundreds of birds of 20 species. Most

were migrants of course, and Terek Sandpiper was one of the most numerous species. It was pleasing to see a large number of Crab Plovers scattered across the mud, invariably in pairs. There were also both morphs of Western Reef Egret, several Eurasian Spoonbills (presumably of the resident race *archeri*) and a superb Goliath Heron in the mangroves. A flight of five Great White Pelicans was a good find as the species is rare here. Our idyllic first night in Somaliland was spent under the stars on the beach, lying on mattresses under individual mosquito nets. It came as a surprise to discover that the waders called throughout the night.



Somali Sparrows (left) and White-crowned Starlings were our companions when our lead vehicle broke down (Nigel Redman)

We awoke early the following morning and, after breakfast, explored the coastal bushes while the staff dismantled the camp. Several Rosy-patched Bush-shrikes put on an impressive display and more bee-eaters passed overhead, both Blue-cheeked and European. New species included African and Black Scrub Robins, Upcher's Warbler and Nile Valley Sunbird. Most of the day was spent heading south into the interior. There were few stops other than for occasional Heuglin's and Arabian Bustards, while mammalian interest came in the form of several Dorcas and Soemmering's Gazelles, and our first Common Jackal and Gerenuk. The journey was somewhat disrupted by a breakdown of the lead Land Cruiser in the desert. It was fortunate that this occurred just outside one of the very few villages, and that there was a competent mechanic on hand who was able to fix the elderly gearbox. The three-hour delay in the welcome shade of a café allowed us ample opportunity to get to know and photograph the local Somali Sparrows and White-crowned Starlings which were also seeking shelter from the midday heat. Eventually we were able to continue our journey, leaving the barren desert behind. The scenery was beginning to become more fertile and hilly as we progressed ever closer towards Hargeisa, but the delay meant that we could not get as far as we had hoped and we stopped for the night close to the road, south of Gerisa. While our helpers set up camp, we added Desert Lark, Desert Wheatear, Pale Prinia and Red-fronted Warbler to the ever-growing birdlist.



Heuglin's Bustard was frequently seen in Somaliland, but Blackstarts were mainly in the north-west of the country (Nigel Redman)

In the morning, after breakfast, we found our first Blackstarts and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds, as well as a pair of Mouse-coloured Penduline Tits. Then it was time to press on towards Hargeisa. We made a short roadside stop at a grove of trees where the highlights were White-browed Scrub Robin, Arabian and Upcher's Warblers, Northern Crombec, Grey-headed Batis and Black-cheeked Waxbill. There were two more stops for pairs of African Hawk Eagles, one of which was devouring an unidentified prey item. We enjoyed a fine picnic lunch at a scenic spot beside a river (where we should have camped the night before, had we not broken down), and here we saw African Orange-bellied Parrots, Somali Fiscals and African Silverbills. In complete contrast, the afternoon drive took us through some wild and magnificent hills. The road was poor and the journey slow, and sadly there was no time to stop and explore. We did see the only Rufous-crowned Roller of the trip and the first of several Short-toed Eagles, but the best birds were our first Somali Wheatears – at last, one of Somaliland's specialities. It was just dark by the time we rolled into Hargeisa, for our first night in a hotel. It was not exactly 5-star, but it was a welcome chance for a shower and a proper bed. However, being situated right next to the city's main mosque meant a somewhat disturbed night for some.



Somali Bee-eaters (left) were seen almost daily. The delightful little Beira is Somaliland's most special mammal; it is virtually endemic to the country and very poorly known. (Nigel Redman)

It was a late start for a change in Hargeisa. After breakfast, there was time for a short walk along the dusty streets to visit a shop or two, accompanied by our trusty armed guards as always. Overhead, we saw Hooded Vultures and also a couple of Marabous. Hargeisa is hardly well developed for a capital city, and there were not even any tarmac roads. Meanwhile, our team replenished our food supplies and repacked the vehicles, ready for the next leg of our adventure. Eventually, it was time to move on, and we headed east out of the city. We made several short stops on the outskirts, seeing the only Greater Blue-eared Starlings and Northern White-crowned Shrike of the trip. Another, longer stop produced Pygmy Falcon, Blue-naped Mousebird, Somali Bee-eater, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Ethiopian Swallow, Shining and Variable Sunbirds, and Eastern Paradise Whydah. After an early lunch, we reached some dry hills that are a known locality for Beira, a rather special small antelope that is almost endemic to Somaliland. Even in the heat of the day, it did not take long to find a group of six of these delightful mammals. The site was also good for more Somali Wheatears. Moving on, we soon hit the first of Somaliland's legendary plains – the Quoryale Plains. Here we found our first Little Brown Bustards, alongside a pair of Northern White-bellied. Here too were the first Somali and Double-banded Coursers, and Somali Short-toed and Thekla Larks, as well as a few Speke's Gazelles. Despite all this, the most interesting species was probably a Zitting Cisticola, a species unknown in the country until 2010, and its presence here represented an extension of its known range. Our campsite that night was on the edge of a remnant forest that was rapidly being converted into charcoal, but our evening was severely disrupted by an unexpected and very heavy rainstorm that flooded our camp and even washed away one of the unoccupied tents. When the rain subsided we were able finally to get a good night's sleep, and it was a relief to wake up to a fine sunny morning.



Little Brown Bustard is one of the key species on the tour and was usually seen in pairs. The male (top and lower left) only shows a black throat when displaying to the drabber female (lower right). (Nigel Redman)

Birding around the camp proved to be very productive. Our first Gillett's Lark was singing from the top of a bush and several groups of Crested Francolins were competing to be the loudest. A Diederik Cuckoo performed well for us, but the best sighting was a lucky encounter with three Donaldson Smith's Nightjars, one of which gave us brilliant close views on the ground in broad daylight. A group of noisy White-crested Helmetshrikes passed through the camp, while other new species included Thrush Nightingale, Banded Parisoma, Grey Wren-Warbler, Northern Grey Tit, Slate-coloured Boubou, Magpie Starling and Somali Bunting. As we headed onwards, we saw plenty more bustards, coursers and sandgrouse, as well as our first Gabar Goshawks, Black-billed Wood-hoopoes, and gorgeous Golden-breasted Starlings. Our first destination was the famous Tuuyo Plain, a remarkably well-preserved (not over-grazed) flat expanse

covered in very small rounded bushes. It did not take long to find our first Lesser Hoopoe-Larks, of the race *tertia*. This is one of Somaliland's most special birds and they performed well for us. A Greater Kestrel and several Tawny Pipits were also new for the trip. A little further on we found the second big prize of the day – a Somali Lark. This too was seen very well indeed as it sang at length from the top of one of the tiny bushes. Later in the afternoon we reached the Aroori Plain, another area not dissimilar from Tuuyo. A random stop produced another Somali Lark and two others were heard further on. It had been our best day for Little Brown Bustards, with a tally of 14 seen. But by now there were threatening rain clouds, and the tracks were already looking decidedly dodgy. When we encountered two vehicles comprehensively stuck in the mud we knew we had to press on to Burco (pronounced Burao). It was something of a relief to arrive at dusk at the walled compound containing our delightful hotel. We were surprised to find the place being run by a young Somali with a Yorkshire accent (he was born and bred in Sheffield), and the rooms were both comfortable and air-conditioned. More importantly, it was an opportunity to recharge our batteries, in all senses.



Golden-breasted Starling (left) and Somali Bunting are two of the country's most stunning species. (Nigel Redman)

But the hotel held a bigger surprise for us. The mature trees in the courtyard were alive with roosting passerines, and the vast majority were Chestnut Weavers. There were hundreds of birds chattering away right above our heads as we ate supper, and they barely flinched as we shone a torch at them, trying to pick out a breeding-plumaged male. The big spectacle came at dawn, when they all left the roost en masse, to spend the day in unknown locations to the west of the hotel. We packed up and left our brief moment of comparative luxury, heading east along the first tarmac road of the trip – this was, in fact, Somaliland's only tarmac road, and it goes all the way to Mogadishu. It did not last long, and after an hour we had turned off onto a dirt road once again. After a field breakfast, we explored an area of acacia scrub. This was a known site for Philippa's Crombec, but after three hours of searching we had failed to find any. Nevertheless, we did find Red-and-yellow Barbet, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Brown-tailed Apalis, Pygmy Batis, Hunter's Sunbird, and a superb male Northern Grosbeak-Canary. There were also brief sightings of Eurasian Wryneck and Arabian Warbler, and a couple of Yellow-winged Bats provided some mammalian interest. We accepted defeat and moved on. A roadside stop for a field lunch proved to be surprisingly productive, with great views of our first Somali Crombecs, Red-naped Bush-shrikes and Green-winged Pytilia. In the afternoon, we headed south, deep into the red-sand country of southern Somaliland. Here the scenery became ever more dramatic, with the acacia-strewn landscape liberally punctuated with towering red termitaria. At a random stop for a Foxy Lark we struck gold when a flock of small passerines passing through was found to contain a pair of near-endemic Philippa's Crombecs, as well as more routine Yellow-bellied Eremomelas and Mouse-coloured Penduline Tits. It boded well for our exploration of this most southerly section of our journey.



Northern Grosbeak-Canary (left) and Red-naped Bush-shrike were frequently seen in bush country. (Nigel Redman)

After a disturbed night due to an unexpected heavy spell of rain, it was a relief to wake up to another fine sunny morning. Our post-breakfast excursion around the camp produced some obliging Green-winged Pytilias, another Foxy Lark, and a pair of Yellow-vented Eremomelas, but we were keen to move on as one of the least known larks in the world was on the morning's agenda. It took an hour for us to reach its favoured habitat of acacias on red-sand, decorated by magnificent termitaria – hardly different from anywhere else in this part of Somaliland! We set off in a line, systematically combing the only known site in the country for this enigmatic species. We were briefly distracted by several Little Owls that had taken up residence in a couple of the termite hills, but otherwise there were remarkably few birds to be seen: a few Double-banded Coursers, Pale Prinias and Red-fronted Warblers were just about the only birds present. Remarkably, one of the taller termite mounds had a raptor nest perched precariously on its top, with much fresh whitewash decorating the red mud – it was presumably a recent nest of an Eastern Chanting Goshawk. After more than an hour, the optimism levels were beginning to drop when one of the stragglers in our group reported he had seen a pair of Foxy Larks. Having already seen this species very well after breakfast, I was inclined to ignore it, but their furtive behaviour sounded odd, so we decided to go back to look for them. It took a while, but after a few tantalising glimpses of a rusty-coloured lark we finally managed to get great views of a stunning Collared Lark. We discreetly followed the pair for a while until we had all had our fill. Although not endemic, Collared Lark is restricted to central Somalia and the Ogaden Desert in Ethiopia, with its range just extending into Somaliland and NE Kenya. As its entire distribution lies in areas that are largely unsafe to visit, this highly attractive species has probably only been seen by a mere handful of living birders.



The near-endemic Collared Lark (left) is one of the least known larks in the world. It shares its habitat with amazing termite mounds such as this one which had a Chanting Goshawk nest sited precariously on the left-hand side. (Nigel Redman)

Flushed with success, we pressed on and eventually left the red-sand area behind, but not before finding some very red Desert Warthogs. Later we made short stops for Madagascar and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, and small flocks of Golden-breasted and Magpie Starlings – what a riot of colour! We arrived at our designated campsite at the edge of a tree-lined wadi well before dark, for a change. While the team put up the tents we found the only Straw-tailed Whydahs of the tour and a family group of Philippa's Crombecs. The latter were most welcome as the first pair had not hung around for long, but here we had great views of the adults feeding a fledged youngster. As dusk drew close, a huge Greyish Eagle Owl flew along the wadi and landed briefly in a nearby tree, an unexpected and welcome addition to the list.



Green-winged Pytilia (left) is a widespread species but Philippa's Crombec is one of Somaliland's top specialities. (Nigel Redman)

In the morning, we explored a bit more of our wadi and also a nearby scrubby hillside. There was little new, but the highlights were a few Black-throated Barbets, another Northern Grosbeak-Canary and no fewer than five more Philippa's Crombecs. Nearby, we also found our only Günther's Dik-diks of the trip. From here we headed north, crossing the east-west tarmac road linking Hargeisa with Mogadishu, and into a barren area of saltflats and desert. Eventually these gave way to the Ban Cade Plains, a vast area of sparsely vegetated and often over-grazed habitat. We made our first stop soon after reaching Ban Cade and, in contrast with the saltflats, there was a profusion of larks: many Somali Short-toed and a few Blanford's for comparison, good numbers of Lesser Hoopoe-Larks (of a different race here, *altera*) but, above all, there were hundreds of Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Larks. As we headed north there were more Little Brown Bustards and Greater Kestrels – both these species have a distinct preference for more open areas than their more widespread counterparts (Buff-crested Bustard and Common Kestrel respectively). Mammals were well represented on Ban Cade, with several Common Jackals, Desert Warthogs and good numbers of Speke's Gazelles, as well as a large troop of Banded Mongooses. Our campsite that night was undoubtedly one of the more unusual – a small grassy hollow with a single large tree, and surrounded by the vast treeless plain. Our team already had the tents up, and dinner was well on the way. Amazingly, the lone tree beside the tents held a few migrant warblers, a couple of Somali Bulbuls and even a Red-naped Bush-shrike! At dusk, a single European Nighthawk paid us a visit, not to mention some impressive insects.

We awoke to the mournful strains of Lesser Hoopoe-Larks singing all around our camp. They had started singing well before it got light, but remained distant and invisible even after it got light. So we set off across the plain after breakfast. We soon found the elusive Lesser Hoopoe-Larks as well as more Blanford's Larks and several small flocks of the unique Short-tailed Lark. We reached a massive wadi that still had a few pools of water in it. Sadly, no sandgrouse visited the pools that morning, although a flock of Spotted Sandgrouse flew over calling. A little further on we made a long stop at a slightly lusher area of the plain. Here the habitat was reminiscent of the Tuuyo Plain, and we quickly found a Somali Lark. He entertained us for quite some time, and we all had superb views of this bird singing at close range on the top of a low bush. A pair of Desert Cisticolas was a bonus here, and our only Lanner of the trip flew over nearby. We pressed

on northwards, eventually leaving the Bad Cade plain. By mid afternoon we had reached Ceel Afweyn, only to be greeted by bad news. Our support car had gone on ahead to set up our camp, but they were engulfed by a big storm with much rain. As it seemed highly likely that we would not be able to reach them on the flooded roads, we decided to spend the night at Ceel Afweyn. The only hotel in town was somewhat basic, but after some rearrangement of the rooms, we were happily installed in our impromptu accommodation and we set off to explore some nearby gardens. The town's open well held a few Blue-headed Wagtails and a single White-winged Tern paid a brief visit. We wandered through the shaded gardens, and noted a few common migrant warblers, but dusk was already fast approaching. A Common Nightingale hopped furtively along the base of a hedge, and the only Squacco Heron of the trip flew overhead. All around, there were menacing Egyptian Vultures, resting on the ground or roosting in bare trees, while another tree held a large flock of Wattle Starlings. In the evening, it made a pleasant change to visit a local restaurant rather than eat on our own.



Egyptian Vultures (left) were refreshingly common on the Ban Cade plains, and we also encountered a few Lappet-faced Vultures.

(Nigel Redman)

In the morning, we made an early return to the gardens, but there was little new other than several Lilac-breasted Rollers and a Eurasian Hobby. So we returned to the hotel and packed up. We stopped for breakfast at a dry, wooded vlei to the north of Ceel Afweyn. A Turkestan Shrike performed well for us here, as did several Nile Valley Sunbirds. A melanistic Gabar Goshawk dashed through the trees and a flock of Shelley's Starlings appeared all too briefly. As the morning warmed up, a few soaring raptors put in an appearance including a Tawny Eagle, a migrant Booted Eagle and several Rüppell's Vultures. Further north, a roadside stop at an area with swathes of tall, golden grass produced an unexpected Pectoral-patch Cisticola. This was a long way east of its known distribution and represented a considerable range extension. A pair of Grassland Pipits showed well here, as did several migrant Tree Pipits. We reached Ceerigaabo in time for a late lunch, but afternoon rain delayed a planned excursion out of town. Instead, we paid a visit to the local park where we were rewarded with great views of a pair of Verreaux's Eagle Owls and several migrant Oortolan Buntings. Eventually, the rain clouds passed away and we ventured out by car. The muddy roads proved difficult to navigate, and we barely reached the outskirts of the town. A pair of Cinnamon-breasted Buntings was a new bird for the trip and several Somali Starlings were the first of many. But the highlight of the day was undoubtedly a magnificent Caracal that stealthily patrolled the scrub, within a stone's throw of habitation. Although it kept its distance, it gave us thrilling views for several minutes at the end of an uneventful day.

Last-minute formalities took longer than expected as the provincial governor had requested a meeting with us, and he did not get up as early as we did. The meeting was quite formal but very cordial, and after welcoming us to Ceerigaabo he promptly assigned three additional soldiers to accompany us. So we now had an armed soldier per person! It seemed hardly necessary and I couldn't help feeling that it was a bit of a jolly for them, and just meant more mouths for us to feed. We finally set off for Daallo as a 4-vehicle convoy. The flat rocky country liberally sprinkled with euphorbias and aloes provided little of interest other than a

couple of Shelley's Starlings (this time showing well) and Common Rock Thrush. From Daallo village, the track climbed steeply into forested terrain. A migrant Whinchat was seen by the first vehicle, but the second clinched the only Gambaga Flycatcher of the tour. A Long-billed Pipit was the first of many and a covey of Yellow-necked Spurfowl crept silently away from the side of the road. The latter, living here at an altitude of 2000m, are probably the highest individuals of their species. Our campsite for the next three nights was set in a most spectacular location, at the top of a precipitous escarpment and with a view to die for. A pair of Fan-tailed Ravens was in residence here too. It didn't take long to erect the tents, but our lunch was disrupted by torrential rain, and our plates of pasta and spicy sauce were served to us in the cars or tents where we had sought shelter when the rain started. It was a pattern that was to continue for the next three days and, after a couple of hours, the rain had passed and the sun came out again. We ventured out for a walk in the forest up to the pass, notching up our first African Olive Pigeons, Red-fronted Tinkerbirds, Little Rock Thrushes, Somali Thrushes, Brown Woodland Warblers and the ubiquitous Abyssinian White-eyes. After an early supper, we managed to find an Arabian Scops Owl, calling in the trees at edge of the camp. This newly discovered bird has a call that seems identical to the Arabian birds, and distinctly different from the African Scops Owls that are supposed to inhabit this region.



A family group of Verreaux's Eagle Owls performed well in the park at Ceerigaabo, and we also found the first of many Somali Starlings here; the bird on the right is a female. (Nigel Redman)

We spent the next two days in the forested hills around Daallo. Each day, after an early breakfast, we headed back up the slippery track to the pass and down the other side to Daallo village. From here we took the Maydh road, a spectacular dirt track through the mountains that was built by Italian prisoners of war to connect Ceerigaabo with the port of Maydh on the Gulf of Aden. The denser forest of the pass soon gave way to a more open, scrub-like vegetation and the stony hillsides were dominated by extraordinary dragon's-blood trees and tree aloes. The former are unique to this region and Socotra, while the tree aloe's closest relative is in southern Africa. We made frequent stops during our descent, walking long stretches of the road to maximise our chances of the region's target birds. Abyssinian Black Wheatears were found close to the village, and the mournful song of Black-crowned Tchagras rang out from the hillsides. Rocky outcrops were home to Yellow-spotted Hyraxes, and the very special Speke's Pectinators, a type of gundi with a tufted tail, sunned themselves on rocks beside the road, dashing into little crevices at the first sign of danger. It was not long before we struck gold: a superb male Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak was scoped in all its glory at the top of a tree. It quickly flew off but we remained in the area and soon found another pair, and yet another a bit further down. One of the males performed a song-flight and another was seen to carry nesting material, indicating the onset of breeding for this little-known species. We were to see at least four pairs over the two days, but all were fairly distant and elusive. Flushed with success, we moved down through a huge ravine and spent much time at these middle levels. There were Grey-headed Batises, Grey-backed Camaropteras and Shining Sunbirds in the bushes, and an occasional African Paradise Flycatcher added glamour. Red-fronted Tinkerbirds called incessantly and sometimes showed themselves well. Flocks of Somali Starlings were a regular sight and always on the move, while the skies were dominated by large congregations of Nyanza and Alpine Swifts. We stopped for lunch at a small tea shop, in the shadow of the huge escarpment.

Brown-rumped Seedeaters were very much at home here, both inside and out, and the views all around were dramatic. The tea house proved to be a great vantage point. After the obligatory rain shower, the sun came out and we scanned the cliffs for raptors. Pale Crag Martins regularly patrolled the slopes and we quickly notched up Yellow-billed Kite, Short-toed Snake Eagle and African Hawk-Eagle. Eventually, we were rewarded with our prize: Archer's Buzzard – distant at first but after a while we managed good scope views, both perched and in flight. A single Barbary Falcon proved less obliging. On the first afternoon we ventured lower along the Maydh road, finding Bruce's Green Pigeons in a fruiting fig and a pair of radiant Violet-backed Starlings nearby. A pair of Klipspringers allowed us a very close but brief view, but still we were missing the Warsangli Linnets. The linnets are reported to favour the flowering *Salvia* bushes. When the salvias are in flower, the linnets are easy to see, but at other times they vanish. We found plenty of *Salvia* bushes, but the flowers were all well over. There was one little valley where the salvias were particularly numerous. There were no linnets, but the glimpse of a cisticola on our second morning was sufficient to raise the adrenaline levels. No species of cisticola is known from these mountains. Moreover, there are only four species on cisticola on the Somaliland list, two of which are very scarce and all of which we had already seen – it was none of these. We stayed with it for some time, gradually getting better views and building up a description of the bird. Some photographs were taken, but the bird was generally quite skulking and frustratingly silent. Occasionally it would briefly perch on a bare twig, but it spent much of its time hidden. It bore similarities to various extralimital cisticolas but it may well prove to be a new taxon! We checked the same bushes on our return several hours later, and the bird was still present; there were also two more not far away – all looking exactly the same. As the cisticolas were not singing, it is not yet possible to resolve the identification with certainty, but whatever they were, it's a new bird for Somaliland, and for the whole of Somalia.



Brown-rumped Seedeaters were common in the Daallo Forest; this Klipspringer was watching us from the roadside. (Nigel Redman)

After three days in the Daallo Forest it was time to leave. While the camp was being packed up, we had a final walk in the juniper forest – just in case some linnets might be around. We headed back up the track to the pass and down towards Daallo village. It was a beautiful sunny morning, but the only new bird was a distant view of a migrant White-throated Robin. We admitted defeat on the linnets as the vehicles picked us up to head back to Ceerigaabo. We were quickly out of the forest and driving through dry rocky euphorbia country. The journey was enlivened only by the occasional White-bellied Canary and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, until a small unfamiliar bird flashing white in its wings caught Nigel's eye as the vehicles trundled along the rough road. We stopped abruptly and it became immediately obvious what it was – Warsangli Linnet! A small group of linnets were right beside us on the ground. We remained in the vehicles until everyone had seen them, then we cautiously got out for better views. We stayed with the loose flock of five birds for some time, getting great views as the birds quietly fed on some tiny thorny plants. We had plucked victory from the jaws of defeat! Just when we had given up all hope of seeing this important endemic, we were rewarded with superlative and prolonged views, and only a few kilometres from Ceerigaabo.



Our best find in the Daallo Forest was arguably this cisticola (left), new for Somaliland but as yet unidentified. The delightful Warsangli Linnet was voted bird of the trip, after making a very late appearance. (Nigel Redman)

After a short stop in Ceerigaabo to replenish supplies, we began our return journey in high spirits. It would take us two days to get back to Burco, and without many birding stops. A flock of vultures was cause for an unscheduled stop, and to our delight comprised six Rüppell's and four Lappet-faced. We stopped for lunch in a beautiful tree-lined wadi, and there were even some pools of water in this one. As we got out of the cars, an immature Purple Heron flew off. Although new for the trip, we didn't get too excited by this and it was only later that we realised that this species was actually new for Somaliland! Although a regular migrant in Ethiopia, it has no doubt been overlooked in Somaliland due to a chronic lack of visiting birders in recent years. There was a good variety of common migrant waders at the water's edge, and a little further on, in a quieter stretch of the wadi, two Garganeys and a male Little Bittern flushed at close range. They didn't go far and we had great views of both species. There are very few records of either in Somaliland, so this lunch stop had proved to be rather productive. Our short visit was completed by an obliging adult Shelley's Starling, easily our best view of the trip. The afternoon drive was ornithologically uneventful and we arrived at our camp well before dusk, in a dry vlei just before the village of Ceel Afweyn. While the tents were being erected and the supper was being cooked, a pair of Little Brown Bustards walked straight through the open site, blissfully unconcerned by our presence!

As usual, we had an early breakfast, but today there was the added attraction of a fly-past of some 50 Egyptian Vultures, flapping slowly from their roosts in the nearby trees to the rubbish dumps of Ceel Afweyn. Each one flew over randomly overhead in the same direction, like a low-flying bomber on its deadly mission. A walk in the dry bushy wadi quickly revealed the presence of many Ashy Cisticolas, a species not previously recorded in this area, but evidently very common here. Other species in the wadi included a migrant Booted Eagle and several pairs of Little Brown Bustards. We continued southwards through Ceel Afweyn and the next village of Fadhigaab. Two Lappet-faced Vultures allowed a close approach on the ground and a male Heuglin's Bustard would be the last one of the trip. Our route took us back to the Ban Cade plains and to the small town of Garadag. A small seasonal pool on the edge of town held a good number of migrant waders. There were 10 species in total and the best were a Marsh Sandpiper and several Temminck's Stints, both new for the trip. Unfortunately, the presence of a large number of curious villagers made birding impossible and we pressed on to a dramatic large wadi for lunch. Despite there being some pools in the wadi, it was surprisingly devoid of birds in the heat of the day, but a troop of 42 Hamadryas Baboons was the largest of the tour. Soon after this we left the Ban Cade plains to take a short-cut across the Saraar plains. There was little time for birding stops, but two random stops in areas with low bushes both produced single Somali Larks which showed well. Lesser Hoopoe-larks were more frequent, as were commoner species such as Blanford's and Somali Short-toed Larks. Most frustratingly, a brief sighting of a probable Flappet Lark could not be relocated – it would have been a notable range extension for this localised species. The day's journey achieved our highest counts of Somali Courser and Speke's Gazelle, but we had to press on to get to Burco before dark. Eventually we reached the tarmac road, and the last part of the journey into town was delightfully smooth. It was very noticeable that the acacia bushes and trees

along the road were all much greener than when we had been there before nine days earlier, thanks to the recent rains. Back in the walled compound of our hotel in Burco, the Chestnut Weavers were once again roosting in their hundreds above our heads in the open-air restaurant, and this time there were more males in breeding plumage than before. For those who opted not to go for an early night, a bold White-tailed Mongoose gave superb views as it patrolled the gardens for a tasty morsel.



The endemic Speke's Gazelle was commonly encountered on the Ban Cade plains, as were Thekla Larks. (Nigel Redman)

The sight of hundreds of Chestnut Weavers leaving the compound was only available for the early risers, and we ate our breakfast without the constant chattering above our heads. Our journey to Berbera was, unusually, on tarmac. We made several stops on the way in green acacia bush country. At the first we found a couple of Shikras, more Upcher's Warblers, several Banded Parisomas and another Northern Grosbeak-Canary. A little further on, a roadside pool yielded the only Great Egret of the trip and our first Masked Shrike. Three furtive Garganeys were also present. At the third stop, we added African Cuckoo, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Isabelline Shrike and Marico Sunbird. After lunch at a roadside café in Sheikh we made a stop at the top of the escarpment. There was little moving in the extreme heat of the early afternoon and we struggled to see more than a pair of Blackstarts. But the tantalising song of a distant Sombre Rock Chat from the valley below was enough to merit a return the following morning. We continued on towards Berbera. The scenery became progressively more arid as we descended the escarpment but, before we reached Berbera, we left the tarmac for the short drive to our final campsite in Somaliland. Our team had already erected the tents in the open scrub at the base of a range of dry hills, but there was no time to settle in. We immediately set off for the hills, clambering into a nearby ravine. It was quite hard going, scrambling over the large boulders, and there were few birds to see other than a couple of pairs of Somali Crombecs. Abdi informed us that this was the top site for the little-known Somali Pigeon, our final Somali endemic. The discovery of a pair of Speckled Pigeons was somewhat alarming as this species had not been seen here before, and we feared they might compete for food and habitat with their Somali cousins. But we did not have to wait long for our first Somali Pigeon, and although the views were fairly distant, it remained perched on top of a huge boulder for ages. Several more were seen in the next hour or so, and by the time we descended back to camp we had seen a total of eight birds.

After an early breakfast, we all squeezed into the two faster vehicles to return to the escarpment. It only took an hour to get back to the site we had stopped at on the previous afternoon, and a close Archer's Buzzard at the roadside was an auspicious start. Birds were certainly more active in the early morning and we were soon watching Blackstarts, Little Rock Thrushes and Somali Bulbuls, while hyraxes sunned themselves on exposed rocks. Two more Archer's Buzzards showed well, neither showing too much rufous on the underparts, and another Shikra was seen. In the bushes, we found an Arabian Warbler and Northern Grosbeak-Canary. Down in the valley far below us, we could hear Emerald-spotted Wood Dove and Ethiopian Boubou, both new for the trip, but too far away to look for. It took a while to relocate a Sombre Rock Chat. Eventually, a brief snatch of song gave their presence away, and after some persistence we managed close views of a pair of these highly localised birds. On our way back to the car, a surprise sighting

was a single Somali Pigeon feeding on the rocky slopes. The altitude here is about as high as the species has ever been seen, and as far as we know, this was the first time Somali Pigeon has been seen at this site. We returned to our camp for an early lunch. The heat was intense now, so after lunch we just packed up and headed into Berbera. The crumbling old port of Berbera is the second largest town in Somaliland, but there seemed little to recommend it. House Crows were present in profusion and we managed to see a few African Collared Doves, but there was little else till we reached the coast. Here, with the smell of rotting fish hanging heavily in the air, we spent some time scanning the mudflats. There were plenty of waders, of the same mix of species that we had seen previously. Further away, at the water's edge, several large flocks of terns were resting. Most were not identifiable at such great range, but some closer ones were White-cheeked, while a small group of larger terns contained both Lesser and Greater Crested as well a single Caspian. Further additions to our list included both Slender-billed and Heuglin's Gulls. There was no time to linger, however, as we had to get to the airport for our flight to Djibouti. Berbera International Airport, as it is fondly known, was a tiny ramshackle building with a surprising amount of chaotic activity. The check-in process was very confusing and seemed to involve relieving us of various sums of money in so-called airport taxes. Eventually, we made it through the scrum and into a peaceful, air-conditioned departure lounge. Having spent much time getting here, it was all too soon before we were being called to the gate to catch the bus to the plane. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that, instead of the ancient, rusty Russian planes that usually ply this route, we were to fly in a much newer and well-maintained Boeing 737, leased (together with its crew) from Tajikistan. In no time at all we were touching down in Djibouti. After the paranoid Djibouti authorities had relieved us of yet more dollars, we were quickly whisked off to our hotel. The Hotel Siesta is conveniently situated right on a beach in Djibouti City, but the tide was in when we arrived, and it was almost dark, so there was nothing else to do but to enjoy our first beers for more than a fortnight.



Archer's Buzzard (left) was seen well on the Sheikh escarpment and nearby we found the endemic Somali Pigeon, here seen with a Speckled Pigeon. (Nigel Redman)

The pre-breakfast walk the next morning was longer than expected as our target birds in the unpromising scrub beside a disused railway track proved hard to find. There were plenty of Graceful Warblers, Rüppell's Weavers and Red-billed Firefinches, and also a few migrants such as Pied Wheatear. Overhead, a few European Bee-eaters flew over as well as flocks of noisy Rose-ringed Parakeets. Eventually we found some sparrows – mainly Somali, but with a few House and, most importantly, a pair of Arabian Golden Sparrows. Having packed up, we headed out of town and into the barren volcanic landscape that seems to cover most of Djibouti. The road towards Ethiopia was heaving with lines of trundling lorries, making progress very slow, but eventually we turned off onto an empty tarmac road bound for Obock. We stopped for a picnic breakfast at the first opportunity and here we saw the only Steppe Grey Shrike of the trip. Further on we stopped to enjoy spectacular views across the inner part of the Gulf of Tadjoura. A longer stop was made at a small, deserted beach beside the Ghoubbet el Kharab. Several Ospreys were present, but it was the flocks of terns fishing out in the middle that caught our attention. When some came closer we realised that they were mainly Bridled Terns, but there were also at least three Brown Noddies with them too. We had not expected to pick up such pelagic species from dry land. We carried on along the tarmac until it was time to turn off

onto rough, twisting track that would take us up to the Forêt du Day. As we neared our destination, we stopped for a few Desert Larks and Oortolan Buntings beside the track. Our accommodation at the delightful Campement Touristique comprised a series of ethnic huts built in Afar style, containing little more than a bed and mosquito net in each. We settled in and pottered around the camp before lunch. There was time after lunch to explore the camp a bit more. Several Shining Sunbirds and a pair of Yellow-breasted Barbets were particularly photogenic in the lush garden, and Hemprich's Hornbills were commoner and easier to see than they had been at Daallo. Migrants included Whinchat and Masked Shrike, while White-throated Bee-eaters passed overhead. By mid afternoon, the temperature had cooled enough for us to venture out for the short drive to the forest. We stopped for Egyptian Vultures and Somali Starlings on the way and, on entering the Forêt du Day, almost the first bird we saw was a francolin scuttling across the ground. We positioned ourselves at a strategic point overlooking the forest floor and managed prolonged scope views of a pair of endemic Djibouti Francolins, our target bird here. But their habitat came as a big shock. Our guide informed us that there had been no rain for seven years, and almost all the mature juniper and box trees were completely dead. We continued on foot through the dry forest but failed to find any more francolins, or indeed many birds at all. There was hardly a blade of green amongst the stark juniper skeletons. A deep ravine below the former governor's ruined country retreat gave a little hope, as there were some trees that still showed some life left in them, but the prospects for Djibouti Francolins look bleak here - and the Forêt du Day is only one of two sites for the species.



Hamadryas Baboons were scavenging by the roadside in Djibouti, and Hemprich's Hornbills were garden birds in the camp at the Forêt du Day. (Nigel Redman)

Shortly before dawn, the presence of two Plain Nightjars in our camp was the cause of some excitement. Each had a preferred perch from which to hunt, and had been present throughout the night. We returned to the forest for a pre-breakfast walk, but it was as quiet as the previous afternoon. A brief view of an Ethiopian Boubou was new for the trip, but there was no sign of the francolins. Back at the camp, breakfast was delayed by a pair of White-throated Seedeaters that paid a brief visit. We scoped both birds for several minutes and were able to confirm the features of a species that was unknown in Djibouti until the first Birdquest tour in 2010. After breakfast we birded the area close to the camp, but it was fairly slow. There were several Long-billed Pipits, a pair of Cardinal Woodpeckers and the occasional Brown Woodland Warbler and Northern Crombec. Migrants included a Lesser Whitethroat and a Red-backed Shrike. Having exhausted the possibilities of the area, we packed up and headed back to Djibouti City. We stopped to admire a White-crowned Black Wheatear on the black lava, and also paid another visit to the beach at Ghoubbet el Kharab – there were still a few Bridled Terns here, as well as a close White-cheeked Tern and a pair of Suanders's Terns. On reaching the City, we headed for a busy Yemeni restaurant in the old town where we had a memorable fish lunch. In the afternoon, there was one final score to settle, and we headed to the old port. Crucially, we found the tide to be out. The mudflats were teeming with waders but, more importantly, we counted at least 60 White-eyed Gulls, a new species for the trip. Sooty Gulls were also present, as well as a few Heuglin's and Caspian. Our last port of call was a small lagoon close to the hotel. This revealed two late additions to the list: a single immature Greater Flamingo and a fine Black Heron, the

latter feeding and shading the water in its unmistakable way. And there was still time to change and re-pack at the hotel before heading for the airport to begin the long journey home.



Shining Sunbird (left) and Yellow-breasted Barbet delighted the photographers in the Foret du Day camp. (Nigel Redman)

The trip had been a resounding success. We had seen almost everything we had expected, and more. We had travelled extensively in one of the least known countries in the world, and in complete safety. We had experienced the warmth of the Somali people and enjoyed their hospitality. And we had seen a number of very special birds that very birders have seen, ever. It was satisfying that our records have contributed to the relatively scant knowledge about Somali birds, with a number of range extensions, large and small. There were a few other surprises, too, and hopefully the identity of the Daallo cisticola will be confirmed before too long. With increased stability, hopefully Djibouti and Somaliland will become a regular destination for birders – there is little doubt that there will be more things to discover in the future there.



Little Rock Thrush in Daallo Forest. (Nigel Redman)



Somali Bee-eater (Nigel Redman)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to Djibouti and/or Somaliland, or the Horn of Africa, or are considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. they are only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; they are difficult to see across all or most of their range; or the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Note on place names: The modern Somali spellings of many places are very different from the old colonial spellings, but the latter invariably more accurately reflect the unchanged pronunciation of these places. Thus, Ceerigaabo is pronounced Erigavo; Burco is pronounced Burao; Ceel Afweyn is pronounced El Afweyn; Saylac is pronounced Zeila. In addition, Ban Cade is pronounced 'Ban-ardie'.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* A flock of 5 flew over near Saylac.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* Several on the coast near Saylac and in Djibouti.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* One at the lunch stop south of Ceerigaabo.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (NL) 2 at a roadside pool near Inaaf-madoorbe.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* One was seen flying over the gardens at Ceel Afweyn.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Only seen on a few occasions, and in very small numbers.



Black Heron (left) was the last new bird of the trip; Western Reef Egrets were common on the coast. (Nigel Redman)

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* One in Djibouti City was the last new bird of the trip.

Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* Good numbers on the coast, both light and dark morphs.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Several seen in Djibouti.

Western Great Egret *Egretta alba* One at a roadside pool north of Burco was the only record.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* One at the lunch stop south of Ceerigaabo was apparently the first for Somaliland.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Good numbers near Saylac; otherwise just a few singles.

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* One seen well in the mangroves near Saylac, and another the following morning.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* Four sightings of single birds, mainly at Daallo.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* One near Saylac and 8 in Djibouti City.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer* Only seen twice: a pair over Hargeisa and a single over Ban Cade.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Only a couple of singles in Somaliland, but good numbers in Djibouti.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Several on the coast near Saylac. See Note.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* A single in Djibouti City was the only one.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Two at the lunch wadi south of Ceerigaabo and 3 more on a pool north of Burco.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One near Saylac and several more in Djibouti.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Rather uncommon: just a single at Daallo and another in Djibouti. See Note.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Commonly seen with up to 50 per day.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* At least 30 over Hargeisa and two more over Burco.

Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* Seen twice north of Ban Cade: 3 on the way north and 6 on our return.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* Four seen on the way back from Ceerigaabo and two more the day after.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* Apparently rare in Somaliland, but we saw three singles.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* Five singles seen: four in Somaliland and one in Djibouti.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar* Five birds seen, all in Somaliland, including one black morph.

Eastern Chanting Goshawk *Melierax poliopterus* Common in Somaliland; small numbers seen most days.

Shikra *Accipiter badius* Two seen north of Burco and another at Sheikh.

Archer's Buzzard \diamond *Buteo [augur] archeri* At least 3 birds at Daallo and another 3 at Sheikh escarpment. See Note.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* Several birds seen between Ceerigaabo and Burco.

African Hawk-Eagle *Hieraaetus spilogaster* Nine birds were seen on the drive to Hargeisa, plus two more singles.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* Two singles were seen, both pale morphs.

Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus* Several sightings in Somaliland.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Frequently encountered in both countries.

Greater Kestrel *Falco rupicoloides* Only four birds seen, all on large open plains.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Several sightings in the Daallo region.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* One bird on the Ban Cade plains was the only sighting.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* (LO) A single bird at Daallo was the only record.

Crested Francolin *Dendroperdix sephaena* Frequently heard and seen well on several occasions.

Djibouti Francolin ◊ *Pternistis ochropectus* A pair was seen well on our first excursion into the Foret du Day.

Yellow-necked Spurfowl *Pternistis leucoscepus* Small numbers on several occasions, up to 2000m at Daallo.

Heuglin's Bustard ◊ *Neotis heuglini* A total of 10 birds seen on five days.

Arabian Bustard ◊ *Ardeotis arabs* Two pairs in the Saylac area and another single a bit further south.

Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana* Frequently encountered in bushy country.

Little Brown Bustard ◊ *Eupodotis humilis* Commonly seen in more open habitats, with a total of 40 birds recorded.

Northern White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis* Two pairs were found between Hargeisa and Burco.

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* Common on the coast at Saylac, and a few more in Djibouti.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* One at Saylac and several in Djibouti.

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* Singles or pairs seen on several occasions. See Note.

Somali Courser ◊ *Cursorius somalensis* Commonly encountered on inland plains.

Double-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus africanus* Good numbers seen, often in same areas as Somali Courser.



Double-banded Courser (Dick Ashford)

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Just two singles seen, on inland pools.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Small numbers on several occasions, mainly on the coast.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Several sightings, especially near Saylac.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* A few in both Somaliland and Djibouti.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Common on the coast.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Common on the coast, generally in smaller numbers than Greater.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Frequently seen on the coast with several birds in good plumage.

Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus* Pairs seen on several occasions.

Crowned Plover *Vanellus coronatus* Common throughout Somaliland.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Several seen on the coast.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Common on the coast, plus a few on an inland pool at Garadag.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Five on the pool at Garadag.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Common on the coast with one bird seen inland.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Several seen on two occasions, both on inland pools.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Common on the coast.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Several seen on the coast.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* Several seen on the coast.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* Several seen on the coast.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* One bird was seen on the small pool at Garadag.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Several sightings throughout the tour.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* Frequently encountered in small numbers.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Only four birds seen, on two occasions.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Very common on the coast.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Widespread sightings in both Somaliland and Djibouti.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Common on the coast.

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* Several at Saylac and in Djibouti.

White-eyed Gull ◊ *Larus leucophthalmus* At least 60 in Djibouti City on our last day.



White-eyed Gull is a Red Sea speciality. (Nigel Redman)

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* One distant bird was seen at Berbera.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* One at Berbera and around 20 in Djibouti.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* Several in Djibouti City on our last day.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* Several on the coast near Saylac and a couple more in Djibouti.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Just two singles: one near Saylac and one at Berbera.

Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* Four birds were seen distantly at Berbera.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* Three distant birds at Berbera.

White-cheeked Tern ◊ *Sterna repressa* At least 20 at Berbera and a few more in Djibouti.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* At least 50 were seen in the Ghoubbet el Kharab, with 20 there the following day.

Saunders's Tern ◊ *Sterna saundersi* A pair near Saylac and another pair in Djibouti.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Several near Saylac and two singles on inland pools.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* Three birds were seen with the Bridled Terns in Djibouti.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* Commonly seen throughout Somaliland.

Spotted Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles senegallus* A flock of 20 flew over the Ban Cade plains.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Frequently seen between Loyada and Hargeisa, but not after.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia* Seen on three occasions at Daallo including a group of 15.

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* (H) One was heard at Sheikh escarpment.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Common throughout the tour.

African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix* Seen daily at Daallo, but only in small numbers.

Somali Pigeon ◊ *Columba oliviae* Eight birds were seen at Wadi Busti and another at Sheikh the following day.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* Common throughout the tour and present in every village.

Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove) *Columba livia* Very common in Djibouti, Hargeisa and Berbera; scarce elsewhere.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* Several at Daallo Forest.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens* Rather uncommon; mainly seen in Hargeisa and Burco.

Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola* Abundant throughout, but few in Djibouti.

African Collared Dove ◊ *Streptopelia roseogrisea* Rather scarce, with pairs seen on only three or four occasions.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Common throughout.

African Orange-bellied Parrot *Poicephalus rufiventris* Small numbers recorded on several occasions.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* An introduced species seen only in Djibouti City.

White-bellied Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster* Commonly seen in Somaliland.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* One was seen well at Daallo, and another was found dead near Ceerigaabo.

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* One seen at a roadside stop between Burco and Sheikh.

Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius* Two birds were seen well and another heard, all in Somaliland.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus* (NL) One was heard by Stephen at Ceel Afweyn.

[Arabian Scops Owl ◊ *Otus pamela* One seen and heard each evening at our camp at Daallo Forest. See Note.

Greyish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens* One bird was seen well at dusk at our camp in Wadi Murayada.

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl *Bubo lacteus* Three birds were in residence in the park at Ceerigaabo.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Five were seen on termitaria in the red-sand country of the south. See Note.

Donaldson Smith's Nightjar *Caprimulgus donaldsoni* Three birds were found during the day at Sharub Forest.

Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus* Two birds were seen in the camp at Foret du Day in Djibouti.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* One bird visited our camp on the Ban Cade plains.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* Large numbers seen at Daallo; a few others seen elsewhere. See Note.

Common Swift *Apus apus* (LO) Two birds were seen by Nigel near Ceel Afweyn.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Small numbers seen on several occasions.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Large numbers were present each day at Daallo.

Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus* Frequent sightings in Somaliland.

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala* One was seen in Djibouti and another north of Burco.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus* Rather scarce; singles or pairs only seen on four days.

Somali Bee-eater ◊ *Merops revoolii* Commonly seen in Somaliland, with a peak daily count of 30 birds.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* A few in NW Somaliland and larger numbers at Foret du Day.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* Large numbers in the Loyada-Saylac area, including a flock of 50.

Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* Seen well in Wadi Murayada area, plus a few others.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Just a few in NW Somaliland, and also in Djibouti.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* Five were seen in the Wadi Murayada area.

Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevia* One in the hills west of Hargeisa was the only one on the tour.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Frequent widespread sightings.

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata* Only seen on five occasions, including three at Ceel Afweyn.

Black-billed Wood-Hoopoe ◊ *Phoeniculus somaliensis* A flock of 10 at Sharub Forest and a single at Daallo.

Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor* Frequent sightings of pairs.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] epops* Commonly seen throughout in Somaliland.

Central African Hoopoe *Upupa [epops] senegalensis* Singles or pairs seen on several occasions.

Northern Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* Common in Somaliland with a peak daily count of 30.

Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris* Widespread sightings but less common than Red-billed.

Hemprich's Hornbill ◇ *Tockus hemprichii* Several at Daallo Forest, but common in the Foret du Day.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus* Frequently seen and heard in Daallo Forest.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala* Several in the Wadi Murayada area and at Sheikh. See Note.

Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus* Several widespread sightings.

Yellow-breasted Barbet ◇ *Trachyphonus margaritatus* Three singles in the north-west, and a pair at Foret du Day.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* One seen briefly near Wadi Willan.

Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica* Several widespread sightings.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens* Several widespread sightings.

Somali Lark ◇ *Mirafra somalica* A total of 7 birds recorded, at five locations. See Note.

Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinnamomea* (NL) One was seen flappeting over the Saraar plains by Tony.

Collared Lark ◇ *Mirafra collaris* A pair performed well in the red-sand country, plus another nearby. See Note.

Foxy Lark ◇ *Mirafra alopex* Two singles in the red-sand country. See Note.

Gillett's Lark ◇ *Mirafra gilletti* Frequently seen or heard in southern Somaliland. See Note.

Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* Frequent sightings in north-west Somaliland. See Note.

Lesser Hoopoe-Lark ◇ *Alaemon hamertoni* Common on the Tuuyo, Ban Cade and Saraar plains. See Note.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* Common on stony plains and in rocky areas. See Note.

Blanford's Lark ◇ *Calandrella blanfordi* Frequent on the Ban Cade and Saraar plains. See Note.

Somali Short-toed Lark ◇ *Calandrella somalica* Large flocks seen on various plains in Somaliland. See Note.

Short-tailed Lark ◇ *Pseudalaemon fremantlii* Seen on three occasions, but large flocks on Ban Cade. See Note.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Commonly seen in north-west Somaliland. See Note.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* Common throughout Somaliland, except in the north-west. See Note.

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* Common on plains in the north of Somaliland.

Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark ◇ *Eremopterix signatus* Common, mainly in the south, with 150 on Ban Cade.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Small numbers seen on several occasions.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* A pair at Daallo and another single were the only sightings. See Note.

Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta* Common around cliffs, especially in the Daallo area and at Sheikh. See Note.



Pale Crag Martins at Daallo Forest. (Nigel Redman)

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* Singles or pairs on three occasions.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Seen almost daily throughout the tour.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Singles or pairs on just three occasions.

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] flava* Common in small numbers, but most not assigned to race. See Note.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Singles seen on several occasions.

Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* A pair at a stop south of Ceerigaabo and another single bird. See Note.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Frequent sightings on several plains in Somaliland.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* Common in the Daallo area, and also seen at Sheikh and the Foret du Day.



Long-billed Pipit of the race nivescens. (Nigel Redman)

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Commonly seen in Somaliland, with up to 20 per day.

Somali Bulbul ◊ *Pycnonotus somaliensis* Commonly seen in NW Somaliland and Djibouti.

Dodson's Bulbul ◊ *Pycnonotus dodsoni* This was the common bulbul in most of Somaliland (with some overlap).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* One was seen at the campsite in Sharub Forest.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Four singles seen, mainly at Ceel Afweyn and Daallo.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* One was seen briefly on our last morning at Daallo Forest.

White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* Frequent sightings in southern Somaliland.

Rufous Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* A common migrant with widespread sightings.

African Scrub Robin ◊ *Cercotrichas minor* Just two records of this resident form. See Note.

Black Scrub Robin ◊ *Cercotrichas podobe* Two singles in the Saylac area and another the following day.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Three singles were seen on the tour.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* A single at Daallo and three more in Djibouti.

White-crowned Black Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe leucopyga* After a bit of searching we saw three in Djibouti.

Somali Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe phillipsi* Commonly seen throughout Somaliland with a total of 31 birds on 12 days.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Six birds seen on five occasions.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Just three individuals of this Palearctic migrant.

Abyssinian Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe lugubris* Several birds seen in Daallo Forest. See Note.



Abyssinian Wheatears were common in the Daallo Forest. (Nigel Redman)

- Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Only a single male seen, at our second campsite.
- Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* A common migrant and seen almost daily.
- Sombre Rock Chat** ◊ *Cercomela dubia* A pair was eventually seen well at Sheikh escarpment. See Note.
- Blackstart** *Cercomela melanura* Fairly common but patchy at widespread locations, but absent from the south.
- Little Rock Thrush** ◊ *Monticola rufocinereus* Common in Daallo Forest, and also seen at Sheikh.
- Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* Frequent sightings in the last week of the tour.
- Somali Thrush** ◊ *Turdus ludoviciae* Common in Daallo Forest, but fairly shy. See Note.
- Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* A single bird was seen at Loyada, on the first day.
- Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* A common migrant, seen daily in the first half of the tour. See Note.
- Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languida* A total of 12 birds seen on 7 days, invariably in acacias.
- Yellow-bellied Eremomela** *Eremomela icteropygialis* Commonly seen in small numbers in Somaliland.
- Yellow-vented Eremomela** ◊ *Eremomela flavicrissalis* A pair in the red-sand country was the only record.
- Northern Crombec** *Sylvietta brachyura* Three birds at a roadside stop in the north-west and another in Djibouti.
- Philippa's Crombec** ◊ *Sylvietta philippae* 10 birds at three locations, including a pair feeding a fledgling. See Note.
- Somali Crombec** ◊ *Sylvietta isabellina* Four at our lunch stop near Kirid, and four more north of Burco.
- Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Just two singles were seen.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* One was seen in Daallo Forest.
- Brown Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus umbrovirens* Common in Daallo Forest. See Note.
- Arabian Warbler** ◊ *Sylvia leucomelaena* Singles or pairs at four locations.
- Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* Singles were seen on five occasions.
- Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* Three records, all of single birds.
- Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* A fairly common migrant in small numbers.
- Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* A single at Loyada on our first day, and another in Djibouti on the last day.
- Banded Parisoma** *Parisoma boehmi* Fairly common in the south, and also seen between Burco and Berbera.
- [Daallo Cisticola** *Cisticola* sp.] Three birds at Daallo Forest remain unidentified. See Note.
- Ashy Cisticola** *Cisticola cinereolus* About 20 birds around our campsite near Ceel Afweyn.
- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* One at Quoryale Plain represented an easterly extension of its known range.
- Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* A pair at the Somali Lark site on Ban Cade plain, plus two other singles.
- Pectoral-patch Cisticola** *Cisticola brunnescens* One at a roadside stop south of Yufle was well out of range.

Pale Prinia ◇ *Prinia somalica* Small numbers seen, especially in the Wadi Murayada area. See Note.

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis* Common in the north-west and in Djibouti City.

Red-fronted Warbler *Spiloptila rufifrons* Fairly common, especially in the red-sand country. See Note.

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida* Pairs were seen on three occasions.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata* Common in Daallo Forest.

Grey Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes simplex* Singles or pairs recorded on five occasions.

African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus* Common throughout Somaliland, but not in Djibouti.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* A very common migrant and seen almost daily, especially in Daallo.

Gambaga Flycatcher ◇ *Muscicapa gambagae* (NL) One was seen by half the group at Daallo.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* Five birds were seen in Daallo Forest.

Grey-headed Batis ◇ *Batis orientalis* Small numbers were seen at widespread locations, especially at Daallo.

Pygmy Batis *Batis perkeo* Five were seen in the red-sand country, with the first in the Wadi Willan area.

Northern Grey Tit *Parus thruppi* Several birds were seen on four days.

Mouse-coloured Penduline-tit *Anthoscopus musculus* A pair was seen on two occasions.

Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis* Fairly uncommon with sightings only on three days.

Hunter's Sunbird *Nectarinia hunteri* Common in the red-sand country, and another north of Burco.

Nile Valley Sunbird ◇ *Anthreptes metallicus* Small parties seen on four days, all in the north.

Marico Sunbird *Nectarinia mariquensis* A single between Burco and Berbera was the only record.

Shining Sunbird ◇ *Nectarinia habessinica* Common and widespread, especially in the Daallo area and Foret du Day.

Variable Sunbird *Nectarinia venusta* Frequent sightings, especially in the south.

Abyssinian White-eye ◇ *Zosterops abyssinicus* Very common in Daallo Forest; also a few at Foret du Day.

Somali Fiscal ◇ *Lanius somalicus* Very common throughout Somaliland and seen almost every day.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* One at a roadside stop between Burco and Berbera, and another in Djibouti.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* Seen almost daily in small numbers.

Steppe Grey Shrike *Lanius [meridionalis] pallidirostris* A single in Djibouti was the only record.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Two birds between Burco and Berbera were the only confirmed records.

Turkestan Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides* Seven birds were recorded on five days.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Six singles were seen on the tour at widespread locations.

Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli* A single just east of Hargeisa was the only record.

Rosy-patched Bush-shrike ◇ *Rhodophoneus cruentus* Small numbers were recorded on 10 days.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus* More often heard than seen, and most frequent in Daallo Forest.

Slate-coloured Boubou *Laniarius funebris* Two at our camp in Sharub Forest were the only records.

Red-naped Bush-shrike ◇ *Laniarius ruficeps* Seen on several occasions in the south, and also north of Burco.

Ethiopian Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus* Heard at Sheikh escarpment and a single seen in Foret du Day.

Brubru *Nilus afer* Commonly encountered in southern Somaliland.

White-crested Helmetshrike *Prionops plumatus* A party of 8 birds passed through our camp in Sharub Forest.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* A common migrant and small numbers were seen on most days.

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* Commonly encountered throughout, but fewer in the north-west.

Cape Rook *Corvus capensis* Four birds in Ceerigaabo and another north of Burco.

Dwarf Raven (Somali Crow) ◇ *Corvus edithae* Commonly encountered, especially around villages.

Dwarf Raven X Pied Crow *Corvus edithae x albus* Around 30 hybrids were noted in Gerisa, in the north-west.

Fan-tailed Raven *Corvus rhipidurus* A pair was resident at our Daallo camp; also seen at Sheikh and Foret du Day.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* Abundant in Djibouti and Berbera.

Somali Starling ◇ *Onychognathus blythii* Large flocks were seen at Daallo, with a few elsewhere in the north.

Greater Blue-eared Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus* Six birds were seen on the outskirts of Hargeisa.

Golden-breasted Starling *Cosmopsarus regius* Small flocks were commonly encountered in the south.

Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi* Seen on three occasions, all between Ceel Afweyn and Ceerigaabo.

Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus* Common throughout Somaliland.

White-crowned Starling *Spreo albicapillus* Common throughout Somaliland, especially around villages.

Magpie Starling *Speculipastor bicolor* Two at Sharub Forest and around 20 in the Wadi Murayada area.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* A single was seen at Hargeisa, and a pair seen well near Daallo.

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* Small numbers at several locations, but 75 counted at Ceel Afweyn.

Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* Small numbers at widespread localities.

Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii* Commonly encountered, often in villages.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Several near the hotel in Djibouti were the only ones encountered.

Somali Sparrow *Passer castanopterus* Fairly common in Somaliland, usually in villages; also in Djibouti

House Sparrow X Somali Sparrow *Passer domesticus x castanopterus* Hybrids were noted in Djibouti and Loyada.

Arabian Golden Sparrow *Passer euchlorus* A pair near the hotel in Djibouti was our only record.

Yellow-spotted Petronia *Petronia pyrgita* Small numbers seen daily in the south of Somaliland.

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger* Only seen on two days, with a peak count of 20.

White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli* Commonly seen in Somaliland, with a peak count of 20.



White-headed Buffalo Weaver. (Nigel Redman)

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius* Small numbers seen on four days.

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus* Small numbers seen on three occasions

Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula* Frequently encountered throughout Somaliland and Djibouti.

Chestnut Weaver *Ploceus rubiginosus* At least 1000 birds roosted each night at the hotel garden in Burco.

Black-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda chamosyna* A pair at a roadside stop south of Fardo Lagu.

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* A single at Wadi Willan, but a dozen the following day in the red-sand country.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* A pair at Loyada and around 15 in Djibouti City.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* Just two sightings: a pair at Sharub Forest and three north of Burco.

African Silverbill *Lonchura cantans* Small numbers were seen on three occasions.

Eastern Paradise Whydah *Vidua paradisaea* Two males east of Hargeisa and two more the following day.

Straw-tailed Whydah *Vidua fischeri* A male and two females were seen at Wadi Murayada.

White-throated Seedeater *Serinus xanthopygius* A pair performed well in the camp at Foret du Day. See Note.

White-bellied Canary *Serinus dorsostriatus* Seen on three occasions, notably between Daallo and Ceerigaabo.

Northern Grosbeak-Canary ◊ *Serinus donaldsoni* Single birds were seen five times: four males and a female.
Brown-rumped Seedeater ◊ *Serinus tristriatus* Common in Daallo Forest, especially in Weji-yari village.
Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak ◊ *Rhynchostruthus louisae* 10 birds were seen on two days at Daallo. See Note.
Warsangli Linnet ◊ *Carduelis johannis* A flock of 5 was found a few kilometres to the west of Ceerigaabo. See Note.
Somali Bunting *Emberiza poliopleura* Common in the red-sand country of southern Somaliland.
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* Singles or pairs seen several times near Ceerigaabo.
Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Four in the park at Ceerigaabo and commonly encountered in Djibouti.

MAMMALS

Sacred Baboon (Hamadryas) *Papio hamadryas* Troops seen on 7 days, the largest being 42 animals.
Yellow-winged Bat *Lavia frons* Two were found in the Wadi Willan area, and two more in the red-sand country.
Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus* Widespread sightings throughout Somaliland. See Note.
Unstriped Ground Squirrel *Xerus rutilus* Very common throughout Somaliland and Djibouti.
[Peel's Pygmy Gerbil *Microdillus peelii*] One was found very freshly dead south of Ceerigaabo. See Note.
Somali Grass Rat *Arvicanthis neumanni* At least 30 in the lunch-stop wadi south of Ceerigaabo. See Note.
Speke's Pectinator *Pectinator spekei* One near Hargeisa, but many in Daallo Forest; also in Djibouti. See Note.
Common Jackal *Canis aureus* 12 individuals seen on six days; always singly.
Slender Mongoose *Herpestes sanguinea* (LO) One rufous individual was seen by Nigel in the red-sand country.
Banded Mongoose *Mungos mungo* A group of 15 on the Ban Cade plains and two other smaller groups later.
White-tailed Mongoose *Ichneumia albicauda* (LO) One in the hotel garden at Burco and two more in Foret du Day.
Caracal *Caracal caracal* One was observed hunting on the outskirts of Ceerigaabo.
Ethiopian Rock Hyrax *Procapra habessinica* Singles were seen at Daallo and Sheikh.
Yellow-spotted Hyrax *Heterohyrax brucei* Frequent sightings at several locations including Daallo and Sheikh.
Desert Warthog *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* Small parties on several occasions including the Bad Cade plains.
Klipspringer *Oreotragus oreotragus* A pair west of Hargeisa, three in Daallo Forest and four on Sheikh escarpment.
Beira *Dorcatragus megalotis* Six in rocky hills east of Hargeisa were one of the highlights of the tour. See Note.
Salt's Dik-dik *Madoqua saltiana* Very common throughout Somaliland and seen almost every day.
Günther's Dik-dik *Madoqua guentheri* Ten were seen in rocky hills in the Wadi Murayada area.
Dorcas Gazelle *Gazella dorcas* Small numbers seen on four occasions in NW Somaliland, and in Djibouti. See Note.
Speke's Gazelle *Gazella spekei* Small groups seen on many occasions, especially on Ban Cade plains. See Note.
Soemmering's Gazelle *Gazella soemmeringi* Four were seen in sandy desert in NW Somaliland.
Gerenuk *Litocranius walleri* Just five individuals were seen on two days in NW Somaliland.

REPTILES

Leopard Tortoise *Geochelone pardalis* Several were seen on the Quoryale plains and nearby.
Robecchi's Agama *Agama robecchi* One was seen well at night at the campsite on the Ban Cade plains.
Black-necked Ridgeback Agama *Acanthocercus atricollis* These brightly coloured agamas were frequent on rocks.
Vaillant's Strange Agama *Xenagama batillifera* One found on the Ban Cade plains – this genus is a Horn speciality.

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list mostly follow Redman, N., Stevenson, T. & Fanshawe, J. (2011). *Birds of the Horn of Africa*, 2nd edition. The species names and taxonomy used in the mammal list mostly follow Kingdon, J. (1997): *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

All the birds we saw were presumed to be the resident race *archeri*, which is confined to the Red Sea coast.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*

The form concerned is *parasitus* which is often lumped in Black Kite *M. migrans*. However, recent DNA analysis suggests that the African forms are more closely related to Red Kite *M. milvus*. To add to the complexity of the problem, northern and southern populations of Yellow-billed Kite may in turn prove to be specifically distinct from each other.

Archer's Buzzard *Buteo [augur] archeri*

Several of the birds we saw showed very little rufous on the underparts, and were presumably immatures. Only fully adult birds are solidly rufous below. This isolated form is usually lumped with the widespread Augur Buzzard *B. augur*. The species is named after Sir Geoffrey Archer (1882-1964), Governor of British Somaliland and later Uganda. He was co-author with Eva Godman of the seminal work *The Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden* (published in four volumes, 1937-1961).

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*

Coastal birds near Saylac and at Daallo were of the endemic race *dodsoni*. Inland birds near Burco were presumably of the race *maculosus*.

[Arabian Scops Owl *Otus pamelae*]

The birds seen and heard in Daallo Forest sounded very similar to the scops owls of SW Arabia which are now considered to be a separate species. Their call is noticeably different from that of African Scops Owl *O. senegalensis*, which is what they were previously considered to be. The identity of the Daallo birds may not be resolved until their DNA can be tested; they could be Arabian Scops Owls but it is also possible that they may prove to be a distinct taxon.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

The near-endemic race concerned, *somaliensis*, is sometimes considered to be part of a separate species: Ethiopian Little Owl *A. spilogastra*.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae*

All birds seen were of the near-endemic and paler race *somalicus*. This race was formerly considered to be a subspecies of Pallid Swift *A. pallidus*.

Black-throated Barbet *Tricholaema melanocephala*

The race seen in Somaliland was the near-endemic *blandi*.

Somali Lark *Mirafra somalica*

This shy endemic was seen at five locations. All birds were of the nominate race.

Collared Lark *Mirafra collaris*

Although not quite endemic to the Horn of Africa, this species is one of the hardest to see in the region. Most of its range is in areas that are unsafe to visit, i.e. the Ogaden desert in Ethiopia and in adjacent Somalia. Apart from our site in Somaliland, the only other recent sightings were in extreme NE Kenya, close to the Somali border.

Foxy Lark *Mirafra alopex*

This species was formerly lumped in Fawn-coloured Lark *M. africanoides*. The race we saw is nominate *alopex*.

Gillett's Lark *Mirafra gilletti*

This species is a near-endemic to the Horn of Africa, extending only marginally into NE Kenya.

Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

The race in NW Somaliland is *desertorum*.

Lesser Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon hamertoni*

Birds on the Tuuyo plain were of the rufescent race *tertia*, while on the Ban Cade and Saraar plains they were the sandy-brown race *altera*.

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*

In NW Somaliland and Djibouti we saw birds of the race *assabensis* which had darker underparts; further east, the race *akeleyi* had paler pinkish-buff underparts.

Blanford's Lark *Calandrella blanfordi*

All birds were of the race *daroodensis*, which is almost endemic to Somaliland.

Somali Short-toed Lark *Calandrella somalica*

On the Quoryale and Tuuyo plains we saw the race *perconfusa*; further east, on the Ban Cade and Saraar plains the birds were nominate *somalica*.

Short-tailed Lark *Pseudalaemon fremantlii*

All birds seen were the near-endemic nominate race.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Only seen in north-west Somaliland where the race is *somaliensis*.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

All birds seen were of the race *elliotti*.

Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo obsoleta*

Seen mainly at Daallo and at Sheikh; all birds seen well were of the resident race *arabica*. This species is sometimes lumped in the extralimital Rock Martin *H. fuligula*.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

The racial identity of the birds at Daallo in N Somaliland is uncertain, and they may represent an undescribed subspecies.

Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] flava*

Many individuals could not be assigned to race, but those that were subspecifically identified proved to be nominate *flava*.

Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

The race we saw was *annae*, which is found patchily throughout the Horn except in the Ethiopian highlands.

African Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas minor*

The birds we saw in NW Somaliland were presumably nominate *minor*. Elsewhere the race is *hamertoni*, but we saw mainly migrant Rufous Scrub Robins, rather than resident African Scrub Robins.

Abyssinian Wheatear *Oenanthe lugubris*

The birds in Daallo Forest were of the race *vauriei*, which is endemic to Somaliland.

Sombre Rock Chat *Cercomela dubia*

This little-known bird is largely confined to NE Ethiopia; there are two previous records in Somaliland and one recent record from Djibouti. Ours was at the same site as the 2010 tour, and it appears that the species does breed locally in Somaliland.

Somali Thrush *Turdus ludoviciae*

This species was formerly lumped in Olive Thrush *T. olivaceus* of southern Africa, together with other forms that are now split as Northern Olive (or Mountain) Thrush *T. abyssinicus*. It is the most distinctive and isolated taxon in the Olive Thrush superspecies.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*

All the birds we saw were migrant *elaeica*. The recently described race *alulensis* is confined to coastal mangroves in N Somaliland and elsewhere on Red Sea coasts.

Philippa's Crombec *Sylvietta philippae*

This Somali endemic was only described in 1955 and is named for the wife of well-known East African ornithologist John Williams, who was the author of East Africa's first field guide.

Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens*

The birds in Daallo Forest were of the endemic subspecies *williamsi*. The birds in the Foret du Day in Djibouti were the nominate race.

[Daallo Cisticola *Cisticola* sp.]

The cisticolas that we found in Daallo Forest bore similarities to several extralimital species but cannot be assigned to a species with certainty. Crucially, we heard no song from them, although occasional short calls were recorded. Whatever their identity, our cisticolas will be a new species for Somaliland and perhaps for the whole of Somalia.

Pale Prinia *Prinia somalica*

All the birds seen were of the near-endemic nominate race.

Red-fronted Warbler *Spiloptila rufifrons*

The first birds we saw, in the north-west, were nominate *rufifrons*, with rufous only on the forehead. Most sightings, however, were of the more widespread race *smithi* with extensive rufous on the crown.

White-throated Seedeater *Serinus xanthopygius*

This species was unknown in Djibouti until 2010, probably having been previously misidentified as Reichenow's Seedeater *S. reichenowi*. The second edition of Redman *et al.* uses the name Yellow-rumped Seedeater for this species, but White-throated seems more appropriate, despite the fact that some birds show a hint of yellow on the throat.

Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus louisae*

One male was seen singing in flight, and another was carrying nesting material, presumably indicating the onset of breeding and coinciding with the start of the autumn rains. This endemic species has only recently been split from closely related species on Socotra and in SW Arabia.

Warsangli Linnnet *Carduelis johannis*

Our five birds were found in rocky euphorbia country at an altitude of 1860m, feeding on the seeds of a small spiny plant. Adults are very similar in plumage; we probably saw four males and a female.

Abyssinian Hare *Lepus habessinicus*

The form in Somaliland (and adjacent Ethiopia) is now usually split off from Cape Hare *L. capensis*, which is the treatment adopted here, contrary to Kingdon.

Peel's Pygmy Gerbil *Microdillus peeli*

The dead gerbil that we found south of Ceerigaabo has been identified as this species. This interesting endemic is the only species in its genus and is only known from three localities, all in Somaliland.

Somali Grass Rat *Arvicanthis neumanni*

The many diurnal rats at the lunch-stop wadi south of Ceerigaabo were this species. They are found in arid country in Somalia and in East Africa.

Speke's Pectinator *Pectinator spekei*

These rock-loving rodents are very poorly known in Somaliland, although we found them to be quite common in Daallo Forest. In NE Ethiopia, this species has only been recorded up to 1200m, but we found them as high as 1950m.

Beira *Dorcatragus megalotis*

This unique small antelope has long legs, a long neck and very large ears. It is placed in its own genus, and is almost endemic to Somaliland; apparently its range just extends into Djibouti.

Dorcas Gazelle *Gazella dorcas*

The race concerned is *pelzelni*, which is almost endemic to the N Somaliland coast. Pelzel's Gazelle is sometimes considered to be a separate species.

Speke's Gazelle *Gazella spekei*

This Somali endemic was refreshingly common in Somaliland, mainly in the east; many small groups were seen, giving a total of 155 animals. The inflatable nasal region is a distinctive feature when seen well.