



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Sierra Leone

1st – 14th December 2007



Gray-throated Rail taken by Christopher Orbell

Trip report compiled by Tour Leader David Hoddinott

Trip summary

This, the first ever comprehensive two-week birding tour to Sierra Leone, proved to be a very successful trip. We saw just over 300 species and found 23 out of 27 Upper Guinea Specials including Ahanta Francolin, White-breasted Guineafowl, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Little Green, Melancholy and Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Ghana Cuckooshrike, Baumann's Greenbul, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, Sharpe's Apalis, Kemp's Longbill, Ussher's Flycatcher, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, the mega White-necked Picathartes, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Turati's Boubou, Chestnut-bellied Helmetshrike, Emerald and Copper-tailed Starling, the very rare Gola Malimbe and Crimson Seedcracker.



Our tour started off with a day trip to the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve where we spent the full morning in lush tropical rainforest. Highlights here included a splendid adult Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Yellow-billed Turaco, stunning Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Melancholy Woodpecker, Red-tailed Bristlebill with chick, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, a very obliging White-tailed Alethe, Sharpe's Apalis and a group of hawking Ussher's Flycatcher. Following a great mornings birding we set off on a canoe trip down River No.2 that produced three superb White-backed Night-Heron, Osprey, a large flock of Royal Tern, Mouse-brown Sunbird and Gray's Malimbe. On arrival at the beach we were treated to a well-deserved, splendid fresh fish and chips lunch.

The afternoon was to be our first attempt at finding the mega and highly sought after White-necked Picathartes. We carefully made our way up to a rocky outcrop where a small Picathartes colony occurs and waited patiently for about an hour when it started to bucket down with rain. Everyone was rather nervous as we were wondering if the birds would ever show, however once the rain subsided they appeared and eventually we all had good views of three of these prehistoric looking birds. What a way to end the first day of the tour!

The following morning we began birding at the Freetown Golf Course where we picked up Blue-breasted Kingfisher, a very confiding Turati's Boubou, Oriole Warbler and several magnificent Crimson Seedcrackers. En route to Bo we stopped at Regent Forest on the Western Peninsula where we found flocks of Pallid Swift, Pied-winged and Preuss' Swallow, Fanti Sawwing, shy Forest Scrub-Robin, stunning Johanna's Sunbird, Compact Weaver, Red-headed Quelea and Black-winged Bishop and Yellow-shouldered Widowbirds in spectacular breeding plumage.

A very early start saw us finding Greyish Eagle-Owl and Long-tailed Nightjar en route to the Moa River. A full day on the fabulous Tiwai Island produced some great sightings including Hartlaub's Duck, a juvenile Long-tailed Hawk, Rock Pratincole, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Shining-blue and Dwarf Kingfisher, several massive Yellow-casqued Hornbill, the seldom seen Spotted Honeyguide, Little Green and Fire-bellied Woodpecker, stunning White-throated Blue Swallow, splendid male Buff-throated Sunbird, Chestnut-winged Starling, a large nesting colony of Maxwell's Weaver and Bates' Swift. Mammals included a trio of Colobus Monkeys, including impressive King, Western Red and Olive.

During some final early morning birding on the island we found the tiny Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, stunning Chestnut-bellied Helmetshrike, Yellow-mantled Weaver and Red-vented Malimbe as well as brief views of two Chimps crossing the trail. In the late afternoon we found the spectacular Diana Monkey in Gola West. The following day we spent the full morning birding in Gola East. Highlights included Plain Nightjar on the road at dawn, a displaying Red-chested Goshawk, beautiful Blue-headed



Wood-Dove, huge Great Blue Turaco, Ghana Cuckooshrike – a very lucky find (well done Hugh!), White-tailed Ant-Thrush, Forest Robin, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Puvell's Illadopsis and the smallest bird in Africa, Tit-hylia. In the late afternoon we spent some time birding some flooded fields near Kenema where we found Intermediate



Egret, Greater Painted-snipe, an unexpected Great Snipe, Little Ringed Plover and a pair of the rare Forbes' Plover.

From Kenema we departed on a real adventure to the remote Lalehun Forest of Gola North. It was a real mission to get to this area and I would not have suggested it had I not discovered a Gola Malimbe nest building in the area just a week earlier, I discussed this epic journey with the group and received a unanimous vote of yes, so the mission was on to see one of the rarest birds in Africa !!! The trek involved a two hour drive to a remote village, then a half hour drive with 4x4 vehicle on the most horrendous road you can imagine which involved crossing some precarious wooden bridges and then a 12km hike to the campsite which had no facilities – mission not for the faint-hearted! All provisions and camping gear were pre-arranged and sent in with porters and meals were pre-pared and sent in by porters the last 8km.

A very early start meant that we could enjoy fantastic forest birding during the walk in to camp. Some of the highlights during our three full days here included; Red-necked Buzzard, Ayres' Hawk-Eagle, White-breasted Guineafowl, stunning Grey-throated Rail (a blur of something disappearing into the forest alerted me to what I thought may be a small mammal at first but on closer examination in the undergrowth I noticed further movement and to my amazement it proved to be the very rare Grey-throated Rail – after getting the group together we managed to coax one back into view and most of us enjoyed superb views of this shy denizen of the forest.) Other highlights included a delightful pair of Blue-headed Bee-eater, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Buff-spotted and Brown-eared Woodpecker, displaying Rufous-sided Broadbill, Square-tailed Sawwing, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Western Bearded and Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Brown-chested Alethe, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaroptera, Kemp's Longbill, palearctic migrants Wood and Garden Warbler, Violet-backed Hylia, Gray Tit-Flycatcher, stunning Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Scarlet-tufted and Tiny Sunbird, Black-winged Oriole, Large-billed Puffback, rarely seen Olivaceous Flycatcher, spectacular Many-colored and Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Copper-tailed Glossy-Starling, a procession of Malimbos including Gola (we found the nest early our first morning but unfortunately the birds never visited it during our time there, however we did find a pair on two occasions feeding with a mixed species flock in the vicinity of the nest), Red-vented, Gray's, Crested and Red-headed and Western Bluebill. Although an epic adventure we were treated to an array of Upper Guinea specials and some very rare birds indeed.

Moving on to Kambui North we enjoyed superb scope views of Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Willcock's and Cassin's Honeyguide, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, European Pied Flycatcher and Magpie Mannikin. In the afternoon we visited another Picathartes colony and had mesmerizing views of six birds bathing and preening at their leisure, a truly unforgettable experience!

Leaving the forest it was a pleasant change to do some birding in the savanna and scrub near Bumbuna. Highlights here included shy Ahanta Francolin, European Hobby, elusive African Finfoot, Vinaceous Dove, superb Guinea Turaco, Western Plantain-eater, calling Pearl-spotted Owlet, spectacular male Standard-winged Nightjar, Double-toothed Barbet, Baumann's Greenbul, Red-winged Prinia, migrant Melodious Warbler and Common Nightingale, Senegal Batis, Blackcap Babbler, Green-headed and Splendid Sunbird, handsome Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike, scope views of magnificent Emerald Starling and host mimicking Jambandu and Cameroon Indigobirds.

Whew, what a trip! It is fair to say that Sierra Leone harbors some of the richest forest birding in West Africa and is an essential destination for anybody serious about African birds. It is however a seldom visited region and, as with much of West Africa, it is tough traveling in basic accommodations and you need to prepare yourself for an adventure!

Photos: Gola Malimbe and Forbes' Plover by David Hoddinott



Annotated List of Bird Species recorded in Sierra Leone

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows J. F. Clements *Birds of the World: A Checklist* 6th Edition (2007) Cornell University Press, with current updates.

(UPG) This stands for Upper Guinea specialties.

Cormorants *Phalacrocoracidae*

Long-tailed Cormorant

Phalacrocorax africanus

A flock of thirty was seen flying along the beach near the Freetown Golf Course. A further three were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns *Ardeidae*

Gray Heron

Ardea cinerea

A well-known, widespread heron, we saw three during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema and peak numbers of eight at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Black-headed Heron

Ardea melanocephala

One was seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Great (White) Egret

Ardea alba

One was seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

NOTE: The nominate Old World Great Egret may be split from the New World A. a. egretta which would become American Egret. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.

Intermediate Egret

Egretta intermedia

We had good views of two in the rice fields near Kenema.

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Small numbers were seen during our boat trip on River No.2.

NOTE: Clements lumps Little, Western Reef E. gularis and Madagascar's Dimorphic Egret E. dimorpha into a single species. This treatment is not widely accepted.

Western Reef Heron

Egretta gularis

A flock of ten was seen flying along the coastline near the Freetown Golf Course and a further ten were seen at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Small numbers were seen almost daily in open habitat.

NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret E. coromanda. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.

Striated (Green-backed) Heron

Butorides striatus

We had good views of three on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

NOTE: This species group is treated by Clements as 3 species, the nominate Striated Heron, B. virescens Little Green Heron of North America and B. sundevalli Lava Heron of the Galapagos. Other authorities lump all three forms into a single species, called Green-backed Heron (as per Handbook of Birds of the World.)

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

We found one during our evening boat trip on the Moa River.

White-backed Night-Heron

Gorsachius leucolophus

Three of these impressive birds were seen during our boat trip on River No.2



Hamerkop *Scopidae*

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

Two of this unique species were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Storks *Ciconidae*

Woolly-necked Stork

Ciconia episcopus

We saw one pair during the boat trip on the Moa River and a further pair during the drive from Tiwai Island to Zimmi.

Ibises & Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

Olive Ibis

Bostrychia olivacea

We heard this species in the early morning on Tiwai Island.

Hadada Ibis

Bostrychia hagedash

A pair was seen during the boat trip on the Moa River.

Swans, Geese & Ducks *Anatidae*

White-faced Whistling-Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Eight were seen during the drive from Bo to Tiwai and a further twenty during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema.

Spur-winged Goose

Plectropterus gambensis

A flock of five was seen flying over Bumbuna.

Hartlaub's Duck

Pteronetta hartlaubii

Small numbers were seen during the drive from Bo to Tiwai Island and later that evening we enjoyed magnificent views of a pair roosting in a tree along the Moa River.

Osprey *Pandionidae*

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

One was seen during the boat trip on River No.2 and a further one in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures *Accipitridae*

Black-shouldered Kite

Elanus caeruleus

We saw three during our time in the Bumbuna area.

Black [Yellow-billed] Kite

Milvus migrans

Seen in small numbers daily.

*NOTE: Many authorities treat the resident African subspecies of this raptor, which we observed as a separate species, Yellow-billed Kite *M. parasitus*. Clements does not as yet accept this split.*

African Fish-Eagle

Haliaeetus vocifer

We found one in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Palm-nut Vulture

Gypohierax angolensis

One of the commonest raptors in Sierra Leone with virtually daily sightings, including peak numbers of ten in the Sierra Leone River estuary.



Hooded Vulture*Necrosyrtes monachus*

Commonly seen around Urban areas with peak numbers of fifteen daily in Freetown.

African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene)*Polyboroides typus*

Another very common species in Sierra Leone, this distinctive raptor was recorded regularly throughout the trip.

Lizard Buzzard*Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Fairly common with small numbers seen virtually daily.

Red-chested Goshawk*Accipiter toussenelii*

We saw a juvenile flying over Regent Forest and an adult was seen displaying above Gola East.

Shikra*Accipiter badius*

Small numbers were seen at several localities including four on the drive from Makeni to Freetown.

Black Goshawk*Accipiter melanoleucus*

One was seen near Regent Forest and a further two during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

Long-tailed Hawk*Urotriorchis macrourus*

We had great views of a juvenile on Tiwai Island.

Red-necked Buzzard*Buteo auguralis*

This handsome buzzard was seen in small numbers daily in the Bumbuna area.

Ayres' Hawk-Eagle*Aquila ayresii*

One was seen during our walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North and a further one at Kambui North.

Long-crested Eagle*Lophaetus occipitalis*

Our first sighting was of one during the drive from Tiwai to Zimmi with further sightings of two during the drive from Makeni to Bumbuna.

Cassin's Hawk-Eagle*Spizaetus africanus*

We had good but brief views of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Falcons & Caracaras *Falconidae***Gray Kestrel***Falco ardosiaceus*

Our first sighting was of one during the drive from Makeni to Freetown with a further sighting of one on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Eurasian Hobby*Falco subbuteo*

We had good views of one hunting cliff swallows at Bumbuna Dam.

African Hobby*Falco cuvierii*

We had great views of one sub-adult during the drive from Freetown to Bo.

Peregrine Falcon*Falco peregrinus*

We had good views of one hunting over a village near Gola North.

Pheasants & Partridges *Phasianidae***Forest Francolin***Francolinus lathamii*

We heard this species calling on several occasions near Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Ahanta Francolin (UPG)*Francolinus ahantensis*

Phil was fortunate to catch a glimpse of one in the Bumbuna area, several others were heard calling here.

Double-spurred Francolin*Francolinus bicalcaratus*

Small numbers were seen near Regent Forest with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Stone Partridge*Ptilopachus petrosus*

We heard this species calling in the Bumbuna area.



Guineafowl *Numididae*

White-breasted Guineafowl (UPG)

Agelastes meleagrides

We heard this species calling on Tiwai Island and unfortunately only I saw a pair in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Crested Guineafowl

Guttera pucherani

We heard this species on Tiwai Island.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots *Rallidae*

White-spotted Flufftail

Sarothrura pulchra

This secretive, forest rallid's hooting call was heard in several forests.

Gray-throated Rail

Canirallus oculus

A pair of these rare and seldom seen birds was seen in the forest en route to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Black Crake

Amaurornis flavirostra

One was seen at a small roadside wetland en route to Kambui North.

Finfoots *Heliornithidae*

African Finfoot

Podica senegalensis

We saw a juvenile in a small river near Bumbuna.

Painted Snipes *Rostratulidae*

Greater Painted-snipe

Rostratula benghalensis

One male was seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Thick-knees *Burhinidae*

Senegal Thick-knee

Burhinus senegalensis

One was seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Coursers & Pratincoles *Glareolidae*

Rock Pratincole

Glareola nuchalis

A total of twelve were seen on the Moa River.

Plovers & Lapwings *Charadriidae*

White-headed Lapwing (Plover)

Vanellus albiceps

Small numbers were seen on several large rivers.

Black-bellied Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

One was seen on River No.2 and a further ten in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

At least ten were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

We saw five in the rice fields near Kenema.



Forbes' Plover*Charadrius forbesi*

A pair was seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

Great Snipe*Gallinago media*

We had wonderful views of four in the rice fields near Kenema.

Bar-tailed Godwit*Limosa lapponica*

We saw one on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

Up to twenty were seen on River No.2 and a further thirty on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Redshank*Tringa tetanus*

We had great views of one on River No.2 and a further six in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

We found one on River No.2 and a further 3 in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Wood Sandpiper*Tringa glareola*

A dozen were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Common Sandpiper*Actitis hypoleucos*

A dozen were seen on the Moa River and a further ten in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Ruddy Turnstone*Arenaria interpres*

We had wonderful views of three in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

A flock of ten was seen on River No.2.

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

Twenty were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Terns Sternidae

Sandwich Tern*Sterna sandvicensis*

Four were seen at River No.2 and a further three in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Royal Tern*Sterna maxima*

A flock of twenty was seen at River No.2 and a further five in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Little Tern*Sterna albifrons*

Two were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Doves & Pigeons Collumbidae

Rock Pigeon*Columba livia*

Small numbers seen in Freetown.

Bronze-naped Pigeon*Columba iriditorques*

We had wonderful scope views of two at Regent Forest and another at Gola East. They were commonly heard at virtually all forest sites, this must be the best country to see this species.

Red-eyed Dove*Streptopelia semitorquata*

A fairly common widespread species, especially notable in more wooded areas and around towns.

Vinaceous Dove*Streptopelia vinacea*

We had wonderful views of two near Bumbuna.

Laughing Dove*Streptopelia senegalensis*

Small numbers were seen in Freetown and around large towns.



Blue-spotted Wood-Dove*Turtur afer*

Not uncommon in secondary growth throughout with peak numbers in the Bumbuna area.

Tambourine Dove*Turtur tympanistria*

A forest equivalent of the wood-doves, seen in small numbers almost daily.

Blue-headed Wood-Dove*Turtur brehmeri*

A deep forest species restricted to West Africa. One was seen well in Gola East.

African Green-Pigeon*Treron calva*

Common, small numbers noted throughout.

Parrots, Macaws & Allies *Psittacidae*

(African) Gray Parrot*Psittacus erithacus*

So much better to see them in the wild than as the usual cage bird! Small groups were seen at Tiwai Island and near Lalehun, Gola North.

Turacos *Musophagidae*

Great Blue Turaco*Corythaeola cristata*

Arguably one of Africa's most spectacular birds, this huge frugivore was first seen in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve and seen in small numbers throughout.

Guinea (Green) Turaco*Tauraco persa*

We had a good sighting of a pair at Bumbuna.

Note: This species used to be lumped under the Green Turaco (T. persa), now split into four full species the others being Knysna Turaco T. corythaix, Livingstone's Turaco (T. livingstonii) and Schalow's Turaco (T. schalowi).

Yellow-billed (Verreaux's) Turaco*Tauraco macrorhynchus*

A commonly heard turaco of the interior forests, we saw them at several forest sites and enjoyed good views of two in Gola West.

Western Plantain-eater*Crinifer piscator*

Up to four were seen daily in the Bumbuna area.

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

Levaillant's Cuckoo*Clamator levaillantii*

Our first sighting was of brief views of one during the drive from Freetown to Bo with a further sighting on Tiwai Island.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo*Cercococcyx olivinus*

We heard one in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North

Yellow-throated Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx flavigularis*

One stunning male was seen at Kambui North.

Klaas' Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx klaas*

This brood parasite, favoring the cup nests of woodland birds, was heard at several locations.

African Emerald Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx cupreus*

Generally shyer and less common than its congeners, we heard it at many forest sites and saw a stunning male at Kambui North.

Dideric Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx caprius*

Small numbers were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Yellowbill (Green Coucal/Malkoha)*Ceuthmochares aereus*

This peculiar, malkoha-like cuckoo was seen at several forest sites.



Note: Some authorities split this species into Green Malkoha, *C. australis* that occurs in East and Southern Africa and Blue Malkoha, *C. aereus* that we saw and occurs in West and Central Africa. Clements does not as yet accept this split.

Black-throated Coucal *Centropus leucogaster*

We heard one calling on Tiwai Island.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

Commonly seen in small numbers virtually daily.

Barn Owls *Tytonidae*

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Phil saw one at the airport on arrival.

Typical Owls *Strigidae*

Grayish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens*

Two birds were seen during the very early morning drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

Pel's Fishing-Owl *Scotopelia peli*

One of these impressive owls was seen during a boat trip on the Moa River.

Pearl-spotted Owlet *Glaucidium perlatum*

One of these tiny birds was seen at Bumbuna.

Nightjars & Allies *Caprimulgidae*

Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis*

One was heard during the early morning drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus*

We saw several during the drives from Zimmi to Kenema and Kenema to Lalehun.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*

We had a good sighting of four during the early morning drive from Bo to Tiwai and a further one during the drive from Kenema to Lalehun.

Standard-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*

A magnificent male was seen in the Bumbuna area.

Swifts *Apodidae*

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini*

We had great views of several on the Western Peninsula and a further two on the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

African Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

Plentiful around Freetown.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Up to twenty were seen daily near Regent Forest.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

The common urban swift throughout the country.

Bates' Swift *Apus batesi*

A couple was seen at Tiwai Island.



Trogon Trogonidae

Narina Trogon

Apaloderma narina

We heard one calling in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Shining-blue Kingfisher

Alcedo quadribrachys

We had a wonderful sighting of one at the dam in Regent Forest and further sightings on the Moa River.

Malachite Kingfisher

Alcedo cristata

We recorded this species in small numbers at several sites including three on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

African Pygmy-Kingfisher

Ispidina (Ceyx) picta

This beautiful little bird was seen at the Freetown Golf Course.

Dwarf Kingfisher

Ispidina lecontei

We had stunning views of one on Tiwai Island.

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher

Halcyon badia

We had superb views of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Gray-headed (Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher

Halcyon leucocephala

Yet another stunning kingfisher, we found one near Lalehun and another in the Bumbuna area.

Woodland Kingfisher

Halcyon senegalensis

Fairly common in open habitat throughout the tour.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher

Halcyon malimbica

We had superb views of this forest species near Lalehun and a further three on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Giant Kingfisher

Megaceryle maxima

The Goliath of the kingfisher world. Our first sighting was of one at the dam near Regent Forest and a further two seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Pied Kingfisher

Ceryle rudis

The world's commonest kingfisher was only seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Black Bee-eater

Merops gularis

We enjoyed fantastic views at several sites including superb scope views of one on Tiwai Island, another at Lalehun and finally one at Bumbuna.

Blue-headed Bee-eater

Merops muelleri

A pair of these striking birds was seen in the forest on the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

White-throated Bee-eater

Merops albicollis

Flocks of up to fifty were seen daily throughout the trip.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

Merops persicus

Up to twenty were seen at River No.2 and again on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Rollers Coraciidae

Blue-bellied Roller

Coracias cyanogaster

One of these smart birds was seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo and another on the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

Peak numbers of five were seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo with scattered sightings elsewhere.



Blue-throated Roller*Eurystomus gularis*

We had superb views of several during the drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

Hornbills Bucerotidae**White-crested Hornbill***Tockus albocristatus*

We heard one on Tiwai Island.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill*Tockus camurus*

This normally scarce species was sighted first on Tiwai Island with a further sighting during the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

African Pied Hornbill*Tockus fasciatus*

Common throughout forested areas in Sierra Leone with peak numbers of twelve seen during the drive from Tiwai to Zimmi.

African Gray Hornbill*Tockus nasutus*

We had good views of two in the Bumbuna area.

Piping Hornbill*Ceratogymna fistulator*

Fairly common and seen at most forested sites. Peak numbers of eight were seen during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Brown-cheeked Hornbill (UPG)*Ceratogymna cylindricus*

This Upper Guinea Endemic was only seen in Gola North during our walks to and from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Yellow-casqued Hornbill*Ceratogymna elata*

Commonly seen in Gola Forest with peak numbers of ten on Tiwai Island.

Black-casqued (Wattled-) Hornbill*Ceratogymna atrata*

Rare in Sierra Leone and only occurring in Gola North where it reaches its western limit. We were fortunate to see two during our walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Barbets Capitonidae**Naked-faced Barbet***Gymnobucco calvus*

One was seen near the village of Lalehun, Gola North and a further six at Kambui North.

Speckled Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*

A scruffy, bird in forests and forest edge. We found it at most forest sites with great views of several in Regent Forest.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus atroflavus*

We enjoyed excellent scope views of one at Regent Forest and also heard at most forest sites.

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus subsulphureus*

Commonly heard and one seen during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North and another at Kambui North.

Yellow (Golden) -rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus bilineatus*

A common forest-edge species. Our first sighting was at Freetown Golf Course with scattered sightings elsewhere.

Yellow-spotted Barbet*Buccanodon duchaillui*

A rather beautiful Barbet, heard at several forested sites and we obtained great views of two during the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North

Hairy-breasted Barbet*Tricholaema hirsuta*

This forest barbet was seen well on Tiwai Island.

Double-toothed Barbet*Lybius bidentatus*

A striking species, we observed a pair near Bumbuna.



Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachyphonus purpuratus*
This elusive and stunning forest barbet was seen on Tiwai Island.

Honeyguides Indicatoridae

Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus*
We had good views of one in Regent Forest and later another obliging bird which allowed scope views on Tiwai Island.

Willcock's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksi*
We had superb views of one at Kambui North.

Cassin's Honeyguide *Prodotiscus insignis*
One was seen near our campsite at Lalehun, Gola North and another at Kambui North.

Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae

Little Green Woodpecker (UPG) *Campethera maculosa*
We had wonderful views of a pair on Tiwai Island.

Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivos*
We saw one at Freetown Golf Course and a further two in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli*
We enjoyed great views of a pair in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Melancholy Woodpecker (UPG) *Dendropicos lugubris*
Our first sighting was of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve with a further sighting at Kambui North.
NOTE: This species is sometimes split from the Central African form - Gabon Woodpecker D. gabonensis. Clements accepts this split.

Fire-bellied Woodpecker (UPG) *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster*
One of these large forest woodpeckers was seen very well on Tiwai Island.

Gray Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae*
We had wonderful views of a family group of three at the Freetown Golf Course with a further sighting in the Bumbuna area.

Broadbills Eurylaimidae

Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis*
We had superb views of a displaying male in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North, one of the many highlights of the trip.

Swallows Hirundinidae

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia*
Small numbers were seen at Tiwai Island and several others during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Commonly seen in open habitat, we found large numbers during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema and again near Kambui North.

Red-chested Swallow *Hirundo lucida*
We had great views of one near Regent Forest.

White-throated Blue Swallow *Hirundo nigrita*
Small numbers were seen daily on the Moa River where we obtained superb views during our boat trip.



Pied-winged Swallow*Hirundo leucosoma*

We had good views of two near Regent Forest.

Lesser Striped-Swallow*Cecropis abyssinica*

A widespread African swallow that is fairly common in Gabon. We found small numbers almost daily throughout the country.

Rufous-chested Swallow*Cecropis semirufa*

Our only sighting was of a pair in the Bumbuna area.

Red-rumped Swallow*Hirundo daurica*

Several were seen in open areas on the Western Peninsula.

Preuss' Swallow*Hirundo preussi*

Small numbers were seen around Regent Forest and peak numbers of four hundred were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Square-tailed Sawwing*Psalidoprocne nitens*

Small numbers were seen in Gola North with peak numbers of twenty at Kambui North.

Fanti Sawwing*Psalidoprocne obscura*

Small numbers were seen several sites with peak numbers of thirty near Regent Forest.

Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae***African Pied Wagtail***Motacilla aguimp*

A common and familiar African bird, we saw small numbers daily on the Moa River.

Yellow Wagtail*Motacilla flava*

We found several in the rice fields near Kenema.

Yellow-throated Longclaw*Macronyx croceus*

One was seen near Regent Forest and another in the Bumbuna area.

Plain-backed Pipit*Anthus leucophrys*

One was seen near Regent Forest and a further two in the Bumbuna area.

Tree Pipit*Anthus trivialis*

One of these palearctic migrants was seen near Bumbuna.

Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae***Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike***Campephaga phoenicea*

We found a female at Kambui North.

Ghana Cuckooshrike (UPG)*Campephaga lobata*

Hugh was very fortunate to see one in Gola West.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae***Common Bulbul***Pycnonotus barbatus*

A ubiquitous species and recorded on many days of the trip.

NOTE: Another very confusing polytypic species complex. Several Asian and African forms have already been recognized as distinct species within the super-species.

Little Greenbul*Andropadus virens*

This, the commonest forest edge greenbul was heard at many forest sites and seen on several occasions at Regent Forest.

Ansorge's Greenbul*Andropadus ansorgei*

We heard this species on many occasions with our first sighting of a pair on the Western Peninsula.



Plain Greenbul*Andropadus curvirostris*

Our only sighting was of good views of one at Kambui North.

Slender-billed Greenbul*Andropadus gracilirostris*

The common greenbul of forest canopy, we found small numbers daily throughout the trip with up to six being seen at Regent Forest.

Yellow-whiskered Greenbul*Andropadus latirostris*

A greenbul of forest undergrowth and mid-storey, we had good sightings of one at Guma Valley and another on the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Honeyguide Greenbul*Baeopogon indicator*

We found two at Regent Forest and another at Guma Valley with many others heard throughout the trip.

Spotted Greenbul*Ixonotus guttatus*

Seen on two occasions with peak numbers of six seen in Gola East and a further two seen during the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Simple Greenbul*Chlorocichla simplex*

We found several at Regent Forest and Freetown Golf Course.

Yellow-throated Greenbul*Chlorocichla flavicollis*

The only sighting of the trip was of two near Bumbuna.

Swamp Greenbul*Thescelocichla leucopleura*

Small numbers were seen daily at our camp on Tiwai Island.

Baumann's Greenbul (UPG)*Phyllastrephus baumanni*

One was seen briefly by Izak at Bumbuna and another was also heard here.

White-throated Greenbul*Phyllastrephus albigularis*

A species which like dense tangles in the undergrowth and we had good sightings of several on Tiwai Island.

Icterine Greenbul*Phyllastrephus icterinus*

Small numbers were recorded in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Common (Red-tailed) Bristlebill*Bleda syndactyla*

Our first sighting was wonderful views of an adult with chick in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve with a further sighting in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Green-tailed Bristlebill (UPG)*Bleda eximius*

We enjoyed great views of two at an ant swarm in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

NOTE: The Green-tailed Bristlebill complex is often split into 3 species, Lesser Bristlebill, Bleda notatus which occurs in Central Africa, Green-tailed Bristlebill, B.eximius which occurs in the Upper Guinea area and the one we observed and Yellow-eyed Bristlebill, B.ugandae which occurs in Uganda and the DRC.

Gray-headed Bristlebill*Bleda canicapilla*

We had fantastic views of three in the Guma Valley, Western Peninsula Forest Reserve and further sightings near Lalehun, Gola North.

Yellow-spotted Nicator*Nicator chloris*

We enjoyed great views of one obliging bird at Regent Forest and several others at Lalehun, Gola North.

Red-tailed Greenbul*Criniger calurus*

We found two in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Western-bearded Greenbul*Criniger barbatus*

We enjoyed great views of one at Guma Valley and another in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Yellow-bearded Greenbul (UPG)*Criniger olivaceus*

A total of three were seen in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Thrushes & Allies *Turdidae*

Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush (UPG)*Neocossyphus finschii*

We enjoyed wonderful sightings of two in the camp on Tiwai Island.



White-tailed Ant-Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis*

We had brief views of three flying across the road in Gola East.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

This is a fairly common bird in Sierra Leone. We obtained good views of several at the Freetown Golf Course.

Brown-chested Alethe *Alethe poliocephala*

We enjoyed excellent views of two of these understory skulkers attending an ant swarm in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe diademata*

Our first sighting was stunning views of one in the Guma Valley. We had several more sightings in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North, some of which were attending ant swarms.

NOTE: The East African form is sometimes split from the nominate White-tailed Alethe of West Africa, becoming A. castanea. Clements does not as yet accept this split.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*

We found two in the grasslands near Regent Forest with further sightings en route from Zimmi to Kenema and in the Bumbuna area.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis*

We had great views of one in the Bumbuna area.

Winding Cisticola *Cisticola galactotes*

We heard this species en route from Kenema to Makeni.

Siffling Cisticola *Cisticola brachypterus*

We had good views of two near Regent Forest and further sightings near Kenema.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

Another noisy and familiar African warbler, we recorded this species in small numbers, our first sighting was of one en route from Freetown to Bo.

Red-winged Prinia *Prinia erythroptera*

One of these smart birds was seen near Bumbuna.

Sharpe's Apalis (UPG) *Apalis sharpii*

Commonly heard in most forested areas, we enjoyed great views of several on the Western Peninsula.

Oriole Warbler *Hypergerus atriceps*

We had a good sighting of two at the Freetown Golf Course.

Green-backed (Gray-backed) Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*

One was seen at Regent Forest and heard many others throughout.

NOTE: Most authorities now recognize the nominate green-backed forms of this widespread African warbler as distinct from the grey-backed forms C. brevicaudata. We encountered the grey-backed form in Cameroon. Clements still lumps these two groups.

Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris*

We had good but brief views of this handsome warbler near the village of Lalehun, Gola North.

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota*

A couple was seen near the village of Lalehun, Gola North.

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Moustached Grass-Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*

Our first sighting was of one in the grasslands near Regent Forest and another was seen near Bumbuna.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

One was seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Great Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One of these large warblers was seen in the rank grass near Regent Forest.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

We had good views of one near Bumbuna.

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens*

The commonest and most widespread forest crombec, though small and inconspicuous (except by call). We heard it on many occasions.

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*

We had great views of a pair at Regent Forest and heard it near Lalehun, Gola North.

Kemp's Longbill (UPG) *Macrosphenus flavicans*

A real skulker, we heard it on many occasions and had brief views several times. Our best sighting was en route to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Gray Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*

Another secretive species that was heard daily and a pair was seen in the Guma Valley.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*

Its "HEE-lia!" call was one of the common background sounds at the forest sites and we saw a couple at Regent Forest and two during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

We had good views of one in the Bumbuna area.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Seen at several forested sites including Guma Valley and Lalehun, Gola North. Several were in full breeding plumage.

Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea*

We found two of these beautiful birds in the forest near Lalehun, Gola North.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

We had wonderful sightings of up to eight at Regent Forest with scattered sightings elsewhere.

Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

African Forest-Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*

We had great sightings of several at Regent Forest.

Ussher's Flycatcher (UPG) *Muscicapa ussheri*

We found five in Guma Valley with further sightings in the forest near Lalehun, Gola North.

Olivaceous Flycatcher *Muscicapa olivascens*

We had wonderful views of an adult and young in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Dusky-blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa comitata*

One was seen by Hugh, during the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Cassin's (Gray) Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*

A sprightly bird restricted to the vicinity of water, often hawking insects directly above it. We had great sightings of one on the Thai River en route to Bo and another during the drive from Tiwai to Zimmi.

Gray Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus*

We had good views of two near the village of Lalehun, Gola North.

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Our first sighting was of one at Kambui North with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Forest Robin *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*

This is a shy species and we enjoyed stunning views of one in Gola East.

NOTE: This species has been split into as many as four species. The ones we observed would become Western Forest Robin S. erythrothorax. Clements does not accept these splits.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

We had brief views of one in the Bumbuna area.



Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat*Cossypha niveicapilla*

We had wonderful views of three on the Freetown Golf Course.

Forest Scrub-Robin*Cercotrichas leucosticta*

We had wonderful views of two of these very shy and seldom seen birds at Regent Forest.

Whinchat*Saxicola rubetra*

We had great views of two near Regent Forest with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Wattle-eyes *Platysteiridae***African Shrike-flycatcher***Megabyas flammulatus*

We had wonderful views of one in Guma Valley and another at Regent Forest.

Black-and-white (Vanga) Shrike-flycatcher *Bias musicus*

This characterful, hammer-headed flycatcher was observed at the Freetown Golf Course and again in the Bumbuna area.

Brown-throated (Common) Wattle-eye*Platysteira cyanea*

A pair was seen at the Freetown Golf Course.

Chestnut Wattle-eye*Platysteira castanea*

Small numbers were seen daily during our stay in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Red-cheeked Wattle-eye (UPG)*Platysteira blissetti*

A pair was seen briefly in Gola East and a further one near Bumbuna.

Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye*Platysteira concreta*

Another stunning and restless bird, we heard one in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Senegal Batis*Batis senegalensis*

We had good views of one male in the Bumbuna area.

Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae***Chestnut-capped Flycatcher***Erythrocerus mccallii*

We had good views of a flock of four in Guma Valley and another two in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Blue-headed Crested-Flycatcher (Monarch) *Trochocercus nitens*

One of these smart birds was seen in Guma Valley.

Black-headed Paradise-Flycatcher*Terpsiphone rufiventer*

Our first sighting was two in Regent Forest with further sightings at Lalehun, Gola North.

African Paradise-Flycatcher*Terpsiphone viridis*

We enjoyed good views of one in Guma Valley.

Picathartes *Picathartidae***White-necked Picathartes (UPG)***Picathartes gymnocephalus*

We had a good encounter with this shy species on the Western Peninsula where we observed three birds near their nest site. Later in Kambui South we had incredible views of six at their nesting colony and watched them bathing and jumping around on the vines for an hour.

Babblers *Timaliidae***Blackcap Illadopsis***Illadopsis cleaveri*

We heard this species on several occasions and finally saw one near the village of Lalehun, Gola North. We enjoyed outstanding views of this forest understory skulker.



Rufous-winged Illadopsis (UPG)*Illadopsis rufescens*

Again we were treated to outstanding views of another understory skulker in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Puvel's Illadopsis*Illadopsis puveli*

We had brief views of two in Gola East.

Brown Illadopsis*Illadopsis fulvescens*

Two birds were seen in the forest understorey at Regent Forest.

Blackcap Babbler*Turdoides reinwardtii*

This is a rather skulking species. We had good views of one near Bumbuna.

Capuchin Babbler*Phyllanthus atripennis*

Two skulking birds were heard calling from very dense roadside scrub en route from Gola East to Kenema.

Penduline Tits *Remizidae***Tit-hylia***Pholidornis rushiae*

We had good scope views of two in Gola East and later a further two near Lalehun, Gola North.

Sunbirds & Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae***Scarlet-tufted (Fraser's) Sunbird***Deleornis (Anthreptes) fraseri*

A confusing species that often looks more like a greenbul than a sunbird. We had many sightings in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

NOTE: The species is sometimes lumped with the East African Gray-headed Sunbird D. axillarus.

Mouse-brown Sunbird*Anthreptes gabonicus*

We had good views of up to eight at River No.2 with further sightings on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Little Green Sunbird*Anthreptes seimundi*

Small numbers were seen daily at Regent Forest and Guma Valley.

Green Sunbird*Anthreptes rectirostris*

We had good scope views of two during our walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split into two forms, the Eastern Gray-chinned Sunbird A. tephrolaemus and the nominate Western Yellow-chinned Sunbird.

Collared Sunbird*Hedydipna (Anthreptes) collaris*

This is a very widespread species on the continent. Commonly encountered in small numbers throughout.

Green-headed Sunbird*Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) verticalis*

We had superb sightings of a male near Bumbuna.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird*Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) cyanolaema*

This forest sunbird was seen at most forest sites with good views of two at Lalehun, Gola North.

Western Olive Sunbird*Cyanomitra (Nectarinia) obscura*

Seen daily in small numbers.

NOTE: The Olive-Sunbird species complex has been split into two full species by Clements and other authorities, namely the nominate Eastern Olive-Sunbird C. olivacea and the form which we recorded in Cameroon, Western Olive-Sunbird. There has been a review of this split and several authorities are in doubt of the validity, which is based upon the presence, or lack thereof, of pectoral tufts in the females of the various subspecies within the complex.

Buff-throated Sunbird*Chalcomitra adelberti*

We had great scope views of one male on Tiwai Island and a further two were seen near Lalehun, Gola North.

Olive-bellied Sunbird*Cinnyris (Nectarinia) chloropygius*

This is a typical forest edge species, seen at Regent Forest and the Bumbuna area.

Tiny Sunbird*Cinnyris minullus*

One was seen near the village of Lalehun, Gola North.



- Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigaster*
One was seen near Regent Forest and a further six were seen in the Bumbuna area.
- Johanna's Sunbird** *Cinnyris (Nectarinia) johannae*
Small numbers were seen daily at Regent Forest.
- Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus*
Commonly seen around Regent Forest and the Bumbuna area.
- Copper Sunbird** *Cinnyris (Nectarinia) cuprea*
Small numbers were seen near Regent Forest and the Bumbuna area.

White-eyes *Zosteropidae*

- African Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis*
We had good views of a pair in the Bumbuna area.
NOTE: This species of Central African forests is sometimes split as Forest White-eye Z. stenocricotus. Clements has recently recognized this split.

Old World Orioles *Oriolidae*

- Western Black-headed Oriole** *Oriolus brachyrhynchus*
Our first sightings were of three in Guma Valley with further sightings in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.
- Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis*
We found two during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Shrikes *Laniidae*

- Common Fiscal** *Lanius collaris*
A widespread species but not encountered often on our tour, we encountered small numbers daily near Regent Forest and the Bumbuna area.

Bushshrikes & Allies *Malaconotidae*

- Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis*
We had wonderful views of a pair at the Freetown Golf Course with a further sighting in the Bumbuna area.
- Large-billed Puffback** *Dryoscopus sabinii*
We enjoyed good but brief views of one in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.
- Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala*
The most widely distributed tchagra was seen well at Bumbuna.
- Brown-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegala*
One was seen at Regent Forest and another in the Bumbuna area.
- Turati's Boubou (UPG)** *Laniarius turatii*
We had incredible views of one at the Freetown Golf Course and heard several others at Bumbuna.
- Common Gonolek** *Laniarius barbarus*
We had superb views of one in the Sierra Leone River estuary.
- Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike** *Telophorus sulfureopectus*
This striking species was seen well in the Bumbuna area.
- Many-colored Bushshrike** *Telophorus multicolor*
We had incredible views of two in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North. One was of the stunning red-bellied form and another the beautiful black-breasted form.



Fiery-breasted Bushshrike*Malaconotus cruentus*

We had superb views of an adult during the walk in to the village of Lalehun, Gola North.

Gray-headed Bushshrike*Malaconotus blanchoti*

We heard this species calling in the woodland at Bumbuna.

Helmetshrikes & Allies Prionopidae**Chestnut-bellied Helmetshrike (UPG)***Prionops caniceps*

A flock of six was seen on Tiwai Island and a further flock of eight during the walk out from Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Drongos Dicruridae**Shining Drongo***Dicrurus atripennis*

This forest interior drongo was seen in the Guma Valley and again at Lalehun, Gola North.

Fork-tailed Drongo*Dicrurus adsimilis*

A familiar, ubiquitous bird. Small numbers were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Velvet-mantled Drongo*Dicrurus coracinus*

This recently split forest equivalent of the Fork-tailed Drongo was found on Tiwai Island and Gola East.

NOTE: Older versions of Clements lump this species within Fork-tailed Drongo D. adsimilis but the split has been recognized in recent Clements updates.

Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae**Pied Crow***Corvus albus*

A common and familiar crow, recorded in good numbers in open areas daily.

Starlings Sturnidae**Emerald Starling (UPG)***Lamprotornis iris*

We enjoyed stunning scope views of three at Bumbuna.

Copper-tailed Glossy-Starling (UPG)*Lamprotornis cupreocauda*

Seen in small numbers at several forested sites. Peak numbers of a dozen were seen during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Violet-backed (Plum-coloured) Starling*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

A flock of thirty of these stunning birds was seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo and a further five were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Chestnut-winged Starling*Onychognathus hartlaubi*

A pair was seen on Tiwai Island.

Old World Sparrows Passeridae**(Northern) Gray-headed Sparrow***Passer griseus*

Fairly common in Freetown and other major towns.

NOTE: The Gray-headed Sparrow complex P. griseus has been split into five full species with the Cameroonian form being retaining in the nominate grouping with the same nomenclature.

Weavers & Allies Ploceidae

Black-necked Weaver*Ploceus nigricollis*

This snappy-looking weaver of forest edge was seen in small flocks at the Freetown Golf Course and again in the Bumbuna area.

Village Weaver*Ploceus cucullatus*

This is one of Sierra Leone's most conspicuous birds, with large colonies found in many towns.

NOTE: This widespread African complex is also a candidate for multi-species splitting and the nominate subspecies which we recorded in Sierra Leone will remain within the nominate Village Weaver P. cucullatus group. These splits are not as yet recognized by Clements.

Vieillot's (Black) Weaver*Ploceus nigerrimus*

Flocks of this beautiful species were noted at several localities with great sightings near Gola East.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split as Chestnut and Black Weaver P. castaneofuscus. This split is not as yet recognized by Clements.

Yellow-mantled Weaver*Ploceus tricolor*

We found several on Tiwai Island and in Gola East.

Maxwell's Black Weaver*Ploceus albinucha*

We found a wonderful breeding colony on Tiwai Island, a rare forest weaver.

Compact Weaver*Pachyphantes superciliosus*

We enjoyed great views of one near Regent Forest.

Gola Malimbe (UPG)*Malimbus ballmanni*

A pair was seen briefly on two occasions in the primary forest at Lalehun, Gola North. This is one of the rarest birds in the Upper Guinea forests and was only rediscovered in 2007 after nearly forty years.

Red-vented Malimbe*Malimbus scutatus*

Our first sighting was of three on Tiwai Island with further sightings during the walk to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Gray's (Blue-billed) Malimbe*Malimbus nitens*

A secretive species that forages in thick tangles, we found a total of one at its nest on River No.2 and another at Regent Forest with several more at Lalehun, Gola North.

Crested Malimbe*Malimbus malimbicus*

This is a fairly common species although we only had a good sighting of two during the walk to Lalehun Campsite, Gola North.

Red-headed Malimbe*Malimbus rubricollis*

Small numbers were seen on Tiwai Island and in Gola East.

Red-headed Quelea*Quelea erythropis*

Small numbers were seen in the Regent area and a further five at Bumbuna.

Black-winged Bishop*Euplectes hordeaceus*

Up to four splendid males were seen daily in the Regent area with several more in the Bumbuna area.

Yellow-shouldered Widowbird*Euplectes macrocercus*

We had good views of one in the Regent area with several further sightings including many in the Bumbuna area.

Red-collared Widowbird*Euplectes ardens*

A total of eight were seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita*Nigrita bicolor*

Small numbers were seen at scattered forest sites with good sightings during the walk to Lalehun, Gola North.

Gray-headed Nigrita*Nigrita canicapilla*

A couple was seen at Regent Forest and a further two near the village of Lalehun, Gola North.

Crimson Seedcracker (UPG)*Pyrenestes sanguineus*

We enjoyed spectacular views of five birds including stunning adults and juveniles at the Freetown Golf Course with scattered sightings elsewhere.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*

A remarkably beautiful bird. We had brief views of one during the walk to Lalehun village and a further one at Kambui South.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*

Two pairs were seen in the Regent area.

African Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*

We had good views of one during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

A small group of three was seen in the Bumbuna area.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Africa's most widespread waxbill was observed in small numbers at Bumbuna.

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus*

We found this to be a ubiquitous species in scrub in most areas.

Black-and-white Mannikin *Spermestes bicolor*

Small numbers were seen near the Freetown Golf Course.

*NOTE: This complex may be split two-ways, the southern and eastern Brown-backed Mannikin *L. nigriceps* and the northern and western nominate group, which would remain as Black-and-white Mannikin. The latter is the form we recorded in Cameroon. Clements does not as yet recognize this split.*

Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringilloides*

We had good views of five near Kambui North.

Indigobirds *Viduidae*

Jambandu Indigobird *Vidua rariicola*

We had stunning views of one male in full breeding plumage during the drive from Kenema to Makeni. It was also heard mimicking its host, Zebra Waxbill.

Cameroon Indigobird *Vidua camerunensis*

We had superb views of one male in full breeding plumage during the drive from Kenema to Makeni. It was also heard mimicking its host, African Firefinch.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

This familiar bird, which parasitises small seedeaters, was seen at Bumbuna.

Buntings *Emberizidae*

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*

Up to twenty were seen in the Bumbuna area.



Annotated List of Mammal Species recorded in Sierra Leone

Taxonomy and nomenclature follows that of 'The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals' by Jonathan Kingdon, Academic Press, 1997.

Apes *Hominidae*

Chimpanzee

Pan troglodytes

We had brief views of two crossing the trail during our walk on Tiwai Island.

Colobid Monkeys *Colobinae*

Western Pied Colobus

Colobus polykomos

This smart primate was seen on several occasions on Tiwai Island.

Western Red Colobus

Colobus badius

Confiding family troops of up to twelve were seen on a number of occasions on Tiwai Island.

Olive Colobus

Colobus verus

A total of five were seen along the Moa River during our boat trip and a further two in Gola West.

Cheek-Pouch Monkeys *Cercopithecinae*

Campbell's Monkey

Cercopithecus campbelli

A group of five was seen during the walk to Lalehun, Gola North.

Diana Monkey

Cercopithecus Diana

After only hearing them on Tiwai Island we were treated to superb views of three in Gola West.

Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey

Cercopithecus petaurista

We had great views of eight in Gola West.

Callithrix Monkey

Cercopithecus sabaesus

We had good views of two at the Thai River en route from Freetown to Bo.

Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae*

Straw-colored Fruit Bat

Eidolon helvum

Up to twenty were seen flying around our camp at Zimmi.

Squirrels *Sciuridae*

Striped Ground Squirrel

Xerus erythropus

We saw five running along the road during the drive from Tiwai to Zimmi and a further three during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

Red-legged Sun Squirrel

Heliosciurus rufobrachium

One was seen during our walk on Tiwai Island.

Forest Giant Squirrel

Protoxerus stangeri

We had superb views of a pair during the walk from Lalehun to Lalehun campsite, Gola North.

Green Bush Squirrel

Paraxerus poensis

We found one in Regent Forest.

Fire-footed Rope Squirrel

Funisciurus pyrropus



We had great views of this stunning species in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Mongoose *Herpestidae*

Slender Mongoose

Herpestes sanguinea

We had great views of two during our walk to Lalehun, Gola North.

Common Cusimanse

Crossarchus obscurus

A group of six was seen briefly on Tiwai Island.

Hyraxes *Procaviidae*

Black-necked Rock Hyrax

Procavia johstoni

We found six in the quarry near Bumbuna.

Hippopotamuses *Hippopotamidae*

Pygmy Hippopotamus

Hexaprotodon liberiensis

Although we were not fortunate enough to see this species we did find fairly fresh footprints on Tiwai Island.

Rockjumper Birding Tours
Worldwide Birding Adventures
PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa
Tel: +27 33 394 0225
Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225
Email: info@rockjumper.co.za
Alternative Email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumper.co.za

