

SENEGAL

BIRDS OF NORTHERN WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL



African Fish Eagles (Jo Finn)

Thursday February 9th – Saturday February 18th 2012

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 220-250

Senegal is one of West Africa's most stable countries with a heavy French influence dating back to colonial days. The coastline has two important wetlands of international importance which are protected in the form of national parks. The north of the country has a wide belt of Sahel holding several species which prefer sub-desert habitats while the south is primarily savanna dotted with stands of acacia trees and secondary forest. We visit Djoudj National Park which is a wetland where Palearctic migrants winter in their thousands. In the south we stay in Saloum National Park, an area of inter-tidal rivers, scrub and savanna. The range of bird species in this little known country is impressive; Arabian and Savile's

Bustards, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Little Grey Woodpecker and Cricket Longtail all being found regularly on past tours.

Birdwatching Breaks have operated several tours to Senegal since the 1990s and are pleased to offer this unique birding tour and experience again at a peak time for birdlife.

Day 1: Fly to Dakar, the bustling capital of Senegal for an overnight stay.

Days 2-6: Yellow-billed Kite is abundant in Dakar and on our journey northwards birds of prey can be numerous and include Lappet-faced, Ruppell's Griffon, Hooded and White-backed Vultures. Near St Louis itself, we should find Red-necked Falcons in roadside palm trees. For the next few days we are based at Ranch de Bango and Djoudj National Park from which we explore sub-Saharan Senegal. The grounds of the ranch offer excellent birding with regularly seen species - Red-billed Hornbill, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Grey Woodpecker, Blue-naped Mousebird, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Red-billed Firefinch, Beautiful and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, African Silverbill, Sudan Golden Sparrow and Long-tailed Glossy Starlings. Wintering Palearctic migrants are common and include Melodious, Subalpine and Western Olivaceous Warblers, Common Redstart, Red-throated and Tree Pipits. Our base, adjacent to the Senegal River, is a haven for waterbirds - Long-tailed Cormorant, Squacco and Purple Herons, Purple Swamphen, Spur-winged Lapwing, African Fish Eagle, Malachite and Pied Kingfishers African Jacana,

Winding Cisticola, Abyssinian Roller and Senegal Coucal. A thorn forest regularly has roosting Long-tailed Nightjars. The drier ground is home to Senegal Thick-knee, Black-billed Wood Dove, Little Bee-eater and Northern Grey-headed Sparrow.

Marigot One: This is in effect a privately run nature reserve. Our main interest here is in locating the internationally scarce Savile's Bustard. Other sub-Saharan birds present include Marsh, Montagu's and, occasionally, Pallid Harriers, Barbary Falcon, Cream-coloured and Temminck's Coursers, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, and Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark. A lake attracts shorebirds and many species of heron including Black Heron and a stop at dusk may give us Verreaux's Eagle Owl, a local resident.

Marigot Two and Three: We spend a day in this area and typical species include Northern Anteater-chat, Black and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, Senegal Batis, Long-tailed and Chestnut-bellied Starlings, Green Woodhoopoe and Blue-naped Mousebird. If cattle are present, we may find Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. Patches of acacia trees are home to specialised Sahelian birds - Cricket Warbler, Sennar Penduline Tit and Little Grey Woodpecker. Other birds may

include Great, Intermediate and Little Egrets, Sacred and Glossy Ibis, Common Snipe, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Black Crake and Collared Pratincole. We have further opportunities for bustards in this area.

Ndiaël: Ndiaël Faunal Reserve was created in 1977. It comprises 46,550 hectares situated in the Senegal River floodplain and is a sahelian environment. Among the many birds that we may encounter here are African Pygmy Goose, Black-shouldered Kite, Montagu's and Pallid Harriers, Wahlberg's, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Kittlitz's Plover, Common Quail, African Reed Warbler, Short-eared Owl, Black-crowned Sparrow Lark, Kordofan Lark, Singing Bush Lark, African Quailfinch, Desert Cisticola, Grey-backed Eremomela and, occasionally, Hoopoe Lark. This is also a known area for Arabian and, in some years, Denham's Bustard.

Djoudj National Park: Djoudj National Park is the third most important wetland in the world. We have two nights here in a purpose built camp just outside the reserve. En route we travel through acacia forest looking for Striped Kingfisher, Vieillot's Barbet, and Desert Wheatear. The hotel grounds attract many interesting species - Speckled Pigeon,

Northern Crombec, Village Indigobird, Yellow-backed, Village and Little Weavers and wintering Eurasian Wryneck. We take a boat safari into one of nature's natural wonders. Our boat takes us along a branch of the Senegal River, which is alive with birds, to a colony of White Pelicans that can number around 18,000. This area usually holds large numbers of ducks and herons. Seasonal lakes in Djoudj attract Marsh Harriers and Striated Heron, kingfishers, Black Crake, Yellow-billed Stork and, on the approaches to the park, in some years, Steppe Buzzard and Desert Wheatear. Other highlights include Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced and Fulvous Whistling-ducks, Osprey, Caspian, Gull-billed, Black and Whiskered Terns and the range-restricted River Prinia. Lac de Kahr and Grand Lac hold thousands of Greater and, sometimes, Lesser Flamingos. Grand Lac also holds thousands of Garganey with lesser numbers of Eurasian Teal, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail. Isolated trees on the surrounding desert landscape provide hunting perches for migrant Peregrine and Lanner Falcons. The park has what is possibly the only protected area for Arabian Bustard, a species under constant threat from hunting and, in this area of Africa, greatly endangered. On the return to Ranch de Bango, roadside lagoons may hold Eurasian and African Spoonbills, Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese and shorebirds including Avocet, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint and Black-winged Stilt.

Lingue de Barbarie National Park: The Lingue de Barbarie is a peninsula of land jutting into the Atlantic Ocean at the mouth of the Senegal River. We take a short boat trip around a protected

island holding a breeding colony of Slender-billed Gulls. We should also see Western Reef Egret, Grey-headed, and, sometimes, Kelp Gull, Caspian, Sandwich and Little Terns. Lingue de Barbarie also attracts wintering shorebirds in Whimbrel, Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and Ruddy Turnstone.

Day 7: We say our goodbyes to Ranch de Bango and travel south towards Kaolack. We stop in a baobab forest where Black-shouldered Kite and Short-toed Eagle can often be found. Senegal Parrot and Grey-headed Sparrow are local residents. From Kaolack we head to Saloum National Park. Woodland and savanna east and south of Kaolack is a stronghold of the beautiful African Swallow-tailed Kite. Rufous-crowned Roller and Bearded Barbet occur in open areas with large trees, a habitat which attracts Tawny Eagle, Lizard Buzzard, African Harrier Hawk and Lesser Kestrel. We arrive at our hotel where we stay for three nights.

Days 8-9: Saloum National Park is an extensive region of forests and mangrove swamps. Around the hotel, we expect to find Black Woodhoopoe, Fork-tailed Drongo, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, African and Bruce's Green Pigeons. On one morning, depending on tide times, we take a boat trip through mangrove swamps and visit isolated sandbars. The hotel quay sometimes has Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Goliath Heron. Shorebirds are numerous, and include White-fronted, Kentish, Common and Little Ringed Plovers, Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Greenshank. On previous visits, we



Malachite Kingfisher (John Hamilton)

have observed Pearl-spotted Owlet, Shikra, Red-eyed Dove, Bronze Mannikin, Brown Babbler, Klass's Cuckoo, Western Grey Plantain-eater, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Lavender Waxbill and Brown Sunbird. An afternoon visit is planned to a forested area where birds of prey abound. We may find Grasshopper Buzzard, Brown and Beadouin's Snake Eagles, Short-toed Eagle, Grey Kestrel, African Hobby and Palm-nut Vulture. Open areas attract European, Blue-cheeked and, occasionally, Little Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters.

Day 10: Today we visit forested areas of Saloum National Park. Mature trees hold species at their northwestern limits including Blue-bellied Roller, Common Wattle-eye, Purple Glossy Starling, Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling, Green Turaco and African Thrush. Common species that find a home here include Yellow-billed Shrike and White Helmetshrrike. A stop at a small bridge should give us views of Hamerkop before returning to the hotel. Late afternoon we head back to Dakar for the late evening flight back to Europe. Arrival is on the following morning.

Ground Price: £1900

*Air Fare: £600

Total Tour Price: £2500

Tour Price Dakar/Dakar: £1900

Single room: £180

Deposit: £250

*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights on pages 5 and 71

This tour is fully inclusive of flights, accommodation, meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature

Basic but clean accommodation in lodges, ranches and hotels with en-suite facilities and air-conditioning at St Louis, Saloum and Kaolack. Meals are French style or Senegali cuisine. Picnic lunches are provided where necessary.

Transport is by 4x4s or minibus in nature reserves. Short walks during the tour on sandy tracks, country trails and in woodland. Stout footwear recommended due to the terrain and acacia thorns.