

THE GAMBIA

Trip report 15th to 28th December 2007

Participants: Ian Forsyth, Tony (A.) Bowman (until 21st), Graeme Bowman, Richard Dunn and Tijan “The Birdman” Kanteh.

Itinerary

15th Dec: by the time we cleared Banjul (Yundum) airport, some 27 hours later than scheduled, there was barely an hour of daylight left as we travelled to our hotel. Night in Kololi.

16th Dec: journeyed inland along the incredibly bad road towards Tendaba, stopping at likely places to bird en route. Night at Tendaba Camp after searching for nightjars.

17th Dec: early morning cruise, primarily along inlets and creeks of the Gambia River. Left Tendaba Camp at 1155 and headed to Janjangbureh (Georgetown) via the roll on-roll off ferry to Farafenni on the north bank, where the main road east was nigh on perfect! Night at Baobolong Camp.

18th Dec: Took a smaller ferry then birded en route to Kunkilling Forest Park – Bansang Sanctuary – evening boat trip west along the Gambia River. Night at Baobolong Camp.

19th Dec: headed for Tendaba Camp after breakfast, birding at suitable localities en route including Karwure (Kunkaur), Nganga Batang, Panchang and Kaur wetland. The process of crossing south via the ferry near Farafenni took a full two hours up until 1715. Once we had finally crossed there was time for a productive roadside stop en route to Tendaba. Arrived at Tendaba Camp for the night at 1950 hrs.

20th Dec: birded early around Tendaba Camp – the airfield that never was – Batelling Woods – Batelling track and then headed straight to Kololi for the night.

21st Dec: birded the hotel grounds and nearby beach area – Kotu sewage pools – Palm Beach Hotel wetlands – Yundum, after which Tony caught his late afternoon flight to the UK. Later birded a farmland area near Yundum. Night in Kololi.

22nd Dec: Tujereng – Paradise Lodge for lunch – two beach areas near Tanji – Tanji Woods – Tanji Bird Reserve. Night in Kololi.

23rd Dec: Bonto rice fields – Pirang – Faraba Banta bush track – Pirang again for a short visit in the late afternoon. Night in Kololi.

24th Dec: Abuko Nature Reserve – Lamin Lodge – Lamin rice fields – Kotu Creek – Palm Beach Hotel wetlands. Night in Kololi.

25th Dec: Brufut Woods - Tujereng. Night in Kololi.

26th Dec: Marakissa area. Night at Marakissa Rivercamp.

27th Dec: Marakissa area - Gunjar Motel – Gunjar wetland. Night in Kololi.

28th Dec: Abuko Nature Reserve – Yundum – airport for late afternoon flight to UK.

Systematic List of Birds

The sequence, English names and scientific nomenclature follow those used in *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* by Barlow, Wacher and Disley.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One at N'Jau waterhole on 17th, three at Kotu Sewage Ponds on 21st and ten at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana*

Seven flew N in a line off Tanji on 22nd.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Nine on 20th, flying over at Tendaba.

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Mainly seen inland in low numbers but also more than 20 at Pirang on 16th and about eight on the river trip from Tendaba Camp next day. One was in the Palm Beach Hotel wetland area on 24th.



African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

Up to four a day were seen at suitable waters and possibly up to 10, mainly around Tendaba, on 17th.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Eight at Pirang on 16th, one near Tendaba next day, c.60 flew over Batelling track/forest on 20th and 35 at Pirang on 23rd.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

At least 50 were at Pirang on 16th and several near Tendaba next day. Around 15 flew over the 'airfield' near Tendaba on 20th, at least 25 were noted in the Tanji area on 22nd

and about 20 at Pirang on 23rd. In the Marakissa area two were seen on 26th and three on 27th.

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus*

Four in the mangroves in an inlet of the Gambia River from the boat trip out of Tendaba Camp on 17th and a juvenile at Abuko NR on 28th.



Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Singles along the Gambia River on 18th and at Kaur wetland on 19th; 12 were seen at Abuko NR on 24th.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Regularly encountered at suitable wetland habitat, occasionally up to ten in total per day.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Very common, almost throughout. A sample count on 17th gave 640+ and a flock of about 100 flying down the Gambia River near McCarthy Island on 18th made an impressive sight.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*

At least three on the Gambia River trip on 17th, ones and twos seen at Bonto rice fields, Abuko and Marakissa.

Black Egret *Egretta ardesiaca*

Locally quite common, seen on four dates including 23+ at Kaur (Japaur) on 17th and a total of 20 on 19th. On the coast only seen at Palm Beach wetland.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

The highest daily count was 15 on 16th, mainly at Pirang but it was seen easily enough on seven other dates in suitable wetland areas.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Up to five casually noted on seven dates; it is likely there were many more unrecorded.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

The larger white egrets were commonly seen in most areas and there was generally insufficient time to check the specific identity of all of them. Around six were noted on 17th, three on 24th and two on 27th.



Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

As for Intermediate Egret, not all were specifically identified but it was noted on at least eight dates.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Two on 18th along the Gambia River and two on 19th at Kaur wetland.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Moderate numbers noted almost daily in typical habitat.

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

Three at Pirang on 16th and two there on 23rd. Also one at Abuko NR on 24th, two near Sifoe (near Marakissa) on 27th and one at Abuko NR on 28th.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Low numbers regularly seen near suitable small or large bodies of water, for example common enough to register as a 'tick' in the daily logs on 17th and 19th and otherwise often up to five or more a day.



Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

Thirteen were flying in the vicinity of the Farafenni Ferry on 17th, c.190 were thermalling in two groups en route back to the ferry on 19th and 14 were at Pirang on 23rd.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

One on 16th at Kampant and about eight along the Gambia River on 17th.

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

Five or six flew over Kunkilling Forest Park on 18th.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

Two flew over the boat on the Gambia River trip of 18th.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Two at wetland near the Palm Beach Hotel on 24th and two near Sifoe (Marakissa) on 27th.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

One flew over the swimming pool at Tendaba Camp on 16th, five on the Gambia River trip from Tendaba Camp on 17th and one over Tendaba Camp on 20th.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

A flock of 10 at Pirang on 16th was the only record.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*

One with the flock of Greater Flamingos at Pirang on 16th.



White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Locally common: 23 at Japaur on 17th, c.80 at Panchang on 19th, c.220 at Kotu sewage pools on 21st and c.100 at Gunjar wetland on 27th.

Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

Seen only on the inland leg: three at Kaur (Japaur) on 17th and five flew over the ferry approach at McCarthy Island on 18th.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*

Eight at Panchang on 17th and three were there on 19th.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Five were at Gunjar wetland on 27th.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

One on 17th then one-two daily from 22nd –28th, apart from a gap on 26th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

One of the commonest raptors and seen daily. All those studied more closely belonged to the yellow-billed African race, *M. m. parasitus*.

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

All seen on the inland leg of the trip along the Gambia River: two on 17th, five on 18th and one on 20th.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*

Ones and twos were noted on nine dates in a variety of locations, for example Pirang, near Janjangbureh, Tanji and Marakissa.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Very common, just about everywhere, and every day although it seemed to be scarcer on 19th, for whatever reason. One was at close range at the drinking pool/photo hide at Abuko NR on 24th.



White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

All records were inland. Singles near Farafenni and near Japaur on 17th, six, including birds in two nests at Kunkilling Forest Park on 18th and a total of eight at various places on 19th.

Ruppell's Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii*

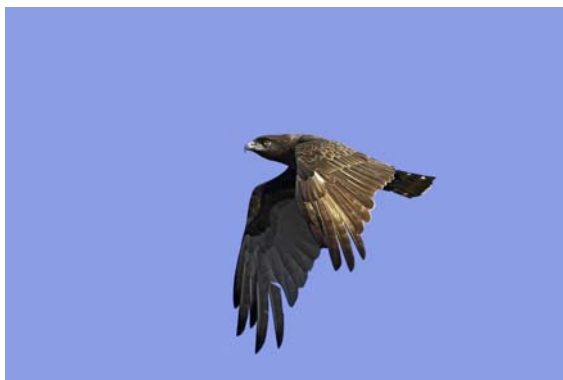
One at Jarol, en route to Tendaba, on 16th.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One at Singajor on 16th, another on 17th on the Tendaba creek crawl and one over Batelling Woods on 20th.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*

Seen only on the inland section of the trip: two not far from Tendaba Camp on 16th, a total of five on 17th including three together near Japaur, two on 18th and singles on 19th and 20th.



Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*

One was seen at rest and later in flight on 23rd at Faraba Banta bush track.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

One in the distance near Killy on 16th, given away by the unmistakable plumage pattern and rocking flight. One at Batelling track on 20th.

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus*

Seen on ten days in widespread locations: mainly up to three but five on 16th and 19th and four on 26th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

One at Pirang on 16th, two from the Gambia river cruise on 17th, including a dark phase individual, and one at Pirang on 23rd.

Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Seen on six days, both inland and nearer the coast: usually one or two but at least three on 17th.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*

Two records, both of the melanistic form: one along the Gambia River on 17th and one flew south over the river on 19th.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*

Noted on seven days, both inland and nearer the coast: usually one or two but up to four on 16th and three on 19th.



Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Seen on ten days, maximum three on 16th.

Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis*

One at Marakissa on 27th was perched in full view.



Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

Noted on three days inland, including three or four in the vicinity of a bush fire en route to Bansang on 18th, and on two nearer the coast, including four on 20th and three on each of 16th and 23rd.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Inland singles on 16th and two on 18th on the boat trip. One on 22nd then two on each of four dates from 23rd to 28th.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*

Singles at Marakissa on 26th and 27th and one at Yundum on 28th.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

One near Japaur on 17th and one at the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.

African Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus spilogaster*

Inland, two at Singajor on 16th and one near Kaur on 19th. One at Yundum on 21st and a probable immature on 27th at Marakissa.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

A dark phase at Yundum on 21st and a pale phase at Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Singles on 16th at Kampant on 23rd at Pirang, on 24th at Lamin Lodge and 27th near Sifoe/Marakissa.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One-three were seen on seven days and also 5+ in the Tujereng/Tanji area on 22nd.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*/**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinninculus*

Seen on eight days, including seven on 20th and four on 23rd, but no positive identifications of Lesser.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiacus*

Noted on nine days, both inland and nearer the coast. Mainly one a day but occasionally two and a total of five on 19th.

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera*

Two on 19th, (one at a small waterhole between Kunhaur and Nganya Bantang and one at Panchang), an obliging individual on a roadside wire towards Yundum on 23rd and one on 28th between Kololi and Abuko.



African Hobby *Falco cuvieri*

One at Pirang on 23rd was the only sighting.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

One at Jarol on 16th, two in the Yundum area on 21st and one at Pirang on 23rd.

Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus*

It was heard at Tujereng on 22nd and along Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd. One was seen briefly at Brufut Woods on 25th.

Ahanta Francolin *Francolinus ahantensis*

Two allowed good and prolonged views in the undergrowth at Abuko NR on 28th.

Double-spurred Francolin *Francolinus bicalcaratus*

Not encountered during the inland part of the trip but quite regularly heard or accidentally flushed from suitable habitats from 21st onwards. Eventually, two at Marakissa on 26th were viewed near to the van, close enough to see well the eponymous spurs.



Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris*

Three at the sides of the Gambia River on the evening boat trip on 18th and two at Panchang next day. Two were seen at Abuko NR on 24th and one at Marakissa on 27th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

At least four were at Panchang on 17th and eight there on 19th. One was noted at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*

A male allowed the boat to approach closely in a creek of the Gambia River on 17th, near Tendaba.



African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

Two at a small waterhole on 17th, at least 70 at Karwure (Kunkaur) on 19th and 20, mainly in the wetlands near the Palm Beach Hotel, on 24th. Singles were seen at Marakissa on 26th and at the Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Two were in the rice fields at Lamin on 24th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Seen on nine days, wherever there was suitable wetland. Mainly in single figures but 13 at Tendaba 'airfield' on 20th, 80 at Kotu sewage pools on 21st and 10 or more at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Senegal Thick-Knee *Burhinus senegalensis*

It was not difficult to find by suitable flowing water and seen on eight days. Top counts were 25 on 16th, c.50 on 17th, 30 on 20th and about 50 on 26th.

Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*

One at Japaur on 17th and two later the same day at Panchang. Five were at Nganya Bantang on 19th.



Temminck's Courser *Cursorius temminckii*

Two were in a sparsely vegetated field at Tujereng on 22nd.



Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

At Tujereng on 22nd two were flushed, one of which was relocated and close, prolonged views were obtained of this highly nocturnal species.



Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

Eight at Japaur on 17th and one at Kaur wetland on 19th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Singles noted on 17th and 19th, three at Kotu sewage pools on 21st and four at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

About 20 were at Pirang on 16th, 4+ at Kaur on 17th and four at Tanji beaches on 22nd.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

Two at Tanji beach on 22nd.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Three in the beach areas at Tanji on 22nd and one at Kotu Creek on 24th.

Wattled Plover *Vanellus senegallus*

Ten were on farmland at Yundum on 21st and one or two were seen on six other days at the Kalagi River site, Tendaba 'airfield', Lamin rice fields and at Marakissa.

Black-headed Plover *Vanellus tectus*

Totals of nine on 17th, two on 18th, 15 on 21st and finally two at Tujereng on 25th.

Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*

Commonly encountered near water throughout the country; seen on ten days.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

A total of around 15 were in the beach areas at Tanji on 22nd.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Three were at Pirang on 16th and one at Kaur on 19th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Six, possibly up to eight, were at Pirang on 16th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Only seen at Pirang: ten on 16th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Three at Kaur wetland on 17th and at least three at Kaur on 19th.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Scarce: singles at Kaur wetland on 19th and at Pirang on 23rd.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A total of 18 was at the Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Four were at the beach areas of Tanji on 22nd.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Noted on eight days including at least ten on the Gambia River boat trip on 17th and about ten in the Lamin area on 24th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Two at one of the beach areas at Tanji on 22nd and one heard near the Palm Beach Hotel on 24th.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Low numbers, not more than two, recorded in typical habitat on six dates.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One or two were seen on three dates and also three at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Low numbers, generally less than five, were seen on nine days.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One or two noted on seven dates.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Up to three or four were logged on five days and also at least six in total on 17th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Noted on eleven dates, usually up to three and at least eight on 17th.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Three at Pirang on 16th, eight at Tendaba riverside on 17th with eleven there on 20th, and about eight at Tanji on 22nd and one at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Two flew north at Tanji on 22nd. Another, more distant, skua at Tanji the same day was either this species or Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

Noted regularly at the coast from 21st, particularly on 22nd when hundreds moved north at Tanji. About 500 were at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

About 15 were at Tanji on 22nd and one at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*

Two adults stood on the beach at Tanji on 22nd.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Three off Kololi beach on 21st and at least 20 were at Tanji on 22nd.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Widespread in low numbers; seen on ten days split equally between the inland and 'coastal' legs of the trip. One or two almost each day at the various points visited along the Gambia River and at Pirang. Nearer the coast similar numbers but also four at Marakissa on 26th.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

The main time spent at the coast was at Tanji on 22nd and at least 25 were seen there. Otherwise up to five or so were noted on six other days, both inland and nearer the coast.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*

One resting on a small fishing buoy, not far from Tendaba camp on 17th, at least ten at Tanji on 22nd and three or more at Gunjur on 27th.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

Just a single, at Tanji on 22nd.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Two at Tanji on 22nd and two at Lamin Lodge on 24th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Three at Tanji on 22nd.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

Only recorded on the visits to Pirang: at least six on 16th and two on 23rd.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

At least 16 were hunting over Gunjur wetland on 27th.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Two were at Gunjur wetland on 27th.

Four-banded Sandgrouse *Pterocles quadricinctus*

A total of five flew across the road towards dusk on 17th on the way to the Janjangbureh ferry. Four were seen at dusk from the boat on 18th. Another was seen en route to Tendaba Camp on 19th and one near Marakissa on 26th.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*

Two showed well at Pirang on 16th but afterwards it was scarce: at least one along Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd and one at Marakissa on 27th.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*

Two at N'Jau waterhole on 17th and one near the Georgetown Island ferry point on 18th. Also on 18th six flew over the road near Kunkilling Forest and four were noted on the boat trip. Around ten were along the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.



Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer*

Seen only in the west from 22nd: one or two at Tanji NR, Abuko NR and Brufut Woods.

Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus*

Noted on ten dates, both inland and nearer the coast, but only one or two each day.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

Fairly common inland and good numbers seen daily, for instance 30+ on 19th. Scarcer near the coast and none seen after 25th.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*

Quite common towards the coast and at some places inland, where it was not recorded on one day. No real attempt was made to evaluate numbers.

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Often seen around villages, though not in any large numbers.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*

Two on each of 16th and 18th were the only ones inland. Seen daily nearer the coast, including ten on 21st.

African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*

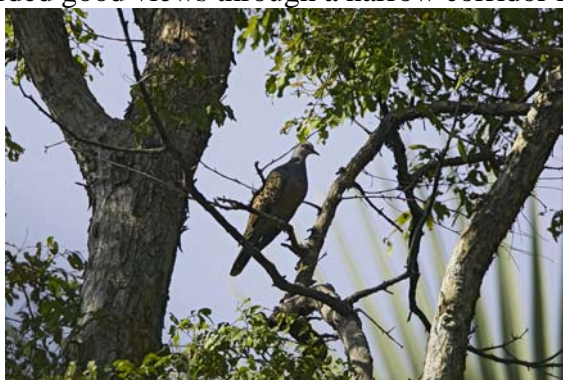
A few seen almost daily inland and may well have been under recorded. Nearer the coast, two at Lamin rice fields on 24th and two at Marakissa on 26th.

Vinaceous Dove *Streptopelia vinacea*

One of the commonest dove and seen on a daily basis throughout the country.

Adamawa Turtle Dove *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*

One was singing from the treetops at Kunkilling Forest Park on 18th. Eventually, it was tracked down and afforded good views through a narrow corridor leading into the canopy.



Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Very common throughout.

Senegal Parrot *Poicephalus senegalus*

Recorded on ten days and it seemed to be more noticeable inland, with five on 19th and ten on 20th. A tame one that had been rescued from a nearby village and released at Marakissa Rivercamp was a delight to watch around the living quarters.



Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Seen and/or heard screaming around suitable habitat on a daily basis. Higher totals include 15+ on 17th and 10+ on 26th.

Green Turaco *Tauraco persa*

One, probably two, at Abuko NR on 24th and one at Brufut Woods on 25th.



Violet Turaco *Musophaga violacea*

One at Tanji NR on 22nd, two at Abuko NR on 24th, one at Marakissa on 26th and 27th and one heard at Abuko on 28th.

Western Grey Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator*

This curious species was quite common near the coast. Inland at least five were around the Tendaba area on 20th.

Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

Singles near Pirang on 23rd and at Brufut Woods on 25th.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

Up to four seen almost daily in a wide variety of habitats, including hotel grounds. On 16th, en route to Pirang, one was hit by the van. Tijan stopped to pick it up, gave it some water and the now reviving bird journeyed on the dashboard to Pirang. Upon release at Pirang the lucky individual flew off quite strongly. Remarkably, a few days later along the same stretch of road, another (or was it the same suicidal one?) may not have been so fortunate as the victim could not be found.

African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*

About four were heard on a night drive around the Bird Safari Camp on 18th. It was also heard during the night near Tendaba Camp on 19th and at Marakissa on 27th.

White-faced Scops Owl *Otus leucotis*

Two seen roosting together at Brufut Woods on 25th was a unique and appreciated Christmas present.



Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*

One calling at Baobolong Camp was soon seen well in the early morning of 19th. One was seen at Paradise Lodge on 22nd, as were two at Marakissa on 26th. Others were heard at times, for example on 27th.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*

One, well after dark, on a track near Tendaba Camp on 16th, one on the main, but incredibly bad, road towards Tendaba on 19th and two were watched at close range as they roosted on the ground at Brufut Woods on 25th. A nightjar flushed into torchlight on 16th near Tendaba was almost certainly a female Standard-winged *Macrodipteryx longipennis* but the view was too brief to be absolutely sure.

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*

One en route to Tendaba on 16th, two during a brief shore stop along the Gambia River on 17th, one at Bansang quarry on 18th, one near the airport at Yundum on 21st and one over Brufut Woods on 25th.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

Fairly common over typical habitats: noted on ten days and probably under recorded. Sample counts produced 20-30 or more on several days.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

One flew quite low over Bansang Sanctuary on 18th.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Logged on seven days, mainly inland and sometimes in fair numbers, including over 100 at Tendaba on 16th and around the same figure in total the following day.

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*

Two on the boat trip along the Gambia River on 18th.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*

One on 16th, at least five along the Gambia River on 17th and one there on 18th and one at Marakissa on 26th.



Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*

One in the hotel grounds at Kololi on 21st was a surprise, as this species is uncommon outside the rainy season.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

One along the bush track at Batelling on 20th, a total of four at Tujereng/Tanji on 22nd and singles on 24th and 25th.

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx picta*

Two at Abuko NR on 24th.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*

Singles along the Gambia River on 17th, two on the boat trip on 18th, at Kunkilling Forest Park on 18th, at Nganya Bantang on 19th and two in the wetlands near the Palm Beach Hotel on 24th.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

Two at Abuko on 24th and 28th, at least two, including two fighting, at Marakissa on 26th and two near Sifoe, Marakissa on 27th.



Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

As always, the most obvious kingfisher and found at most types of wetland. Regularly up to four a day and at least eight on 16th and six on 24th.



Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

Small numbers seen on ten dates from 16th, notably a total of ten on 22nd and six at Tujereng on 25th.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

At least two were found at Tanji on 22nd and two were at Tujereng on 25th.



Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bullocki*

Four or more were not far along the road from the ferry (south side of the river) and one at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th and two at Panchang on 19th.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*

The only record is of two seen from the Tendaba creek crawl along the Gambia River on 17th.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

One or two on 18th just beyond the ferry crossing from McCarthy Island to the south side of the river at Sankyley Kunda.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

Three on the Gambia River trip on 17th, about eight at Tujereng/Tanji on 22nd and three at Pirang on 23rd.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

One on the river trip and about four en route from Tendaba Camp on 17th, two en route between Soma and Tendaba on 19th and more than 30 in total on 20th.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus*

A flock of 22-25 was found on 17th at Masembe.

Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevia*

Logged on eight days, usually one or two and three on 16th.

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster*

Regularly encountered, often by the roadside. Seen on ten days, mostly up to five or six but seven on 21st and eight on 22nd.



Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinica*

The commonest roller, particularly inland, and logged almost daily including over 30 on 17th and at least 44 on 19th.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Singles on 16th and 17th, seven or more on the boat trip from Janjangbureh on 18th, three in the Tanji area on 22nd, one on 25th and one on 27th.

Green Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*

Up to four noted on seven dates from 16th to 25th and up to seven at Marakissa on 26th and 27th.

Black Wood Hoopoe *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

One at Batelling Woods on 20th and two along the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One on 17th at Darasoma, singles at Batelling track and en route back to Kololi on 20th, one along the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd and another at Marakissa on 27th.

Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus*

Recorded daily in widespread locations, regularly into double figures.



African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus*

All were found nearer the coast: two at Paradise Lodge on 22nd, three at Abuko NR on 24th and two at Marakissa on 26th and 27th.

African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus*

Up to three or four recorded on ten days and also ten at a farm near Yundum on 21st.



Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*

Just two sightings of this tiny, supposedly common, resident: one near Tendaba Camp on 20th and one at Brufut Woods on 25th.

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti*

One en route to the Farafenni ferry on 19th, three at Batelling Woods on 20th and one at Tujereng on 22nd.

Bearded Barbet *Lybius dubius*

Logged daily on the inland leg, including about six on 20th. Also one or two on three more dates to 26th in addition to three on 24th.

Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus*

Excellent views of this rarity were obtained when one came down to water in the grounds of Marakissa Rivercamp on 26th and 27th.



Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

One heard at Batelling track on 20th was the only inland record. Nearer the coast singles were seen on three dates and also a male and female at Brufut Woods on 25th.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

One was near the ferry point on 18th and another was at Marakissa on 26th.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

One was found at Tujereng on 22nd.

Fine-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera punctuligera*

Two along the Gambia River on the Tendaba creek crawl on 17th and two at Marakissa on 26th.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*

A male was entering a nest hole in a dead tree in the bush not far from Yundum airport on 28th.

Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae*

One or two seen on six dates, two of which were inland.

Brown-backed Woodpecker *Picoides obsoletus*

Singles at Batelling track on 20th and Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd and at Brufut Woods and Tujereng on 25th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Seen only at Pirang: 10+ on 16th and 6+ on 23rd.

Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis*

Noted on four dates from 17th to 22nd, two to four but also about ten at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th and 15+ at Panchang on 19th.

Fanti Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne obscura*

A total of six were seen in the Tanji area on 22nd.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Two along the Gambia River on 17th and two at Kunkaur on 19th.

Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*

One at Pirang and a group of four at a stop en route to Tendaba on 16th and one on 18th at Bansang Sanctuary.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Recorded on four dates inland in lowish numbers, the most about ten on 15th.



Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

Several at Pirang on 16th and 23rd and three at a forgotten location on 24th.



Pied-winged Swallow *Hirundo leucosoma*

Two over Lamin rice fields on 24th and one at Yundum on 28th.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida*

Seen on about eight days, mostly near habitation and usually up to six or seven; also 10-20 along the Gambia River on 17th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

One seen en route from Tendaba Camp on 17th and at least one at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Only noted inland and the largest count was along the Gambia River, with 70-80 on 17th. A total of 20 was logged on 19th and small numbers on two other days.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Low numbers, up to three, recorded on seven dates from widespread localities.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Seen and/or heard on six days, usually singles but at least six on 17th and four on 27th.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*

Just one seen, on 23rd during the second visit to Pirang.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Two along Batelling bush track on 20th and two at Tujereng on 22nd.

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

Three at Bonto rice fields on 23rd.

Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*

One at Tanji NR on 22nd, one at Abuko NR on 24th, one heard at Marakissa on 27th and three, including a juvenile, at Abuko NR on 28th.

Yellow-throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla flavicollis*

Two at Baobolong Camp on 18th, three at Abuko NR on 24th, two at Brufut Woods on 25th and three at Marakissa on 26th.

Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapilla*

Seen only at Abuko NR: two on 24th and three on 28th. One heard only at Brufut Woods on 25th.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Very common throughout the country although, curiously, only one was noted on 17th.

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla*

Singles on five of the last seven days near the coast: at Tanji on 22nd, at Abuko on 24th and 28th and Marakissa on 26th and 27th.



White-crowned Robin-Chat *Cossypha albicapilla*

One on the boat trip from Janjangbureh on 18th. One was singing and briefly seen at Brufut Woods on 25th and then at least two showed well next day at Marakissa.

Rufous Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

One turned up during a very productive spell along Batelling bush track on 20th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Seen on three days: one on 20th, two on each of 22nd and 25th.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Seen on eight days, mainly singles and also three on 19th, 20th and 22nd.

Northern Anteater Chat *Myrmecocichla aethiops*

Two between Kaur (Japaur) and N'Jau on 17th.

White-fronted Black Chat *Myrmecocichla albifrons*

One at Tujereng on 22nd and two there on 25th.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

Not recorded inland but seen every day in coastal areas, including hotel grounds. Usually up to four or five and at least eight on 24th.



{Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

{African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*

Two 'acros' heard on 17th along the Gambia River and one singing on 19th near Farafenni river crossing (north side) could not be assigned to species.

Western Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*

Recorded on six days, all inland apart from four on 22nd at Tanji. Otherwise up to three, for example at Tendaba Camp on 20th.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

One at Abuko NR on 24th.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

One on 17th, one on 22nd, three on 23rd, one on 25th and three on 27th. Disappointingly, the only species of cisticola got to grips with. The loss of a day on the inland part of the trip undoubtedly cost the time to search for others.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

Seen on nine days, the majority in coastal areas. Mainly up to three and also five on 25th.

Red-winged Warbler *Heliolais erythroptera*

Another good Christmas present well received! Two responded to judicious use of a tape at Tujereng on 25th, giving excellent views.



Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*

Only found at Abuko NR: one on 24th and two on 28th.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*

Noted on six days, not more than one or two and all in coastal areas, apart from two at Batelling Woods on 20th.

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*

Seen on eight days from 18th, mainly up to three but four on 20th, five on 25th and six on 27th.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura*

The alternative name of 'Nuthatch Warbler' fits this diminutive species very aptly. One or two noticed on four days and also three on 21st and 22nd.

Oriole Warbler *Hypergerus atriceps*

Remarkably good views were obtained of this skulker with two by the riverside at the McCarthy Island (south side) ferry point on 18th; another was heard only on the boat trip from Janjangbureh later the same day. One was heard on 19th at Janjangbureh (ferry crossing to north side), one heard only at Kotu Creek on 24th and another heard on 28th at Abuko NR.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*

One was seen on both visits to Abuko NR on 24th and 28th.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Singles at Pirang on 16th, at McCarthy Island on 18th and at Tanji on 22nd.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*

One along Batelling track on 20th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

At least four in the Tujereng/Tanji area on 22nd and other singles were found on 21st and 25th.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Singles at Tendaba Camp on 16th, at Pirang on 23rd and Marakissa on 27th.

Northern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis edolioides*

Singles en route to Tendaba on 16th, at Abuko NR on 24th and Tujereng on 25th; two at Abuko NR and one near the airport at Yundum on 28th.

Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica*

Two, separately, amongst low overhanging branches along the Gambia River, on the boat trip from Janjangbureh, on 18th.

Senegal Batis *Batis senegalensis*

One near Tendaba Camp on 20th and two were at Tujereng on each of 22nd and 25th.

Common Wattle-eye *Platysteira cyanea*

Recorded on six dates, including inland, notably three at Pirang village on 23rd, four at Abuko NR on 24th and 2-3 there on 28th.

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer*

Two on 28th at Abuko NR.

African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

All seen in coastal areas: one at Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd, three on 24th at Abuko NR and two on 28th also at Abuko.

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus*

Seen on eight dates, more or less split evenly between inland and coastal areas. Generally at least two and around eight on 26th at Marakissa.

Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*

All seen in coastal areas with seven at Paradise Lodge on 22nd, about five at Marakissa on 26th and two at Abuko NR on 28th.



White-shouldered Black Tit *Parus leucomelas*

Two along the Batelling track on 20th.

Yellow Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus parvulus*

One along the Batelling track on 20th and one or two on the Faraba Banta track on 23rd.

Mouse-brown Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus*

Brief views were obtained of several in mangroves along the Gambia River on 17th.

Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

Four were seen en route to Tendaba Camp on 19th, two on higher ground behind Tendaba Camp on 20th and two at Marakissa on 27th.

Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris*

Three, possibly four, at Abuko NR on 28th.

Pygmy Sunbird *Anthreptes platurus*

Two along the Gambia River on the Tendaba creek crawl on 17th, a party of four en route to Tendaba Camp on 19th, three on 20th (one at Tendaba and two at Batelling) and two on the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.

Green-headed Sunbird *Nectarinia verticalis*

One came in to mob a Pearl-spotted Owlet at Paradise Lodge on 22nd.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Nectarinia senegalensis*

Perhaps surprisingly, a male en route to Tendaba Camp on 19th was the only record.

Variable Sunbird *Nectarinia venusta*

One at Batelling track on 20th, four at Tanji on 22nd, two at Brufut Woods on 25th and one at Yundum on 28th.

Splendid Sunbird *Nectarinia coccinigaster*

Noted on four days in coastal areas, including six on each of 22nd and 25th.



Beautiful Sunbird *Nectarinia pulchella*

Seen every day in widespread locations, maximum at least six on 17th.

Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*

Two along Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd, two at Tujereng on 25th and two at Marakissa on 26th.

African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*

Singles, and once two, seen on six dates from 19th to 27th.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Seen on ten days with the majority of birds in coastal areas. Mainly one or two but three on each of 20th and 22nd.

Yellow-billed Shrike *Corvinella corvina*

Noted on nine dates from 16th, including eight on 19th, 15 on 23rd and at least ten on 25th.

Brubru *Nilaus afer*

Two were seen at the Batelling track on 20th and singles were heard on three other dates.

Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis*

Apart from one on 18th whilst waiting for the ferry, all others were in coastal areas: one or two on five dates at Tanji, Faraba Banta, Marakissa and Abuko NR.

Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala*

Singles, heard only, on 19th, 22nd, 23rd and 25th.

Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus*

Up to three recorded on ten dates, the majority in coastal areas.

Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus*

A male in Tanji woods on 22nd.

Grey-headed Bush Shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*

One heard at Brufut Woods on 25th and three seen at Marakissa on 27th.

White-crested Helmet Shrike *Prionops plumatus*

If one appears there are soon at least five, as the local name of 'five sisters' testifies. Five or six were seen on four dates at Tendaba, Yundum, Faraba Banta and Brufut Woods.



Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

Low numbers, not more than three, on ten days.

Piapiac *Ptilostomus afer*

Very common in coastal areas with regularly 20 or more and a sample count of 45 on 23rd.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Very common in many areas, including a flock of 30+ by the roadside near Yundumon 21st.



Purple Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus*

Locally common and seen on ten days. Apart from about 30 on 26th, no attempts were made to number it.



Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

Recorded on four dates, including 20 or more on 17th and at least 12 on 19th.

Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis chloropterus*

Only one or two noted on six dates.

Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus*

Common throughout the country.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*

At least five were on cattle on 16th, shortly before arrival at Tendaba Camp. Three were on the backs of two horses beside the Batelling track on 20th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Low numbers, not more than six, seen on four days around villages in western parts.

Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*

Quite common and seen on eleven days, including totals of 30+ on 17th and at least 20 on 25th.

Sudan Golden Sparrow *Passer luteus*

About 15 repeatedly came down to drink at a small waterhole on 19th near Kaur.

Bush Petronia *Petronia dentata*

Two or three were near Soma on 17th, six were at Bansang Quarry on 18th, at least three were at a small waterhole between Kunkaur and Nganya Bantang on 19th and one at Batelling track on 20th.

Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser superciliosus*

Two at Batelling Woods and two along Batelling bush track on 20th and one at Brufut Woods on 25th.

White-billed Buffalo-Weaver *Bubalornis albirostris*

Seen on nine dates. Inland about 80 on 16th and at least 50 on 19th. Smaller numbers noted in coastal areas but recorded almost daily.

Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis*

Up to four noted on four days near the coast at Abuko NR, Kololi and Brufut Woods.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

Very common daily in coastal areas, for example about 200 on 21st and at least 250 on 24th. The only sighting inland was of around eight on 18th, whilst waiting for the ferry after leaving Baobolong Camp.

[Gray's Malimbe *Malimbus nitens*]

One fitting the description of this species was out in the open on a bare branch on the north bank of the Gambia River on 18th. At least two observers saw a clearly demarcated bright red patch on the breast when the bird turned round. The rarity of the species in The Gambia makes the claim cautious but at the same time the most similar species could be ruled out, including Western Bluebill (six of mixed sex and ages seen well at Abuko NR on 28th). The sighting has been reported to 'Gambia Birding' and comment is awaited.

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

One on the Tendaba creek crawl on 17th, at least two on 18th whilst waiting for the ferry after leaving Baobolong Camp and at least two were visiting a small waterhole on 19th.

Yellow-crowned Bishop *Euplectes afer*

One at Soma on 17th and three, probably four, at Pirang on 23rd.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus*

The sole record was of 10+ on 21st in Yundum fields

Northern Red Bishop *Euplectes franciscanus*

Noted on six dates, including ten on 17th and at least 30 coming to a small waterhole on 19th.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*

A total of six, three males, two females and a juvenile were seen in two groups at Abuko NR on 28th.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*

Fairly common, mainly around human habitation: seen almost daily, regularly up to 15.



Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata*

A female showed well for several seconds along Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd.

Red-cheeked Cordon-Bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*

Good numbers were seen daily in coastal areas from 21st. Prior to that, inland, it seemed to be rather local but a total of at least 30 were noted from three locations on 19th.

Lavender Waxbill *Estrilda caerulescens*

Singles at the Mansea Beach hotel, Kololi on 21st, along the Faraba Banta bush track on 23rd and at Abuko NR on 24th.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

Two were found at Tanji on 22nd.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes*

Recorded in the Tendaba Camp area: at least ten on 17th and five or more on 20th. Also about ten on the boat trip from Janjangbureh on 18th.

Quail-Finch *Ortygospiza atricollis*

Found only at Pirang with around 25 on 16th and 23rd.



African Silverbill *Lonchura cantans*

Two visited a small waterhole en route to Nganya Bantang on 19th and two were near the beach at Kololi on 21st.



Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata*

Locally quite common in coastal areas, with up to 25 almost daily. The only record further inland was of a pair at an active nest on the mast of Farafenni ferry on 17th.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*

Only recorded on the inland leg of the trip. One between Farafenni and Japaur on 17th, five came to drink at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th and three visited a small waterhole near Kaur on 19th.

Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata*

One at Baobolong camp on 18th and again on 19th, two around Tendaba Camp on 20th and two at the Gunjur motel on 27th.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

Singles near a small quarry en route to Kunkilling Forest on 18th, at Tanji woods on 22nd and one at the Gunjur motel on 27th.

Exclamatory Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta*

Seen inland: at least eight en route to Janjangbureh on 17th, two at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th and singles at two different waterholes on 19th.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*

Small numbers, six or less, found on four dates inland and on two days in coastal areas.

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*

Two were attracted to water at Bansang Sanctuary on 18th and two at a small waterhole en route to the Farafenni ferry on 19th.

