

*Ghana 9<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016*



I travelled to Ghana with “**Sunbird Tours**” as a group of 8 led by Sunbird guide James Lidster and Ashanti guide Victor along with driver Martin and culture attaché Mike, all of whom were very experienced and top class operatives which made the tour run smoothly and without any problems.

A number of bird species were seen most days and were very common and don't need to be mentioned again in the report and these include – Cattle Egret, Yellow-billed Kite, Red-eyed Dove, Laughing Dove, Western Grey Plantain-eater, African Palm Swift, Common Swift, Little Swift, Ethiopian Swallow, Barn Swallow, Common Bulbul, Pied Crow and Village Weaver.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Nov 2016**

We took off from Heathrow, London 20 mins late at 1400hrs but landed in Accra, Ghana on time at 1940hrs due to a good tail-wind. Getting through customs and baggage reclaim was swift and we met our guides at arrivals and transferred to a spacious 15 seater bus and were at our stop for the night the **Erata Hotel** in Accra by 2100hrs. A late evening meal followed by introductions and a tour introduction talk meant we were able to be in bed by 2300hrs after a long day.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Nov 2016**

A late breakfast at 0630hrs meant I could wander around the hotel gardens that held a few trees before breakfast as it was light at 0545hrs. The first bird seen in Ghana as it was dark last night when we arrived was Purple Glossy Starling, other birds followed very quickly in the half hour stroll and included – African Pied Hornbill, African Grey Hornbill, 2 Grey Woodpecker, 3 **African Pied Wagtail ((✓))**, Splendid Sunbird, Collared Sunbird, 15 **Splendid Glossy Starling ((✓))**, 2 Double-toothed Barbet and 2 Bronze Mannikin.

After breakfast we set off through the Accra rush hour traffic towards our first stop Winneba Lagoons about 2hrs west because of the traffic. The chaos that is the Accra traffic system allowed us time to pick out species on the side of the road and while crossing over lakes and estuaries and included African Green Pigeon, Senegal Parrot, Senegal Coucal, 10 **White-rumped Swift ((✓))** amongst the throngs of Little Swift, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow and Pin-tailed Whydah.

We arrived at Winneba Lagoons at 0915hrs, the tide was in so all the shorebirds were concentrated on Islands in front of us and were easily scoped, plenty of species were present on the lagoon and surrounding scrub and the list were made off – 6 Long-tailed Cormorant, 3 Western Reef Egret, 2 Little Egret, 1 Palm-nut Vulture, 1 African Harrier Hawk, 20 Black-winged Stilt, 30 Ringed Plover, 35 Grey Plover, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit, 6 Spur-winged Lapwing, 12 Sanderling, 1 Little Stint, 2 Curlew Sandpiper, 6 Marsh Sandpiper, 30 Greenshank, 10 Common Sandpiper, 2 Turnstone, 50 Royal Tern, 30 Sandwich Tern, 1 Common Tern, 1 Malachite Kingfisher, 1 Woodland Kingfisher, 6 Pied Kingfisher, 20 **White-throated Bee-eater ((✓))**, Winding and Singing Cisticola, Splendid and Collared Sunbird, 20 Black-necked Weaver and 4 Bronze Mannikin.

From here we travelled to our accommodation for the next 3 nights the Forest Lodge Motel, Akroform, which was 15kms outside the Kakum Forest and arrived for lunch at 1300hrs. The lodge itself was quite modern by African standards and the food was of a high quality. After lunch I walked round the gardens during the hottest part of the day and managed to pick up a few species in – Common Wattle-eye, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow and Black and White Mannikin.

Our afternoon trip after the heat of the day when bird activity is practically zero was about 10kms away at Abrafo, where we walked the Farm Bush which is essentially Rain-forest interspersed with Banana and cocoa plantations. This area was easy to view and birds were on every tree branch. The next two hours proved to be very exciting with new birds coming thick and fast and included – Palm-nut Vulture, African Harrier Hawk, Superb views of **Long-tailed Hawk ((✓))**, **2 African Hobby ((✓))**, 3 African Green Pigeon, Blue-spotted Wood-dove, **Tambourine Dove ((✓))**, **1 Grey Parrot ((✓))**, 1 Senegal Parrot, 1 Klaas's Cuckoo, 1 **Mottled Spine-tail ((✓))**, **2 Black Bee-eater ((✓))**, 80 White-throated Bee-eater, 6 **Blue-throated Roller ((✓))**, 6 Broad-billed Roller, 10 African Pied Hornbill, 4 African Grey Hornbill, **2 Piping Hornbill ((✓))**, **1 Speckled Tinkerbird ((✓))**, 2 Bearded Barbet, 3 Fanti Saw-wing, 6 Lesser-striped Swallow, 4 **Preuss's Cliff Swallow ((✓))**, 1 Little Greenbul, 1 **Simple Leaflove ((✓))**, 1 Red-faced Cisticola, 1 **Whistling Cisticola ((✓))**, 1 Green Crombec, 1 Grey-backed Camaroptera, **2 Ussher's Flycatcher ((✓))**, **2 Tit Hylia ((✓))**, **1 Green Sunbird ((✓))**, **3 Blue-throated Brown Sunbird ((✓))**, **2 Buff-throated Sunbird ((✓))**, **2 Olive-bellied Sunbird ((✓))**, **1 Superb Sunbird ((✓))**, 3 Common Fiscal, 3 **Velvet-mantled Drongo ((✓))**, 2 Long-tailed Glossy Starling, 50 Violet-backed Starling, 4 **Red-vented Malimbe ((✓))**, **1 Red-headed Malimbe ((✓))**, 4 **Grey-headed Negrofinch ((✓))**, **Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch ((✓))** and **2 White-breasted Negrofinch ((✓))**.

By 1800hrs it was starting to get dark so after a brief return to the bus for biscuits and water, we walked through the Farm Bush and stood by a large tree waiting for owls to come in. African Wood-Owl was seen flying by before the real Prize appeared in **Akun Eagle-owl ((✓))**, which showed superbly in its favoured tree and was an early highlight for the tour along with the earlier Long-tailed Hawk sighting. After our fill we returned to the lodge for dinner at 1900hrs and a well-earned beer.

So after the first day our trip list was on 98 species with 30 new species for me.

## **11<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

An early start and an even earlier breakfast meant that we were at the Kakum National Nature Reserve by dawn, and made our way to the famous Canopy Walkway. At this time of the day there were no noisy tourists and we had the place to ourselves for several hours. The walkway contains six viewing platforms attached to very large trees, with rope bridges connecting each platform 40 metres above the ground, some of the trees must have been 200ft tall. Luckily all of us could fit onto a single platform, the experience was quite exhilarating and for good measure there were lots of birds about too. We also visited this area again in the evening, but there were fewer birds about and a lot of screaming tourists unable to get to grips with the swaying walkway, the key to walking the rope bridges is to put one foot directly in front of the other while walking to stop the swaying by



keeping your centre of gravity in the same place even though it was impossible to fall off the walkway. None of our party had any problems compared to the often swaying tourists.



During the morning and afternoon sessions combined a fine list of rain-forest birds were seen and included – 2 **African Cuckoo Hawk ((✓))**, 1 Black-shouldered Kite, 2 Palm-nut Vulture, 2 African Harrier Hawk, **Cassin's Hawk-eagle ((✓))**, Common Kestrel, 3 African Green Pigeon, 2 Tambourine Dove, 2 Grey Parrot, 3 **Yellow-billed Turaco ((✓))**, **Cassin's Spine-tail ((✓))**, 5 Pallid Swift, 30 White-throated Bee-eater, 2 Blue-throated Roller, **Forest Wood-hoopoe ((✓))**, **White-crested Hornbill ((✓))**, 20 African Pied Hornbill, 3 Piping Hornbill, **Hairy-breasted Barbet ((✓))**, 2 **Naked-faced Barbet ((✓))**, **Cassin's Honeybird ((✓))**, **Little Green Woodpecker ((✓))**, **Fire-bellied Woodpecker ((✓))**, **Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike ((✓))**, 4 **Little Grey Greenbul ((✓))**, **Yellow-whiskered Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 **Golden Greenbul ((✓))**, **Honeyguide Greenbul ((✓))**, **White-tailed Alethe ((✓))**, **Black-capped Apalis ((✓))**, 2 **Sharpe's Apalis ((✓))**, 4 **Rufous-crowned Eremomela ((✓))**, **Violet-backed Hylia ((✓))**, **Green Hylia ((✓))**, **Little Grey Flycatcher ((✓))**, 2 **Chestnut-capped Flycatcher ((✓))**, **Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher ((✓))**, 2 **Chestnut Wattle-eye ((✓))**, 3 **Forest Penduline Tit ((✓))**, 3 **Little Green Sunbird ((✓))**, **Fraser's Sunbird ((✓))**, Blue-throated Brown Sunbird, Buff-throated Sunbird, 20 Collared Sunbird, 10 Splendid Sunbird, 2 Copper Sunbird, 2 **Sabine's Puffback ((✓))** with the male displaying, 2 **Black-winged Oriole ((✓))**, 10 Velvet-mantled Drongo, 2 **Forest Chestnut-winged Starling ((✓))**, **Copper-tailed Glossy Starling ((✓))**, 6 Purple Glossy Starling, 10 Splendid Glossy Starling, 8 Violet-backed Starling, 10 **Yellow-mantled Weaver ((✓))**, 2 **Preuss's Weaver ((✓))**, 2 Red-headed Malimbe, 3 Negrofinch species as seen yesterday and 2 Pin-tailed Whydah.

We returned to the car park just after dark for another owl search and it wasn't long before a **Fraser's Eagle-owl ((✓))** revealed itself with a little coaxing through tape luring and showed well in the trees around the main buildings.

At the end of day two the trip list had been extended to 138 with another 35 new birds for me, meaning my tick list was at 65.

## **12<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Another early breakfast and start had us travelling to another area of Farm Bush called Antwikia near Wawase, this area was much wetter than previous areas visited and thus held some different species. 3 hrs here included highlights of – **White-spotted Fluff-tail ((✓))** seen very well, Tambourine Dove, Klaas's Cuckoo, **Didric Cuckoo ((✓))**, **Black-throated Coucal ((✓))**, 20 White-throated Bee-eater, 10 African Pied Hornbill, Piping Hornbill, **Yellow-throated Tinkerbird ((✓))**, **Yellow-browed Camaroptera ((✓))**, Green Hylia, **Dusky Blue Flycatcher ((✓))**, **Red-cheeked Wattle-eye ((✓))**, 2 **Johanna's Sunbird ((✓))**, 14 **Vieillot's black Weaver ((✓))**, **Maxwell's Black Weaver ((✓))**, 3 **Blue-billed Malimbe ((✓))**, Black-winged Bishop and Orange-cheeked Waxbill.

From here we travelled for about an hour to the town of Twifo Praso, which has a road bridge over the river. We parked just before the bridge and walked a path that brought us to the river bank about 100mts downstream and within 5 minutes we had all seen the three speciality species we had come to see, namely – 2 **White-headed Lapwing ((✓))**, 4 **Rock Pratincole ((✓))** and **White-throated Blue Swallow ((✓))** all of which showed extremely well. 3 Hooded Vulture were also over the town.

We then returned to our lodge for lunch. After the heat of the day had passed, we made a return visit to Abrafo Farm Scrub, this time going in deeper into the forest than before. Most of the same species were seen on the previous visit were still present, but new species and highlights included – African Cuckoo Hawk, African Harrier Hawk, African Goshawk, Lanner Falcon, 3 **Red-fronted Parrot ((✓))**, Blue-headed Coucal, 2 **Sabine's Spine-tail ((✓))**, 2 Black Bee-eater, 2 Piping Hornbill, 2 Fire-bellied Woodpecker, **Rufous-sided Broadbill ((✓))**, 2 Preuss's Cliff Swallow, Wire-tailed Swallow, **Icterine Bulbul ((✓))**, Tawny-flanked Prinia, 5 Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Green Hylia, 2 Black-winged Oriole and Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch.

As we had had the two important owls we went looking for nightjars near the hotel at dusk and duly found and had good views of Long-tailed Nightjar.

The trip list had increased at the end of the day to 168 species and 18 new birds meant I was on 83 new lifers.

### **13<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Today we started to travel west, we stopped at Abrafo first for an hour and a different area of Farm Bush produced – 2 **Red-necked Buzzard ((✓))**, 2 Grey Kestrel, 3 African Green Pigeon, 2 Yellow-billed Turaco, 3 **Yellowbill ((✓))**, 3 Woodland Kingfisher, 2 Black Bee-eater, 16 **Rosy Bee-eater ((✓))**, 3 Speckled Tinkerbird, 1 **Red-rumped Tinkerbird ((✓))**, 3 Fanti Saw-wing, **Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike ((✓))**, **Blue Cuckoo-shrike ((✓))**, **Cameroon Sombre Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 **Slender-billed Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 **Spotted Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 **Swamp Palm Greenbul ((✓))**, **Grey-headed Bristlebill ((✓))**, **Western Nicator ((✓))**, **Grey Longbill ((✓))**, 2 Green Hylia, 2 Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, 2 Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, **Puvel's Illadopsis ((✓))**, 2 **Green-headed Sunbird ((✓))**, Blue-throated Brown Sunbird, **Olive Sunbird ((✓))**, **Sooty Boubou ((✓))**, 4 **Red-billed Helmet Shrike ((✓))**, 2 **Western Black-headed Oriole ((✓))**, 2 **Bar-breasted Firefinch ((✓))**, **Blue-billed Firefinch ((✓))** and 2 Orange-cheeked Waxbill.

We then started west on a 4hr journey to Ankasa on the Ivory Coast border. We stopped for lunch somewhere along the way, but our first birding stop was at a small wetland near Apemenyim on the Tarkwa Junction where we picked up a colony of **Orange Weaver ((✓))**. Our second stop was on the coast just west of Esiam, a small tidal lagoon with Mangroves lining the river. Here we had – Western Reef Egret, Intermediate Egret, 6 Hooded Vulture, Woodland Kingfisher, 3 Mouse-brown Sunbird, Olive-bellied Sunbird, 4 Orange Weaver and 3 Pin-tailed Whydah amongst other comer species.

We arrived at the Ankasa Reserve Campsite with enough light to get settled in, a great surprise here was the quality of the food, probably the best we experienced in Ghana. A couple of beers and a walk of the camp lights for moths made me very tired after a long day and was in bed by 2200hrs.

A good day considering the travel time, took our trip list to 192 with 21 new birds making my tick total 105.



## **14<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

I was up at 0445hrs unable to sleep due to the 100% humidity and it wasn't long before the first calling Nkulengu Rail alerted us to its presence, but it was far off in the forest and we were unable to locate this one or another that was calling near the toilet block on any of our mornings here. After breakfast we headed off deep into the forest stopping briefly at an area of open habitat that had been created by electricity pylons, here we found – **Red-thighed Sparrowhawk ((✓))** [perched], 4 **Blue-headed Wood-dove ((✓))** [mainly on the forestry tracks], 2 Yellow-billed Turaco, Yellowbill, Sabine's Spine-tail, 30 White-throated Bee-eater, Blue-throated Roller, Piping Hornbill, **Yellow-spotted Barbet ((✓))** and **Shining Drongo ((✓))**, 10 Velvet-mantled Drongo, 3 Red-billed Helmet Shrike, Black-winged Oriole.

From here we continued on to what is called the 3 pools walk, a 1 mile walk along the forestry paths which has three small pools alongside them for good measure. This was quite an interesting excursion and produced – 2 **Hartlaub's Duck ((✓))** [pool 1], 2 African Green Pigeon, Yellow-billed Turaco, **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo ((✓))** [finally after much trying], **African Emerald Cuckoo ((✓))**, Cassin's Spine-tail, **Chocolate-backed Kingfisher ((✓))** [pool 1], Blue-breasted Kingfisher [pool 2], African Pygmy Kingfisher [pool 2], **White-bellied Kingfisher ((✓))** [pool 2], **Shining Blue Kingfisher ((✓))** [pool 3], Blue-throated Roller, 20 African Pied Hornbill, Piping Hornbill, **Cassin's Honeybird ((✓))**, 6 **Square-tailed Saw-wing ((✓))** [pool 1], 2 Cameroon Sombre Greenbul, 2 Slender-billed Greenbul, Golden Greenbul, Honeyguide Greenbul, 3 Swamp Palm Bulbul, **Western Bearded Greenbul ((✓))**, **Red-tailed Greenbul ((✓))**, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Green Hylia, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, 4 Chestnut Wattle-eye, 8 Blue-billed Malimbe and Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch.

We then returned to camp for lunch and then as with all rain forests it rained. We tried to get out in the afternoon but was pointless and we gave up for the day and returned to camp. Another early night was called for. A tip from the local guides suggested we should sleep on the floor of the tent instead of the beds as the humidity doesn't reach ground level as much. So I put the mattress on the floor and had my best night's sleep so far, a solid 8hrs.

Trip list now up to 206 and 15 new species meant I had reached 120 lifers, just 30 short of my target on day 6 of 13.

## **15<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Today's plan was to bird Ankasa in the morning then have an early lunch and return to Forest Lodge, Kakum stopping at a few sites on the way.

Another early breakfast meant we were at the river bridge by the park entrance just after dawn and we stayed here for an hour to see what would come to drink and feed and we weren't disappointed, birds included - 2 Green-backed Heron, Klaas's Cuckoo, Woodland Kingfisher, White-bellied Kingfisher, Shining Blue Kingfisher, **Buff-spotted Woodpecker ((✓))**, **Ansorge's Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 Slender-billed Greenbul, Golden Greenbul, 4

Swamp Palm Bulbul, 3 **Yellow-bearded Greenbul ((✓))**, **Tiny Sunbird ((✓))** and Western Black-headed Oriole. One lucky group member had White-crested Tiger Heron downstream, well photographed but it had gone by the time we got there.

From the bridge we followed a looping path through the forest which was extremely dense and hard going at times but we did get a few good birds in – Broad-billed Roller, 10 African Pied Hornbill, Speckled Tinkerbird, 3 Little Grey Greenbul, yellow-whiskered Greenbul, Honeyguide Greenbul, Red-tailed Greenbul, **Forest Robin ((✓))** [brief flight views], **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush ((✓))**, Green Hylia, 2 **Cassin's Flycatcher ((✓))**, 2 Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, 2 Fraser's Sunbird and 2 Shining Drongo.

After another hearty lunch we set off back east, stopping again briefly at the Esiam Lagoon, this time picking up **Reichenbach's Sunbird ((✓))** amongst the same birds as previously. We also got the only House Sparrow Colony [8 birds] in Ghana at The Axim River toll booth on the way.

Our final stop of the day at 1600hrs was at Brennu Beach Road on the coast and was good to get away from forest birding to a more open savannah type habitat. Birds here came thick and fast and included – 3 Black-shouldered Kite, 3 Hooded Vulture, 3 African Harrier Hawk, 3 Shikra, 1 female type Pallid Harrier, 2 each of Grey Kestrel, Common Kestrel and African Hobby, Double-spurred Francolin, 6 African Wattled Lapwing, Black-throated Coucal, 2 Senegal Coucal, Malachite Kingfisher, 4 Pied Kingfisher, 2 Pied-winged Swallow, Snowy-crowned Robin-chat, Red-faced, Singing and Whistling Cisticola, Tawny-flanked Prinia, 4 Red-winged Warbler, **Marsh Tchagra ((✓))**, 2 **Slender-billed Weaver ((✓))**, 4 **Yellow-mantled Widowbird ((✓))**, 6 Bar-breasted Firefinch and 4 Black-rumped Waxbill.

We left Brennu Beach Road near dark and carried on back to Forest Lodge Kakum which was about an hour away. Our final birds of the day were 2 Long-tailed Nightjar flushed by the bus from the roadside halfway to the lodge. Where we had another good meal and a few beers.

Trip list was now at 222 species and with my tick list was at 126.

## **16<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Early starts were the norm as this was mainly a travel day, we stopped again at Abrafo Farm Scrub, and added birds to the trip in the form of – 3 **Black Spine-tail ((✓))**, **Yellow-billed Barbet ((✓))** and **Yellow-footed Honeyguide ((✓))**, 3 Shikra, .

We set off north after an early lunch and arrived at our next site, a village called Bonkra near Assin Fumso at 1530 hrs. From here we walked into the forest and up the hillside to a rocky outcrop with a bench for viewing, the walk took about an hour. As we settled in for a long wait a 6 foot **Green Mamba** passed close by giving great views, many people die from their bites every year as they can't get to hospital in time as they are usually found in remote forests like this one. At about 30 minutes later the first **Yellow-headed Picathartes ((✓))** bouncing over the rocks appeared, a total of 3 we eventually seen and was the highlight of the trip for some. We started our decent at 1730hrs but by the time we got half way night had fallen and



slowed down some of the group dramatically. We eventually arrived in the Ashanti region capitol Kumasi at 2000hrs and booked into the Royal Basin Hotel and had some high quality food and beers before bed.

A halfway holiday recount found the trip list to be 232 species while my lifers had increased to 132.

### **17<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

An extremely early breakfast in order to beat the rush hour traffic saw us arriving at Offinso forest 2hrs north of Kumasi at 0715hrs. The forestry road had been washed away due to heavy rains earlier in the year, so we had to walk in instead of drive. This allowed us to see many more birds during our 1 hr leg stretch stay, Highlights included – Black-billed Wood-dove, **Brown-necked Parrot ((✓))** [a real rarity here], **Black Coucal ((✓))**, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Broad-billed Roller, African Grey Hornbill, Piping Hornbill [their furthest site north], 2 **Vieillot's Barbet ((✓))**, 2 Spotted Flycatcher, Orange-cheeked Waxbill and **Blue-billed Firefinch ((✓))**.

From here Mole our destination in the north was still a six hour drive, so we set off at 1030hrs and stopped for lunch at a hotel in Techiman at 1300hrs. After leaving the town the landscape changed dramatically. First the trees became shorter around 25 feet compared to the 200 foot monsters of the rain forest then the trees became thinner with stretches of grassland between them and finally the grasses only grew in the shade of the trees or damp areas. This allowed us to see many birds from the bus as we travelled north and birds of prey became a feature of the skies and African Grey Hornbill became the default Hornbill as opposed to the African Pied Hornbill in the forests of the south. Highlights of the journey included – Black-shouldered Kite, Honey Buzzard, 7 Hooded Vulture, **Beaudouin's Snake-eagle ((✓))** [perched on a pylon, giving good scope views], African Harrier Hawk, 6 **Grasshopper Buzzard ((✓))**, Lanner Falcon, Woodland Kingfisher, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Blue-bellied Roller, 15 African Grey Hornbill, Yellow-billed Shrike and 4 Brubru.

After crossing the Black Volta Bridge and about an hour short of Mole, we stopped at a roadside wetland for 30 minutes for a leg stretch and recce. The birds here were different to that in the south in the main and included – White-faced Whistling Duck, Grasshopper Buzzard, 2 African Wattled Lapwing, Namaqua Dove, 4 Speckled Pigeon [a rarity here], 12 Vinaceous Dove, 20 Rose-ringed Parakeet, Grey-headed Kingfisher, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Whistling and Singing Cisticola, Melodious Warbler and 6 Piapiac.

We arrived at the Mole Motel within the park at dusk, the rooms themselves overlook a serious of waterholes that attract all manner of animals and birds, which would prove thrilling over the next few days.

Trip list now stands at 249 species with lifers standing at 138 species.

**18<sup>th</sup> November 2016**



*View for the balcony*

Breakfasts were back to 0530hrs today and for the next three days and it seems like a lie on!!! . Less than 15 minutes to our first stop which was along the Samole Loop which leads to the waterholes. The first stop in the bush produced – 2 African Cuckoo Hawk, Dark-chanting Goshawk, 2 Black-billed Wood-dove, 3 Senegal Parrot, 10 Rose-ringed Parakeet, 50 **Red-throated Bee-eater ((✓))** [now the default Bee-eater], Northern Red-billed hornbill, 2 African Grey Hornbill, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, 2 Grey-backed Camaroptera, 5 Senegal Eremomela, 30+ Willow Warbler, 3 **Violet-backed Hyliota ((✓))**, 2 Northern Black Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, 10+ Pied Flycatcher, 2 **Senegal Batis ((✓))**, **White-shouldered Black Tit ((✓))**, 2 Scarlet-chested Sunbird, 2 **Pygmy Sunbird ((✓))**, 2 Yellow-crowned Gonolek, 2 Fork-tailed Drongo, **Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling ((✓))**, 10 Long-tailed Glossy Starling, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver, 2 **Wilson's Indigobird ((✓))** and 10 Yellow-fronted Canary.

We finally pulled ourselves away from here after an hour and then moved 10 minutes in the bus along the loop road to an area of a dried waterhole, with a trickle of a stream and a disused tower hide. If we thought the last stop was good this place was even better and highlights produced – Black-headed Heron, Dark-chanting Goshawk, **Stone Partridge ((✓))**, 4 Double-spurred Francolin, Senegal Coucal, 60 Red-throated Bee-eater, 4 Green Wood-hoopoe, 2 Black Wood-hoopoe, 2 Lesser Honeyguide, 2 Grey Woodpecker, Sand Martin, 2 Wire-tailed Swallow, 4 Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Melodious Warbler, 3 **Oriole Warbler ((✓))**, 2 Beautiful Sunbird, 2 African Golden Oriole, 6 Bush Pretonia, Little Weaver, Northern Red Bishop, Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu and a fine male **Exclamatory Paradise Whydah ((✓))**.

Another hour had passed in no time and we moved on again by bus to the waterholes beneath my balcony after a five minute drive. We walked 200 metres passed the new tower hide and to the edge of the waterholes, by now the birds of prey were up and a fine selection ensued. Out of the trees on the far side of the water [about 100 metres away] appeared 2 rather large and tusked Elephants, they appeared huge to me but our armed protection ranger assured us they were medium sized females, apparently males are much bigger and would have charged us at that distance.....yikes. Besides the Warthogs, Olive Baboons, Kobs, Waterbucks and Bushbucks there were also a lot of birds too and the best seen were – Hamerkop, 40 Hadada Ibis, Palm-nut Vulture, 6 Hooded Vulture, 15 White-backed Vulture, another Beaudouin's Snake-eagle, 2 Bateleur, 2 Grasshopper Buzzard, Lizard Buzzard, a majestic **Martial Eagle ((✓))**, 3 African Jacana, 2 Greater Painted Snipe, Malachite Kingfisher, 4 Pied Kingfisher, 2 Abyssinian Roller, Greater Honeyguide, 60 House Martin, 2 Yellow Wagtail, Red-throated Pipit, 2 **Swamp Flycatcher ((✓))**, 3 Yellow-billed Shrike, Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike and 2 Red-billed Firefinch.

It was now 1130hrs and the heat of the day was really kicking in at 42c, so we returned to the motel for lunch and some downtime. But the morning had not yet finished as we approached the motel an **African Hawk-eagle ((✓))** was perched by the side of the road, a first for the Sunbird Ghana tours.

While everybody had a siesta I parked myself on my shaded balcony overlooking the waterhole to see what would turn up and had a pretty good 2hrs which included - Squacco Heron, Green-backed Heron, 2 Grey Heron, Woolly-necked Stork, 40 Hadada Ibis, 9 White-faced Whistling Duck, Dark-

chanting Goshawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Tawny Eagle [dive bombing the Ibis unsuccessfully], 10 African Wattled Lapwing, 6 African Green Pigeon, Bruce's Pigeon, Grey-headed Kingfisher, 6 Blue-breasted Kingfisher and 2 Blue-throated Roller.

After siesta time we tried a different track to the north, just 15 minutes away called the Brubani Loop. An hour's walk produced new birds in 2 White-fronted Chat, **African Moustached Warbler ((✓))** and 2 Northern Puffback. Then a few more quick stops along the track brought 5 **Forbe's Plover ((✓))** and 2 **Sun Lark ((✓))**. Dusk was falling as we stumbled upon 2 Four-banded Sandgrouse on the side of the track and were well watched. We were now about 30 minutes from the motel, so we looked for species in the buses headlights on the way back along the track and found 8 Double-spurred Francolin, Spotted Thick-knee, Greyish Eagle-owl [completing the Eagle-owl treble] and 5 Long-tailed Nightjar.

After an excellent days birding the trip list had leaped to 313 species and 17 new lifers taking my total to 155, beating my target of 150 with four days of the trip left. My other 2 targets of a 350 trip list and at least a tick a day was still on schedule. Exclamatory Paradise Whydah being my 150<sup>th</sup> lifer for the trip.

### **19<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Another day in Mole and another track, this time it was the Mognori Bridge Loop, the beginning of which was only 10 minutes from the motel by bus. At the start of the track was the disused Mole Airstrip, a walk around here produced a good selection of birds including – 4 Stone Partridge, 6 Double-spurred Francolin, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Northern Red-billed Hornbill, 2 **Rufous Cisticola ((✓))**, 16 White Helmet-shrike and 2 Wilson's Indigobird.

From here we continued along the track for 10mins by bus and stopped at Mognori Bridge and then walked into the Bush. Both the Bridge and River area was good for birds and the highlights of a 3hr walk included – Palm-nut Vulture, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, 2 Lanner Falcon, Wahlberg's Eagle, 10 African Green Pigeon, 10 Senegal Parrot, 2 Violet Turaco, **Levaillant's Cuckoo ((✓))**, **Thick-billed Cuckoo ((✓))**, Striped Kingfisher, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Blue-bellied Roller, 3 Bearded Barbet, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, 4 Wire-tailed Swallow, 4 Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, 40 Pied Flycatcher, Senegal Batis, 3 Yellow-billed Shrike, **Square-tailed Drongo ((✓))**, 15 Long-tailed Glossy Starling, 100+ Bush Pretonia, 15 Orange-cheeked Waxbill and 15 Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu.

Siesta time was again spent on the balcony and it felt hotter than yesterday. After getting rid of the attention of the baboons, I found new birds from yesterday in 2 African Cuckoo-hawk, **Ovambo Sparrowhawk ((✓))**, 50 Helmeted Guineafowl, 10 Senegal Thick-knee and Greenshank.

Post Siesta we returned to the Brubani Loop and checked out the area near the waterhole only 5 minutes from the motel, highlights were 4 Hamerkop, 2 Four-banded Sandgrouse, 2 Pearl-spotted Owlet, 6 Broad-billed Roller, Whinchat, White-fronted Black Chat, Yellow-breasted Apalis, **Lead-coloured Flycatcher ((✓))**, **African Blue Flycatcher ((✓))**, 5 White-shouldered Black Tit, Western Violet-backed Sunbird, 2 Sulphur-breasted



Bush-shrike, 2 African Golden Oriole, 6 Northern Red Bishop, **Black-bellied Firefinch ((✓))**, 4 Lavender Waxbill and Yellow-fronted Canary. The track back to the motel after dark only yielded 2 Long-tailed Nightjar and a Sun Lark.

Our last full day in Mole saw our trip list rise to 333 and my lifer list rise to 163 species.

## **20<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Today was a travel day back south, so at dawn we had a quick look around the waterhole, motel and Airstrip before setting off and this produced new and good birds including – 4 Bruce's Green Pigeon, 2 Violet Turaco, 2 Tree Pipit, 2 White-fronted Black Chat, 5 Rufous Cisticola, 3 Melodious Warbler, Wood Warbler, Swamp Flycatcher, Senegal Batis, 2 Pygmy Sunbird, Black-crowned Tchagra, 3 Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Red-headed Weaver and 2 Lavender Waxbill.

Birds seen on the journey included new for the trip Spur-winged Goose and a high count of 12 Grasshopper Buzzard over the lagoon wetland that we stopped at on the way up. Lunch was at Kintampo in a rather up market service station, the food here was top notch. So we arrived back at Offinso forest at 1530hrs and spent the next 1 ½ hrs walking the tracks deeper in the forest and had some good birds in – Little Grebe [rare here], 2 Grey Kestrel, 3 Common Moorhen [again rare here], African Pygmy Kingfisher, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Double-toothed Barbet, 2 **Black and White Flycatcher ((✓))** and 3 Pin-tailed Whydah.

We arrived at the Royal Basin Hotel, Kumasi just after dark and booked into the same rooms and had a few beers and dinner.

Trip list was now at 342 species, only one lifer today though, so moving up to 164 species.

## **21<sup>st</sup> November 2016**

An early start to beat the Kumasi work traffic saw us at our next destination - Bobiri Butterfly Nature Reserve [an hour drive] at 0700hrs. Although famed for its butterflies, of which I took plenty of photos, the birds were pretty damn good too. A host of speciality rainforest species were seen to add to the list including – Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, 3 Grey Parrot [at nest site], 10 Red-fronted Parrot, Yellowbill, **Black Dwarf Hornbill ((✓))**, **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill ((✓))**, **Brown-cheeked Hornbill ((✓))**, 10 **Bristle-nosed Barbet ((✓))**, 3 Naked-faced Barbet, Cardinal Woodpecker, **Fraser's Forest Flycatcher ((✓))**, Tiny Sunbird, Red-headed Malimbe and 4 **Magpie Mannikin ((✓))**. We then left at 1100hrs

After stopping along the way for lunch we arrived at the final destination of the day Shai Hills near Accra with about an hour light left, which was just enough time to get 2 **White-crowned Cliff Chat ((✓))**, 2 Plain-backed Pipit, 2 Green Turaco, **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird ((✓))**, Yellow fronted Tinkerbird and 1 **Flappet Lark((✓))**. From here at dusk we drove further into the Reserve and found African Scops Owl. The well served drive the tracks after dark technique paid off big time and we had 14 Long-tailed Nightjar, 9 **Plain Nightjar ((✓))**, 2 **Black-shouldered Nightjar ((✓))** and a

further 8 nightjars that flushed before we could identify. Besides these there were also 6 Double-spurred Francolin and a further 2 Greyish Eagle-owl – quite an experience. We then returned to the Erata Hotel, Accra where it all began 13 days ago.

Trip list was now up to 359 species and life list was on 175 species.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016**

This was our last day in Ghana and we had the morning session birding at Shai Hills Reserve and a number of tidy birds were seen including – Black-shouldered Kite, 2 Shikra, Grey Kestrel, Green Turaco, 2 Violet Turaco, 2 Green Wood-hoopoe, **Croaking Cisticola ((✓))**, 5 **Short-winged Cisticola ((✓))**, 3 Brown Babbler, 2 Yellow-crowned Gonolek and 3 Piapiac.

Our last stop was at the Sagumo Lagoon on the Accra Coast. Surprisingly this area in the middle of the metropolis held some good birds in 5 Squacco Heron, 4 Black Heron, 5 Intermediate Egret, 2 Great Egret, 3 Western Reef Egret, 20 White-faced Whistling Duck, 2 Garganey, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, 4 African Jacana, 3 Black-winged Stilt, Senegal Thick-knee, 10 Collared Pratincole, 2 Bar-tailed Godwit, 35 African Wattled Lapwing, 15 Spur-winged Lapwing, Red Knot, 2 Marsh Sandpiper, 20 Greenshank, 5 Wood Sandpiper, Black Tern 2 Pied Kingfisher, Yellow-throated Longclaw ((✓)) which was my last lifer of the trip.

We returned to the hotel for a late lunch and some downtime before our flight back to London which took off at 2300hrs and landed at 0505hrs [half hour early].

My final trip list was 371 species, with other participants seeing 9 more and a further 16 species heard only. My life list for the trip was 177 species far more than anticipated.

Ghana was a wonderful destination with the people the friendliest in Africa by reputation, which was well and truly borne out. Sunbird and local guides were top class and the trip ran very smoothly indeed. So I can thoroughly recommend this tour to any avid birder.

*Martyn Hnatiuk*



