

## FOREWARD

This year has been a major landmark for the editor as he has finally swapped green for some colourful attire. The year has been busy one for him and one of his last military actions was to lead another trip to Ascension and the report is published here for those who have not seen it on the web-site. This was followed by resettlement leave and courses on botany and invertebrates before a holiday in Ecuador taking in the Galapagos hence a few “filler” photos. During the year he went on two AOS trips abroad and you can read about Canada and the Oman in this edition. Late last year there was a trip to Hungary by the Society as well. The Society had a number of other trips this year including favourites of Norfolk and Portland which are not included this year. Another addition to the list of annual trips is a ringing weekend for those who would like to see what the fuss is all about. As you will read in this edition our members have been around the globe and no matter where they have been or what reason it does not take long for a pair of binos to appear and a list started. What is it about lists and recording? It seems that we all do it to some extent and some will have lists for garden, local patch, county, country, year etc. Whatever it is those lists are useful as if they are submitted they can be used by many organisations to formulate policy and plans at all levels. This year saw the end of the BTO Atlas recording and the Society helped out by visiting the remote parts of Jura to fill in missing gaps of coverage. We visited Jura twice and the second visit was a more species rich (helped by a bottle of the local brew whilst camping out on the mountains) than the first which you can read about. I would point out that there 8 of us on the 2<sup>nd</sup> trip allowing all the grid squares to be checked. The editor is not the only retiree this year. Carl Powell also retired as warden of Sizewell Nature Reserve and I am grateful to him for the birds of Suffolk; from around his patch. The cover birds were sent by Ray Marsh. On the next page are some notes from the Chairman.

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## ARMY BIRDING – REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR

A lot of us have been there. It starts with a tap on the window. At 04:00 in the morning in a country lay-by. In a broad Norfolk accent, backlit by an unnecessary blue disco light – “Are you all right Sir?” I’m not, as my neck feels permanently cricked; I’m covered with condensation and have mild hypothermia. But with as much gravitas as possible in the circumstances – “I’m an Army Birder and I’m waiting for the Hunstanton Bus Station cafe to open”. Credentials established and knowing that the Wolferton Triangle Golden Pheasants that I have missed for countless years will soon be missed again, I try for a final couple of hours sleep. And so the AOS year opens, with a very respectable turnout of members a few hours later on the annual January pilgrimage to Norfolk.

A Jura BTO survey trip and an Ascension visit later, I am again woken while slumped over the steering wheel but this time, of a minibus and 400 miles from home. The second Jura trip has been rescued by a combination of two stalwarts of the Society happy to be ‘excused peaks’, and two new supporters from the county town of Herefordshire who could not get enough peaks! A day later, sitting on the side of a windswept mountain, bivis pitched, tetrad surveys completed, sipping Jura whisky from an Army mug and talking to old friends and new; THAT is birding. And frankly, that’s what makes this Society a little bit different and worth preserving.

Fast-forward through a number of field days, expeditions, Portland, a ringing weekend and it is a reminder that we have a huge (and growing) amount of birding talent of every description within our ranks and we depend on many of them to host days or organise events and trips and for this, we are all very grateful. Please support them. In the spirit of glasnost, we have opened a number of these activities to our sister societies. By pure coincidence, the Royal Navy deployed all its birders abroad on ops at the same time, while we kept track of their activities by e-mail and blog and through our own web site. RAFOS were well represented at our ‘introduction to ringing’ weekend at Catterick and both societies joined us on Ascension.

Portents of doom became reality when then Committee reviewed the budget in September, the effects ameliorated by some life saving ideas from the Hon Treasurer and Editor, all explained in the next Newsletter. We prosper only as long as our numbers continue to grow so there is a sustained search for new members, particularly but not exclusively from those serving. I am pursuing contacts with the media and we now have interest from the BBC. Congratulations therefore to all members sporting the AOS logo at the British Bird Fair. To encourage further interest next year, I have agreed with BTO to help sponsor the Salisbury Plain part of the national Whinchat survey with assistance from AOS members in that region. They will in turn be looking for birding support from the rest of us living further afield. Whether on Salisbury Plain or at the AGM, I look forward to comparing sightings with everyone in 2012.

And finally, good luck and safe return to our Hon Secretary on his forthcoming operational birding tour.

Roger Dickey  
Chairman



Sooty Terns on Ascension Island South Atlantic  
24<sup>th</sup> Integrated Population Monitoring Programme Report  
26 March – 9 April 2011

(Andrew Bray, John Hughes, Tony Giles)

Summary: The expedition completed a full census of sooty terns. The colony size in early April 2011 was 181,000 AON. A further 2,526 sooty terns were ringed and 385 re-trapped. 20 sooty terns had geolocators fitted on metal rings on their legs which will require recovery next year. This will help us determine the movement of adults at sea between breeding periods. DNA samples were taken of brown noddies and white-tailed tropic birds. A survey of white terns was taken across the whole island and stacks.

Population Dynamics of Sooty Terns – Long Term Monitoring Programme

Background

British military ornithological societies have monitored the colony of sooty terns *Onychoprion fuscatus* and other seabirds on Ascension Island in the South Atlantic since 1987. The first population census was completed in 1990 ten years prior to the commencement of the RSPB cat eradication on the Island. Sooty terns were closely monitored during the two years when cats were culled and now we continue the monitoring in the post eradication phase. This report contains the findings of the latest field trip and is the sixteenth AOS expedition. The longitudinal study has focused on the breeding biology of the sooty tern. The study has concentrated on establishing trends in the breeding population, identifying and recording levels of predation, site fidelity, sub-annual breeding, investigating nest and adult survival rates, and more recently to identify their migration sites.

Organisations

The long term monitoring programme on Ascension was not planned and there is no lead organisation dictating the direction of the project. The programme has evolved over time and the focus now is on publishing the information that has already been gathered, filling gaps in existing data sets and to continue with the monitoring work. Over the years the lead role has changed hands a number of times. The organisations involved are:

- Royal Air Force Ornithological Society (RAFOS) who mounted the first expeditions in Feb 87 and Nov 88 and contributed to most of the other expeditions.
- Army Ornithological Society (AOS) the main contributor who mounted expeditions in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and the most recent in Mar/Apr 2011.
- Royal Navy Bird Watching Society (RNBWS) who contributed field workers and ringers.

Terms of Reference

The main aim of this long term monitoring programme is to facilitate the expansion of the breeding population by identifying and reducing threats to the sooty tern colony. The following process is carried out:

- Surveys of the breeding population are undertaken at regular intervals.

- The levels of predation in the colony are measured and recorded.
- A ringing and re-trap programme is maintained so that inter and intra colony movements can be monitored and survival rates determined.
- Perceived threats to the colony are investigated.
- Long term, quantifiable data that can be used as evidence for making conservation management decisions on sooty terns is collected and made available to interested parties.

### Secondary Aims

In addition to work on sooty terns the various military organisations maintain data bases on a wide variety of species and projects on Ascension. Sixteen different databases exist and all were started prior to the feral cat eradication programme. One database, holds records of breeding attempts by all avian species on three precisely defined study sites. The Royal Navy Bird Watching Society maintains a data base of some 35,000 birds seen from ships. There are also data based on the abundance and distribution of land birds and on sea-watches.

### Aims of the March 2011 Expedition

1. Population census of the sooty tern.
2. Survey the number of apparently occupied nests (AONs) of brown noddy *Anous stolidus* on fairs and Ascension Island frigate bird *Fregata aquila* on Letterbox.
3. AON survey of white tern *Gygis alba*.
4. Survey of red-foot booby *Sula sula*.
5. Collect blood samples of brown noddy and yellow-billed tropic bird *Phaethon lepturus*.

### Expedition Booby 16 – Mar 11 - Participants

Major Andrew Bray	Expedition Leader
Group Captain Martin Routledge	RAFOS
Lieutenant Colonel Roger Dickey	AOS
Capt Richard Seargent	AOS
Flight Lieutenant Simon Croson	RAFOS
Warrant Officer 2 Tony Tindale	RNBWS
Staff Sergeant Tony Giles	AOS
Sergeant Richard Agus	AOS
Mrs Beverley Fletcher	AOS
Dr Jim Reynolds	University of Birmingham
Colin Wearn:	RAFOS

Members of the expedition were on the island from 26 March to 09 April 2011. A total of 96 man days were spent in the field.

### Long Term Population Trends

The population survey this season was carried out close to peak abundance and 37-46 days after the first egg of the season was laid. The colony on Ascension is at its greatest 42-60 days after the first egg of the season is laid.

### Timings

Ascension Conservation Office is thanked for their reports where they recorded the first eggs of the season at Waterside on 17 February 2011 giving an estimate of hatch on 17 Mar 11. We

estimate from our observations that the first egg that hatched was laid 25/26 Feb 11 and hatched 25/26 Mar 11.

#### Survey

The area of the colony was determined from GPS observations. The GPS worked by constantly recording the position of the bearer and then the data is downloaded onto a computer. The GPS worked out the area of each sub-colony. This method did not require waypoints to be recorded as the surveyor walked around the different colonies. The colony this season was made up of 16 sub-colonies (8 per major site) and as in previous years a “Fair Description Sheet” was completed for each sub-colony. The total area occupied in March 2011 was 10.69ha.

#### Nest Density

Nest densities were measured by counting all eggs that were passed over by a string 1.784m long, rotating 360 degrees around a stick, at random points within the sub-colonies. In total 5,694 AONs were counted in 308 quadrats giving an average density of 1.685 AONs per sq metre (Table 1).

#### Population Size

At Mars Bay on 07 April 2011 the sub colony contained 69,000 (AONs) and at Waterside the sub colony contained 112,000 (AONs).

Table 1 Breeding population of pairs of sooty terns at the two colonies on Ascension in April 2011. Population determined by multiplying area by density.

Sub Colony	Area Hectares	No of Quadrats	No of Nests Counted	Av. Density Per sq. m	Population Size Pairs
Waterside	5.47	Combined	Combined	2.05	112,161
Mars Bay	5.22	Combined	Combined	1.32	68,910
Total	10.69	308	5694	1.685	181,072

#### Predation - Natural Limiting Factors

Exposure to predation and habitat studies were conducted to help ascertain breeding success.

#### Dead Adults

Ten dead sooty terns were found, three at Waterside and seven at Mars Bay. There was a fissure on Mars Bay at grid 65723 15741 which had created a small cave where we found five dead sooty terns. It looked like they had fallen in and could not get out due to the small entrance. No signs of any cat predation were found on any of these birds or on our three study sites during this field trip.

#### Rat Index

We have been concerned about the high levels of predation by black rats *Rattus rattus* at both sites. We completed rat indexes on both these sites (Table 2). We used break back traps. On Waterside there was notable land crab *Gecarcinus lagostoma* activity around the traps. On Mars Bay there were large numbers of House mice *Mus musculus* caught. Mars Bay now has a grass (probably soft feather pappus grass *Enneapogon cenchroides*) growing across the fair which will provide alternate food to sooty terns.

Table 2 Summary of rat indexes on three study sites on Ascension Island March/April 2011. The index is the count of the number of rats trap per 100 trap nights.

Location	Dates	Traps Set	Trap-nights lost	Corrected trap-nights	Captured	Index
West side of Waterside	5-7 Apr	64	26	40	2	5.0
North west side of Mars Bay	30 Mar – 3 Apr	66	33	33	6	18.2

#### Frigate Predation

There was no time to spend on frigate predation. There were however 8-12 frigates over Waterside from 29 Mar.

#### Myna Predation

Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* predate on sooty tern eggs. Mynas prick and destroy many more eggs than they devour. Nests were marked and egg survival rates measured. Mynas were seen on the breed colony most days. We monitored sighting of myna in the breeding colony and the frequency of occurrence this season was 52%. Of 100 nests monitored there were 43 failed nests and 7 of these were positively attributed to myna predation.

#### Site Fidelity

#### Re-trap Adults

In total 385 sooty terns were re-trapped this season none of these were controls. Time allocation to re-trapping this season was 102 hours. One tern ringed as a chick on 24 Oct 2005 was re-trapped while incubating on 20 Jul 2011 at Fernando de Noronha, Brazil.

#### Desertion

It is common for a minority of the sooty tern population to desert their eggs. This season two sub colonies at Waterside and Mars Bay had areas that were deserted. These were not surveyed.



Roger Dickey, Tony Giles, Tony Tindale in ringing party

#### Life History - Survival Rates

A further 2526 sooty terns were ringed by Colin Wearn (with assistance from Roger Dickey, Martin Routledge and Jim Reynolds); details are below (Table 3). When this figure is added to our total and ringing completed by the RSPB and Dr Gale in Nov 1975 who used USA rings the overall total of ringed sooty terns on Ascension is 20,926.

Table 3 Summary of ringing data.

Ring No	Number Ringed	Date	Location
DE47001 DE47500	500	28-Mar-11	Waterside
DE45001 DE45700	700	29-Mar-11	Waterside
DE45701 DE45950	250	29-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DE46001 DE46100	100	29-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DE45951 DE46000	50	30-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DE46501 DE46900	400	30-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DE46901 DE47000	100	31-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DD99322 DD99348	26	31-Mar-11	Mars Bay
DE46201 DE46450	350	06-Apr-11	Mars Bay
DE46451 DE46500	50	08-Apr-11	Mars Bay

### Movement at Sea

A major task this trip was to attach geolocators to 20 birds. The geolocators were funded by the University of Birmingham, The RSPB, The Royal Navy Bird Watching Society and the AOS. We have good long term data for the birds whilst breeding but we have no evidence of where they go once they head out to sea. All we have is anecdotal evidence from passing yachts stopping at Ascension. We know the young spend 5 years at sea on the wing before they return to breed. We suspect the adults head to parts of the ocean that are rich in sprat and squid; where deep cold currents mix with warmer waters. On a previous trip we had experimented with attaching geolocators to birds using a harness however this did not work well. Technology now



Geolocator fitted to Sooty Tern

allows us to attach these tracking devices to rings on legs. The geolocators are programmed to record the time of daylight from which we can determine longitude and latitude. The devices have to be recovered to download the data. To enhance the chances of re-trapping a bird with a device we have marked the birds with additional coloured rings and about 120 of their neighbours. We know that the birds are neighbour faithful rather than site faithful so if we locate one bird with the additional coloured rings, the birds with a geolocator will be close by. Unfortunately there are

many things that could prevent the birds returning. To improve the likelihood of the birds returning, we ringed birds in a small group on Mars Bay separated from the main group and thus likely to fail in breeding which will mean that they should be in the first wave of returning birds. Our first attempt at re-trapping will happen in early January 2012 and there will be another opportunity in October 2012.

The geolocators have to be attached after the ring has been fitted. This is a delicate job as the ring has to be firmly in place and a special licence is required. They have only a miniscule impact on the bird and with the rings weigh less than 2 grams. Once a bird was captured full

biometrics were taken. These were put into a formula that had been devised from previous studies<sup>1</sup> to determine if it was likely to be a male or female. A blood sample was taken for each bird which will be used to confirm the sex of the bird as measurements only provide a 78% certainty. The aim was to have 10 male and 10 females. We put a numbered ring and coloured ring on the right leg of the bird. We then put a coloured ring and a plain metal ring on the left leg of the bird. We then wrapped sticky tape around the plain metal ring which bonds as it is stretched. We then use 2 plastic tie grips to attach the geolocator to the ring. Thus the geolocator is stuck to the rings and as well as secured using the tie grips. The grips are then cut to remove the excess. The whole operation takes about 30 minutes per bird. The birds are re-trapped a few days later to ensure that the rings still fit comfortably and there is no chaffing to the leg.

#### Food Availability

On the previous trip there was concern that the staple diet seemed to be squid rather than sprat. Squid does not have the same calorific content as sprat and thus could affect the fledging of chicks. During ringing we monitored the regurgitation of food (Table 4). Of the 10 examples only 1 was squid.

Table 4 Summary of regurgitation.

Date	Location	Qty	Food
26-Mar-11	Mars Bay	1	Sprat
29-Mar-11	Waterside	6	Sprat
30-Mar-11	Mars Bay	1	Sprat
31-Mar-11	Mars Bay	1	Squid
08-Apr-11	Mars Bay	1	Sprat

#### Egg Survival Rate

Egg survival rates were monitored using the Mayfield technique. 754 egg days was recorded with 43 failed nests and the survival rate calculated. Of the 100 nests that were monitored 43 failed. Nest survival rate this season varied from 0.61 in the core of the colony to 0.38 on the periphery. The causes of failure were: seven broken (probably Myna), 31 nests were deserted and five due to heavy rainfall (moved/buried).

#### Other Activities

##### Training and Support

We delivered two days of ringing training to two staff from the Ascension Island Government. We provided conducted tours of the Mars Bay site and explained our activities to three workers from the Conservation Office. We are currently developing a guide to monitoring of sea-birds on Ascension for use by future expeditions and the Conservation Office.

##### DNA Records

We took nine blood samples from brown noddies for the University of Copenhagen. The university have requested more samples of all seabirds. In addition 20 blood samples of white-tailed tropic birds were taken for the University of Reunion.

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<sup>1</sup> S. J. Reynolds, G. R. Martin, L. L. Wallace, C. P. Wearn & B. J. Hughes (2008). Sexing sooty terns on Ascension Island from morphometric measurements. *Journal of Zoology* **274**, 2–8



### Mexican Thorn

The spread of mexican thorn *Prosopis juliflora* to the edge of the sooty tern colonies was first recorded in 1998. Since that date the steady but relentless progress of encroachment by this plant onto the nesting ground has been mapped using GPS. The height, spread and co-ordinates of five thorn bushes at Waterside and 11 at Mars Bay in the close vicinity of the colonies were measured. At the moment ample open space is available for sooty terns to find nest sites. However, the bush provides rats with food when sooty terns migrate.

### Study Sites

Once again all bird species attempting to breed on the three study sites established in 1990 were noted (Table 5). At Mars Bay there were three brown noddy nests with eggs besides the sooty tern sub-colony. This is the first time that we have recorded brown noddy nesting on the site. At Waterside in addition to the sooty terns, 69 brown noddy nests were identified of which 58 contained an egg. Of note was that all nest sites identified were on the edge of the sooty tern occupied areas, also that there was no pattern to nest sites. In some cases there could be four pairs nesting very close to each other and in other cases a pair could be a good distance from another pair.

On the Letterbox study site the Conservation Office already has a masked booby *Sula dactylatra* nest marking scheme as there are so many nests now-a-days. The team did search for any frigate bird nests but only found roost sites. Of note is that masked booby are nesting on a larger area of the southeast side of the island than before. They range from Crater Cliff to below the cliffs of White Hill.

Table 5 Summary of breeding pairs on three long term study sites on Ascension – Apr 2011

Species	Waterside	Mars Bay	Letterbox
Sooty Tern	© 112,000	© 36,000	Nil
Masked Booby	Nil	Nil	Not monitored. Conservation office counting nests.
Brown Booby	Nil	Nil	Nil
Tropicbirds	Nil	Nil	Nil
Brown Noddy	58 pairs	3 pairs	Nil
Frigates	Nil	Nil	Nil

### White tern

A full population survey of the white terns was carried out and a separate report will be prepared.

### Red-footed booby

A boat was used to survey the cliffs of Boatswain Bird Island. During the survey of white tern's 12 Red-foot Booby were counted.

### Ringling

During the field season the following additional birds were fitted with a ring:

Masked booby – 12.

White-billed tropic bird – 18.

Brown noddy – 10.

## Survey Effort

Long term monitoring programmes are an expensive business. We are fortunate to have a dedicated team that has been willing to self fund to ensure continuation of the project. The majority of the funding has come from the MoD by providing facilities.

## Future Work

The next expedition is scheduled for January 2012. This will be a short visit with a team of five and the aim is to re-trap sooty terns fitted with geolocators. A second expedition in October 2012 is also planned to carry out a population survey and predation monitoring. Effort will be devoted to locating other geolocators and re-trapping.

## Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to Clare Stringer of the RSPB for her support and grant. Our thanks to the Service ornithological societies for funding and manning the expedition. Our sincere thanks goes to the Ascension Island Conservation Office for the continuing support and hospitality. Finally, our thanks to RAF Ascension and HQ British Forces South Atlantic for allowing the expedition to take place and allowing us to use the military facilities. It is their support that allows the Services to continue to be highly regarded by the authorities responsible for the governance and conservation of UK Overseas Territories.



Brown Noddy



Masked Booby

Suffolk Birds by Carl Powell



Herring Gull



Black-headed Gull



Tawny Owl



Gadwall



Moorhen



Black-tailed Godwit





Green Woodpecker



Reed Warbler



Black Redstart



Mute Swan



Linnet



Sedge Warbler



Stonechat

## EXERCISE GREAT BUSTARD

### HUNGARY 22-30 May 2010

(Tim Hallchurch)

On 22nd May 2010, 19 members arrived at Budapest Airport having travelled on different flights from the UK and once couple from Nigeria. Those who took part were:

Hilary Nash  
Tom and Judy Walcot  
Chris and Rosie Howarth Booth  
Patricia Davies  
Philip and Carolyn Hall  
Lynne Millard and Julien Crisp  
Tony and Pat Lancaster  
Gerry and Sheila Birch  
Tim Hallchurch and Jan Stokes Carter  
Steve and Maggie Dettmar  
Miles Stockdale

We were met at the airport by Roy Adams and two minibuses. Roy is a former police officer specialising in wildlife conservation and protection and lives near Eger. When not guiding bird tours he carries out conservation work and surveys in Hungary. We arrived at Hotel Villa Volgy at Eger in the evening. The hotel on the outskirts of the town has spa facilities with swimming pools, saunas etc. and with a good variety of bird life in the garden. It was also within walking distance of the wine caves where wine tasting takes place and we were all able to visit.



Juvenile White-backed Woodpecker

The first morning, Sunday 23rd May was an early start at 6.30 with a visit to the Ostoros—Novaj valley where we had sight and sound of Marsh and River Warblers, Nightingales and Red-backed Shrikes amongst other species. We then returned to the hotel for breakfast before going to the Bukk National Park where the highlight was a young White-backed Woodpecker. It was then to Mezokovesd for a goulash lunch before moving to Mezokoveaal fishponds to look for Red-necked Grebe and Penduline Tits nesting. The pond area also supported a pair of Marsh Harriers nesting nearby, plus Blackcap, Nightingale, Crested Lark, Black Redstart, Red-backed Shrike, Blackcap, Black-crowned Night Heron.

Monday took us on our first visit to the Hortobaggy National Park where we were escorted by Sherdor Konyhas, one of the park wardens, who took us into an area not open to the public to see Great Bustards. We had good views of up to 9 from half a mile away although not near enough for photographs. There were also Quail and the usual Marsh Harriers in the area.

Tuesday was back to the Nosvaj Forest to look for the Grey-headed Woodpecker. We watched the nest hole for about half an hour when we had a flashing glimpse of one leaving the nest. We also had a glimpse of a Black Woodpecker plus three Syrian Woodpeckers, many Red-backed Shrikes, Hawfinch, Barred Warbler and the usual Hawfinches and a



Collared Flycatcher. After a lunch break where flying over the restaurant were Cranes, Storks and Spoonbills, we were taken to Mezokovesl ponds. The ponds added Pygmy Cormorant, a Bittern calling, Night and Squacco Heron. Over the water were Black, White-winged Black and Whiskered Terns. Ducks included Pochard and Ferruginous. Birds of prey included 40 Marsh Harriers, a Montague's and at least 10 Common Buzzards. The telegraph wires revealed a number of Rollers. We also saw a number of Bee-eaters.



Red-back Shrike



Bee-eater

On the Wednesday morning we visited the Novaj forest about 6km SE of Eger in the foothills of the Bükk National Park. Here we saw a Goshawk, possibly a Peregrine, 3 Wryneck, Spotted and Collared Flycatcher and a juvenile White-backed and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker; also a nesting pair of Black Redstart. Golden Orioles were also present along with Tawny Pipit, Olivaceous, Willow and Wood Warblers. Hawfinches were seen almost everywhere and Nightingales were seen and heard. Warblers we saw included Blackcap, Willow, Wood and Icterine plus Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroats.

On Thursday we went to the Bird Nature Reserve of Lake Tisza, The bird reserve located in the

Tiszavalk inlet at the north of the lake is a protected natural resource entered on the list of internationally recognised waterfowl habitats and it is also part of the Hortobágy National Park which was designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO. The reserve is excellent for Marsh Terns, Pygmy Cormorant and a variety of Herons and Egrets. The scrub at the side of the lake contains Red Backed Shrike (very common). The most common warbler in the reed beds that we saw were Great Reed Warbler along with Marsh, Sedge, Reed and River Warblers. Penduline Tits nests were found and after patient waiting birds were seen entering the nest. Bearded Tits (Reedlings) were also seen in a number of places alongside the Tisza River. Savi's Warblers were heard on a number of occasions while a late wet evening was spent looking for Aquatic Warblers. This meant wading through leech infested water lead by a warden. Of the two parties that went, one party saw two Aquatic Warblers. All got very wet. A Bluethroat was



Wryneck

located in an old fish breeding pond adjacent to Lake Tisza. The café where we had lunch was evacuated due to rising waters of the Tisza River after heavy rain! A Wryneck was nesting in the trees and White Wagtails on the boarding. The Black Stork seen was harried by its white cousin and chased off when it landed so we only enjoyed a brief sighting. Bitterns were heard but not seen.

Thursday and Friday was spent re-visiting the same areas with a dinner in an Eger restaurant, wine tasting and a bit of sightseeing and shopping. Some of the party then spent nights in Budapest and some ventured by rail to Vienna before returning to London. Swifts and Hirundines were numerous over the Danube in Budapest and Hawfinches were seen in the parks. The main areas visited were: Bukk Hills.



Goulash Lunch

These border the hotel and consist of large areas of broadleaf woodland, vineyards and several lakes. Collared Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Hawfinch were abundant. Areas of old Beech forest have Red Breasted Flycatcher, White Backed Woodpecker and Ural Owl. Lesser Spotted, Middle Spotted, Syrian, Grey Headed and Black Woodpeckers are all common and widely distributed in the forest. Sadly we did not see the Red-breasted Flycatcher or Ural Owl.

Bodrozug and Tisza Floodplains.

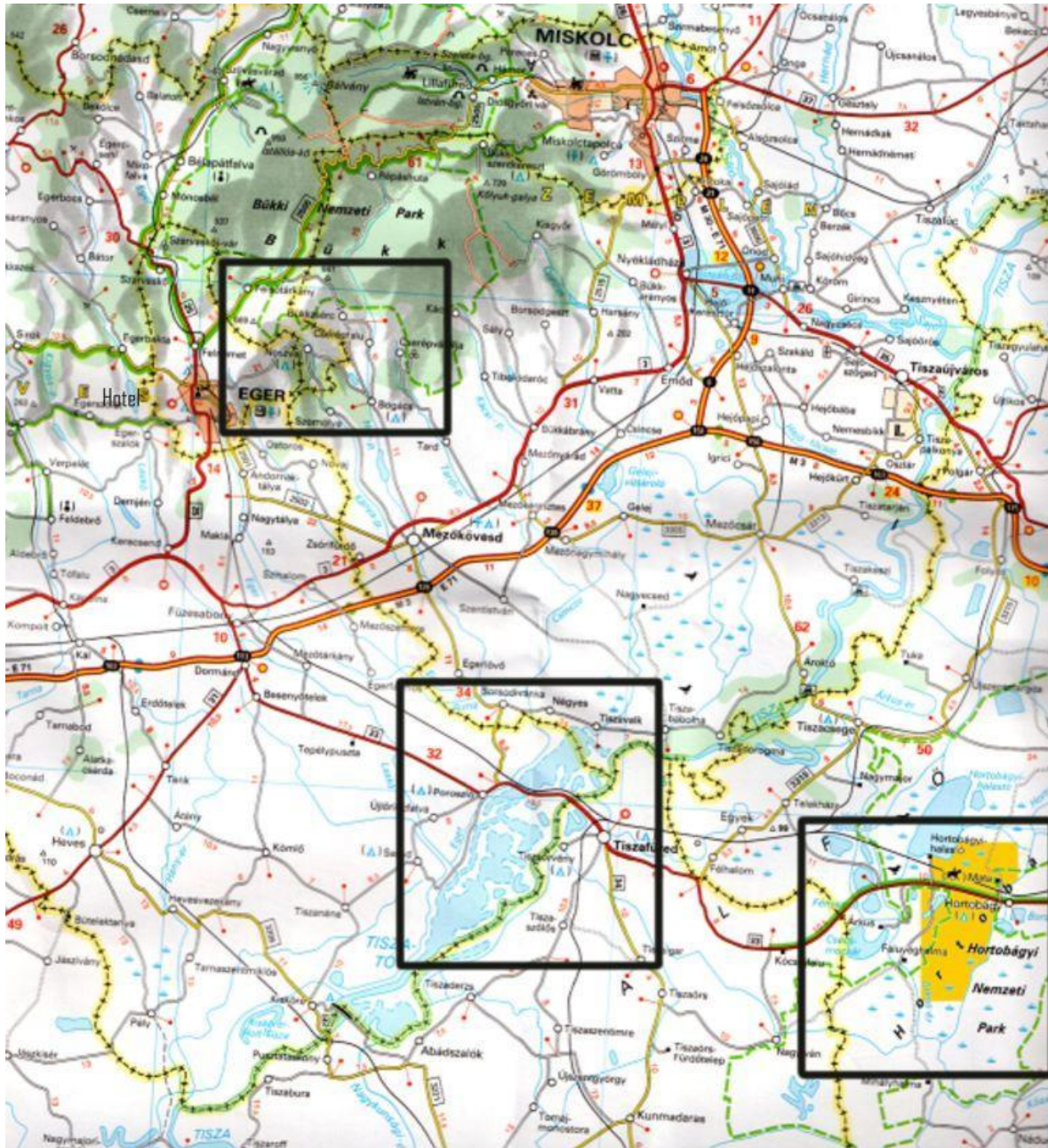
Excellent for Corncrake, Little Crake, Black Kite, Black Stork, Icterine Warbler and Saker Falcon. We missed most of these species except nesting Saker Falcons that were breeding in nest boxes high up on electricity pylons. Also seen was a pair of Eastern Imperial Eagles with young on a nest in a tree.

Eger

The city of Eger, has a thousand-year history, heroic past, monuments, wines and thermal baths and is one of the most famous towns of Hungary. It is also noted for its splendid Baroque architecture, wine, thermal and medicinal waters and lively student population. It became an episcopal seat as early as the 11th century, during the reign of St. Stephen, the first king of Hungary. Disaster struck the town many times: it was practically destroyed during the invasion of the Tatars, but its fortress, built in the 13th century, played a major role in defence during the wars of the Turkish era. Captain István Dobó and a handful of his soldiers withstood the attack of the Turkish army 40 times superior in force to his 2000 defenders for 38 days in 1552, and eventually forced the Turks to withdraw. Eger is dominated by buildings in Baroque style. It became an important cultural and education centre in the 18th century. 184 outstanding examples of the architecture of the past few centuries have been preserved. The oldest wine-cellars are more than 400 years old and new ones have been carved out of the mountain-side. Scops Owl breed in the town park Eger and are easily seen (nest boxes are used).

Hungary map showing main areas visited. The Hotel is just west of Eger. The Hortobágy Nemzeti park is a vast flat area of grass and wetlands where the Great Bustards are closely





guarded by wardens and entry off the roads is only permitted when accompanied by the warden. The wetlands are teeming with marsh terns, Marsh Harriers and a few Montague's and a single Pallid Harrier was seen. Tisza lakes are home to Black-crowned Night, Squacco, Grey, Purple herons and Great White Egrets. River Tisza is a tributary of the Danube and flows from Ukraine. During our trip we had very heavy rain mostly overnight and the river flooded surrounding areas. The Danube also overflowed in Budapest whilst we visited the city after the trip.

We were well looked after by Roy Adams, the hotel staff were very hospitable and the food in general was very good although some thought the lunchtime goulash was a bit thin. Roy and his wife run Hungarian Bird Tours and he is used by many of the major tour companies. Roy can be contacted by email ([admin@hungarianbirdtours.com](mailto:admin@hungarianbirdtours.com)). He also has a local telephone 003 6705 012331 and a UK mobile 07774574204.



List of Species Recorded		May-10								
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		2	20	1	4	12	2		
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			10+	2	3	50	8		
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>			10+						
Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			h				1		
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>			1	2					
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		2	8		2	6	6		
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			3		1	2	1		
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>						6	10		
Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>			4	1	8	20	6	3	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			4	1	8	20	6	3	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>			4			4	6		
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						1			
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		2	10	2	12	20	50	6	
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			5		2		6		
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		2	2		10	2	20		
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			20			2	3		
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		6	10	4	10	20	6	2	
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>			1				2		
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>							2		
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			50		8				
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>			10		8	1	6		
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>					2				
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>				2			1		
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>			2		1				
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		2	40	4	20	40	40	2	4
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>						1			
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>		2	1				1		
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				1f					
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			1				2		
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		4	10	10	10	10	20	4	15
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>							2		
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>		1							
Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>					2				
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		2	5	3	8	20	6	3	2
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			1						
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>			10			4	2		
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>				1		2	1		
Saker	<i>Falco cherrug</i>						2			
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>			3			h			

List of Species Recorded		May-10								
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		4	4	3	2	3	2	1	
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		2	2	1		8	1		
Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>			15				3		
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>			9						
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>					1				
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>					2				
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		2	10	6	12	12	12		
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			1	1					
Red Shank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>					1	h	1		
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>			50			8	8		
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>			20						
WhiskeredTern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>			35			20	4		
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>			10			6	2		
White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>			30			50	50		
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia f. domestica</i>		p	p	p	p	p	p	p	
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		2	1	2					
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		1	5	6	2	8	2	1	
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		60	50	30	30	p	p	p	
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		20	30	6	20	20	30	10	
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		10	10	10	10	10	15	2	
Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>		1				h		h	h
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		2							
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>							1		
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		6	1	10			1	20	
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		60	70	10	100	6	20	6	
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>			10		6	6	6	2	
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			2	2		1	3	1	
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>			h	3			h		
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>			1						
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>				h			1		
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		h	1		1				
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				2		2	1		
Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>		1	3	1	1	2			
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>		1							
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>				2			1		
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		4	10	10	10	20	3		
Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				2					

List of Species Recorded		May-10								
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		4	6	6		p	12	2	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			100				100		
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		p	100	100		p	p	p	p
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>		10	100	100		50	p	p	p
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>			2	1					
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			1						
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		2	60	6	2	50	20	4	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		4	10	10	4	10	10	2	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				1					
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		2	1						
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		10	20	10	p	20	p	p	
Blue Throat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>			4				5		
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		1	4	10	1		3	4	1
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			1						
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>		6	10	10	6	6	4	2	
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			2			6			
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		6	4	10	4	3	2	2	
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>									
River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>		3		h			2	1	
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			4			10	2		
Moustached Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>						1			
Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>							2		
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			4		20	10			
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>		4		h	6	20	15		
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			8	2		6	6		
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		4		6	2	15	15		
Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>				1					
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>			2				1		
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>		6	10	2		2	2	1	
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		1	2	2		1	1		
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>		1	1	2		3		1	
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		1	2	10		20	10	4	
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>				1					
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		1	1	h		1			
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		1	h						
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		1	1	2		1	1		
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>		h		2			2		

List of Species Recorded		May-10								
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>			h			6	2		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>							1		
Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	1					1			
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>					2				
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2	3	2	2	2	6			
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	1								
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				1					
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>		1	1		1				
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	4	4	10	10	10	10	2	1	
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	12	10	10	20	20	p	6	4	
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	4	1	3	3	5	4	2		
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>					1				
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	4	2	3	2			1		
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		10	6	2		10	1	2	
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>		3				2			
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		50		10	10	6			
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	1	10	10	10	10	50	4	5	
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	4	2							
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	10	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	20	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	
Snow Finch	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>									
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	50	5	6	4	3	20	6		
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		2	10			1	1		
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	3	6	6	6	1				
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	1	10	10	6	10	12	4		
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>			2				2		
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	2			2	2				
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	2	10	5	6	6	4	2		
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	1	2	h	6		2			
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>							1		
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		2			12	6			
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	6	6	6	10	10	20	4	2	
147 species		h = heard		p = present						

## BRAZIL - SOUTH EAST ATLANTIC RAINFOREST

20 -30 November 2010

(Keith Cherry)

As usual with our group there were several discussions as to where we should visit on our next trip. It was suggested that a trip to Brazil would be incomplete without a scheduled trip to the Pantanel. This is possibly the case, but after taking into account that an additional trip to the Pantanel would add significantly to the cost, it was unanimously decided that 'Half of Brazil' would be better than none. Trevor Brownsell set about booking up the trip and although several company's visit this region he decided to go with Birdfinders for the first time. We would be staying at the Serra dos Tucanos Lodge for the duration of the trip and travelling out from there each day, which we all thought would be an ideal arrangement. Our group would consist of John Tomkins, Tony Hukin, Richard Pople, Ian Hardy, Trevor Brownsell and me. We also welcomed two new people to the group for this trip, namely Trevor's daughter Helen and Colin Alderman. Unfortunately Clive Harding sadly had to drop out due to work commitments. Our first two options on dates were fully booked but as we had enough people, Birdfinders arranged with the Lodge for an additional trip on their spare period. As you would expect, being a Rain Forest, the weather will dictate how the itinerary pans out and it was no surprise to us when several changes were forced upon us.

### TRIP REPORT

Day 1 : Saturday / Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> November

After what seems to be the customary Air France delay we finally took off for our Paris connection. We were rather anxious as we only had 55 minutes to transfer to another terminal



Serra dos Tucanos Lodge

at Charles De Gaulle airport and the delay had eaten into a lot of that time. During the flight we mentioned our concerns to the cabin crew and this seemed to pay off as there was someone waiting for us to guide us through what is a busy and complicated airport. Good job! I don't think we would have found the terminal in time otherwise.

We settled down for what was a trouble free flight and arrived at Rio de Janeiro fairly tired but in good spirits. As usual on arrival, the adrenalin kicks in and the expectation of the trip ahead banished all thoughts of fatigue. We were met by our guide for the trip,

Cirilo and made our way to our transport, picking up Grey-breasted Martin, Blue-and-White Swallow and Saffron Finch to start our list. The journey takes between 1-2 hours, depending on traffic conditions. As we left Rio our journey took us over the Rio – Niteroi Bridge seeing Kelp Gull, Neotropic Cormorant, Great White Egret and a multitude of Magnificent

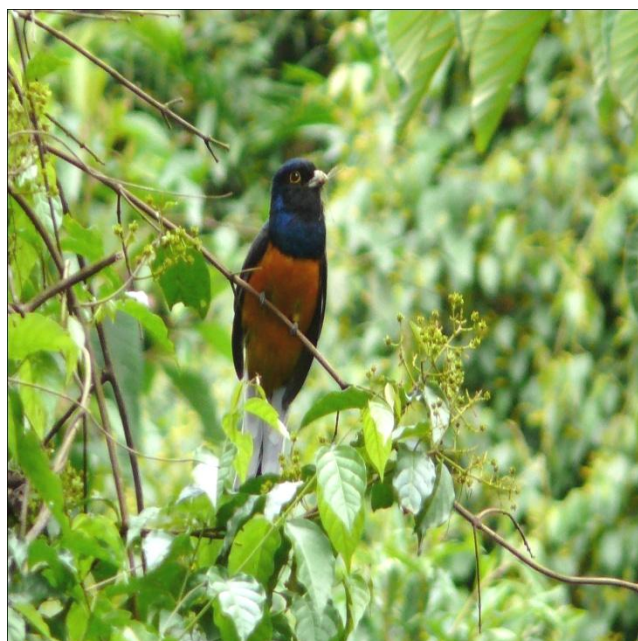
Frigatebirds. As the journey progressed, Black-capped Night Heron, Ringed Kingfisher, Roadside Hawk and Yellow-headed Caracara were seen. A short refuelling stop produced Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Tail-banded Hornero and Red-cowled Cardinal. Other birds seen during the journey included Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Savannah Hawk, Smooth-billed Ani and a Swallow-tailed Hummingbird was seen at what was to be a regular site for Burrowing Owl.

We arrived at the Lodge at about 10:45, quickly sorted ourselves out and made our way to the veranda overlooking the garden. Sombre Hummingbirds and Black Jacobin's zipped around our heads as they flew in and out to the feeders. Across the other side of the lawn the bird tables were full of birds, Brazilian, Palm, Green-headed and Ruby-crowned Tanagers vied for space with Maroon-bellied Parakeets, Violaceous Euphonia's, Sayaca Tanager and Plain Parakeets. Cirilo took us for a walk around the Lodge garden and the abundance of resident birds soon became evident including Variegated Flycatcher, Golden-chevrons Tanager, Masked Water Tyrant, and Olive Green Tanager along with several nesting birds including Crested Becard and Chestnut-crowned Becard. After a very nice lunch we walked with Cirilo along the Extension Trail. This is an easy trail to walk which was a bonus as the temperature was steadily rising dragging the humidity with it. Some of the birds seen included Blue (Swallow-tailed) Manakin, Pin-tailed Manakin, Black-cheeked Gnateater, White-throated Spadebill, Scaled Woodcreeper, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, Streaked Xenops, Whiskered Flycatcher and to everyone's delight a Channel-billed Toucan was seen perched on the other side of the valley. That was to be it for our first full day so we returned to the lodge. It had been a long first day so a very welcome shower was beckoning. After a nice dinner we had call over and settled down to several beers and sampled a few variety's of the local rum that are available 'on the house' accompanied by Cicades and the persistent croaking of Hammer Frogs!

## Day 2 : Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November

Serra dos Tucanos Lodge is a small lodge set within 46000ha of the Tres Picos State Park. The lodge is set in a valley surrounded by forest and it's location and altitude is ideal for a large number of Atlantic Forest endemics.

The day started early with John, our resident zoologist, and a few others, searching the area around the swimming pool for any moths, bugs and amphibians that he could find. They were usually successful and brought their finds over to the lodge for the rest to see and photograph. Then we set about seeing the early birds that were about the lodge. The nesting Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper was quickly discovered, soon to be followed by Rufous-bellied Thrush, Piratic Flycatcher, Boat-billed Flycatcher, Shiny Cowbird and the nesting Yellow-lored Tody Flycatcher. To finish off the stunning Blond-crested Woodpecker made a



Surucua Trogon

visit to one of the birdtables. After a hearty breakfast we set off for Portao Azul which is reached with a 1 hour drive from the lodge towards Nova Friburgo. On arrival at our start point we all leave the bus and spend the morning walking the trail. There is a mixture of habitats along the trail with an excellent chance of seeing the endemic Half-collared Sparrow. As we were getting out of the bus there was instant bird activity. Varied Antshrike, Red-eyed Thornbird, Black-billed Scythebill, Yellow Tyrannulet were quickly seen and a Dusky-tailed Antbird led us a merry dance as it skulked through the undergrowth. As we progressed along the trail the birds continued to flow, with a perched Long-tailed Tyrant, Surucua Trogon, Buff-fronted Foliage Gleaner, White-collared Foliage Gleaner, Planalto Tyrannulet, Spix's Spinetail and the stunning Ochre-faced Tody Flycatcher. It was not long before we caught up with the endemic Half-collared Sparrow and is a far more attractive bird than its name might suggest. We walked the trail until lunchtime adding many more birds of which Short-crested Flycatcher, Bran-coloured Flycatcher, Green-backed Becard, Pallid Spinetail, Gilt-edged Tanager, Swallow Tanager and a perched Dusky-legged Guan were but a few and the list of endemics was steadily increasing. After lunch we set off for an area called Macae de Cima, about 30 minutes from the lodge, primarily to hope to see the Bare-throated Bellbird whose far reaching call is unmistakable. Birds here were a bit thinner on the ground, so to speak, but along with our target bird, Giant Cowbird, Campo Flicker, Blue Dacnis and Streaked Flycatcher were all seen. Back at the lodge our first Burnish-buff Tanager turned up at a bird table. The evening activity was as before with more rum and even louder frogs!

### Day 3 : Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

The proposed High Altitude excursion was cancelled due to the low cloud base following last night's heavy rainfall, so the Jacamar Excursion was brought forward to today: This consists of a 200km round trip and includes various habitats. John did his usual early forage around the pool area with his usual success and new birds seen before breakfast included Creamy-bellied Thrush, Pale-breasted Thrush, Golden-chevroned Tanager and some were fortunate to see Spot-billed Toucanet. We set off for this day full of hope as it is not unusual to net 100 species during this full day excursion. The day started very slowly as we were held up for a long time due to roadworks. When we were amongst the birds we were not disappointed with Rufous Hornero, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Brown-chested Martin, Boatbilled Flycatcher, Bran-coloured Flycatcher and Double-collared Seedeater. Further on we came across a small area of wetland which held Brazilian Teal, Smooth-billed Ani and Slaty-breasted Woodrail. A Planalto Hermit was seen by a few as was a Capped Heron, which at first had been miss called as a Black-crowned Night Heron. Other birds picked up here included Plumbeous Pigeon, Variagated Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Tyrant, Glittering-bellied Emerald and Red-eyed Vireo.

Our next destination was known as Duas Barras which is an area of high ground overlooking a grassland valley. The grassland area had hosted a nesting site for Red-legged Seriema. Unfortunately the nest was empty and the birds had moved on to pastures new but we took some consolation in the other birds available, such as Chopi Blackbird, Crested Black Tyrant, Grassland Sparrow, White-rumped Swallow. A juvenile White-tailed Hawk took centre stage until two Aplomado Falcons took to the air and a Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture soared effortlessly above our heads. We drove on and Cirilo tried another sight that might hold Red-legged Seriema and this time we were in luck. There turned out to be three on the hillside opposite us and they were well seen through our telescopes. Moving on we stopped at another small wetland area that was covered in reeds and grasses. We were soon seeing birds including Whistling Heron, Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Red-rumped Cacique, Rufous-fronted



Thornbird and Black-capped Donacobius. Another stop eventually produced a very reluctant Blackish Rail, but the calling and extremely shy Ash-throated Crake failed to show. The temperature was steadily climbing and the birds started to become harder to find. It was time for lunch and we stopped in an area of open aspect and immediately had a party of about six Guira Cuckoo's all around us; a stunning bird. The temperature was continuing to rise so the birds were keeping their heads down, so only Yellow-chinned Spinetail was added to our list. After lunch our next stop was for Three-toed Jacamar. A very short walk from the bus had us looking at the bird sitting out in the open in trees above an electricity substation. It is obviously a well known nest site so you would be very unlucky if you missed them. Just before we moved on a Blue-winged Parrotlet flew in and perched above our heads. The only other bird of note that was seen that afternoon was the fantastically named Firewood Gatherer. A pretty non de-script bird, but when you see its gigantic nest of twigs you can see how it gets its name. The very hot weather persisted as we made our way back to the lodge and once again we were held up in the roadwork's traffic jam. The total of 61 birds seen was a tremendous disappointment but we all felt that the very hot temperature and the extended travelling time both contributed to our poor total.



Guira Cuckoo

#### Day 4: Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November

Once again the weather conditions were unsuitable for the high level trip so it was decided that we would walk trails near to the Regua Lodge and then the Wetlands, a local nature reserve-Reserve Ecological de Guanine Acu, established in 2002. We started this morning by trying to nail down the various swifts that filled the sky above the lodge and White-collared and Ashy-tailed were seen. As we made our way to Regua Lodge we checked out a large pond that held White-faced Whistling Duck, Least Grebe and Wattled Jacana. Further on from the pond we stopped at a Burrowing Owl nest site where a parent bird stood guard over at least four young as they peered inquisitively towards us. A Cattle Tyrant and a Picazuro Pigeon were also seen. At the start of the Regua Lodge trail a pair of Tropical Screech Owl's were roosting in a tree just above our heads. The pick of the birds seen along the trail included Unicoloured Ant-wren, White-flanked Antwren, Chestnut-backed Antshrike, White-bearded Manakin and Sooremata Slaty Antshrike. We walked on to the Wetland which is an area of reed fringed lagoons. Not a lot of activity but we did find White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Masked Duck, Green Kingfisher, Sapphire Spangled Emerald, Pied-billed Grebe and Greater Ani. Just before we left Cirilo had a 'lifer' when a Red-legged Honey Creeper was located in a tree above our heads. The walk back to the bus produced Chestnut-vented Cone bill, Short-crested Flycatcher and Rufous Hornero.

#### Day 5: Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November

Once again the high level trip was postponed so a trip to Serra dos Orgaos National Park was to be our destination. A Yellow-eared Woodpecker caused some excitement before breakfast



but no other new birds were seen. At the National Park we were to walk the low level road in the morning and the high level board walk in the afternoon. Fortunately and amazingly the rain stopped as we arrived. The first birds that were seen were a pair Spot-billed Toucan's which was a huge relief to me as I was the only one in the group who had yet to see one. These were soon to be followed by Plain Antvireo, Lesser Woodcreeper and a Star-throated Antwren played hard to get but was eventually seen by everyone. These were quickly followed by Golden-chevrons Tanager and Violet-capped Woodnymph, while a pair of Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper's flew back and forth across the road as we walked. A massive Tegu Lizard brought the birding to a temporary halt but it wasn't long before new birds were seen including Yellow-legged Thrush, Yellow-backed Tanager, Black-goggled Tanager, Streak-capped Ant wren and a stunning Flame-crested Tanager put on a great show. Several other birds were to be seen of which Mottled-cheeked Tyrannulet, Pale-browed Tree hunter,



Giant Antbird

Streaked Xenops and Ochre-breasted Foliage Gleaner were the pick.

After lunch we walked the board walk which is built on top of an old water viaduct.

The first bird to be seen was a female Black-throated Trogon soon to be followed by a White-bibbed Antbird. Cirilo played the call of a Giant Antshrike and it responded immediately by crashing through the surrounding bamboo and perched up right in front of us. This bird is a serious contender for bird of the trip. Next a Brazilian Ant thrush was tempted into view. Further along the board walk we saw White-browed Foliage Gleaner, White-shouldered Fire-eye, Scaled Woodcreeper and Azure-shouldered Tanager. Not a lot of birds were seen on the return until a Saffron Toucanet landed in a tree not far away which delighted us all.

#### Day 6: Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November

John's daily forage produced his usual collection of moths and beetles and a Grey-hooded Attila was seen before breakfast. It was now or never for the High Altitude excursion so despite the rain we set off for Pico de Caledonia. Our first stop on the way up was a great site overlooking a valley and almost immediately a Hooded Siskin was located. A pair of White Woodpecker's were seen by some as they flew across the valley below. Several Brassy-breasted Tanagers made their presence known along with White-eyed Parrot, Pale-vented Pigeon and our primary target bird at this location, Swallow-tailed Cotinga, was finally seen perched on the other side of the valley. Just as we were about to leave we added Velvety Black-Tyrant and Blue-billed Black Tyrant. We drove onwards and upwards until we left the bus at



A long walk!

an altitude of about 1600 mts. We were now on foot to walk the final part up to an altitude of 2200mts. We walked and walked mainly in an upwards direction picking up Black-and-Gold Cotinga and Planalto Woodcreeper. As we struggled upwards Richard and Ian decided to call it a day and make their way back to the bus. The rest carried on upwards. This was fast becoming a very tough walk. Serra do Mar Tyrant Manakin, Bay-chested Warbling Finch, Rufous-crowned Greenlet and Rufous-browed Peppershrike brought brief but welcome rest from the relentless climb upwards. The ultimate destination is the Radio Station which is accessed by climbing 680 steps and I was beginning to wonder if we would ever get there. We had a break before walking the final part before the steps, seeing a Diademed Tanager in all its glory. A short way from the Radio Station entrance a male Black-breasted Plovercrest was actively feeding on flowers and taking an occasional rest on a fence wire, but not long enough to get a photograph. As we reached the Radio Station security lodge, we picked up Pallid Spinetail and a Rufous-tailed Antbird played hide and seek in a close by bush. We slowly made our way up the steps until we reached the 'summit'. We were all tired and made the most of the chance to rest. Our rest was abruptly interrupted when the specialist bird at this altitude put in an unexpected appearance. This is one of only two sites where you will see the Itatiaia Spinetail. Andy Foster, who owns and runs Serra dos Tucanos, was the person that discovered it here. It flew from bush to bush in a circle around us. Having all seen it so well, we all felt the climb was worth it after all. On the way down a Brazilian Ruby was the only addition to the list. We met Richard and Ian at the bus and they had added Olivaceous Elaenia to their lists.

#### Day 7: Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November

No new birds before breakfast but Trevor saw a Coati Mundi on the bird tables at first light. A first for the lodge! This morning we will walk the Theodoro Trail which is a short ride from the lodge. This gradually descending trail used to be part of the old Cachoeiras-Nova to Friburgo railway line, which was then made into a road and evidence of which can still be seen. The first bird to be seen was a Berton's Antbird quickly followed by Plain Antvireo. Our next bird, Slaty Bristlefront, required a great deal of patience as it was very reluctant to show itself but eventually it did. A good bird to have on any list. We carried on along the track seeing Euler's Flycatcher, Spot-billed Toucanet, White-throated Hummingbird, Scale-throated Hummingbird, Eared Pygmy-Tyrant, White-browed Woodpecker, Star-throated Antbird and Tony was the only one who managed to get on to a Rufous-breasted Leaf-tosser.



Mysistogaster

Back to the lodge for lunch :

This afternoon we walked the Cedea Trail, but apart from Yellow-olive Flycatcher, White-barred Piculet, Lesser Woodcreeper and Streak-capped Antbird nothing of any note was seen. All in all a disappointing trail. One point of interest was an extremely long (12-14 inches) 'Helicopter' Dragonfly called Mysistogaster. It's very long body enables them to lay their eggs in Bromeliad Pools. Back at the lodge Green Honeycreeper and Blue Dacnis were seen as



they fed on the bird tables. Not a very productive day but, as with all things, we made the best of what was available. We still had the local rum to look forward to this evening!

#### Day 8: Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> November

Today was basically a rest day. We were to walk the extension trail above the lodge this morning and the afternoon was free. We set off with Cirilo on what was now a familiar route but with high hopes of seeing new birds. We quickly saw an Ochre-bellied Flycatcher which was only the second sighting of the week. A calling Rufous-capped Motmot was eventually tracked down and seen well as was a Plain Woodcreeper. Cirilo was surprised that despite hearing it and playing its call we had not seen the Rufous-capped Antshrike. Several new attempts to entice it in failed, so it was most probably 'taped out'.

A male Spot-billed Toucanet was seen briefly and a White-eyed Foliage Gleaner brought this morning's walk to a satisfying close.

Richard and Ian had opted to stay around the lodge and were rewarded with a fly through of a Toco Toucan, much to the envy of the rest of us and Richard finally sorted out Biscutate Swift from the frequent flocks that flew through.

The afternoon was at leisure so it was a good chance to sort out our belongings for



Green Honeycreeper



Red-necked Tanager



Green-headed Tanager



Blue-naped Chlorophonia

tomorrow's flight home and photograph some of the birds from the photographic hide and around the garden. New birds were still being picked up such as Spot-breasted Antvireo, White-winged Becard, Reddish Hermit and a White-throated Woodcreeper brought our Woodcreeper total to six.

### Day 9: Monday 29<sup>th</sup> November

After breakfast Cirilo kindly offered to guide us once again on the Extension Trail. It seems that he was determined that we should catch up with the elusive Rufous-capped Antshrike. It is seen regularly so we really should see it. Alas, once again it did not show but we did see Rufous-capped Motmot again and two real skulkers, Scaled Antbird and Ferruginous Antbird, were finally tracked down. That was it! We returned to the lodge and completed our final preparations for the trip home, which were interrupted when a pair of Marmosets and a fairly large Tegu Lizard visited the bird tables. The drive to the airport produced the final bird of the trip when Ian saw a Maguari Stork in a shallow river bed.

The flight went as well as could be expected considering we were informed that the aircraft was the oldest one in the Air France fleet. Possibly a case of too much information!

### Summary

Serra dos Tucanos Lodge proved to be an excellent base from which to explore this bird rich environment. The hosts Andy and Christina Foster are very friendly and nothing is too much trouble. The resident guide Cirilo, was very good, considering the short time that he has been their guide.

The food was always extremely good, especially the various desserts that the kitchen staff produced. The bar, which is run on an honesty basis, and not forgetting the continual supply of the local rum, help to make the evening's pleasant and relaxing.

We were generally very lucky with the weather, losing no daytime birding what so ever. In fact the hot weather on some occasions was possibly a disadvantage, especially the Jacamar Excursion. Despite this disappointing day, the group finished with a total of 253 birds, including 72 endemics, which is a credit to Cirilo and the group as a whole.

All in all this trip is very highly recommended.



The Crew

## Bird List

E Denotes an Atlantic Rainforest endemic- H denotes Heard

EH Solitary Tinamou - Heard on one occasion

H Brown Tinamou - Heard on several occasions

Pied-billed Grebe - Two seen at the Wetland Reserve

Least Grebe - One seen at the Wetland Reserve

Neotropic Cormorant - Two seen on drive to lodge

Magnificent Frigatebird - Numerous birds seen near Rio

Great Egret - Often seen in suitable habitat

Snowy Egret - Seen occasionally in suitable habitat

Striated Heron – One seen near Portao Azul - Two seen at Wetland Reserve

Cattle Egret – Large flocks seen on several occasions

Whistling Heron – Three birds seen on Jacamar Excursion

Capped Heron – One bird seen on Jacamar Excursion

Black-capped Night Heron – One bird seen on drive to lodge

Maguari Stork – One bird seen on return Journey to Airport

White-faced Whistling Duck – Several at Wetland Reserve

Brazilian Teal – Two on Jacamar Excursion – several at Wetland Reserve

Masked Duck – Several at Wetland Reserve

Black Vulture – Seen every day

Turkey Vulture – Seen most days

Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture – Seen on Jacamar Excursion and at Lodge

Bi-coloured Hawk – Two birds seen at National Park

White-tailed Hawk – One bird seen at Duas Barras

Roadside Hawk – Seen on several days in transit

Savanna Hawk – Seen on several days, usually in transit

Yellow-headed Caracara – Seen on several days

Southern Caracara – Seen on several days

H Barred Forest-Falcon – Heard on Theodoro Trail

Aplomado Falcon – Two birds at Duas Barras

Dusky-legged Guan – One bird seen on Jacamar Excursion

E Slaty-breasted Wood Rail – One seen on Jacamar Excursion- One at High Altitude Excursion

Blackish Rail – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion

H Ash-throated Crake – One heard on the Jacamar Excursion

Red-legged Seriema – Three birds seen on the Jacamar Excursion

Common Gallinule – Seen at all suitable habitats

Purple Gallinule – Seen at all suitable habitats

Wattled Jacana – Seen at all suitable habitats

Southern Lapwing – Seen on most days, widespread

Kelp Gull – Several seen when leaving Rio

Pale-vented Pigeon – One bird seen on High Altitude Excursion

Picazuro Pigeon – Regularly seen at various locations

Plumbeous Pigeon – Seen on Jacamar Excursion and Theodoro Trail

H Grey-fronted Dove – Heard at Wetland Reserve

White-eyed Parakeet – One bird seen on Jacamar Excursion – One bird seen on the High Altitude Excursion

E Maroon-bellied Parakeet – Regular feeders on Lodge birdtables

- Blue-winged Parrotlet – Several seen in Lodge garden and on Jacamar Excursion
- E Plain Parakeet – Regular feeders on Lodge birdtables
- Scaly-headed Parrot – Birds seen at various locations
- Squirrel Cuckoo – Single birds seen at three different locations
- Greater Ani – Several birds seen on Jacamar Excursion
- Smooth-billed Ani – Several birds seen at four different locations
- Guira Cuckoo – Six birds seen at one location on Jacamar Excursion
- Tropical Screech-Owl – Two birds seen roosting at Regua Lodge
- Burrowing Owl – Single birds seen at regular roost-Five seen at nest site on Jacamar Excursion
- Sooty Swift – Small flock seen on High Altitude Excursion
- White-collared Swift – Flocks seen daily
- Biscutate Swift – Small flock flew through the lodge on the 28<sup>th</sup>
- Ashy-tailed Swift – Birds seen around lodge most mornings
- Grey-rumped Swift – Seen going to roost in lodge roof most days
- E Saw-billed Hermit – Seen most days on lodge feeders
- E Scale-throated Hermit – One seen at the National Park – One seen on the Theodora Trail
- Planalto Hermit – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion
- Reddish Hermit – One seen from the Lodge photographic hide
- Swallow-tailed Hummingbird – One seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> – One on the Jacamar Excursion
- E Black Jacobin – Seen daily on the lodge feeders
- E Black-breasted Plovercrest – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion
- Glittering-bellied Emerald – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion
- E Violet-capped Woodnymph – Seen daily on the Lodge feeders
- E White-throated Hummingbird – Single birds seen on several occasions
- Versicoloured Emerald – Seen almost daily on the Lodge feeders
- Sapphire-spangled Emerald – One seen at the Wetlands
- E Sombre Hummingbird – Seen daily on the Lodge feeders
- E Brazilian Ruby – One seen at High Altitude – One on the Theodora Trail
- Black-throated Trogon – One seen at the National Park - High level
- Surucua Trogon – A pair seen at Portao Azul – One seen around the Lodge
- Ringed Kingfisher – Single bird seen on three occasions, usually in transit
- Green Kingfisher – One seen at the Wetland
- Amazon Kingfisher – One seen on Jacamar Excursion
- E Rufous-capped Motmot – One seen on the Cedae Trail, One on Lodge Trail
- E Three-toed Jacamar – A pair seen on the Jacamar Excursion
- Buff-bellied Puffbird – One seen on the 24<sup>th</sup> from the Lodge
- White-eared Puffbird – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion
- Spot-billed Toucanet – Seen on most days at various locations
- E Saffron Toucanet – One seen at National Park – High level
- Toco Toucan – One seen flying through from the Lodge
- Channel-billed Toucan – One seen on the Lodge Trails
- White-barred Piculet – Always seen in suitable habitats
- Campo Flicker – Several birds seen at three different locations
- E Yellow-browed Woodpecker – One seen on Theodora Trail
- Blond-crested Woodpecker – Daily visitor to Lodge bird tables
- White Woodpecker – Two birds seen on the High Altitude Excursion
- E Yellow-eared Woodpecker – One on the 25<sup>th</sup> at the Lodge
- Plain Woodcreeper – One seen on the 28<sup>th</sup> on the Lodge Trails
- Olivaceous Woodcreeper – Seen almost daily in all suitable habitats

E White-throated Woodcreeper – Seen on four different days at the Lodge  
     Planalto Woodcreeper – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion  
 E Scaled Woodcreeper – Single birds seen at the Lodge-Portao Azul and the National Park  
 E Lesser Woodcreeper – Single birds seen at the National Park-Lower level-Theodora Trail and at the Lodge  
 E Black-billed Scythebill – One bird seen at Portao Azul  
     Rufous Hornero – Single birds seen at four different locations  
 E Tail-banded Hornero – Single birds seen daily  
     Spix's(Chicli) Spinetail – One seen at Portao Azul  
 E Rufous-capped Spinetail – One seen at Portao Azul  
 E Pallid Spinetail – One seen at Portao Azul-One on the High Altitude Excursion  
     Yellow-chinned Spinetail – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion-One seen at the Wetland  
 E Itatiaia Spinetail – One seen at the High Altitude Radio Station  
     Rufous-fronted Thornbird – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion  
 E Red-eyed Thornbird – One seen at Portao Azul-One seen on the Jacamar Excursion  
     Firewood Gatherer – One seen on the Jacamar Excursion  
 E White-collared Foliage-gleaner – One seen at Portao Azul  
 E White-browed Foliage-gleaner – One seen at the National Park-One seen on the Theodora Trail  
 E Black-capped Foliage-gleaner – One seen on the Theodora Trail  
     Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner – One seen at Portao Azul- One seen at Regua Lodge  
 E Ochre-breasted Foliage-gleaner – One seen at the National Park- Lower level  
 E White-eyed Foliage-gleaner – One seen on Lodge Trails  
 E Pale-browed Treehunter – One seen at the National Park-Lower level  
     Streaked Xenops – Single birds seen at the National Park-Lower level and the Lodge trails  
 E Rufous-breasted Leaf-tosser – One seen on the Theodora trail  
     Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper – Seen daily at the lodge and at the National Park-lower level  
     Giant Antshrike – One seen at the National Park-High level  
 E Sooremata Slaty Antshrike – One seen on Regua Lodge Trail  
     Chestnut-backed Antshrike – One seen on Regua Lodge Trail  
     Variable Antshrike – One seen at Portao Azul  
 E Spot-breasted Antvireo – One seen on Lodge Trails  
     Plain Antvireo – Single birds seen at the National Park-Lower level  
         Theodora Trail and Lodge Trails  
 E Star-throated Antwren – Single birds seen at the National Park-Lower level and on the Theodora Trail  
 E Unicoloured Antwren – One seen at Regua Lodge Trail  
     White-flanked Antwren – One seen at Regua Lodge Trail  
 E Ferruginous Antbird – One bird was finally seen on the Lodge Trails  
 E Bertoni's Antwren – One bird seen on the Theodora Trail  
 E Rufous-tailed Antbird – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion  
 E Dusky-tailed Antbird – One bird seen on Lodge Trails  
 E Scaled Antbird – One seen on the Lodge Trails  
 E Streak-capped Antwren – Single birds were seen at National Park-Lower level and on the Theodora Trail  
 E White-bibbed Antbird – One bird seen at the National Park-High level  
 E White-shouldered Fire-eye – A pair was seen at the National Park- High level and singles seen on Lodge Trails  
 E Brazilian Antthrush – One seen at the National Park-High level  
 E Black-cheeked Gnatcatcher – Easily seen on Lodge Trails

E Slaty Bristlefront – One seen on the Theodora Trail  
     Sierra de Mar Tapaculo – One heard on the High Altitude Excursion  
 H Shrike-like Cotinga – One heard on the Theodora Trail  
     Swallow-tailed Cotinga – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion  
 E Black-and-gold Cotinga – A pair seen on the High Altitude Excursion  
 EH Grey-winged Cotinga – One heard on the High Altitude Excursion  
 E Bare-throated Bellbird – One seen at Macae de Cima  
 EH Greenish Schiffornis – One heard on the Theodora Trail  
     Green-backed Becard – One seen at Portao Azul  
     Chestnut-capped Becard – Nesting in Lodge garden  
     Black-capped Becard – Small flock seen at Portao Azul  
     Crested Becard – Nesting in Lodge garden  
 E Serra do Mar Tyrant-manakin – One bird seen on High Altitude Excursion  
 E Blue(Swallow-tailed)Manakin – Readily seen around the Lodge Trails  
     White-bearded Manakin – One bird seen at Portao Azul-One at Regua Lodge  
 E Pin-tailed Manakin – Regularly seen on Lodge Trails  
     White-rumped Monjita – One seen on Jacamar Excursion  
     Crested Black-tyrant – Several birds seen at Duas Barros  
 E Velvety Black-tyrant – One seen on High Altitude Excursion  
     Blue-billed Black-tyrant – One seen on High Altitude Excursion  
 E Shear-tailed Grey-tyrant – One seen on High Altitude Excursion  
     Streamer-tailed Tyrant – Two birds seen on Jacamar Excursion  
     Long-tailed Tyrant – One seen at Portao Azul-One seen on Jacamar Excursion  
     Masked Water-tyrant – Seen daily at the Lodge  
     White-headed Marsh-tyrant – Two seen at the Wetland  
     Yellow-browed Tyrant – One seen on Jacamar Excursion  
     Cattle Tyrant – One seen on Jacamar Excursion-One at Regua Lodge  
     Fork-tailed Flycatcher – Seen at several locations  
     Tropical Kingbird – Seen daily-Common  
     Social Flycatcher – Regularly seen at several locations  
     Streaked Flycatcher – Seen daily around Lodge  
     Great Kiskadee – Common around the Lodge and fairly widespread  
     Boat-billed Flycatcher – Seen most days in suitable habitats  
 E Grey-hooded Attila – Nesting in the Lodge Garden but could be elusive  
     Variegated Flycatcher – Seen on the Jacamar Excursion  
     Short-crested Flycatcher – Birds seen at Portao Azul and the Wetland  
     Piratic Flycatcher – Seen most days in various locations  
     Whiskered Flycatcher – One seen on Lodge Trails  
     Bran-coloured Flycatcher – Birds seen at Portao Azul and on the Jacamar Excursion  
     Euler's Flycatcher – One seen on the Theodora Trail  
     Cliff Flycatcher – Birds seen on the Jacamar Excursion  
     White-throated Spadebill – Seen regularly on Lodge Trails  
     Yellow-olive Flycatcher – Seen on four different days in forest habitat  
 E Yellow-lored Tody-flycatcher – Nesting in Lodge garden  
     Common Tody-flycatcher – Pair nesting at the Wetland  
     Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher – One seen at Portao Azul  
     Eared Pygmy-tyrant – One seen on the Theodora Trail  
     Mottled-cheeked Tyrannulet – One seen on the National Park-Lower level  
 E Serra do Mar Tyrannulet – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion  
     Yellow-bellied Elaenia – Birds easily seen at three different Locations



Olivaceous Elaenia – One seen on High Altitude Excursion  
 Southern Beardless-tyrannulet – Birds seen at Portao Azul  
 Planalto Tyrannulet – One seen at Portao Azul  
 E Grey-capped Tyrannulet – Birds seen at Portao Azul  
 Yellow Tyrannulet – One seen at Portao Azul  
 Sepia-capped Flycatcher – Seen on Lodge Trails  
 Ochre-bellied Flycatcher – Seen occasionally on Lodge Trails  
 H Sharpbill – Heard at several locations  
 White-rumped Swallow – Small flock seen at Duas Barros  
 Brown-chested Martin – Quite widespread- seen on four different days  
 Grey-chested Martin – Seen on occasions in built up areas  
 Blue-and-white Swallow – Seen daily- Common  
 Southern Rough-winged Swallow – Seen around the Lodge  
 E Long-billed Wren – Seen in various locations but mainly around the Lodge  
 Moustached Wren – One seen at Regua Lodge Trail  
 House Wren – Seen daily at the Lodge  
 Black-capped Donacobius – Birds seen on Jacamar Excursion  
 Chalk-browed Mockingbird – Birds seen on Jacamar Excursion  
 Yellow-legged Thrush – Several birds seen on the National Park-lower level and the High Altitude Excursion  
 Rufous-bellied Thrush – Seen daily at the lodge  
 Pale-breasted Thrush – Seen daily at the lodge  
 Creamy-bellied Thrush – Seen on three days at the Lodge  
 Common Waxbill – Seen on transit stop to the Lodge  
 Rufous-browed Peppershrike – Finally seen on High Altitude Excursion  
 Red-eyed Vireo – Seen on Jacamar Extension and at the National Park  
 Rufous-crowned Greenlet – Birds seen at Portao Azul and on the High Altitude Excursion  
 Golden-crowned Warbler – Seen in several forested areas  
 Bananaquit – Seen daily at the lodge feeders  
 Chestnut-vented Conebill – One seen at the Wetland  
 Green Honeycreeper – Seen on occasions at the Lodge bird tables  
 Red-legged Honeycreeper – One seen at the Wetlands  
 Blue Dacnis – Seen on three days at the lodge and the National Park-lower  
 Orange-bellied Euphonia – Seen daily at the lodge bird tables  
 Violaceous Euphonia – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 Chestnut-bellied Euphonia – Seen daily at the lodge bird tables  
 Blue-naped Chlorophonia – Seen on two days at the Lodge bird tables  
 E Green-headed Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 E Red-necked Tanager – Seen most days around the Lodge  
 E Guilt-edged Tanager – Several birds seen at Portao Azul  
 E Brassy-breasted Tanager – Several birds seen at Portao Azul-National Park and High Altitude Excursion  
 Burnished-buff Tanager – Seen at various locations  
 Diademed Tanager – Several birds seen on the High Level Excursion  
 Sayaca Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 E Azure-shouldered Tanager – One seen at the National Park- high level  
 E Golden-chevroned Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 Palm Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 E Brazilian Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables  
 H Red-crowned Ant-tanager – Heard at the National Park-lower level

- E Ruby-crowned Tanager – Seen daily at the Lodge bird tables
- Flame-crested Tanager – Several birds seen on the National Park lower level
- Black-goggled Tanager – Individual birds seen at three different locations
- Swallow Tanager – Birds seen at Portao Azul-the Jacamar Excursion and Regua Lodge trail
- Yellow-backed Tanager – Seen on National Park-lower road
- E Olive-green Tanager – One bird seen on first walk of Lodge Trails
- White-browed Blackbird – Seen on the Jacamar Excursion
- Chestnut-capped Blackbird – Several seen on the Jacamar Excursion and at the Wetlands
- Giant Cowbird – Several seen at Macae di Cima and on the Jacamar Excursion
- Shiny Cowbird – Seen daily on the Lodge lawn
- Chopi Blackbird – Several birds seen at Duas Barros
- Red-rumped Cacique – Large flock seen at the National Park-also seen on Jacamar Excursion and at the Wetlands
- Crested Oropendola – Seen on two days flying over the Lodge
- Red-cowled Cardinal – One bird seen on transit stop on journey to Lodge
- E Half-collared Sparrow- A pair seen at Portao Azul
- Grassland Sparrow – Several birds seen at Duas Barros and at the Wetlands
- Rufous-collared Sparrow – Seen most days in a variety of habitats
- E Black-throated Grosbeak – A pair seen on two days at the Lodge
- Green-winged Saltator – One seen at Portao Azul
- Yellow-green Grosbeak – A pair seen at the National Park-lower level
- Blue-black Grassquit – Birds seen on the Jacamar Excursion-the Wetland and the National Park
- Double-collared Seedeater – Common- seen in a variety of locations
- Saffron Finch – Common- seen in a variety of habitats
- E Uniform Finch – Individual birds seen at Portao Azul and the Nation Park
- E Bay-chested Warbling-finch – Several seen on the High Altitude Excursion
- Hooded Siskin – One seen on the High Altitude Excursion
- House Sparrow – All built up areas
- Feral Pigeon - All built up areas



Strong-billed Woodcreeper - Ecuador

FUERTEVENTURA  
29 June – 13 July 2011

(Carl Powell)

29th June. After spending the night at the Gatwick Worth Hotel we caught the shuttle bus to the airport and arrived with plenty of time to spare for our flight. Breakfast in one of the private lounges then the wait! Our Thomas Cook flight was delayed for “technical reasons”. When we eventually boarded it was on a smaller aircraft which had to re-fuel at Faro in Portugal! Our arrival on Fuerteventura was much delayed with not even a complimentary cup of tea by way of an apology! Never mind, however there was still time for a quick walk along the beach to spot Yellow-legged Gull, Hoopoe, Collared Dove and Trumpeter Finch.

30th June. As before, we are staying in the apartments El Caledon just a few hundred yards north of the small town of El Cotillo on the north west of the Island. The beach is made up of sandy coves and rocky outcrops, great for that early morning walk. Usually that is, except when there is a music festival. A large stage had been erected on the beach just to our south and festival goers and campers were quickly filling up every available space all around us. Again it was going to be a busy and noisy weekend! The walk on my first morning was still fruitful with what are the usual suspects. Yellow-legged Gull is very common as is the ubiquitous Berthelot's Pipit. Good first morning ticks were two Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Kentish Plover and Spectacled Warbler. On returning to the apartments I saw Hummingbird Hawk Moth feeding on plants in the garden. Later that day we took our first drive south from El Cotillo looking for Houbara Bustards. The track along the cliff top is quite drivable. We



Houbara Bustard

drove slowly but others don't. However, traffic is not that heavy and we were not disappointed by the drive. Barbary Ground squirrels seem to have become much more widespread since our last visit in 2005. I am sure we only saw them in the mountains before and now they were everywhere. We watched at close quarters a Raven hunting along a stone wall and then a Great Grey Shrike perched on some scrub. Then picking

its way gently toward us was our first Houbara Bustard of the trip. My camera was now working overtime as I clicked away. Thank goodness for digital. Further on we spotted Cream-coloured Courser. Our second target bird achieved with very little effort! Linnets were also added to the day list. We drove all the way to the Barranco which leads to the Playa de Esquinzo and then returned. We saw our second Bustard on the return.

1st July. Today we visited Los Molinos, a dammed river valley which stays wet thus attracting water birds and waders. For reference we used "A Birdwatchers Guide to The Canary Islands" by Tony Clarke and David Collins and "Finding Birds in The Canary Islands" by Dave Gosney and found both useful. Directions given take you to where you need to be. Approaching the Goat farm at the eastern end we saw three Coursers in the stony fields. On or around the water were 22 Ruddy Shelduck, a pair of Black winged Stilt, a single Coot and a pair of Little Ringed Plover. Around the buildings were Spanish Sparrows, Rock Doves, Berthelot's Pipits and a Great Grey Shrike. As we left four Black-bellied Sandgrouse came in to land but quickly disappeared amongst the rocks. At the dam end we had a further nine Ruddy Shelduck and several Coot. Another group of Spanish Sparrows lived in the abandoned building there and a juvenile Fuerteventura Chat showed well. Overhead we noted six Ravens and three Kestrels. Also here we saw Red veined Darter and an unidentified emperor species of those which occur on the Island.



Great Grey Shrike

2nd July. The weekend music festival is well underway with cars and campers seemingly everywhere. We did not leave the apartment complex. Still, no hardship being on the beach in glorious sunshine even if the wind is quite strong. I know Fuerteventura is a windy Island but we have experienced much stronger winds than usual. During our two weeks the wind hardly let up at all and there was talk of record wind speeds being recorded!

3rd July. Knowing the festival was about to end and it being a Sunday and therefore the locals would go home, we dared to give up our parking spot for a trip out to La Oliva. First we turned into Rosa de los Negrines as we approached from the north on the FV10. There on a telegraph pole sat a Common Buzzard. It moved off and was immediately joined by a second, two in the air together. We drove on along the track without seeing much but noting the very large area now designated as a Bustard reserve and protection area. We drove eventually reaching some pools, probably the Barranco Agua Salada. We had success here on our previous visit in 2005. Little-ringed Plover ran along the edges and several Black-bellied Sandgrouse came in to drink; at least six. Again, Spanish Sparrow and Great Grey Shrike were present. Overhead was another Buzzard but this time seen off by a Kestrel. We moved into the town of La Oliva and passing the school into the cultivations. This loop is very drivable and returns you to the main road joining La Oliva with Caldereta. The first field held no less than 22 Hoopoes, adults and juveniles, as well as Berthelot's Pipits and Lesser Short toed Larks both in good numbers. Further round the loop a Stone Curlew presented great views atop a sandy bank. Also seen around the loop was Bath White Butterfly.



4th July. Today we drove through the mountains to Las Penitas. Ann stayed in the car whilst I walked to the dam. Spanish Sparrows and a probable Sardinian Warbler (sadly, the briefest of glimpses) greeted my arrival. Only Turtle Dove to see during my walk to the dam until Raven and Kestrel came overhead. I reached the dam and its water but nothing came into view. On the return walk Fuerteventura Chat and Great Grey Shrike both put in appearances. It was very windy. At one stage my tripod and camera were blown over but I managed to catch them before they hit the ground. That would have been a disaster of major proportions and could have left me in tears!! We were beginning to realize that birds on this trip had to be worked for!



Spectacled Warbler

5th July. My pre-breakfast walks were getting better and better. The wader passage must have started, for as I combed the bays toward the lighthouse I added Turnstone and Whimbrel to the trip list. I also noted Kentish Plover with young. In the dunes were the usual Hoopoe, Berthelot's Pipit and Shrike and this morning three Black-bellied Sandgrouse. A confiding Spectacled Warbler allowed me great views and posed for photographs! We returned to La Oliva today with just 10 Hoopoes in the cultivated field

but greater numbers of Lesser Short-toed Lark and Berthelot's Pipit. Spectacled Warbler and Great Grey Shrike also present. After some confusion we found our way into the Fimapaire Valley. We advanced to the fork and stopped as recommended but saw nothing. We progressed further into the valley without any success and decided to leave. We were almost back to the main track when, in a derelict cultivation we had movement. There we had our best views of Fuerteventura Chat so far. Also, Great Grey Shrike showing very well.

6th July. Morning walks now followed a familiar pattern with very much the same birds. I haven't mentioned so far the fact that Cory's Shearwater can be seen out to sea almost at will! A scan of the sea will inevitably produce views of them wheeling in a very short time. The cliff top drive south from El Cotillo was devoid of birds this morning. We ventured a little further into the



Fuerteventura Chat

Barranco and parked. I walked further on to find a permanent pool alive with dragonflies. Scarlet and Red veined darters and emperor species seemingly everywhere. Why won't the emperors' rest for a photo call? I was also able to photograph what I believe is an immature male Blue tailed damselfly *Ischnura elegans*. However, no mention is made of this species in the list at the back of Clarke and Collins. I realize the book is somewhat dated now so this could be a newish arrival to the Canary Islands but more likely simply not mentioned in the book. Anyway, almost back to the car when a small flock of Lesser Short-toed Larks came in to drink. Wary at first, thirst overcame fear and we watched from close quarters as they drank, bathed and preened. Later that afternoon I visited the lighthouse to see Cory's Shearwaters and Yellow-legged Gulls. As I drove away movement amongst the sand dunes caught my eye; nine Barbary Partridge. I tried to track them but they were too wary. However, I also discovered five Stone Curlews and a large flock of Trumpeter Finches. As usual, Berthelot's Pipit, Hoopoe, Great Grey Shrike and Spectacled Warbler also present.

7th July. I am sure now wader passage is underway. This morning's walk brought forth views of Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Ringed Plover and Dunlin. The winds that had slightly subsided returned with gusto. My second walk in the afternoon northwards toward



Stone Curlew

the lighthouse and more waders including three Stone Curlews and seven Turnstones.

8th July. Drinking my first morning coffee in the garden of the apartments I was able to see three Whimbrel and Yellow-legged Gulls on the beach, Cory's Shearwater out to sea as well as Great Grey Shrike and Spectacled Warbler close by in the scrub. Isn't this why we travel? Betancuria is a delightful

village in the heart of the mountains and is somewhat of a tourist destination. We had lunch there today. Buzzard and Kestrel had been seen on route and the native Blue Tit in the trees around our chosen lunch venue. We had seen Plain Tiger butterfly here in 2005 but this time it was definitely a Monarch. Also the tiny Long tailed Blue came to rest alongside us over lunch; a butterfly tick! We had another cliff top drive in the late afternoon but this time just the one Houbara.

9th July. We ventured further south today to Catalina Garcia. As the book says, the water can be seen from the road so no trouble finding it. There were several Coot and Moorhen present with many young birds on view. Looks like it might have been a good breeding year! Ruddy Shelduck were very much in attendance with at least 47 visible. Waders were also in good numbers with 15 Black-winged Stilt, Kentish, Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers all there. Pride of place must go to two Greenshanks. Parking on the dam we were able to get good views of both Plain and Pallid Swifts. Patience will allow observers to get sufficient views of both species to be able to tell them apart. Other birds present were four Turtle Doves, three Black-bellied Sandgrouse, and small flocks of Trumpeter Finch and Lesser Short-toed Larks and, of course, Berthelot's Pipit! A single adult gull was resting on a sand

bar. It looked different with possibly a lighter mantle and straighter bill. I studied it for some time trying hard to turn it into something other than a local Yellow-legged. Sadly, for me, I had to conclude that indeed is what it was. A good days birding but be aware; it is possible to drive a little way over the dam but I would not recommend going all the way round. Leave the way you came in unless you have a 4x4! On the return journey we stopped at a vantage point near the village of Valle de Santa Ines and were rewarded with good views of two Buzzards and eight Ravens.

10th July. Driving down the coast road from Corralejo the scenery makes the drive worthwhile. High sand dunes are to one side and rugged rocky coast on the other. In 2005 we had Ring-necked Parakeet along here but not today. In fact we saw very little today despite the occasional stop to check; just Berthelot's Pipit as usual. A detour to check out the housing complex that is Parque Holandes then along



Berthelot's Pipit

the FV102 passing through the hamlet of Caldereta. For scenic value it is worth checking out the FV103 to Vallebrón. The road passes through a delightful valley with terraces high up the hill sides. We stopped to enjoy the view and to eat a light lunch. Buzzard and Raven flew overhead to keep us amused.

11th July. My early morning walk along the beach proved very fruitful today. Whimbrel and Turnstone both were showing well and a group of four very obliging Sanderling. Moving on, a single Grey Plover stood alone on the rocks. Returning back, a juvenile Hoopoe posed well, Spectacled Warbler and Trumpeter Finch and need I mention a certain pipit! A second visit to Los Molinos but strong winds didn't help birding at all. Two Black winged Stilt around the edge of the water as well as 30 Ruddy Shelduck. Away from the water up on the rocky "fields" were another 30 Ruddy Shelduck and good numbers of Lesser Short toed Lark feeding on a new hatching of what looked to be crane flies or similar.

12<sup>th</sup> July. My last morning walk was quiet in comparison with some but two Black bellied Sandgrouse were good to see as well as Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Spectacled Warbler and Hoopoe and, of course, Berthelot's Pipit. The single Swallow which had been present around the apartment for days continued to swoop and dive hawking insect prey.

13<sup>th</sup> July. Whilst driving back to the airport this morning Kestrel was the only bird of note seen.

#### Species Seen.

Cory's Shearwater

Ruddy Shelduck

Common Buzzard

Turnstone

Yellow-legged Gull

Black-bellied Sandgrouse



Kestrel	Rock Dove
Barbary Partridge	Collared Dove
Moorhen	Turtle Dove
Coot	Plain Swift
Houbara Bustard	Pallid Swift
Black-winged Stilt	Swallow
Stone Curlew	Lesser Short-toed Lark
Cream-coloured Courser	Berthelot's Pipit
Little Ringed Plover	Fuerteventura Chat
Ringed Plover	Spectacled Warbler
Kentish Plover	Blue Tit
Grey Plover	Great Grey Shrike
Sanderling	Raven
Dunlin	Spanish Sparrow
Whimbrel	Linnet
Greenshank	Trumpeter Finch



Magnificent Frigatebird - Galapagos



## ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE

### 12 December 2010 – 5 January 2011

(Anne Nason)

Setting off from Broad Chalke to Heathrow on the 12<sup>th</sup> December on a beautifully sunny winter's day, little did we know how lucky we were to be escaping to the warmth of Africa. This was the calm before the storm and it was not until 10 days later, emerging from the African bush, that we heard the UK was blanketed in heavy snow and Heathrow airport closed.

Arriving in Lusaka on the BA flight, we walked to the Domestic Terminal adjoining the International Terminal, and took the Pro-flight to Mfuwe. This is a light aircraft with about 18 seats which flies once a day back and forth to Mfuwe. Fannuel, our driver and guide met us at the small airport and together with his wife and two small sons, we drove slowly to Mfuwe Lodge in the South Luangwa National Park, a journey of about an hour through villages and farmland.

Mfuwe Lodge is 15 minutes drive from the main gate to the Park and is renowned for the elephants that walk through the entrance lobby on occasions. Unfortunately we didn't witness this ourselves as the wild mango tree to which they were coming had already been stripped by them, but the day before we arrived back at Mfuwe from the bushcamps, a young bull elephant had nearly demolished the Christmas tree in the lobby. Three years ago, however, when we had first tried to go to South Luangwa, the area had been completely flooded and the only customers at the bar were crocodiles.

Apart from the abundant wildlife, it is a very friendly lodge and we were treated as friends rather than guests. Our guide, Fannuel was incredibly knowledgeable and was delighted that we were birders as he often points out avian rarities to guests who reply that all they want to see is the Big Five! He also had a great sense of humour which made a real difference as we were with him most of the day and ate all our meals together. On our journey to the remote bushcamps, we were also accompanied by a scout with a rifle and a general factotum who prepared the coffee breaks and sundowners, so we travelled in some style.

The wet season starts at the end of October so by this time the landscape was green and very beautiful. The best time for birding is in the dry season when both birds and animals are concentrated, but one of the advantages of going when we did was that the palearctic migrants are still present. Photography was not as easy as in Namibia, as it is mostly woodland, and on overcast days the light was not perfect, but Ian still managed to get many good photographs. One of the scoops was of a bird infrequently seen, a Dwarf Bittern, crouching in the grass beside the track. On our first afternoon we went on a drive in the Mfuwe Lodge area and saw one of the "specials," Lilian's Lovebird, but unfortunately not near enough to photograph. Several Woodland Kingfishers, an inter-African migrant, were calling loudly, and Meve's Starling was plentiful too. Amongst the many waterbirds, African Openbill was seen circling in a large flock. Even on that one short evening we noted 51 species of birds.

Next morning we set off for Chindeni Bushcamp, a journey of about 4 hours, but it actually took us 9 hours because of our frequent stops to look at birds or animals. Elephants are present in large numbers in the Park and the youngest baby we saw was only 5 days old, with a very wobbly trunk which he hadn't quite mastered. Impala are common and also Puku,



Grey Crowned Crane

endemic to that part of Zambia, a reddish brown antelope the size of impala but like Lechwe, they prefer marshy areas. Chindeni was in the most beautiful location overlooking a lagoon formed as an oxbow lake from the Luangwa River. As we arrived, hippos were grunting in the water, a crocodile lying on the opposite bank, and several large bull elephants grazing nearby. As it was the very end of the season, we were the only visitors in a camp which can accommodate eight people, so we had exclusive use of the facilities. The young English girl running the

camp turned out to be the granddaughter of a friend of ours in the next village – a small world indeed.

On our two days in Chindeni we saw many interesting birds, and a pair of Grey Crowned Cranes obligingly posed for their photograph. The leading bird had fluff caught in its crown, giving the impression of a bad hair day! It was encouraging to see good numbers of these majestic birds in South Luangwa.

The views over the lagoon were superb and our camp very luxurious, but there was little time to relax as we were up at 5.15am and left camp each morning about 6.30 to be out all morning. A siesta was essential in the heat of the day, before tea at 3pm, and out in the vehicle again in the late afternoon, culminating in a “sundowner.” As we returned each evening a very obliging Fiery-necked



Fiery-necked Nightjar

Nightjar was sitting on the road, which remained even with the spotlight on him, for Ian to photograph.

On our journey to Chindeni our guide had spotted Narina Trogon and Myers Parrot, but the commonest species en route were White-browed Sparrow-Weaver and Dark-capped Bulbul, but at Chindeni we also had good sightings of Greater Honeyguide, African Golden Oriole and Red-chested Cuckoo. The latter drove us mad with its call of “It will rain” but finally we spotted it, but too distant for a good photograph. Red-necked Spurfowl and Swainson’s Spurfowl were the only francolin species we saw and the common lapwing was the White-crowned.

One of our best sightings in this area of the Park was a leopard resting on a branch about 5 metres above the ground so that we could sit and watch it for some minutes and photograph it too, without causing it any concern. We also saw a Thornicroft’s giraffe with a new baby, as the shrivelled umbilical cord was still showing.

Unfortunately we slept through the incident when elephants invaded the camp and got rather too close to our guide in the middle of the night! Even their frightened trumpetings did not wake us, but in the morning we enjoyed the booming of the Southern Ground Hornbills.

We enjoyed sundowners on the banks of the Luangwa River, but in the wet season the whole area is flooded and the only access to the bushcamps is by boat, to provision the guards left to look after the camp until the next dry season, so it is an area of dramatic seasonal contrasts.

Although the camps are in radio contact with Mfuwe Lodge, there is no other form of



Martial Eagle

communication and so we were blissfully unaware of the snowstorms in the UK.

Raptors in this area of South Luangwa are particularly good, and Ian photographed a Crowned Eagle, an adult Martial Eagle, a Yellow-billed Kite, a Wahlberg’s Eagle and a juvenile Bateleur. Fannuel spotted a Western Banded Snake Eagle, but it was only later that Ian was able to photograph one. Little Bee-eaters were common, with juveniles present. Two species of Helmet-Shrike were seen – White-crested and Red-billed, (now called Retz’s Helmet Shrike), along with several species of Hornbill.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> December we set off for Kapamba Bushcamp which is

only about an hour from Chindeni, but of course it took us much longer as we were stopping frequently, and on one occasion our vehicle got stuck in the mud. The camp overlooks the Kapamba River which flows into the Luangwa nearby. As we were sitting enjoying our



afternoon tea, we spotted an Orange-Breasted Bush Shrike in a tree near the platform, and a Fish Eagle flew up the river.

During our two days in Kapamba, Fannuel drove us across the Kapamba River on several occasions, which was rather alarming, but there was a line of sticks marking the causeway under at least two feet of water, so we always got through in spite of my misgivings, much to Fannuel's amusement. Southern Carmine Bee-eaters had recently nested in the banks of the river, and many birds were still around the nest site. One had a huge dragonfly in its bill and didn't seem to know how to deal with it as it sat there for at least 15 minutes.



Southern Carmine Bee-eater

White-fronted Bee-eaters were also very common in this area as it was less wooded and with many open grassy areas dotted with bushes which made convenient perches. In the marshy areas there were many species of water bird including Goliath Heron, Spoonbill, White-faced Duck, African Jacana and Saddle-billed and African Openbill Stork. Among the palearctic migrants, Great Spotted Cuckoo and Red-backed Shrike were good sightings.

Early one morning we saw the only snake of our trip, a small Centipede-eater wriggling along the path, on our way to breakfast, but it is non-venomous. In the large trees around the camp we spotted Paradise Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Greenbul and Kurrichane Thrush. During the night there was a huge storm with thunder and lightning, but luckily the roads were still passable next morning.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> December we had an early lunch at Kapamba and moved on to Zungulila Camp which had a beautiful view over the river from the dining platform. Just outside our "tent"

were the huge prints of an elephant which had passed in the night. On our afternoon drive a Black-bellied Korhaan flew across the road but luckily landed where Ian could photograph it, although the light was not good. We only stayed overnight at Zungulila as Fannuel quite rightly suggested that it was easier to photograph birds around Mfuwe Lodge as there was less woodland and the birds more accustomed to vehicles. In the morning we were woken in time to see a huge male lion stalking purposefully along the bank of the river, 50 yards from the camp.

On our return drive to Mfuwe, we came across a Three-banded Plover feeding in a puddle, which obligingly allowed us to get quite close to it.

Arriving back at Mfuwe Lodge on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> we were greeted as long lost friends by the staff, who were incredibly welcoming. Several of the staff had originally come to South Luangwa as guests but had become so attached to the place that they had returned to work there. That evening we found an African tarantula, locally called a Baboon spider, in our room, which the staff quickly removed!



Three-banded Plover

The bite is painful, but not fatal. The chalets were all named after animals and that evening I heard some new arrivals saying to the staff “Which chalet do you think is the most romantic, warthog or porcupine?” The staff looked somewhat perplexed but it was eventually decided that warthog would be best as porcupine might be rather prickly!

On the 20<sup>th</sup> December we woke to the sound of a hippo munching kigelia (sausage tree) pods right beside our room, but by the time we were ready to go to breakfast it had moved off. Fannuel took us to a wide open plain, back across the Mushilashi and Katete Rivers where there were eight Thornicroft’s Giraffe and three buffalo bulls, some with Red-billed Oxpeckers in attendance. Overhead several hundred White Storks were circling and in the



Dwarf Bittern

marshes Spurwing Geese, Sacred Ibis and Wood Sandpipers were feeding. Our last day in South Luangwa National Park dawned grey and rather drizzly, but we set off as usual and were rewarded with the sight of several Dwarf Bitterns, one of which was crouched in the grass beside the track.

A rather miserable Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove was sitting hunched on a branch, drying out

after the rain, and Fanuel started imitating its call. Immediately the dove responded and they had a short duet which amused us all. However, the most tantalising call was that of an African Pitta which Fannuel recognised, but the bird would not show itself, and the park rules didn't allow us to go searching for it in the bush as on that occasion our armed scout was not with us. The raptors spotted that morning were Western Banded Snake-Eagle and Red-necked Falcon, a juvenile Tawny Eagle and an African Fish Eagle. Amongst the smaller birds, an Emerald Cuckoo and a Long-billed Crombec were good sightings.

After lunch we packed up and left for Mfuwe airport, stopping to say goodbye to Fanuel's family on the way. We arrived in Lusaka about 6 pm and were taken to the Reedbuck Hotel. Our taxi was ordered for 4.15am but when we woke soon after 3am we found no water in the taps, so Ian had to find the guard and get the hotel to turn on the pump – not the most restful night! We flew Air Zambezi to Harare at 6.30, arriving at 7.15am, and were met by our daughter. We had an excellent two week stay with the family, including Christmas and our Golden Wedding on New Year's Eve. Not surprisingly, we also found time for a certain amount



Levaillant's Cisticola

of birding, but Ian managed to photograph Whyte's Barbet, a Zimbabwe endemic, in the garden. Visits to Monavale and Marlborough Vleis produced various Widowbirds, Parasitic Weaver, Levallant's Cisticola and two Marsh Owls which took flight from almost under our feet. Reluctantly, we returned to the UK via Johannesburg on the 5<sup>th</sup> January to face the realities of a further two months of winter.

### List of Species Recorded

Grey Heron	Pied Kingfisher
Black-headed Heron	Malachite Kingfisher
Goliath Heron	Woodland Kingfisher
Great White Egret	Brown-hooded Kingfisher
Cattle Egret	Grey-headed Kingfisher
Green-backed Heron	Striped Kingfisher
Dwarf Bittern	Southern Carmine Bee-eater
Hamerkop	White-fronted Bee-eater
African Openbill Stork	Little Bee-eater
Saddle-billed Stork	Lilac-breasted Roller
Marabou Stork	Broad-billed Roller
Yellow-billed Stork	African Hoopoe



African Sacred Ibis	Green Wood-Hoopoe
African Spoonbill	African Grey Hornbill
White-faced Duck	Red-billed Hornbill
Egyptian Goose	Crowned Hornbill
Comb Duck	Southern Ground Hornbill
Spur-winged Goose	Black-collared Barbet
Hooded Vulture	Greater Honeyguide
White-backed Vulture	Golden-tailed Woodpecker
Lappet-faced Vulture	Cardinal Woodpecker
White-headed Vulture	African Pitta (heard only)
Black Kite	Flappet Lark
Yellow-billed Kite	Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark
Black-shouldered Kite	Barn Swallow
Tawny Eagle	Wire-tailed Swallow
Lesser Spotted Eagle	Lesser Striped Swallow
Wahlberg's Eagle	Black Cuckooshrike
Martial Eagle	Fork-tailed Drongo
African Crowned Eagle	Eurasian Golden Oriole
Western Banded Snake-Eagle	African Golden Oriole
Bateleur	Black-headed Oriole
African Fish Eagle	Pied Crow
Lizard Buzzard	Arrow-marked Babbler
Ovambo Sparrowhawk	Dark-capped Bulbul
Dark Chanting Goshawk	Yellow-bellied Bulbul
Pallid Harrier	Kurrichane Thrush
African Harrier-Hawk	White-browed Robin-Chat
Red-necked Falcon	Long-billed Crombec
Amur Falcon	Green-backed Cameroptera
Red-necked Spurfowl	Moustached Grass-Warbler
Swainson's Spurfowl	Zitting Cisticola
Grey Crowned Crane	Rattling Cisticola
Black-bellied Bustard	Red-faced Cisticola
African Jacana	Tawny-flanked Prinia
Three-banded Plover	Spotted Flycatcher
Crowned Lapwing	Southern Black Flycatcher
Blacksmith Lapwing	Chinspot Batis
White-crowned Plover	African Paradise Flycatcher
African Wattled Lapwing	African Pied Wagtail
Common Sandpiper	Red-backed Shrike
Wood Sandpiper	Tropical Boubou
Common-Greenshank	Black-backed Puffback
Black-winged Stilt	Brown-crowned Tchagra
Water Thick-knee	Black-crowned Tchagra
Red-eyed Dove	Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike

Cape Turtle Dove	White-crested Helmet-Shrike
Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove	Retz's Helmet-Shrike
African Green Pigeon	Wattled Starling
Meyer's Parrot	Violet-backed Starling
Lilian's Lovebird	Meve's Starling
Purple-crested Turaco	Greater Blue-eared Starling
Grey Go-away-bird	Red-billed Oxpecker
Common Cuckoo	Scarlet-chested Sunbird
African Cuckoo	Collared Sunbird
Red-chested Cuckoo	Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver
Black Cuckoo	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Great Spotted Cuckoo	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Levaillant's Cuckoo	Yellow-throated Petronia
Jacobin Cuckoo	Spectacled Weaver
African Emerald Cuckoo	Village Weaver
Diederik Cuckoo	Southern Masked-Weaver
White-browed Coucal	Lesser Masked-Weaver
Giant Eagle-Owl	Red-billed Quelea
Fiery-necked Nightjar	Green-winged Pytilia
Common Swift	Jameson's Firefinch
White-rumped Swift	Red-billed Firefinch
Little Swift	Blue Waxbill
African Palm-Swift	Common Waxbill
Red-faced Mousebird	Village Indigobird
Narina Trogon	Yellow-fronted Canary

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162 Species



Blue-footed Booby - Galapagos

(Tim Hallchurch)

In December 2010, after 4 days delay due to snow at Heathrow, Jan and I flew to Seattle on Christmas eve arriving in time to have a jet lagged Christmas celebration with Jan's son and family. BA had mitigated our delay by upgrading us to First Class so at least the flight was comfortable.

Boxing Day excursion was to nearby Carkeek Park, 220 acres of lush forest, meadows, wetlands, creeks, and beach. In Carkeek Park, years of hard work by volunteers have brought salmon back to Pipers Creek, restored major portions of the forest, built miles of trails, created sustainable gardens, educated visitors, and restored a unique fruit orchard. At the car park we had lovely views of Northern Flickers but in the depth of winter there were few birds in the wood except a Song Sparrow. However on crossing a bridge over the railway to the beach hundreds of birds could be seen on the sea at Puget Sound. The top of the bridge gave good, although distant, views of Red-breasted Merganser and Goldeneye and tantalising glimpses of other seabirds bobbing between the waves with Auks that I was unable to identify. Glaucous-Winged Gulls are very common as are North West Crows and we also had views of the local Bald Eagle.



Golden-crowned Kinglet

A trip to Washington University Park on the banks of Lake Washington was very rewarding. A Red-tailed Hawk sat in a tree as people walked below, Great Blue Heron stalked the water's edge but it was the open waters of the lake that were the real reason for the visit. Flocks of ducks included Lesser Scaup, American Widgeon, Bufflehead with the males prominent white heads, Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. Also on the lake were Pied-billed Grebes and of course Mallard. A walk round the harbour at Ballard Lock revealed more Goldeneye and Common Mergansers who came through the lock with boats rather than fly.

Double-crested Cormorants roosted on lamp standards while again Glaucous-winged Gulls were prominent. New birds for me were a Golden-crowned Kinglet in the garden and Brewer's Blackbird under our feet in a shopping precinct.

We had been booked to fly next to Fiji but due to the delays caused by the snow in UK we had to abandon that part of the trip. From Seattle we flew to Auckland New Zealand, via Los Angeles. In Auckland we were met by Dr Ann O'Reilly who was to be our host for a week. Ann had studied with Jan at Trinity College Dublin in the '60s. Ann's house was surrounded by trees and vegetation and with distant views of the sea. Driving from the airport we were to see familiar birds, Starlings, House Sparrows, Skylark, but also Dominican (or Black Backed) Gulls and Purple Swamphens. In the garden Chaffinches and Blackbirds could be seen and



heard. A trip to the coast revealed Red-billed Gulls, Welcome Swallows, Silvereye, Yellowhammer and various Cormorant species.

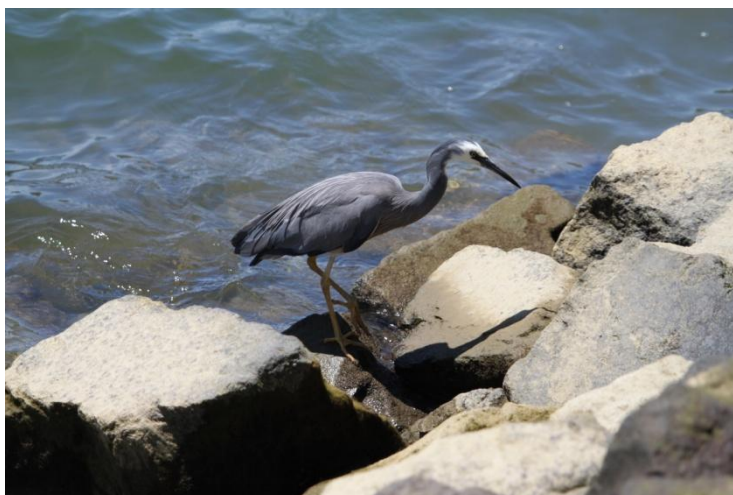


Silvereye

Our plan was then to go south to Whakatane and Ohope, Bay of Plenty area. Ann had previously lived at Ohope (pronounced Oh-hopey) and had a friend at Whakatane (pronounced Fuckatanay) who lent us their home for four nights. The house was surrounded by forest and one could have spent all day on the terrace watching the bird life. The endemic Tui and New Zealand Pigeon were present along with Chaffinch,

Silvereye, Song Thrush, and Indian Mynah. The coast with estuaries and wetland proved to be very productive with Pied and Little Shag, Black-billed Gulls along with Red-billed and Dominican Gulls. Mallard were common along with New Zealand Scaup. Other species included Spur-winged Plover, Variable Oystercatcher and White Faced Herons. We were treated to a display by a pair of Fantails who had young just out of the nest and they created a great deal of noise whilst bombing us.

We took a day trip by boat to the volcanic White Island (or *Whakaari* as it was named by the Maori before Europeans arrived) that lies 48 kilometres off New Zealand's Bay of Plenty coastline. This active volcano and private scenic reserve are accessible by boat and helicopter. It is unique in that visitors to the island can walk right inside the main crater just above sea level and without undue risk. We experienced at first hand nature's immense power as



White-faced Heron

gas and steam burst up from far below the Earth's crust. The surroundings are quite surreal and the scenery spectacular. It is like walking on an active volcanic moonscape with no

plants or vegetation inside the crater. The smell of sulphur and the noise of steam emanating from the many fumaroles both large and small made for an amazing experience. To protect us, we were provided with hard hats, masks that were needed when caught in a sulphurous cloud. The trip to and from the island was especially memorable with dolphins swimming alongside the boat. On the outer slopes of the island there were colonies of the Australasian Gannet. Other birds seen on the trip were Grey-faced Petrels that also bred on the island.



Australasian Gannet

Other excursions included a visit to Rotorua where **the** Arawa people made their home 500 years ago. Today Maori people comprise more than a third of Rotorua's population, and the region is known as the heartland of Maoridom in New Zealand. Here people were playing bowls and croquet dressed in white in true English tradition while Red-billed and Black-billed Gulls patrolled the outfield. A visit to the museum is a worthwhile experience.

From Auckland we flew to Sydney, Australia and were met by my son Andrew and his wife Jacquie. They have a flat at Narabeen north of Sydney overlooking the sea. From the balcony of his flat we saw at close quarters, Sulphur Crested Cockatoo and Rainbow Lorikeets. Laughing Kookaburra regularly sat on the TV antenna and Cockatiel were seen in nearby gardens. The beach was teeming with Silver Gulls plus Australian Magpies and Spur-winged Plover on the roadside. A Superb Fairy-wren skulked in the bushes by the beach. Narabeen boasts a wetland park with an impressive board-walk that gave view of more than a dozen species including Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Crested Pigeon, Red-whiskered Bulbul and Red-browed Finch. We also had two nights at Terrigal when Andrew and Jacquie have a house while Jacquie is working in Newcastle and although only an hour's



Rainbow Lorikeet



drive north the area has a different bird population including Australian Pelicans, Indian Mynah and Noisy Miner.



Black-naped Tern

The height of our visit was to northern Queensland and we flew to Cairns, hired a car and drove to north of Port Douglas to a house that Andrew rented on the beach 45 minutes north of Port Douglas and an hour from Cape Tribulation where the road ends and only 4 x 4 vehicles go further to Cape York. We spent a memorable day visiting the Great Barrier Reef in the MV Poseidon. The boat normally takes up to 90 people and we were fortunate to be in a party of less than

30. It was a beautifully calm day with blue skies which are unusual in the wet season. We all spent a total of three hours snorkelling in three locations along with a fish buffet for lunch. The number of birds seen was slightly disappointing. However we did have good views of Black Noddy and Black-naped Terns and a few Crested Terns.

We also had a half day in a small boat up the Daintree River to see crocodiles. Birds were difficult to see but there were good views of a Metallic Starling nest colony and a Yellow-bellied Sunbird nest building. We also saw a few crocs. Another day we spent in the Daintree National Park where we even ventured to swim in the river. The car park had it unusual picnic scavenger in an Australian Bush Turkey and in the rain forest a Bush Stone Curlew and Pied Heron beside the river. We climbed a tower to the jungle canopy and all we saw was a pair of Varied Tiller.



Pied Heron

In another park between the sugar and tea plantations we were able to observe Rajah Shelduck and a Pacific Black Ducks, an Eastern Reef Heron and a very tame young Emu that had been hand reared. There were roadside notices warning of the dangers of crocodiles and Cassowary. However the one Cassowary we saw in a park looked very placid, although we did not approach too closely.



There were always swiftlets in the air but never closely enough to identify with certainty. Nankeen Kestrels were fairly common along the road and in the garden of our house were Imperial Pigeons, winter visitors from S.E.Asia. Before we left for Singapore we had a day out in Sydney. The park near to the Opera House hosted a few birds. The Silver Gull dominated but also very tame Australian White Ibis and feral Wood Ducks.



Pheasant-tailed Jacana

Our next leg of the world trip was a flight to Singapore on a QUANTAS A380. Club Class passengers board the upstairs via a separate gangway so there is no crush and there is a bar where you can have as many drinks as you want on the house. We were only in Singapore for two nights and the aim was to meet up with friends and see the city and have dinner. The Italian restaurant was in the old Sergeants Mess of one of the old British Army Barracks and it was interesting to see an army camp that we would all

recognise in this vibrant city of high rise buildings. Our hotel was on Sentosa Island where switlets and hirundines abounded plus a few Black-naped Orioles. We lunched at the Fullerton Hotel in the city where Tree Sparrows came to the table to feed – just like Bulgaria!

The next flight was to Colombo, Sri Lanka, where we had booked a room in The Turtle Bay Hotel in Kalamatiya 220km south of the airport. The hotel is ideally situated for relaxing and bird watching. It is surrounded by the Kalamatiya Bird Sanctuary, 90 minutes from the Yala National Park with the world's highest concentration of leopards and 90 minutes from Uda Walawa National Park. After a fairly uneventful 5 hour drive from Colombo the arrival at Kalamatiya was a revelation. Birds were everywhere including Indian Pond Herons, Cattle, Little, Intermediate and Great Egrets, Grey and Purple



Orange-breasted Green Pigeon

Hérons, Open-billed Storks, Black-headed Ibis, Purple Swamphens, Pheasant Tailed Jacana and many other species. Our Hotel in Turtle Beach had only 12 rooms all looking out to sea. Our corner room also looked out onto a lake giving us views of both habitats. The area had been badly damaged by the tsunami but in this area British aid had paid for new housing and a double canoe for a local lad to lash together and make a tourist boat that he and a mate “punted” though the lagoon. He also had a “Tuk Tuk” paid for by tsunami aid to collect visitors from the hotel. The lagoon produced the usual suspects and crocodiles. It was good to see that the local people were very appreciative of British and Canadian aid that been given to the region. There were very few sea birds except terns – Little, Whiskered and Common.



Oriental Magpie Robin

The highlight of the trip was undoubtedly a visit to the Yala National Park. Yala National Park is the most visited and second largest national park in Sri Lanka. Actually it consists of five blocks, two of which are now open to the public; and also adjoining parks. The blocks have individual names also, like Ruhuna National Park for the (best known) block 1 and Kumana National Park or 'Yala East' for the adjoining area. It is situated in the southeast region of the country, and lies in Southern Province and Uva Province. The park covers 979 square

kilometres (378 sq mi) and is located about 300 kilometres (190 mi) from Colombo. Yala was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900, and, along with Wilpattu, it was one of the first two national parks in Sri Lanka, having been designated in 1938. The park is best known for its variety of wild animals. It is important for the conservation of Sri Lankan Elephants and aquatic birds. There are six national parks and three wildlife sanctuaries in the vicinity of Yala. The park is situated in the dry semi-arid climatic region and rain is received mainly during the northeast monsoon. Yala hosts a variety of ecosystems ranging from moist monsoon forests to freshwater and marine wetlands. It is one of the 70 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Sri Lanka. Yala harbours 215 bird species including six endemic species of Sri Lanka. The number of mammals that has been recorded from the park is 44, and it has one of the highest leopard densities in the world

We had been provided with a driver who met us at the airport and he took us to the park where we transferred to an ancient Land Rover as the only passengers and spent 4 hours touring the tracks though the park mainly looking for leopards. (We were the only vehicle not to see them but we were concentrating on the birds). We looked at many wetland areas that revealed Red-wattled Lapwing, Crab Plover, Little and Ringed Plovers, Kentish Plover, Spur-winged Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, White-breasted Waterhen, three types of Kingfisher and some lifers for me – Barred Button Quail, Malabar Pied Hornbill and White-rumped Munia.

The next leg of our journey was a flight to Dubai but only to get a BA flight to Heathrow. The only bird we could see outside the massive terminal was a Palm Dove.



White-breasted Kingfisher

#### List of Birds Recorded

##### **Seattle**

Pied-billed Grebe	Goldeneye
Western Grebe	Common Merganser
Double-Crested Cormorant	Red Breasted Merganser
Great Blue Heron	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Canada Goose	Red-tailed Hawk
Mallard	American Coot
Gadwall	Glaucous-winged Gull
American Wigeon	Northern Flicker
Northern Shovler	American Robin
Green-winged Teal	North West Crow
Lesser Scaup	Winter Wren
Bufflehead	Golden-Crowned Kinglet

##### **New Zealand**

Grey-faced Petrel	Black-billed Gull
Australasian Gannet	Red-billed Gull
Little Shag	Tern spp
Black Shag	New Zealand Pigeon
Black Swan	Spotted Dove
Mute Swan	Pock Dove
Canada Goose	Lorrikeet
Paradise Shelduck	New Zealand Kingfisher
Grey Duck	Welcome Kingfisher
Mallard	Silvereye

New Zealand Scaup  
New Zealand Babchick  
Australasian Harrier  
Californian Quail  
Australasian Coot  
Purple Swampphen  
Variable Oystercatcher  
Spur-winged Plover  
Pied Stilt  
Dominican Gull

**Australia NSW**

Common Mynah  
Noisy Miner  
Pellican  
Sulphur-crester Cockatoo  
Kookaburra  
Welcome Swallow  
Brush Turkey  
Honey Eater  
Short-tailed Shearwater  
Silver Gull  
Little-pied Cormorant  
Little-black Cormorant  
Pied Cormorant  
Eastern Reef Heron  
Eurasian Coot  
Dusky Moorhen  
Black Swan  
Black Duck  
Mallard  
Eared Dove  
Noisy Friarbird  
Black Ducker  
Moorhen  
Purple Swampphen

**Australia QLD**

Black Swan  
Radjah Shelduck  
Pacific Black Duck  
Shearwater spp  
Eastern Reef Heron  
Wedge-tailed Eagle  
Nankeen Kestrel  
Bush Stone-curlew

Blackbird  
Song Thrush  
Skylark  
Tui  
Bellbird  
House Sparrow  
Yellowhammer  
Dunnock  
Chaffinch  
Australasian Magpie

Brown Gerrygone  
Red-browed Finch  
Masked Lapwing  
Nankeen Kestrel  
Crested Pigeon  
Rock Dove  
Spotted Dove  
King Parrot  
Rainbow Lorrikeet  
Superb Fairy-wren  
House Sparrow  
New Holland Honeyeater  
Tree Martin  
Australian Reed Warbler  
Rainbow Bee-eater  
Rufous Fantail  
Figbird  
Olive-backed Oriole  
Silvereye  
Red-whiskered Bulbul  
Australian Raven  
Common Starling  
Grey Fantail  
Blue-winged Cookaburra

Channel Billed Cuckoo  
White-rumped Swiftlet  
Azure Kingfisher  
Sacred Kingfisher  
Rainbow Bee-eater  
Little Friarbird  
Honeyeater spp  
Varied Tattler



Spur-winger Plover  
Silver Gull  
Crested Tern  
Black-naped Tern  
Common Noddy  
Black Noddy  
Spotted Turtle Dove  
Pied Imperial Pigeon  
Forest Kingfisher  
Sulpher-crested Cockatoo  
Rainbow Lorikeet

**Singapore**

Indian Mynah  
Sulpher-crested Cockatoo  
Pea Fowl  
Swift spp  
Hirundine spp  
Blue-tailed Bee Eater

**Sri Lanka**

Little Cormorant  
Indian Cormorant  
Darter  
Indian Pond Heron  
Cattle Egret  
Little Egret  
Great Egret  
Intermediate Egret  
Grey Heron  
Purple Heron  
Spot-billed Pelican  
Little Heron  
Black-crowned Night Heron  
Openbill Stork  
Black-headed Ibis  
Painted Stork  
Eurasian Spoonbill  
Lesser-whistling Duck  
Brahminy Kite  
Honey Buzzard  
White-bellied Sea Eagle  
Crested Serpent Eagle  
Shikra  
Kestrel  
Black Kite

White-breasted Woodswallow  
Magpie Lark  
Australian Magpie  
Torresian Crow  
House Sparrow  
Yellow-bellied Sunbird  
Welcome Swallow  
Metallic Starling  
Common Starling  
Common Mynah

Black-naped Oriole  
Tree Sparrow  
Indian Crow  
Sea Eagle  
Common Mynah  
Dove spp

Common Sandpiper  
Wood Sandpiper  
Turnstone  
Curlew  
Brown-headed Gull  
Whiskered Tern  
Little Tern  
Common Tern  
Rock Dove  
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon  
Spotted Dove  
Rose-ringed Parakeet  
Swiftlet  
Greater Coucal  
Common Kingfisher  
Pied Kingfisher  
White-throated Kingfisher  
Blue-tailed Bee-eater  
Green Bee-eater  
Indian Roller  
Hoopoe  
Milibar Pied Hornbill  
Barbet spp  
Barn Swallow  
Sand Martin

Junglefowl  
Indian Peafowl  
Barred Button-quail  
Common Moorhen  
Purple Swamphen  
Pheasant-tailed Jacana  
Black-winged Stilt  
Small Pratincole  
Ringed Plover  
Little-ringed Plover  
Kentish Plover  
Lesser Sand Plover  
Crab Plover  
Red-wattled Lapwing  
Spur-winged Plover  
Ruff  
Black-tailed Godwit  
Redshank

Brown Shrike  
Ceylon Woodshrike  
Red-vented Bulbul  
Magpie Robin  
Indian Robin  
Indian Tailorbird  
Clamorous Reed Warbler  
Yellow-billed Babbler  
Black-hooded Oriole  
Long-billed Sunbird  
White-bellied Drongo  
House Crow  
Large-billed Crow  
Common Mynah  
Southern Hill Mynah  
White-rumped Munia  
Rosy Starling  
House Sparrow



Green Bee-eater

## AOS Trip to Ontario Province 14 – 25 May 2011

(Andrew Bray)

I had been to Kingston before in May though that was on exercise wearing desert combats. This time we would be birding at different locations around the Province which is so big that overnight stays would be required. Six members flew into Ottawa where we were met by Tony Kaduck, the organiser of the trip. The weather was a bit wet as we travelled to our rooms at McNeil House, Kingston University though 12 species were ticked off. After unpacking we went to downtown Kingston for food and drink at the Iron Duke and an introduction to the events ahead of us. Day one and we were joined by Dr Paul Mackenzie who had many years birding in the Province. We departed Kingston at 0500 hrs for Prince Edward Point via Tim Hortons and the Glenora ferry. Tim Hortons was to become a staple part of our diet with breakfast and coffee stops as were the very early starts. The rain lashed down and the wind blew. Out at the Point things did not look promising. There was no ringing happening and the trails were flooded. That has never stopped us before and we were soon picking up warblers sheltering. In fact the adverse conditions helped us as we picked up flocks containing many species that were keeping low in the trees and scrub. The haul was not too bad before we headed for a more sheltered part of the county (though not really). In the end we called it a day having counted 17 species of warbler. We did stop at Amherstview Lagoons (sewage farm) on the way back to make it a round figure of 90 species for the day. Tony had a hard act to follow to keep that number up each day!



Gray Jay

The next day was a later start so that I could be added to the driver list at the car hire company and another vehicle could be hired. Not all of us were died in the wool birders and the two ladies on the trip had booked themselves a side diversion of visiting the Niagara Falls. Whilst hardened members travelled to Carden Plain the ladies went on their own excursion. Carden Plain was our opportunity to see some of the dry grass varieties. There was an air of expectation however our first excitement was a

Porcupine up in a tree. We stopped along the road a few times but at one stop not only did we see Upland Sandpiper but also Loggerhead Shrike. To cap it at a nearby stream we managed to pick up Sora and Virginia Rails as well as Swamp Sparrow. Our next stop was a motel at Tillsonberg having seen 64 species that day. In the morning we visited Long Point Important Bird Area. We went to many sites including the Observatory with its small wood which was laden with birds. Fortunately the rain held off until the long 5 hr journey back. We added quite a few new species including Scaup, Bald Eagle, Sandhill Crane, Sedge Wren, Canada and Hooded Warblers with 85 species recorded.

The next 2 days was a trip to Algonquin National Park with an overnight stay at a motel just outside the Park at Whitney. This was an opportunity to pick up a few boreal birds on their breeding grounds. We visited a number of sites including Spruce Bog Trail where we had excellent views of a Black-backed Woodpecker. This was a rare sighting which raised our expectations. We would eventually find this mysterious bird singing loudly from the trees.

Despite some of the wonderful birds and animals seen (Moose) we were completely stymied by this very loud bird. We found a volunteer warden at the end of the day and played him a recording. It was an Ovenbird! It never crossed our minds that this ground skulking bird would sing from trees. On our second day in the Park we knew that call and could walk around with a smug smile on

our faces. We even managed to find one in a tree. Of course the smug face was also a result of having stood on a track at dawn with three male Spruce Grouse showing around us. We saw 56 species during our stay including Merlin, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-winged Warbler and Vesper Sparrow.



Spruce Grouse



Black-capped Chickadee

After all that travelling we stayed in the local area and added a few more birds to the overall total including Orchard Oriole. No matter where we went there was always water close by. We went walking in a well known spot looking for grouse but without success despite the birds being so friendly. Both Chickadee and White-breasted Nuthatch would eat seed out of your hand. This provided a quite a delay in our schedule but Tony had brought quite a few seeds to use. We added a few more water loving birds and flycatchers to the trip list. Our last bird on the day trip was an Osprey that had a nest at the Military Academy in the floodlights of the football field. The

evening was passed at Chez Kaduck and passed too quickly. The next day was also spent locally though it did involve a ferry to Amherst Island. We were blitzed by flies that you needed a knife to cut a path through. Fortunately at that stage in the season they were not biting otherwise we would not have stepped out of the car like the ladies. All we had to do



was keep our mouths shut otherwise you had second breakfast. On the way we saw a variety of birds through the haze including Wilson's Phalarope. At the end of the point there was some respite from the wind and on the return journey the majority of the insects had de-camped back into the grass. This localism had to stop and the next day was another very early start to return to Prince Edward Point. We visited some old and new locations and were able to add Mourning Warbler to our list as well as a few others that day. The talking point of the day occurred at the first stop where they were ringing. This included ringing a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and we were shown a neat trick with Hilary Nash as the hand!



Wilson's Phalarope



Ruby-throated Hummingbird – a bird in the hand.

We were birding locally the next day heading into the forest and lakes driving along routes with holiday cottages and small settlements. This added Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush and Indigo Bunting to our list. Our final stop of the day was near the freeway as we found a pond that was well stocked with sandpipers. We became an attraction to the motorists passing by and one car saw us and took the nearest exit to join us. Birdwatchers are very curious people when they see others with telescopes and binos. Our final full day was once again an early start

to ensure a good visit to Presqu'ile National Park. This park sits out on a spit with a number of habitats. We still added species to our list and had our best views of Marsh Wren. We followed a boardwalk through the reeds that provided close up views of birds that climbed to the top of reeds to sing loudly whilst doing the splits. We saw 65 species on this day which was about our daily average. That night we went out for a meal in a very nice restaurant within walking distance of the university accommodation (as was all of downtown Kingston). On our final day Andrew was up very early to go with Paul Mackenzie to find Least Bittern and judging by the grins on both faces at breakfast they had had good views. We then said our goodbyes and the main party headed off for some sightseeing in Ottawa whilst Andrew waited for the bus to Toronto airport and a trip to Washington State. This was an excellent trip that was well organised by Tony who at long last was able to add considerably to his Canada list and at last overtake his UK list on numbers.

## List of Species Recorded

Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>
Double-crested Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocrax auritus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocrax carbo</i>
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>
Least Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Brant	<i>Branta bernicla</i>
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>
Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>
White-winged Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Ruddy Duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Sharp-shinned hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Wild Turkey	<i>eleagris gallopavo</i>

Spruce Grouse	<i>Falcipennis canadensis</i>
Virginia Rail	<i>Rallus limicola</i>
Sora Rail	<i>Porzana carolina</i>
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
American Coot	<i>Fulica americana</i>
Sandhill Crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis maculaia</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Caldris pusilla</i>
Least Sandpiper	<i>Caldris minutilla</i>
Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>
Wilson Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>
American Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>
Black-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides arcticus</i>
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>
Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>
Eastern wood Peewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>
Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>
Great-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>

Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>
Philadelphia Vireo	<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
Blue-headed Vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>
Yellow throated Vireo	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>
Gray Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonota</i>
Northern rough-winged Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>
Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>
Purple Martin	<i>Progne subis</i>
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapilla</i>
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>
Marsh Wren	<i>Cistothorus palustris</i>
Sedge Wren	<i>Cistothorus plantensis</i>
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus calendula</i>
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>
Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>
Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>
Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>
Brown Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>
Nashville Warbler	<i>Vermivora ruficapilla</i>
Blue-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora pinus</i>
Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>
Northern Parula	<i>Parula americana</i>
Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>



Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>
Magnolia Warbler	<i>Dendroica magnolia</i>
Cape may Warbler	<i>Dendroica tigrina</i>
Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Dendroica fusca</i>
Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>
Cerulean Warbler	<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>
Black-throated Green Warbler	<i>Dendroica virens</i>
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>
Palm Warbler	<i>Dendroica palmarum</i>
Pine Warbler	<i>Dendroica pinus</i>
Prairie Warbler	<i>Dendroica discolor</i>
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Dendroica striata</i>
Bay-breasted Warbler	<i>Dendroica castanea</i>
Black and white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>
Mourning Warbler	<i>Oporornis philadelphia</i>
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>
Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>
Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapillus</i>
Canada Warbler	<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>
Hooded Warbler	<i>Wilsonia citrina</i>
Wilson's Warbler	<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>
Scarlet Tanager	<i>Piranga olivacea</i>
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>
Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>
Eastern Towhee	<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>
Field Sparrow	<i>Spizella pusilla</i>
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>
Savannah Sparrow	<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>
Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolni</i>
Swamp Sparrow	<i>Melospiza georgiana</i>
White-crowned Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia leuophrys</i>
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>
Orchard Oriole	<i>Icterus spurius</i>
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>

Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
American Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>
Pine Siskin	<i>Carduelis pinus</i>
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>
Purple Finch	<i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>



Blackpoll Warbler



Downy Woodpecker



Red-wing Blackbird

## RINGING WEEKEND AT CATTERICK GARRISON

19-21 August 2011

(Carl Powell)

Opportunities for members of the Army Ornithological Society to meet other than the Annual General Meeting are few and far between so the idea of meeting at Foxglove Covert in Catterick Garrison for a weekends ringing was an offer too good to refuse!

To make life easy it was decided to meet at the annual Rutland Bird Fair on the Friday before making our way up to Catterick. Eventually eight of us made up the party. We were a mixture of ringers ranging from experienced to first time novice but all managed to gain something from the weekend. The Saturday involved helping with the scheduled Constant Effort Scheme day with over 40 nets deployed! Birds came thick and fast involving a mixture ranging from Great Spotted Woodpecker to the diminutive Goldcrest and with over 160 new birds ringed and 100 or more “re-traps” a good day’s work was deemed to have been done. The first timers soon gained confidence under very watchful eyes of the expert trainers and all ringed and handled many birds each. Foxglove Covert has ringing facilities second to none and a better place to begin a ringing career would be hard to find!

Sunday morning and back to reality as we gathered on the moor to begin the second session. No well-lit warm and dry room with tea on tap but ringing as most know it from the back of a vehicle! No lack of enthusiasm though as we erected several nets hoping to catch mainly Meadow Pipits on migration. Sadly, the wind was a little too strong and after a few hours it was decided to end the session. Not a total failure though as over 60 pipits and a solitary Linnet were ringed.

It had been a splendid weekend with friends old and new. Many thanks to all who made it possible particularly Major Tony Crease who is always keen to encourage ringing within the Army, and to John Bell and Tom Dewdney for their knowledge and patience.

Those attending were Roger Dickey(A), Julia Springett, RAFOS,(A), Martin Routledge, RAFOS, (T), Dave Pentelow (new), Lynne Millard (new), Phil Cook (new), Ann and Carl Powell (C).



Lesser Redpoll



Carl Powell, Tony Crease, Dave Pentelow, Phil Cook with youth

TOBAGO, WEST INDIES  
20 December 2009 - 10 January 2010

(Tim Hallchurch)

I flew with Dr Jan Stokes Carter and her daughter Susie Carter to Tobago on Sunday 20th December. We were joined in Tobago by Molly Gamble, a friend from New York City. This was three days earlier than planned but we moved the flight forward to avoid the British Airways strike that did not happen. We were forced to spend an extra three days at the end due to our return flight being cancelled due to snow at Gatwick so we had three weeks instead of two! The flight via Antigua arrived late after dark but our hire 4x4 was waiting at arrivals and we had to search for the hotel in the dark and Tobago is rather short of road signs. The hotel was on the beach near Pigeon Point, only five minutes from the airport. The Conrado Beach resort has an open fronted dining room ten yards from the sea while our bedrooms were above also yards from the sea. From our breakfast table on our first



Masked Duck

morning were about 70 Laughing Gulls, plus Royal Terns and Sandwich Terns as well as Brown Pelicans. Running along the beach were Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. Also seen from the hotel were Semipalmated Plover and Spotted Sandpipers while Tropical Mockingbirds were always near to hand. Later in the day Magnificent Frigate birds cruised overhead. The hotel was situated at the entrance to Pigeon Point Country Park and across the



Crimson Crested Woodpecker

road was a Mangrove swamp. The park had mown grass with palm trees and other trees and gardens. This area was inhabited by Southern Lapwing, Black-faced and Blue-Black Grassquit, Tropical Kingbirds, Smooth-billed Ani, Ruddy Ground Doves, Eyed Doves and many Carib Grackles. Copper-rumped Hummingbirds were nesting in shrubs in the flower beds. The hotel owners had a large cage with a Scarlet and two Blue and Yellow Macaws plus two Orange-winged Parrots. The former is extinct in the wild on Tobago and the Blue and Yellow Macaw is now rarely seen. The Parrots are very common in the hills.

The mangrove swamp was very difficult to access, but I did see a Green and Great Blue Heron. Herons also came to the sea in front of our room at low tide

and these included Great Blue and Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Pelicans, gulls and terns roosted on the fishing boats. Also seen on the hotel beach Ruddy Turnstone with colour rings (ringed in New Jersey USA), Semi-palmated Plover, Sanderling, Sandwich Tern and Magnificent Frigatebird females, I only saw one male frigate bird against hundreds of females in the 3 weeks we were there. From our hotel room, as well as watching birds, we also observed manta rays, tuna and other fish, fishermen bringing in their catch that attracted more gulls and surfers. Laughing Gulls were the only gulls seen, while Bare-eyed or



Spectacled Thrush, were common in hotel gardens. I hired a local guide, Newton George, to take me to see local birding areas on two days. The first of these trips included the inevitable



White-tailed Sabrewing

sewage farm, the local lakes and ponds including Grafton Bird Sanctuary where birds were fed twice a day (mostly Rufous-vented Chachialaca and doves) as well as Hilton Ponds which is now a golf course and holiday home complex but with a number of small lakes. There was a walk into the hills and a visit to the Hummingbird feeding station. The Hummingbird Feeding Station on the west coast near Plymouth is an excellent place to sit in an armchair and watch four species of hummingbird as well as Tanagers, woodpeckers and other species at close quarters. Newton took me to the Forest Reserve; we had been warned the track would be wet and muddy. As we parked we were approached by the local "boot hire service" being peddled from a car boot. The circular path leads through the rain forest and was wet and muddy in places. I had excellent views of several Blue-backed Manakin,

Yellow-legged Thrush, White-tailed Sabrewing, Rufous-breasted Wren, White-fringed Antwren, Plain Antvireo, Stripe-breasted Spinetail and stunning Red-legged Honeycreeper (male & female). A White-tailed Sabrewing displayed his tail feathers. American Redstarts made brief appearances.

Little Tobago is a small uninhabited island off the NE coast of Tobago. It used to have a number of birds of paradise, imported in the 19th century from Asia but they were wiped out in a hurricane. It is now a wildlife sanctuary. We visited by a boat from the Blue Waters hotel at Speyside. While we waited for the boat in the bar, we were surrounded by Ruddy Turnstones that came in to feed from food scraps and some were hand fed by residents. They return every winter from USA and Canada. The boat trip revealed Frigate Birds, Red-billed Tropicbirds and an Audubon's Shearwater. On arrival on Little Tobago we were greeted by a Crested Oropendola flashing its yellow plumage as it flies. We then scrambled up a hillside and our guide showed us a roosting White-tailed Nightjar. Other birds in the forest were Northern Waterthrush and a species of wren. The top of the hill revealed breeding Red-billed Tropicbirds, Brown and Red Footed Boobies and Magnificent Frigatebirds.



Blue-crowned Motmot

#### List of Species Recorded

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>
White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>

#### Tobago

#### Little Tobago

x  
x  
x

Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	X	
Masked Duck	<i>Nomonyx dominica</i>	X	
Rufous-vented Chachalaca	<i>Ortalis ruficauda</i>	X	
Least Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>	X	
Audubon's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>		X
White-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>		X
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>		X
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>		X
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>	X	
Brown Booby	<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	X	X
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>	X	
Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	X	
Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>	X	
Anhinga	<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>	X	
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	X	X
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	X	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	X	
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	X	
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	X	
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>	X	
Tricolored Heron	<i>Egretta tricolor</i>	X	
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	X	
Green Heron	<i>Butorides virescens</i>	X	
Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	X	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	X	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	X	
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>	X	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	X	
Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio martinica</i>	X	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	X	
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>	X	
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	X	
Wattled Jacana	<i>Jacana jacana</i>	X	
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	X	
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	X	
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	X	
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	X	
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	X	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	X	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	X	
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	X	
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	X	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	X	
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	X	

Pale-vented Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas cayennensis</i>	x	
Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>	x	
Ruddy Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina talpacoti</i>	x	
White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>	x	x
Scarlet Macaw	<i>Ara macao</i>	cage	
Blue-and-yellow Macaw	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	cage	
Green-rumped Parrotlet	<i>Forpus passerinus</i>	x	
Orange-winged Parrot	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	x	
Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>	x	
White-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus cayennensis</i>		x
Short-tailed Swift	<i>Chaetura brachyura</i>	x	
Rufous-breasted Hermit	<i>Glaucis hirsutus</i>	x	
White-tailed Sabrewing	<i>Campylopterus ensipennis</i>	x	
White-necked Jacobin	<i>Florisuga mellivora</i>	x	
Black-throated Mango	<i>Anthracothonax viridigula</i>	x	
Ruby-topaz Hummingbird	<i>Chrysolampis mosquitos</i>	x	
Copper-rumped Hummingbird	<i>Amazilia tobaci</i>	x	
Collared Trogon	<i>Trogon collaris</i>	x	
Blue-crowned Motmot	<i>Momotus momota</i>	x	
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	x	
Green Kingfisher	<i>Chloroceryle americana</i>	x	
Rufous-tailed Jacamar	<i>Galbula ruficauda</i>	x	
Red-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes rubricapillus</i>	x	
Cocoa Woodcreeper	<i>Xiphorhynchus susurrans</i>	x	
Olivaceous Woodcreeper	<i>Sittasomas griseicapillus griseus</i>	x	
Barred Antshrike	<i>Thamnophilus doliatus</i>	x	
Yellow-bellied Elaenia	<i>Elaenia flavogaster</i>	x	
Ochre-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Mionectes oleagineus</i>	x	
Slaty-capped Flycatcher	<i>Leptopogon superciliaris</i>		
Yellow-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Tolmomyias flaviventris</i>	x	
Tropical Pewee	<i>Contopus cinereus</i>		x
Fuscon Flycatcher	<i>Cnemotriccus fuscatus</i>	x	
Venezuelan Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus venezuelensis</i>	x	
Brown-crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus tyrannulus</i>	x	
Streaked Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i>	x	
Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>	x	
Gray Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	x	
Blue-backed Manakin	<i>Chiroxiphia pareola</i>	x	
White-winged Swallow	<i>Tachycineta albiventer</i>	x	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	x	
Rufous-breasted Wren	<i>Thryothorus rutilus</i>	x	
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	x	x
Spectacled (Bare-eyed) Thrush	<i>Turdus nudigenis</i>	x	
Tropical Mockingbird	<i>Mimus gilvus</i>	x	x

Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>	X	
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	X	X
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	X	
Bananaquit	<i>Coereba flaveola</i>	X	
White-lined Tanager	<i>Tachyphonus rufus</i>	X	
Blue-gray Tanager	<i>Thraupis episcopus</i>	X	X
Palm Tanager	<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>	X	
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>	X	
Black-faced Grassquit	<i>Tiaris bicolor</i>	X	
Carib Grackle	<i>Quiscalus lugubris</i>	X	
Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>	X	
Yellow-rumped Cacique	<i>Cacicus cela</i>	X	
Crested Oropendola	<i>Psarocolius decumanus</i>		X
<hr/>			
Total 104 species			



Ruby Topaz



Copper-rumped Hummingbird



Barred Antshrike



## JURA: THE WINTER BIRD SURVEY

(Chris Dickey)



The Spine of Jura

Surveying can be straight forward or as challenging as you would like to make it. From carrying out surveys in your back garden to ‘yomping’ equipment down to Letterbox, Ascension Island, there are few birders who purposely seek the more challenging surveys. It was therefore no surprise that the Chairman, Roger Dickey, actively encouraged the good people at BTO Bird Atlas to give him a list of the most inhospitable, un-surveyed tetrads in the United Kingdom. Armed with this list, Roger chose Jura as a feasible AOS venture, so long as twenty or so variables didn’t prevent this, including being shot by deer stalkers.

After hours of internet searches for ferries, hotels, Scottish trespassing laws, weather forecasts and whether or not the Jura distillery would be open or not, Andrew Bray and Richard Sergeant with Roger and son (myself), set off from Somerset after a hearty lunch of hot tea and freshly baked cakes. The drive was long and boring but we had been reliably informed about a service station that even the Royals take detours to visit. On arrival it was safe to say it was not 24hr. We managed to get the last of the steak and ale pie but at the prices they were charging, we should have stopped at Burger King.

Once past Glasgow and with a refuel, we set off along the winding road to Kennacraig Port. By now it was dark, which prevented Roger from seeing but not sharing views of interesting birdlife, like the Goshawk he forgot to mention on the M6. At the ferry port we were able to catch several hours sleep while our ferry underwent heavy maintenance through the night (very reassuring). At 0500hr, we were awoken by the ticket lady and then spent the following hour tending to our contorted bodies and stiff necks, having slept in the car. Once onboard the ferry, I slept the two hour trip while everyone else tucked into a “Full Scottish”, which looked a lot like a ‘Full English’. Sightings of Black Guillemot, Great Northern Diver and Red Breasted Merganser were common. Nearer to Port Ellen and with a bowl of porridge inside of me, I joined the others on deck for some Seal watching.

On Islay, I took charge of driving while everyone played the Japanese tourist shouting ‘STOP’ or ‘Go Back’ every time something moved. This would have been fine but as we were on the only main road on Islay, stopping every few seconds did not impress the tailback of locals. We also had a ferry to catch at the northern end, Port Askaig, which limited our time considerably. However, with six pairs of eyes scanning the undergrowth, shorelines and hedgerows, we saw fields of Barnacle and White Fronted Geese, Eider, Mute Swan, Goldeneye and Oystercatcher to name a few. There was heated discussion on the New

Collins Guide, which had given some sub species their own status. The Hooded Crow however had not gained such status and therefore prevented Richard from increasing his yearly total by one.

At Port Askaig, we had a short wait until the small ferry (3-4 cars max) took us the few hundred metres across the channel to Jura. As Jura grew ever closer, the ‘Paps’ or small peaks towered above the horizon, their sides covered in grey scree and looking incredibly steep, so it was a relief to know we wouldn’t be climbing them. Port Felon was in many respects, more like a small lay-by with a notice board. Having previously asked the ferryman about return timings, he told us to check the notice board, which we now know was last updated in the early nineties. A runner, who had joined us on the ferry, disappeared over the berm and headed cross-country for the Paps. Not surprisingly, he was on his own. Jura is very much like many training areas, the animals roam freely, the undulating hills are vast and open, the bogs and ‘babies head’ tussocks are ready to catch you out and the woods are dark and dense.



The Team Outside of the Jura Hotel  
Andrew Bray, Roger Dickey, Chris Dickey, Richard Seargent

We set off along the single road, which travels along the eastern side of the island. As we climbed we came across a minibus sat at the side of the road. People with telescopes and binoculars were by the waters’ edge looking at something interesting. After pulling over to join them, hoping there was something rare and unusual, we were directed onto a family of sea otters playing in the kelp beds. After a few minutes watching the otters and Grey Heron, we compared notes with the birders and then headed on. Without any other roads, we were taken straight to Craighouse and the Jura distillery. To our delight the distillery was next door but to our horror it was closed to visitors. Without the distraction of whisky, we headed into the Jura Hotel to find our rooms would not be ready for another few hours. While some of us changed into our surveying gear, Roger and Andrew interrogated a Ghillie who had dropped into the hotel. To our relief, there would be no culling of the red deer in our tetrads, at a guess. With this reassuring news, we set off on our first survey of the island.

The teams were chosen on age and stamina, for reasons which will become apparent on the following days' survey. Andrew and Roger dropped off Richard and I in what should have been a dense wood. However, albeit a recent map, much of the wood had been felled and only branches remained. Although this was brilliant Merlin country, it was not easy to cross. However, we climbed alongside a steep re-entrant with fast flowing water and small trees that grew no higher than the cover the re-entrant provided. As we got higher, a Wren flitted about a dry stone wall. The landscape then opened up with large rocky outcrops on the tops of hills. Ravens circled with courting displays but little else. As we carried on, a Kestrel flew through our tetrad and a couple of Hooded Crows passed by. We kept bumping into Red Deer but they were quick to be over the next peak and into dead ground. Heading down hill again and back toward the wood, although we didn't see the Red Grouse, we heard one call in the dead ground to our front. Circling the wood, we hoped to see birds of prey but only managed Blue Tit, Coal Tit and Chaffinch. Somewhat disheartened but having had a more varied tetrad than the other team, we walked back to the hotel in the hope for some waders and maybe a Sea Eagle?!



Red Deer Stag

Back at the hotel, which overlooked the shoreline, we watched Mallards, Heron, Stonechat and a Mute Swan. To our dismay, we had missed a Sea Eagle by a few minutes according to the birders we had met in the morning. Andrew and Roger came in having had a similar experience to our own.

Back at the hotel and after a hot shower, we visited the local shop, which horrified Richard as there were no crisps. In fact, there wasn't much of anything but we found some Red Stripe beer, all the way from Jamaica. After a few beers at the hotel, we checked our notes from the day before heading off to the Burns Night at the village hall. The evening was the social event of the year and was packed with locals and four 'foreigners' or 'fresh meat' as the women's look seemed to suggest. After hoping to fit in and accidentally breaking the main door when going to the toilet (it was a sliding door, not a hinged one), we tucked into our haggis, neaps and tatties, which were fantastic. When offered more, we all headed straight to the kitchen, which surprised everyone. Being the only people having seconds and being glared at, it was difficult not to feel that we were polishing off food saved for the week. With full stomachs and the lights dimmed, Tam o' Shanter was recited in full by the piper. To say it was difficult to stay awake would be an understatement and Andrew did a very good

nodding dog impression. The evening then descended into a concert of singing, which had Andrew, Roger and myself running for the door. Richard didn't make it unfortunately but we felt that someone should stay behind and check our raffle tickets.



The Jura Hotel Bar - Burns Night

The following morning, with a cooked breakfast inside of us, we headed north. As luck would have it, a passing point was found at our drop off point, which could be used as a temporary car park. Richard and I set off west through a wood towards the mountains while Andrew and Roger had a gentle stroll along the road to their tetrads. A heavy frost had hardened the ground making the cross country yomp easier to manage and a clear sky gave brilliant visibility. Out of the woods and on the right route, we hit what seemed like a wall. The ground ascended in front of us, which didn't impress Richard in the slightest. Map reading our way uphill through the tundra and valleys, we followed a path on the map. Unfortunately, the scenery got in the way of map reading and we ended up taking the pretty route instead of the direct route. Tarns with reedbeds were crying for wildfowl but were mostly empty. Mallards and Raven were all that we saw on the way to the tetrad. Once we got over the spine of Jura and dropped down to the coastline, the landscape opened up again and we were treated to large herds of Red Deer. With flatter ground, I thought it would be a good idea to run in order to gain time and ground. Sitting down on a high feature panting, Richard took to rigorously ditching weight by offering mugs of hot coffee and wedges of fruit cake in case I made the suggestion of running on the way back. The shoreline hosted Shags, Black Backed Gulls and Great Northern Diver. Raven and Hooded Crow were seen moving around and also island hopping from Scarba.

The route back was up the direct valley, which took in waterfalls and a Goldeneye in one of the tarns. I prayed the whole way back for a glimpse of a Golden Eagle but it was not to be. As we dropped off the spine of Jura again, we spotted a solitary Meadow Pipit and were able to watch Andrew and Roger in the distance attacking the 'baby heads'. Back at the car and with a cheese and spam roll down our necks, we awaited news from the other team. With tide lines up to their knees, they came squelching down the road to report their narrow escapes with bottomless bogs. As they were surveying predominantly grassland and the odd sparse wood, their tally was as limited as our own.

It was a quick drive back along the road to the ferry and then south to Port Ellen, where we were booked into a B+B by the port. After an evening meal in a pub, we relaxed by the fire with a 'wee dram' of Islay whisky. The following morning we watched Eider and Seals in



the harbour as we waited for the ferry back to the mainland. While on the ferry, we braved the freezing deck to watch more Great Northern Divers, Black Guillemots and Shags.



On the deck of the Kennacraig Ferry

In summary of the winter survey, we came to a couple of conclusions. If you're after diversity, Jura in January will not provide. However, bird distribution and diversity are exactly what we were there to prove/disprove. The terrain is not for the faint hearted as it can be challenging in places. The tetrad that Richard and I surveyed on the west coast of Jura had originally been deemed a two day expedition due to distance to be covered, the terrain, daylight in mid winter and mandatory time spent on the tetrad. Finally, there is one distillery on Jura and only seven on Islay. Good weather over two days on the hill surveying is sometimes a mixed blessing.



Galapagos Mockingbird

## Zimbabwe, Botswana & South Africa

11 – 20 Oct 2010

(Mark Easterbrook)



Lilac-breasted Roller - The National Bird of Botswana

### Introduction

My wife and I had been invited to join our friends to celebrate his 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday on a mini tour of Africa, taking in Zimbabwe to see Victoria Falls, a quick trip to the border with Zambia in order for my friend to undertake a bungee jump (crazy), onto Botswana for safaris and finally finishing off with 4 days in Cape Town. We agreed and so off we set on 11th Oct from Heathrow with South Africa airlines to Johannesburg where we changed for a flight to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.

We arrived at Victoria Falls at about 1330 on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct. I usually say that all went without incident; however, on this occasion my wife's bag had been lost at Johannesburg and didn't turn up for 3 days. This turned into a bit of a logistical disaster in Zimbabwe, where as you can imagine shopping for women's clothing proved problematic. In an event it did show up before we departed for Botswana, with little harm done, the holiday continued and proved to be well worth the money we'd spent.

### Day 2 – 12 Oct - Zimbabwe

Arriving at Victoria Falls we were a bit shocked at the price of a visa which cost 55 USD each. We purchased a single entry, which was a mistake, as we left Zimbabwe for Botswana and had to re-enter for our return flight. However, with most things in Africa, if you throw some money at it the problems are quickly resolved and it didn't cause us any difficulties during our return trip. After giving up my wife's bag for lost and filling out the necessary paperwork we proceeded to the hotel (The Kingdom Hotel and Victoria Falls). Several birds were seen flying overhead as we drove to the hotel, including Sacred Ibis, African Openbill and a lone Hamerkop. We arrived at the hotel, checked in and quickly made our way to the border with Zambia so as my friend could undertake one of his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday presents – a bungee jump from the bridge forming the border with Zambia and crossing Victoria Falls. Whilst watching him from the Zambia side of the bridge, I saw my first lifer which was a Trumpeter Hornbill closely followed by the second – several Red-winged Starlings. I also

saw the only Short-toed Eagle of the trip and a Dark-capped Bulbul. We returned to the hotel for a few well earned beers and a few more good birds including White-fronted Beeaters, a pair of Pied Kingfishers, a couple of Golden Weavers, a solitary Black-collared Barbet and a surprise Schalow's Turaco.

### Day 3 - 13 Oct

I rose early and began to walk around the grounds of the hotel and the area which led to the Victoria Falls National Park (NP). The area was very productive with birds being very active as is usual for Africa before the sun gets up and they seek the shade. The first bird of note was a White-browed Scrub Robin. As I walked around the area several Black-backed Puffbacks were obvious and a single Rattling Cisticola. A rustling in the leaf litter alerted me to the presence of what turned out to be several Terrestrial Brownbuls along with a pair of Yellow-bellied Greenbuls. Perhaps more surprising were a pair of Natal Spurfowl that ran off and wouldn't pose for the camera. Once the yellow area on the bill was seen, identification became straight-forward.

As my friend had decided to embark on his second act of recklessness (white water rafting down the Zambezi – surely a mid-life crisis?), I walked to the falls with the ladies, birdwatching as I went. The entrance fee to the falls was £20 or 30 USD per person. It was worth the money as the falls are spectacular although very different to Niagara with the natural beauty being preserved as opposed to a tourist fiasco. At least 5 more Schalow's Turacos were noted here despite the entrance board suggesting that they were Livingstone's. A few Rock Martins and Wire-tailed Swallows were seen around the falls, with another Black-collared Barbet and a single White-browed Scrub Robin that showed well. We returned to the hotel via the now very irritating and persistent street vendors. An element of Africa that you become accustomed to, however, nonetheless still annoying. Whilst they are persistent, as long as you meet them with solid resolve and a liberal amount of abruptness, they tend to leave you alone eventually. Later at the swimming pool, I managed to photograph some very close White-fronted Beeaters and saw a pair of White-winged Black Tits. A Hooded Vulture drifted overhead, accompanied by the ubiquitous Yellow-billed Kites and Red-winged Starlings were very vocal around the pool.

I once again decided to brave the vendors and go for a walk. On this occasion, I wanted to get beyond the Falls NP and proceed to an area above the falls that had looked interesting in the morning. I eventually found a road that skirted the park where I noted a Little Beeater and I ended up in vegetation looking out over a fast flowing area of the Upper Zambezi just before the falls. A little patience was rewarded; a Malachite Kingfisher was seen flying upriver with several Little Egrets and Long-tailed Cormorants. About 100 metres in front of me I noticed a small movement on the rocks in the river, as I focussed my bins, it became clear that the 2 beautiful birds in front of me were what I had hoped to find – a pair of pristine Rock Pratincoles. Very pleased with the walk I returned to the hotel for a beer. As I skirted the hotel, what looked like a Woodpecker landed in a tree to my left. I searched for it and found what I initially thought was a Woodland Kingfisher. Carefully noting its features, with rufous flanks and a plain head it was obvious that I was looking at a Brown-hooded Kingfisher which I was extremely pleased with.

### Species List for Zimbabwe and Zambia

Long-tailed Cormorant

Terrestrial Brownbul

Little Egret	White-browed Scrub Robin
Cattle Egret	White-browed Robin Chat
Hamercop	Rattling Cisticola
African Openbill	Yellow-breasted Apalis
Sacred Ibis	Grey-backed Camaroptera
Egyptian Goose	Icterine Warbler
Yellow-billed Kite	Long-billed Crombec
Hooded Vulture	Willow Warbler
Short-toed Eagle	Ashy Flycatcher
Natal Francolin	African Paradise Flycatcher
Helmeted Guineafowl	Black-backed Puffback
Rock Pratincole	Brown-crowned Tchagra
Laughing Dove	Tropical Boubou
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Sulphur-breasted Shrike
Schalow's Turaco	Fork-tailed Drongo
Grey Go-away-bird	Pied Crow
African Palm Swift	Red-winged Starling
Brown-hooded Kingfisher	Amethyst Starling
Pied Kingfisher	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
White-fronted Beeater	Holub's Golden Weaver
Little Beeater	Red-billed Quelea
Trumpeter Hornbill	Green-winged Pytillia
Black-collared Barbet	Red-billed Firefinch
Rock Martin	Jameson's Firefinch
Wire-tailed Swallow	Blue-breasted Cordonbleu
Lesser-striped Swallow	Common Waxbill
Dark-capped Bulbul	Bronze Mannikin
Yellow-bellied Greenbul	

#### Day 4 – 14 Oct - Botswana

We were due to depart for the 100Km or so drive to Botswana after breakfast which left me enough time to walk around the hotel area once more. The presumed same pair of Natal Spurfowl scuttled around whilst I quickly saw an Ashy Flycatcher and an African Paradise Flycatcher. A pair of lovely Sulphur-breasted Bush shrikes were very vocal, as was a Tropical Boubou. Several Southern Cordon Bleus fed amongst the Jameson's and Red-billed Firefinches and a pair of Green-winged Pytillias fed actively. A Long-billed Crombec was very obvious and vocal as were the five or so Grey Go-away Birds that lived up to their names.

We departed the hotel at about 1015 via the airport to retrieve my wife's case which was a real relief as life was becoming difficult to say the least. We headed to the border, a journey that was fairly uneventful although we did encounter our first family group of African Elephants before exiting Zimbabwe. As we dealt with the Botswana immigration which was painless and easy, I noted a pair of White-browed Sparrow Weavers in a tree opposite the offices.

As we proceeded to Chobe (Kasane), suddenly Lilac-breasted Rollers became numerous on the telegraph wires. We arrived at the Chobe Marina Lodge, received a warm welcome and checked into our rooms prior to our first safari at 1530. The usual commoner birds were



present in the hotel grounds and overlooking the River Chobe, my first Darter and Grey-headed Gulls were seen. We departed on our first Safari and we were fortunate that there were only 6 of us in a 10 man 4x4 vehicle. I was also fortunate that our driver, Simon was very interested in birds, which made stopping for them easy and he was constantly on the lookout for anything interesting. Simon also knew many of the bird calls which proved very useful as we traversed the park.

As we entered the park the first Southern Red-billed Hornbill was seen, a bird that was very numerous in the park. We saw our first elephants and Water Buffalo and below a bush nearby was a very still Spotted Thick Knee which posed nicely for the camera. We stopped for a number of Francolins that were identified as Crested and Red-billed. In a dead tree above them was an outrageously coloured and looking Crested Barbet. It was fantastic to see so many Southern Carmine Beeaters with Blacksmith Plovers running around beneath them. We approached the Chobe River and I quickly spotted several large Tern like birds which were obviously African Skimmers that performed as they should do and skimmed the water with their grotesque bills. A single Three-banded Plover was a lifer and as I had missed the bird earlier in the year in Uganda, I was extremely pleased to catch up with it. Closely followed by a White-crowned Plover with another Francolin catching my attention and closer inspection ensured that I had another tick with a Swainson's Francolin. We watched Olive Baboons, Elephants, Giraffes, Banded and Slender Mongoose and a Kori Bustard sauntered by which was photographed and was a great site. We stopped for refreshments and I noted Tinkling Cisticolas and a fantastic pair of White-bellied Sunbirds. A number of commoner birds were seen along the river with a pair of Arrow-marked Babbblers being the highlight.



Kori Bustard



Southern Carmine Bee-eater

#### Day 5 – 15 Oct

The early morning safari took place and we had booked a private vehicle at minimal extra cost with Simon as our driver so as we could stop where we wanted. A good tip the previous night ensured that we received the premium service from Simon - who was proving to be an excellent guide and driver. We entered the park and Simon quickly alerted me to a calling Swamp Boubou, which obliged and I saw it sat up on a bush. An Amethyst Starling caught in the early morning light looked resplendent and a Hippo on the land was rare enough but I was delighted that it was accompanied by a back full of Red and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers.

Many common birds were seen this morning, however in quick succession 2 Southern Yellow-billed and a Bradfield's Hornbill flew close to the vehicle. 2 more Kori Bustards walked by and by the river the first African Jacanas and a flock of about 40 Wattled Starlings accompanied a herd of Water Buffalo. We returned to the hotel and I spent a few hours in the grounds watching a flowering tree which was attracting many Sunbirds. I was rewarded with 2 Amethyst Sunbirds whilst White-bellied Sunbirds appeared to be the most numerous. An African Harrier Hawk drifted by whilst Southern Masked Weavers joined the other feeding birds in the flowering tree. This evening we took the Chobe River safari on a large boat that the lodge owned. Before departing the hotel a Giant Kingfisher perched up in front of us and gave great views. This was excellent with a good number of waterbirds and Herons being seen. The highlight was a Slaty Egret amongst the Openbills and Storks. 2 Saddle-billed Storks and numerous Marabous were amongst the more numerous Yellow-billed and the extravaganza was completed with a Goliath and Black Egret. The only Black-crowned Night Heron was also seen from the boat trip. Collared Pratincoles were numerous and a pair of Water Thick Knees with a chick rounded the day off nicely.

### Day 6 – 16 Oct

The morning game drive brought the excitement of a group of 4 female Lions and although the same birds were seen, new species were becoming difficult to find. In fact the only new species of the safari were a group of 4 Kittlitt's Plover which were a welcomed find and a Chinspot Batis with a pair of African Hawk Eagles and a Tawny Eagle being notable. We departed on the evening safari which proved to be the most memorable experience of the holiday – truly fantastic. As we drove around the area we asked Simon to attempt to find Zebras, which are difficult in the park as they are migratory and quite shy. As we searched by the River, I saw a Falcon shape which looked very odd. As it flew closer and passed us, its pale grey head and rump with yellowish face made the identification of a fantastic male Dickenson's Kestrel easy – what a great bird and start to a memorable safari drive. We eventually caught up with 4 Zebras that were fairly secretive and were then treated to a herd of about 700 Water Buffalo migrating right passed the vehicle. As we watched them, I saw a small flock of birds feeding under a bush. As I worked my way through the Jameson's Firefinches and Southern Cordon Bleus, I spotted a single larger Common (Violet-eared



Waxbill) Grenadier. As we were exiting the park, I stopped the vehicle to photograph a group of Double-banded Sandgrouse that fed by the track and were undisturbed by our vehicle. Suddenly, there was an exchange between our driver and another and we were quickly moving with great purpose. We asked Simon "What was happening"? He replied "Leopard". We reached an area where several vehicles had gathered and there under a tree looking unperturbed

and nonchalant was a Leopard, not 20 yards away - A truly unbelievable and surreal encounter with a majestic creature. As we left the park 2 Yellow-throated Sandgrouse flew passed the vehicle - the end of a perfect day!

## Day 7 – 17 Oct

I walked around the village of Kasane, photographing some Arrow-marked Babbler and noting a final lifer in the form of 4 Red-faced Mousebirds which I thought were going to be easier.

Sadly, it was time to leave Botswana – A fantastic, well governed country where the people are polite, helpful and very enthusiastic about their country. Unfortunately, we were unable to undertake this morning's safari due to our departure time. Due to this we did miss 2 male lions feeding on a young elephant. Which goes to prove animals don't perform to requests and you can't win them all. However, it does mean that we will have to return – which is no bad thing.

We crossed the borders with few difficulties despite our Zimbabwe visa fiasco but the exchange of some dollars solved the problem relatively easily. I again noted a number of White-browed Sparrow Weavers, whilst some White-rumped and Little Swifts were overhead. We proceeded to Lake Victoria airport and caught our delayed flight to Johannesburg. Due to its lateness, we missed our connection to Cape Town, so had to catch a later departure without too many problems however our transfer at the airport in Cape Town had departed, which we then had to pay for again. Top Tip: If using connecting flights in Africa, ensure that you have at least 2 – 2 and a half hours separation between flights as not many flights appear to depart on time. Eventually, we arrived at the City Lodge V&A Waterfront Hotel in Cape Town. We checked in quickly to this well situated, clean and efficient hotel.

## Species List for Botswana

Long-tailed Cormorant	Helmeted Guineafowl
White-breasted Cormorant	Black Crake
African Darter	Kori Bustard
Slaty Egret	African Jacana
Black Heron	Black-winged Stilt
Little Egret	Water Thick-knee
Grey Heron	Spotted Thick-knee
Goliath Heron	Collared Pratincole
Purple Heron	Ringed Plover
Great White Egret	Kittlitz's Plover
Cattle Egret	Three-banded Plover
Squacco Heron	Long-toed Lapwing
Black-crowned Night Heron	Blacksmith Lapwing
Hamerkop	White-headed Lapwing
Yellow-billed Stork	Marsh Sandpiper
African Openbill	Common Greenshank
Saddle-billed Stork	Wood Sandpiper
Marabou Stork	Common Sandpiper
Glossy Ibis	Little Stint
Sacred Ibis	Ruff
African Spoonbill	Grey-headed Gull
White-faced Whistling Duck	African Skimmer

Egyptian Goose  
 Spur-winged Goose  
 Yellow-billed Kite  
 African Fish-eagle  
 African White-backed Vulture  
 Bateleur  
 African Harrier Hawk  
 Gabar Goshawk  
 Tawny Eagle  
 African Hawk-eagle  
 Dickinson's Kestrel  
 Crested Francolin  
 Red-billed Francolin  
 Swainson's Francolin  
 White-fronted Beeater  
 Southern Carmine Beeater  
 Lilac-breasted Roller  
 Green Woodhoopoe  
 Southern Red-billed Hornbill  
 Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill  
 Bradfield's Hornbill  
 Trumpeter Hornbill  
 Black-collared Barbet  
 Crested Barbet  
 Wire-tailed Swallow  
 Dark-capped Bulbul  
 Yellow-bellied Greenbul  
 Terrestrial Brownbul  
 White-browed Scrub Robin  
 White-browed Robin Chat  
 Grey Cisticola  
 Grey backed Camaroptera  
 African Paradise Flycatcher  
 Arrow-marked Babbler  
 Amethyst Sunbird

Yellow-throated Sandgrouse  
 Double-banded Sandgrouse  
 Laughing Dove  
 Ring-necked Dove  
 Red-eyed Dove  
 Emerald-spotted Wood Dove  
 Grey Go-away-bird  
 Senegal Coucal  
 African Palm Swift  
 Little Swift  
 Red-faced Mousebird  
 Malachite Kingfisher  
 Giant Kingfisher  
 Pied Kingfisher  
 White-breasted Sunbird  
 African Yellow White-eye  
 Black-backed Puffback  
 Brown-crowned Tchagra  
 Swamp Boubou  
 Suphur-breasted Bushshrike  
 Chinspot Batis  
 Fork-tailed Drongo  
 Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling  
 Amethyst Starling  
 Wattle Starling  
 Yellow-billed Oxpecker  
 Red-billed Oxpecker  
 White-browed Sparrow Weaver  
 Holub's Golden Weaver  
 Southern Masked Weaver  
 Green-winged Pyillia  
 Jameson's Firefinch  
 Southern Cordonbleu  
 Common Grenadier

### Day 8 – 18 Oct – South Africa

Before departing the UK, we had booked a Cape Peninsula tour online. It could have probably been cheaper to do it in country but we simply didn't have the time and needed to maximise our time in Cape Town and be able to leave immediately this morning. I used Springbok Atlas Tours ([Shuaib.Mohldeen@springbokatlas.com](mailto:Shuaib.Mohldeen@springbokatlas.com)) and our guide, Chris was excellent company being very knowledgeable, friendly and well organised. Outside the hotel in the morning were several White-throated Swallows and numerous Hartlaub's Gulls which are everywhere. Some more Red-winged Starlings and their European counterparts put in an appearance before we departed.

We headed for Hout Bay and a boat to see the Cape Fur Seals. Stopping on route to see several very close Southern Right Whales and Dusky Sided Dolphins also resulted in my first sighting of a Jackal Buzzard being harassed by a Pied Crow and 2 Cape Canaries. The boat



trip from the Harbour rewarded me with views of Cape Gull, Hartlaub's Gull, Cape Cormorant and several Common Terns. As we neared the Seal Colony the smell revealed their presence before we could see them, a few more Cape Gulls were noted and at least 2 Bank Cormorants flew by joined by a single Sandwich Tern and many Swift Terns. As we drove along the coast I noted a close African Oystercatcher that proved to be the only one of the trip. We entered the Cape of Good Hope NP and were greeted by 2 Ostrich and a cracking Malachite Sunbird. As we posed for photographs at the Cape, Cape Cormorants, Swift Terns and Cape Gannets were much in evidence. We next visited Cape Point where White-naped Ravens, Cape Bulbuls, Cape Robin Chats, Buntings and Karoo Prinias were all very obvious. Departing for an enjoyable lunch at Simonstown, allowed the opportunity to photograph African Penguins at Boulders Beach, whilst at the restaurant Speckled Pigeons, Cape White-eyes and a Southern Grey-headed Sparrow were noted.

After lunch we proceeded to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. The gardens are fantastic in their own right, however, as a birder, let no possible opportunity pass. The gardens are spectacular with many endemic plants and birds to go with them. A fairly hasty walk through



Spotted Eagle Owl

the gardens gave me an opportunity to catch up with at least 8 Southern Double-collared Sunbirds and many Cape White-eyes, 2 Olive Thrush, 3 Cape Canaries and numerous Hadada Ibis. It was clearly not the best time of day to visit as it was very busy with much disturbance. As we were leaving the gardens, the guide commented that there was a pair of Spotted Eagle Owls breeding in the park. I looked up and there in a tree was indeed a Spotted Eagle-owl, which sat quietly as we photographed it.

#### Day 9 – 19 Oct

Before departing the UK, a guide in Cape Town had been recommended to me. I booked Brian Vandervalt for a full day's birding in the Cape area. His brief was to attempt to find as many Cape endemics as possible with Cape Rockjumper being a must. As I was unable to undertake a pelagic as I wasn't in Cape Town over a weekend, I decided to concentrate on the land based endemics prior to any future visits. It is worth saying at this stage that Brian has a great sense of humour, is very good company and I would unreservedly recommend him to anyone travelling the Cape area or wider in Africa where he has a wealth of experience. He can be contacted via his email at [info@brians-birding.co.za](mailto:info@brians-birding.co.za) or [www.brians-birding.co.za](http://www.brians-birding.co.za).

We visited the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens once more and it goes to show that if you visit early in the morning with no disturbance the birds perform much more obligingly. Brian knew where a pair Lemon Doves were nest building and sure enough the 2 birds were found close by roosting under trees. Another pair of Spotted Eagle Owls was seen with a chick close by and some good Cape endemics were seen including Cape Sugarbirds, Forest Canary, Orange-breasted Sunbirds, Sombre Greenbuls, Cape Francolins and with a supporting cast of African Goshawk, Southern Boubou and Olive Pigeons the day had started well. We continued to the Royeils area in search of Cape Rockjumper. However, before reaching the

well known area a number of good birds were seen on the various telegraph wires and buildings including Familiar Chat, Cape Rock Thrush, Rock Kestrel, a couple of stunning Grassbirds and Yellow Bishops. We continued along the track seeing Cape Buntings, Cape Robin Chats and then our quarry a female Cape Rockjumper followed by a confiding male and what were thought to be 2 immature birds. As I photographed the birds, 2 Cape Siskins flew in next to me and Grey-backed Cisticolas were present. As we left the valley, A Verreaux's Eagle soared above and a Jackal Buzzard loafed.



Cape Rockjumper



Cape Bunting

We progressed to Harold Porter Water NP for lunch and to look for some more endemics. After an enjoyable lunch that was interrupted by passing White-throated, and Greater Striped Swallows along with Alpine and African Black Swifts we proceeded to search the rest of the park. Brian was alerted by the song of a warbler. He explained that we were looking for a Victorin's Warbler, an arch skulker and more often heard than seen. With patience and following the moving vegetation the gorgeous warbler was seen extremely well with long black tail, orange wash to the front and indeed the orange eye-ring – what a cracker. As we moved around the park we also had excellent views of a male and female Cape Batis and 2 Dusky Flycatchers.

Brian then drove to an area near Bot River and farmlands that were crossed by "Transporter" roads. In the fields adjacent to the roads many Blue Cranes were seen and soon at least 3 Fiscal Flycatchers, with Common Fiscals becoming common place. As we proceeded along the road we stopped to look at numerous birds including a stunning male Cape Sparrow, several Cape Weavers and Capped Wheatears. The only Crowned Plovers of the trip were noted along with 2 Orange-throated Longclaws. Red-capped Larks were common and a solitary Pied Starling was noted amongst the commoner European Starlings. Other notable birds were an African Hoopoe, Alpine and Black Swifts and a large colony of Southern Red Bishops.

Our final stop of the day before returning to Cape Town was the Cape Town Water Treatment Works. Everywhere in the world these sorts of locations never cease to turn up good birds. The only Black-headed Heron was seen along with numerous Sacred Ibis; however the attraction was the wildfowl. Cape and Red-billed Teal were present in good numbers along with Southern Pochard, and Cape Shoveller. Hundreds of Black-necked Grebe and Greater Flamingo were present and a single White Pelican. Levaillant's Cisticolas were very vocal and 2 Purple Swamphen were seen with many Red-knobbed Coots. As we were departing a real bonus came in the form of a drake Maccoa Duck. Outside the works 2 House Crows were seen, which, soon to be eradicated may not be on the South African list

for too much longer. We returned to the hotel after a very enjoyable and productive day thanks to Brian's local knowledge – Many Thanks.

### Day 10 – 20 Oct

An early morning walk around the Cape Town Waterfront allowed me to photograph Cape Fur Seals, Hartlaub's and Cape Gulls and to catch up with the Cormorant I had previously missed – Crowned Cormorant with at least 3 being seen amongst the Cape Cormorants. Another male Cape Sparrow and several Cape Wagtails were also present. Later in the morning, a trip to Table Top Mountain bought photographic opportunities for Familiar Chat with another Grassbird, several Karoo Prinias, 2 more Cape Siskins and Canaries were seen. All too soon it was time to depart for the airport and reflect upon what a great time we had experienced whilst taking a lengthy long-haul back to Heathrow.

### Species List for South Africa

Southern Ostrich	Verreaux's Eagle
Little Grebe	Rock Kestrel
Great Crested Grebe	Peregrine Falcon
Black-necked Grebe	Cape Francolin
African Penguin	Helmeted Guineafowl
Cape Gannet	African Swamphen
Long-tailed Cormorant	Common Moorhen
Crowned Cormorant	Red-knobbed Coot
Bank Cormorant	Blue Crane
White-breasted Cormorant	African Oystercatcher
Cape Cormorant	Black-winged Stilt
White Pelican	Pied Avocet
Grey Heron	Three-banded Plover
Black-headed Heron	Blacksmith Plover
Purple Heron	Crowned Lapwing
Intermediate Egret	Ruddy Turnstone
Cattle Egret	Curlew Sandpiper
Hamerkop	Cape Gull
Glossy Ibis	Grey-headed Gull
Hadada Ibis	Hartlaub's Gull
Sacred Ibis	Swift Tern
Greater Flamingo	Sandwich Tern
Maccoa Duck	Common Tern
Egyptian Goose	Speckled Pigeon
Spur-winged Goose	African Olive-pigeon
Cape Teal	Lemon Dove
Yellow-billed Duck	Laughing Dove
Red-billed Teal	Ring-necked Dove
Cape Shoveller	Red-eyed Dove
Southern Pochard	Namaqua Dove
Black-shouldered Kite	Spotted Eagle-owl

Yellow-billed Kite	Alpine Swift
African Marsh Harrier	African Black Swift
Jackal Buzzard	Little Swift
White-rumped Swift	Southern Double-collared Sunbird
African Hoopoe	Malachite Sunbird
Red-capped Lark	Cape Sugarbird
Plain Martin	Cape White-eye
Rock Martin	Southern Boubou
Eurasian Swallow	Cape Batis
White-throated Swallow	Common Fiscal
Greater Striped-swallow	Fork-tailed Drongo
Black Sawwing	House Crow
Orange-throated Longclaw	Cape Crow
African Pipit	Pied Crow
Cape Wagtail	White-necked Raven
Cape Bulbul	Red-winged Starling
Sombre Greenbul	Pied Starling
Cape Robin Chat	Eurasian Starling
African Stonechat	Common Mynah (Joburg)
Capped Wheatear	House Sparrow
Cape Roch-thrush	Cape Sparrow
Olive Thrush	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Victorin's Scrub Warbler	Cape Weaver
Cape Grassbird	Red Bishop
Grey-backed Cisticola	Yellow Bishop
Levaillant's Cisticola	Common Waxbill
Karoo Prinia	Chaffinch
Fiscal Flycatcher	Cape Canary
African Dusky Flycatcher	Forest Canary
African Paradise Flycatcher	Cape Siskin
Cape Rockjumper	Cape Bunting
Orange-breasted Sunbird	

### Summary

Who could possibly forget the encounter with the Leopard! This was an unforgettable holiday that allowed us to cover a number of different habitats in several countries. A return to Botswana or South Africa is very likely; however, I would probably not chose to go to Zimbabwe again unless travelling onwards to Botswana. Some excellent birds were seen and the travel arrangements and guides went relatively smoothly. We had no stomach problems and generally the people we met were friendly and welcoming. I would once again recommend Brian Vandervalt in South Africa for a very professional approach to birding.



Exercise Arabian Partridge Oman  
21- 31 October 2011

(Tim Hallchurch, Miles Stockwell, Andrew Bray)

Thirteen members and guests assembled at Heathrow Terminal 3 on the evening of 21<sup>st</sup> October to fly overnight by Oman Air to Muscat, Oman. We arrived after breakfast and were met by our guide Justin Halls and a selection of drivers. Justin immediately took us birding before even going to the first hotel. The first stop was the Al Nasab Nature Reserve. Here sewage is delivered by a steady stream of yellow tankers to the treatment works and the outflow is clean water that forms the reserve. Here we had excellent views of Black-winged Stilt, a single Black-necked Grebe and a few Little Grebes. A Bonellis Eagle appeared and chased the Stilts. Waders included Little Stint, Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers while Sand Martins, Barn Swallows circled the lake. We were also able to identify Indian Silverbill, Isabelline Shrike and Yellow Wagtail amongst the bushes and a splendid Indian Roller.

The next stop was Qurum Park for a short walk looking at surrounding bushes and wetland.



White-cheeked Bulbul

This site really deserved a longer visit but our found targets were all three species of Bulbuls, all in the same location; White-spectacled Bulbul, White-eared Bulbul and Red-vented Bulbul. In addition we found Graceful Prinia and Purple Swampphen despite the building work going on around. Fourteen very tired and hot birders eventually arrived at the Ramee Guestline Hotel Located near the beach, in Qurum. We met up with Simon Strickland and we all walked to the Crown Plaza Hotel for an al fresco dinner on the balcony and enjoying our first Tiger Beers.

Next morning we visited Qurum tidal creek near “Starbucks Coffee” building. We had good views of Marsh Harrier and identified some of the Terns including a Roseate and Common amongst the flocks of Great and Lesser Crested Terns. We also saw Sooty, Heuglin’s, Caspian and Black-headed Gulls. There were also numerous herons and egrets. Waders included Spoonbill, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Curlew and Red-wattled Lapwing. A Little Bee-eater sat close by on the fence. We then drove in our four 4x4s to Amerat rubbish tip where we were expecting to see lots of vultures. In the event there was a single Egyptian Vulture sitting on a rock on the hillside but we did see our first (of many) Desert Wheatear and a Hume’s Wheatear. The offal dump had been re-located during the fortnight to our arrival and had been covered in



Desert Wheatear

soil and rubble. We headed north back to the coast and pre lunch drinks were had at the Al Sawadi Hotel where we looked for birds in the garden. We were able to find Purple Sunbirds, Rollers, individual leaf warblers and a Cuckoo. We then drove the short distance to the point with a bay off to the south to eat our packed lunch. We were able to look at many water birds on the flats with large flocks of gulls and waders before driving around the bay to the inlet where we picked up Terek Sandpipers. We headed back inland to the Al Nahda Resort in time for a swim and more birding. The hotel was laid out in lovely gardens with chalet accommodation. Not a lot was added though the gardens were alive with birds. Patience was required as the small birds flew out of one green bush straight into the middle of another green bush! The buffet dinner was very expensive and many abandoned the fare and chose something cheaper from the menu.



Indian Roller

The Monday morning took us for a drive inland through the mountains to the desert. Here we saw lots of Egyptian Vultures sitting on the pylons. On our journey to Sur, we stopped for lunch in the delightful, lush Wadi Bani Khaled. This is on the tourist trail and was not that bird rich despite the irrigation and crops. We finally headed back to the coast and the sheltered lagoon at Khawr Jirama for the target bird of the day. We found 6 Crab Plovers plus an assortment of other birds. We finally reached our destination of Turtle Beach resort after the sun set.

The resort was on a lovely beach and the accommodation is made up of 22 Barusti huts with a walk to the showers. The restaurant produced a buffet dinner and had a bar that served beer, wine and even gin & tonic. After supper, 9 of our party visited the turtle viewing centre further down the coast to watch the female turtles laying on the beach and the babies struggling to get down to the water.

The next morning some had a lie in, while others had an early start birding in the surrounding desert. An Osprey was seen eating a fish on a telegraph pole and nightjars seen the night before were identified as Egyptian next morning. Other species included a Desert Warbler, Little Tern and numerous waders that were mainly Lesser Sand Plover. Our first stop of the day on the return



Early Birders

journey from Ras Al Hadd to Seeb was the estuary at Sur on an overlooking hill though nothing not seen was found. We visited the ruins of the ancient capital city of Qalhat

crowned by the interesting mausoleum of Bibi Miriam and later a creek with a deep gorge at Wadi Sha'ab, this was more of a cultural visit but we did get good views of Wheatears and a Steppe Eagle. We then drove to Muscat airport for a 1 hour 40 minute flight to Salalah. At Salalah Airport four brand new Toyota 4x4s were waiting. We were taken direct to the Beach Villas located in Dhariz South, a lush coconut and banana tree lined part of Salalah. Situated directly on a fine white sandy beach, with the sound of the Arabian Sea echoing in our ears, but the ambiance was spoiled by being next to a building site!

On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October we visited four main sites with many waders and other species at Ain Hamran, Wadi Dabat, Tawi Atair and Wadi Hannah. At Ain Hamran we saw Bruce's Green pigeon and Grey-headed Kingfisher. There were also plenty of African Paradise-Flycatchers plus White-breasted White-eyes and buntings. Our next stop was at Wadi Dabat with large herds of camels, cattle and goats. High above the cliffs various eagles glided by whilst amongst the herds were large flocks of White Storks. We also stopped for pictures of spiders! The Tawi Atair attraction is a 200 metre deep sink hole home of breeding Rock Martins and other hirundines. We were very lucky to see at least 6 rare Yemen Serins as well as Black-crowned Finch Larks. We stopped for lunch at a café that had dining tent with open sides that allowed us to observe Fan-tailed Ravens, Lesser Kestrel and a male Desert Wheatear.



Grey-headed Kingfisher

There was plenty of time as we caused a major operation to feed us with rice and meat. The late afternoon visit was to Wadi Hannah with baobab trees and a stream. It was a little disappointing for birds but there was a lovely view across to the coast.



Green Bee-eater

Thursday morning was an early start to Ain Hamran. Star bird was Dideric Cuckoo besides Arabian Partridge. A visit to East Khawr Lagoon turned 7 Tern species and a wide range of waders and added Squacco Heron to an expanding list. Our main stop of the day was at Samharan, mainly to visit of the excavated city and port and with the temperature in the upper 90s it was a little hot. It is believed that frankincense was exported from here three thousand years ago. The water nearby of Khawr Rori produced our first flock of 50+ Greater Flamingos as well as over 50 Grey

Heron, Glossy Ibis and numerous gulls and terns. Before returning to the hotel some of the party

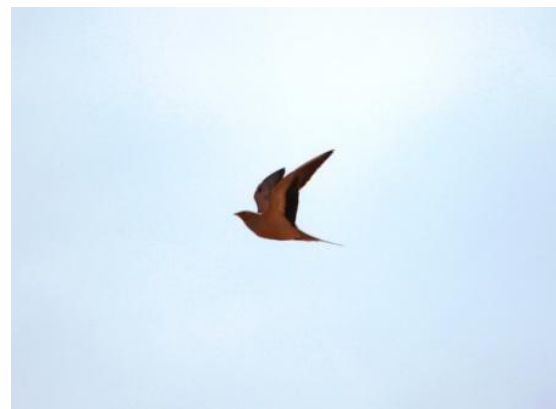
visited the site of the Battle of Mirbat in 1972 whilst others continued birding.

Friday we headed north towards Quitbit via Ain Sahalnoot where several lesser Kestrels gave aerial displays and Thumrait. We diverted off the metalled road through the desert to visit the



ancient remains of Uber, now a world heritage site. Much of the city collapsed into an underground cave system and was only discovered by studying satellite photographs. Beneath the square keep in the old city was a deep cave, originally the water well and now the home of thousands of bats. On the way we passed through a farm at Al Shisr growing mainly melons where we stopped to look at a Marsh Harrier when an eagle eyed member of the party saw six Cream-coloured Coursers in the field. Some Greater Hoopoe-larks were also close by the road. It was then on to Quitbit with some daylight remaining to look for birds in the garden of the QitBit Motel. The motel and filling station are located in a walled garden several hundred metres away from an oasis. It had trees and bushes for the birds though parts had a definite pong! In the garden we found a Eurasian Scops Owl and Egyptian Nightjar plus a lone Pacific Golden Plover and also a lone Mallard cross-bred duck. The trees also supported African Silverbill, Desert Warbler, Desert Wheatear, House Sparrows, Isabelline Shrike and Spotted Flycatchers in abundance. A reminder that this was also a migration route was provided by a lone Blackcap and Whitethroat.

On Saturday morning we headed off to Muntasar Oasis to look for sandgrouse. The area by the water hole had already been staked out by another group of birders who were too close. When the Spotted Sandgrouse did appear they were too nervous to come to the nearby water and landed about 300 metres away. We all moved further away and waited. As the other party started to get ready to leave the grouse started to head towards the water. The other party drove up to close to the water but the grouse were spooked and the main party flew off. So after a long drive from Salalah and a long wait were robbed of good views and only sight of one species. We then drove 3 hours back to Salalah to join those members who chose to stay behind and enjoy the delights of the Crown Plaza Hotel with its gardens, pool, bar and restaurants.



Spotted Sandgrouse



Steppe Eagle

Our last full day was spent with the morning looking at local Rubbish Tip where we were expecting to see lots of Eagles. We arrived in the middle of a windstorm but there were still 20+ Steppe Eagles and a smaller number of Great Spotted Eagles present some flying motionless in the wind above us. Then on to the wetland sights at Khawr Salalah, Mughsayl Beach, Khawr l, Wadi Mughsayl and West Khawr. The beach and lagoons at Mughsayl were

abundantly occupied with ducks, herons, wading birds and even a cuckoo.

We saw our only Namaqua Dove which is very small and was right by our vehicles. Out to sea was a raft of Socotra Cormorants and even further out were Flesh-footed Shearwaters which were identified when a few decided to



take off and fly towards us for a while. In the Wadi we added Red-throated and Long-billed Pipits. Our final stop for the die-hards was West Khawr where we found a Masked Booby and a Yellow Bittern besides more ducks and flamingoes including Ferruginous Duck.

On the Monday morning we were awake at 3am to get to the airport to fly back to Muscat. After an uneventful flight we had time to do the tourist bit in Muscat. We visited the old city, palace and the Souk before stopping at the Grand Mosque for a last bit of birding in the gardens. At the airport we said our farewells and departed for Heathrow.



Namaqua Dove

AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	20					5			6
Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	1								
Flesh-footed Shearwater <i>Puffinus carneipes</i>									100
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>									1
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		1				1			1
Socotra Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>									12
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	5	6	40	20	15	150	2	1	14
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2					1			4
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	3			1	1	1			2
Intermediate Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>									1
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	6	6	1		1	1		1	4
Western Reef-Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>		4							1
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>						4		4	9
Indian Pond-Heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i>						1			1
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	12								1
Striated Heron <i>Butorides striata</i>				1					
Yellow Bittern <i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>									1

AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	1		1		128				
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>						6			6
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		2				30		1	4
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>						56			64
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>						3			
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>		30							1
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>						1	1		6
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>						1			7
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	3								30
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	1					20			8
Marbled Teal <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i> (A)									5
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>									7
Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>									6
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>							1	1	
Pallas's Fish-Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i> (A)									
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	1	3	16	1					1
Eurasian Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>			1						
Lappet-faced Vulture <i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>		1	6						
Short-toed Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>						1			
Western Marsh-Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	2	1	1	1		3	2	2	9
Northern Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i>							1		
Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>					1				
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>						1			
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		6	4	5	2		15		1
Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>					1	1			5
Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	1						1		50
Verreaux's Eagle <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>					1				
Bonelli's Eagle <i>Aquila fasciatus</i>	1				3	2	1		2
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>					2		6		
Eurasian Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					4	2	20		3
Arabian Partridge <i>Alectoris melanocephala</i>					6	30	1		
Grey Francolin <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>		11	3						
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>								2	
Purple Swampphen <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> (A)	1								
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>						4			100
Eurasian Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>									1
Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>			6						
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		6	4		10		12		14
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	150	2			1		20		10
Pied Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	1				1				
Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>							6		

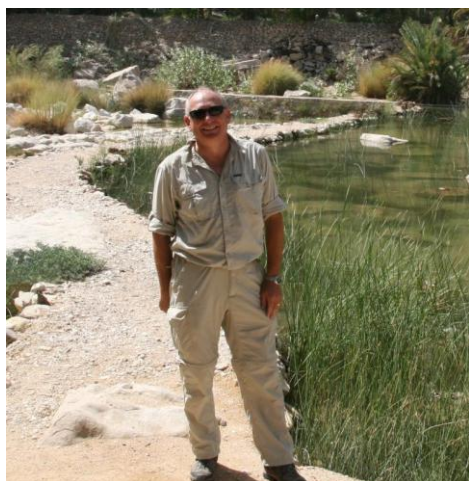
AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Red-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus indicus</i>	20	20	12		6				
Pacific Golden-Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>						1	2	2	3
Black-bellied Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>							2		8
Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>							50	6	20
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>							6		
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>							60		10
Lesser Sandplover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>		50	30	20	1		500	2	250
Greater Sandplover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>		12							
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	10							1	1
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>							10	4	14
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>		2	2	2	10		4		
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		1					1		1
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>		2	4	2	2		4		8
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>		1		9		2			
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	4	2	1		2	6	10		30
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>						1			
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	3	2	4		1		2		30
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	6	2			6		6		
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>		1	8		2				1
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>									8
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>									3
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>							50		10
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	20		6				10		6
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>			2			20			50
Buff-breasted Sandpiper <i>Tryngites subruficollis</i> (A)		1							
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	20					1			
Sooty Gull <i>Larus hemprichii</i>		P	30	P	30	P	P	P	P
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>			1			1		1	
Heuglin's Gull <i>Larus heuglini</i>		10	1		10	60	P	1	500
Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>		30	30	30	30	100	P	20	10
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>		30	30	20	10				1
Slender-billed Gull <i>Larus genei</i>									150
Bridled Tern <i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>						2	2		
Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>				1		2			
Saunders's Tern <i>Sternula saundersi</i>				1					
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>			10			2			7
Caspian Tern <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>				1		1	1		
White-winged Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>						30		7	1
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>									6
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>	1	1							
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>		1				3			

AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
White-cheeked Tern <i>Sterna repressa</i>									20
Great Crested Tern <i>Thalasseus bergii</i>		30		4		30			6
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>		100							
Spotted Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles senegallus</i>								60	
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	20	50	50	7	6		P	P	p
Eurasian Collared-Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	10	6	6	3	3	1	3	20	p
African Collared-Dove <i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i> (A)								2	
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	10	100	100	100	100	100	100	P	P
Namaqua Dove <i>Oena capensis</i>									2
Bruce's Green Pigeon <i>Treron waalia</i>					2	12			
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i> (I)	1	4	1					50	100
Oriental Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>		1							1
Dideric Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>						2			
Asian Koel <i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>						1			
Eurasian Scops Owl <i>Otus scops</i>							1		
Spotted Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>		2			1				
Eurasian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	1			1			1	1	
Egyptian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>				1			1		
Alpine Swift <i>Tachymarptis melba</i>						2			
Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>						20	10		1
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>					1				
Grey-headed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>					3	1	1		2
Green Bee-eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>	2	6	1				1		2
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops persicus</i>		4	1						
European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>							4	4	
European Roller <i>Coracias garrulus</i>		1				20	3		
Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	1	10	30		5	1	1	6	6
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>					2	2	4	2	
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark <i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>							20	1	
Desert Lark <i>Ammomanes deserti</i>				1			2		
Greater Hoopoe-Lark <i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>							4	3	
Greater Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>				4					
Lesser Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella rufescens</i>					2				
Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>	1	5				1	1	4	11
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	50							1	
Pale Sand Martin <i>Riparia diluta</i> (A)					6	2			
Eurasian Crag-Martin <i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	50		1						
Rock Martin <i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		5				30	5	6	2
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	50	20	1	1	3	5	4	34	20
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus richardi</i>									2
Long-billed Pipit <i>Anthus similis</i>									7



AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Blyth's Pipit <i>Anthus godlewskii</i> (A)					1				
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>							1		3
Red-throated Pipit <i>Anthus cervinus</i>									7
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	2	2	1	1	1	2	6	6	6
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	5							4	1
Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>					2	2	1		3
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>					1				
White-spectacled Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>	1	10	10	6	20	30	15	4	8
White-eared Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	2	*1	1						
Red-vented Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> (I)	2	2	1	2					
Streaked Scrub-Warbler <i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>		1							
Graceful Prinia <i>Prinia gracilis</i>	1	1	2	2		1			1
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>									1
Clamorous Reed-Warbler <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	h								h
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>						1			
Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		1	1		1	1			
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		1						1	
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>							1		
Greater Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>							1	1	
Desert Whitethroat <i>Sylvia minula</i>				1	2	1		4	
Arabian Warbler <i>Sylvia leucomelaena</i>							1		
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>		1	1		3	6	8	6	
Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin <i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>					1	1	1		
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			1				3		
Hume's Wheatear <i>Oenanthe alboniger</i>		2		1					
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2		1						
Mourning Wheatear <i>Oenanthe lugens</i> (A)									2
Arabian Wheatear <i>Oenanthe lugentoides</i>				6					8
Black-eared Wheatear <i>Oenanthe hispanica</i> (A)			1	1					
Red-tailed Wheatear <i>Oenanthe xanthopyrna</i>		6							
Desert Wheatear <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>		6	1	2		1	25	10	10
Isabelline Wheatear <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>					1				1
Blackstart <i>Cercomela melanura</i>					12	25	2	1	
African Paradise-Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>					7	7			
Palestine Sunbird <i>Cinnyris oseus</i>							4		
Shining Sunbird <i>Cinnyris habessinicus</i>					2	2		2	2
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	3	20	30						
White-breasted White-eye <i>Zosterops abyssinicus</i>					30	60			
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>						1			
Isabelline Shrike <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	2	1			1	1	2	3	6
Turkestan Shrike <i>Lanius phoenicuroides</i>								3	2

AOS Checklist of Bird of Oman - Oct	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Southern Grey Shrike <i>Lanius meridionalis</i>							2		
Lesser Grey Shrike <i>Lanius minor</i>		1							
Black-crowned Tchagra <i>Tchagra senegala</i>					2	2			
House Crow <i>Corvus splendens</i>	P	30	2		2		2		30
Brown-necked Raven <i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	1		1	2			8	30	
Fan-tailed Raven <i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>					20		6	30	
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> (I)	50	P	P		6	P	6	50	50
European Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	30			6					
Tristram's Starling <i>Onychognathus tristramii</i>				50	10		6	1	40
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	P	P	15	12	12		3	1	30
Rueppell's Weaver <i>Ploceus galbula</i>					20	20	2	4	
African Silverbill <i>Euodice cantans</i>					50	30	6	8	
Indian Silverbill <i>Euodice malabarica</i>	2								
Yemen Serin <i>Serinus menachensis</i>					6				
House Bunting <i>Emberiza striolata</i>			1		8	2	20	2	
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting <i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>					50	40	4		
Black-headed Bunting <i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>							2		
A) Accidental - A species that rarely or accidentally occurs in Oman. (I) Introduced - A species introduced to Oman as a consequence, direct or indirect, of human actions. * - Hybrid P - A large amount; h - heard									



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The Editor in Oman