



ARMY ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN 2006

FOREWARD

This year there have been several AOS trips which I have pushed myself and others into writing about. In recent past our expeditions have followed a similar pattern. Next year there are changes afoot. I trust that reading the articles and seeing the bird list may encourage some of you to come along. Every trip does include a long list. The joy I find from the trips (besides excellent company) is that I am constantly learning and now can pick out birds relatively straight forward including some songs and calls. This summer the British Ornithological Union updated its British List in name and precedence. I have used this list for trips to UK and Europe. I am sure that it's a pretext for publishers to sell us a new guide!

Besides the AOS organised trips there are some articles from a few correspondents around the world. There are three from Ascension. The AOS continue to be heavily involved with Ascension which is now organised as a duty exercise rather than adventurous training. Our efforts are widely acknowledged and we are now an honorary member of the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum.

Though the Bulletin is our own in-house magazine there are organisations outside who find it very interesting in the trips we organise and our member's holidays and trips. The Natural History Museum now receives a copy. This is on top of the more scientific articles that are published in the Osprey. I believe that the interest lies in the data that the articles provide of what, where and when. I would therefore encourage you to provide an article that is of ornithological interest. It is not too onerous and you can always fall back on the editor to help you out.



Finally I would like to thank all the photographers; Tim Cowley, Roger Dickey, Tim Hallchurch, Anne Nason, David Richards, John Stentiford, Rodney Walker, Ken Wright. There are some superb shots. All photos are copyright.

NORTH NORFOLK COAST

(Andrew Bray)

The AOS started the year off with a trip to the North Norfolk coast on 7 January. The coast does take a buffeting in the winter but once again global warming came to our rescue with a fine day. We met up at Hunstanton Bus Station at 8am for a hearty English breakfast to fortify us for the day ahead. From there it is a short trip to the cliffs of Old Hunstanton for lots of birds around the sea's edge and cliffs including Fulmar. The next stop was Titchwell. 'Sammy' is no longer on the list but there is plenty to see in the woods and lagoons. At the end of the path is the beach and time for a bit of sea watching and this time a Slavonian Grebe bobbed in and out of our scopes. The beach is always windy and the café at the reserve entrance provides a welcome break – cup of tea and cake!

The day in Norfolk always has a familiar feel and the usual detour to the Grain Store on the ridge south of the village produced the 'is it or is it not' debate for the day. Brambling is on the list for the day. Fortunately at this time of year traffic is light on the coast road so not much time was wasted in reaching Holkham Gap. The area for birding is vast but we eventually found the Snow Buntings on the beach. More to the point they eventually found us to give fantastic views. The woods were disappointing however the fields were once again filled with Pink Foot Geese and other wildfowl. The skeins coming in are very spectacular and it is not surprising that lots of people arrive before dusk to see the sky shrouded in geese. On our departure we all stopped by the gate to get a sight of the Black Brant. By now the light was fading and most of us had a long journey home. Once again we had run out of time, wore rosy cheeks and had a considerable bird list to start the year off.

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Slavonian Grebe <i>Podiceps auritus</i>
Greater White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons</i>	Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla</i>	Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
'Black Brant' <i>Branta nigricans</i>	Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Eurasian Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	European Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Long-tailed Duck <i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>
Common Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>
Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>
Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>

Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>
Mew Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>
Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>	Carriion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Common Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>
White / Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>	Eurasian Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>
European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Common Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>



A WEEKEND IN GERMANY

(Richard Sargent)

An austere trip to the continent has been scheduled into the AOS programme for the past two years and following excellent trips to Holland and France we headed off towards Germany, 21 – 23 April, and my old stamping grounds of Munster, Lippstadt and the Arnsberger Wald.

Following the earlier itineraries we left Farnborough in the early evening and by midnight were heading towards Germany. If you haven't heard of these trips, our visits to the Continent are very much not for the weary. We generally sleep when we can, sometimes in a tent, occasionally in a motel, but mostly at the side of the minibus. This optimises

the time spent birding. We eat 'on the hoof', bacon sandwiches, cooked by the vehicle, are very much the order of the day but we always have an excellent time.

At 0530hrs we arrived at the Rieslefelder Munster, an old sewage works originally built for the many Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe barracks in Munster. This is an excellent site for waders, raptors and passerines and during the day we saw many excellent birds, most notably



Honey Buzzard, Bluethroat, numerous waders and White Stork. Following a hard days birding we retired to Munster for a well earned meal and a night in beds in the transit accommodation at Oxford Barracks.



At 0530hrs we again left the comfort of a bed for a two hour drive to the Zacheriasee, a disused gravel pit near Lippstadt. This was originally a reserve set up by Geoff McMullan, an AOS member, which had improved tremendously since my last visit. The lake was teeming with birds and very quickly we picked up many ducks, a Red-necked Grebe, Black Terns and Little Gulls. A walk around the perimeter produced migrant passerines and an excellent Hobby.

From the 'Zach' we headed south and picked up Marsh Harrier, Lesser Whitethroat and Eagle Owl and eventually arrived at Vosswinkel, an excellent ancient woodland, which produced Middle-spotted and Grey-headed Woodpecker and as, we left, Goshawk.

The evening was then spent searching high and low for Tengmalm's and Pygmy Owl in the Arnsberger Wald. You will have guessed by now that we didn't see either species, although we did hear the call of a Tengmalm's as we settled down in our sleeping bags for the night. There had been a lack of rodents over the proceeding few weeks and both species had failed to breed. It is at the Arnsberger where we went into 'hard routine' and slept by or in the minibus. During the evening it rained but those in army issued bivvy bags had a comfortable evening.

Finally, after an excellent cooked breakfast in a lay-by, we headed back to Calais and even managed to bird at a local reserve before arriving at the Eurotunnel where we

managed to bag Yellow Wagtail and Yellow-legged Gull before we travelled underground.



AOS members attending were:

Lt Col R C Dickey
Lt Col D Vaughan
Maj A Bray
Maj (Retd) H Nash
Maj (Retd) C Powell
Capt R Seargent
W01 D Easterbrook
Mr B Hayward
Mr G McMullan
Mr D Pentelow

In summary, these trips are not for the faint hearted. You might not get much sleep, will be hungry if you don't eat bacon sandwiches or fast food and you may have a bad back from travelling in a minibus. However, you will see many birds; some not often found in the UK, and enjoy some agreeable company. I urge you to give it a try.

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	European Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Common Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Greater Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>
Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Tawny Owl <i>Strix aluco</i>
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	Tengmalm's Owl <i>Aegolius funereus</i> (heard)
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>
	Middle Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Common Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	White / Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Red-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Common Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>
European Honey-buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Eurasian Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
	Eurasian Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Pied Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>
Little Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Crested Tit <i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Coal Tit <i>Periparus ater</i>
Eurasian Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Marsh Tit <i>Poecile palustris</i>
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Wood Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Short-toed Treecreeper <i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Little Gull <i>Larus minutus</i>	Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Mew Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>
Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i>	European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>

Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Common Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
Stock Pigeon <i>Columba oenas</i>	Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Common Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>



THETFORD

(Andrew Bray)

It was with trepidation that I checked the BBC weather web site to see a dark cloud and rain symbol for Thetford. The week had been glorious sunshine and it was all change for the weekend. I required divine intervention but our padre was in Germany not Thetford. Being optimistic I felt that we would escape any serious down pour. On the Friday in the bright sunshine our members drifted into camp. Cars drove 'on parade' around the inner then outer circuits before turning down the dead end roads looking for their Nissen hut which were not necessarily in a logical order to some of the members. They soon worked out there entrances at both ends and settled in. Some took to enjoying the bird life in camp and some opted for a drive out with our guide to see Tree Pipits before dinner. Fortunately the bar closed on time that night. I say fortunately as there was a sizeable group that was just starting to wonder whether they were that tired or not. Various people had stopped off en route to look at nearby reserves but like the traffic in Brandon it was a

picture of armageddon where 'ticks' were concerned. Some were still trying to get to the camp as we wandered in for dinner; delayed by last minute disasters at work and accidents on the road network.



Saturday morning and the downpour woke quite a few. What was the point of sleep when you could get up and get a considerable head start on the list before breakfast? Outside the huts a spotted flycatcher was busy once the rain had ceased. A hearty breakfast was consumed giving us the needy fortification for the day. Don't ask me how but we managed to get

organised for departure including car sharing. The long convoy snaked out of the camp on our way to Bridge Carr where the passengers were deposited and the cars drove on to park at Langford. When all drivers were back we went for a lovely country walk along the River Wissey filled with crayfish. Warblers sang and cuckoo was sighted; curlews put on a display as we reached the cars with their haunting cry as they flew circles over our heads. The sun broke through, the land was green and flowers were bursting out; an idyllic scene.

Near Langford was our first stop for Stone Curlew which was soon spotted and everyone had a reasonable view as it moved around. Next stop was Cameronian Firs with views of Stonechat and in a sprayed off arable field a pair of Stone Curlew with 2 chicks. It was

time for lunch and we sat on a bridge watching the darker clouds roll in and listened to the sound of thunder. This was not looking too good but next stop was Frog Hill. It actually was not the next stop as on the way we stopped for Wood Lark which were strolling down the road. At Frog Hill it was not looking good, sots of rain and very few birds and our



target of Redstart had left a sign 'gone for lunch'! I did write Pied Wagtail into my book

at the end of the walk. A short drive down the road to Smokers Hole was much brighter as the sky brightened and good views of Stonechat, Wheatear and Grey partridge were had.

Our final stop was a cross country drive to Fowlmere. This small lake formed by rain water was still reasonably full thanks to the previous weeks of rain. On the water's edge there was a pair of Redshank, another one for the list then a Redstart was spotted in a dead tree. What other birds could be found as it was getting close to closing the book on the day's count – money was riding on the result! All too soon ENDEX was called as tea and biscuits beckoned back in camp. The final total was 75 species for the day, won by the bookmaker himself. During the day we did manage to see some other interesting bugs and animals but our chief hare correspondent was left bitterly disappointed.

There is not a lot to say about the AGM and dinner except we managed to keep the AGM short and the dinner went on longer than anticipated, hence my powers of recollection are somewhat diminished. Our guests enjoyed themselves as well as our members but at some stage bed called. The alarm went off 3 ¼ hours later as some fools went off to Wayland Wood and bagged Golden Pheasant and Willow Tit. After an even heartier



breakfast the party went out to the impact area to visit Stamford Water. The highlight was the Barn Owl in full view on the edge of the water as well as the fly past by the cars. All the hirundines were seen as they swooped over the lake in spectacular fashion at varying heights.

At this stage more of the group bade farewell until next year and the rest of the party drove to Robin's Lodge where we treated to 2 Nightingales singing. There were also good views of Yellowhammers. At Hopton Point we were out of luck for Short Eared Owl and Little Owl; we checked all the known haunts. Last stop of the day was West Mere where the islands were no longer as the water levels were low. A final push to get the group organised before heading back to camp via Frog Hill (where Redstart was spotted!). The sun was out and it had not rained; maybe the padre had already had a word! In all another successful AGM weekend enjoyed by 41 dedicated souls.

The list of species seen during the weekend on the training area is:

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Greater Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	White / Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Common Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>
Grey Partridge <i>Perdix perdix</i>	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>
Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>
Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Coal Tit <i>Periparus ater</i>
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Common Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>
Common Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Wood Lark <i>Lullula arborea</i>	European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Common Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	



PELAGIC BY ANY OTHER NAME

(Andrew Bray)

On Friday 1 Sep 06, Andrew Bray, Tim Cowley, Roger Dickey and Andrew Harrison met in the chaos that is known as the Ferry Passenger Terminal at Portsmouth. We had booked a mini cruise to Bilbao on the Pride of Bilbao. This is a large ship and the pride of the P&O ferry fleet. Such was the chaos we took a step back and had a beer. What else was there to do whilst everyone rushed to queue to get on board for, what for us was a 3 day cruise taking in the English Channel and Bay of Biscay. This was a follow up to an event last year when some more AOS members decided to get a good look at seabirds.



Having got on board, we found our bijoux cabin on Deck 4 with all mod cons – bunks, en suite ablutions and a window. Unpacking was conducted quickly and in relay allowing a staged rendezvous in a bar for another social drink. As we pulled out of Portsmouth harbour the lights shone and darkness beckoned. Talk over dinner and a few more

beers, was all about birds. The plan was to be up at first light, find a spot and look to sea.

On Saturday 2 Sep 06 we awoke to pounding and lurching. Not to be put off we were on station at 7 am, positioned nicely on deck 8 in the middle of the ship with some shelter

from the wind under a lifeboat. The lifeboat provided some protection from the later rain but not the mini swimming pool that formed around our feet. This was important as the sea state got progressively worse from Force 5 to Force 7. It was during this day that we saw the greatest number of species; Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Great Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Cory's Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Lesser Black



backed Gull and Gannet. One of the delightful sights was the few Sabine's Gulls that passed close to the ship with a few twirls to show off the plumage. Of course we had to go through lots of sighting of gannets before something else turned up. There was the diversion of Common Dolphin doing their stuff every so often. After nearly 13 hours on deck fortified with hot drinks and the odd cake we went for an evening meal and a few beers (just as conditions started to improve!).

It was an early call at 0545 hrs as we approached Bilbao and we were near the front for disembarkation at 0700 hrs. It was straight off the boat into the nearest taxi for a trip up the hill for at least 3 hours birdwatching in the hot sun (and on land!). The taxi up was a

master stroke just leaving a walk down, though the novices found out that the taxi only goes halfway up. There was still uphill walking to do! The hill was alive with chats and we soon started picking up other birds amongst the throng. Highlights of the morning were Roger flushing a Nightjar as he nearly put his foot on the bird plus close views of a Booted Eagle.

It was back on the ferry at lunchtime for a cruise in the afternoon sunshine. Yellow Legged Gulls lined the quayside and younger Spanish females posed on a separate spur with brown and white breasts showing in the sunshine. We started on the Helicopter deck but the vibration was not good for scopes. We then went down a level to the side which was excellent for seeing dolphins and fish alongside the ship but for Andrew B it was still too high and it was back to Deck 8 in the middle of the ship. The reason was that despite it being a lovely day there was a 4 metre swell which



made the ship go up and down a lot! That afternoon we saw a lot of Great Shearwaters plus some Storm Petrels and a Black Tern. A Turnstone flew around the ship for hours looking for a perch but the Wheatear just kept flying south. In addition Tim managed to get onto a Little Shearwater. There were good mammal sightings of Fin, Sperm and Pilot Whale as well as lots of Dolphins, some in large pods, which included Atlantic White Sided, Bottlenose and Risso's. The dolphins always put on a good show with some spectacular acrobatics. In addition there were sighting of Sun Fish, Flying Fish and Tuna. By the evening Andrew B was not in the mood for a celebratory drink and after a meagre stab at a late meal retired to the cabin. Tim was better and lasted a beer but Roger and Andrew H had no problems tackling the bottles of Spitfire.

Monday morning was very calm with low cloud obstructing the views. The party got up according to how they went to bed. Andrew B being up early managed to get Sandwich Tern close to the ship otherwise, in the main, the Terns seen were classified as sp (but Common was identified late on). The majority of the birds seen through out the day were Gannets both flying and floating; in fact we used to get major outbreaks of them so that the occasional gull was appreciated. Other birds that day included several Great Skuas, 7 Storm Petrels, Lesser Black Backed and immature gulls. A Swallow broke the Gannet monotony around lunch time. The visibility fluctuated as the day went by and the team managed to man the railings to the end with the list ending as we turned around the eastern edge of the Isle of Wight. It was so good to stand on land but even now there is a bit of deja vue as the party swayed down the path. The next sea watch will be from a large, static lump (possibly called England).

List of birds:

Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	European Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
Great Shearwater <i>Puffinus gravis</i>	Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>
Sooty Shearwater <i>Puffinus griseus</i>	Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Macaronesian Shearwater <i>Puffinus baroli</i>	Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	White/Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>
Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Booted Eagle <i>Aquila pennata</i>	Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetu</i>	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Sabine's Gull <i>Larus sabini</i>	Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i>	Common Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>



PORTLAND

(Andrew Bray)

The bacon and rolls were bought and I was not going to run out of tea. I had raided a bank for cash and I knew the opening times of selected venues. All was set for a fat boy's weekend at Portland. Normal form was to arrive late Friday afternoon and find a bunk space ready for a weekend of birding. I managed to get away early (actually I just got up and walked out) so on arrival I had the pick of bunks and time to make a cup of tea accompanied by a nut and chocolate bar to get the energy levels up. Other started to arrive and there just time, after the greetings, to get out on the ground before the pub opened. The Pulpit pub is only a very short walk from the accommodation and serves food with its limited stocks of beer (they did run out of Ringwood Best that night). The

big question was what we were going to eat as there was a two for the price of one special at the time. The majority of the group did team up for steak or chicken and steak combo. There was one member who just had two meals for the price of one! He was still feeling full the next day until he had fired off the remains and limbered up.

Next morning saw the dawn walk followed by the intoxication of frying bacon and sausage as we contemplated the paucity of bird species not taking into account the Rosy Coloured Starling hidden in the starling flock. As our spirits were lifted from the wafting



smoke a decision was made to move to Ferrybridge earlier than the norm. It was a one minute stop as the tide was in and therefore we moved onto Radipole Lake. By the end of the walk to the hide and back the pangs of hunger were taking effect (lifting the bins to look at another Black Headed Gull was proving too difficult). The Bearded Tits did their best to take our minds off negativity of birds but it was back to Ferrybridge and

sustenance of fast food from the greasy spoon café. A raspberry flapjack was also required to allow the telescope focus wheel to work as we honed in on the numerous Ring Plover on the mud flats. Feeling somewhat replete we decided to visit the Pennsylvania Castle area for possible warblers. We did see a 'Chif Willow Flycatcher' but again energy levels had been drained by the walk up the cliff.

Back at base there was time for a much needed cuppa then a roundabout walk to the Lobster Pot café. It was here that disaster struck as they had run out of Dorset Apple Cake. How was I going to get back to base as energy levels were low? I looked to the skies and was inspired by the Meadow Pipits which continually flew overhead straight out to sea without stopping. If they could keep going so could I! I could make it back, shower and travel across the causeway to the town where at last I could rest and eat at the Gurkha. Oh joy of joys it was a sight beyond comprehension; 'All you can eat buffet' was a selection. I may have overdone the chicken satay and crispy duck as I could only manage one helping of Alu Dum. Once the equilibrium had been restored there was no difficulty of finding our way back to the Pulpit where Ringwood Best had also been restored.



The next morning there was time for Merlin and Peregrine before the remainder of the bacon and sausage sizzled in the pan. It was then that everyone set off to scavenge wherever they wanted via Ferrybridge and a Mediterranean Gull. For me it was a stopover at Arne with the sight of Common Terns diving amongst a raft of swimming Cormorants following something in the water.

As for the birds you ask; the final list was 75 species though for most of the time on the Bill all we could see was Meadow Pipits and Linnets! Highlights were the juvenile Rose Coloured Starling, fantastic views of the Short Eared Owl and the company of the group.

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>
Greater Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Brent Goose <i>Branta bernicla</i>	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Stock Pigeon <i>Columba oenas</i>
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Common Wood Pigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Eurasian Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>
Balearic Shearwater <i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	White / Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Hedge Accentor <i>Prunella modularis</i>
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>
Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Bearded Tit <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Eurasian Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>

Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Rosy Starling <i>Sturnus roseus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Mediterranean Gull <i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Common Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ASCENSION

(Mike Vincent)

Ascension Island lies just to the south of the equator about 700 miles north of St Helena. The island was discovered in 1501 by Juan da Nova Castella, on his way to India. He called in Conception, he also discovered St Helena on his return. It was rediscovered in 1503 by Alfonso d'Alberquerque on Ascension Day, reputedly, and the origin of its name.

Ascension is in fact a mountain peak which rises 10, 000ft from the ocean floor just to the west of the mid-Atlantic Ridge, forming an island at the surface. The Mid-Atlantic ridge is a weakness in the earth's crust, which still sees volcanic activity as per Tristan da Cunha in 1961 so an eruption on Ascension cannot be ruled out.

The island is 97sq km in area and consists of three different ages of development. The oldest part of the island is considered to be the highest area to the south east rising to 2800ft at Green Mountain, 2000ft at Weather Post and 1700ft at White Hill. These were thought to have formed from the volcanic explosion through which a dome was formed on the base of basalt. All around the area are similar structures, containing fissures where



further flows of basalt have accrued. The Devils Cauldron is a large volcanic crater several hundred yards across. Red Hill Mountain was formed in the second stage of development and is purely basalt cone and were somewhat eroded before the third phase begin. The most recently formed peaks are Sisters Peak and Perfect Crater close

to it and they are still almost perfect cones. It is thought the last eruption occurred some 600 years ago, the upper slopes being soft ash, lave flows spread north to the coast 2 miles away and there is a considerable area of cinders on the lower slopes.

One of the biggest problems facing the island was the lack of water, as the low annual rainfall scarcely maintained the needs of

Georgetown the capital. Ascension has a tropical climate, but is drier than expected. The general impression is that the island is a barren dusty and waterless wilderness where the temperature is generally in the eighties Fahrenheit and rain is virtually unknown. This is



true for all but a quarter of the island. The greatest rainfall occurs on Green Mountain and the Northwest of the island. This is where most of the vegetation can be found. When Napoleon was exiled to St Helena in 1815, a British Garrison took possession of the island to avoid any rescue attempt. From then until 1922 the Royal Navy administered the island. A water supply was essential and two springs were found, one of which was Dampier's Drip. The water was fed into barrels and transported 5 miles over the lava

fields. This continued for fifteen years when pipes were laid into Georgetown. Following Napoleon's death in 1821 the island changed its role to a supply base for the naval ships and various improvements made to its roads and water systems.

In 1899 a submarine cable was landed at Comfortless Cove and Ascension suddenly was able to contact the outside world immediately with out a delay of weeks and eventually became a crossroads for international communications, a role it continues today with satellite receivers. In 1922 the Telegraph Company took control and Ascension became a dependency on St Helena and quite a number of St Helenians work on the island. During the Second World War the Americans came and constructed an airfield on the breeding ground of the Wide-awake sooty tern and anti-submarine bombers were stationed there. At the end of the war they left leaving a population of about 170 but by 1956 the Americans were using the island to track missiles from Cape Canaveral and later NASA tracking station was set up at Devil's Ash pit during the Apollo Programme. The island was important during the Falklands war in 1982 as a staging post for supplies.

ASCENSION FEB 06

(Andrew Bray)

The disruption to our expedition in October 2005 meant that some work was not finished. We wanted to finish the land bird survey so a quick trip was organised in early February 2006. Team members were Andrew Bray, Roger Dickey, David Vaughan and Christopher Dickey. On arrival in Ascension we managed to see the last handful of the



Sooty Tern juveniles at Waterside that were about to leave. There were also several pairs of Brown Noddies nesting in the area.

We then had two days of early morning starts to catch the dawn chorus. It was a bit like a symphony in that at 0630 the Waxbills started, then at 0635 the Canaries and Mynas joined in and at 0645 the Canaries stopped. The rest of the day was spent surveying

selected grid squares. Included in the count were Francolins and White (Fairy) Terns. There were numerous sightings and sound of Francolin during our stay. We seemed to have hit the height of the White Tern breeding period as they were to be found in all sorts of areas. Days were hot and cold drinks from the shop at the end of the day were appreciated.

Thursday saw us spending a day on Green Mountain. We started off with a count of White Terns before counting the land birds around the water catchment area. We then

walked up to the Dewpond along the new board walk – no slipping and sliding up or down! In the afternoon we were fortunate to come across the two wild cows but they were too quick for our Para to take a picture despite hurling himself across the top of a col. In the afternoon we took a trek around Elliot's path to find some real mud we could slip and slide along.

On Friday we left David behind to carry out a survey of a couple of remaining grid squares whilst the rest of us descended to Letterbox. Why oh why do we do it? At least we were able to confirm that the Brown Noddies had fledged and that Masked Boobies continue to nest; three nests with eggs were on the path down from Louie's Ledge! The roost on Letterbox was still active and new nests seem to be appearing as well. Of course the views and birds were excellent and lots of photos were taken. We will not discuss the long march back up except to note that the young mountain goat left the huffing and puffing to the more experienced members of the party.

Saturday was a mix of surveys and sightseeing then trying to find out if we were going to fly home. Like October there was an issue with flights as the RAF had carried that good ol' party trick of reversing a truck into a plane at Mount Pleasant. Fortunately the smaller replacement plane was not required and the Jumbo was repaired in time to take Tuesday's and Saturday's passengers home.

During our visit we met up with the Conservation Team. We met the authors of a book on inshore coastal creatures so could identify some of the many fish we saw. There were octopuses found in rock pools. We were crashed around in some waves; the swell limited chances of a swim at the end of the day to wash the dirt off. We saw lots of Green Turtles coming ashore to lay eggs. We also saw lots at



sea during the day including a Hawksbill off Letterbox. The sad part of the trip was seeing the carnage at Mars Bay where rats had ripped through the Sooty Tern population with feathers and bones everywhere. Despite this there were positive signs that the Seabird Restoration project was going from strength to strength.

ASCENSION AUG 06 **EXERCISE BOOBY X11 TERNS**

(Mike Vincent)

A small expedition arrived on Ascension on the 7th August 2006 for 10 days to study the breeding of birds on Ascension Island as part of the ongoing survey. This was in line with previous expeditions and FCO initiative, supported by the RSPB, to arrest the decline of the seabird population using the Island.

The 4 man expedition team carried out, detailed surveys of the breeding Sooty Tern along with the impact of myna birds on the Sooty Tern fairs. Other surveys included Rat-trapping, encroachment of Mexican Thorn and random surveys of other breeding populations of land birds. John Hughes organised a survey of the Myrna Birds at One Boat Tip and we counted over 600 birds on two separate accounts. Surveys were carried out to estimate for the size the fairs, both at Mars Bay and at Waterside.

We also provided support to the Island Management Plan working with the Island Conservation Officers (Tara Pelembe, Anselmo Pelembe & Raymond Benjamin). They were given the chance to do some on site ringing which included the Brown Booby Birds on the stacks 4 & 5 off the coast towards English Bay and Georgetown and on the Sooty Terns at the Wide-awake Fairs. Also some guidance on the procedures for Rat Trapping.

The fairs covered a total of 10 hectares with the population of about 200,000 pairs and during our time there we managed to ring 500 birds, Colin Wearn (RAFOS) being in charge. One of the most interesting times for me was the trapping of Sooty chicks and the sight of hundreds huddled in crèches, at various stages of their development.



The team continue to notice dramatic improvements resulting from the implementation of the Island Management plan especially the feral cat eradication policy. Even though only 10 months had passed since the last trip improvements in nesting habits are noticeable. One consequence of feral cat cull is that the birds are now settling onto the fairs much more quickly and are less likely to abandon their nests.

Our days were planned systematically, with a daily routine on the fairs from 0800hrs-1600hrs. We then had the opportunity to show Chris Feare of Wild Wings Bird Management (a leading researcher on Sooty Terns and our guest on the expedition) around the sights of Ascension including one of our routines of snorkelling to wash off the dirt of the day. He in return introduced us to the Sooty Tern cocktail!

One major and interesting factor during our visit was the devastation of Sooty Terns killed by the US Aerial System at the Airhead Site. During the period of 10 days we visited the site twice and recovered 173 Sooty Terns, 9 of which were alive, however they were put down due to severe injuries. It's a problem that the AIG Conservation Officer will have to monitor to establish the effect on the Sooty Tern population. This may be easier said than done as the US are concerned about security which both John Hughes and myself experienced; they were a bit twitchy to say the least, having two Brit's walking around their site collecting dead birds.

The AGI Conservation Officer Tara Pelembe arranged for John Hughes and Chris Feare to give short talks on the Sooty Tern, and the Sooty Tern on the Seychelles, respectively to the Ascension Island Council in the late afternoon and later on in the evening to the general public at the Conservation Office in Georgetown. Both talks were well attended and the audience found them informative.

It was a delight to visit the Ascension Islands again, and to experience the life on the Island and its people. We departed the island after a hard 10 days. I must thank Tara Pelembe for the kind support and help along the way, and our guest Mr Chris Feare for his knowledge and advice. With the sun setting, and the 747 insight we departed the Island bound for the UK.

AOS MONITORING ON ASCENSION ISLAND **PRESENTED AT SEABIRD CONFERENCE**

(John Hughes)

The annual Seabird Conference took place in Aberdeen over the week-end 1-4 Sept 2006. The conference was attended by 160 delegates from 18 countries. Thirty three papers were presented at the conference including one entitled "Sooty Terns – Ascension Island Predation – Population Status". The paper was delivered by John Hughes who would like to thank the AOS publicly for their generous support in funding the conference fees. A synopsis of the paper follows:

Despite the eradication of Feral Cats *Felis catus*, the Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* on Ascension Island continue to experience high levels of predation from non native species. The elimination of feral cats, a major component of the islands ecosystem, has the potential for unforeseen results. Thus, long term monitoring using precise baselines is a vital component of the conservation management plan. We report on cat predation rates and changes in predatory pressure that we have recorded during the five breeding seasons following the eradication programme.

Ship rats *Rattus rattus* plagued the island before man arrived and when HMS Ascension was garrisoned many exotics were introduced to control pests and help feed and house the Marines. These included domestic cats, the Myna bird *Acridotheres tristis* that now predate on Sooty Tern eggs and Mexican Thorn *Prosopis juliflora* that encroaches onto the breeding colony reducing the available space for nest sites. Evidence of rat predation on Sooty Terns was first recorded in 2002 and we completed our first rat index the following year. The Myna population continues to increase and each season the bird destroys some 20,000 Sooty Tern eggs. We started monitoring the spread of Mexican Thorn when it first appeared in the colony in 1998.

The Sooty Tern is the only seabird to breed on the main land of Ascension in any numbers (175,000 pairs). Most of the other seabirds that are returning to Ascension previously nest on Boatswain Bird Island (BBI) and the other cat and rat free offshore stacks. During the last 15 years we completed ten population surveys, measuring the area occupied by breeding birds and multiplying by nest density. These surveys provide a solid base line from which to measure trends in the population and to date we have found no up turn in the breeding population. In October 2005 we completed the latest surveys

and found that Mexican Thorn continues to encroach onto the Waterside study site but as yet is not a threat, Myna birds carry on with their destruction of many thousands of eggs and rats possibly *Rattus norvegicus* the new menace took more than half of the 200 Sooty Tern chicks we ringed at our Mars Bay study site. The data we have collected points to a rapid increase in rat predation and the need for further careful monitoring.

EXERCISE LION SUN 13 **BIRD OBSERVATIONS DURING AN EXERCISE**

(Richard Seargent)

Exercise LION SUN is low-level infantry exercise package run throughout the year within and around the Western Sovereign Base Area of Cyprus. Headquarter Squadron, 4th General Support Medical Regiment took part in the exercise between 7th September and 5th October 2006 which, luckily for me, coincided with the Autumn bird migration over the island. The Squadron was based initially at Radio Sonde Camp then for the last week at Episkopi Garrison where I managed to obtain a room in the Officers' Mess with a balcony and excellent views of Griffon Vulture and passage Warblers. My appointment during the exercise was Exercise Co-ordination Officer which involved all the planning for the final exercise which in turn allowed me to recce all the training areas. This gave me an excellent opportunity to birdwatch whilst taking part in my official military duties.

My initial reaction to being told I was off to Cyprus in September was 'excellent, Demoiselle Cranes' and after consultation with Mark Easterbrook I was told I would have to hurry up as the Cranes left the Island by the 7th September. In the first few days I managed to see two small flocks of these beautiful birds, one of ten individuals and a flock of thirty which flew over my head as I recce'd a potential exercise site close to Akrotiri Salt Lake. During the initial visits to Akrotiri I managed to meet Doug Radford the RSPB warden for Fowlmere who was helping Birdlife Cyprus conduct a raptor count. He became a useful person to know, with information on the birds around, and a welcome but often not sanctioned, break from my long days trudging around the southern areas of Cyprus. He also gave me a master class in raptor identification which came in useful during the final exercise.

Migration was very much in evidence throughout my visit. Honey Buzzard flocks, of up to 100 individuals, were seen on a regular basis and from our watchpoint at the Akrotiri Conservation Centre. We also counted Eleanor's Falcon, the odd Lesser Kestrel, Red-footed Falcon, Marsh, Montegu's and Pallid Harriers. Throughout the island a large passage of passerines was evident. Daily I observed large flocks of European Bee-eater, whilst pairs of Hoopoe and Golden Oriole darted from bush to bush. Hirrundines flew overhead and Radio Sonde Camp saw good numbers of Isabelline and Northern Wheatear passing through. On an early morning trip to Phassouri Reed Beds I manage to find the second only record that year of Baillion's Crane.

Birdwatching from the office window produced Black Francolin whilst shooting on the range saw Long-legged Buzzard and Black Kite flying low over the three 300 metre point. On one visit to a potential harbour area I accidentally flushed a Booted Eagle from scrub.

Phasouri Reed Beds is a RAMSAR site on the Akrotiri Peninsula. This is the place I did most of my birding and the place where I saw the greatest amount of species. During my visits I managed to see species close at hand including two species of Crake, Osprey, Booted Eagle and many other passage species. This is a must see area if you ever visit Cyprus.

The final exercise went as planned. During quiet time in the afternoons I kept myself busy watching Raptors, Larks, Wagtails, Warblers, Flycatchers and Shrikes around our Harbour Areas and in the hour prior to a first light attack on Paramali village I lay listening to the diagnostic double call of the Cypriot race of Scops Owl whilst Nightjars hawked above.

The three day 'In-country stand-down' was spent driving in a ramshackle hire car from the Mess to Phasouri Reed Beds, the Salt Lake and Bishops Pools to add birds to my list. On the final day I headed over to Asprokremmos Dam, Paphos, Troodos and the fields around Mandria to bag the final illusive species on my Cyprus 'Wish List'. The flight back on the 5th October was uneventful and on the morning of the 7th I arrived at Portland to take part in the annual pilgrimage to the Observatory.

In summary, if you are still serving, get to a unit which is pencilled in for LION SUN. Cyprus is an excellent island; the birding is outstanding and, if you get there, never leave your binoculars more than an arms length away, even if you are carrying a bergan and a rifle.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING EXERCISE LION SUN

Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minitus</i>	Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops cyprius</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Areola ralloides</i>	Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus Ibis</i>	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea Leucordia</i>	Calandra Lark	<i>Melnaocorypha calandra</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya farina</i>	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Griffon Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	a. Blue-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	b. Black-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	c. Grey-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergi</i>
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola ruberta</i>
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
Eleanora's Falcon	<i>Falco eleonorae</i>	Cyprus Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe Hispanica</i>
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar Cypriotes</i>	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>

Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Cyprus Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Baillion's Crake	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater Cypriotes</i>
Demoiselle Crane	<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	Great Tit	<i>Parus major Aphrodite</i>
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>
Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultia</i>	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Spur-winged Plover	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Serim	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull 'Baltic Gull'	<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Yellow-Legged Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Cretzschmar's Bunting	<i>Emberiza caesia</i>
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canoris</i>		

The shaded observations denote species seen only outside the Western Sovereign Base Area.

TRIP TO BOTSWANA, FEBRUARY 2006

(Anne Nason)

This year we made the usual trip to Zimbabwe to see our family but decided to spend a week in the Okavango Delta first. We flew BA to Johannesburg and then on to Maun with Air Botswana. However, we were advised not to book our luggage through, so had to go through Customs and Immigration and then book in again for Maun (luckily our BA plane was early) as Johannesburg airport has a reputation for losing baggage. We were also told at the Air Botswana check-in not to put any cameras in our heavy baggage as they would be stolen! You have been warned! At Maun we were met by representatives of CC Africa (Conservation Corporation Africa) who own the two Lodges we were staying at in Botswana, on the edge of the Moremi Game Reserve. They directed us to a light aircraft for the 15 minute flight to the Chitabe Airstrip. The pilot flew at 700 ft so we were low enough to see game from the air and we spotted a large herd of elephant shortly before we landed. As the Okavango Delta is absolutely flat one had the impression of being in the centre of a huge goldfish bowl as the horizon was at the same distance all around us, as far as the eye could see.

We were met at the airstrip by our Guide, Katumbo, in a Toyota Safari truck, and because of the unusually large amount of rain in the delta this year, it took us nearly an hour to get to Sandibe Lodge as some of the roads were impassable. We stopped several times to look at birds or animals, and in several places the truck had to plough through flooded roads with the water sometimes half-way up the vehicle. It is not surprising that the exhausts on these trucks stick up like a snorkel at the front! Several times I thought "We

are never going to get through this one!” We passed several Saddle-billed Storks and a pair of Wattled Crane, (an endangered species) a lone bull elephant, several giraffe and herds of impala.



The ethos of CC Africa is for their Lodges to blend seamlessly into their surroundings and this was certainly the case. We stopped suddenly near some trees where to my surprise I saw the staff were waiting with drinks for us and realised we had arrived at Sandibe Lodge. A short walk through the trees and we were at the Lodge which was very comfortable but not in any way lavish. It is right beside one of the waterways and therefore at night we were escorted to our rooms in case hippotamus were

grazing nearby. As everyone knows, you never get between a hippo and the water! Baboons and vervet monkeys often come into the camp and as it is unfenced, larger animals can wander through. The staff at both Lodges were very friendly and welcoming.

In the afternoon we travelled in an electric boat along the narrow waterways lined with papyrus. Little Bittern and Malachite Kingfisher were spotted, but in spite of the boat being very quiet, we didn't see too many birds that afternoon. That night we went to sleep listening to a chorus of frogs and the grunts of hippos. At two in the morning I heard the Cape Turtle Dove calling, “Work *harder*, work *harder*!” No thank-you, we are on holiday!

The next day we were woken at 6.0 and went out at 7.0 when it was getting light enough for photography. One of the first sightings was of a Pearl Spotted Owllet being mobbed by small birds, and not long after, our guide noticed a pair of Giant Eagle Owls

(Verreaux's) in a large tree. As they were in the shade, the light was too low for photography, but luckily later in the day Ian was able to get some shots of them. As this vast wetland area has many lakes and marshes, we saw as many as six Saddle-billed Storks, a pair of Wattled Crane, Woolly-necked Stork, Yellow-billed Stork, large flocks of Pygmy Geese and Egyptian Geese, several varieties



of Duck, Heron and Egret including Slaty Egrets which are endemic to this part of Southern Africa. When we stopped for a coffee break and a chance to stretch our legs, thirty Openbill Storks were circling on thermals above us. African Fish Eagle were fairly common and we saw the occasional Dickinson's Kestrel. Other species like Southern Carmine Bee-eaters, various kingfishers and doves were also frequently seen. Burchell's

Starling was the commonest member of the starling family, but Red-billed and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers were frequently seen on giraffe or zebra. Everywhere we went we heard the “chink-chink-chink” of the Blacksmith Plover, which was in much greater numbers than Crowned Plover.

After lunch and a siesta we went for an afternoon and night drive. One of the highlights was seeing two lionesses sleeping up a tree, about 30 ft from the ground on a horizontal branch. One was straddling the branch with all four feet dangling down. Later, when the sun had set, the Guide picked up a young male lion with the spotlight. The other members of the cat family we saw were serval and wild cat. Of the hoofed mammals, impala were common and kudu, red lechwe and giraffe were about in reasonable numbers. At one moment, whilst driving through one of the flooded roads,



we put up a crocodile in front of the vehicle. The driver was in a dilemma: he did not want to run over the crocodile but if he stopped he might get the vehicle stuck. He slowed a little and fortunately the crocodile swam out of our way. We had just passed a supply vehicle, firmly embedded in the mud, and had picked up the driver and his assistant who were relieved not to spend the night in a crowded cab, bitten by mosquitoes!

The following day we went out in mokoro (flat bottomed local canoes) on one of the wetlands covered with water lilies. As the trees used for these canoes were being cut down at an alarming rate, the canoes are now made from fibre-glass but in the traditional pattern. We paddled silently through the water, listening to the grunts of hippo and seeing Lesser Gallinule, African Jacana and other water birds. On the night drive we saw the Giant Eagle Owls again and heard their booming calls, and two Barn Owls were picked up in the spotlight. Among the smaller animals, we saw genet and spring hare. In the afternoon there had been a violent thunderstorm with thunder and lightning, but to our astonishment, while the storm was only slightly abating, we heard the drone of a light aircraft! We realised it was coming to collect some guests who were leaving, one of whom was a retired BA pilot who had been telling us of the dangers of flying in a storm! We assumed he survived the ordeal.

On our last morning at Sandibe we decided to stay in the camp as there were many woodland birds in the large trees around the camp. Because of the danger of predators, people are not allowed to walk around during the wet season when the grass is high, and the vehicles had to keep to the roads, so we had missed many woodland species. Around the Lodge we found nestholes of both Black Collared Barbet and Crested Barbet, and saw African Paradise Flycatcher and Heuglin's Robin.



After lunch we said our goodbyes and left for the airstrip. En route we saw a young Martial Eagle crouching down in the grass beside a bush, mantling its wings. We were quite close and presumed it had been injured, but suddenly it took off and flew to a nearby dead tree, so Ian was able to get good photographs. As we arrived at the airstrip our guide drove us to a point where two lions had been seen that morning. Sure enough, they were still there, lying flat on the ground sleeping in the warmth of the sun just beside the runway. They tolerated the vehicle coming quite close and barely raised their heads. It proved to us how easy it would be to walk straight into lions on foot. They would have been invisible even from a few feet away.

Just as our plane landed a warthog ran across the airstrip with its tail in the air, and a lioness walked off nonchalantly in the distance. We said goodbye to Katumbo, our excellent guide and boarded for the 25 minute flight to Nxabega (pronounced Nabetha). The camp is only 5 minutes from the airstrip and we were met by Basha and driven to the Lodge, passing three giraffe browsing just outside the camp. That afternoon we went out in a motor boat down some larger waterways in the papyrus and at one moment a large crocodile swam ahead of us, which we followed from the bubbles, until a massive head emerged. It must have been at least 3 metres long. In contrast, the guide pointed out a tiny reed frog about 5cms in size which was white with red markings and very beautiful.



That evening we met the young South African, Phillip Steffny, who was running the Lodge with his wife, and to our delight Phillip offered to take us out the next day on our own, as he wanted to train a new guide and like Ian, was interested in photographing birds. The first stop for photography was a Dickinson's Kestrel and then Phil took us to the place where he knew the Pel's Fishing Owl roosted during the day. As we arrived in a glade of trees, the Fishing Owl, as if on cue, flew into the

top of a tall tree and perched in the sunlight! It was a long shot for a camera, but not impossible. Next we came across five Southern Ground Hornbills which eventually flew off and landed in a tree. Near one of the bridges (made from logs wired together) we saw at least five Hamerkops looking for frogs in the marshy ground. There were several Southern Carmine Bee-eaters with juveniles and also Blue-cheeked and European Bee-eaters.

At lunchtime the other guests came in saying that they had witnessed a tremendous fight between two male giraffe's on the edge of the airstrip. The animals had been swinging their necks at each other with considerable force until one giraffe had gone down, covered in blood and was then savagely kicked by his rival. In the afternoon Phillip took us out again and tried to find it. In fact the giraffe must have recovered, as it was no longer there. Their vehicle had also been chased by a female elephant who had become separated from her calf. They had been quietly drinking their morning coffee beside their vehicle when they suddenly had to leap back in with the agility of people 30 years younger! Later that day we had our sundowner within 50 yards of the same breeding herd, but luckily the elephants were feeding peacefully except for two adolescent males play-fighting in the background.

Next morning we awoke to the sound of Ground Hornbills booming in the distance. We had another wonderful day with Phillip and the guide he was training called Coll. Almost at once we found two Swallowtail Bee-eaters sitting on a dead tree and Phillip played “grandmother’s footsteps” with them, as each time he and Ian took a photograph, he would edge the vehicle nearer, until they were only a few metres away. He managed to do the



same with Dickinson’s Kestrels, Southern Carmine Bee-eaters and Rufous-naped Larks. Most of the raptors were impossible to photograph but we saw Bateleur, African Hawk Eagle, Red-necked Falcon and Black-shouldered Kite, to name a few. We left Nxabega Lodge after a last drive in the morning which included sightings of Barred Owl, Green Pigeon and White-browed Scrub Robin. We boarded a Cessna aircraft with two girls from the CC Africa headquarters and landed at the Chitabe airstrip as they were going to Sandibe. On arrival, there was no vehicle to meet them and as there is nothing there besides the airstrip, we waited with the girls in spite of running a bit late for our connection at Maun. They said they were happy to be left as they could always get up a tree, but as we knew the lions frequented the airstrip, the pilot and Ian and I all insisted we waited with them. After about 20 minutes the truck arrived, having been stuck in the mud en route! We were then able to fly on to Maun where we boarded our plane almost immediately. Our in-flight snack was chilli flavoured biltong which was very tasty! On arrival at Johannesburg we changed to South African Airways and flew on to Harare to stay with the family for a couple of weeks, after a memorable week in Botswana.

Pink-backed Pelican <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	White-backed Duck <i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>
Reed (Long-tailed) Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	African White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps africanus</i>
African Darter <i>Anhinga rufa</i>	White-headed Vulture <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Hooded Vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	African Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Wahlberg’s Eagle <i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	African Hawk Eagle <i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>
Slaty Egret <i>Egretta vinaceigula</i>	Martial Eagle <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Black Egret (Heron) <i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	Black-breasted Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Brown Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Rufous-bellied Heron <i>Ardeola rufiventris</i>	Bateleur <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
Green-back (Striated) Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	Black (Yellow-billed) Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>
Yellow-billed (Intermediate) Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Red-necked Falcon <i>Falco chiquera</i>
Great White Egret <i>Egretta alba</i>	Dickinson’s Kestrel <i>Falco dickinsoni</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Red-billed Francolin <i>Francolinus adspersus</i>
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Crested Francolin <i>Francolinus sephaena</i>
Goliath Heron <i>Ardea goliath</i>	Swainson’s Francolin <i>Francolinus swainsonii</i>
Hamerkop <i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Helmeted Guinea fowl <i>Numidia meleagris</i>
Woolly-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	African Crane <i>Crex egregia</i>
Saddle-billed Stork <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	Black Crane <i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>
Marabou Stork <i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>	Lesser Gallinule <i>Sarothrura ayersi</i>

African Open-billed Stork <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	Wattled Crane <i>Grus carunculatus</i>
Yellow-billed Stork <i>Mycteria ibis</i>	African Jacana <i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
Hadedda Ibis <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	Lesser Jacana <i>Microparra capensis</i>
Fulvous Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	Painted Snipe <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Water Dikkop <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>
Spur-winged Goose <i>Plectroperus gambensis</i>	Three-banded Plover <i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	Blacksmith Plover <i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Knob-billed (Comb) Duck <i>Sarkidornis melanotos</i>	Crowned Plover <i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
Yellow-billed Duck <i>Anas undulata</i>	Long-toed Plover <i>Vanellus crassirostris</i>
Red-billed Teal <i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>	Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
African Pygmy Goose <i>Nettapus auritus</i>	Ethiopian (African) Snipe <i>Gallinago nigripennis</i>
White-backed Duck <i>Thalassornis leuconotus</i>	Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>
African White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps africanus</i>	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
White-headed Vulture <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	Double-banded Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>
Hooded Vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Burchell's Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles burchelli</i>
African Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	African Green Pigeon <i>Treron calva</i>
Wahlberg's Eagle <i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>	Emerald-spotted Dove <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
African Hawk Eagle <i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>	Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
Martial Eagle <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	Cape Turtle (Ring-necked) Dove <i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Black-breasted Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>	Meyer's Parrot <i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>
Brown Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	Grey Lourie <i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>
Bateleur <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	Jacobin (Black & White) Cuckoo <i>Oxylopus jacobinus</i>
Black (Yellow-billed) Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	Diederik Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
Red-necked Falcon <i>Falco chiquera</i>	Coppery-tailed Coucal <i>Centropus cupreicaudus</i>
Dickinson's Kestrel <i>Falco dickinsoni</i>	Senegal Coucal <i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
Red-billed Francolin <i>Francolinus adspersus</i>	Black Coucal <i>Centropus bengalensis</i>
Crested Francolin <i>Francolinus sephaena</i>	Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>
Swainson's Francolin <i>Francolinus swainsonii</i>	African Scops Owl <i>Otus senegalensis</i>
Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numidia meleagris</i>	Giant (Verreaux's) Eagle Owl <i>Bubo lacteus</i>
African Crake <i>Crex egregia</i>	Pel's Fishing Owl <i>Scotopelia peli</i>
Black Crake <i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i>	Pearl-spotted Owlet <i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>
Lesser Gallinule <i>Sarothrura ayersi</i>	Barred Owlet <i>Glaucidium capense</i>
Wattled Crane <i>Grus carunculatus</i>	Mozambique Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>
African Jacana <i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	African Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Lesser Jacana <i>Microparra capensis</i>	Grey-headed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
Painted Snipe <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Woodland Kingfisher <i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>
Water Dikkop <i>Burhinus vermiculatus</i>	Striped Kingfisher <i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
Three-banded Plover <i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	Malachite Kingfisher <i>Alcedo cristata</i>
Blacksmith Plover <i>Vanellus armatus</i>	Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Crowned Plover <i>Vanellus coronatus</i>	Eurasian Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>
Long-toed Plover <i>Vanellus crassirostris</i>	Southern Carmine Bee-eater <i>Merops nubicoides</i>
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops persicus</i>
Ethiopian (African) Snipe <i>Gallinago nigripennis</i>	Little Bee-eater <i>Merops pusillus</i>
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater <i>Merops hirundineus</i>
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Lilac-breasted Roller <i>Coracias caudata</i>
Double-banded Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles bicinctus</i>	Purple (Rufous-crowned) Roller <i>Coracias naevia</i>

Burchell's Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles burchelli</i>	Broad-billed Roller <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
African Green Pigeon <i>Treron calva</i>	Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>
Emerald-spotted Dove <i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>	Red-billed (Green) Wood-hoopoe <i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Southern Ground Hornbill <i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
Cape Turtle (Ring-necked) Dove <i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	Red-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>
Meyer's Parrot <i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus leucomelas</i>
Grey Lourie <i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	African Grey Hornbill <i>Tockus nasutus</i>
Jacobin (Black & White) Cuckoo <i>Oxylopus jacobinus</i>	Black-collared Barbet <i>Lybius torquatus</i>
Diederik Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	Crested Barbet <i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>
Coppery-tailed Coucal <i>Centropus cupreicaudus</i>	Lesser Honeyguide <i>Indicator minor</i>
Senegal Coucal <i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Bearded Woodpecker <i>Thripias namaquus</i>
Black Coucal <i>Centropus bengalensis</i>	Golden-tailed Woodpecker <i>Campethera abingnoni</i>
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Rufous-naped Lark <i>Mirafraga africana</i>
African Scops Owl <i>Otus senegalensis</i>	Barn (European) Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Giant (Verreaux's) Eagle Owl <i>Bubo lacteus</i>	Red-breasted (Rufous-chested) Swallow <i>Hirundo semirufa</i>
Pel's Fishing Owl <i>Scotopelia peli</i>	Grassveld (Richard's) Pipit <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Pearl-spotted Owlet <i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>	Black-eyed (Common) Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Barred Owlet <i>Glaucidium capense</i>	Arrow-marked Babbler <i>Turdoides jardineii</i>
Mozambique Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus fossii</i>	Hartlaub's (White-rumped) Babbler <i>Turdoides hartlaubii</i>
African Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	Heuglin's (White-browed) Robinchat <i>Cossypha heuglini</i>
Grey-headed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	White-browed Scrubrobin <i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>
Woodland Kingfisher <i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	Kurriichane Thrush <i>Turdus libonyana</i>
Striped Kingfisher <i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>	Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Malachite Kingfisher <i>Alcedo cristata</i>	Chin-spot Batis <i>Batis molitor</i>
Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Eurasian Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	Grey-backed Bleating Warbler <i>Camaroptera semicaudata</i>
Southern Carmine Bee-eater <i>Merops nubicoides</i>	Tawny-flanked Prinia <i>Prinia subflava</i>
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops persicus</i>	Long-billed Crombec <i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>
Little Bee-eater <i>Merops pusillus</i>	Burnt-necked Eremomela <i>Eremomela usticollis</i>
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater <i>Merops hirundineus</i>	Chirping Cisticola <i>Cisticola pipiens</i>
Lilac-breasted Roller <i>Coracias caudata</i>	Rattling Cisticola <i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
Purple (Rufous-crowned) Roller <i>Coracias naevia</i>	Fan-tailed (Zitting) Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Broad-billed Roller <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Southern Black Tit <i>Parus afer</i>
Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	Long-tailed (Magpie) Shrike <i>Corvinella melanoleuca</i>
Red-billed (Green) Wood-hoopoe <i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>
Southern Ground Hornbill <i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>	Brubru <i>Nilais afer</i>
Red-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	Black-crowned Tchagra <i>Tchagra senegalensis</i>
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus leucomelas</i>	Swamp Boubou <i>Laniarius bicolor</i>
Pink-backed Pelican <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	Fork-tailed Drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Reed (Long-tailed) Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	African Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus auratus</i>

African Darter <i>Anhinga rufa</i>	Eastern Black-headed Oriole <i>Oriolus larvatus</i>
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Greater Blue-eared Starling <i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Burchell's Starling <i>Lamprotornis australis</i>
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Plum-coloured (Violet-backed) Starling <i>Cinnyrinclus leucogaster</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Red-billed Oxpecker <i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
Slaty Egret <i>Egretta vinaceigula</i>	Yellow-billed Oxpecker <i>Buphagus africanus</i>
Black Egret (Heron) <i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	Collared Sunbird <i>Anthreptes collaris</i>
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow <i>Passer griseus</i>
Rufous-bellied Heron <i>Ardeola rufiventris</i>	Yellow-throated Sparrow (Petronia) <i>Petronia supercilarius</i>
Green-back (Striated) Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	Red-billed Buffalo-weaver <i>Bubalornis niger</i>
Yellow-billed (Intermediate) Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	White-browed Sparrow-weaver <i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Great White Egret <i>Egretta alba</i>	Golden Weaver <i>Ploceus xanthops</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Southern Brown-throated weaver <i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i>
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Red-headed Weaver <i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>
Goliath Heron <i>Ardea goliath</i>	Pin-tailed Whydah <i>Vidua macroura</i>
Hamerkop <i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Steel-blue (Village) Widowfinch (Indigobird) <i>Vidua chalybeata</i>
Woolly-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Jameson's Firefinch <i>Lagonosticta rhodopareia</i>
Saddle-billed Stork <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	Southern Blue Waxbill <i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>
Marabou Stork <i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>	
African Open-billed Stork <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	
Yellow-billed Stork <i>Mycteria ibis</i>	
Hadedda Ibis <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	
Fulvous Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	
Spur-winged Goose <i>Plectroperus gambensis</i>	
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	
Knob-billed (Comb) Duck <i>Sarkidornis melanotus</i>	
Yellow-billed Duck <i>Anas undulata</i>	
Red-billed Teal <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	
African Pygmy Goose <i>Nettapus auritus</i>	



THE GAMBIA
20 Dec 05 – 03 Jan 06.

(Mark Easterbrook)

References:

1. *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* by Barlow, Wacher and Disley.
2. *A Birdwatchers' Guide to The Gambia* by Rod Ward.
3. Trip Reports posted on the Web.

Introduction

This was my second visit to the Gambia following an “up-river” trip on a boat in March 2003 with the AOS. This had proved to be an excellent trip and introduction to African birding although due to the survey work that the AOS was mandated to carry out, it was impossible to carry out very much birding at the coast. My aspiration during this visit was to target the birds that I had missed last time and visit sites that I had not visited – to a large extent I achieved this.

I travelled with my wife and we stayed at the Bungalow Beach Hotel in Koto. For those of you who have read any of my previous trip reports, you will realise that my wife is a “shopaholic”. Therefore time was needed to be allowed for this pursuit and as a result I bird watched for the mornings only (which are the most productive time anyway) and this approach seemed to strike a happy medium. The notable exception was a trip to Tendaba (accompanied by my wife).

Costs

The cost of the holiday was more expensive than usual as it was Christmas and New Year. However this was the only time my wife and I could get off together, so the dates were largely out of our hands and it was a choice of pay or go nowhere. Julbrew (Lager) costs about 35 Gambian Dalasi (GMD) (£1 = 50 GMD), one and a half litres of water costs about 25 GMD and a 2 course meal with wine costs about £20 (1000 GMD) on average depending where you eat and what standard you require. I can recommend Sailor's along the Fajara beach as it is clean, the food is good, reasonably priced and neither of us experienced any “Banjul Belly”.

Guides

The fees incurred by hiring guides appear to have risen sharply. This coupled with the fact that the price of petrol has risen recently generally adds to your birding costs (now 60 GMD per litre), so this should be considered before planning your trips. Generally a “long half day” birding cost between £35 and £50 with all transport costs included, depending on how far you have to travel and what birds you want to see. The price of guides will vary, I presume, depending on how good they are and whether or not they own their own transport.

Following the advice and recommendations given on previous trip reports, posted on this site (which I always find most informative, reliable and honest). I contacted Ebrima Sidebeh email: ebrimahsidebeh@hotmail.com. He was waiting for me at the hotel when I arrived and we wasted no time in agreeing an itinerary that was within my budget.

Ebrima proved to be an excellent birder and companion. He was totally reliable, stuck to the agreed plan and costs and had a great sense of humour. A local guide's knowledge of calls, habitats and local bird movements is invaluable if you are not to miss the difficult birds and spend a frustrating two weeks sweating in the bush for scant reward!

I would not only recommend him as a bird guide as his organisational skills were excellent with any problems we encountered being quickly rectified.

Day by Day Itineraries with highlights

Day 1 – 20 Dec 05

We flew from Gatwick at 0920, although this was delayed. The flight was the usual experience but it did lead us to upgrade for the return journey. We arrived at Banjul at about 1600 and following the predicted baggage fiasco arrived at our hotel at about 1800. Some common Gambian birds were seen along the route but nothing to get excited about.

Day 2 – 21 Dec 05

Today's excursion was to Pirang and Faraba Banta bush track. The main target was Black-crowned Cranes. The Cranes were located in the "usual" tree and finally seen at close quarters via a track around the back of the mangroves. Also seen here were African Spoonbills, Plain-backed Pipits and the well marked Quail Finches.

We travelled to Faraba Banta via a bush track to the village. A White-faced Scops Owl was roosting in the village and was seen but not well. The Faraba Banta bush track produced a known roosting Greyish Spotted Eagle Owl – (no yellow in the eye, with reddish eyelids), Ruppel's Griffon Vulture, African Yellow White-eye, a female Northern Puffback and several other typical bush birds.

I also went to the Nightjar site behind the building work near Koto beach in the evening and was delighted to see at least three Long-tailed Nightjars.

Day 3 – 22 Dec 05

Brufut Woods was today's destination. Immediately a Green Turacao was spotted high in a tree and well camouflaged. Hunting at the small concrete pond by the hide was a fantastic African Pygmy Kingfisher, whilst a Grey-headed Bush Shrike also came to drink. Klaas's Cuckoos were very much in evidence in the scrubby woodland as were a number of Cisticolas, Chestnut-backed Sparrow Weaver and a Lesser Honeyguide.

Day 4 – 23 Dec 05

A short journey and we had arrived at Yumdum Woods where we quickly encountered a Lanner perched atop a dead tree. A calling bird was tracked down by Ebrima which revealed the presence of a stunning Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike. Four Yellow Penduline Tits made a timely appearance and a Yellow-throated Leaf Love put in a brief appearance. As we walked along the track we were about to discover the bird of the trip. Sat in a tree not fifteen metres from us was what appeared to be a Cuckoo species? Upon closer inspection the bird in question did have black barring from the throat down and had

red legs and reddish bill. We soon realised that this was no Cuckoo and indeed we had stumbled across a beautiful male Ovambo Sparrowhawk.

Later during the walk good birds continued to appear in the form of a male Great Spotted Cuckoo, three Senegal Batis, both male and female, a cracking Brown-backed Woodpecker and a male Levillant's Cuckoo.

Day 5 – Xmas Eve

The morning was spent in Serrekuda shopping, an experience in itself! An evening walk around Koto Creek produced a Grey-headed Kingfisher – a Gambia tick.

Day 6 – Xmas Day

Hangover – Day Off – Say no more! In the evening we walked around the Fajara Golf Course.

Day 7 – Boxing Day

A visit to Abuko Reserve home of the Makasutu Wildlife Trust produced several lifers. At the usual site between the Education Centre and marker post number 24 there were a large amount of birds between about 0930 and 1000, after this period of frenetic activity it appeared to become very quiet. Birds noted were two Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, two Western Bluebills, four Grey-headed Bristlebirds and three Yellow-breasted Apalis. An Ahanta Francolin called loudly and a fleeting glimpse was caught of it as it scampered off into the scrub.

Day 8 – 27 Dec 05

The coastal bird reserve at Tanji, established by Clive Barlow with the intention of finding White-fronted Plover ended in a dip today. However two Kelp Gull on the beach plus the only Fanti-Saw Wing and Curlew of the trip added to the trip list along with several Little Terns.

Day 9 – 28 Dec 05

A disappointing morning at Marrikissa provided very few new birds and was generally very quiet. Of interest was a White-backed Night Heron that was flushed and very little was seen of it. The first Pallid Swifts of the trip and a roosting Barn Owl in the building at the Marrikissa bird lodge did provide a break in the boredom. Time was taken to positively identify several African “Yellow-billed” (Black) Kite.

Day 10 – 29 Dec 05

My wife and I were collected at 0730 for our long and bumpy trip to Tendaba today, with some notable birding stops along the way. Our first stop were Yumdum fields, unfortunately the Temminck's Coursers had not read the script and did not appear, however a male Blackcap was noted and a Lanner.

A stop at Faraba Banta village had caught the White-faced Scops Owl behaving in a more obliging manner giving satisfactory views of its face pattern, ears and eyes.

A track into the bush near to the village of Kafota was a remarkable site, producing two White-fronted Black Chats, a Brubru, Striped Kingfisher, Whistling Cisticola and five Brown-necked Parrots flying over.

Yet another stop next to the road in the hope of Yellow-bellied Hyliota which failed to appear produced an African Cuckoo.

The well known raptor watch point at Campanteh produced several Grasshopper Buzzards, a Bateleur, Shikra, White Pelican and African Harrier Hawk.

An evening walk around Tendaba “Airfield” and the Battleing track was very productive and indeed pleasant. A pair of Wahlberg’s Eagle was present at the airfield whilst three White-shouldered Black Tits appeared along with a Village Indigobird along the Battleing track. Four, Four-banded Sandgrouse were flushed, whilst two Bruce’s Green Pigeon looked on and a male Namaqua Dove appeared unimpressed.

Day 11 – 30 Dec 05

All aboard! For the boat trip around the Bolongs on the North Bank opposite Tendaba camp. I had done this trip before, but today was longer and we were specifically targeting three birds. The three birds; Mouse-brown Sunbird, White-backed Night Heron and African (Fairy) Blue Flycatcher (all mangrove specialists), were all seen well. Also three Black Scimitarbill, a Bedouin’s Short-toed Eagle and two Woolly-necked Storks were seen.

The journey back to Koto brought several more Bateleur and Dark Chanting Goshawks along the roadside.

Day 12 – 31 Dec 05

A shopping trip to the capital Banjul and an evening walk to the Nightjar site, which still failed to produce any Standard Wings but five Long-taileds were seen plus a Pearl Spotted Owlet along the Casino cycle track.

Day 13 – 01 Jan 06

The North Bank – Barra & Essau, promised so much but produced so little! The locals had obviously not adhered to the guide books as the fields were not cleared or burned, as a consequence several birds which should have been easy to see under those circumstances remained very difficult to find.

It is essential to get the 0700 ferry from Banjul. There will be a queue and you will be refused passage. This is where the guide is worth his money. He will “grease the palm” where required and suddenly you will be boarded and under way on the 0700 ferry. The usual amount is about 25 GMD, so have this ready and be prepared to pay a few people (usually security personnel) in order to reach the other side early. Royal Terns, Pomarine Skuas and Arctic Skuas were seen from the ferry whilst the North Bank produced the expected Northern Anteater Chats but very little else of interest.

Retuning to the South bank numerous Blue-cheeked Bee eaters lined the wires along the Bund Road, two Oystercatchers were on the mud and two beautiful Yellow-throated

Longclaws were flushed (and perched nicely for the scope) from the long grass along the road to Cape Point – the first lifer of the New Year and the only Longclaws of the trip.

Day 14 – 02 Jan 06

An early walk around Bijilo Forest Park in order for my wife to photograph the monkeys produced a few good birds including a Levillant's Cuckoo, Oriole Warbler and Snowy-crowned Robin Chat.

The evening around Koto Creek produced another immature Levillant's Cuckoo and the usual commoner species.

Day 15 – 03 Jan 06

The final morning before getting picked up for the airport run. I had not planned to go out this morning however I had met a local guide (Lamin Sidebeh – older brother of Ebrima and mentioned in the book *A Birdwatchers' Guide to The Gambia* by Rod Ward). He had mentioned that he knew the whereabouts of a pair of Temminck's Courser – so this essentially became a last minute twitch. Fortunately I saw the birds, which I had searched for and missed during the trip; so the holiday ended on a real high.

Summary

The second trip to the Gambia and I feel sure it will not be my last. At least two visits are essential to a country like The Gambia and as a result my next trip is planned for early October (some time) – just after the end of the wet season.

Gambia is an excellent place to bird watch with very little hassle although guiding fees are getting more expensive and it's essential to do your homework in order to get a good and more importantly reliable guide before you arrive. It's also essential to plan your trip for the birds that you most want to see and ensure that you are in country for the correct season, hence the reason for my projected visit after the end of the wet season, in order to "clean-up".

Systematic Species List

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
Tachybaptus ruficollis	Little Grebe	Koto Sewage Ponds
Phalacrocorax africanus	Long-tailed Cormorant	Widespread in suitable habitat
Anhinga rufa	African Darter	Tendaba – Kisi Bolong
Pelecanus onocrotalus	Great White Pelican	Pirang Shrimp Ponds & Cam
Pelecanus rufescens	Pink-backed Pelican	Pirang Shrimp Ponds & Tendaba
Gorsachius leuconotus	White-backed Night Heron	2 in Tunko Bolong – Tendaba and 1 briefly at Marrikissa
Nycticorax nycticorax	Black-crowned Night Heron	Several at Abuko
Ardeola ralloides	Squacco Heron	Widespread in suitable habitat
Bubulcus ibis	Cattle Egret	Widespread & Numerous
Butorides striatus	Striated Heron	1s at Koto Creek, Tendaba & Abuko
Egretta ardesiaca	Black Egret	Koto Creek
Egretta gularis	Western Reef Heron	Widespread in suitable habitat (dark morphs predominate)
Egretta garzetta	Little Egret	Widespread usual at Koto Creek
Egretta intermedia	Intermediate Egret	Tendaba – Kisi Bolong wetlands

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Egretta alba</i>	Great White Egret	1s & 2s widespread in suitable habitat
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	1 Immature at Abuko
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	Widespread and numerous
<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	Black-headed Heron	1 at Pirang Mangroves & a roost at Abuko
<i>Ardea goliath</i>	Goliath Heron	Several - Mangroves - Tendaba
<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Hamerkop	1s & 2s Abuko, Koto Creek, Tendaba Kisi Bolong
<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Woolly-necked Stork	2 at – Bolong Tendaba and probably the same 2 at Tendaba "Airport" pools
<i>Platalea alba</i>	African Spoonbill	7 at Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Greater Flamingo	5 Flying at Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Whistling Duck	A large flock at Koto Sewage Works & Creek
<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	Spur-winged Goose	3 at Pirang Shrimp Ponds & 2 at Tendaba
<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Black-shouldered Kite	2 at Yumдум Woods
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite	Widespread & Numerous
<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>	African "Yellow-billed" Kite	As Above
<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-nut Vulture	1s at Koto Creek, Abuko & Tanji
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Hooded Vulture	Widespread & Numerous near habitation
<i>Gyps africanus</i>	White-backed Vulture	1 on the North Bank at Essau
<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>	Rüppell's Griffon Vulture	1 at Faraba Banta Bush Track
<i>Circaetus gallicus gallicus</i>	Short-toed Eagle	1 sub adult at Essau fields
<i>Circaetus gallicus beaudouini</i>	"Beaudouins' " Short-toed Eagle	1 over the mangroves at Tendaba
<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	Brown Snake-Eagle	1s at Yumдум, Faraba Banta Bush Track
<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	Bateleur	3 along the road to Tendaba
<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	African Harrier-Hawk	Widespread - singletons
<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Montagu's Harrier	5 over the mangroves at Tendaba (2 Males)
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	Pirang Shrimp Ponds and Tendaba "Airport"
<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	Gabar Goshawk	1s over Yumдум Woods and Faraba Banta Bush Track
<i>Melierax metabates</i>	Dark Chanting Goshawk	1s along the road to Tendaba and at Brufut Woods
<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Shikra	Widespread in small numbers
<i>Accipiter ovampensis</i>	Ovambo Sparrowhawk	1 fantastic male at Yumдум Woods
<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>	Grasshopper Buzzard	Numerous at Faraba Banta, Campanteh & Tendaba
<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	Lizard Buzzard	Widespread
<i>Aquila rapax</i>	Tawny Eagle	1 over Yumдум Woods
<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>	Wahlberg's Eagle	2 at Tendaba "Airport"
<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	Long-crested Eagle	Singles in most suitable habitats
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey	1 at Pirang and 1 over the mangroves at Tendaba
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Kestrel	1 over the fields at Yumдум
<i>Falco ardosiaecus</i>	Grey Kestrel	Widespread but not numerous
<i>Falco chicquera</i>	Red-necked Falcon	1 at Brufut Woods
<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	Lanner Falcon	1 at Yumдум Woods and 1 at Tanji

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>	Stone Partridge	Fairly common along the bush tracks at Yumdum and Brufut
<i>Francolinus achantensis</i>	Ahanta Francolin	1 was very vocal at Abuko and seen briefly
<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	Double-spurred Francolin	Common in suitable scrub habitat
<i>Amauornis flavirostris</i>	Black Crake	1 at Koto Creek and 1 at Koto Sewage Works
<i>Balearica pavonina</i>	Black Crowned Crane	2 at Pirang
<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	African Jacana	Several at Koto Lily Ponds & Abuko
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Eurasian Oystercatcher	2 at the Bund Road
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Black-winged Stilt	Numerous at Koto Sewage Works
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Pied Avocet	1 at Pirang Shrimp Ponds and 1 at Tendaba
<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Thick-knee	Common at Koto Creek
<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>	Temminck's Courser	2 (Displaying) on Melon fields near Brufut
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover	Fairly common at coastal locations and Pirang
<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Kentish Plover	1 Female at Tanji Reserve
<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	1s at Koto Creek and the Bund Road
<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	Wattled Plover	Small numbers at Tendaba, Koto Creek and Melon fields
<i>Vanellus tectus</i>	Black-headed Plover	Numerous at Koto Creek and roadside fields
<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	Spur-winged Plover	Widespread and numerous
<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling	A large flock at Tanji Reserve
<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Little Stint	1 and Tendaba "Airfield" pools and Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	Temminck's Stint	Several at Pirang
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	Several at Pirang
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	Numerous on suitable mudflats
<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Whimbrel	Common on wetlands
<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Eurasian Curlew	1 at Tanji Reserve
<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Common Redshank	1s and 2s at wetland areas
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Marsh Sandpiper	As Above
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Common Greenshank	As Above – but more numerous
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Green Sandpiper	Singles at Pirang & Koto Sewage Works
<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Wood Sandpiper	Numerous at Koto Creek, Tendaba and Koto Sewage Works
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	Common in suitable habitat
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnst1	Common at Tendaba and Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Pomarine Skua	At least 8 seen from the Banjul – Barra Ferry
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Arctic Skua	2 seen from the Banjul – Barra Ferry
<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	Grey-headed Gull	Numerous at coastal sites
<i>Larus genei</i>	Slender-billed Gull	Several at Tanji Reserve
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Kelp Gull	2 on the beach at Tanji Reserve
<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Lesser Black-backed Gull	10s on the beach at Tanji Reserve
<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Gull-billed Tern	1s and 2s at Tanji, Pirang and Banjul
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	Common at Tanji and 1s at Pirang and Banjul
<i>Sterna maxima</i>	Royal Tern	Several from the Banjul Ferry
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern	Numerous on the beach at Tanji
<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Sandwich Tern	Common along the coast

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern	3 at Tanji and 1 from the Banjul Ferry
<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i>	Four-banded Sandgrouse	4 flushed at dusk along the Battling Track - Tendaba
<i>Treron calva</i>	African Green Pigeon	2 at Brufut Woods
<i>Treron waalia</i>	Bruce's Green Pigeon	2 along the Battling Track - Tendaba
<i>Turtur afer</i>	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Common at the coast – Abuko & Bijilo
<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>	Black-billed Wood Dove	Common in coastal scrub and woodland
<i>Oena capensis</i>	Namaqua Dove	Several seen with a male along the Battling Track - Tendaba
<i>Columba guinea</i>	Speckled Pigeon	Numerous at the coast
<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Red-eyed Dove	As Above
<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>	African Mourning Dove	As Above
<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	Vinaceous Dove	As Above
<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Laughing Dove	Ubiquitous
<i>Poicephalus robustus</i>	Brown-necked Parrot	5 flying over woods at Kafota
<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>	Senegal Parrot	1s and 2s encountered almost anywhere
<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Rose-ringed Parakeet	As Above
<i>Tauraco persa</i>	Green Turaco	1 at Brufut Woods & 1 at Abuko
<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	Violet Turaco	Fairly Common in suitable habitat – Brufut, Abuko
<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	Western Grey Plantain-eater	Widespread & numerous
<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>	Levaillant's Cuckoo	1 male at Yumdum Woods & Bijilo Forest and a Imm at Koto Creek
<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Great Spotted Cuckoo	1 male at Yumdum Woods
<i>Cuculus gularis</i>	African Cuckoo	1 at Kaboka
<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	Klaas's Cuckoo	Several at Brufut Woods
<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Senegal Coucal	Widespread and Common
<i>Tyto alba</i>	Barn Owl	1 roosting in the old building at Marrikissa bird reserve
<i>Otus leucotis</i>	White-faced Scops Owl	1 roosting in the village of Faraba Banta
<i>Bubo africanus</i>	(Greyish) Spotted Eagle-Owl	1 roosting in a palm off the Faraba Banta Bush Track
<i>Bubo lacteus</i>	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl	1 at Brufut Woods and 1 on the North Bank roosting near Essau
<i>Glaucidium perlatus</i>	Pearl-spotted Owlet	1 along the Casino Cycle Track - Koto and 2 on the approach road to Marrikissa
<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>	Long-tailed Nightjar	At least 5 in coastal scrub behind the building works at Koto Beach
<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>	Mottled Spinetail	1s over woodlands
<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	African Palm Swift	Numerous fly overs almost anywhere
<i>Apus pallidus</i>	Pallid Swift	Good numbers over Marrikissa
<i>Apus affinis</i>	Little Swift	1 over Koto Sewage Works and several at Tendaba
<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	Grey-headed Kingfisher	1 at Tendaba – Kisi Bolong and 1 at Koto Creek
<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	1 at Abuko and 3 along the Bolongs at Tendaba
<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>	Striped Kingfisher	Common in woodlands
<i>Ceyx picta</i>	African Pygmy Kingfisher	1 from the hide at Brufut Woods
<i>Alcedo cristata</i>	Malachite Kingfisher	1s and 2s at Tendaba and Koto
<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	Giant Kingfisher	3 at Abuko

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Pied Kingfisher	Common at Koto
<i>Merops pusillus</i>	Little Bee-eater	Common at Fajara Golf Course and coastal woods
<i>Merops hirundineus</i>	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	Several at Brufut Woods and Bijilo forest
<i>Merops persicus</i>	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	Common along the Bund Road and singletons at Tendaba
<i>Merops apiaster</i>	European Bee-eater	Several over the mangroves at Tendaba
<i>Coracias naevia</i>	Rufous-crowned Roller	1s sitting on dead trees along the road to Tendaba
<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	Blue-bellied Roller	1s & 2s at Fajara Golf Course and along the road on telegraph wires
<i>Coracias abyssinica</i>	Abyssinian Roller	1s from the coast to Tendaba
<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	Broad-billed Roller	1s & 2s at Fajara Golf Course
<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	Green Wood-Hoopoe	Common at Fajara Golf Course and other wooded areas
<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>	Black Wood-Hoopoe	3 seen well at Tendaba – Badabou – scrubby wooded area among the mangroves (where you generally land)
<i>Upupa epops</i>	Hoopoe	1 along the Battleing Track – Tendaba and 1 at Yumdum Woods
<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	Red-billed Hornbill	Common & widespread
<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	African Pied Hornbill	Singles seen in suitable woodland – Bijilo, Abuko & Brufut
<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	African Grey Hornbill	As above
<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	1s seen as above
<i>Lybius vieilloti</i>	Vieillot's Barbet	As Above
<i>Lybius dubius</i>	Bearded Barbet	Usually in pairs – As Above
<i>Indicator indicator</i>	Greater Honeyguide	1 at Tendaba – and 1 at Brufut Woods
<i>Indicator minor</i>	Lesser Honeyguide	1 at Brufut Woods and 1 at Abuko
<i>Campethera punctuligera</i>	Fine-spotted Woodpecker	1 at Brufut Woods
<i>Campethera nivos</i>	Buff-spotted Woodpecker	2 at Abuko
<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>	Grey Woodpecker	Widespread – fairly common
<i>Dendropicos obsoletus</i>	Brown-backed Woodpecker	1 at Brufut, Yumdum and along the Battleing Track - Tendaba
<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Crested Lark	Common at Pirang and 2 at Tanji in coastal scrub
<i>Psalidoprocne obscura</i>	Fanti Saw-wing	1 over Tanji bird reserve
<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Sand Martin	Several over the mangroves at Tendaba
<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>	Mosque Swallow	Several over the Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Red-rumped Swallow	5 at Tendaba
<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Wire-tailed Swallow	Common at the coast – Koto Creek
<i>Hirundo leucosoma</i>	Pied-winged Swallow	1s and 2s at Tanji and Brufut
<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	Red-chested Swallow	Common at Koto Creek
<i>Delichon urbica</i>	House Martin	1 over the ponds at Pirang
<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Yellow Wagtail	2 at Pirang and 1 from the Banjul ferry
<i>Motacilla alba</i>	White Wagtail	Common at the Pirang and Koto
<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	Plain-backed Pipit	4 seen only at Pirang Shrimp Ponds
<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	Yellow-throated Longclaw	2 seen only in the scrub along the road to Cape Point
<i>Andropadus virens</i>	Little Greenbul	1 and 2s seen in Brufut and Abuko

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i>	Yellow-throated Leaf-love	Several heard and seen at Yumdum and Marrikissa
<i>Bleda canicapilla</i>	Grey-headed Bristlebill	4 seen at Abuko
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Common Bulbul	Common
<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	1s seen at Bijilo, Koto and Abuko
<i>Cossypha albicapilla</i>	White-crowned Robin Chat	As above but easier to see
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Common Redstart	1 at Tendaba - Badabou – scrubby wooded area among the mangroves (where you generally land)
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Whinchat	2 on the North Bank near Essau
<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Northern Wheatear	1 at Brufut Woods and 1 on the North Bank near Essau
<i>Myrmecocichla aethiops</i>	Northern Anteater Chat	4 or 5 seen on the North Bank only near Essau
<i>Myrmecocichla albifrons</i>	White-fronted Black Chat	2 seen along a track off the road at Kafota on the road to Tendaba
<i>Turdus pelios</i>	African Thrush	Common
<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	Olivaceous Warbler	Common
<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Melodious Warbler	Common
<i>Cisticola cantans</i>	Singing Cisticola	1s seen at Yumdum
<i>Cisticola lateralis</i>	Whistling Cisticola	1 seen along a track off the road at Kafota on the road to Tendaba
<i>Cisticola dorsti</i>	Plaintive Cisticola	1 seen at Brufut Woods
<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>	Siffling Cisticola	2 seen at Yumdum Woods
<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Zitting Cisticola	5 seen together on land at Tendaba in the Bolong on land at Badabou – scrubby wooded area
<i>Prinia subflava</i>	Tawny-flanked Prinia	Common and widespread - Brufut
<i>Heliolais erythroptera</i>	Red-winged Warbler	2 or 3 seen at Brufut
<i>Apalis flavida</i>	Yellow-breasted Apalis	2 seen well at Abuko
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	Grey-backed Camaroptera	Common at Yumdum and Brufut
<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>	Green-backed Eremomela	As Above
<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>	Northern Crombec	2 seen at Faraba Banta Bush Track
<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>	Oriole Warbler	Several seen at Koto and Bijilo
<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Chiff Chaff	1 seen at Koto
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Blackcap	1 at Yumdum fields and a pair along the Battling Track - Tendaba
<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>	Northern Black Flycatcher	Common in suitable habitat – open woodland
<i>Batis senegalensis</i>	Senegal Batis	3 seen at Yumdum Woods
<i>Platysteria cyanea</i>	Common Wattle-eye	1 at Abuko and several heard at Tendaba - mangroves
<i>Elminia longicauda</i>	African-blue Flycatcher	1 seen well from the boat along Tunko Bolong – Tendaba
<i>Terpsiph1 rufiventer</i>	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	1 seen at Abuko
<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>	Brown Babbler	Common at the coast
<i>Turdoides reinwardtii</i>	Blackcap Babbler	As Above
<i>Parus leucomelas</i>	White-shouldered Black Tit	3 seen along the Battling Track - Tendaba
<i>Anthoscopus parvulus</i>	Yellow Penduline Tit	4 seen at Yumdum Woods
<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>	Mouse-brown Sunbird	4 seen from the boat in the mangroves at Tendaba
<i>Anthreptes longuemarei</i>	Western Violet-backed Sunbird	1 seen at Yumdum Woods
<i>Anthreptes platurus</i>	Pygmy Sunbird	Several seen well along the Battling

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
		Track - Tendaba
<i>Nectarinia senegalensis</i>	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Common at the coast
<i>Nectarinia venusta</i>	Variable Sunbird	Common at the coast
<i>Nectarinia coccinigaster</i>	Slendid Sunbird	As Above
<i>Nectarinia Pulchella</i>	Beautiful Sunbird	As Above
<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	Yellow White-Eye	Several seen at Faraba Banta Bush Track, Battleing Track and Yumdum Woods
<i>Oriolus auratus</i>	African Golden Oriole	Singletons seen at Tendaba and Yumdum
<i>Lanius senator</i>	Woodchat Shrike	1 at Brufut Woods and 1 at Essau
<i>Corvinella corvina</i>	Yellow-billed Shrike	Widespread and numerous at the coast
<i>Nilaus afer</i>	Brubru	1 seen along a track off the road at Kafota on the road to Tendaba
<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	Northern Puffback	1 female at Faraba Banta Bush Track and 1 male on the North bank near Essau
<i>Tchagra senegala</i>	Black-crowned Tchagra	Common in coastal scrub and woods
<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	Golden-crowned Gonolek	Widespread and numerous
<i>Malacanotus sulfureopectus</i>	Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike	1 at Brufut Woods, 1 at Yumdum Woods and 1 heard at Tanji
<i>Malacanotus blanchoti</i>	Grey-headed Bush-Shrike	1 at Brufut woods from the hide
<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	White-crested Helmet-Shrike	Several groups seen at Faraba Banta
<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	Fork-tailed Drongo	Seen in 1s and 2s in open woodland
<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>	Piapiac	Common and usually seen in groups near the coast
<i>Corvus albus</i>	Pied Crow	Widespread and numerous
<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>	Purple Glossy Starling	1s seen perched in trees in woodland
<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>	Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling	Several seen along the road to Tendaba and at Tendaba
<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>	Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling	3 seen along the Battleing track - Tendaba
<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>	Long-tailed Glossy Starling	Common at the coast
<i>Buphagus africanus</i>	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	1 seen along the Battleing track - Tendaba
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Common near habitation at the coast
<i>Passer griseus</i>	Grey-headed Sparrow	Common in coastal woodland
<i>Petronia dentata</i>	Bush Petronia	1 on the road to Tendaba, 2 along the Battleing Track and 1 on the North Bank
<i>Plocepasser superciliosus</i>	Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver	2 at Brufut and 1 along the Battleing Track - Tendaba
<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>	White-billed Buffalo-Weaver	Common at Koto
<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>	Little Weaver	Large flocks encountered at
<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	Black-necked Weaver	Several at Abuko, Brufut and Bijilo
<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	Village Weaver	Common and Widespread
<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>	Northern Red Bishop	Several in fields near Yumdum and Brufut
<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	Western Bluebill	2 at Abuko
<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	Red-billed Firefinch	Common in flocks at Fajara Golf Course
<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	Common & widespread
<i>Estrilda caerulescens</i>	Lavender Waxbill	Several groups seen in suitable scrub habitat
<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>	Black-rumped Waxbill	1 large mixed flock on the North Bank

Scientific Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Ortygospiza atricollis</i>	Quail Finch	4 at Pirang
<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Bronze Mannikin	Widespread and numerous at the coast
<i>Amadina fasciata</i>	Cut-throat Finch	1 at Yumdum
<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>	Village Indigobird	2 along the Battleing Track - Tendaba
<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	Yellow-fronted Canary	Common at coastal woodland sites – Faraba Banta, Brufut & Yumdum also at Tendaba



NOTES FROM SHETLAND

(Gerry Birch)

My wife's chance reading of the *Daily Telegraph* weekend travel section led us to make a trip to Shetland. Shetland had been on the mental list of places to visit but the rather tortuous journey (2 days to drive to Aberdeen plus a 12 hour crossing to Lerwick was a little daunting – time, expense and the possibility of a rough sea journey for my wife) had put us off. However Atlantic Airways, based in the Faeroes, were starting direct flights from Stansted in late June. We decided to go – act now or regret a missed chance. That spring show ('*Beauty and the Beast*' ie *Spring Watch*) of course had whetted our appetite for a visit. (I know carbon etc!). Planning is necessary as there is a need to book flights, b&b and car rental. It is not advisable just to arrive and hope, as resources are finite on the islands. Early July is not the best time to go but not the worst either. Breeding was largely over at the sea bird colonies but at that time birds were still present in large numbers, not breaking up and returning to sea until early August. We had ten days walking, birding and looking at the varied archaeological remains. Make no mistake the islands require four OS mapsheets and there is a need to coordinate trips with ferries. Highlights included the colonies of puffins and guillemots at Sumburgh Head where the

RSPB has its HQ (closed on our visit). The local ‘sparrows’ were twites. My ‘target’ species was red-throated diver. They nest on small lochs but where to find them in the myriad of such lochs dotted around all the islands? There is a good little guide, *Where to watch birds in Shetland* by Hugh Harrop – useful although much of it is geared to the places to check during the spring and autumn migration periods. On our travels we met a birding group whom we saw several times so this helped. We had a good view of several divers and the best being able to see a bird sitting on its nest on the shoreline with its mate swimming nearby. Whooper swans were seen in one of the sea lochs. We made a trip to Hermaness NNR and walked out to view the lighthouse at Muckle Flugga (an amazing name of the most northerly point of UK!) and see the Gannetry. Hermaness also holds a huge number (several hundred) of nesting great skuas. Although most of the breeding had taken place, I nearly trod on a chick which looked, for all the world, like a piece of old wool discarded by the sheep which grazed the area. Needless to say we were bombed!

Our other highlight was the night visit to the broch on Mousa. This was also featured on ‘*Beauty and the Beast*’. Mousa is a small island off the eastern coast of Mainland. The broch is a restored Pictish stone tower. There are many such brochs all over Shetland, nearly all in complete ruins. The broch on Mousa and the surrounding boulder beach is the nest site for a large colony of storm petrels. Like the Manx shearwaters on Skomer they only return at night to feed their mate or young. The night boat trip departs at 2300 hrs and the crossing takes around 20 minutes and returns at around 0100 hrs. At this latitude there is still some light and it is not until it is almost dark that the birds return. They hover around the tower and somehow manage to locate their own nest entrance. It is possible to hear the young calling from within the stone walls and among the boulders on the stony beach. The storm petrels flutter around and resemble bats rather than birds. It was a fascinating visit.

Weather plays a big part in any trip to this part of the world. Whilst we were glad to be away from the heat-wave for a while (our b&b hostess’s husband considered that 18 degrees C constituted sufficient of a heat-wave for him to stop painting his fence!), wind stopped us making a daytime trip to Mousa and also led to the cancellation of a trip to Noss NNR, both were to have been RSPB led visits. However there is always another time and we hope to revisit soon, assuming that Atlantic Airways consider their service to be economical.

Note: If you stay at a b&b it is advisable to book dinner in the evenings. Failure to do so at worst means disappointment and at best you are viewed as an alien parachutist!

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	Mew Gull <i>Larus canus</i>
Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Black-legged Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Common Eider <i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	Common Guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i>
Northern Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i>
European Storm-petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	Black Guillemot <i>Cephus grylle</i>
Northern Gannet <i>Morus bassanus</i>	Atlantic Puffin <i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Sky Lark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>

Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	White / Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	Winter Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Hooded Crow <i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Twite <i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	



A VISIT TO THE SWANNERY AT ABBOTSBURY, DORSET

(Ken Wright)

On 28 May Meg and I visited the Swannery at Abbotsbury, which lies behind Chesil Beach in the lagoon. I had never been there before and I cannot recall seeing an article in our publications.

The centre provides a good café and shop. It is easy to reach and park. The cost of entrance was very good value as we had an excellent day out. We had a very sunny day and it was dry underfoot. There were lots of people visiting that day but the facilities were not overwhelmed.

I was very impressed to see how the Mute Swans build their nests in any available spot close to water and we were delighted to see so many signets (plus eggs still on some nests). The birds have taken to the public and there was not much evidence of hissing! The females seem to be good mothers and the males were efficient at guarding the families; in one nest there were 8 signets. There were very large numbers and I did not even attempt to count numbers.

The way the nests are built caused us a certain amount of laughter. One bird, maybe trying for the first time, was on the pathway and picking up straw piece by piece and putting it in a small bundle behind itself. It seemed to lack that vital piece of knowledge in choosing a site and construction.

In addition to the swans there are some other birds and we saw Canada Goose, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Swallow, Tufted Duck, Ruddy Duck, Pheasant and Crow. There was the possibility for more species even just looking out over the water. In addition there are numerous walks laid out to follow.



THE ANNUAL MEANDERINGS OF THE CHAIRMAN

(Rodney Walker)

Since returning from the wonderful Hallchurch Ethiopian tour in the Spring I have continued to travel mainly as part of my business but occasionally for pleasure too!



Stockholm 2006!

So here are a few of my 'as usual' random and very amateur findings. As I am writing, Autumn 2006 has finally arrived in Cheshire (after a very warm Summer and October) and my garden birds are returning to my feeders – Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Magpie, Crows and Jackdaws, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch. Even our local Sparrowhawk has made a showing and the Tawny Owl is in full voice.

Yesterday (Bonfire night) we spent the early evening in the English Nature hide on Aqualate Mere, close to Newport, Shropshire (780203). The setting sun was absolutely fantastic as it played its myriad of colours on the clouds and continued for at least half an hour through its oranges, reds, purples and pinks; indeed our very own firework display. Oh to be in England on such an evening; and the silhouetting of The Wrekin finally sealed it for us. But not before we had seen the Autumn display of thousand of Starlings over the lake. As well as the Starlings we gained a handful of Tits (oh wouldn't that be marvellous!) – Marsh, Willow, Coal, Blue, Great, and Long-Tailed; were regaled by roosting Pheasants and added, in the gloom, at least Great Crested Grebe, Lesser Black-backed Gull (100s), Black-headed Gull (100s), Grey Heron, Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Wigeon, Mallard, Common Pochard, Tufted duck, Red-legged Partridge, Moorhen, Coot (100), Crows and Jackdaws.

Late in October I visited my sister in Cornwall where she has now settled and we went for a walk along Fisherman's Creek on the Helford Estuary. To our surprise we saw a Razorbill, in winter plumage, ducking and diving alongside a Black-headed Gull as the tide rose in the creek. Is this unusual I ask myself and you the readers too? The only birds in the creek that day were 20 or so Little Egrets in their tree top colony (does one call it an egretary?) and a very vociferous Curlew.

And whilst in Cornwall I received the following from friends who were visiting their family in Moscow:

“From your own correspondent
North Central Moscow - near the Red Army Theatre

Between the blocks of flats are small areas of tree lined walk ways, corrugated steel garages, rubbish compounds and play parks. Cats are a rare sight. Perhaps the semi-feral dog packs are too much of a challenge for their survival. Everyday these areas are swept clean and at this time of year neat piles of leaves complete the scene - or almost. Intriguingly there are several groups of twenty or so birds foraging on the damp earth, unworried by the close passage of human feet. Hooded Crows are seen rubbing shoulders with Rooks; Collared* Jackdaws with Pigeons. With the exception of one Great Tit combing the spaces between some brick work, Sparrows are the only other birds in the park. These fluffy little balls are feeding like there is no tomorrow. When the Moscow temperature falls to minus 30 and sometimes below, when thick snow covers the ground, for many there will be no tomorrow.

ENDS

This link below supposedly shows a Collared Jackdaw but the ones that I've seen here have a white mark which just rings the neck; wider at the back tapering to nothing near the front.

<http://www.mangoverde.com/wbg/spec/spec189-79.html>”

Late in September we spent 5 days on a coastal cruise down the Norwegian coast from Kirkenes in the North to Bergen dropping in on many a port at all times of the day and night. Birding was not top of the agenda for the very simple reason that we saw very few of them! It was interesting to remind oneself of how inhospitable the frozen north and

that coast line can be even though we had excellent weather on the trip. Inside the Arctic Circle our main sightings were of Cormorants, Herring (grey) Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Kittiwake, Eider ducks, Raven and Hooded Crows. Once round North Cape I had my solitary sighting of a solitary Gannet (special bird for me), along with a few Whoopers, a Great Northern Diver, a Slavonian Grebe and a Common Tern. Then as we



entered calmer water we saw large flocks of Red-breasted Merganser and Goosander. You will note that, at this stage, we had not seen any normal garden birds.

Entering Raftsundet, a narrow channel north of the Lofoten Islands we had our first sightings of Sea Eagle, 3 on one small island. What joy and ever so close. By the end of that day we had seen at least 10 of them, both on the shore and islands and circling

around at height. Then to make our trip totally worthwhile the Northern Lights performed for us all before we crossed the Arctic Circle. Very soon we came across Grey Heron, Mallard, Starlings, Great Tits, Magpies and House Sparrows. A wander around Trondheim early one morning, Christiansund that afternoon and a day later Bergen confirmed that garden birds were able to survive this far north.

There have also been a few wonderful days on The Wirral and the Dee Estuary. Remarkably the best could well have been during the Summer, Sunday 23 July, when we visited RSPB Inner Marsh Farm and then moved on to the Deeside Naturalist's Reserve at Connah's Quay. In the space of 3 or so hours we saw 38 species as detailed below. It was good to see Spotted Redshank and 3 Little Ringed Plovers. But pride of place goes to the 3 Water Rails found lurking in the reeds at Inner Marsh Farm. Actually they spent quite a while not lurking but giving us full frontal views in the open.

Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i>	Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>
Greater Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i>	Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Common Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Eurasian Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Little Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Black-billed Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>

Finally in our local Wybunbury sand quarry in September we came across a family of Red Grouse, miles from where I would thought they should have been!

May I wish you all a Happy Christmas.

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