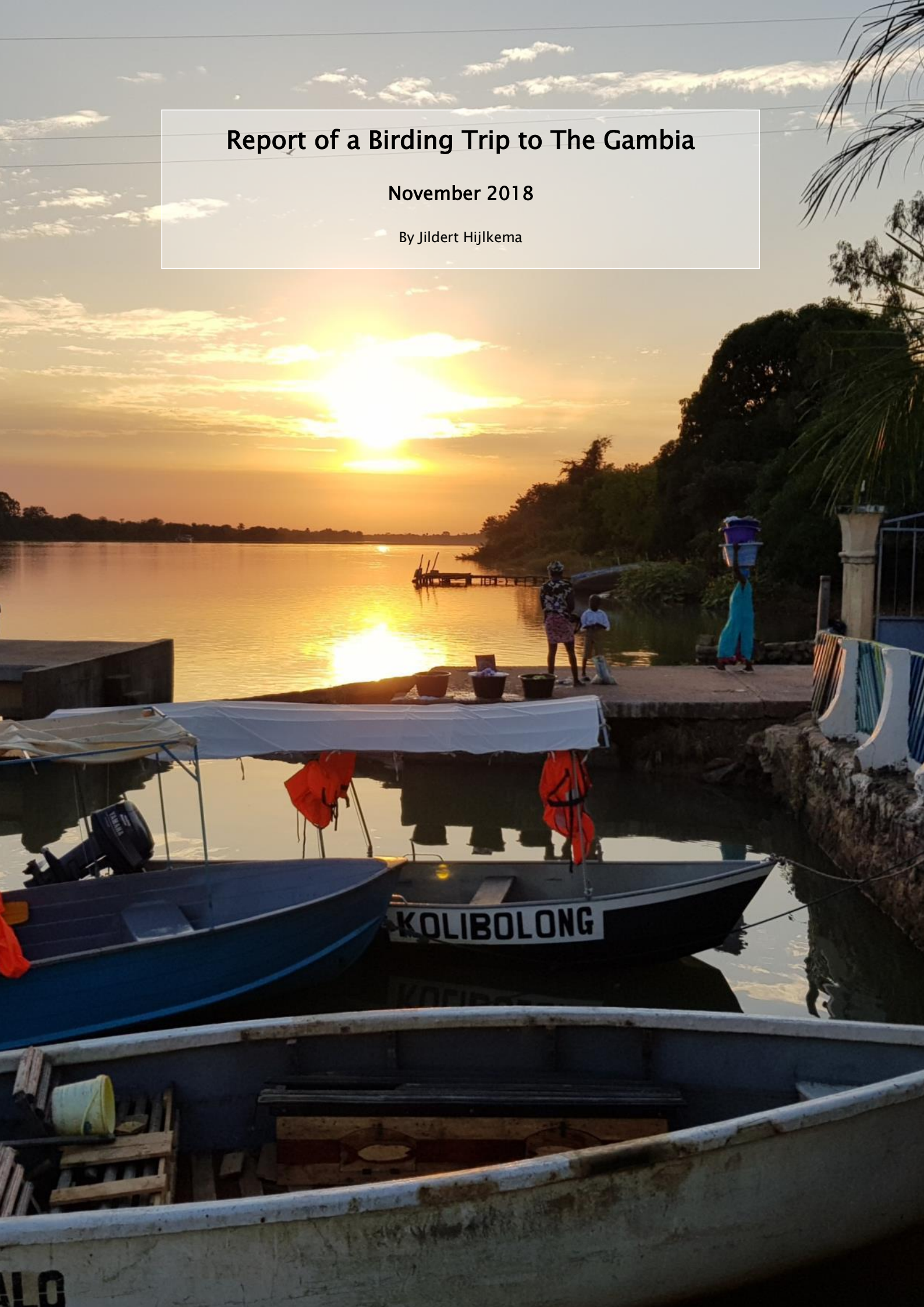


# Report of a Birding Trip to The Gambia

November 2018

By Jildert Hijlkema



**Written by:**

Jildert Hijlkema

E: [jildert.hijlkema@hotmail.com](mailto:jildert.hijlkema@hotmail.com)

**Participants:**

Bo Andernach

André Geelhoed

Jildert Hijlkema

Jasper Hooymans

Joep Hooymans

Rens Huizinga

The Netherlands



**Organized by:**



**Gambia Birding Experience**

Henk Schuurman

The Netherlands

T: +31(0) 651521934

<http://www.gambia-birdingexperience.com>

Foday Bojang (bird guide)

The Gambia

T: +220 778 8261



**Cover photo**

Sunrise at Baobolong Guest House, The Gambia,  
22 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)


## Preface

Immediately after the birding trip to Oman back in February/March 2017, The Gambia was mentioned as a potential destination for our next birding trip. Given the relatively small size of the country, the Gambia has a high number of (colourful) species. This is the main reason why in the first place the Gambia attracted us to be the next birding destination. Besides that, the Gambia is known to be a good start for birding in Africa. Moreover, after conducting a research and contacting a substantial amount of birding guides, we finally found Henk Schuurman from Gambia Birding Experience in which I contacted him in April 2017. After having regular contacts through email and WhatsApp with Henk Schuurman, a deal was made around June/July. The concrete details about the trip was done after booking the flight tickets.

All the processes we had done to arrange our trip turned out to be good choices and you can read it further in this report. Hopefully, this trip report can be a help for you in arranging your itinerary for a birding trip to this pleasant country. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. This report itself does not have any GPS coordinates, but when you click on the species in this report, you will be directed to the website where you can find the exact GPS coordinates of each single observations. The species are shown in bold in this report. Only GPS details of roosting birds or threatened mammals are obscured. Additionally, to get you to the single observations, you might need to change the date (<12 November 2018). The screen shot below will help you to get a better understanding.

Jildert Hijlkema

On behalf of the rest of the group: Bo Andernach, André Geelhoed, Jasper Hooymans, Joep Hooymans and Rens Huizinga.


**Gambia Biodiversity**  
[Add](#) [Observations](#) [Overviews](#) [My observation.org](#)

---

**Jildert Hijlkema**  
**Observations**

from  to   
search for  within remarks ☐  
species group   
rarity

Month   
Country   
Tag   
Validation   
Certain   
Rows   
☐ only hidden

Date	Time	details	Species	Area	Pr	Status		
22-11-2018	11:02	10	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Central River Division CRD (13.5625,-14.8409)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
19-11-2018	11:14	17	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Pirang former shrimp farm (13.2781,-16.5193)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
18-11-2018	15:32	30	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Kartong (13.088,-16.7659)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
18-11-2018	15:02	5	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Kartong (13.092,-16.7638)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
16-11-2018	10:28	5	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Kotu ponds (13.4593,-16.7031)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
16-11-2018	09:09	8	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Kotu Bridge (13.461,-16.7048)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
13-11-2018	16:22	1 calling	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Marakissa woods (13.1924,-16.6542)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
13-11-2018	08:02	1	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Marakissa woods (13.1923,-16.654)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
12-11-2018	17:51	6	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Marakissa woods (13.1919,-16.6542)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>
12-11-2018	17:49	1	White-faced Whistling Duck - <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Gambia - Marakissa woods (13.192,-16.6542)	GM			<input type="checkbox"/>

## Contents

<b>1. The Practical Guide</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Flights	4
1.2 Visas and travel advice	4
1.3 Language	4
1.4 Accommodations	5
<b>2. The Site Guide</b>	<b>10</b>
Itinerary	10
Marakissa Woods	11
Lamin	14
Abuko Nature Reserve	15
Brufut Woods	18
Tanji Beach	20
Kotu Creek	21
Pirang Forest National Park	24
Farasuto Forest	25
Tujereng	27
Kartong	28
Pirang Former Shrimp Farm	31
Kiang West National Park	33
Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve	35
Janjanbureh (Georgetown)	38
Bansang	40
North Bank	42
AbCa's Creek	44
Pirang Forest National Park	46
Marakissa Woods	48
<b>3. Review</b>	<b>49</b>
3.1 Conclusion	49
3.2 Statistics	49
3.3 Missing species	49
3.4 Considerations	50
3.5 Acknowledgements	50



<b>4. Annotated list .....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.1 Birds.....	53
4.2 Mammals .....	70
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>71</b>
I Global map.....	71

## 1. The Practical Guide

### 1.1 Flights

Airlines such as TUI and Corendon offer direct flights from the Netherlands, however, there are more flight options if you do not mind flying with a transfer. In certain periods, airlines are only flying on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, although we had our return flight on Tuesday. We flew with TUI and arrived at Banjul International Airport (see our schedule below) after a nearly 6-hour flight. The airport is actually located 23km away from the capital Banjul. Our guide collected us at the airport.

Rens arrived a few days later on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, flying with TUI Belgium from Brussels. As it was not possible to rebook his flight to our flight, he also returned separately with TUI Belgium back to Brussels with a transfer in Cape Verde (to fuel).

m 12/11 - 08:00	AMS AMSTERDAM	.....✈	BJL BANJUL	m 12/11 - 14:05
tu 27/11 - 15:05	BJL BANJUL	✈.....	AMS AMSTERDAM	tu 27/11 - 22:50

### 1.2 Visas and travel advice

Although in January 2017 the Gambia experienced a peaceful handover of power to President Adama Barrow and his coalition government, traveling in The Gambia is very safe as long as you take sensible precautions to safeguard your personal possessions. For traveling to Gambia, no visa is needed.

#### Travel vaccinations

Yellow fever vaccination is recommended, but also mandatory if you come from a high-risk country for yellow fever. No country requires vaccination against cholera. However, a number of countries (Gambia included) still require a cholera stamp from incoming travellers. Vaccinations for DTP, hepatitis A and rabies (little risk with mammals) are recommended.

However, we practically did not suffer from flies and mosquitos, malaria protection is also recommended. Generally, there are more mosquitos and flies in the rainy season, which usually lasts from late June to October.

### 1.3 Language


Alongside Mandingo; spoken as the first language by 38% of the population, several other (local) languages are spoken. English is the main language used for official purposes and in education. Whilst the various tribal languages are used by the Gambians to converse between themselves, the official language and language of instruction in most schools is English (The Gambia is a former British colony).


As expected, we experienced that English is a widely spoken language in the country, even in the in-lands.

## 1.4 Accommodations

Tourist accommodations in the Gambia are ranged from extremely luxurious hotels (mainly at the coast) to basic lodges. As we asked the Gambia Birding Experience (our trip organizer) to keep our costs low, we mainly stayed in basic lodges during our trip. Our accommodations were mostly situated in great locations for birders or with a beautiful garden for bird watching. Please find below the list of the lodges we stayed in, including our short reviews.

**Marakissa Rivercamp**, tel. +220 9905852 / +220 7779487, E: [info@marakissarivercamp.nl](mailto:info@marakissarivercamp.nl)

 Marakissa Highway (gps: 13.193, -16.654)

 Limited available on request


 Available


### Review

The lodges can be described as basic, hygienic and expedient. The hosts, Joop (fellow Dutch) and Adama, will make you feel very welcome. Furthermore, Adama's breakfast and dinner were more than decent. In the lodges, mosquito nets were available, although electricity was only available in the restaurant (when the sun gives enough power). Many water bowls are placed in the gardens and the terrace, this had given us the opportunity to see some excellent colorful species such as Violet Turaco, Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat to only name a few.

As the camp is situated along the Allahein River, it is also possible to make a boat ride. This water side hosts many Pied Kingfishers in which they are coming for their colonial roost. Moreover, the West African Crocodiles seemed to be common around the camp. At the camp and its surroundings, we saw an impressive number of 120 different bird species, thus this site cannot be missed.

**Tendaba Camp**, no official contact details available

 Tendaba (gps: 13.439, -15.809)

 Available after payment

 Available

### Review

The lodges can be described as really nothing special, outdated and very basic. There was one day that we did not have any water supplies due to technical problems, which applied to the whole camp. The food was okay, electricity and mosquito nets were available.





As Marakissa Rivercamp is situated along the Allaheh River it is possible to make adventurous canoe trips between West African Crocodiles.



The owner Adama, as usual dressed colourful, leads us to our lodges.



Furthermore, the camp site is situated perfectly at the South bank of the mighty Gambia River, it is the opposite to Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve and near the King West National Park. Both places are recommended birding areas. Boat trips from the camp to Bao Bolong were organized manifold. You should not be surprised if your boat leaks a little (Gambian people do not even panic).

**Baobolong Guest House**, tel. 220 7648844

📍 Boraba Street, Janjanbureh (gps: 13.543, -14.763)

📶 Not available

P Available

### Review

A small camp, situated in Janjanbureh (formerly known as MacCarthy Island) along the mighty Gambia River. Lodges are comparable to the lodges at Tendaba Camp, basic and unhygienic. Although, the others had fairly good rooms. The freshly prepared local food was a real joy as well as the view from the terrace, especially in the morning during sunrise. From here, we had a really good boat ride and we saw all the main target species in the morning (see further in this trip report). After a long day birding, we even had a short swim in the Gambia River to cool down. It was a great experience.



Tendaba Camp is basic, but offers some good birding.



Sunrise at Baobolong.

**AbCa's Creek Lodge**, +220 7994414 (English) / +220 7994413 (Dutch / English),  
E: [abcagambia@hotmail.com](mailto:abcagambia@hotmail.com)

📍 Kassagne (gps: 13.228, -16.223)

📶 Not available

P Available

### Review

This lodge is located in a beautiful birding area, to be precise in the inland of the Gambia. It is also a nice place to stay for tourists who would like to experience the traditional way of living and experience the real Gambia (thus not the coastal area). You can book excursions and any other activities at the lodge to make the most of your visit.

The standard of this lodge is relatively high for Gambian standards, perhaps this is due to the Dutch influences as one of the owners is Dutch. The lodges were very clean, electricity was even available in the lodges itself and the garden was maintained carefully with the attention for birds. The woodlands around also offered some very interesting birding. Hospitality and a personal approach to visitors were the important characteristics and they offered various (and fresh) food. Very recommended, even if you are not a birder.





Facilities for having a relaxing time are widely available at AbCa's Creek Lodge.



As AbCa's Creek Lodge is built along a creek it is possible to make a canoe trip.

## 2. The Site Guide

### Itinerary

12-11-2018	Marakissa Woods
13-11-2018	Marakissa Woods
14-11-2018	Lamin Lodge and Abuko Nature Reserve
15-11-2018	Brufut Woods and Tanji Beach
16-11-2018	Kotu Creek
17-11-2018	Pirang Forest and Farasuto Forest
18-11-2018	Tujereng and Kartong
19-11-2018	Pirang Former Shrimp Farm and Kampanti Rice Fields ('Raptor Track')
20-11-2018	Kiang West National Park and Tendaba Woods
21-11-2018	Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve (Tendaba Mangrove Area)
22-11-2018	Janjanbureh (Georgetown)
23-11-2018	Bansang
24-11-2018	North Bank
25-11-2018	AbCa's Creek
26-11-2018	Kampanti Rice Fields ('Raptor Track') and Pirang Forest
27-11-2018	Marakissa Woods and Penjem Woods

*A global map of these areas and observations is included in the **Appendix**.*





## Marakissa Woods

12 – 13 November 2018

After a seven-hour flight, we arrived at Banjul International Airport (BJL) at 2:05 PM local time. After collecting our luggage, we immediately picked up by **Foday Bojang** from the **Gambia Birding Experience**, our bird guide for the next over two weeks. Divided into two cars, we were headed towards **Marakissa Rivercamp**, our one-week base for the coastal part of our birding trip.

### Marakissa Woods

Just before arriving at Marakissa, we could not resist the birds and stopped for a little while for some roadside birding. This short stop turned out to be some good birding for the next hour. We started with a stunning **Lanner Falcon** perched in a low tree along the roadside. The birds came so quickly and made it quite challenging for us to keep up with the note (via mobile application called Obsmapp). Birds like **Western Red-billed Hornbill**, **Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu**, **Beautiful Sunbird**, **African Grey Hornbill**, **Glossy-backed Drongo**<sup>1</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> Due to recent taxonomic changes (formerly known as Fork-tailed Drongo).

<sup>2</sup> Due to recent taxonomic changes (formerly known

**Common Bulbul**, **African Wattled Lapwing**, **Yellow-billed Kite**, **Piapiac**, **Red-billed Firefinch** and **Western Plantain-eater** were all proved to be common. Additionally, a large amount of **Hooded Vultures** and **Pied Crows** were always on view during our southwards ride from Bri-kama (the second-largest town in the Gambia after Serekunda) to Marakissa.

In the half-open (former) rice fields also striking species such as **Blue-bellied Roller**, **African Green Pigeon**, **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, **Senegal Parrot**, **Northern Red Bishop** and **Black-winged Red Bishop** were added to the list. Among the list, the last two species were in full breeding plumage. We had also a short view of both **Lesser Blue-eared Starling** and the odd **Long-tailed Glossy Starling**; those were species that we would see more often around the water bowls in the gardens of Marakissa Rivercamp. Foday and I had a brief view of a single **Western Square-tailed Drongo**<sup>2</sup>, an uncommon and therefore unexpected species. Unfortunately, the rest of the group could not catch up with

---

<sup>2</sup> Due to recent taxonomic changes (formerly known as Square-tailed Drongo).

this species due to some divided birding. Afterwards, in the evening, I found out that I missed a few species such as **Yellow-crowned Gonolek** and **Senegal Eremomela**, which had been seen by the others.

### **Marakissa Rivercamp**

Our roadside birding to Marakissa Rivercamp was only a 500m drive. Once we arrived, we found out that the camp offered some spectacular birding as the camp is situated at the bank of the Allahein River, which is connected to the Atlantic Ocean South of Kartong and follows the Gambia–Senegal border. At the sandy banks, **Senegal Thick-knee** was common and the water attracts species such as **Pied Kingfisher** and **Giant Kingfisher**. A single **Black Crake** and an **African Golden Oriole** were shown as well. An **African Darter** and a juvenile **Black-crowned Night Heron** were both found in different roosting sites (trees) near the water. A single **Northern White-faced Owl** preferred bamboo as its roosting site. Some **West African Crocodiles** were also lounging around in the water besides the camp.

While our guide explained our itinerary for the next following days, his story was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a **Violet Tura-co**. The bird was attracted by the water bowls in the garden. Seeing a Violet Turaco was probably one of our highlights on that day. Unfortunately, a **Shining Blue Kingfisher** (a kind of species that I desperately hoped for) was seen shortly around the camp by two of the group members and it was not seen by me this time.

The next day, we had an easy day around the camp to acclimatize to the Gambia. The surroundings of the camp can be described as vegetated (former) rice fields with palms, due to deforestation not really woody. Woodlands

alternated with swamps is probably the best description. Despite deforestation, an interesting variety of birds can still be seen around such as **Hamerkop**, **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Northern Puffback**, **African Jacana**, **Malachite Kingfisher** and **Blue-breasted Kingfisher**. Near the bridge that is located on the South of the camp, we found two male **Pin-tailed Whydahs**, a **Yellow-crowned Gonolek** and two **Western Violet-backed Sunbirds**. When the temperatures raised in the middle of the day, we returned to the garden of the Marakissa Rivercamp and watched dozens of birds drinking at the lodge's water bowls. At this point, we mainly saw species that we had already seen before, however, without any exception, it was still a stunning view to see those birds from close range.

In the afternoon, it was the time for us all meet up again for our afternoon stroll through the surrounding woodlands. Today was keen to show us some beautiful **Grey-headed Bushshrikes**. Within only a few metres from the entrance, we already saw **Yellow-billed Shrikes**, **Green Wood Hoopoes** and a **Long-crested Eagle**, peering around for prey on the ground. One of the highlights of this walk was a **Red-chested Goshawk** found in the garden of the neighbouring Kingfisher's Lodge.

Highlights: **Red-chested Goshawk**, **Violet Tura-co**, **Northern White-faced Owl**, **Grey-headed Kingfisher**, **Blue-breasted Kingfisher**, **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Shining Blue Kingfisher**, **Giant Kingfisher**, **African Pied Hornbill**, **Grey-headed Bushshrike**, **African Golden Oriole**, **Pin-tailed Whydah** and **West African Crocodile**.





**Northern Red Bishop** *Euplectes franciscanus*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)







Lamin

14 November 2018

We left Marakissa Rivercamp at 6:30 AM, the day started with a typical call from a **Pearl-spotted Owlet**. A nocturnal species who is also active on daylight. The sound of Pearl-spotted Owlet is one of Foday's favorites to imitate. More details about this will follow.

Arriving at 7:20 AM in Lamin (also known as Lamin Lodge), we had a quick coffee with biscuits before boarding our canoe and set off riverward. During this start we were accompanied by our first **Green Monkeys** (be aware of your food, especially bananas as it can be easily stolen by the monkeys). The boat trip gave an excellent view of expected species such as **Pied Kingfisher**, **Giant Kingfisher** and **Blue-breasted Kingfisher**. Although the first **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** gave us a great deal of enthusiasm, a quick observation of an overflying **White-throated Bee-eater** was less satisfying. The creek is one of the places to see **Mangrove Sunbird** in which we saw twice during this boat trip.

A **Fine-spotted Woodpecker** and an **African Sacred Ibis** could be classified as notable species as later on during our trip they proved to

be not that common. Moreover, Foday showed us his birding skills by pointing at a shy and well-hidden **White-backed Night Heron**; a species that we hoped for. We also had brief view of a **Yellow-crowned Gonolek**. Further during this trip, this specie proved to be not that rare. Back at the mooring place, we had a good view of a colourful **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**.

### Lamin Rice Fields

After a decent breakfast, we had a short walk through the rice fields and its surroundings. For an hour we encountered different species, such as **Little Bee-eater**, **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird**, **African Grey Woodpecker**, **Bronze Manakin** and **Lizard Buzzard**. Our first flyby of **Pink-backed Pelicans** was good.

Highlights: Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, White-throated Bee-eater, Mangrove Sunbird, **White-backed Night Heron**, Bearded Barbet, Green Monkey.





Abuko Nature Reserve

14 November 2018

Although some trip reports stated that the quality of Abuko Nature Reserve is declining, however, it is still offering some very good birding and amazing richness of wildlife. Your visit to the Gambia is not complete without visiting Abuko.

The fenced park is rectangular in shape and covers an area of 105 hectares (roughly 2 square km). From Lamin it is not even half an hour drive. After the entrance, we entered this small protected patch of gallery forest which provides an oasis for wildlife amid the hustle and bustle of African life outside. We slowly ambled off on foot on a sandy path into the dry jungle. The canopy was high above us and giant palms jostled for space above the tangles understory with long lianas and spiky rattan reaching from top to bottom and veering off at impossible angles that defied logical growing directions. Our first notable sightings in succession: **African Pygmy Kingfisher**, **Blackcap Babbler** and some **Fanti Saw-wings** darting around. Some **Common Wattle-eyes** sang invisibly but were thankfully seen a little later. A single **Guinea Turaco** was right away one of the highlights. Later we would see a stunning cou-

ple of them and its typical behaviour, running over the branches.

When the temperatures raised in the middle of the day, we had some relaxing time at the Darwin Field Centre. The terrace (on poles) gave an excellent view at the Bamboo Pool, the biggest of three pools in the reserve. From there, we had a sufficient view of a **Broad-billed Roller**, a pair of **Malachite Kingfishers** who zipped around and a majestic **West African Crocodile** who slowly left the pool.

Furthermore, at the gallery forest, we had a good view of both **African Paradise Flycatcher** and **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher**. The birds came in quickly with **Little Greenbul**, **Black-necked Weaver**, **Yellow-breasted Apalis** and **Lesser Honeyguide**. We also encountered our first **Nile Monitor**, which ran away quickly after being noticed. Some **Temminck's Red Colobus** crashed noisily through the forest canopy. A **Western Bluebill** proved to be elusive as it has only been heard.

## **Photo hide**

As we are hard core birders (not bird photographers), we were a bit sceptical at first when Foday lead us to the photo hide. It soon proved to be a superb experience with a stunning close-up view of **Little Bee-eaters, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, African Pygmy Kingfisher** and a stunning **Woodland Kingfisher**. The highlights were probably the elusive birds such as **Oriole Warbler, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, Grey-headed Bristlebill** and a rare **Red-tailed Leaflove**.

## **Marakissa Rivercamp**

At 5:30 AM, we headed back to Marakissa and had a quick check on Shining Blue Kingfisher near the bridge of the camp, which turned out to be unsuccessful. As the light started to fade away, we managed to see a brief sortie of no less than three **White-crowned Robin-Chats**! Back at Marakissa Rivercamp, we managed to see a couple of **Hadada Ibises**. This was great for me as the day before I missed seeing the bird when two of the group members saw them flying to their roosting tree near by the camp.

Highlights: **Guinea Turaco, Temminck's Red Colobus, Oriole Warbler, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, Woodland Kingfisher, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Shikra, Red-tailed Leaflove** and Grey-headed Bristlebill.





**Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone rufiventer*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Red-tailed Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Shikra** *Accipiter badius*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)







## Brufut Woods

15 November 2018

After an hour driving, we reached Brufut Woods via a random road between houses in the village, bumping down a dusty track and waving at the numerous small children with beaming smiles. The forest itself contained small patches of dense coastal forest with a collection of copses and scrubby patches interlinked by farm plots of shrubby strips. A large amount of species were seen in which most of those species had already been seen previously. **Pallid Swift**, **White-billed Buffalo Weaver** (although we saw the large impressive nests earlier), **Red-necked Falcon**, **Vitelline Masked Weaver**, **Orange-cheeked Waxbill** and **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** all proved to be new for the trip. The same goes with the **Singing Cisticola**, it was our first species of this difficult tribe. Seeing a noisy pair of territorial **Stone Partridges** was excellent.

When we were having lunch around the water bowls, a few species such as **African Pygmy Kingfisher**, **Yellow-crowned Gonolek**, **Lavender Waxbills**, **Lesser Honeyguide**, **Greater Honeyguide**, **Blackcap Babbler** and **Yellow-throated Leaflove** were seen. Also, a couple of splendid **Violet Turaco's** hang around long

enough to get some decent pictures. This raised us a question whether or not this species can be missed.

After lunch, a short amble through the brush in silent running mode allowed our guides took us to a roosting **Long-tailed Nightjar**. During our return, we luckily encountered a **Cardinal Woodpecker**. One or more **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters** were present too as well as a **Splendid Sunbird** was noticed.

Highlights: **Violet Turaco**, **Stone Partridge**, **Orange-cheeked Waxbill**, **Long-tailed Nightjar** and **Cardinal Woodpecker**.





**Violet Turaco** *Musophaga violacea*, Brufut Woods, The Gambia (Bo Andernach)



**Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus*, Brufut Woods, The Gambia (Jasper Hooymans)





Tanji Beach

15 November 2018

Driving from Brufut Woods to Tanji was relatively a short drive. Tanji Fishing Village and the adjacent Bird Reserve is worth the visit for some coastal birding. Although we did not visit the actual bird reserve itself. At the beach, we saw a great number of **Grey-headed Gulls**, **Royal Terns** and **Lesser-Crested Terns**. Those species are probably restricted within the Gambia to Tanji and Kartong (see further in this trip report).

A **Great Cormorant** flew by, and afterwards proved to be the one and only during the trip. In this trip, we also saw our first **Great White Pelican**. Also some waders feeding in a tiny tidal pool were added to the list. All palearctic migrants.

### Marakissa Rivercamp

It was uncertain whether or not more species could have been added and therefore, due to lack of time we headed back to the Marakissa Rivercamp. Soon after our arrival, the calls of a **Pearl-Spotted Owlet** attracted our attention as we still had not seen this species. After a short walk we could not relocate the bird. However,

we bumped into a **Fine-spotted Woodpecker** in which we assumed to be nearby its breeding hole. The day ended with a calling from **African Scops Owl**, we even heard them singing after dinner.



**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus*, Tanji Beach, The Gambia, 15 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*, Tanji Beach, The Gambia, 15 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)





16 November 2018

The next day, we headed to Kotu Creek; a popular birding spot in the Gambia. The area incorporates Kotu Bridge, cycle track, sewage ponds and the Fajara Golf Course. It contains a large variety of habitats from mangroves, mudflats, freshwater pools, rice fields, scrubs to open woodlands. This area is therefore holding an impressive range of species.

#### Kotu Bridge

Starting at the famous bridge, we saw a few species such as **Common Bulbuls**, **Giant Kingfishers**, **Bronze Mannakins**, **African Palm Swifts**, **Red-billed Firefinches** and **Spur-winged Lapwings** while lots of **Pied Kingfishers** hovered before plunging from height into the shallows. We also had a close view of some **Reed Cormorants** and a new species for our trip, a **Bronze-tailed Starling**. Moreover, the bridge is a meeting point for the Gambian bird guides, all of them keen to provide a service to the tourist birders. They all knew and respected today, so we got no hassle at all.

#### Kotu Creek & sewage ponds

Across the bridge, we bounded eastwards where we saw a (much wanted) **Black Heron**. Unfortunately, the bird was seen without its typical umbrella behaviour. Additionally, there were many other great species around that were found such as **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Tawny-flanked Prinia**, **African Grey Woodpecker** (we were hoping to see **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** as this species was recorded to be in this area thus, there should be a big possibility that the bird will be seen around this area), **Intermediate Egret**, **African Jacana** and **Black-headed Heron**. The sewage ponds produced mainly species we already know from home, like **Little Grebe**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Wood Sandpiper**. Besides that we encountered a pair of swimming **Nile Monitors**.

Heading towards Fajara Golf Course, we crossed a small bridge. Both **African Darter** and a **Striated Heron** were present. We also recorded a flyby of an **African Sacred Ibis** twice.



## **Fajara Golf Course**

An interesting walk along the crispy brown fairways ensured a lively pair of **Green Wood Hoopes** posing nicely before their nesting hole. Earlier, we again saw (and heard) the beautiful (curious) **Oriole Warbler** gleaning insects in a methodical manner with its olive and yellow plumage. The same thing happened with **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Rose-ringed Parakeet** and **Yellow-fronted Canary**.

Moreover, our bird guide, Foday, dropped us around the water bowls near the Bird Watchers Association office in the middle of the day. This gave him the possibility to collect our friend Rens, who joined us from then, at Banjul International Airport. In the meanwhile, we had some useful birding, accompanied by Mutar, Foday's birding guide employee. The water bowls did not attract any new species, but a pair of **White-crowned Robin-Chats** and a drinking **Nile Monitor** at close range were good.

## **Cycle Track**

When walking over the so called cycle track to the Palm Beach Hotel (for a sanitary stop), we managed to see common species such as **Blue-bellied Roller** and **Squacco Heron**. Near the Badala Park, a **Pearl-Spotted Owlet** responded immediately when Mutar made imitating calls. Shortly after that, we managed to find two birds. This was funny because Foday's attempts earlier to find these species during the trip was unsuccessful. However, this does not mean to be inadequate as without any doubt, Foday is also a great birder.

## **Kotu Bridge**

Back at Kotu Bridge we met with Rens and Foday. At the water bowls, we found a **Northern Crombec** in the bushes around. This is such a

promising start for Rens and it would only become better and better.

## **Palm Beach Hotel**

As we still had not seen the much wanted **Greater Painted-snipe**, Foday came up with an idea to give it a try near the Palm Beach Hotel. Thus, we were directed to a hide which is located on the Southern part of the hotel. This can be reached via a mudfilled car tires path across a swampy area. The hidden entrance of the path is nearby a hotel called Sunprime Tamala Beach.

Rens soon caught up with more common species. After nearly a quarter-hour, Jasper managed to find two **Greater Painted-snipes** on the mudflats hidden under the trees; both females. According to Foday, it is hard to see this bird during this period of the year when grasses are high. A final view over the area revealed a **Swamp Flycatcher**, a good addition to finish a productive birding day.

Highlights: **Black Heron**, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Northern Crombec and **Greater Painted-snipe**.



**Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca*, Kotu Bridge, The Gambia, 16 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**White-crowned Robin-Chat** *Cossypha albicapillus*, Kotu Bridge, The Gambia, 16 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus*, Kotu Bridge, The Gambia, 16 November 2018 (Jildert Hijlkema)



**Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*, Palm Beach Hotel, The Gambia, 16 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)







## Pirang Forest National Park

17 November 2018

We arrived at Pirang Forest around 8:00 AM. The National Park lies in the South of Banjul Airport and North East of the Pirang Village. This is the hometown of our guide, Foday. It covers an area of 158 acres of mature gallery forest, largely protected by the local community. Starting at the outside of the forest, we were shortly caught up with the common species like **African Harrier-Hawk**, **Senegal Coucal**, **Senegal Parrot** and **African Wattled Lapwing**. A **Goliath Heron** caused some confusion for a short while because the habitat did not seem to be suitable. At the outside we had barely a view of a pair of **Brown-necked Parrots**.

Once we entered the forest, **Brown-throated Wattle-eye** was calling virtually everywhere from cover, but mostly did not show up. A male **Collared Sunbird** proved to be the only one. Species who are not that common, like **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** and **Little Weaver**, were also seen.

One of the highlights for sure was a single **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** (the one with the puffy pink eyelids), pointed by a local guide named Edrisa. At this place, other good species like

**Guinea Turaco** and **African Pied Hornbill** gave a stunning view as well. Some **Ahanta Francolins** called around us but refused to make themselves visible. Unfortunately, this happened too with **Green Hylia** and **Blue Malkoha** (also known as **Yellowbill**).

On the other hand, we were having a good view of both **Green Crombecs** (particularly skulky) and a perching **Red-chested Goshawk**.

Furthermore, we headed to the Northern part of the forest to see **White-spotted Flufftail**, which had been intoning its very distinctive call after imitating calls from our local guide. Edrisa directed us to a relatively open spot in the dense and fully shaded forest. However, we could only hear the sound. According to Foday, there might be possibilities for us to come back to this place if time allows at the end of our trip. Additionally, a pair of **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** was notable when we walked back to the car.

Highlights: **Goliath Heron**, **Brown-necked Parrot**, **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Guinea Turaco**, **African Pied Hornbill**, **Green Crombec** and **White-spotted Flufftail**.





## Farasuto Forest

17 November 2018

Our next stop was only a short distance away (West of Farasuto Forest). This next stop provided us with another drinking pool watch point under the shade trees. This was a strategic decision as Foday got information from a local that a Black-faced Firefinch was seen recently. Although we did not see this bird, we had some decent birding with species like **Black-rumped Waxbill**, **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Lavender Waxbill**, **Red-billed Quelea**, **Orange-cheeked Waxbill**, **Namaqua Dove** and **Brown Babbler**. A **Spotted Honeyguide** was less expected, which also applied to a male **Pin-tailed Whydah**. This one had already lost its tail feathers due to molt.

After lunch, we visited a small forest patch. It was a short distance from the Farasuto Forest. We were aiming for a couple of **Greyish Eagle-Owls**. During this purposeful visit, a young local guide, Bakary Kujabi, pointed at Greyish Eagle-Owls's appearance in a tree. Besides the appearance of the owls, the woods were pretty quiet.

## Farasuto Forest

Our visit to the forest started great with a view of a **Violet Turaco**. The appearance of an **African Wood Owl** was again pointed by the same local guide. Finding an **African Wood Owl** proved to be more difficult than finding the other owls, although eventually we saw it sufficiently. A much wanted **Western Bluebill** was again only being heard.

On the Northside of the forest, there were more open parts with water. This is the spot where we saw a **White-backed Night Heron** again. At the sandy banks, common species like **Senegal Thick-knee**, **Common Sandpiper** and **Spur-winged Lapwing** occurred.

However, the halfopen parts of the birds proved to be very diverse. In terms of birds, no new species were added. On our way back to the South Bank Road, we added a new specie to the trip list: **Woodchat Shrike**.

Highlights: **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Greyish Eagle-Owl**, **African Wood Owl** and **White-backed Night Heron**.





**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath*, Pirang Forest, The Gambia, 17 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** *Bubo lacteus*, Pirang Forest, The Gambia, 17 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Greyish Eagle-Owl** *Bubo cinerascens*, Farasuto Forest, The Gambia, 17 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus*, Farasuto Forest, The Gambia, 17 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)







## Tujereng

18 November 2018

When we arrived at Tujereng at 8:30 AM, the area at first did not seem to offer anything special. The area is located on the coastal main road, halfway between Tanji and Sanyang. Tujereng is a mixture of coastal scrub, open woodland and walled areas of cultivated land. Only after a short while, the area already offered an impressive mix of species, including **Black-crowned Tchagra**, **Red-winged Warbler**, **Four-banded Sandgrouse** and a less expected specie, **Great Spotted Cuckoo**. New species such as **Senegal Eremomela**, **Vieillot's Barbet**, **White-fronted Black Chat**, **Northern Black Flycatcher**, **Striped Kingfisher** and **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver** came in quickly. It turned out afterwards that the last one, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver, was the only one we saw on the trip. A couple of **Pied-winged Swallows** also proved to be the only ones of the trip.

Tujereng is known to be a good place to see Brubru and White-shouldered Black Tit. However, according to Foday, due to the rainy conditions, we failed to see them. However, we did manage to see some birds of prey such as: **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **Black-winged Kite**

and **Grey Kestrel**.

Highlights: Vieillot's Barbet, White-fronted Black Chat, **Northern Black Flycatcher**, **Striped Kingfisher** and Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-weaver.



**Pied-winged Swallow** *Hirundo leucosoma*, Tujereng, The Gambia, 18 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)





## Kartong

18 November 2018

After having a decent lunch at the Paradise Beach Bar, we headed towards our destination for the afternoon; a strip of coast – not too far from the Senegal border at Kartong. Near the Kartong Bird Watching Observatory; the only in the country, we found up to four **African Swamphens**. The area appeared to be a strip of semi-cultivated land interspersed with pockets of scrubs, extensive reed beds, dunes, mudflats and shoreline. This area offers habitats to species such as **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Common Snipes**, **African Jacana**, **Black-headed Heron**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Little Grebe**. Additionally, a single **Knob-billed Duck** (albeit sans knob as it was the female persuasion) was found between the flocks of **White-faced Whistling Ducks**, the most numerous species around. Sometimes African Pygmy Goose can also be found here but we did not see any.

Our main quarry here was **White-fronted Plover** and we had to walk down the silvery shell (and plastic) strewn sand before we found a few. Large mixed groups of mainly **Lesser Crested Terns** and **Royal Terns** were present as well. Among those species, **Caspian Terns** were

patrolling up and down along the beach.

**Slender-billed Gull** and **Lesser Black-backed Gull** occurred in less numbers. Luckily, Foday picked out a single **Kelp Gull** between large mixed flocks of gulls and terns, in subadult plumage.

### Balaba Nature Camp

On our way back, we had a short stop at Balaba Nature Camp; a place managed by an English woman who married a Gambian man. Foday received recent information about a pair of Western Bluebills that had been seen regularly from their photo hide. After having a short view of an **African Pygmy Kingfisher** and only some calls of the **Western Bluebill**, we soon left the place because only a few birds were seen around the man-made drinking pool. This birding garden still needs a lot of work to do. Fences around the pools are restricting skulky birds to reach the pool from the ground and lower branches around.

## **Marakissa Rivercamp**

How different is the garden of Marakissa Rivercamp? Back at the camp before dinner, we had a short look at the waterside. Luckily, we managed to find a **Shining-blue Kingfisher**! This time, the whole group had a sufficient view of the bird. Later on while we were having dinner, we heard an **African Scops Owl**.

Highlights: **African Swamphen, White-fronted Plover**, Kelp Gull, African Pygmy Kingfisher and **Shining-blue Kingfisher**.



**African Swampphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis*, Kartong, The Gambia, 18 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**White-fronted Plover** *Charadrius marginatus*, Kartong, The Gambia, 18 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii*, Pirang former shrimp farm, The Gambia, 19 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Brown-necked Parrot** *Poicephalus fuscicollis*, Faraba Bantta - Sotokoi, The Gambia, 19 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)







## Pirang Former Shrimp Farm

19 November 2018

The project shrimp farming failed due to the withdrawal of some investors which resulted in the farm closed down for a while. It has been re-opened now as a birding site, covering an area of shallow small water basins of almost five square km in total. Nowadays, The Pirang former shrimp farm is also known as the Pirang Ponds; home to mainly water birds.

By visiting this birding site, you can add a lot of additional species to your trip. However, in our case, mostly waders that we know from home were added to the list. We also got more notable species such as **African Sacred Ibis**, **Woolly-necked Stork**, **African Spoonbill** and **Yellow-billed Stork**. The list with notable species was also consisted of our first **Brown Snake Eagle**, **African Reed Warbler**, **Red-rumped Swallow** and **Wire-tailed Swallow**. Although at some distance a **Red-breasted Swallow** was considered as one of the highlights. On the other side, we got more close encounters with multiple **Subalpine Warblers** who were mainly skulking in the lower spined scrubs. It was hard to see a pair of **Quailfinches** well, but eventually we had a good

view through the telescope while the bird was foraging at the stoney path.

A good selection of waders with species such as **Dunlins**, **Ruffs**, **Little Stints**, **Curlew Sandpipers**, **Black-winged Stilts**, **Pied Avocets**, **Grey-headed Gulls** and **Black-tailed Godwits** were seen. A small group of **Greater Flamingos** was mentionable. Unfortunately, no Lesser Flamingo was seen among them; a specie which is recorded here sometimes.

Groups of respectively two and twenty-two **Northern Shovelers** were also present. According to Foday, that specie is not really common in the Gambia.

We were grateful to another guided group, probably from England. They saw at least two **White-throated Bee-eaters**, which we only had seen briefly before, and let us know about this. During our walk, we already saw both **Green Bee-eater** and **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**. In the meanwhile, we were watching a male **Namaqua Dove** foraging confidently at the path.

### **South Bank Road**

After leaving the former shrimp farm, it seemed we randomly stopped between Faraba Banta and Sotokoi at the South Bank Road for some birding. But what happened in this stop proved Foday's birding experience and his knowledge of finding specific birds. At this stop, we got an unforgettable view of a pair of the increasingly uncommon **Brown-necked Parrots**; as endemic restricted to West Africa only, cracking fruits in the tree. Apparently, this site is known as a good place as the birds come here regularly from the surrounding forests to find fruits. At this place, other good birds like **Woodland Kingfisher**, **African Golden Oriole** and **Northern Puffback** were present as well. We left the place around 12:30 PM as we planned to drive to Tendaba (around 110km distance) with a few stops on the way.

### **Kampanti Rice Fields ('Raptor Track')**

The Kampanti Ricefields (also known as Kampant) was our first long-stop. This place is a well-known raptor hotspot and therefore, sometimes it is called the 'Raptor Track'. The area comprises rice fields, open savannah and farmlands. Having a sort of siesta near the bridge, the birding site soon proved its fame with the following birds of prey in succession: **African Harrier-Hawk**, **White-backed Vulture**, **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle**, **Western Banded Snake Eagle**, **Palm-nut Vulture** and up to three **Lanner Falcons**. Species as **African Jacana**, **Broad-billed Roller**, **Mosque Swallow**, **Woodland Kingfisher** and **Violet Turaco** occurred as well. Earlier, both **Grashopper Buzzard** and **Purple Roller** started to appear more regularly at the power lines along the roadside as we were heading more to the inland.

The birds came in quickly with **Mottled Spinetails** zipped on cigar shaped bodies, a pair of **Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters**, a calling **Levaillant's Cuckoo** and a small group of **Great White Pelicans**. We also noticed a male **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah** with its long (striking) tail in which looks a bit clumsy in flight.

Leaving this site at 15:30 PM, we had some roadside birding along the South Bank Road more up to the North. A group of an approximately one hundred **Bronze-tailed Starlings**, a single **African Green Pigeon** between some **Bruce's Green Pigeons** were the more notable species. We also had an excellent view of a single **Temminck's Red Colobus** and a pair of **Yellow-throated Leafloves**.

### **Tendaba Old Airport Site**

Our last stop before arriving at Tendaba was the Tendaba Old Airport Site. We did some birding at the so called 'Terminal 1', which is actually a raised mudbank in the heart of a wetland. From this unbuilt, unspoiled area, we watched birds of open woodland such as **Senegal Parrot**, **Abyssinian Roller**, **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, **Glossy-backed Drongo** and **Yellow-billed Shrike**. A pair of **Grey Woodpecker** caused some confusion for a little while. Before we reached Tendaba we had a brief encounter with a small group of **Stone Partridges**.

Highlights: **Woolly-necked Stork**, **African Spoonbill**, **Yellow-billed Stork**, **Red-breasted Swallow**, **Quailfinch**, **White-throated Bee-eater**, **Brown-necked Parrot**, **Woodland Kingfisher**, **African Golden Oriole**, **Bruce's Green Pigeon** and **Temminck's Red Colobus**.





## Kiang West National Park

20 November 2018

From Tendaba we first planned a full day at the Kiang West National Park; 115 square km in size and known as the largest and arguable one of the most productive birding hotspots in the Gambia. Although the state of the roads and the unpaved roads are very good in general, large parts of the route Tendaba-Kiang can be described as challenging and time consuming.

Some stops near Wurokang produced fairly good species such as **Striped Kingfisher**, **Yellow-billed Oxpecker**, and **Pygmy Sunbird**. We also got our first **Black-headed Lapwings**, which soon proved to be common around here. Although both **European Bee-eater** and **Short-winged Cisticola** were mentionable, we did not manage to find much hoped species like Abyssinian Ground Hornbill and Temminck's Courser or the less expected Bronze-winged Courser.

Arriving at the more wooded part, we noticed new species like **Sahel Bush Sparrow** (also known as **Bush Petronia**) and **Black Scimitarbill**; like a smaller Wood Hoopoe with similar white wing bars. A **Brubru** showed briefly but proved elusive for half of the group. This was another of the intriguing bird names that I wanted to

connect to the real thing. On the other hand, everyone had a good view of about two **Brown-rumped Buntings**. Sweeping some agricultural fields, again we had no luck with Temminck's Courses, but we bumped onto our first **Cut-throat Finch**.

When we finally arrived at the actual National Park, we were accompanied by a local guide/ranger (without bins!) from the park. He immediately proved his value virtually by hearing a flock of **White-crested Helmetshrikes** and we eventually managed to see them at their nesting site. Some other good species such as **Scarlet-chested Sunbird**, **Northern Crombec**, **Greater Honeyguide** and **Long-crested Eagle** were seen or heard.

At the freshwater lake, we found a **Common Warthog** drinking. Some of us have also seen some **Guinea Baboons** drinking at the lake, which I missed for now.

### Tendaba Old Airport Site

On our return to Tendaba, we again had a short stop at the former airport site near Tendaba. The place is known for Abyssinian Ground



Horbills. Besides two **Collared Pratincoles** and an **African Spoonbill**, no mentionable birds were seen. I was relieved to see a group of up to fifteen **Guinea Baboons**; seeing them was probably one of the highlights here.

After our arrival at Tendaba, we walked to a hide on the outside of the village. Some minutes earlier, we enjoyed seeing **European Turtle Dove** (unfortunately, it did not appear to be a Adamawa Turtle Dove, which has been reported several times at the Kunkilling Forest Park nearby) and **Village Indigobird**. Near the hide, a **Yellow Penduline Tit** captivated us and a pair of **Brubrus** were heard only. We had

a relaxing time in the hide while seeing species that we mainly have seen before: **Sahel Bush Sparrow**, **Purple Starling**, **Black-rumped Waxbill**, **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah**, **Greater Honeyguide** and **Glossy-backed Drongo**. Also some **Little Swifts** were hanging around.

Highlights: Black Scimitarbill, **Brubu**, Brown-rumped Bunting, Cut-throat Finch, **White-crested Helmetshrike**, Long-crested Eagle, Common Warthog and **Guinea Baboon**.



**White-crested Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus*, Kiang West NP, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Exclamatory Paradise Whydah** *Vidua interjecta*, Tendaba, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Glossy-backed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis*, Tendaba, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Lesser Blue-eared Starling** *Lamprolornis chloropterus*, Tendaba, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)





## Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve

21 November 2018

After an early breakfast, we caught our powered canoe across the river to the mangrove swamp of the Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve. This site is also known as the Tendaba Mangrove Area. We were accompanied by two senior English birders.

Fish-eating birds were unsurprisingly accounted for much of the avian biomass, encountered with a huge colony of **White-breasted Cormorants** and dominating a vast rookery with all the associated noise of adults and younger birds. **African Darters** were omnipresent and occasionally stayed long enough for a picture or two. However, they were mostly fell off their perches and plummeted from whatever height straight into the murky waters. Now, with a long snaky neck and pointy bill, you may think these odd looking birds would enter the water Gannet like with bill leading the way. But no, they entered their chest first with the head pulled back and an almighty splash followed.

Furthermore, we had an extremely close and good view of the other familiar and expected species such as **Pied Kingfisher**, **Malachite**

**Kingfisher** and **Blue-breasted Kingfishers**; echoing on both sides of us (a sound you would not expect from a Kingfisher). We luckily had a good view of an **African Hobby** flying over the boat. After seeing some **Mangrove Sunbirds** (probably heard them during the entire boat ride), Foday pointed at an **African Blue Flycatcher** flicking through the mangrove, This probably can be best found at low brenches near the waterline. Ash blue is actually a good colour to blend in with the myriad of greens but we all got a good look at the bird. This bird was for sure already the highlight of the boat trip.

Although further we had other notable species such as **West African Crocodile**, **Striated Herons**, **Reed Cormorant** and **Nile Monitor**. We eventually came upon a majestic **Goliath Heron** that lived up to and beyond our expectations. The bill of this species is simply obscene. Up to five **Woolly-necked Storks** were feeding in one of the water meadows.

We were heading slowly against the outgoing tide and diverted onto small channels where the mangroves almost thouched both sides

with arching limbs reaching for the water to root down in the silt, while other places submerged roots struck for the air and poked from the mud like reaching fingers. At this site we encountered again a **White-backed Night Heron**; this was the third one during our trip. Foday also pointed us at a (former) nesting site of a pair of Martial Eagles. Unfortunately, we were not able to see the Martial Eagle as the nesting site was used back in 2016.

### **South Bank Road**

As we planned a drive for about 160km to Janjanbureh (formerly known as Georgetown), we left Tendaba just before noon for some roadside birding. During our drive, we had productive stops near Soma and Buiba Mandinka. A **Bateleur** flew high by at Soma. A group of at least 500 **Collared Pratincoles** occurred at the sandy banks nearby. Eventually, the whole group foraged at flies or flying ants, which was impressive to see. Also a small group of **Namaqua Doves** were present, foraging at the stoney ground.

Further East, we had a good view of a single **Patas Monkey**, near Bere Kobng. This roadside birding turned out to be good for birds of prey such as **White-backed Vulture** and among them some **Rüppell's Vultures**. Other notable species during our drive: two male **Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs** (near Madina) and **Hadada Ibis** (just north of Pakali Ba Mosque). We also made an attempt for Black Crowned Crane near Sambang. According to Foday, the bird is regularly seen at this site. It took us nearly half an hour drive from the main road to reach this remoted agricultural fields. This area is exploited by the local (fairly primitive) community. Although the habitat seemed to be suitable, the target species could not be found. Additionally, based on a local farmer, some

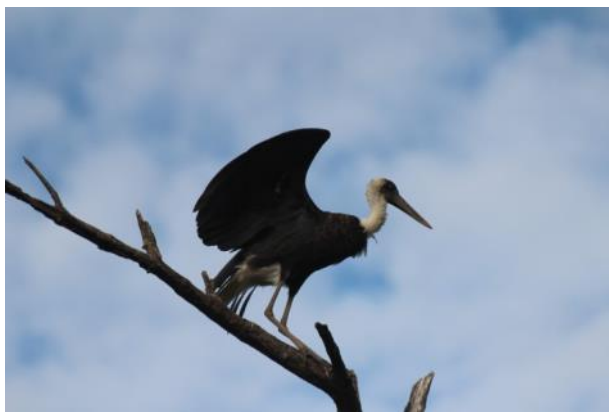
birds just left before we arrived, although I am not sure whether or not should I believe it.

Back at the main road, we did see a group of twenty-five **Guinea Baboons** (just before Sotokoi). A late stop that is known as the place to find colony of Marabou Storks did not work out as planned. Unfortunately, its nesting tree had been chopped for timber by the local community. Thus, the storks were gone. Foday reassured us that we would see them elsewhere.

Arriving late at Janjanbureh Island (formerly known as MacCarthy Island), we found out why Foday and our driver, Abdullah, preferred not to drive in the dark. Driving in the dark whilst cattle walking on the roads and random stationay cars made this drive at high risk.

Highlights: **African Hobby, African Blue Flycatcher, West African Crocodile, Goliath Heron** and **White-backed Night Heron**.





**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*Rens Huizinga*)



**Nile Monitor** *Varanus niloticus*, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*Rens Huizinga*)



**Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens*, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa*, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*André Geelhoed*)





## Janjanbureh (Georgetown)

22 November 2018

The next day, we took an early boat ride up at the mighty Gambia River. The river contains of fresh water. This is an important factor for both animals and the local community. The journey started in succession with **Bearded Barbet**, **Striated Heron**, **Senegal Coucal**, **Palm-nut Vulture** and a pair of **Mourning Collared Doves**. An **African Fish Eagle** was present at a large distance. We would see this species more closer on further East. A pair of **Red-throated Bee-eaters** flew over the boat briefly. Although it was not really satisfying, however, Today reassured us that we would see them better at their nesting colony at Bansang quarry.

Moreover, species such as **Swamp Flycatcher** and **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** were seen often. Navigating through a smaller creek on the North of Janjanbureh Island soon provided good species. An adult **African Finfoot** accompanied by two small chicks crossed the creek in front of the boat. We also managed to find two roosting **Yellow-winged Bats**. Hard to see for someone who is a little color-blinded, but I eventually had a decent view.

Further West, we found **Grey-headed Kingfisher**, **Yellow-crowned Gonolek**, **Bruce's Green Pigeon**, **Black-crowned Night Heron** and **Hadada Ibis**. A close encounter with a pair of **Common Hippopotamuses** – when they suddenly appeared at short distance from the boat – has certainly become one of the highlights. During the boat trip, we also had a good view of different monkeys: **Green Monkey**, **Temminck's Red Colobus** and **Guinea Baboon**.

Near Kajakat Island, we were finally able to add **Marabou Stork** to the list. Although we saw it from afar, we were glad to be able to have a good view of the nesting birds. On our return, we encountered two **Black Storks** and had a better view of an **African Fish Eagle** and an **Oriole Warbler**. We also found an unexpected **African Cuckoo** as well as our first **Black-headed Weaver**, which appeared to be a male in full breeding plumage.

Other mentionable species were seen during the boat trip, to name a few: **White-throated Bee-eater**, **Red-billed Quelea** and **Little Bee-eater**. As we achieved to see all the target



species in the morning, the afternoon boat trip was cancelled.

### Janjanbureh Rice Fields

After the boat trip we had some late afternoon birding on rice fields at both sides of the bridge, which now makes it possible to drive to Janjanbureh. We were mainly aiming for Black Coucal; a rare visitor that is seen regularly in this area on the last few months. An exception for a pair of **Copper Sunbirds**; which was appeared to be our first during the trip, and exceptional views of a single (calling) **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, nothing special was seen.

Highlights: African Fish Eagle, **African Finfoot**, Yellow-winged Bat, **Common Hippopotamus**, African Cuckoo and White-throated Bee-eater.



**African Finfoot** *Podica senegalensis*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Common Hippopotamus** *Hippopotamus amphibius*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Temminck's Red Colobus** *Piliocolobus temminckii*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (André Geelhoed)



23 November 2018

The next day, we continued our journey to Bansang sand quarry to observe a colony of **Red-throated Bee-eaters**. Before arriving at the quarry, other birds were seen and these included **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, **Pygmy Sunbird**, **Black Scimitarbill**, **Northern Yellow White-eye** and **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah**. We also saw a melanistic (dark) morph **Gabar Goshawk**, cleverly found by Foday from a moving car.

We enjoyed ourselves for a long time with the presence of an approximately one hundred breeding **Red-throated Bee-eaters**. Among those birds, one or more were yellow-throated variants. While watching those good and common species, a few species came to visit the quarry to drink: **Piapiac**, **Mosque Swallow**, **Village Indigobird**, **Gosling's Bunting** (due to taxonomic changes splitted recently from Cinnamon-breasted Bunting), up to four **Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs** and some **Cut-throat Finches**. A pair of **Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks** and a rare and unexpected **Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** were both new for the trip.

### Jahaly Rice Fields

In 1982 a rice irrigation project started in Jakhaly. A visit to the rice fields led to surprisingly good birding. The area seems to be a good birding place especially to find cisticolas species. We found both **Winding Cisticola** and **Croaking Cisticola**. **African Jacana**, **Purple Heron** and **Spur-winged Goose** were the common birds around. Furthermore, we also suddenly saw up to sixteen unexpected **Greater Painted-snipes** from almost dried rice fields as well a pair of **Quailfinches** from the path. We also found some **Red-throated Pipits** in which according to Foday, they are rare species in the Gambia. From there, we headed back to Janjanbureh for another night at Baobolong Guest House.

Highlights: **Red-throated Bee-eater**, **Gabar Goshawk**, **Gosling's Bunting**, **Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks**, **Ayres's Hawk Eagle** and **Greater Painted-snipes**.





**Red-throated Bee-eater** *Merops bullocki*, Bansang, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix leucotis*, Bansang, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Greater Painted-snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis*, Jakhaly rice fields, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Anteater Chat** *Myrmecocichla aethiops*, Wassu, The Gambia, 24 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius*, Kaur, The Gambia, 24 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii*, North Bank, The Gambia, 24 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



## North Bank

24 November 2018

As it was quite chaotic, we unfortunately, could not get into the first ferry. However, after having a delay when crossing the Gambia River, we arrived at the North Bank just before 9 AM. We were aiming especially for the enigmatic Egyptian Plover. According to Foday, this is one of the few species we would certainly see; given that the chance to see the bird is 150 percent during this time of the year. He knew three different sites to find them.

### Wassu

At first we stopped near a village called Wassu. It is known to be one of the best places for the Northern Carmine Bee-eater in the Gambia; although their numbers are declining. Lack of recent observations made the situation not really confiding. While searching for this species, we were entertained by up to five (giant) **Anteater Chats** and four **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers**. The first species were a prime target species from the North of the river. Although we had a good view of some **Red-throated Bee-eaters**, however, there was no sign from the Carmines. Not forget to mention

our first **Montagu's Harrier** and a pair of **Sahel Paradise Whydahs**.

### Njauri & Kaur

Before reaching Njau, we saw the **Western Cattle Egrets** and some **Spur-winged Lapwings** at a wet area near Pachang that hosted hundreds of them. At Njau (or Njauri) we found up to seven **Egyptian Plovers**, undoubtedly one of the main target species of the trip. The next thirty minutes was spent on ogling at one of the most mythical and striking of all wading birds. A few minutes earlier, we already encountered a single one from afar distance, East side from Panchang. At Kaur, we managed to find another two of them. These two were very approachable for photos. When I came closer, I was captivated by the striking combination of glossy black, duck egg blue and warm peach, the black, white stripes as well as odd angles and the short blue legs. The birds were overwhelmingly and moth-wateringly beautiful, which caused less attention to the other birds around.



## Peanut Farms

During our drive to further West, we had a random stop at some peanut farms between Ngeyen Sanjal and Dibba Kd. It was scorching hot but with the prospect of good species like **Temminck's Courser** and Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, it did not matter. Only the first succeeded and gave virtually stunning (close) view, although they were mostly on the run.

## Katchang

We also stopped around a lake; just in the North of Katchang. This led us to see a small group of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**. Also species such as **Sahel Paradise Whydah**, some **Bronze-tailed Starlings**, **Grasshopper Buzzard** and **Speckled Pigeon** who came to drink. During our further drive to AbCa's Creek Lodge; where we stayed overnight, we had no significant birding anymore. At the ferry terminal in Bamba Tenda, they put us into the priority line in which we were able to cross the Gambia river after a short wait without any fuss.

Highlights: Anteater Chat, Red-throated Bee-eater, Sahel Paradise Whydah, **Egyptian Plover** and **Temminck's Courser**.



**Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis*, North Bank, The Gambia, 24 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



## AbCa's Creek

25 November 2018

We started early for some easy birding around AbCa's Creek Lodge. The visit to the surrounding halfopen woody area led us to see good species. Among those species, we noticed groups of around four to seven **White-crested Helmetshrikes**, an **African Golden Oriole**, a **Black Scimitarbill** and a group of approximately thirty **White-throated Bee-eaters**. We also had a short encounter with a pair of **Four-banded Sandgrouses**. A delightful **Diederik Cuckoo** was unexpected as it is known to be a rainy season bird. Other good species included **Vitelline Masked Weaver** and **Splendid Sunbird**. Back at the camp, we had a good view of some **Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bats** hanging in the palms.

After a short rest, we visited the North area of Kassagne. Some decent birding resulted in a good view of both **African Grey Woodpecker** and **Fine-spotted Woodpecker**. A small group of **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** who were foraging at cattle entertained us for a while. Another small greeny Cuckoo was quickly identified as a **Klaas's Cuckoo**; adding to another unexpected highlight as this species is apparently a rainy season bird as well. A **Northern Black**

**Flycatcher** was also seen briefly, but proved to be elusive for most of the group.

We picked a strategic site (just the North of Killy) for lunch, which worked out very well. At first, we had a good view of fairly common species such as **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher**, **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, **Northern Puffback** and **Mosque Swallow**. For awhile, up to three **Broad-billed Rollers** were up and about and hawking like Nightjars above the trees while making curious croaking calls. Among common birds of prey, we had a decent view of both **Booted Eagle** and **Bateleur** (was only seen twice before, both from afar distance), gliding on unmoving dihedral wings. We were able to classify its gender as a female due to its large white underwings.

On the afternoon, we strolled through the woodland surroundings in which we had some good birding. Although we failed to see an elusive Senegal Batis, however, we had an exceptional good view of a pair of **Four-banded Sandgrouses** who were sitting on the path. Other birds who were noted included **Northern Yellow White-eye**, (again) **Klaas's Cuckoo**,



**Bearded Barbet, Yellow-crowned Gonolek and African Golden Oriole.**

*26 November 2018*

The next morning, Foday planned some early (additional) birding around the camp to see **Senegal Batis**, which we finally managed to see. Other notable species included **Black Scimitarbill, Western Violet-backed Sunbird,**

**Copper Sunbird and Cardinal Woodpecker.**

Hearing a **Long-tailed Nightjar** was a good addition for Rens who arrived after we saw the it at Brufut Woods.

Highlights: White-crested Helmetshrike, **Four-banded Sandgrouse**, Diederik Cuckoo, Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat, Klaas's Cuckoo, **Bateleur** and Senegal Batis.



**White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis*, AbCa's Creek Lodge, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*André Geelhoed*)



**Purple Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureus*, AbCa's Creek Lodge, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Four-banded Sandgrouse** *Pterocles quadricinctus*, AbCa's Creek, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus*, Killy, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



Pirang Forest National Park

26 November 2018

### Kampanti Rice Fields ('Raptor Track')

On our return to the Marakissa Camp; a place where we would stay for our last night, from AbCa's Creek Lodge, we visited some familiar places. We started at the Kampanti Rice Fields; mainly for raptors. Before that, we stopped at a random place for mainly Abyssinian Ground Hornbill. Unfortunately, it did not work out as we expected, however, we successfully saw three **Northern Crombecs** and an **African Golden Oriole** bolted from cover.

Back at the so called Raptor Track, birds of prey came in quickly and fast, we saw at least two **Lanner Falcons**, our second **Griffon Vulture**, **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Grasshopper Buzzard**, **African Hawk-Eagle**, **Red-necked Falcon** and some **White-backed Vultures**. Those species were mostly had been seen regularly before, so during lunch we killed some time by taking pictures of an adult **African Jacana** with two chicks.

### Pirang Forest National Park

When the temperature dropped a bit, we

headed towards Pirang Forest for a return. We were aiming to see (and not only hearing) **White-spotted Flufftail** and **Green Hylia**. Foday arranged Kawsu Gibba for assistance. Kawsu worked as a park ranger and birding guide for more than eight years. Based in Pirang, where he is currently the head Ranger, he probably knows the forest very well. Just before we saw three **Northern Yellow White-eyes**.

Soon, Kawsu proved its value by pointing at a perching **Red-chested Goshawk** in which giving us a great view. When Kawsu imitated the whistling calls of **White-spotted Flufftail**, it immediately responded. In the meanwhile, we had a striking view of an **African Pied Hornbill** flopping around. A **Western Bluebill** was seen briefly, but again proved to be elusive for most of the group. Just before changing to another site in the forest, we were pointed at no less than three **Buff-spotted Woodpeckers**, among them one **African Grey Woodpecker**. After changing between two sites, it took a while until two **White-spotted Flufftails** came closer as the sounds became stronger. At first, a bird beside the path was seen by only two of us and



Kawsu. Finally, he pointed us at a single bird in the undergrowth, giving a one minute great view beside us. Fantastic! The guides were both equally happy as their skills and our patience had paid off; not every group is as fortunate as us. After this, the highlight were both **Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat** as well as **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher** who also gave a good view.

During our walk back to the car, we encountered a singing **Brown-throated Wattle-eye** and a **Little Greenbul**. Some **Temminck's Red Colobus** again crashed noisy through the canopy as they wanted say goodbye. Green Hylia was for planned to see for another trip as the day had gotten darker.

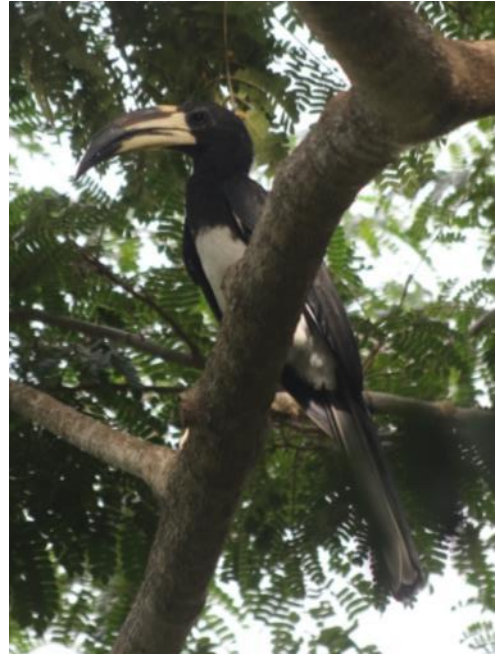
### Marakissa Rivercamp

Back at Marakissa Rivercamp, we had a warm welcome from the owners, Joop and Adama. During a short look on the waterside, we were surprised by the presence of an approximately thirty **Pied Kingfisher**, which unexpectedly was a colonial roosting bird.

Highlights: Red-chested Goshawk, **White-spotted Flufftail**, African Pied Hornbill, **Western Bluebill**, **Buff-spotted Woodpecker**, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat and Temminck's Red Colobus.



**Red-chested Goshawk** *Accipiter toussenelii*, Pirang Forest, The Gambia, 26 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Pied Hornbill** *Lophoceros fasciatus*, Pirang Forest, The Gambia, 26 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



## Marakissa Woods

27 November 2018

As I woke up early, probably caused by some overwhelming birding during recent days, I heard up to three different owl species calling: **African Scops Owl**, **Western Barn Owl** (breeds at Marakissa Rivercamp) and a least a pair of **Pearl-Spotted Owlets**. Can you imagine?

Furthermore, the final morning was finally here before we take our flight back home. Foday planned some easy birding nearby Penjem Woods with a hope to see Yellow-bellied Hyliota and both White-breasted Cuckooshrike and Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike; all species were previously recorded from this area. Shortly after we left Marakissa Rivercamp, Foday shouted "Shining-blue!", referring to a **Shining-blue Kingfisher**, sitting and preening on the low branches. It gave genuinely a stunning view!

### Penjem Woods

At Penjem, we mostly saw familiar birds until Foday found a **Yellow-bellied Hyliota**; an unexpected and new species for the trip. Although Foday tried to find new species until the last second of our trip, however, this marked the end of the trip. For us, this trip had

personally exceeded all of our expectations and this led to us to a question: whether this successful trip could have been any better? Hardly for sure.

Highlights: **Shining-blue Kingfisher** and **Yellow-bellied Hyliota**.



**Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribachys*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 27 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



## 3. Review

### 3.1 Conclusion

It is not hard to imagine why the Gambia is an increasingly popular destination for birding. The attraction of getting somewhere tropical within six hours, no jet-lag and for birding; some very well-situated lodges, decent food and most importantly, an amazing wildlife. Not even mentioned the many colourful birds such as Turacos, Rollers, Kingfishers, Bee-eaters and many more. Although only small patches of primary forests are remaining, mangroves, the mighty Gambia River and semi-cultural areas such as rice fields even still offering amazing birding. As the Gambia is relatively a small country (a quarter size of the Netherlands) travel distances from one place to another is limited; the country is only 250km in length, resulting in more quality birding. We saw everything that hoped for and unexpectedly more than we actually expected to. This became possible because of our excellent bird guide, Foday Bojang.

### 3.2 Statistics

Although we visited the Gambia for sixteen days, excluding arrival and departure, we actually had fifteen effective birding days. In this period, we noticed 316 different bird species (non-native House Sparrow included) in which four birds were heard only (3,5%). On most of our days, up to nearly one hundred different species were seen (see **Figure 1**). In terms of diversity, our day at the Pirang former shrimp farm and our drive to Tendaba on Monday, 19th November 2019, was the most productive day in which we noticed 124 different bird species.

**Figure 2** shows most species that can be seen in a period of approximately twelve days. This is proved by Rens who joined us later but even managed to see 298 different birds in 12 days (11 days effective birding). Our guide, Foday, also has good track guiding bird tours records in February in which he saw approximately 300 different birds in only one week. Be aware of the fact that lots of birds such as Sunbirds, Weavers, Bishops and Whydahs do not appear in breeding plumage in February.

### 3.3 Missing species

Although we had a very successful birding trip, however, there were some species that we hoped for but we did not see. Those species are Abyssinian Ground Hornbill; probably most wanted one. According to Foday this species is not easy to be found in this period of the year when grasses are high. This applied to the Black Crowned Crane as well in which we searched for this species near Sambang. Although habitat seemed suitable, we did not succeed. The number of Black Crowned Crane in the Gambia has been decreasing rapidly.

One of the birds we expected to see was White-shouldered Black Tit, which should at least be possible to see at Tujereng or the surroundings of Tendaba. We failed to see this species when Foday heard their call near the AbCa's Creek Lodge.

We also hoped for some regularly recorded (but sometimes hard to see) species such as Martial Eagle, Standard-winged Nightjar and Northern Carmine Bee-eater. For these species, you

probably need to be lucky. For sure other species can be mentioned here, but these are mostly more likely to be seen in February.

### 3.4 Considerations

Although most sites in this itinerary probably have to be visited for birding, it is considerable to change some minor accents. During this period when grasses are high, you probably need more time at the North Bank for species such as Abyssinian Ground Hornbill and Northern Carmine Bee-eater. This is probably caused by our lack of time when we had a delay waiting for the ferry to cross the Gambia River.

We were actually considered to spend another day at the North Bank instead of for example Lamin as apart from seeing the Mangrove Sunbird (also seen at Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve opposite to Tendaba) no mentionable additional species could be seen. I am not sure if there are decent birding lodges at the North Bank.

#### Senegal

As the Gambia is surrounded by Senegal, a combined trip was being considered. The Gambia Birding Experience offers a combined trip, with a visit to Parc National du Niokolo-Koba (Wassadouguou) included. This is known to be a good place to see some additional species such as Black Crowned Crane, Adamawa Turtle Dove, Pel's Fishing Owl, African Pied Wagtail and sometimes Bat Hawk. However, we decided not to go ahead with the combined trip as we found that the number of additional species that we could see does not worth the extra money we would spend. Although the price was still more affordable compared to other birding companies.

Elsewhere in Senegal, it is probably possible to see additional species like Scissor-tailed Kite,

Savile's Bustard, Blue-naped Mousebird and Speckle-fronted Weaver. I have not studied which areas in the Senegal that are good, but some trip reports of combined trips can be found at [www.cloudbirders.com](http://www.cloudbirders.com).

### 3.5 Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank our bird guide, Foday Bojang. Foday is a great birder and really knows his stuff. Although he always low our expectations by saying "it is nature you know" (except for the Egyptian Plover as the chances are 150 percent, he said) at the end of the day he always meets our expectations. He prefers to guide guests (especially young fanatic birders) who would like to see as many birds as possible or target specific species. He was always punctual, polite and patient and is well-respected by the other guides in the Gambia. This resulted in less-hassle, intimidation or threatening, no matter how remote we were. Besides, the local people are very friendly in general. Additionally, his commitment and desire to give us an unforgettable experience was shown when we were searching for new birds at Penjem until the very last seconds of our trip. Without any doubts, I would fully recommend him as a bird guide!

Foday has an extensive birders network and trainee guides stationed at most bird watching sites we visited. This resulted in a massive help when seeking out for some more difficult birds such as Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Greyish Eagle-Owl, African Wood Owl, White-spotted Flufftail and Long-tailed Nightjar. We would also like to thank these local guides, Mutar (at Kotu and for his company in the evening at Bao Bolong Guest House), Madi (at Brufut Woods), Edrisa (at Pirang Forest NP, from which I cannot remember the name anymore), Bakary Kujabi (at Farasuto Forest), the ranger at Kiang West NP and Kawsu Gibba (at Pirang Forest NP). Moreo-

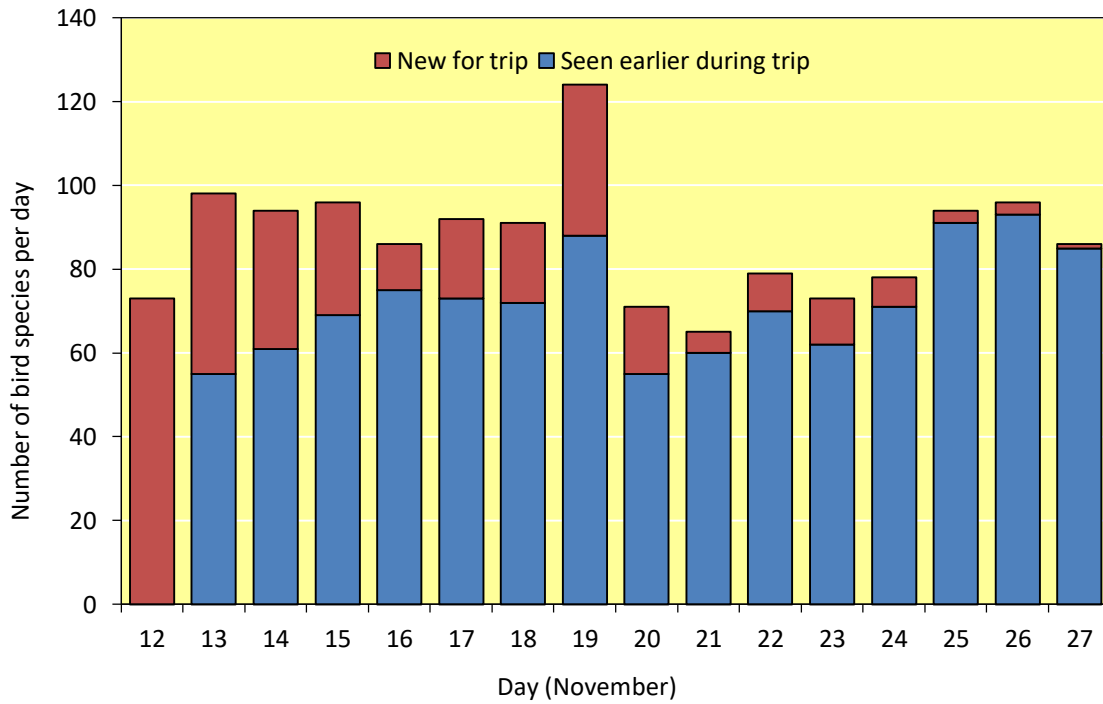


ver, we would like to thank our careful drivers as well, Mozes and Abdullah.

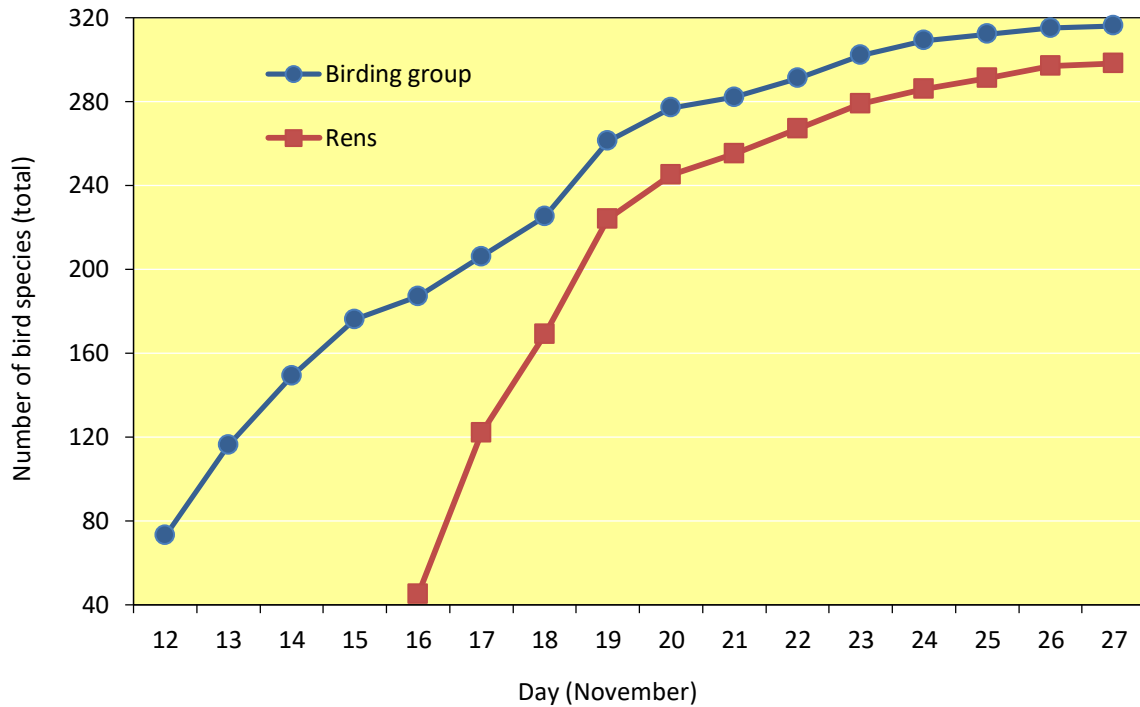
We are grateful for Henk Schuurman from the Gambia Birding Experience who organised the trip (together with Foday) and always responded our email very fast. We can fully recommend the Gambia Birding Experience as they offer affordable and custom-made birding trips. Our itinerary was compiled in order to see as many species as possible. Only some minor changes in itinerary were made for us to be able to have higher chances in seeing certain target species.

As discussed beforehand, no additional costs were charged during the trip (pick up from and to the airport, food, drinks, accommodation, driver, bird guide and travel all included).

Ultimately, I would like to thank Mellona Samperante, who patiently carried out the language errors. Her review invaluablely improved the readability this trip report.



**Figure 1:** Number of bird species per day, divided in new species (red) and species which have been seen earlier during the trip (blue).



**Figure 2:** Number of bird species summarized.



## 4. Annotated list

### 4.1 Birds

1. **White-faced Whistling Duck** – *Dendrocygna viduata*  
Common around areas with water.
2. **Spur-winged Goose** – *Plectropterus gambensis*  
Common.
3. **Knob-billed Duck** – *Sarkidiornis melanotos*  
One bird at Kartong, two birds at Jakhaly Rice Fields.
4. **Northern Shoveler** – *Spatula clypeata*
5. **Northern Pintail** – *Anas acuta*
6. **Stone Partridge** – *Ptilopachus petrosus*  
Commonly heard, seen several times.
7. **Ahanta Francolin** – *Pternistis achantensis*  
Heard only one bird at Pirang Forest.
8. **Double-spurred Francolin** – *Pternistis bicalcaratus*  
Very common.
9. **Little Grebe** – *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
10. **Greater Flamingo** – *Phoenicopterus roseus*
11. **Yellow-billed Stork** – *Mycteria ibis*  
Respectively one and up to three birds at former shrimp farm.
12. **Black Stork** – *Ciconia nigra*
13. **Woolly-necked Stork** – *Ciconia episcopus*  
Common at former shrimp farm and Tendaba.
14. **White Stork** – *Ciconia ciconia*
15. **Marabou Stork** – *Leptoptilos crumenifer*  
A small colony seen from the boat near Kajakat Island.
16. **African Sacred Ibis** – *Threskiornis aethiopicus*  
One bird at Lamin, seems to be common around Kotu and one bird at the former shrimp farm.
17. **Hadada Ibis** – *Bostrychia hagedash*  
Up to two birds roosting at Marakissa River-camp, some more inland.
18. **Eurasian Spoonbill** – *Platalea leucorodia*
19. **African Spoonbill** – *Platalea alba*  
Some birds at former shrimp farm, another bird at old airport site near Tendaba
20. **White-backed Night Heron** – *Gorsachius leucotis*  
Surprised by seeing this species at three different occasions: Lamin, Farasuto Forest and Tendaba.
21. **Black-crowned Night Heron** – *Nycticorax nycticorax*
22. **Striated Heron** – *Butorides striata*
23. **Squacco Heron** – *Ardeola ralloides*
24. **Western Cattle Egret** – *Bubulcus ibis*
25. **Grey Heron** – *Ardea cinerea*
26. **Black-headed Heron** – *Ardea melanocephala*  
Very common.
27. **Goliath Heron** – *Ardea goliath*  
One bird at Pirang Forest (weird to see it here) and one at Tendaba.
28. **Purple Heron** – *Ardea purpurea*
29. **Great Egret** – *Ardea alba*



**Double-spurred Francolin** *Pternistis bicalcaratus*, Brufut Woods, The Gambia, 15 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala*, S Bank Rd, The Gambia, 19 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta*, Killing, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Reed Cormorant** *Microcarbo africanus*, Kotu Bridge, The Gambia, 16 November 2018 (*André Geelhoed*)



**Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini*, Kiang West NP, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Western Banded Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinerascens*, Fula Bantang, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



30. **Intermediate Egret** – *Ardea intermedia*  
Some birds at Marakissa, and a single bird at both Kotu and Killy.
31. **Black Heron** – *Egretta ardesiaca*  
One bird at Kotu, seems to be not that common during this time of the year.
32. **Little Egret** – *Egretta garzetta*
33. **Western Reef Heron** – *Egretta gularis*
34. **Hamerkop** – *Scopus umbretta*
35. **Great White Pelican** – *Pelecanus onocrotalus*
36. **Pink-backed Pelican** – *Pelecanus rufescens*  
Very common.
37. **Reed Cormorant / Long-tailed Cormorant** – *Microcarbo africanus*  
Very common.
38. **Great Cormorant** – *Phalacrocorax carbo*
39. **White-breasted Cormorant** – *Phalacrocorax lucidus*  
Especially common at breeding colony near Tendaba.
40. **African Darter** – *Anhinga rufa*  
Common around Marakissa and Tendaba.
41. **Western Osprey** – *Pandion haliaetus*
42. **Black-winged Kite** – *Elanus caeruleus*
43. **African Harrier-Hawk** – *Polyboroides typus*  
Very common.
44. **Palm-nut Vulture** – *Gypohierax angolensis*  
Very common.
45. **Hooded Vulture** – *Necrosyrtes monachus*  
One of the commonest bird in the Gambia.
46. **White-backed Vulture** – *Gyps africanus*  
Common inlands.
47. **Rüppell's Vulture** – *Gyps rueppelli*  
Some juvenile birds between White-backed Vultures at Lower River Division and near Tendaba.
48. **Griffon Vulture** – *Gyps fulvus*
49. **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** – *Circaetus beaudouini*  
Among other sites at Raptor Track and near Tendaba.
50. **Brown Snake Eagle** – *Circaetus cinereus*  
Seen several times during the trip.
51. **Western Banded Snake Eagle** – *Circaetus cinerascens*  
Also seen several times during the trip.
52. **Bateleur** – *Terathopius ecaudatus*  
Seen three times during the trip at respectively Bajana (Baijanaa), near Soma and Killy (Killing).
53. **Long-crested Eagle** – *Lophaetus occipitalis*  
Seen at different sites such as Marakissa, Ki-ang West NP and different occasions alongside the S Bank Rd.
54. **Wahlberg's Eagle** – *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*  
Common in mainly the Western Division.
55. **Booted Eagle** – *Hieraaetus pennatus*  
Seen only once at Killy (Killing).
56. **Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** – *Hieraaetus ayresii*  
We were happily surprised seeing this species at Bansang.
57. **Tawny Eagle** – *Aquila rapax*  
Once seen alongside S Bank Rd near Kankuntu.
58. **African Hawk-Eagle** – *Aquila spilogaster*  
Two birds alongside S Bank Rd, three alongside N Bank Rd and one at Killy (Killing).
59. **Lizard Buzzard** – *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*  
Mainly restricted to the west (coastal area), but very common.



**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii*, Bansang, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Rens Huizinga*)



**African Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus vocifer*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (*Rens Huizinga*)



**Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*, Buiba Mandinka, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia*, Kampant, The Gambia, 19 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Western Plantain-eater** *Crinifer piscator*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>60. <b>Gabar Goshawk</b> – <i>Micronisus gabar</i><br/>Probably not that common, so we were happy seeing a melanistic (dark) morph at Bansang and up to two birds alongside the S Bank Rd.</p> <p>61. <b>Dark Chanting Goshawk</b> – <i>Melierax metabates</i><br/>Very common.</p> <p>62. <b>Red-chested Goshawk</b> – <i>Accipiter toussenelii</i><br/>A single bird at Kingfisher's Lodge (next to Marakissa Rivercamp) and a single bird during two different spells at Pirang Forest.</p> <p>63. <b>Shikra</b> – <i>Accipiter badius</i><br/>Seen twenty times (twenty-one birds) during the trip.</p> <p>64. <b>Western Marsh Harrier</b> – <i>Circus aeruginosus</i></p> <p>65. <b>Montagu's Harrier</b> – <i>Circus pygargus</i></p> <p>66. <b>Black Kite</b> – <i>Milvus migrans</i></p> <p>67. <b>Yellow-billed Kite</b> – <i>Milvus aegyptius</i><br/>Very common in the western part of the Gambia.</p> <p>68. <b>African Fish Eagle</b> – <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i><br/>Seen two birds near Janjanbureh.</p> <p>69. <b>Grasshopper Buzzard</b> – <i>Butastur rufipennis</i><br/>Very common in the inlands.</p> <p>70. <b>White-spotted Flufftail</b> – <i>Sarothrura pulchra</i><br/>Heard up to two birds at Pirang Forest and during our last visit we also had great views of a single bird.</p> <p>71. <b>African Finfoot</b> – <i>Podica senegalensis</i><br/>Seen an adult and two chicks passing the creek opposite to Janjanbureh.</p> <p>72. <b>Black Crake</b> – <i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i><br/>Fairly common, especially around Marakissa Rivercamp.</p> <p>73. <b>African Swampphen</b> – <i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i></p> | <p>Seems to be common around the Kartong Bird Watching Observatory.</p> <p>74. <b>Common Moorhen</b> – <i>Gallinula chloropus</i></p> <p>75. <b>Senegal Thick-knee</b> – <i>Burhinus senegalensis</i><br/>Very common around for example Marakissa, Lamin, Kotu and Kaur among other sites.</p> <p>76. <b>Black-winged Stilt</b> – <i>Himantopus himantopus</i></p> <p>77. <b>Pied Avocet</b> – <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i></p> <p>78. <b>Spur-winged Lapwing</b> – <i>Vanellus spinosus</i></p> <p>79. <b>Black-headed Lapwing</b> – <i>Vanellus tectus</i><br/>Fairly common in the inlands.</p> <p>80. <b>African Wattled Lapwing</b> – <i>Vanellus senegallus</i></p> <p>81. <b>Grey Plover</b> – <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i></p> <p>82. <b>Common Ringed Plover</b> – <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i></p> <p>83. <b>Little Ringed Plover</b> – <i>Charadrius dubius</i></p> <p>84. <b>White-fronted Plover</b> – <i>Charadrius marginatus</i><br/>Only two birds at Kartong.</p> <p>85. <b>Egyptian Plover</b> – <i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i><br/>Seen this enigmatic bird at three different sites at the North Bank: one at Panchang, seven at Njauri (Njau) and two at Kaur.</p> <p>86. <b>Greater Painted-snipe</b> – <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i><br/>According to Foday not easy to find during this time of the year, so we were glad to find two females near the Palm Beach Hotel. Surprisingly we flushed up to sixteen birds at the Jakhaly Rice Fields, which probably contains breeding habitat.</p> <p>87. <b>African Jacana</b> – <i>Actophilornis africanus</i><br/>Seen at several locations.</p> <p>88. <b>Whimbrel</b> – <i>Numenius phaeopus</i></p> <p>89. <b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b> – <i>Limosa lapponica</i></p> |
|---|---|



**Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Rens Huizinga*)



**Diederik Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius*, AbCa's Creek Lodge, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus*, Kiang West NP, The Gambia, 20 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Northern White-faced Owl** *Ptilopsis leucotis*, Marakissa Rivercamp, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus*, Lamin, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 90. <b>Black-tailed Godwit</b> – <i>Limosa limosa</i>   | 110. <b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b> – <i>Larus fuscus</i>   |
| 91. <b>Ruddy Turnstone</b> – <i>Arenaria interpres</i>  | 111. <b>Gull-billed Tern</b> – <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>  |
| 92. <b>Ruff</b> – <i>Calidris pygmaea</i>   | 112. <b>Caspian Tern</b> – <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>   |
| 93. <b>Curlew Sandpiper</b> – <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>  | 113. <b>Royal Tern</b> – <i>Thalasseus maximus</i><br>Some small flocks at Tanji and Kartong.  |
| 94. <b>Sanderling</b> – <i>Calidris alba</i>  | 114. <b>Lesser Crested Tern</b> – <i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i><br>Some medium flocks at Tanji and Kartong.  |
| 95. <b>Dunlin</b> – <i>Calidris alpina</i>  | 115. <b>Sandwich Tern</b> – <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>   |
| 96. <b>Little Stint</b> – <i>Calidris minuta</i>  | 116. <b>Little Tern</b> – <i>Sternula albifrons</i>  |
| 97. <b>Common Snipe</b> – <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>  | 117. <b>Common Tern</b> – <i>Sterna hirundo</i>  |
| 98. <b>Common Sandpiper</b> – <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>   | 118. <b>Four-banded Sandgrouse</b> – <i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i><br>Seen a pair of them at Tujereng and had exceptionally good views of a pair sitting at the path nearby AbCa's Creek Lodge. |
| 99. <b>Green Sandpiper</b> – <i>Tringa ochropus</i>   | 119. <b>Speckled Pigeon</b> – <i>Columba guinea</i><br>Very common.  |
| 100. <b>Common Redshank</b> – <i>Tringa tetanus</i>   | 120. <b>European Turtle Dove</b> – <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>  |
| 101. <b>Marsh Sandpiper</b> – <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>   | 121. <b>Mourning Collared Dove</b> – <i>Streptopelia de-cipiens</i><br>Seen at Marakissa, Lamin and Janjanbureh.   |
| 102. <b>Wood Sandpiper</b> – <i>Tringa glareola</i>   | 122. <b>Red-eyed Dove</b> – <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i><br>Seen at Marakissa, Lamin and Brufut Woods.   |
| 103. <b>Spotted Redshank</b> – <i>Tringa erythropus</i>   | 123. <b>Vinaceous Dove</b> – <i>Streptopelia vinacea</i><br>Fairly common, especially around Marakissa and Tendaba.  |
| 104. <b>Common Greenshank</b> – <i>Tringa nebularia</i>   | 124. <b>Laughing Dove</b> – <i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i><br>Probably common, seen at five different sites.   |
| 105. <b>Temminck's Courser</b> – <i>Cursorius temminckii</i><br>Two birds at peanut farms between Ngeyen Sanjal and Dibba Kd.   | 125. <b>Black-billed Wood Dove</b> – <i>Turtur abyssinicus</i><br>Very common.   |
| 106. <b>Collared Pratincole</b> – <i>Glareola pratincola</i><br>Two birds at the old airport site near Tendaba and an impressive flock of an approximately 500 birds near Buiba Mandinka. | 126. <b>Blue-spotted Wood Dove</b> – <i>Turtur afer</i><br>Very common.  |
| 107. <b>Slender-billed Gull</b> – <i>Chroicocephalus genei</i><br>Common around coastal area.   |  |
| 108. <b>Grey-headed Gull</b> – <i>Croicocephalus cirro-cephalus</i><br>Common around coastal area, especially at former shrimp farm.  |  |
| 109. <b>Kelp Gull</b> – <i>Larus dominicanus</i><br>One single bird (subadult) at Kartong.  |  |

127. **Namaqua Dove** – *Oena capensis*  
Common in the inlands.
128. **Bruce's Green Pigeon** – *Treron waalia*  
Found this striking collared bird near Raptor Track, at Janjanbureh (two times) and AbCa's Creek Lodge.
129. **African Green Pigeon** – *Treron calvus*  
Mainly seen around Marakissa.
130. **Guinea Turaco** – *Tauraco persa*  
Seen two times at both Abuko and Pirang Forest.
131. **Violet Turaco** – *Musophaga violacea*  
Recorded ten times during our trip with a total of sixteen birds. More common than expected! Abuko, Brufut Woods and Farasuto Forest are probably good sites for seeing this species.
132. **Western Plantain-eater** – *Crinifer piscator*  
One of the commonest birds in the country.
133. **Senegal Coucal** – *Centropus senegalensis*  
Very common.
134. **Blue Malkoha / Yellowbill** – *Ceuthmochares aereus*  
One of the birds we only heard at Pirang Forest.
135. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** – *Clamator glandarius*  
Not expected to see this species at Tujereng, as it is not common in the Gambia.
136. **Levaillant's Cuckoo** – *Clamator levaillantii*  
Seems to be fairly common as we recorded this species several times during the trip. For example at Abuko, Tujereng and Janjanbureh.
137. **Diederik Cuckoo** – *Chrysococcyx caprius*  
Not expected to see this bird near AbCa's Creek as it appears to be a rainy season bird.
138. **Klaas's Cuckoo** – *Chrysococcyx klaas*  
Also unexpectedly, seen at practically the same site as Diederik Cuckoo.
139. **African Cuckoo** – *Cuculus gularis*  
One bird found sharply by Foday during our boat trip from Janjanbureh.
140. **Western Barn Owl** – *Tyto alba*  
Breeds at Marakissa Rivercamp.
141. **African Scops Owl** – *Otus senegalensis*  
Heard several times at Marakissa Rivercamp and AbCa's Creek Lodge.
142. **Northern White-faced Owl** – *Ptilopsis leucotis*  
Seen one (probably the same) bird roosting in bamboo trees at Marakissa Rivercamp at four different days.
143. **Greyish Eagle-Owl** – *Bubo cinerascens*  
Seen two roosting birds in a small woody patch at short distance of Farasuto Forest.
144. **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** – *Bubo lacteus*  
One roosting bird at Pirang Forest.
145. **African Wood Owl** – *Strix woodfordii*  
One roosting bird at Farasuto Forest.
146. **Pearl-spotted Owlet** – *Glaucidium perlatum*  
Heard regularly as this owl is also day active, seen twice at Cycle Track and Janjanbureh.
147. **Long-tailed Nightjar** – *Caprimulgus cli-macurus*  
Seen a roosting birds at Brufut Woods and hear another bird near AbCa's Creek. Other nightjars were not seen well enough during evening drives, but are most likely this species.
148. **Mottled Spinetail** – *Telacanthura ussheri*  
Fairly common, seen at Marakissa, near Brufut Woods, at Kampanti Rice Fields, Kiang West NP and near Kajakat Island.
149. **African Palm Swift** – *Cypsiurus parvus*  
Very common, especially in the western part of the Gambia.



150. **Pallid Swift** – *Apus pallidus*  
Seen at Brufut Woods, Tujereng, Kartong and the former shrimp farm.  
tiems) both at Marakissa, rare for the Gambia. Very shy compared to other Kingfishers.
151. **Little Swift** – *Apus affinis*  
Seen at Marakissa, Kotu ponds, Tendaba Soccerfields and Bansang.
152. **Purple Roller / Rufous-crowned Roller** – *Coracias naevius*  
Common in the inlands.
153. **Abyssinian Roller** – *Coracias abyssinicus*  
Very common.
154. **Blue-bellied Roller** – *Coracias cyanogaster*  
Very common.
155. **Broad-billed Roller** – *Eurystomus glaucurus*  
Very common, especially in the western part of the country.
156. **Grey-headed Kingfisher** – *Halcyon leucocephala*  
Seen regularly at Marakissa, Lamin, Janjanbureh and during the boat trip at the Gambia River.
157. **Striped Kingfisher** – *Halcyon chelicuti*  
Fairly common as we have seen this species at Tujereng and different occasions alongside the S Bank Rd.
158. **Blue-breasted Kingfisher** – *Halcyon malimbica*  
Very common, especially around Tendaba.
159. **Woodland Kingfisher** – *Halcyon senegalensis*  
Very common.
160. **African Pygmy Kingfisher** – *Ispidina picta*  
Fairly common.
161. **Malachite Kingfisher** – *Corythornis cristatus*  
Very common.
162. **Shining-blue Kingfisher** – *Alcedo quadribrachys*  
Lucky to see this bird twice (some of us three
163. **Giant Kingfisher** – *Megaceryle maxima*  
Very common, especially in the western part of the country.
164. **Pied Kingfisher** – *Ceryle rudis*  
Very common.
165. **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** – *Merops hirundineus*  
Seen regularly at for example Lamin, Abuko, Brufut Woods and Kotu.
166. **Little Bee-eater** – *Merops pusillus*  
Most common Bee-eater species.
167. **Red-throated Bee-eater** – *Merops bulocki*  
The colony at Bansang Quarry is the obvious place to see them, but they can also be found at other places like Wassu.
168. **White-throated Bee-eater** – *Merops albicollis*  
Seen at a variety of places from the former shrimp farm and Tendaba to Janjanbureh and AbCa's Creek.
169. **Green Bee-eater** – *Merops orientalis*  
We have seen this species at the former shrimp farm, Janjanbureh and alongside the S Bank Rd (near Madina Demba Forest Park).
170. **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** – *Merops persicus*  
Probably common, but only recorded at Lamin, former shrimp farm and near Katchang at the North Bank.
171. **European Bee-eater** – *Merops apiaster*
172. **Eurasian Hoopoe** – *Upupa epops*
173. **Green Wood Hoopoe** – *Phoeniculus purpureus*  
Very common across the whole country.
174. **Black Scimitarbill** – *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*  
Not that common as we recorded this species only at four different sites. A single bird nearby AbCa's Creek gave good views.

175. **Western Red-billed Hornbill** – *Tockus kemp*  
Very common.  
single birds at both Brufut Woods and near Killy (Killing).
176. **African Pied Hornbill** – *Lophoceros fasciatus*  
Probably only locally common, Abuko and Pirang Forest seem to be good sites in order to see this species.
177. **African Grey Hornbill** – *Lophoceros nasutus*  
Very common.
178. **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird** – *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*  
Their calls can probably be heard almost everywhere.
179. **Viellot's Barbet** – *Lybius vielloti*  
Not that common, as we only have seen this species at Tujereng and heard it twice at Tendaba and surroundings.
180. **Bearded Barbet** – *Lybius dubius*  
Very common in mainly the western part of the Gambia.
181. **Lesser Honeyguide** – *Indicator minor*  
Seen this species at Abuko, twice at Brufut Woods and once at Pirang Forest.
182. **Spotted Honeyguide** – *Indicator maxulatus*  
Seen only once around water bowls near Farasuto Forest.
183. **Greater Honeyguide** – *Indicator indicator*  
Fairly common.
184. **Fine-spotted Woodpecker** – *Campethera punctuligera*  
Seen this species at Lamin, Marakissa, Kotu and around AbCa's Creek Lodge.
185. **Buff-spotted Woodpecker** – *Campethera nivos*  
Foday and local guide Kawsu pointed us at three birds at Pirang Forest.
186. **Cardinal Woodpecker** – *Dendropicos fuscescens*  
Probably not very common, as we only found
187. **African Grey Woodpecker** – *Dendropicos goertae*  
Very common.
188. **Grey Kestrel** – *Falco ardosiaceus*  
Common in the Gambia, especially in the western part.
189. **Red-necked Falcon** – *Falco chicquera*  
Common.
190. **African Hobby** – *Falco cuvierii*  
We had a lucky encounter with a bird flying over the boat at Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve near Tendaba.
191. **Lanner Falcon** – *Falco biarmicus*  
Fairly common.
192. **Brown-necked Parrot** – *Poicephalus fuscicollis*  
As we were only having brief views of two birds at Pirang, we were glad to have more decent views of this increasingly uncommon West African endemic at the surroundings of the former shrimp farm.
193. **Senegal Parrot** – *Poicephalus fuscicollis*  
Can be seen anywhere across the country.
194. **Rose-ringed Parakeet** – *Psittacula krameri*  
Very common.
195. **Senegal Batis** – *Batis senegalensis*  
Only seen this elusive species once around AbCa's Creek Lodge.
196. **Brown-throated Wattle-eye / Common Wattle-eye** – *Platysteira cyanea*  
Common in woods or woodland such as Abuko, Pirang Forest and Farasuto Forest.
197. **Grey-headed Bushshrike** – *Malaconotus blanchoti*  
Foday pointed us at three birds near Marakissa after being localized at sound. We heard another bird at Brufut Woods.



**African Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos goertae*, Killing, The Gambia, 25 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Senegal Parrot** *Poicephalus senegalus*, Penjem Woods, The Gambia, 27 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Brown-throated Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea*, Farasuto Forest, The Gambia, 17 November 2018 (Jildert Hijlkema)



**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (Jasper Hooymans)



**Yellow-crowned Gonolek** *Laniarius barbarus*, Brufut Woods, The Gambia, 15 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**African Blue Flycatcher** *Elminia longicauda*, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, The Gambia, 21 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



198. **Black-crowned Tchagra** – *Tchagra senegalus*  
Although mostly only its typical calls were heard, fairly common at for example Tuje-reng.
199. **Northern Puffback** – *Dryoscopus gambensis*  
Fairly common.
200. **Yellow-crowned Gonolek** – *Laniarius barbarous*  
Although seemed hard to see in the beginning, eventually recorded fifteen times with in total seventeen birds.
201. **Brubru** – *Nilaus afer*  
Proved to be elusive for half of the group, but for some it gave brief but clear views near Kiang West NP. Two birds calling at Tendaba Woods unfortunately could not be located.
202. **White-crested Helmetshrike** – *Prionops plumatus*  
This species is known as a gregarious bird which can be found in small, active parties that are always on the move. We encountered three different parties: one at Kiang West NP (even founded a bird sitting on the nest) and two around AbCa's Creek Lodge.
203. **Yellow-billed Shrike** – *Corvinella corvine*  
Can be found regularly at savannah woodlands or former rice fields.
204. **Woodchat Shrike** – *Lanius senator*
205. **African Golden Oriole** – *Oriolus auratus*  
Found occasionally at the Western Division.
206. **Glossy-backed Drongo** – *Dicrurus adsimilis*  
Very common.
207. **Western Square-tailed Drongo** – *Dicrurus ludwigii*  
Today and I managed to see a single bird just before our arrival at Marakissa Rivercamp during the first day.
208. **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher** – *Terpsiphone rufiventer*  
Can easily be found at most forests.
209. **African Paradise Flycatcher** – *Terpsiphone viridis*  
Probably less common than Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, can be found fairly easy at Abuko and Pirang Forest.
210. **Piapiac** – *Ptilostomus afer*  
Common.
211. **Pied Crow** – *Corvus albus*  
Very common.
212. **African Blue Flycatcher** – *Elminia longicauda*  
Found one bird at the mangroves in the Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve. Perches on lower branches, where it seems to prefer branches near the waterline.
213. **Yellow Penduline Tit** – *Anthoscopus parvulus*  
Seen only twice, one at Tendaba Woods and one near Kassagne.
214. **Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark** – *Eremopterix leucotis*  
Had good views of this species at Bansang Quarry, Jakhaly Rice Fields and near Wassu.
215. **Crested Lark** – *Galerida cristata*
216. **Common Bulbul** – *Pycnonotus barbatus*  
Can be found at almost any wooded or bushy habitat with sufficient abundance of fruiting trees or shrubs.
217. **Little Greenbul** – *Eurillas virens*  
Mostly in primary forests such as Abuko and Pirang Forest.
218. **Yellow-throated Leaflove** – *Atimastillas flavicollis*  
Fairly common and likely to be seen at places such as Marakissa Woods and Brufut Woods.

219. **Red-tailed Leaflove** – *Phyllastrephus scandens*  
Seen from the hide at Abuko, particularly not a common species in the Gambia.
220. **Grey-headed Bristlebill** – *Bleda canicapillus*  
Seen only once at Abuko, another bird was heard only at Pirang Forest.
221. **Fanti Saw-wing** – *Psalidoprocne obscura*  
Regularly seen at woodland forest edges of Abuko, Brufut Woods and Pirang Forest.
222. **Sand Martin** – *Riparia riparia*
223. **Red-chested Swallow** – *Hirundo lucida*  
Seen regularly.
224. **Wire-tailed Swallow** – *Hirundo smithii*  
Fairly common.
225. **Pied-winged Swallow** – *Hirundo leucosoma*  
Probably not common as we only have seen two birds at Tujereng.
226. **Common House Martin** – *Delichon urbicum*
227. **Red-breasted Swallow** – *Cecropis semirufa*  
Only seen around the farmer shrimp farms.
228. **Mosque Swallow** – *Cecropis senegalensis*  
This large swallow flies like a falcon and can be found at Raptor Track, Bansang, Wassu and Killy (Killing).
229. **Red-rumped Swallow** – *Cecropis daurica*
230. **West African Swallow** – *Cecropis domicella*  
We have seen this species at least at three different locations: former shrimp farm, Buiba Mandinka and Bansang.
231. **Northern Crombec** – *Sylvietta brachyuran*  
As this species prefers wooded savannah it can be found more easy than Green Crombec, for example at Tujereng.
232. **Green Crombec** – *Sylvietta virens*  
Very hard to see as it usually moves through the canopy of mature forest. Eventually we had good views of two birds at Pirang Forest.
233. **Green Hylia** – *Hylia prasina*  
Unfortunately we only heard one bird at Pirang Forest.
234. **Common Chiffchaff** – *Phylloscopus collybita*
235. **Sedge Warbler** – *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
236. **African Reed Warbler** – *Acrocephalus baeticatus*  
Mainly heard, but also had good views of a two birds at Jakhaly Rice Fields.
237. **Western Olivaceous Warbler** – *Iduna opaca*  
Seems to be fairly common.
238. **Melodious Warbler** – *Hippolais polyglotta*
239. **Singing Cisticola** – *Cisticola cantans*  
Seen one bird at Brufut Woods and up to three birds at Tujereng.
240. **Winding Cisticola** – *Cisticola marginatus*  
One bird at Jakhaly Rice Fields.
241. **Croaking Cisticola** – *Cisticola natalensis*  
One bird at Jakhaly Rice Fields. This seems to be a good site for different Cisticolas.
242. **Short-winged Cisticola** – *Cisticola brachypterus*  
Probably common in the Gambia, but we only managed to see one bird during our trip from Tendaba to Kiang West NP.
243. **Zitting Cisticola** – *Cisticola juncidis*  
Seen four times during our trip.
244. **Tawny-flanked Prinia** – *Prinia subflava*  
Seen more than regularly in the western part of the Gambia.
245. **Red-winged Warbler** – *Heliosais erythropterus*  
Although we have seen multiple birds at Tujereng, probably not that common.

246. **Yellow-breasted Apalis** – *Apalis flavida*  
Hard to see, but we have seen this species at both Abuko and Pirang Forest.
247. **Oriole Warbler** – *Hypergerus triceps*  
Seems to be common at Abuko, although not always easy to see. Seen occasionally during the trip for example at Brufut Woods, Kotu Kreek and Farasuto Forest.
248. **Grey-backed Camaroptera** – *Camaroptera brevicaudata*  
Most of the times only hearing this species but we manage to have views at Marakissa Woods, Kotu and Janjanbureh.
249. **Senegal Eremomela** – *Eremomela pusilla*  
Can be found regularly at wooded savannah and cultivated areas with palms.
250. **Blackcap Babbler** – *Turdoides reinwardtii*  
Regular visitor of water bowls at Marakissa Rivercamp and Abuko.
251. **Brown Babbler** – *Turdoides plebejus*  
Fairly common.
252. **Eurasian Blackcap** – *Sylvia atricapilla*
253. **Common Whitethroat** – *Sylvia communis*
254. **Subalpine Warbler** – *Sylvia cantillans*  
Can be found easily in low scrubs at the former shrimp farm.
255. **Northern Yellow White-eye** – *Zosterops senegalensis*  
Mostly in small flocks as we have seen at Pirang Forest.
256. **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** – *Hyliota flavigaster*  
Rare species in the Gambia, seen at Penjem Woods.
257. **Greater Blue-eared Starling** – *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*  
Only recorded at Marakissa and alongside the S Bank Rd.
258. **Lesser Blue-eared Starling** – *Lamprotornis chloropterus*  
Seen regularly, mainly at Marakissa, Abuko and Brufut Woods.
259. **Bronze-tailed Starling** – *Lamprotornis chalcurus*  
Often gathering in large flocks, this species can be seen easily.
260. **Splendid Starling** – *Lamprotonis splendidus*  
Probably rare, seen only once at Marakissa Woods.
261. **Purple Starling** – *Lamprotornis purpureus*  
Seen regularly at Marakissa Woods, Tendaba and AbCa's Creek Lodge.
262. **Long-tailed Glossy Starling** – *Lamprotornis caudatus*  
Very common.
263. **Yellow-billed Oxpecker** – *Buphagus africanus*  
Occurs in presence of cattle, which we have seen regularly in the inlands.
264. **African Thrush** – *Turdus pelios*  
Common visitor to water bowls.
265. **Northern Black Flycatcher** – *Melaenornis edolioides*  
We found a pair at Tujereng and a single bird in the surroundings of AbCa's Creek Lodge.
266. **Swamp Flycatcher** – *Muscicapa aquatic*  
Common around Janjanbureh.
267. **Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat** – *Cossypha niveicapilla*  
Seen this species at Abuko, Marakissa Rivercamp and Pirang Forest.
268. **White-crowned Robin-Chat** – *Cossypha albigapillus*  
Regular visitor to Marakissa Rivercamp's, where we noticed up to four birds. A pair was also present at the water bowls near the office of the Bird Watcher Association at Kotu.





**Mosque Swallow** *Cecropis senegalensis*, Bansang, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Jildert Hijlkema*)



**Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis*, Jakhaly Rice Fields, The Gambia, 23 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



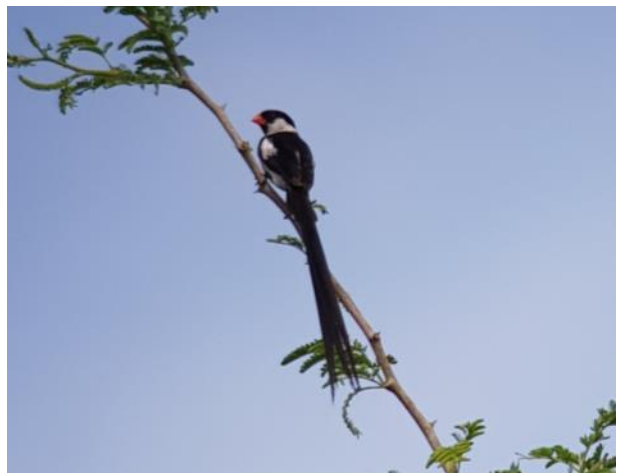
**Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis*, Abuko, The Gambia, 14 November 2018 (*Bo Andernach*)



**Red-billed Quelea** *Quelea quelea*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Red-billed Firefinch** *Lagonosticta senegala*, Marakissa Rivercamp, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)



**Pin-tailed Whydah** *Vidua macroura*, Marakissa Woods, The Gambia, 13 November 2018 (*Jasper Hooymans*)

269. **Common Redstart** – *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
270. **Whinchat** – *Saxicola rubetra*
271. **Anteater Chat / Northern Anteater Chat** – *Myrmecocichla aethiops*  
Seen up to five birds at Wassu.
272. **White-fronted Black Chat** – *Oenanthe albifrons*  
Only seen at Tujereng.
273. **Mangrove Sunbird / Mouse Brown Sunbird** – *Anthreptes gabonicus*  
Seen two bird at both Lamin and Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve opposite to Tendaba.
274. **Western Violet-backed Sunbird** – *Anthreptes longuemarei*  
Seen a pair at Marakissa Woods and a single male around AbCa's Creek Lodge.
275. **Collared Sunbird** – *Hedydipna collaris*  
Only seen a male at Pirang Forest.
276. **Pygmy Sunbird** – *Hedydipna platura*  
Probably not very common as we only did see two birds in the surroundings of Tendaba, and a single bird alongside the S Bank Rd.
277. **Green-headed Sunbird** – *Cyanomitra verticalis*  
We have only seen birds at Farasuto Forest and surrounding water bowls.
278. **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** – *Chalcomitra senegalensis*  
Seen at Brufut Woods, Pirang Forest, Tujereng and Kiang West NP.
279. **Beautiful Sunbird** – *Cinnyris pulchellus*  
Very common.
280. **Splendid Sunbird** – *Cinnyris coccinigastrus*  
Common, especially at Brufut Woods.
281. **Variable Sunbird** – *Cinnyris venustus*  
Can be found in most woodlands.
282. **Copper Sunbird** – *Cinnyris cupreus*  
Expected to be fairly common, but we only noticed a pair at Sankuli Kunda and single female near AbCa's Creek Lodge.
283. **House Sparrow** – *Passer domesticus*
284. **Northern Grey-headed Sparrow** – *Passer griseus*  
Very common.
285. **Sahel Bush Sparrow** – *Gymnoris dentate*  
Only seen at different occasions during our trip from Tendaba to Kiang West NP.
286. **White-billed Buffalo Weaver** – *Bubalornis albirostris*  
Although often finding their impressive nests, we only managed to see them twice. A single bird at Brufut Woods and a small flock of eight birds at Tujereng.
287. **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver** – *Ploceus passer suoerciliosus*  
Only a single bird at Tujereng.
288. **Little Weaver** – *Ploceus luteolus*  
Can be found at Brufut Woods, Pirang Forest and Tujereng, mostly in open woodland or forest edges.
289. **Black-necked Weaver** – *Ploceus nigricollis*  
Seen several times at Abuko and single encounters at Marakissa Woods, Brufut Woods, Kotu Bridge, Pirang Forest and Farasuto Forest.
290. **Vitelline Masked Weaver** – *Ploceus vitellinus*  
Seen it in open woodland mainly around Brufut Woods and Tujereng.
291. **Village Weaver** – *Ploceus cucullatus*  
Most abundant Weaver.
292. **Black-headed Weaver** – *Ploceus melanocephalus*  
Seen birds in succession at Janjanbureh, Jakhaly Rice Fields and the ferry cross at Bamba Tenda.

293. **Red-billed Quelea** – *Quelea quelea*  
Probably can be found around most rice fields inlands, for example around Janjanbureh and Jakhaly. farm and Jakhaly Rice Fields as they prefer to forage at stoney paths.
294. **Yellow-crowned Bishop** – *Euplectes afer*  
Seen up to two birds at Marakissa Woods.
295. **Black-winged Red Bishop** – *Euplectes hordeaceus*  
Seen six times, all in the western part of Gambia.
296. **Northern Red Bishop** – *Euplectes franciscanus*  
Common.
297. **Cut-throat Finch** – *Amadina fasciata*  
Founded a single male perching in a tree while we were planning a sweep for mainly Temminck's Courser at Batelling (between Tendaba and Kiang West NP). Up to three birds came to drink at Bansang Quarry.
298. **Western Bluebill** – *Spermophaga haematina*  
After hearing birds only at three different sites, finally a bird gave brief views at Pirang Forest. Even here it proved elusive to at least half of the group.
299. **Red-billed Firefinch** – *Lagonosticta senegala*  
Can be found virtually everywhere.
300. **Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu** – *Uraeginthus bengalus*  
Very common.
301. **Lavender Waxbill** – *Estrilda caerulescens*  
Mostly in woodlands.
302. **Orange-cheeked Waxbill** – *Estrilda melpoda*  
Seems to be fairly scares, although birds gave good views at Brufut Woods, Pirang Forest and near Farasuto Forest.
303. **Black-rumped Waxbill** – *Estrilda troglodytes*  
Fairly common around the country.
304. **Quailfinch** – *Ortygospiza atricollis*  
Flushed several times at the former shrimp
305. **Bronze Mannakin** – *Lonchura cucullata*  
Very common.
306. **Village Indigobird** – *Vidua chalybaeta*  
Fairly common.
307. **Pin-tailed Whydah** – *Vidua mascroura*  
Up to three males at Marakissa Woods, another moulting male near Farasuto Forest.
308. **Sahel Paradise Whydah** – *Vidua orientalis*  
Seen some birds at the North Bank.
309. **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah** – *Vidua interjecta*  
Seen at six different places, among which Bansang is probably best in order to see this species, as they come to drink at the quarry.
310. **Western Yellow Wagtail** – *Motacilla flava*
311. **White Wagtail** – *Motacilla alba*
312. **Tree Pipit** – *Anthus trivialis*
313. **Red-throated Pipit** – *Anthus cervinus*  
Seen at Jakhaly Rice Fields, according to Foday rare for the Gambia.
314. **Yellow-fronted Canary** – *Crithagra mozambica*  
Very common.
315. **Gosling's Bunting** – *Emberiza gosling*  
One bird could be viewed regularly at Bansang when it came to drink at the quarry.
316. **Brown-rumped Bunting** – *Emberiza affinis*  
Seen up to two birds between Tendaba and Kiang West NP.



## 4.2 Mammals

1. **Green Monkey** – *Chlorocebus sabaeus*  
Common around Lamin Lodge and at Abu-ko.
2. **Patas Monkey** – *Erythrocebus patas*  
Seen at three different sites.
3. **Guinea Baboon** – *Papio papio*
4. **Temminck's Red Colobus** – *Piliocolobus temminckii*
5. **Gambian Sun Squirrel** – *Heliosciurus gambianus*
6. **Striped Ground Squirrel** – *Xerus erythropus*
7. **Gambian Rat** – *Cricetomys gambianus*
8. **Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat** – *Epomophorus gambianus*  
Hanging in the palms at AbCa's Creek Lodge.
9. **Yellow-winged Bat** – *Lavia frons*  
Lucky to find this species at Janjanbureh.
10. **Common Warthog** – *Phacochoerus africanus*  
One drinking at freshwater lake at Kiang West NP.
11. **Common Hippopotamus** – *Hippopotamus amphibious*



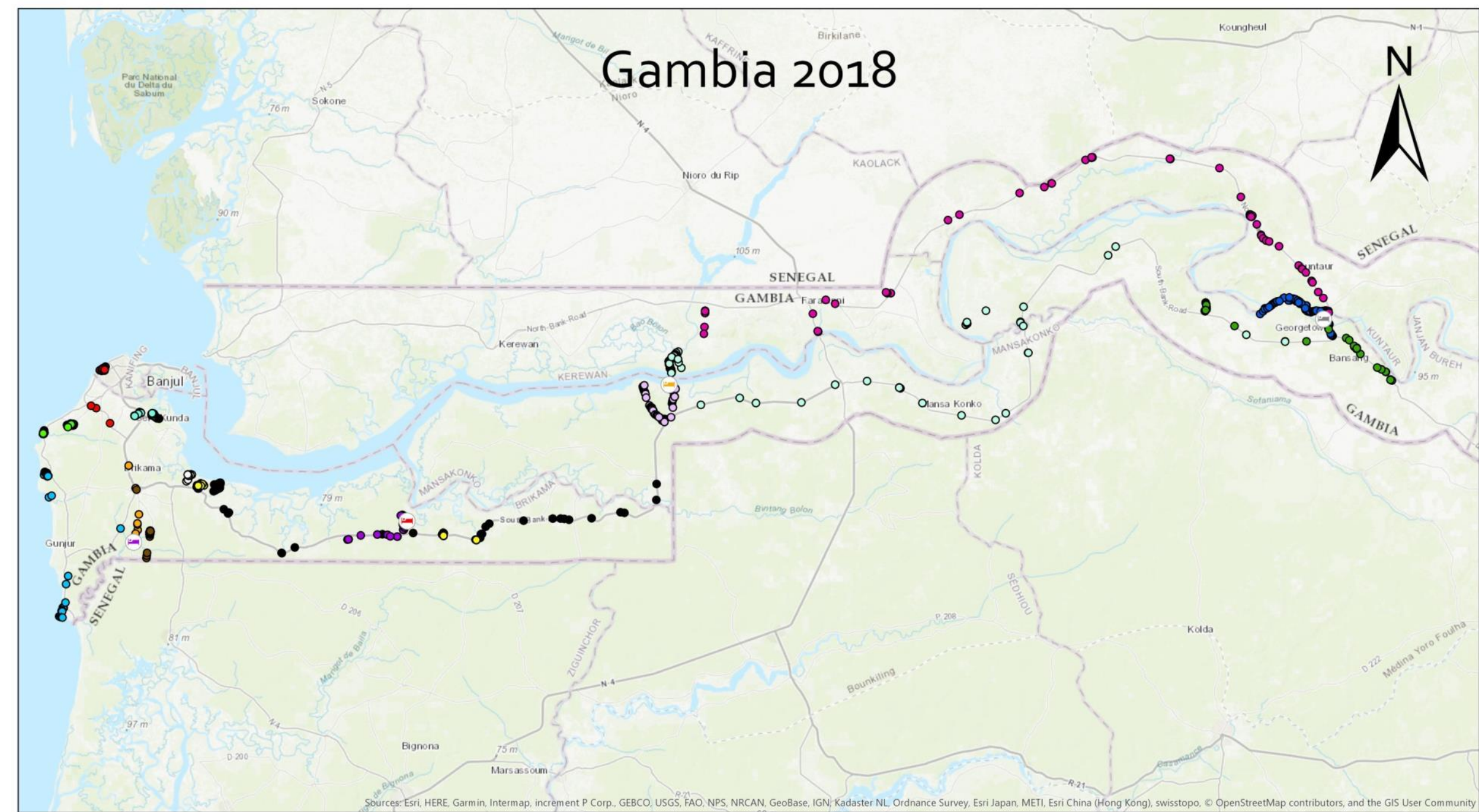
**Guinea Baboon** *Papio papio*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (Bo Andernach)



**Yellow-winged Bat** *Lavia frons*, Janjanbureh, The Gambia, 22 November 2018 (Rens Huizinga)

Appendix

I Global map



Name	Datum	○ 17-11-2018	● 23-11-2018
Abca's Creek Lodge	● 12-11-2018	● 18-11-2018	● 24-11-2018
Baobolong Camp	○ 13-11-2018	● 19-11-2018	● 25-11-2018
Marakissa Rivercamp	● 14-11-2018	● 20-11-2018	● 26-11-2018
Tendaba River Camp	● 15-11-2018	● 21-11-2018	● 27-11-2018
	● 16-11-2018	● 22-11-2018	

Points represent all observations during the birding trip. See all observations at [www.observation.org](http://www.observation.org).

