

The GAMBIA: *short trip report 3rd to 9th January 2010*

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This report complements a comprehensive report, by the same authors, of a 13 day trip to The Gambia in December 2007 and a short trip report from December 2008. It highlights some species not recorded on previous trips, together with selected records of other birds of interest. A total of 225 species was recorded in the seven days of the 2010 trip.

Itinerary

3rd Jan: Pre-breakfast stroll around grounds of Mansea Beach hotel in Kololi then a full day spent in Abuko NR.

4th Jan: Morning at Tujereng. Lunch at Paradise Inn, Tanji. Afternoon at Tanji reserve and beach.

5th Jan: Drove down to the Darsalani area via Brikama and Sifoe. Two hours leisurely birding from canoe at Marakissa in early afternoon was one of the highlights of the trip. Watched birds coming to drink from water bowls at Marakissa river camp mid-afternoon then birded the area on foot from 4.15 pm - 6.30pm. Stayed overnight at the camp.

6th Jan: Pleasant hour birding round Marakissa river camp before breakfast. Spent morning birding by foot around Marakissa. Short stop at Darsalani then a truncated visit to Gunjur wetland, which proved to be very disappointing compared to previous visits (water level was high). Called in at Tujereng in late afternoon before returning to Mansea Beach hotel.

7th Jan: Brief look round hotel grounds before breakfast. Brufut Woods (9.10am-1.15pm). Kotu sewage pools and lily pond mid-afternoon. Early finish to allow Tijan to take care of some business. Increased the hotel swimming pool list by several species.

8th Jan: Birded around hotel early morning. Farasutu Reserve, Kuluro between 10.10am – 12.05pm. Met the only other birders of the trip here – two Americans who were heading upriver for five days. Called in to a very dry Pirang 'shrimp farm' before moving to Faraba Banta bush track area. Crossed over into Senegal briefly to the Seleti water holes. Returned to Farasutu Reserve only to find the gate locked (5.00pm). Looked at edge of nearby tidal mangroves (River Gambia).

9th Jan: Final look around hotel grounds. Several hours at Abuko NR. Finally, checked habitat immediately outside Banjul Airport perimeter fence - quite productive and worthy of some proper exploration on a future visit.... At 4.30pm. flew back to a snowy Manchester.

Highlights

(* = not recorded on four previous birding trips to the Gambia)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One was in paddies at Marakissa on 6th.

Black Egret *Egretta ardesiaca*

Two were at Kotu lily pond on 7th.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Two flew over Marakissa on the morning of 6th.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Seven were in the Darsalami area on 6th.

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

A surprise sighting of five flying over the Mansea Beach hotel, Kololi early on 7th.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

Five were on the river at Marakissa on 5th (viewed from canoe)

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Up to 60 were in the Marakissa-Darsalami area on 5th-6th, and 23 flew over the Mansea Beach hotel, Kololi on 8th.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

One at Daraslami on 5th and seven on 6th. Also four at Kotu lily pond on 7th.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*

A possible flew over Marakissa on 6th and a definite was at Pirang 'shrimp farm' on 8th.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

One was close to Banjul Airport on 9th.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Singles were near Sifoe and at Marakissa on 5th.

Bataleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

Two were at Faraba Banta Bush Track on 8th.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cineris*

Singles near Sifoe on 5th and close to Banjul Airport on 9th.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One seen at close range at Pirang on 8th was of the *beaudouini* race. Another nearby on 8th and one at Darsalimi on 5th were not raced.

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

Singles were at Faraba Banta on 8th and near Banjul Airport on 9th.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Two were noted *en route* between Kololi and Abuko on 3rd and 5th.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

One was at Darsalami on 5th.

***Western Little Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter erythropus*

One was seen well, but briefly, perched under the canopy at Farasutu Reserve on 8th.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

Singles on 3rd and 8th-9th.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera*

Brief views of one on 4th and up to three sightings on 8th (all coastal).

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus*

One at Darsalami on 5th was the sole confirmed record.

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus*

One flushed at Tanji on 4th.

***Black-bellied Bustard** *Eupodotis melanogaster*

One discovered by Tijan on a track at Tujereng on 4th was a major surprise. Fortunately it was relocated after a tense few minutes, allowing GB and IFo flight views.

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

One was noted at Marakissa paddies on 6th.

Black-headed Plover *Vanellus tectus*

Two were in 'farmland' near Banjul Airport on 9th.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One was at Kotu sewage pools on 7th.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

A flock of 38 were roosting in tidal mangroves near Farasutu on 8th.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*

Three were found amongst the gull and tern flock at Tanji on 4th.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*

Ten were in a fig tree at Brufut Woods on 7th and two were at Faraba Banta on 8th.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

A male near Banjul Airport on 9th was the sole record.

***Yellowbill** *Ceuthmochares aereus*

A very skulking, calling individual was poorly seen at Brufut Woods on 7th.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii*

One was at Faraba Banta on 8th.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

A good showing, with two at Tujereng on 4th and 6th, and one near Banjul Airport on 9th.

Verraux's Eagle Owl *Bubo lacteus*

Distant views were had of two roosting in a tree at Brufut Woods on 7th.

***Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

One was heard calling at Marakissa river camp during the early hours of 6th (where a nest with five young under a roof was reported by the owner). One was found roosting in a tree at Farasutu reserve on 8th (fulfilling a long-term desire to see a Barn Owl outside the UK by GB).

White-faced Scops Owl *Otus leucotis*

Roosting singles were found outside Abuko NR on 3rd and at Brufut Woods on 7th.

Pearl-Spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*

One was in fig trees near Tujereng on 4th, two were at Marakissa on 5th and 6th, and one responded to Tijan demonstrating playback to some kids at the Gambian-Senegal border at Seleti on 8th!

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*

Superb views of two roosting during the day in leaf litter under trees at Brufut Woods on 7th.

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*

At least two were in the Tujereng area on 4th, swooping to drink from a roadside pool at one point.

Black Wood Hoopoe *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

Two to three were at Tujereng on 4th.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

One to two noted at Abuko NR, Marakissa and Farasutu. The sight of one diving close to our canoe and coming up with a fish at Marakissa on 5th was a memorable sight.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*

One came close to the water bowls at Marakissa river camp on 5th.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

One to two at Faraba Banta and Tujereng.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx picta*

Singles were at Abuko NR on 3rd and 9th (the former showing particularly well at the 'private hide' overlooking a small water hole).

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

One was at the Mansea Beach hotel, Kololi on 4th and one was at Marakissa on 6th.

Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevia*

One to two noted near Banjul Airport, Faraba Banta, between Gunjur-Tujereng, and near Tanji.

Green Turaco *Tauraco persa*

Three were at Abuko NR on 3rd.

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti*

One was at Tanji on 4th.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*

Singles were at Tujereng on 4th and Marakissa on 5th.

***Buff-spotted Woodpecker** *Campethera nivosa*

One was at Abuko NR on 9th.

Brown-backed Woodpecker *Picoides obseletus*

One was at Tujereng on 4th.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

One came to a drinking bowl at Faraba Banta on 8th.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

Singles were at Abuko NR and Marakissa.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*

Up to four were found in the Darsalami area on 5th.

Pied-winged Swallow *Hirundo leucosoma*

Two were at Abuko NR on 3rd and one near Banjul Airport on 9th. Another came into the Seleti water hole (Senegal) on 8th.

Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*

One to two were came in to drink from the Seleti water hole (Senegal) on 8th.

Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina phoenicea*

A female was found at Marakissa on 5th.

Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapilla*

Singles were heard only (identified by Tijan) at Abuko NR on 3rd and Brufut Woods on 7th. One was seen briefly at Farasutu Reserve on 8th.

Oriole Warbler *Hyperigerus atriceps*

Three were at Gunjur wetland on 6th.

White-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha albicapilla*

Two were at Marakissa river camp on 5th and one was calling there on 6th.

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla*

Two were at Abuko NR on 3rd.

***Siffling Cisticola** *Cisticola brachypterus*

One was seen and heard at close range at Tujereng on 4th.

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans*

Singles were noted at Tujereng on 4th and 6th.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis*

One to two at Tujereng on 6th included one showing well.

Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythroptera*

One was at Tujereng on 4th.

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens*

Two were at Brufut Woods on 7th.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*

One was heard only at Abuko NR on 3rd and 9th (identified by Tijan).

Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*

Two were at Tanji on 4th, six at Marakissa on 5th and three there on 6th.

White-shouldered Black Tit *Parus leucomelas*

Four were at Tujereng on 4th.

***Yellow-bellied Hyliota** *Hyliota flavigaster*

Two were found at that gem of a place, Tujereng, on 4th.

Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*

One at Marakissa on 6th was a surprise find.

Senegal Batis *Batus senegalensis*

A pair was noted at Tujereng on 6th.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

Two were at Abuko NR on 3rd and two at Farasutu Reserve on 8th.

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer*

Up to three were at Abuko NR on 3rd and singles at Brufut Woods, Farasutu Reserve and Paradise Inn (Tanji).

Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris*

Two were at Abuko NR on 9th.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Nectarinia senegalensis*

Two were at Tujereng on 4th, one at Marakissa on 6th and two at Faraba Banta on 8th.

Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

One was at Paradise Inn, Tanji on 4th and one was at Seleti water hole (Senegal) on 8th.

Copper Sunbird *Nectarinia cuprea*

The sole record was one at Brufut Woods on 7th.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala*

Singles were heard only near Banjul Airport and Tujereng, and one was seen at Marakissa.

Grey-headed Bush Shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*

One at Marakissa on 5th.

Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus*

One showed well as it moved through trees at Farasutu Reserve on 8th.

Brubru *Nilaus afer*

One was found at Tujereng on 6th.

Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Small numbers were in fig trees near Tujereng on 4th and at least one came in to drink from water bowls at Marakissa river camp on 5th.

Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalcurus*

At least one showed well in the grounds of the Mansea Beach hotel on 3rd and three to four were attending roadside fig trees near Tujereng on 4th.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*

On 8th one was with cattle at Faraba Banta and five were just over the Senegalese border at Seleti water holes on 8th.

Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus*

Tujereng held one on 4th and two on 6th.

Little Weaver *Ploceus luteolus*

One to two were at Tujereng on 4th and 6th.

Red-winged Pytilia *Pytilia phoenicoptera*

One came in to drink at the Seleti water holes (Senegal) on 8th.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

Seven were feeding along a track at Abuko NR on 3rd.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes*

Seven were in fields near Farasutu Reserve on 8th.

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata*

Two came in to drink at the 'private pool' at Abuko NR on 3rd.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*

Two were at Pirang 'shrimp farm' on 8th.

Quail-finch *Ortygospiza artricollis*

Three to four were in the Marakissa-Darsalami area on 5th and one was at Pirang 'shrimp farm' on 8th.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*

One was at Abuko NR on 3rd.

Tijan Kanteh is available for hire (at very good rates) as a bird guide and driver (owner of a 10 seater minibus). Contact him at tijanthebirdman@yahoo.com or Tijan Kanteh, PO Box 2108, Serrakunda, The Gambia, West Africa, or via Graeme Bowman at g.bowman@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk