



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Sierra Leone

9th – 22nd December 2008



Congo Serpent Eagle
Keith Valentine

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Keith Valentine

Trip summary:

This, only our second ever comprehensive two-week birding tour to Sierra Leone, proved to be a very successful trip. Sierra Leone, as with any country in West Africa, can often be brutal on logistics however we enjoyed a fabulous, hassle free trip with smooth logistics and, most importantly, superb birding in some of West Africa's finest lowland forests. We found a very impressive 319 species and numerous Upper Guinea Specialties including Ahanta Francolin, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Little Green, Gabon and Fire-bellied Woodpecker, 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 kicked off with a day trip to the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve, a magnificent forested area in the amazingly scenic hills that surround Freetown. We spent the morning lapping up views of Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Yellow-billed Turaco, magnificent Yellow-casqued Wattled Hornbill, Gabon Woodpecker, delightful Chestnut Wattle-eye, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, a very obliging White-tailed Alethe, stunning Johanna's Sunbird and a group of hawking Ussher's Flycatcher. Following a great mornings birding we set off on a canoe trip down the romantically named River No.2 that produced a wonderful pair of White-browed Forest Flycatcher, a large flock of Terns comprising three species, a surprise Lesser Black-backed Gull, Mangrove Sunbird and Blue-billed Malimbe. On arrival at the beach we were treated to a well-deserved, splendid fresh fish and chips lunch.



The afternoon was set aside to target the mega and highly sought after White-necked Picathartes. We carefully made our way up to a rocky outcrop within the forest where a small Picathartes colony is found. We began our wait with much excitement and it was not long before the first Picathartes was spotted. The birds however were only visible from certain angles and it took a little shuffling of positions before everyone was soaking up the moment! A fantastic sighting that will surely stay with us for a long, long time and a superb way to end the first day of the tour!

The following morning we began birding at the Freetown Golf Course.

This, the premier site for the highly localized Turati's Boubou and Crimson Seedcracker, did not disappoint as we enjoyed crippling views of both species and also picked up Western Banded Snake Eagle, Grey Parrot, Greater Honeyguide, African Grey Woodpecker, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat and Oriole Warbler. We then began our drive to Bo, stopping first at Regent Forest on the Western



Peninsula where we found Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Preuss's and West African Swallow, scarce Forest Scrub-Robin, Sharpe's Apalis, the rare and seldom seen Cappuchin Babbler, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Red-headed Quelea, Black-winged Red Bishop and Yellow-mantled Widowbird in spectacular breeding plumage. Before reaching Bo in the evening we had close looks at the smart Blue-bellied Roller and Long-crested Eagle.

This morning we left Bo very early as we struck out for Tiwai Island on the Moa River. We found Greyish Eagle-Owl and Long-tailed Nightjar during the early morning hours on our drive. A full day and the following morning were then spent exploring the network of forest trails, taking boats up the Moa River and exploring the surrounds. Tiwai Island produced some great sightings including perched Congo Serpent Eagle for an extended period at close range, shy Olive Ibis, the sought-after Egyptian Plover, Rock Pratincole, Shining-blue Kingfisher, showy White-crested Hornbill, Hairy-breasted Barbet, the seldom seen Spotted Honeyguide in the scope, Little Green and Fire-bellied Woodpecker, stunning White-bibbed Swallow, Finsch's Rufous Thrush, Maxwell's Weaver, Western Bluebill and a host of different Malimbe species. Mammals included Straw-colored Fruit Bat, the rare Potto, King and Western Red Colobus and Campbell's Monkey.

It was now time to head further east, towards the Liberian border, where the magnificent Gola forest was waiting for us. Our first experience was birding through Gola East and West before departing for Kenema. Gola East and West were very quiet and no match for what we were going to experience at the brilliant Gola North. Birds seen at Gola East and West included Ahanta Francolin, Blue-throated Roller, Black Bee-eater, brilliant displaying Rufous-sided Broadbill, Swamp Palm Bulbul and Yellow-mantled Weaver. Our base town, Kenema is surrounded by rice paddies which are incredibly productive and an afternoon was spent enjoying fabulous views of Greater Painted-snipe, Great Snipe and the rare Forbes's Plover.

Today was the day we had all been really waiting for, our adventure into Gola North. We spent a fabulous 2 nights inside this remote forest where the birding was excellent. This did not however come without effort and it took a combination of a two hour bus drive on interesting (read bad!) roads, a 4X4 drive for one hour and then a 12 km hike to get to our camp. A very early start on the latter however meant that we could enjoy fantastic forest birding as we made the walk with the highlights including; perched Red-chested Goshawk, gorgeous Blue-headed Wood Dove, African Emerald Cuckoo, Willcocks's Honeyguide, Brown-cheeked Woodpecker, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Kemp's Longbill, tiny Tit-Hylia, Splendid Starling, Western Forest Robin and Ussher's Flycatcher. Our full day inside the primary forest produced one of the most memorable birding moments for all of us as we tracked down three splendid Gola Malimbe that proceeded to call to one another and nest build right in front of us at point blank view! We did not see any other bird, let alone a mega, during our time in the



forest at such close range, what a sighting! The day here also produce Olive-Long-tailed Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Yellow-spotted Barbet, dazzling Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye, Sabine's Puffback, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, localized Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, sneaky Blackcap Illadopsis and the rare Olivaceous Flycatcher. On our walk out we still managed to locate a number of new, quality birds that included A super pair of Hartlaub's Duck, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Levillant's Cuckoo, Bates's Swift, Brown-cheeked and Black-casqued Wattled Hornbill, Cassin's Honeybird, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Blue Cuckooshrike and Yellow-browed Camaroptera, .

The forests of Kambui south and north and the Nimiri Hills were comparatively less birdy but we still added some goodies like Naked-faced and Yellow-billed Barbet, Buff-spotted Woodpecker, White-necked Picathartes at Kambui south, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Grey Longbill, Puvel's Illadopsis, Copper-tailed Starling and the spectacular Buff-throated, Copper and Tiny Sunbirds.

Our final birding spot on the route was the savanna habitat around Bumbuna which did not disappoint in the slightest. The open savanna habitat came as a welcome change from the closed forest environment we had become so accustomed to over the previous 11 days. The specials of the area gave themselves up in great style as we quickly found the localized Emerald Starling in good numbers, Togo Paradise Whydah displaying, singing Jambandu and Cameroon Indigobird and Thick-billed Cuckoo. Other good birds included Stone Partridge, Grasshopper Buzzard, Beadouin's Snake Eagle, Guinea Turaco, Standard-winged Nightjar, Black Scimitarbill, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, African Golden Oriole, Red-winged Warbler, showy Moustached Grass Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Senegal Eremomela, Western Violet-backed, Green-headed and Splendid Sunbird, Compact Weaver, excellent Dybowski's Twin-spot, Orange-breasted Waxbill,

What an amazing adventure! The birding was excellent, the country something to behold, we really did have a fantastic two weeks in Sierra Leone. This is certainly not the average 'run of the mill' tour, it nothing short of an intensive focus on some of West Africa's best forests and rarest birds, but for all of us who were willing to put up with the hardships of travelling in remote West Africa the efforts were well worth it! If you enjoy a little discovery and exploration in your birding then Sierra Leone is certainly the trip for you!

Photos all by Keith Valentine and, in order of appearance, are: Congo Serpent Eagle, Western Reef Heron and White-bibbed Swallow.

Annotated List of Bird Species recorded in Sierra Leone

(UPG) = Upper Guinea specialty.

Pheasants & Partridges *Phasianidae*

Stone Partridge

Ptilopachus petrosus

Two birds responded well to playback and flew across the road in front of us in the Bumbuna area.

Forest Francolin

Francolinus lathamii

We heard this species calling on several occasions in Gola North.

Ahanta Francolin (UPG)

Francolinus ahantensis

This species can be one of the toughest endemics to catch up with and we were very fortunate to first hear and then see this species at the forest edge near our campsite in Gola East.



Double-spurred Francolin*Francolinus bicalcaratus*

Small numbers of this widespread savanna species were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Swans, Geese & Ducks Anatidae**White-faced Whistling-Duck***Dendrocygna viduata*

This very widespread species was sighted near Tiwai and in the Bumbuna area.

Spur-winged Goose*Plectropterus gambensis*

A pair of birds was seen flying over Bumbuna.

Hartlaub's Duck*Pteronetta hartlaubii*

One of West Africa's finest waterfowl species and Africa's only forest duck, we enjoyed walk away views of two birds near Kenema and found a few more giving morning flybys in the Bumbuna area.

Storks Ciconidae**Woolly-necked Stork***Ciconia episcopus*

We saw one pair during the boat trip on the Moa River and singles at a few points near the Gola Forests.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**Olive Ibis***Bostrychia olivacea*

On one of our morning walks on Tiwai Island we flushed a bird from its feeding position where it flew up and onto an exposed perch for a few seconds before flying off again. This is always a difficult bird to catch up with on any tour and is particularly rare in West Africa.

Hadada Ibis*Bostrychia hagedash*

A total of three were seen during the boat trip on the Moa River.

Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae**Striated Heron***Butorides striatus*

Birds were sighted along the Moa River, the Kenema rice paddies and in the Bumbuna area.

NOTE: This species group has potentially 3 or more 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.)

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

A single bird was sighted at rice paddies outside Kenema.

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.

Gray Heron*Ardea cinerea*

A well-known, widespread heron, we saw one during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema and a further two at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

One was seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Great (White) Egret*Ardea alba*

Singles were noted at various water points throughout the country.

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.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Small numbers were seen at the Kenema rice paddies.

NOTE: The IOC splits Little, Western Reef *E. gularis* and Madagascar's Dimorphic Egret *E. dimorpha*. Some authorities such as Clements lump all three into a single species.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*

Good numbers were seen at the Freetown golf course and at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

NOTE: See above.

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Four of these unique birds were sighted in the Bumbuna area.

Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Singles were seen along the beach near the Freetown Golf Course and at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

We had good views of one perched at the Freetown Golf Course and another in the Bumbuna area.

Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures Accipitridae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Two were seen during the boat trip on River No.2 and a further one on the Moa River.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

A single was seen cruising by at eye level in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

A single bird was sighted on our drive to Bo.

Black 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*. The IOC does not accept this split.

African Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

This species distinctive call was heard along the Moa River.

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*

One of the commonest raptors in Sierra Leone with virtually daily sightings.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

Commonly seen around Urban areas.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*

A single bird was sighted in forest at the edge of Gola North.

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*

We enjoyed a fabulous view of a juvenile bird at the Freetown Golf Course.

Beudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*

This uncommon species was very well seen in open country just south of Makeni en route to Freetown.

Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*

A superb forest raptor that is very infrequently encountered, we had a mind blowing sighting of a single bird at the roadside near Tiwai with a snake in its talons.

African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene) *Polyboroides typus*



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

Red-chested Goshawk *Accipiter toussenelii*

We saw a juvenile perched next to the side of the road while driving to Lalehun, Gola North.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Seen once at the Freetown Golf Course and again near Bumbuna.

Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*

A single bird was seen well in flight at Western Peninsula.

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Fairly common with small numbers seen on many days of the tour.

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

On our drive back to Freetown from Bumbuna we came across a huge grass fire which had at least three birds in attendance.

Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis*

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

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Our first sighting was of one during the drive from Freetown to Bo with further sightings of two during the drive from Bumbuna to Freetown.

Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*

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

Flufftails Sarothruridae

White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra*

This secretive, forest rallid's hooting call was heard at Tiwai.

Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra*

Two birds were sighted at a wetland near Kenema.

Finfoots Heliornithidae

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*

A single bird was seen very briefly along the Moa River.

Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae

White-headed Lapwing *Vanellus albiceps*

A pair of birds was seen along the Moa River.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Birds were sighted at River No.2 and the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Good numbers were seen in the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Good numbers were sighted at the rice fields near Kenema our first sighting was of six birds on the Moa River.

Forbes' Plover *Charadrius forbesi*

We were elated to find at least five birds in the rice fields near Kenema.



Painted Snipes *Rostratulidae***Greater Painted-snipe***Rostratula benghalensis*

Two of these classy birds were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Jacanas *Jacanidae***African Jacana***Actophilornis africanus*

A single bird was sighted in the Bumbuna area and at a roadside wetland on our drive to Kono.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae***Great Snipe***Gallinago media*

Two birds were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

At least four birds were found on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Redshank*Tringa tetanus*

We had two birds on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

We found one on River No.2 and a further 1 along the Moa River.

Wood Sandpiper*Tringa glareola*

Good numbers were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

Common Sandpiper*Actitis hypoleucos*

Many were seen on the Moa River with further views on the Sierra Leone River estuary.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

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

Coursers & Pratincoles *Glareolidae***Egyptian Plover***Pluvianus aegyptius*

This is surely one of the world's finest waders and always high on everyone's wish list. We found a brilliant pair that allowed us to get super close views along the Moa River.

Rock Pratincole*Glareola nuchalis*

These gorgeous birds were seen on the Moa River in good numbers. The West African race has very distinctive chestnut markings on the head which is lacking in the race found further south.

Gulls & Terns *Laridae***Lesser Black-backed Gull***Larus fuscus*

A young bird was seen in a large tern roost at River No.2.

Lesser Crested Tern*Sterna bengalensis*

We found at least ten birds in a mixed tern roost at River No.2.

Sandwich Tern*Sterna sandvicensis*

Ten were seen at River No.2 in a large tern roost.

Royal Tern*Sterna maxima*

Huge numbers were seen at River No.2.

Doves & Pigeons *Collumbidae***Common Pigeon***Columba livia*

Small numbers seen in Freetown, Kono and Makeni.

Western Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba iriditorques*

We found this species perched at Gola North. They were commonly heard at virtually all forest sites.

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 six in the woodlands near Bumbuna.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Small numbers were seen in Freetown only.

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, singles sighted at a few forest localities.

Blue-headed Wood Dove *Turtur brehmeri*

A deep forest species restricted to West Africa. One was seen very well in Gola North. Otherwise heard calling often.

African Green Pigeon *Treron calva*

Common, small numbers noted throughout.

Parrots, Macaws & Allies *Psittacidae*

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*

So much better to see them in the wild than as the usual cage bird! Pairs were seen in Freetown, Tiwai Island and Gola North.

Turacos *Musophagidae*

Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata*

Arguably one of Africa's most spectacular birds, this huge frugivore was seen in small numbers throughout.

Guinea 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 Turaco *Tauraco macrorhynchus*

A commonly heard turaco of the interior forests, we saw them at Western Peninsula and Gola North.

Western Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator*

At least six were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

Black-throated Coucal *Centropus leucogaster*

We heard them calling on Tiwai Island.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

Sighted at Tiwai Island, Gola West and around Bumbuna.

Green Malkoha *Ceuthmochares aereus*

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

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 and the IOC do not as yet accept this split.



Levaillant's Cuckoo*Clamator levaillantii*

We enjoyed a lovely viewing of this impressive species in Gola North.

Thick-billed Cuckoo*Pachyococyx audeberti*

This is one of Africa's toughest species to catch up with and we had good views of a single calling bird in the woodlands around Bumbuna.

Dideric Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx caprius*

A single bird was scoped at Bumbuna.

Klaas' Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx klaas*

This brood parasite, favoring the cup nests of woodland birds, was seen at the Freetown Golf Course and Kambui South.

African Emerald Cuckoo*Chrysococcyx cupreus*

Generally shy and less common than its congeners, we heard it at many forest sites and found a stunning male in Gola North.

Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo*Cercococcyx mechowi*

This species was heard calling at extremely close range in the Nimini Hills.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo*Cercococcyx olivinus*

We found a single highly responsive bird in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Black Cuckoo*Cuculus clamosus*

A single bird was heard calling at Kambui South.

Barn Owls Tytonidae**Barn Owl***Tyto alba*

Singles were seen in Freetown and in Kenema.

Typical Owls Strigidae**Grayish Eagle-Owl***Bubo cinerascens*

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

African Wood Owl*Strix woodfordii*

A single bird was seen from the vehicle by some of the group on our drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

Pearl-spotted Owlet*Glaucidium perlatum*

Three of these tiny birds were seen at Bumbuna.

Nightjars & Allies Caprimulgidae**Long-tailed Nightjar***Caprimulgus climacurus*

We had good sightings of six during the early morning drive from Bo to Tiwai and a further five during the drive from Kenema to Lalehun.

Standard-winged Nightjar*Macrodipteryx longipennis*

Females were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Swifts Apodidae**Sabine's Spinetail***Rhaphidura sabini*

We had great views of several on the Western Peninsula, Lalehun, Gola North and Kambui North.

African Palm-Swift*Cypsiurus parvus*

Plentiful throughout the country.

Alpine Swift*Tachymarptis melba*

A single bird was seen near Tiwai by some of the group.

Mottled Swift *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*

A pair was sighted flying rather low with a mixed flock of swifts on the Moa River.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Common throughout the country in large numbers.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

At least five birds were sighted by some of the group in Kambui North.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

The common urban swift throughout the country.

Bates' Swift *Apus batesi*

Half a dozen were seen flying above the forest of Gola North.

Trogon Trogonidae

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina*

We found a single bird at Lalehun, Gola North.

Rollers Coraciidae

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*

A single bird was sighted in the Bumbuna area.

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster*

Three of these smart birds were seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo and another four on the drive from Makeni to Freetown.

Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis*

We had superb views of several during our time in the Gola forests.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Good numbers seen at forest edge throughout.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia*

We had superb views of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve on our final day.

Gray-headed (Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*

Yet another stunning kingfisher singles seen in the Bumbuna area while our first sighting was at the Western Peninsula Forest.

Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*

Heard calling early one morning above our heads in the Bumbuna woodlands

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*

We had superb views of this forest species at River No.2 and Kambui North.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*

Fairly common in open habitat throughout the tour.

African Pygmy-Kingfisher *Ispidina (Ceyx) picta*

This beautiful little bird was seen at the Freetown Golf Course and on our drive to Kono.

Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*

We recorded this species in small numbers at several sites including the Moa River, Bumbuna and in Freetown.

Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribrachys*



We had a wonderful sighting of two birds on the Moa River.

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

The Goliath of the kingfisher world. Our only sighting was two at Bumbuna.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

The world's commonest kingfisher was only seen on the Sierra Leone River estuary and on our drive to Kono.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis*

We enjoyed fantastic views at several sites including superb scope views of three at Kambui South.

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

A pair of these striking birds was seen on our drive to Kono and again on the drive to Makeni.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*

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

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

Good numbers seen in the Freetown area.

Woodhoopoes *Phoeniculidae*

Black Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

A generally uncommon species of broad-leaved woodland. We were fortunate to find a single bird perched up to allow excellent scope views while in the Bumbuna area.

Hornbills *Bucerotidae*

African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus*

Common throughout forested areas in Sierra Leone.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus*

This is a rather scarce species and was sighted in Gola North.

White-crested Hornbill *Tockus albocristatus*

We had fabulous views of this outrageous looking species on Tiwai Island and at Kambui South.

Piping Hornbill *Ceratogymna fistulator*

Fairly common and seen at most forested sites throughout.

Brown-cheeked Hornbill (UPG) *Ceratogymna cylindricus*

This Upper Guinea Endemic was only seen in Gola North where a total of five birds were found.

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 three birds.

Yellow-casqued Wattled Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*

This spectacular hornbill was commonly seen in all forests throughout.

Barbets *Capitonidae*

Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*

This communally nesting barbet was seen at Kambui North, the Nimini Hills and Bumbuna.

Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus*

A scruffy, bird in forests and forest edge. We found it at most forest sites.

Red-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus atroflavus*



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

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus subsulphureus*

Commonly heard and one seen very well at our campsite on Tiwai Island.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*

A common forest-edge species with scattered sightings throughout.

Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui*

A rather beautiful Barbet that was first seen in Gola North with a further view at Kambui North.

Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta*

This forest barbet was seen well on Tiwai Island, Gola East and Gola North.

Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachyphonus purpuratus*

This elusive and stunning forest barbet was seen very well at close range in the Nimini Hills.

Honeyguides *Indicatoridae*

Cassin's Honeybird *Prodotiscus insignis*

Singles were seen in Gola North, Kambui North and the Bumbuna woodlands.

Willcock's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksi*

This uncommon species was seen very well in the scope perched at the forest edge in Gola North.

Spotted Honeyguide *Indicator maculatus*

We had superb views of two birds perched in the scope on Tiwai Island. This is a much sought-after species which seems to occur at very low density, easily located however if calling.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

A single was seen well at the Freetown Golf Course.

Woodpeckers & Allies *Picidae*

Little Green Woodpecker (UPG) *Campethera maculosa*

We had wonderful views of a pair on Tiwai Island and a single in Gola North.

Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivosa*

We found three birds while exploring the forests of the Nimini Hills.

Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli*

We found a single bird associated with a mixed feeding flock in Gola North.

Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicus fuscescens*

We had sightings of birds in the woodlands in the Bumbuna area.

Gabon Woodpecker *Dendropicos lugubris*

We found four birds in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split as Melancholy Woodpecker D. lugubris from the nominate Central African form - Gabon Woodpecker D. gabonensis. The IOC does not accept this split.

Fire-bellied Woodpecker (UPG) *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster*

This large forest woodpecker was seen at a number of forest sites with our most memorable views being a pair at Gola North.

African Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae*

We had a single bird at the Freetown Golf Course with a further sighting on our drive to Kono.

Broadbills *Eurylaimidae*

Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis*



We had superb views of a displaying male in the forest at Gola East, one of the outstanding highlights of the trip.

Wattle-eyes *Platysteiridae*

African Shrike-flycatcher

Megabyas flammulatus

We had wonderful views of one in Guma Valley and further views in Gola North, Kambui South and Nimini Hills.

Chestnut Wattle-eye

Platysteira castanea

Small numbers were seen at most forests throughout.

Red-cheeked Wattle-eye (UPG)

Platysteira blissetti

This furtive species was sighted in Gola North and again at Bumbuna.

Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye

Platysteira concreta

Another stunning and super restless bird, we had excellent views in Gola North.

Senegal Batis

Batis senegalensis

This species was heard in the Bumbuna area.

Brown-throated Wattle-eye

Platysteira cyanea

Five birds were seen at the Freetown Golf Course and a further two were found in the Bumbuna area.

Helmetsrikes, Bushshrikes *Malaconotidae*

White-crested Helmetshrike

Prionops plumatus

The West African races have exceptionally long crests, adding something special to this already beautiful bird. We found a small flock in the Bumbuna woodlands.

Red-billed Helmetshrike (UPG)

Prionops caniceps

A flock of six was seen very well during the walk out from Gola North.

Gray-headed Bushshrike

Malaconotus blanchoti

A single bird was seen by some at the Freetown Golf Course otherwise we heard this species calling in the woodland at Bumbuna.

Many-colored Bushshrike

Telophorus multicolor

We had incredible views of one in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North of the stunning red-bellied form and a further sighting of a pair in the Nimini Hills.

Orange-breasted Bushshrike

Telophorus sulfureopectus

This striking species was seen well in the Bumbuna area.

Black-crowned Tchagra

Tchagra senegala

This the most widely distributed tchagra was seen well at Bumbuna.

Sabine's Puffback

Dryoscopus sabinii

Some members of the group enjoyed good but brief views of one in the forest at Lalehun, Gola North.

Northern Puffback

Dryoscopus gambensis

We had wonderful views of six at the Freetown Golf Course with a further sighting in the Bumbuna area.

Lowland Sooty Boubou

Laniarius leucorhynchus

We enjoyed fabulous views of one of these usually shy birds in the Regent Forest.

Tropical Boubou

Laniarius aethiopicus

A single bird was found at a roadside stop on our drive to Kono.

Turati's Boubou (UPG)

Laniarius turatii

We had excellent views of a pair at the Freetown Golf Course and found another at Bumbuna.



Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae***Blue Cuckooshrike***Coracina azurea*

This is a superb looking species and we enjoyed a great sighting of a single bird while on the walk out of Gola North.

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike*Campephaga phoenicea*

Birds were seen at Gola North, Kambui North and Nimini Hills.

Shrikes *Laniidae***Common Fiscal***Lanius collaris*

A widespread species encountered regularly on our tour at most degraded areas and especially in the Bumbuna area.

Old World Orioles *Oriolidae***African Golden Oriole***Oriolus auratus*

A few birds were sighted on our days in the Bumbuna woodlands

Western Oriole*Oriolus brachyrhynchus*

Our first sightings were of two in Guma Valley with further sightings at most forests.

Black-winged Oriole*Oriolus nigripennis*

We found a single bird on Tiwai Island and in the Nimini Hills.

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 and on the drive to Bo.

Velvet-mantled Drongo*Dicrurus coracinus*

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

NOTE: This species was at one stage lumped with Fork-tailed Drongo D. adsimilis but the split is now widely accepted.

Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae***Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher***Trochocercus nitens*

This smart, restless species was sighted at Gola East and Gola North.

Red-headed Paradise Flycatcher*Terpsiphone rufiventer*

Our first sighting was one in Regent Forest with further sightings at Gola North.

African Paradise Flycatcher*Terpsiphone viridis*

We enjoyed good views of two in Guma Valley, Gola North and Bumbuna.

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

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

Picathartes *Picathartidae*

White-necked Picathartes (UPG)*Picathartes gymnocephalus*

The poster species for Sierra Leone. We had a fantastic encounter with this shy species on the Western Peninsula where we observed two birds near their nest site. Later in Kambui South we found four at their nesting colony.

Swallows *Hirundinidae***Square-tailed Sawwing***Psalidoprocne nitens*

Small numbers were seen in Guma Valley, Gola North and Kambui North.

Fanti Sawwing*Psalidoprocne obscura*

Small numbers were seen at Guma Valley, Regent Forest and at Bumbuna.

Sand Martin*Riparia riparia*

Good numbers were seen at Tiwai Island and again in the Bumbuna area.

Rock Martin*Hirundo fuligula*

A flock of around half a dozen birds were sighted in the Bumbuna area.

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Commonly seen in open habitat throughout the country.

White-bibbed Swallow*Hirundo nigrita*

Small numbers were seen daily on the Moa River where we obtained superb views during our boat trip.

Lesser Striped-Swallow*Cecropia abyssinica*

A widespread African swallow that is fairly common in Sierra Leone. We found small numbers at many sites.

West African Swallow*Hirundo domicella*

We had good views of several near Regent Forest and again in the Bumbuna area.

*NOTE: This species has been split by the IOC from the nominate Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica*.*

Preuss's Cliff Swallow*Hirundo preussi*

Small numbers were seen around Regent Forest and in the Bumbuna area.

Cisticolas & Allies *Cisticolidae***Red-faced Cisticola***Cisticola erythrops*

Our first views were at a roadside stop on our drive to Kono with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Whistling Cisticola*Cisticola lateralis*

A single bird was seen singing from an exposed perch outside Kambui South.

Winding Cisticola*Cisticola galactotes*

Four birds were well seen at rice fields near Kenema.

Short-winged Cisticola*Cisticola brachypterus*

We had good views of three near Regent Forest and a further sighting near Bumbuna.

Tawny-flanked Prinia*Prinia subflava*

Another noisy and familiar African warbler, we recorded this species in small numbers, our first sighting was in scrub near Tiwai.

Red-winged Prinia*Prinia erythroptera*

One of these smart birds was seen near Bumbuna.

Sharpe's Apalis (UPG)*Apalis sharpii*

Commonly seen in most forested areas, we enjoyed awesome close views of a pair at Regent Forest as our first sighting.



Oriole Warbler*Hypergerus atriceps*

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

Grey-backed Camaroptera*Camaroptera brevicaudata*

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 Sierra Leone.

Yellow-browed Camaroptera*Camaroptera superciliaris*

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

Olive-green Camaroptera*Camaroptera chloronota*

A single was seen near the village of Lalehun, Gola North with a further sighting in the Nimini Hills.

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 and seen at all forest sites.

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 Gola North.

Slender-billed Greenbul*Andropadus gracilirostris*

The common greenbul of forest canopy, we found small numbers on many days throughout the trip.

Yellow-whiskered Greenbul*Andropadus latirostris*

A greenbul of forest undergrowth and mid-storey, we had good sightings at Regent Forest and another on the walk to Gola North.

Golden Greenbul*Calyptocichla serina*

We enjoyed good views of two at Western Peninsula, Gola East and Nimini Hills.

Honeyguide Greenbul*Baeopogon indicator*

Often heard calling, our best views were in the Kambui Mountains.

Spotted Greenbul*Ixonotus guttatus*

This species was seen on three occasions, once in Gola East once in Gola North and again in the Nimini Hills.

Simple Greenbul*Chlorocichla simplex*

We found several at Regent Forest, Freetown Golf Course, Kambui Forests and the Bumbuna woodlands.

Swamp Palm Bulbul*Thescelocichla leucopleura*

Small numbers were seen at Tiwai Island and at Gola East while our best views were at the Nimini Hills.

Icterine Greenbul*Phyllastrephus icterinus*

A single bird was seen on the Western Peninsula.

White-throated Greenbul*Phyllastrephus albigularis*

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

Red-tailed Bristlebill*Bleda syndactyla*

Heard on many occasions with our best view coming in Kambui South when a bird perched in full view for an extended period of time.

Green-tailed Bristlebill (UPG) *Bleda eximius*

This is a very uncommon species and we had a good sighting of one in the Nimini Hills.

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

Gray-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapilla*

We had fantastic views of two in the Guma Valley, Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus*

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

Red-tailed Greenbul *Criniger calurus*

A single bird was sighted by some of the group at Nimini Hills.

Yellow-bearded Greenbul (UPG) *Criniger olivaceus*

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

Uncertain Incertae sedis

Western Nicator *Nicator chloris*

We enjoyed great views of one obliging bird at Regent Forest and heard several others calling daily at all forest localities.

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccallii*

This highly active species was seen at Gola North and again at Kambui South.

Old World Warblers *Sylviidae*

Moustached Grass Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*

A single bird was very well seen in tall grass in the Bumbuna area.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Heard calling in the Bumbuna area.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

At least three birds were found in the Bumbuna area.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

We had good views of three near Bumbuna.

Kemp's Longbill (UPG) *Macrosphenus flavicans*

A real skulker, we heard it on many occasions and had our best sighting on our walk into Gola North.

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*

Another secretive species that was heard many times and seen at Kambui South.

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*

Its "HEE-lia!" call was one of the common background sounds at the forest sites, we also had many sightings.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

We had good views at widely scattered localities throughout.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Seen at several forested sites including Guma Valley and Lalehun, Gola North.

Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*

Two pairs were recorded in the Bumbuna woodlands.

Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps*



A single bird was found by some members of the group in a mixed flock in Gola North.

Tit-Hylia *Pholidornis rushiae*

We had superb views of this, Africa's smallest bird, in the forest at Gola North.

Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura*

A single bird was seen very well at the Freetown Golf Course.

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens*

We heard it on a number of occasions and a single bird was sighted at the Nimini Hills.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

We found two birds at Regent Forest.

Babblers Timaliidae

Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri*

This is a tough bird to see well and we had brief views of a single calling bird in Gola North.

Rufous-winged Illadopsis (UPG) *Illadopsis rufescens*

We were treated to outstanding views of this understory skulker in the Western Peninsula Forest on the final day.

Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli*

We had a good view of one bird in secondary tangle on our walk in to Kambui South.

Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens*

This species was heard in the forests of Gola North.

Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens*

Good looks were had of a single bird on our final day at Western Peninsula Forest.

Capuchin Babbler *Phyllanthus atripennis*

This seldom seen and rather shy species was well seen when a group of four birds were initially heard calling and then showed for multiple views, although never quite completely unobstructed, at Regent Forest.

Starlings Sturnidae

Splendid Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus*

We had good views of two birds perched in the scope on our drive into Lalehun, Gola North.

Emerald Starling (UPG) *Lamprotornis iris*

We enjoyed stunning scope views of a number of birds at Bumbuna. Good numbers of at least 20 birds were recorded.

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

Seen in small numbers at several forested sites. Our best looks however were undoubtedly the point blank views offered by a pair at Kambui North.

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

Good numbers recorded in the Bumbuna area and Guma Valley.

Thrushes & Allies Turdidae

Finsch's Rufous Thrush (UPG) *Neocossyphus finschii*

We enjoyed wonderful sightings of two at Tiwai Island and again at Gola North.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

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



Fire-crested Alethe*Alethe diademata*

Our only sighting was a stunning view of two in the Guma Valley, it was otherwise heard frequently at the other forest sites.

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

Chats, Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae***Western Forest Robin***Stiphornis erythrothorax*

This is a shy species and we enjoyed stunning views of four in Gola North.

NOTE: This species has been split by the IOC into four species. The one we observed is Western Forest Robin *S. erythrothorax*. The others are Gabon Forest Robin, Sangha Forest Robin and Eastern Forest Robin.

Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat*Cossypha cyanocampter*

We heard this species lovely song on the walk into Kambui South.

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat*Cossypha niveicapilla*

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

Forest Scrub-Robin*Cercotrichas leucosticta*

We had decent views of one of these very shy and seldom seen birds at Regent Forest and then superb views of one on our final day at Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Whinchat*Saxicola rubetra*

We had great views of two at the rice fields near Kenema with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

Fraser's Forest Flycatcher*Fraseria ocreata*

We had great sightings of one at Regent Forest and another at Gola North.

White-browed Forest Flycatcher*fraseria cinerascens*

This uncommon species was brilliantly seen at close range when a pair was discovered on our boat trip on River No.2.

Northern Black Flycatcher*Melaenornis edolioides*

We found two birds at the Freetown Golf Course and had a further sighting of four birds while in the Bumbuna area.

Cassin's Flycatcher*Muscicapa cassini*

A sprightly bird restricted to the vicinity of water, often hawking insects directly above it. We found a single bird along the Moa River and again at a bridge crossing in the Bumbuna area.

Olivaceous Flycatcher*Muscicapa olivascens*

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

Ussher's Flycatcher (UPG)*Muscicapa ussheri*

We found a single bird at the forest edge in Gola North.

Grey Tit-Flycatcher*Myioparus plumbeus*

Singles were seen at Tiwai Island and Gola North.

European Pied Flycatcher*Ficedula hypoleuca*

Our only sightings came from the Bumbuna area.

Sunbirds & Spiderhunters *Nectariniidae***Fraser's Sunbird***Deleornis fraseri*

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

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

Mangrove Sunbird*Anthreptes gabonicus*

We had good views of many along River No.2 and the Sierra Leone Estuary.



Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

Two birds were found in the broad-leaved woodlands at Bumbuna.

Little Green Sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*

Small numbers were seen at most of the forest sites.

Grey-chinned Sunbird *Anthreptes rectirostris*

Birds were seen at Guma Valley, Nimini Hills and Bumbuna.

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 collaris*

This is a very widespread species on the continent and it was commonly encountered in small numbers throughout.

Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*

We had superb sightings of a pair near Bumbuna.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanolaema*

This forest sunbird was seen at Tiwai Island, Gola East, Kambui North and Nimini Hills.

Western Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra obscura*

Common and seen daily in small numbers.

NOTE: The Olive-Sunbird species complex has been split into two full species by the IOC, namely the nominate Eastern Olive-Sunbird C. olivacea and the form which we recorded in Sierra Leone, 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 there-of, of pectoral tufts in the females of the various subspecies within the complex.

Buff-throated Sunbird (UPG) *Chalcomitra adelberti*

First seen at great distance in Gola North, we later got to really appreciate the beauty of this stunning bird when two were seen at Kambui North.

Olive-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris chloropygius*

This is a typical forest edge species, seen at Regent and Kambui Forests.

Tiny Sunbird *Cinnyris minullus*

Six birds were seen at a very impressive flowering tree at the bottom of Kambui North.

Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigaster*

Good numbers were seen in the Bumbuna area.

Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae*

Small numbers were seen at Guma Valley, Tiwai Island and Kambui North.

Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus*

Sighted by some of the group at Gola North.

Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*

Commonly seen around Regent Forest, Western Peninsula and the Bumbuna area.

Copper Sunbird *Cinnyris cuprea*

Small numbers were seen near the Bumbuna area.

Old World Sparrows *Passeridae***Northern Grey-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 form in Sierra Leone being retained 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 the IOC.

Vieillot's Black Weaver *Ploceus nigerrimus*

Seen well in the Bumbuna area.

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

Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*

We found three of these smart birds in Gola East.

Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha*

We found them on Tiwai Island and in Gola East.

Compact Weaver *Pachyphantes superciliosus*

We enjoyed great views of two near Bumbuna.

Gola Malimbe (UPG) *Malimbus ballmanni*

A total of three were seen incredibly well 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 one near Gola East with further sightings in Gola North.

Blue-billed Malimbe *Malimbus nitens*

A secretive species that forages in thick tangles, we found two on River No.2 and then again at Tiwai Island and Gola North.

Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus rubricollis*

Small numbers were seen on Tiwai Island and the Nimini Hills.

Crested Malimbe *Malimbus malimbicus*

This is a fairly common species seen well at Tiwai Island and Gola North.

Red-headed Quelea *Quelea erythrops*

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

Red-billed Quelea *Quelea quelea*

At least fifteen birds were seen in non-breeding plumage in the Bumbuna area.

Black-winged Red Bishop *Euplectes hordeaceus*

Good views were had in the Regent area with several more in the Bumbuna area.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macrocercus*

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

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

Many were seen well in the Bumbuna area, the form here without the red collar.

Waxbills & Allies *Estrildidae*

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita *Nigrita bicolor*

Small numbers were seen at scattered forest sites throughout.

Gray-headed Nigrita *Nigrita canicapilla*

Seen once at the Freetown Golf Course and again at Kambui North.

Crimson Seedcracker (UPG) *Pyrenestes sanguineus*



We enjoyed spectacular views of four birds including stunning adults and juveniles at the Freetown Golf Course.

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*

A remarkably beautiful bird. We had brief views of singles on Tiwai Island.

Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii*

We had fantastic views of this uncommon species in the Bumbuna woodlands.

Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*

Two birds were seen in the Bumbuna area.

African Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*

We had good views of two on our drive to Kono.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

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

Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

This uncommon species was sighted in grassland in the Bumbuna area.

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 at scattered localities especially in the Bumbuna area.

*NOTE: This complex may be split two-ways, the southern and eastern Red-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 Sierra Leone.*

Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringilloides*

Some of the group had two birds near the village of Lalehun, Gola North area.

Indigobirds *Viduidae*

Jambandu Indigobird *Vidua raricola*

We had stunning views of one male in full breeding plumage in the Bumbuna area. It was also heard mimicking its host, Zebra Waxbill and we got so close we could see the green gloss of the plumage.

Cameroon Indigobird *Vidua camerunensis*

We had superb views of two males in full breeding plumage in the Bumbuna area. 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.

Togo Paradise Whydah *Vidua togoensis*

The ultimate cap to our remarkable *vidua* experience, we had a single male in full breeding dress perched on top of trees in the Bumbuna area for many hours.

Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

We found several in the rice fields near Kenema.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

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

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

We saw a few near Regent Forest.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*

A single bird was sighted perched on top of a tree on the outskirts of Freetown.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*



Four of these palearctic migrants were seen near Bumbuna.

Buntings *Emberizidae*

Cinnamon-breasted Bunting

Emberiza tahapisi

Two birds 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.

Colobid Monkeys *Colobinae*

King Colobus

Colobus polykomos

This smart primate was seen once on Tiwai Island.

Western Red Colobus

Colobus badius

A total of four were seen on Tiwai Island.

Cheek-Pouch Monkeys *Cercopithecinae*

Campbell's Monkey

Cercopithecus campbelli

We had a total of ten on our boat trip up the Moa River.

Diana Monkey

Cercopithecus Diana

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

Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae*

Straw-colored Fruit Bat

Eidolon helvum

Large numbers were seen and heard in the evening along the Moa River.

Squirrels *Sciuridae*

Striped Ground Squirrel

Xerus erythropus

We saw three in the Bumbuna area.

Red-legged Sun Squirrel

Heliosciurus rufobrachium

A single was seen in Gola North.

Green Bush Squirrel

Paraxerus poensis

We found a single in the Guma Valley.

Mongoose *Herpestidae*

Slender Mongoose

Herpestes sanguinea

A single was seen on our drive to Kenema.

Marsh Mongoose

Atilax paludinosus

We found one at the rice fields near Kenema, this is usually a nocturnal species.

Hyraxes *Procavidae*

Black-necked Rock Hyrax

Procavia johstoni



We found six in the quarry near Bumbuna.

PHOTO CREDITS: Western Reef Heron & White-bibbed Swallow all by Keith Valentine.

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

