



www.ingloriousbustards.com with www.honeyguide.co.uk



The Gambia
6 – 16 December 2022

This was a joint holiday between Inglorious Bustards www.ingloriousbustards.com and Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays www.honeyguide.co.uk

Leaders and local guides

Simon Tonkin; Tijan Kante and Abubacarr Kante with our expert driver Alagie Touray with ten participants.



The group and local people watching marabou storks (CD)

Report by Chris Durdin. Bird checklist by Simon Tonkin. Photos, as attributed, by Simon Tonkin, Mark Howarth, Everard Daniel, Jill Sutcliffe and Chris Durdin.
Cover photos: blue-bellied roller and bearded barbet (ST); watching marabou storks (MH).



Local colour (CD & MH).

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, and additional donations, totalling £715.

Inglorious Bustards and The Flyway Birding Association will be providing additional funds to the mangrove restoration project.

The Gambia Bird Watchers' Association (GBWA) was established in 2007 and provides a headquarters for the area's bird guides, trains the next generation of ornithologists and runs project-based conservation work. This includes using local volunteers in the restoration of mangrove swamp habitat. The GBWA is instrumental in setting up community reserves, training bird guides in the villages and enabling them to benefit from the preservation of forest habitat through ecotourism.

The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £145,682 to January 2023.

INTRODUCTION

'Birding in West Africa with a smile' is how Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson of Inglorious Bustards like to sub-title this holiday in The Gambia. Now the ten of us in the group know why. The smiles should be on group members' faces with so many rich wildlife experiences to enjoy. They are certainly on the faces of countless people who would shout and wave as our bus went past. This is real Africa: where we stayed and what we saw had great local character. This all adds to the experience, especially when guided with such skill by Simon and the ever-cheerful Tijan, who seems to be the best-known person in The Gambia.

Writing a report is a challenge when we've seen so much, and we hope this gives a good flavour of our experiences. Obviously, this cannot record all the birds and wildlife seen daily: you could add 'and many others' or 'plus the usual suspects' for many stops on most days. I was there as a participant, not a guide on this occasion. We start with our daily diary, and there are wildlife lists at the end of this report.

Chris Durdin

DAILY DIARY

Day 1, Tuesday 6 December – Banjul to Tanji

Our Titan Airways flight made a smooth landing in Banjul and, once off the plane, we were bussed a very short distance to the terminal building. The queue moved slowly through passport control as fingerprints were scanned, and paying the £/€/ \$20 entry fee was very smooth. We assembled and met each other, Simon, local guide Tijan and Tijan's son Abubacarr (or Bubacarr – he is happy to spell it either way). There was an immediate opportunity to get some local currency – very well-used and smelling of fish, as many of the notes pass through Tanji's fish market.

Airport screens showed that there was an international conference of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Banjul today, and our route west was chosen to avoid that. Much of the way was along a dirt road alongside what appeared to be a dual carriageway under construction. African life was very much on view: roadside stalls, shops, throngs of people, dust-covered trees and vehicles. We paused for a black-winged kite and a pre-arranged pick-up of drinking water for our holiday from reusable bottles. Yellow-billed kites and hooded vultures were noted along the way; we were to see many more of both.



Stopping off point for drinking water supplies; two of the big bottles used to avoid plastic waste (CD).

At Tanji Ecolodge, the entrance road was an interesting challenge to negotiate for our tall bus, complete with rooftop luggage, on account of much growth during the Covid shutdown period. But negotiate it we did. We were shown to our chalets, which looked rather like the shape of night-sky observatories. The best bit here, though, once at Tanji, was sitting down to watch the bird action at a small, concreted pond. We soon had an impressive list: blackcap babbler, African thrush, red-eyed and laughing doves, snowy-crowned robin-chat and red-billed firefinch. It was a gloomy corner in the late afternoon, but an African paradise flycatcher provided a flash of red and a blue-breasted kingfisher an actual splash in the water, scaring other birds there at the time.



At Tanji: African thrush coming to drink (MH), a pair of rooms; gecko (CD).

From my lodge, looking towards to sea, there were two little bee-eaters plus terns, gulls and an osprey beyond. A wall gecko added wildlife interest at the bar before we tucked into dinner, a choice of vegetarian, chicken or locally caught fish.

Day 2, Wednesday 7 December – Tanji, Kotu Creek and Tijan's home

There was much to see at Tanji first thing: a procession of kites, vultures and pied crows, as we looked towards the many fishing boats by the beach in the distance. Breakfast was an omelette, bread and beans. I brought over in a bug box one of the many tiny bluish butterflies: African grass blue. Citrus swallowtail showed well as we walked towards the bus, and little bee-eaters too.



Little bee-eaters were at Tanji Ecolodge (ST).

We then drove through the bustling, colourful scenes of Tanji market to reach another coastal spot with a large freshwater lake, partly covered by white water lilies. We quickly found long-tailed cormorant, African darter and African jacana from a distance, and later saw all these again much closer. A flash of red in a tree was a yellow-crowned gonolek and two double-spurred francolins flew and ran across some open land. Of course, there were herons: great, cattle and intermediate egrets, dark western reef and grey herons, then two black-headed herons flew through.

Big milkweed bushes – *Calotropis procera*¹ – gave height to the ruderal vegetation, though seemed to have no wildlife on them. As it warmed, the number of butterflies increased: the numerous whites were creamy small whites. There were many dragonflies, too: those named were broad scarlet and banded groundling on bare ground by the beach.

Overlooking the lake, at one point there was black-headed heron, Senegal thick-knee and spur-winged lapwings together through telescopes. As well as pied kingfishers, a giant kingfisher impressed both by size and its splash. An osprey on a distant tree was ringed; nearer a male beautiful sunbird was accompanied by less showy females. Retracing our steps there was another Senegal thick-knee under a bush, with bronze mannikins nearby. Western grey plantain-eater was another great bird; northern grey-headed sparrow was new, too.



Pied kingfisher; spur-winged lapwing (MH); osprey (ST).

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calotropis_procera gives English names of apple of Sodom, Sodom apple, king's crown, rubber bush, rubber tree and Dead Sea apple, though apple of Sodom is also used for a *Solanum*.

Then it was back into the traffic to make our way to Kotu Creek. We squeezed around a big table with several enthusiastic members of the Gambia Bird Watchers' Association. We heard about their work, particularly to protect and expand the mangroves of Kotu Creek. They were enthusiastic, articulate and inspiring, and very grateful for the support from Inglorious Bustards and Honeyguide for their work.

A few paces away, a road bridge offered views of mangroves and its wildlife in two directions, plus an elevated view from a tower. Waders included some from the north: greenshanks, a whimbrel, a green sandpiper. More local flavour, wader-wise, included African wattled lapwing, a big flock of spur-winged lapwings and black-winged stilt. Swallows of two species flew around and malachite kingfisher perched for those with long lenses on the tower. A sacred ibis flew in. On the other side of the road there were four hamerkops and a common sandpiper, the sandpiper then moving to the water's edge near some fiddler crabs.



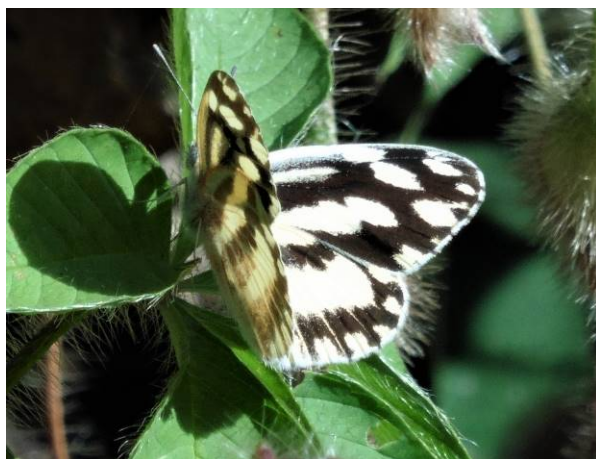
On the bridge at Kotu Creek (CD); hamerkop (MH).

Then we made our way towards a very special treat: a late lunch with Tijan's extended family and friends. Tijan likes to describe his house as the local RSPB office – he's a great fan of the RSPB – though that was by-the-by today. We were greeted by half a dozen children shaking hands with everyone, then Tijan's wife Mariama, daughter and many others. We were seated around a large table in a central courtyard, and coffee/tea was soon followed by a large, varied and delicious spread of local specialities including chicken and also vegetable Domoda (peanut stew), rice, beans and more. We enjoyed lots of chat with our hosts, including hearing about hair extensions and Gambian Maria meeting our Maria-José. Then a drum appeared – actually a large washing bowl! - and the braver souls joined in with some dancing. And, of course, endless photos by them of us and all of us together. A joyful occasion.

By now it was late afternoon and time to return to Tanji. This time we walked down the short entrance road to avoid risk to Alagie's bus.

Day 3, Thursday 8 December – Tanji to Tendaba

We packed so suitcases could be barrowed to the bus, then after breakfast took the short walk to our transport, adding two new butterfly IDs on the way: African spirit (rather like a wood white with a weak, fluttery flight in wooded areas) and zebra white. We headed east.



Zebra white, Tanji (CD); banana shopping (ED).

Our first stop was in the bustling market at Brikama. Some tried sweet coffee, our guides bought bread, a huge hand of bananas, seasonal vegetables and other supplies. Most of us simply soaked up the atmosphere.

Our main morning destination was Farasutu Forest, a community nature reserve (as it says on my polo shirt). We had a short walk through this wood, pausing for a small frog and an African paradise flycatcher. We were soon at a wetland with African wattled lapwings, Senegal thick-knees and a giant kingfisher. Purple glossy starling was new, and one dragonfly was recognisable: violet dropwing.

Simon had something up his sleeve as he took us into another section of woodland: two greyish eagle owls roosting high in a tree, though fine views through telescopes.

Simon and Tijan prepared a picnic of local fresh bread, seasonal local salad items and sardines while we chilled. We ate overlooking water bowls, which attracted large numbers of black-rumped waxbills, red-cheeked cordon bleus and bronze mannikins

Another short woodland walk, another roosting eagle owl, this time Verreaux's eagle owl. A real wow moment.



A 'two eagle owl' day: greyish eagle owl (ST) at Farasutu Forest (CD), Verreaux's eagle owl (ED).

Then we settled down for our drive, happily on a very good road with little traffic. This took us into a region where burning of grass and scrub is routine as part of cultivation, producing an open mix of habitats valuable for Palearctic migrant birds. A single white-backed vulture was with some hooded vultures.

Shortly after we had a longer roadside stop, where new species included Senegal parrots, broad-billed roller, blue-bellied roller (there were several of these when we continued driving), long-tailed glossy starlings, lizard buzzard on a clump of four palm trees and an overhead view of an African harrier hawk.

We arrived at Tendaba with enough time to shower and settle in before a cold drink and a very good buffet-style dinner.

Day 4, Friday 9 December –Tendaba

We gathered for breakfast at seven o'clock, so we could make a move to the adjacent jetty at eight o'clock. The reason was today's main event, a boat trip that started on the main river though mostly narrower, mangrove-lined waterways. The previous holiday report reminds me that this is Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, a vast 220-square kilometre Ramsar site (internationally important wetland). An Abyssinian roller on a baobab and a pink-backed pelican before we left was good start.

It was a wonderful, bird-rich experience that is difficult to summarise on paper. So I'll note some highlights, some continuous, others roughly in the order they happened. There were scores of pied kingfishers and African darters, the darters often perched and often swimming with just head and neck visible. One had speared a fish. Vinaceous doves were new to most of us, though they look similar to a collared dove. In many places there were tiny mouse brown sunbirds, a mangrove specialist, we also saw a nest, hanging from a mangrove perilously close to the water. The list goes on: a Nile monitor lizard basking high on a bare tree trunk, almost within reach of a blue-breasted kingfisher. Mud skippers and fiddler crabs; African grey woodpecker; European bee-eaters, swiftly followed by a single white-cheeked bee-eater; a Nile crocodile; African striated heron; a tutorial on ID of intermediate / great egrets; ospreys on two occasions; ring-necked parakeets; yellow-billed and woolly-necked storks; flying great white pelicans.



African darter; 'a word in your ear' said the yellow-billed stork to the pink-backed pelican (MH).

At the farthest point we reached, we cruised past a large (200+) colony of white-necked cormorants, with fishy smells like a seabird colony. It was interesting to see egrets under the trees here, evidently after dropped titbits. Our first Namaqua doves were noted on the return journey.

Back at base, the patchy Wi-Fi updated my phone's weather from 4°C Horley (Gatwick) to 34°C Tendaba. Returning to chalets there were clouds of browned-veined white butterflies (also called caper white in the ID guide), and Everard photographed a widow dragonfly and large orange tip.

We drove a very short distance to the old Tendaba airfield where we sat in the shade while our team of guides prepared our picnic. Guinea fowl butterflies kept landing, briefly, mostly on the ground. On a large lagoon there was a good selection of waders, including grey plovers beyond the many whimbrels. There was a big flock of terns, all Caspian and gull-billed. Gary found an Abyssinian roller, Tijan worked to show us a Levallant's cuckoo, and long-tailed glossy starlings flew past several times.

Then back for an extended siesta, including (variously) swimming, a massage, taking advantage of the Wi-Fi and looking at epauletted fruit bats in their roosting tree. Angela and Gary showed me a stick grasshopper near the swimming pool – a sensible English name in The Gambian wildlife guide for this distinctive genus, also found in southern Europe. Then checklists and dinner and, for Simon and me, some World Cup football, when the Wi-Fi connection was up to it; the TV froze just as the final penalty was about to be taken in the shoot-out between Holland and Argentina!



A darter spears a fish: a small part of a large cormorant colony (MH).

Day 5, Saturday 10 December –Tendaba

Our now routine early breakfast, plus two good birds of prey nearby: African peregrine (*Falco peregrinus minor*) on the TV mast and shikra on the top of a tall tree stump. The shikra continued to be around Tendaba Camp throughout our stay.

After pausing for supplies, we headed along the Bateling track into open scrub, created by rotational peanut farming. Simon had described this as we travelled west, now we could see the outcome. Managed fires are followed by peanut crops, followed in turn by stages of natural succession as the habitat recovers. All this, using long term fallows and rotational scrub development, creates a mosaic of habitats, attractive both to local Sahel-edge species and western palearctic migrants.

The open landscape, with a good scattering of mature trees, is also good for birdwatching. A herd of cattle where we arrived, tethered for milking, attracted yellow-billed oxpeckers. Two more new birds were

perching on trees making telescope views straightforward. The first was a bright yellow (despite the name) Bruce's green pigeon, the second grasshopper buzzard. Grasshopper buzzard was a fairly routine raptor at first sight, more like a sparrowhawk than a buzzard, but transformed by chestnut on wings once in the air. There were two black-headed lapwings on an open (early succession) area, a lanner flew over, as did hoopoes. Senegal eremomela took a bit of work to see in some roadside eucalyptus trees and quite a lot of practice to pronounce its name. I noticed larval pits of ant-lions and Tijan dug one out with a small stick to show us. It buried itself in an instant when returned.

Small butterflies – common zebra blues – were comfortable perching on Jill's jacket and my hands. We saw and heard the song of melodious warbler, at last a familiar sound from western Europe.

A bataleur twice flew past, as did a four-banded sandgrouse, while we had lunch in the field. On the way back we stopped and saw a chestnut-crowned sparrow weaver.

Siesta time was followed by a short local trip 'up the hill'. Here we found yellow-fronted canary, northern puffback (a shrike) and, for some, brown-backed woodpecker. A small hide overlooking a stone water hole attracted many bees, a few doves a few other birds. These were eclipsed by Tijan finding a greater honeyguide, the emblem of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, my first and an emotional moment. Honeyguides are said to wait where bees are taking water so they can follow the bees back to their nest.

The evening's activities and meal were dominated by watching England v France in the quarter-finals of the World Cup in Qatar. The locals were all supporting England. A good match and a great occasion to remember, despite the result.

Day 6, Sunday 11 December – Transfer to Georgetown

Today was a day of travelling farther east, punctuated with various stops, often opportunistic when birding opportunities cropped up. The first two halts were soon after leaving, when early bird activity was at its best, for northern puffback, then long-crested snake eagle, dark chanting goshawk, black stork and grey kestrel at the second stop.

The excellent road then went over a huge new bridge – not long ago it was a ferry here – and we continued along the north side of the river. Then a shopping stop in Farafeni, a bustling thoroughfare. Farther on a birdwatching halt turned into a peanut stop, bought by the roadside directly from the women harvesting the crop by hand.

Then, with wetlands either side of the road at Soma, a star bird was *on* the road – an Egyptian plover. Views through the bus's windows soon improved when it settled under a tamarisk on a nearby shore. There was also very close view of a Senegal thick-knee – a real eye-to-eye view.



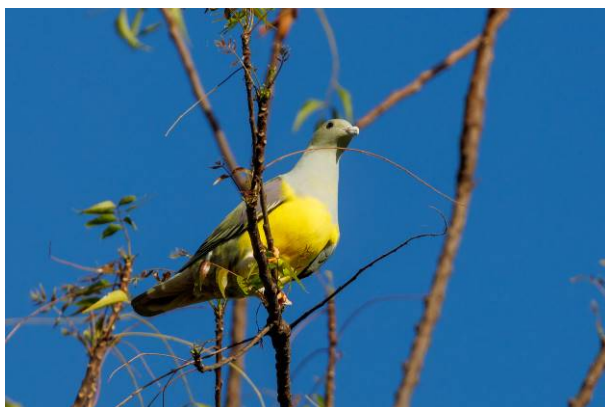
Egyptian plover (ST).

We turned off the road and then lunch team got to work under the much-needed shade of a large tree. The nearby wetland was alive with dragonflies: violet dropwing, blue emperor, long skimmer and black percher plus damselflies later identified as tiny swamp bluet damselfly. There was slightly surreal extended moment when a bunch of guys with a sound system started to unload huge speakers from their roof. A talented Senegalese guy, D J Fulla King, came and sang to us, then they moved on.

The next roadside stop gave us good views of chestnut-backed sparrow weaver, a bunch of red-billed queleas and a male exclamatory paradise whydah towing its oversized tail along. A final stop added brown snake-eagle and wood sandpiper to our tally.

A final adventure was re-crossing the river by ferry. A general store among the varied shops had a fridge, and Simon appeared with welcome sack-full of cold drink cans. All worked smoothly, and having crossed the river we were at our accommodation. George – here in Georgetown (also called Janjanbureh) – settled the group into rooms at Baobolong Guest House, then Simon and I went to rooms in the Annex a short distance away. Our arrival in Janjanbureh coincided with the final day of the national congress of the United Democratic Party: not only were there signs near the ferry, but also many delegates staying at the Annex.

After an excellent dinner, we were entertained by a large black beetle, brought in by the lights, which was then dwarfed by a West African water scorpion.



The ferry across the river to Janjanbureh (Georgetown); Bruce's green pigeon (MH).

Day 7, Monday 12 December – Georgetown

There was a swamp flycatcher by the river as we breakfasted. We needed to start today's itinerary by crossing the river and, while we waited for the ferry, we watched birds in nearby trees. Remarkably, these included three of the prettiest birds we saw all holiday: Bruce's green pigeon, yellow-crowned gonolek and purple glossy starling. Brown babbler and yellow-throated leaflove added more interest. A friendly guy called Takatiti appeared with his drum and performed an amazing 'welcome to The Gambia' chant.

We drove very slowly through a busy Monday market, where the team bought supplies. Our main stop of the morning was 'the quarry' where we did a circuit, essentially shade-hopping from tree to tree. Red-throated bee-eaters were an excellent start, as was Beaudouin's snake-eagle. Vultures came over and Simon picked out Rüppell's griffon, white-backed and a few Eurasian griffon vultures. Wahlberg's eagle was next, adult and immature, and African hawk-eagle and an impressive martial eagle overhead. Village indigobird was a bit of a star on a prominent perch, and we saw many cut-throats (formerly called cut-throat finch) – just adult males have the red band of colour implied by their name.



Rüppell's vulture (ST); 'welcome to The Gambia' (MH); cut-throat (ST).

What first looked like a black bee or beetle in the sky turned into a widow dragonfly once you could see the transparent outer parts of its wings. A citrus swallowtail flew into the bus and needed rescuing in a bug box. Lunch was earlier than usual, and we took our time, given the heat. The siesta continued once we'd reached the departure point for the afternoon boat trip. Shade, tables & chairs and cold drinks helped.

Then it was time to clamber on board two small boats, happily with awnings, and move along the river. Our destination was large, forested islands, home to a remarkable project, though first we saw countless

squacco herons, palm-nut vultures, little bee-eaters, malachite kingfishers and various other river birds. Then we paused to watch hippopotami in the water close to an island, a very large cow and two calves, regularly surfacing for air.



Hippopotamus; chimpanzees (MH).

The islands have a healthy and growing population of chimpanzees. This ‘Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project’² started in the 1970s with rescued individuals, organised by Stella Brewer and Janis Carter. There is a little supplementary feeding, which also is a way of providing medication and means the chimps are used to people and boats. We saw several very well, including babies. There is a difficult-to-describe magic about encountering these close relatives of ourselves, which some group members felt quite moving.

We stopped by a wetland with water lilies on the way back, where black crane was a new bird. Back at the ferry, a delay was expected to get the minibus across the river, so the group went in a smaller boat that delivered us to our accommodation.

Like last night, Tijan started our evening with a magic trick. He’d lent me a ¾-length kaftan, which I wore for dinner tonight, and we sang him ‘Mud Glorious Mud’ to celebrate today’s hippos.

Day 8, Tuesday 13 December – Georgetown

It was almost – whisper it quietly – chilly as we set off in a boat from the lodge. It stayed a very comfortable temperature for a good while. Simon pointed out groups of European turtle doves flying over. How Abubacarr spotted the African finfoot I don’t know but there it was, bright orange feet standing on a riverbank, tucked into surrounding trees. We cruised skillfully gently up and down, expertly navigated by our excellent boat handlers Gibbi Sallah and Sherifo Touray, and we had excellent view of two finfoots (not finfeet, surely?), this one-of-a-kind bird in the water, swimming like a grebe.



African finfoot (ST).

² www.facebook.com/ChimpanzeeRehabilitationProjectCrplnTheGambia/ on Baboon Island.

Bearded barbet near a grey-headed kingfisher and a western banded snake-eagle were other good birds. We also passed a large Nile crocodile, African fish eagle and a dead rock python.

We reached the wooded island home to Kunkilling Community Forest Reserve known for Adamawa turtle dove, a very scarce African species only discovered in The Gambia in 1990. The warden Haruna Kandeh joined us and took us down the main track before we went into the wood, following the dove's call – a purring like a low pitch turtle dove. We found it and had excellent views. Simon got some recordings and video of this little-known species.



At Kunkilling Community Forest Reserve (CD); Adamawa turtle dove (ST).

Re-joining the main track, we went to an open area, over which flew white-backed vultures. On the way back we encountered a troop of Guinea baboons on the track, who gave way to us and returned to the path once we'd gone past. We settled into a lounge with comfy chairs where the team prepared our picnic lunch.

The return boat journey saw us encounter a family group of three African finfoots and more palm-nut vultures. Time for a siesta.

We had a late afternoon walk, extended to nightfall, in the area of the old colonial cemetery. Grey-headed bush-shrike was a new bird and twice we had views of Verreaux's eagle owl in the scopes. Two African scops owls were heard and there were glimpses of long-tailed nightjars on the journey back.

Day 9, Wednesday 14 December – Georgetown

We crossed the river again, only this time on a bridge, making our first stop near Pachar for some treetop nests of marabou storks. Though common in east and southern Africa, they are scarce in The Gambia. We gathered quite a crowd, with several girls and boys appreciating the storks through telescopes; Mark took some memorable photos.



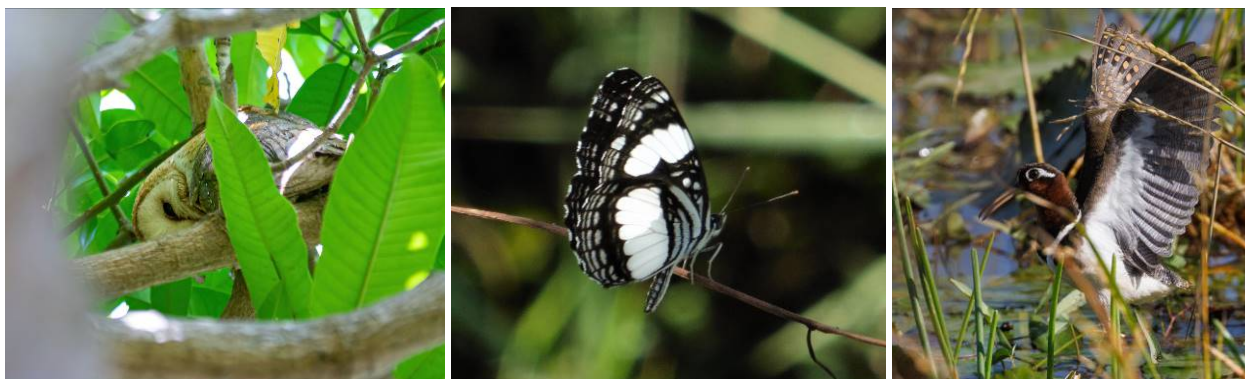
Watching marabou storks (MH, CD).

After a stop for supplies, we moved onto an area of rice paddies, all helpfully irregular without the intervention of machinery. Two types of water lilies spread across lagoons, with the inevitable jacanas – lily trotters – in big numbers and very close. Then on the near edge, Julia spotted something very different: a painted-snipe. It flew a short distance, was joined by a second, then the disappeared into vegetation.

We found shade by the pumphouse. Here we could hear and see both an Isabelline and melodious warblers and we watched various birds, coming and going, including marsh harriers, an immature black-

crowned night heron and a distant flock of collared pratincoles. Around the other side of the building, we were led to a tree where, peering towards to top, an African barn owl was roosting and watching us below.

Black and white river sailor butterflies were regularly on the move. At last, there was one of the large acraeas still enough to see, on a *Typha* leaf – elegant acraea. A dark blue pansy dashed past and there were hordes of dragonflies. Then it was back to base for an extended siesta, especially given tomorrow's long journey back to the coast.



African barn owl (ST); river sailor butterfly (CD); African painted-snipe (MH).

Day 10, Thursday 15 December – Georgetown to Tanji

We took our last looks at the life-jacketed people on the ferry, local pied kingfishers and 'swampy' the swamp flycatcher, said goodbye to host George and cook Mariama and off we went. The journey was over the bridge and along the road on the north side of the river, so no ferry today.

It was a day for travelling back to the coast, with stops on route. These included buying and eating watermelons, and a nice wetland with water lilies of two colours, white and lilac, and a good selection of birds. Another wetland had trees covered in a dense mass of cattle egrets. There were very brief stops for Tijan to see upcountry relatives he rarely sees, and to add some stuff to transport to the suitcases, chairs and our empty re-usable water containers on the roof rack. A troop of about 100 Guinea baboons on and near the road entertained us for a while. Lunch was under a shady tree by the Bateling track, not far from Tendaba.

We arrived back at Tanji in the light, time enough to re-find our old rooms and take a welcome shower before checklists and dinner, after which we shared the holiday highlights listed below. Some of us looked at a lovely night sky, including the Pleiades and Mars looking along the coast (roughly northeast) and Jupiter overhead.



Guinea baboons crossing (ST).

Day 11, Friday 16 December –Tanji area, and return to the UK

A later breakfast at 8am before we packed up and left for two local stops. The first of these was Tanji fish market, where we parked by a flowery hedge alive with butterflies. The shoreline vista was somewhat incongruous: piles of discarded or sea-borne single use plastic contrasting with the picturesque scene of wooden fishing boats. The most numerous birds were grey-hooded (= grey-headed) gulls, including one with a smart grey head, and we played spot the yellow bill to pick out the odd royal tern among many red-billed Caspian terns. There were several bar-tailed godwits and a turnstone on the shoreline. A uniformed school group passed us, guided by a man with binoculars who greeted Tijan and Simon. He was a guide from the local community forest, outreaching to schools - environmental education in action.



Caspian tern and grey-hooded gull, final morning at Tanji Beach (ST).

We moved to a woodland, where we picked up a local guide to take us to something – Simon was keeping it a surprise. That surprise was a long-tailed nightjar, roosting on the ground, with eyeball-to-eyeball views, two of us at a time going to where Simon had set up his telescope.



Long-tailed nightjar (ST)

The drive to the airport was another adventure though the traffic, navigated with Alagie's usual skill and care with a sensible margin for error factored in. After farewells to the team, there was time for lunch at the airport and to reflect on our adventures in The Gambia, Africa's 'smiling coast'. The flight home was smooth and, once on the Wi-Fi at Gatwick, I saw the temperature on my phone drop from 34°C to -6°C ... welcome home!

Holiday highlights, as nominated by group members

Angela	First river boat trip; lunch at Tijan's, osprey, African fish eagle, dark chanting goshawk.
Maria-José	Palm-nut vulture, honeyguide, river boat trips.
Julia	Finfoots, baobabs, how friendly everyone is.
Daphne	River trips, especially the first; tracking the Adamawa turtle dove.
Jane	All the birds, bataleur a stand-out bird, seeing chimpanzees living naturally. Meeting all the people, Tijan and the team. Staying in different places.
Everard	Water lily ponds of various sorts; boat trips, especially the first; the butterflies; African fish eagle.
Gary	Boat trips, especially the first; yellow-crowned gonolek; purple glossy starlings, African fish eagle, palm-nut vulture, finfoot. Lunch with Tijan and Chris's dance.
Mark	Chimpanzees, boat trips, lily ponds with jacanas and painted-snipe, the people including the guiding team. Birding trip but also a Gambian trip.
Jill	'Rice gaps' including lilies & painted-snipe; finfoot; that large chimpanzee called Jumbo; Mariama's lunch; the peanut fallow rotation; the people.
Chris	Finfoot, Egyptian plover; greater honeyguide; the family meal at Tijan's, waving children.
Simon	Enjoyed group's environmental understanding, that we've experienced real Africa and helped people along the way. Adamawa turtle dove: the group was immersed in the experience and respectful. Finfoot and the boat guy's excitement and skill.

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS

		December 2022	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			4								
2	White-breasted Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus</i>				✓	✓						
3	Reed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>		6		2	2	✓	2		2	3	
4	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>		2		✓				1		2	
5	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>				6							
6	Pink-backed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>				20	✓	✓	✓		1	1	
7	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>							1	1	2		
8	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>				1		3	10	2	20	40	
9	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>				2			1	3			
11	Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>							3				
12	Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>		3	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	4		
13	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		1	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	✓	30		
14	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>		1		✓	✓	✓	✓	10	3	5	
15	Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>		3		✓			4		✓	✓	
16	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>								1			
17	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		2	1	✓	5	7	✓	✓	✓	5	
18	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>		2						1	10	2	
19	Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>				1				1			
20	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		4	6	5	10	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	
21	Yellow-billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>				12							
22	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						1		1			
23	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>				7		2	2	1			
24	Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>									11	11	
25	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>								2			
26	Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>		1									
27	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>							20	20	✓	70	
28	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>					70						
29	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>				3			12		1		
30	African Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus auritus</i>										2	
31	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>										3	
32	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	1	1	2						1	
33	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	1										
34	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		1				20					
35	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>				1				1			
37	Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>			3				20	4			
38	Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>			1				10	7		2	
40	Rüppell's Vulture	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>							3				
41	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>							4				
42	Beaudouin's Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus beaudouini</i>		1					1		1		
43	Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>					1		1			1	

44	Western Banded Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinerascens</i>								2			
45	Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>			2	2	1	1					
46	African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>		2	1			1		1			
47	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>					2	1	1			3	
48	Dark Chanting Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>					4	3				4	
49	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>		1	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	
50	Grasshopper Buzzard	<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>				2	4	3				3	
51	Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>		2									
52	Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Aquila wahlbergi</i>						1					
53	African Hawk Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>						2		1			
54	Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>						2					
55	Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>						1					
56	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						2	1				
57	Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>					2			2	2		
58	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>				1							
59	African Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus minor</i>				1	1						
60	Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	2	2		6		4	2	2	4	1	
61	Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>	1					2	1	4	1		
62	Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>									1		
63	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>								2	1		
64	African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>							5				
65	African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>		3		2	4	✓	✓	✓	✓		
66	Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>								4			
67	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	2		6					5			
68	Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>		9	20	2	10	5	✓	✓	✓	✓	
69	Egyptian Plover	<i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>					4						
70	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>								40			
71	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				30							
72	African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	2	3	6	7	✓	✓	20	2	10	26	
73	Black-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus tectus</i>				2			2		2		
74	Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	10	40	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>								7			
76	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>										20	
77	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		1	2	140	✓	✓				10	
78	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		1		1	1						
79	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		2	1	20	4	2	2	1	1		
80	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		1	1	2	2	2	1			1	
81	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>					1						
82	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		3	1	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	2		
83	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>											10
84	Grey-hooded Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus</i>	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓
85	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>											✓
86	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>				40	20	10					
87	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	10	20	5	60	5	2					40
88	Royal Tern	<i>Sterna maxima</i>											10
89	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	1									✓	
90	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	✓	✓									✓

91	Four-banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i>					1						
92	Bruce's Green Pigeon	<i>Treron waalia</i>					3	5	3	2			
93	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>			1				1				
94	Black-billed Wood Dove	<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>	1		1	1	2	5	2	2		5	1
95	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>				4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
96	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
98	African Mourning Dove	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
99	Vinaceous Dove	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>			4	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
100	African Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>						1		4	5	2	
101	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>								70			
102	Adamawa Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia hypopyrrha</i>								2			
103	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Senegal Parrot	<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>			7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10	7	2
105	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>				4	5	10	4	5	4	3	
106	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	1										
107	Western Grey Plantain-eater	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	2	4	10	2	10	5	✓	✓	10	8	4
108	Levaillant's Cuckoo	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>		1		1			1	1			
109	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>			1		7	5	3	5	12	30	2
110	African Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba poensis</i>									1		
111	African Scops Owl	<i>Otus senegalensis</i>								2			
112	Northern White-faced Owl	<i>Ptilopsis leucotis</i>								2			
113	Greyish Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo cinerascens</i>			2								
114	Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>			1					2			
115	Pearl-spotted Owlet	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>						2	2	2		1	
116	Long-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>								4			1
117	Mottled Spinetail	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>		1			✓						
118	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
119	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
120	Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>		1						1			
121	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	1	2	1	4	4	2	3	2			1
122	Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>								1			
123	Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>					1						
124	African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx pictus</i>			2								
125	Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>	1	2	1				2	2			
126	Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>		1	1								
127	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	2	4	6	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5	4
128	Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	5	5	4		4		15	5		10	4
129	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>			3								
130	Red-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops bullocki</i>							20	2			
131	White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>				1							
132	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>			2		10	2					

133	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>				200	20						120
134	Blue-bellied Roller	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>			10								
135	Abyssinian Roller	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>			2	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	15	✓	2
136	Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>			1				4	2		1	
137	Green Wood-hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>		6	10				5	12	4	20	4
138	Black Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus aterrimus</i>					2						
139	Eurasian (central African) Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops senegalensis</i>					2						
140	Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
141	African Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	2	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
142	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>			2		2					1	1
143	Bearded Barbet	<i>Lybius dubius</i>								2	2	3	
144	Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>					2	1	1	2			
145	Fine-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Campethera punctuligera</i>								1			
146	Grey Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>				2	2	1	2				
147	Brown-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides obsoletus</i>					1						
148	(Senegalese) Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata senegallensis</i>		4									
149	Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>						7	6				
150	Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>						2					
151	Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>					2	2					
152	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>						4	10		✓	✓	
153	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3			4	6
154	Red-chested Swallow	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
155	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>				✓	✓	✓	3		✓		
156	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		2				10	✓				
157	Little Greenbul	<i>Andropadus virens</i>		2									
158	Yellow-throated Leaf-love	<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i>							6	2	2	4	
159	Grey-headed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda canicapillus</i>		1									
160	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
161	Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	2	2	2							1	2
162	White-crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha albicapilla</i>			1				4	2			
163	Northern Anteater Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla aethiops</i>							1				
164	African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	✓	✓	✓							2	✓
165	Common / African Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus/baeticatus</i>				2	2	2	2	2		2	
166	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>					1		1				
167	Isabelline Warbler	<i>Iduna opaca</i>				1		1		1	1		
168	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>					2	1			2		
169	Senegal Eremomela	<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>					2						
170	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>						1					
171	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	2	2									3
172	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>								1			
173	Winding Cisticola	<i>Cisticola galactotes</i>									2		
174	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>									1		
175	Tawny-flanked	<i>Prinia subflava</i>							1	1			

	Prinia																
176	Red-winged Warbler	<i>Heliolais erythropterus</i>															2
177	Yellow-breasted Apalis	<i>Apalis flavida</i>			1												
178	Oriole Warbler	<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>			2						2						2
179	Swamp Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa aquatica</i>								2	2	1	1				
180	African Blue Flycatcher	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>				1											
181	African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	1	1	4						2						
182	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>		1													
183	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>			2	4	2										
184	Brown Babbler	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>								4	5	✓	6				2
185	Blackcap Babbler	<i>Turdoides reinwardtii</i>	10	10	✓		✓										4
186	Mouse-brown Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>				10											
187	Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>		2													
188	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>					4	2	1								
189	Pygmy Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna platura</i>				1	2	2									
190	Beautiful Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>	2	4	3	1	4	2				2	3				2
191	Variable Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>			1		2										
192	Splendid Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i>		1	2												
193	Yellow-billed Shrike	<i>Corvinella corvina</i>					4		5	4			20				
194	Grey-headed Bush-Shrike	<i>Malacanotus blanchoti</i>								2							
195	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>					5	2					1				
196	Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>				2	4	6									2
197	Yellow-crowned Gonolek	<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	2	3		2	2	3	2	3			2				2
198	Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>					1										
199	African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>					1										
200	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>			1		10	5				4	7				2
201	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓
202	Piapiac	<i>Ptilostornus afer</i>		6	15		10	15	✓	✓	✓						10
203	Purple Starling	<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i>			10	✓	✓	5	10	4	5	20					
204	Bronze-tailed Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalcurus</i>							1								
205	Greater Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓				10	10				
206	Lesser Blue-eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>						2				4					
207	Long-tailed Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
208	Yellow-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>					4										
209	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>		3			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓
210	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓														
211	Sahel Bush Sparrow	<i>Gymnoris dentata</i>				2		1	2								
212	White-billed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>					8		20				8				
213	Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser superciliosus</i>					1										
214	Little Weaver	<i>Ploceus luteolus</i>		2													
215	Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>			4												
216	Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
217	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>						10	✓	✓	✓						

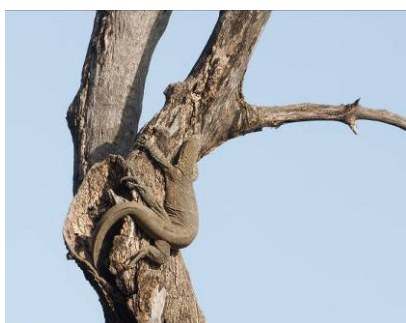
218	Northern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>						15	✓	✓	✓		
219	Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>							✓	✓			
220	Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>			✓								
221	Black-rumped Waxbill	<i>Estrilda troglodytes</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
222	Western Bluebill	<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	1										
223	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
224	Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	7	10	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
225	Cut-throat	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>							30				
226	Bronze Mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>		8	✓		✓		✓			✓	10
227	Exclamatory Paradise Whydah	<i>Vidua interjecta</i>						1	4				
228	Village Indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>					1		2				
229	Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>					10		10				
230	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>					2						

MAMMALS

Chimpanzee	Green vervet monkey	Red patas monkey	Guinea baboon
Hippopotamus	Gambian sun Squirrel	Striped ground squirrel	Gambian epauletted fruit bat

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (some names vary between references)

African Wall Gecko <i>Tarentola ephippiata</i>	Gambian Agama Lizard <i>Agama weidholzi</i>	Nile Crocodile <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>
West African Nile Monitor Lizard <i>Varanus niloticus stellatus</i>	Unidentified frog – see photo ³	Common African Toad <i>Sclerophrys regularis</i>



Nile monitor lizard high in a tree from the boat on 9 Dec (MH); frog sp. at Tendaba (JS); Nile crocodile (MH).

BUTTERFLIES (names from Penney, with widely used alternatives noted in brackets)

Citrus swallowtail	African emigrant	Common grass yellow	Small grass yellow	Zebra white
Large orange tip	Caper white (=brown-veined white)	African caper white	Creamy small white	African spirit
Common zebra blue	Pea blue (=long-tailed blue in Europe)	African grass blue	African tiger (=plain tiger or African monarch)	Painted lady
Dark blue pansy	River sailor	Guineafowl	Small orange acraea	Elegant acraea



Citrus swallowtail, common zebra blue, guineafowl, (ED), small orange acraea on shrubby false buttonweed (MH).

³ The Gambia lacks a clear reference for amphibians. A puddle frog *Phrynobatrachus* sp or a ridged frog e.g. sharp-nosed ridged frog *Ptychadena oxyrhynchus* look possible.

ODONATA		
Black percher <i>Diplacodes lefebvrii</i>	African piedspot <i>Hemistigma albipunctum</i>	Violet dropwing <i>Trithemis annulta</i>
Broad scarlet <i>Crocothemis erthraea</i>	Northern banded groundling <i>Brachythemis impartita</i> ⁴	Strong (=banded) skimmer <i>Orthetrum brachiale</i>
Long skimmer <i>Orthetrum trinacria</i>	Red-veined darter <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	Portia widow <i>Palpopleura portia</i>
Blue emperor <i>Anax imperator</i>	Tiny swamp bluet damselfly <i>Azuragrion vansomereni</i>	



Violet dropwing; portia widow, African piedspot (ED), black percher (CD)

OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES		
Carpenter bee <i>Xylocopa callens</i>	Common stick grasshopper <i>Acrida acuminata</i>	West African water scorpion
Fiddler crab	Praying mantis sp	
Ant-lion larva <i>Myrmeleon</i> sp	Crimson speckled moth Cf <i>Utetheisa lotrix</i>	Two-banded blister beetle <i>Mylabris bifasciata</i>
Giant forest orb weaver (spider) <i>Nephila fenestrata</i>	Giant huntsman spider <i>Heteropoda venatoria</i>	



Two-banded blister beetle (MH); ant-lion larva and larval pit (ED); carpenter bee *Xylocopa callens* on rattle box (CD).

PLANTS AND TREES (selected)	
Milkweed bushes <i>Calotropis procera</i>	Egyptian lotus (water lily) <i>Nymphaea lotus</i>
Rattle box <i>Crotalaria retusa</i>	Yellow oleander <i>Cascabela thevetia</i>
Hemp-leaved hibiscus <i>Hibiscus cannabinus</i> (Malvaceae)	<i>Senna alata</i>
Star thistle <i>Centaurea perrottetii</i>	Shrubby false buttonweed <i>Spermacoce verticillata</i>
Pride of Barbados <i>Caesalpinia pulcherrima</i> (ornamental)	
Baobab <i>Adansonia digitata</i>	Kapok <i>Ceiba pentandra</i>



Milkweed *Calotropis procera*; star thistle *Centaurea perrottetii*; bark on a kapok tree *Ceiba pentandra*; yellow oleander *Cascabela thevetia* (CD)

⁴ Both northern and southern banded groundlings occur in The Gambia and are very similar. This ID is from a careful check of photos of one male banded groundling on 7 December. 'Banded groundling *Brachythemis* sp' is in general a safe ID.