



# Rockjumper Birding Tours

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Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Sierra Leone

### Rockfowl & Upper Guinea Specials

*10<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2009*



White-necked Rockfowl photo by Paul Ellis

**Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader David Hoddinott**

## Trip Summary:

Our comprehensive, two-week birding tour to Sierra Leone proved to be extraordinarily successful, with a record breaking trip total of 341 species reflecting the countries' incredible birding potential! Whilst the focus of the tour was certainly the rich assemblage of Upper Guinea specialties, we did not neglect the region's interesting diversity of primates. Participants were treated to 19 Upper Guinea specialties and an array of rare, elusive, localized and stunning species. These included Hartlaub's Duck, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Long-tailed Hawk, African Crake, Red-chested Flufftail, Forbes's Plover, Greater Painted Snipe, Great and Jack Snipes, Egyptian Plover, Afep Pigeon, Great Blue Turaco, Thick-billed and Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Brown Nightjar, Narina Trogon, Blue-headed and Black Bee-eaters, all 9 species of Hornbills, Spotted Honeyguide, Little Green, Fire-bellied and Gabon Woodpeckers, Rufous-sided Broadbill displaying, spectacular Red-cheeked and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes, Red-billed Helmetshrike, rare Lagden's Bushshrike, localized Turati's Boubou, magnificent White-necked Rockfowl (watched for forty minutes!), Oriole Warbler, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Copper-tailed and dazzling Emerald Starlings, Forest Scrub Robin, Buff-throated and Johanna's Sunbirds, Maxwell's Weaver, very rare Gola Malimbe, Yellow-winged Pytilia, Crimson Seedcracker and Togo Paradise Whydah amongst many others. Some of the mammalian highlights included fantastic views of King, Western Red and Olive Colobus, Sooty Mangabey, Diana, Campbell's and Lesser White-nosed Monkeys.

For more highlights and a detailed report read on ....

Sierra Leone, as with most countries in West Africa, can often be tricky regarding logistics; however we enjoyed a fabulous, relatively hassle free trip with smooth logistics and, most importantly, superb birding in some of West Africa's finest lowland forests.

Our tour started off with a wonderful day in the lush wooded hills of the Western Peninsula Forest



Reserve, not far from the capital of Freetown. An early start ensured that we avoided traffic and arrived in the forest at dawn, where we enjoyed our packed breakfast while watching a group of magnificent Great Blue Turacos! We were to enjoy many of these great birds over the next two weeks. This was the start of a memorable morning's forest birding that included sightings of a white morph Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, a pair of very confiding Yellow-billed Turaco, stunning Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, a pair of the huge Yellow-casqued Wattled Hornbill (which flew right overhead!), Grey Longbill building a nest, and a lovely pair of

Golden Greenbul amongst many others. Following this we made our way to River No.2 where we boarded our dugout canoes and quietly meandered downstream. Now nearing the heat of the day, it was fairly quiet; however we still managed to see the splendid Shining-blue Kingfisher, White-backed Night Heron, Sabine's Spinetail, Mangrove Sunbird and the smart-looking Blue-billed Malimbe.

Upon arriving at the Atlantic Ocean, we then enjoyed a delicious fish lunch at a local restaurant. Alain in the meantime had found a nearby spot where birds were bathing and drinking; and so, after lunch, we enjoyed some time scoping this area and were rewarded with good sightings of fifteen species, including a fine male Eurasian Blackcap and several Garden Warblers.



It was then time to head off in search of one of the great birds of the world! Excitement mounted as we neared the nesting area of the highly sought-after White-necked Rockfowl. After a short walk across boulders and vines we sat down for a patient wait that ensued for a considerable time. Suddenly there they were, these weird, pre-historic looking birds! We enjoyed fair views of a pair before making our way back to the hotel. Some participants had arrived late due to flight delays and with only ten minutes of daylight left, they nonetheless also managed to see the pair. Back at the hotel we enjoyed some wonderful celebrations for seeing this truly great bird, which were especially sweet for Paul on his birthday. Many beer glasses were charged and the champagne was flowing; what a great way to end off our first day!

The next morning we set off for the Freetown Golf Course. Although small, this sight has a wonderful selection of birds and exceeded our expectations with great sightings of African Grey Woodpecker, a pair of Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, elegant Fanti Saw-wing, Red-chested Swallow, scarce Pied-winged Swallow, beautiful Oriole Warbler and lovely Crimson Seedcracker. Moving on to Regent Forest we picked up Red-rumped Tinkerbird, the shy and elusive Forest Scrub Robin, smart White-browed Forest Flycatcher and lovely Johanna's Sunbird. Leaving the capital behind us, we stopped first for the exquisite Blue-bellied Roller, and then some mixed woodland and grassland produced a confiding Levaillant's Cuckoo, African Grey Hornbill, Compact Weaver and a pair of Cabanis's Bunting.



From Bo we made a particularly early start for the drive to Tiwai Island, enjoying a confiding Greyish Eagle-Owl en route. Upon arrival at the great Moa River, we enjoyed a packed breakfast while we were entertained by a pair of tiny Tit Hylia, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Red-vented Malimbos at their intricate nests, and beautiful Buff-throated Sunbird. After breakfast we then made our way across to Tiwai Island where we spent the day enjoying the network of forest trails. Quietly moving through the jungle we found African Dwarf Kingfisher, enjoyed scope views of Blue-headed Wood Dove, and had confiding Finsch's Rufous Thrush and White-tailed Alethe amongst many others. In the late afternoon we embarked on a superb boat trip on the Moa River and were delighted to see a pair of Hartlaub's Duck with two chicks, plus an absolutely magnificent Egyptian Plover - surely one of the great waders of the world!



Initially, the plover was seen at great distance and was barely distinguishable with binoculars; however with the help of a local fisherman and the excellent steering of our boatmen, we managed to get within just twenty feet of this absolute stunner – the detail of which is truly impressive when viewed up close. Other species included Rock Pratincole, striking Blue-breasted Kingfisher and White-bibbed Swallow; though the cherry on the cake was seeing a pair of Brown Nightjar, rounding off the day very nicely indeed!



Leaving Tiwai we made our way to Gola East. Here we enjoyed some superb forest birding, finding Black Sparrowhawk with three chicks at its nest, a superb Long-tailed Hawk, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, a flock of twenty-five Grey Parrots, Little Green Woodpecker, stunning Red-billed Helmetshrike, Blue Cuckooshrike, Western Bearded Greenbul and Chattering Cisticola. We also found several Upper Guinea Endemics, including a confiding Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Copper-tailed Starling and Ussher's Flycatcher. Our late afternoon was spent birding the rice paddies near Kenema. Here we were rewarded with a wonderful array of birds that included African Crake, six Forbes's Plover, Greater Painted Snipe, both Great and Jack Snipe (the latter very rare in Sierra Leone), and Red-throated Pipit.



Leaving Kenema, we struck out early for the magical primary forest of Gola North. This year the road was far better than previously, which meant that we only had to walk nine kilometers instead of the original twelve! It is, however, still a real expedition, and all our food, water and camping gear was taken in by porters ahead of us, leaving us to enjoy the fabulous birding that this forest has to offer.

We had a real bumper birding session at the forest edge, where we simply couldn't leave as we found one new species after another. Amongst the hive of activity we saw Thick-billed Cuckoo overhead (with its distinctive lazy flight), Gabon and Fire-bellied Woodpeckers (giving great scope views as they perched above on dead snags), Lowland Sooty Boubou (which emerged briefly from the undergrowth), a pair of Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Yellow-browed Camaroptera and stout-billed Magpie Mannikin. Tearing ourselves away from the forest edge, we continued on the forest trail to our camp, stopping en route to enjoy a pair of Black-casqued Hornbill – here at the extreme western edge of their range. We arrived at the camp in the late afternoon, well please with the myriad of species that the day had produced. We then spent a wonderful time in the climax primary forest. Interestingly, in many such forests in West Africa there can be days of high activity where you see numerous flocks and there seem to be birds just about everywhere, yet other days where you see very little and sometimes wonder if there are any birds there at all! The following day proved to be one of these days; nonetheless, we did manage to find a super pair of rare Lagden's Bushshrike, scarce Black Dwarf Hornbill, displaying Rufous-sided Broadbill, stunning Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye and exquisite Narina Trogon; but alas, no Gola Malimbe, and we returned to our camp somewhat forlorn. The next day, however, proved to be



particularly productive, and soon we were scoping Afep Pigeon and the Upper Guinea endemic Brown-cheeked Hornbill. Shortly afterwards we discovered a flock, and we quickly found Blue Malkoha, Buff-spotted and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Many-coloured Bushshrike, Fraser's Sunbird and, suddenly there it was, a resplendent male Gola Malimbe! This bird showed particularly well on several occasions, allowing us all to get great views of this very rare species.

Whilst exploring the area other notable species we encountered were Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Spotted Honeyguide, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Sharpe's



Apalis, all three Bristlebills (including the elusive Green-tailed Bristlebill), Kemp's Longbill, a confiding Blackcap Illadopsis, and Western Forest Robin. The walk out was very successful with great sightings of Blue-headed Bee-eater, a White-crested Hornbill – which, for a change, posed for a considerable time – shortly followed by a pair of displaying Red-cheeked Wattle-eyes.

Another early morning start saw us heading into the hills of Kambui North, which produced some fine birds that included Red-chested Goshawk, a male African Emerald Cuckoo in full song, a large flock of Mottled Swift, Naked-faced Barbets at their nesting colony, Hairy-breasted Barbet, tiny Cassin's Honeybird, African Shrike-flycatcher with its characteristic pendulum-like tail swinging side to side, Whistling Cisticola and a family group of Red-headed Malimbe.

The afternoon was set aside as another opportunity to see the near mythical White-necked Rockfowl. As our first sighting wasn't particularly good, we visited another colony where we were treated to the most incredible experience of four birds jumping from boulder to vine to sandbar right in front of us, seemingly unperturbed by our presence! At times they were a mere ten metres away and we watched enthralled for forty minutes. We later all agreed this was certainly one of the greatest birding experiences of our lives!



Leaving the forests behind, we then made our way to Bumbuna where we enjoyed a remarkable two days in the Upper Guinea savanna. It was a pleasant change to bird this open country and we were rewarded with many fantastic sightings way beyond our expectations. On our first day alone we saw a whopping 112 species! Some of the highlights of our stay in the area included European Honey Buzzard, a pair of Brown Snake Eagle, a stunning male Western Marsh Harrier, Red-necked Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, a pair of Red-chested Flufftail showed briefly, a Pearl-spotted Owlet (which, to our delight, attracted many small passerines), Long-tailed Nightjar, magnificent Abyssinian Roller, Black



Scimitarbill, Greater Honeyguide, scarce migrant Eurasian Wryneck, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, Senegal Batis, White Helmetshrike of the distinctive race *plumatus* sporting particularly long crests, Grey-headed Bushshrike eating a snake, very localized Turati's Boubou showing particularly well, White-shouldered Black Tit, Preuss's Cliff Swallow, vocal Red-winged Warblers, a pair of Yellow-throated Leaflove, Eurasian Reed Warbler, flocks of busy Senegal Eremomela, Blackcap Babbler, dazzling Emerald Starling, unusually confiding Common Nightingale, Cassin's Flycatcher, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, European Pied Flycatcher, dozens of Splendid Sunbirds and a whole host of seedeaters, including Red-headed Quelea, Red-winged and Yellow-winged Pytilia, Dybowski's Twinspot, Jambandu and Cameroon Indigobirds, and a fabulous male Togo Paradise Whydah in full breeding plumage and sporting his particularly long tail.



Having some time to play with before our return flights home, we then explored a new area along the Kabala Road which proved to be most interesting and rewarding. Here we found a splendid Yellow-throated Cuckoo, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, African Golden Oriole, a family of Brown Babblers, Red-tailed Leaflove and both Western Violet-backed and Green-headed Sunbirds.

Making our way back to Freetown we stopped for Western Banded and Beaudouin's Snake Eagles, several Grasshopper Buzzard, calling Senegal Thick-knee, a pair of White-fronted Black Chat and Orange-breasted Waxbill. Upon arriving in Freetown we then transferred to the quick ferry that soon whisked us across the Sierra Leone River estuary to the airport. During this short, twenty minute ride we were able to reflect on our wonderful adventure that was filled with so many highlights! This certainly isn't an easy trip, but for those who are fit, enthusiastic and imbued with a real spirit of adventure, you'll have a truly great time, enjoy some of the least visited places in Africa, and experience some of the rarest and most sought-after birds on the Planet!

**Photos:** Yellow-casqued Wattled Hornbill, White-bibbed Swallow, Turati's Boubou and Emerald Starling by Paul Ellis, Crimson Seedcracker by Mark Beevers, Egyptian Plover by Matthew Matthiessen and Gola Malimbe by David Hoddinott

## Annotated List of Birds recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 2.3 List of: Gill, F. and Wright, M. 20/12/2009. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Brackets indicate Clements [omissions] and (changes)

### Total species recorded: 341 (329 seen and 12 heard)

E = Upper Guinea Endemic, NE = Upper Guinea Near Endemic.

#### Guineafowl Numididae

##### Helmeted Guineafowl

*Numida meleagris*

A pair was seen near Zimmi.

#### Pheasants & Partridges Phasianidae

##### Stone Partridge

*Ptilopachus petrosus*

We heard many calling in the Bumbuna area.

##### Forest Francolin

*Peliperdix lathamii*

We heard this species calling in Gola North.

##### Double-spurred Francolin

*Pternistis bicalcaratus*

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

#### Ducks, Geese & Swans Anatidae

##### White-faced Whistling Duck

*Dendrocygna viduata*

This very widespread species was sighted in the Bumbuna area where a flock of at least fifty were seen.

##### Spur-winged Goose

*Plectropterus gambensis*

We saw one flying in the distance along the Kabala Road.

##### Hartlaub's Duck

*Pteronetta hartlaubii*

One of West Africa's finest waterfowl species and Africa's only forest duck, we enjoyed stunning views of a pair with two chicks on the Moa River and a further pair near Gola North.



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

We had almost daily sightings of this species throughout the tour, with a peak count of nine during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema.

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

We heard this species calling on Tiwai Island. 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 pair was seen during the boat trip on the Moa River.

**Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae****White-backed Night Heron***Gorsachius leuconotus*

Some of us were fortunate to have superb views of one at River No.2

**[Western] Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Small numbers were seen almost daily in open habitat.

*NOTE: This group is sometimes split into Western Cattle Egret, B. ibis and the Asian/Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret B. coromandus. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.*

**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

A well-known, widespread heron, we saw two during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema.

**Black-headed Heron***Ardea melanocephala*

We found one during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema and another during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

**Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea*

One was seen during the drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

**[Western] Great Egret***Ardea alba*

One was seen during the drive from Tiwai Island to Zimmi.

*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 superb views of four at the Kenema Rice fields.

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta*

Small numbers were seen at the Kenema rice paddies and a flock of ten near the Freetown Golf Course.

*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*

We enjoyed good views of six dark morph birds on River No.2

**Hamerkop Scopidae****Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

One of these unique birds was seen en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae****Reed (Long-tailed) Cormorant***Microcarbo africanus*

Several were seen at River No.2 and a further two on the Moa River.



### Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

**European Honey Buzzard***Pernis apivorus*

Our first sighting was of one en route from Tiwai to Zimmi and a further five were seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Black-winged(-shouldered) Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

One was seen on the Western Peninsula and a further two during the drive from Makeni to Freetown.

**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*

We had great views of one on Tiwai Island. This species is rare in Sierra Leone.

**Palm-nut Vulture***Gypohierax angolensis*

One of the commonest raptors in Sierra Leone, small numbers seen daily

**Hooded Vulture***Necrosyrtes monachus*

Commonly seen around Urban areas

**Beudouin's Snake Eagle***Circaetus beaudouini*

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

**Brown Snake Eagle***Circaetus cinereus*

We enjoyed good views of a pair flying over, near Bumbuna.

**[Western] Banded Snake Eagle***Circaetus cinerascens*

We had superb scope views of an adult en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Western Marsh Harrier***Circus aeruginosus*

We had fantastic views of a male en route from Kenema to Bumbuna.

**African Harrier-Hawk (Gymnogene)***Polyboroides typus*

Another very common species in Sierra Leone, this distinctive raptor was recorded regularly throughout the trip. A peak count of fifteen was seen during the day from Kenema to Bumbuna to Makeni.

**Red-chested Goshawk***Accipiter toussenelii*

We had good views of one at Kambui North.

**Shikra***Accipiter badius*

We found this species to be particularly common in the Bumbuna and Makeni areas.

**Red-thighed Sparrowhawk***Accipiter erythropus*

One was seen very briefly during the drive from Tiwai Island to Zimmi.

**Black Sparrowhawk***Accipiter melanoleucus*

A single bird was seen very well during the drive to Bo and later we found a nest with adult and three chicks near Gola East.

**Long-tailed Hawk***Urotriorchis macrourus*

We had good scope views of a juvenile at Gola East.

**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 enjoyed good views of three birds.

**Red-necked Buzzard***Buteo auguralis*

This handsome buzzard was first seen in Gola North with further sightings of small numbers in the Bumbuna area.



**Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*

We had good views of one en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** *Hieraaetus ayresii*

We had good views of a pale phase bird on the Western Peninsula and another in the Bumbuna area.

**Long-crested Eagle** *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Our first sighting was of a pair near Bumbuna with further sightings of three during the drive from Makeni to Freetown.

**Crowned (Hawk-) Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus*

We heard one calling above the forest canopy in Gola North.

**Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae****Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

We enjoyed good views of several in the Bumbuna and Makeni areas.

**Flufftails Sarothruridae****White-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura pulchra*

This secretive, forest rallid's hooting call was heard in Gola East and Gola North.

**Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa*

We had good but brief views of a pair near Bumbuna.

**Rails, Crakes & Coots Rallidae****African Crake** *Crex egregia*

We had good views of three in rice fields near Kenema.

**Thick-knees Burhinidae****Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis*

We had good scope views of a pair en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae****White-crowned(-headed) Lapwing** *Vanellus albiceps*

We had magnificent views of one along the Moa River and another en route from Kenema to Makeni.

**[African] Wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus senegallus*

We had good views of one en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

A flock of sixteen was seen at the Sierra Leone River estuary.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

Two were seen at the Sierra Leone River estuary and a further one at River No.2

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

Up to twenty were sighted at the rice fields near Kenema.

**Forbes's Plover** *Charadrius forbesi*

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

**Egyptian Plover Pluvianidae****Egyptian Plover** *Pluvianus aegyptius*

This is surely one of the world's finest waders and always a high on everyone's wish list. We found a magnificent obliging individual on the Moa River that allowed us super close views which meant we could really appreciate its beautiful intricate patterns.

### Painted Snipes Rostratulidae

#### **Greater Painted Snipe**

*Rostratula benghalensis*

One male of this classy species was seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

### Jacanas Jacanidae

#### **African Jacana**

*Actophilornis africanus*

Four were seen at a roadside wetland near Kenema.

### Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

#### **Jack Snipe**

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

We had fantastic views of one in the rice fields near Kenema. A very rare migrant to Sierra Leone

#### **Great Snipe**

*Gallinago media*

Five birds were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

#### **Common Snipe**

*Gallinago gallinago*

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

#### **Whimbrel**

*Numenius phaeopus*

At least four birds were found at River No 2.

#### **Common Greenshank**

*Tringa nebularia*

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

#### **Green Sandpiper**

*Tringa ochropus*

We had good views of seven in a wetland near Zimmi and one at the Kenema rice fields.

#### **Wood Sandpiper**

*Tringa glareola*

Up to thirty were seen in the rice fields near Kenema.

#### **Common Sandpiper**

*Actitis hypoleucos*

We found four on the Moa River with scattered sightings elsewhere.

#### **Sanderling**

*Calidris alba*

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

### Courasers & Pratincoles Glareolidae

#### **Rock Pratincole**

*Glareola nuchalis*

Our first sighting was a flock of fifty four over the forest on Tiwai Island. These gorgeous birds were later seen in small numbers on the Moa River. The West African race has very distinctive chestnut markings on the head which is lacking in the race found further south.

### Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Laridae

#### **Royal Tern**

*Thalasseus maximus*

A count revealed about 840 at River No.2.

#### **Lesser Crested Tern**

*Thalasseus bengalensis*

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

#### **Sandwich Tern**

*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Up to thirty were seen at River No.2 in a large tern roost.



### Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

**Common (Rock) Pigeon**

*Columba livia*

Small numbers were seen in Freetown and Makeni.

**Afep Pigeon**

*Columba unicincta*

We had good scope views of one in Gola North.

**[Western] Bronze-naped Pigeon**

*Columba iriditorques*

Our first sighting was of one in Gola East and a further two were seen perched in 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**

*Spilopelia 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 on Tiwai Island and we enjoyed further sightings in Gola East and Gola North.

**African Green Pigeon**

*Treron calvus*

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! A flock of twenty five was seen flying over at dusk, near Zimmi.

### Turacos Musophagidae

**Great Blue Turaco**

*Corythaeola cristata*

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

**Guinea Turaco**

*Tauraco persa*

We had brief views of one at forest edge in Gola North.

*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 a pair on the Western Peninsula and another pair in Gola East.

**Western Plantain-eater**

*Crinifer piscator*

At least eight were seen in the Bumbuna area.

### Cuckoos Cuculidae



**Black-throated Coucal** *Centropus leucogaster*  
We heard this species calling on Tiwai Island, in Gola North and at Kambui North.

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis*  
Up to three were seen daily in the Bumbuna area.

**Blue Malkoha (Yellowbill)** *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 does not as yet accept this split.*

**Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii*  
We enjoyed a lovely sighting of this impressive species en route from Freetown to Bo and another in Gola North.

**Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti*  
This is one of Africa's toughest species to catch up with and we had good views of a single bird flying over the forest at Lalehun.

**Dideric Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx caprius*  
Small numbers were seen daily in the Bumbuna area.

**Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas*  
This brood parasite, favoring the cup nests of woodland birds, was scoped at Lalehun and seen again near Bumbuna.

**Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*  
We had magnificent views of this rare species along the Kabala Road.

**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 at Lalehun and another at Kambui North.

**Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus*  
We heard one calling in Gola North.

### Typical Owls Strigidae

**Sandy Scops Owl** *Otus icterorhynchus*  
We heard what appeared to be this species on two successive nights in Gola North.

**Greyish Eagle-Owl** *Bubo cinerascens*  
One was seen particularly well during the very early morning drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

**African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii*  
We had great views of one during the day on Tiwai Island.

**Pearl-spotted Owlet** *Glaucidium perlatum*  
One of these tiny birds was seen at Bumbuna.

### Nightjars Caprimulgidae

**Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus*  
We had good views of a pair on Tiwai Island, this species was only discovered in Sierra Leone in 2007.

**Long-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus climacurus*  
We had good sightings of three during the early evening near Kambui South.

### Swifts Apodidae

**Sabine's Spinetail** *Rhaphidura sabini*  
We had great views of six on the Western Peninsula.



**African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus*

Plentiful throughout the country

**Mottled Swift** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*

A large flock was seen flying over Kambui North.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

Common throughout the country in large numbers

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis*

The common urban swift throughout the country

### Trogon Trogonidae

**Narina Trogon** *Apaloderma narina*

We had fantastic scope views of a male at Gola North.

### Rollers Coraciidae

**Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus*

A single bird was sighted in the Bumbuna area and another en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Blue-bellied Roller** *Coracias cyanogaster*

Four of these smart birds were seen during the drive from Freetown to Bo and a further one en route from Kenema to Makeni.

**Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis*

We had superb views of three on Tiwai Island.

**Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Small numbers seen at forest edge near Kambui South and around Bumbuna

### Kingfishers Alcedinidae

**Chocolate-backed Kingfisher** *Halcyon badia*

We had superb views of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve and another near Tiwai Island.

**Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala*

Yet another stunning kingfisher, peak numbers of five were seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Striped Kingfisher** *Halcyon chelicuti*

We had good views of three in the Bumbuna woodland.

**Blue-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon malimbica*

We had superb views of this forest species on eleven occasions including great views on the Moa River

**Woodland Kingfisher** *Halcyon senegalensis*

We had good views of two during the drive from Bo to Tiwai Island.

**[African] Dwarf Kingfisher** *Ispidina lecontei*

We had great views of one on Tiwai Island.

**African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta*

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

**White-bellied Kingfisher** *Alcedo leucogaster*

We heard several along small forest streams in Gola North.

**Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata*

We found two at River No.2 and three in the Kenema rice fields.

**Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys*

We had a good sighting of one at River No.2 and another on the Moa River.



**Giant Kingfisher***Megaceryle maxima*

The Goliath of the kingfisher world, we had good views of a pair on the Moa River and several in the Bumbuna area.

**Bee-eaters Meropidae****Blue-headed Bee-eater***Merops muelleri*

We had fantastic scope views of one in Gola North.

**Black Bee-eater***Merops gularis*

We enjoyed superb views of one along the Moa River and a further pair at Kambui South.

**Little Bee-eater***Merops pusillus*

A pair of these striking birds was seen near Bumbuna.

**White-throated Bee-eater***Merops albicollis*

Flocks of fifty were seen almost daily throughout the trip.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater***Merops persicus*

Small numbers were seen along River No.2

**European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*

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

**Woodhoopoes Phoeniculidae****Black Scimitarbill***Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

A generally uncommon species of broad-leaved woodland, we were fortunate to find two birds in the Bumbuna area.

**Hornbills Bucerotidae****African Pied Hornbill***Tockus fasciatus*

Common throughout forested areas in Sierra Leone

**African Grey Hornbill***Tockus nasutus*

We had good views of one en route from Freetown to Bo.

**Black Dwarf Hornbill***Tockus hartlaubi*

We had great scope views of one on Tiwai Island and a further pair was seen in Gola North.

**Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill***Tockus camurus*

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

**White-crested Hornbill***Tropicranus albocristatus*

We had fabulous views of this outrageous looking species in Gola North.

**Piping Hornbill***Bycanistes fistulator*

Fairly common and seen at most forested sites throughout

**Brown-cheeked Hornbill (E)***Bycanistes cylindricus*

This Upper Guinea Endemic was seen in Gola North with a further sighting at Kambui North.

**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 a fabulous pair.

**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.

**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 another at Gola East.

**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 seen in Gola North

**Hairy-breasted Barbet***Tricholaema hirsuta*

This forest barbet was seen well at Kambui North.

**Yellow-billed Barbet***Trachyphonus purpuratus*

This elusive and stunning forest barbet was seen on Tiwai Island with a further sighting at Kambui South.

**Honeyguides Indicatoridae****Cassin's Honeybird***Prodotiscus insignis*

We had good but brief views of one at Kambui North and later enjoyed an excellent sighting during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

**Thick-billed Honeyguide***Indicator conirostris*

We had brief and distant views of one in Gola East and later another was seen well but briefly at Lalehun.

**Lesser Honeyguide***Indicator minor*

We heard one at Bumbuna.

**Spotted Honeyguide***Indicator maculatus*

We found two at Guma Valley and later enjoyed superb views of one in Gola North. This is a much sought-after species which seems to occur at very low density.

**Greater Honeyguide***Indicator indicator*

An adult was seen very well in the Bumbuna area.

**Woodpeckers Picidae****Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

We had superb views of one in the Bumbuna area.

**Fine-spotted Woodpecker***Campethera punctuligera*

We had great scope views of a pair in the Bumbuna area.

**Little Green Woodpecker (NE)***Campethera maculosa*

We had wonderful views of one on the Western Peninsula, another in Gola East and three in Gola North.

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

We found several while exploring the forests of Gola North.

**Brown-eared Woodpecker***Campethera caroli*

We found a single bird associated with a mixed feeding flock on the Western Peninsula and another in Gola North.

**Cardinal Woodpecker** *Dendropicos fuscescens*

We had good sightings of a pair in the woodland in the Bumbuna area.

**Gabon Woodpecker** *Dendropicos gabonensis*

We found one in the Western Peninsula and later enjoyed great scope views of one at Gola North.

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

**Fire-bellied Woodpecker (NE)** *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster*

This large forest woodpecker was seen very well in Gola North.

**[African] Grey Woodpecker** *Dendropicos goertae*

We had good views of three at the Freetown Golf Course with further sightings in the Bumbuna area.

### Broadbills Eurylaimidae

**Rufous-sided Broadbill** *Smithornis rufolateralis*

We had superb views of a displaying male in Gola North, one of the many highlights of the trip.

### Wattle-eyes & Batises Platysteiridae

**(African) Shrike-flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus*

We had wonderful views of three in Kambui North.

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

We had superb views of a pair at the Freetown Golf Course and a male en route from Kenema to Makeni.

**Chestnut Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya castanea*

Small numbers were seen at most forests throughout.

**Red-cheeked Wattle-eye (NE)** *Dyaphorophya blissetti*

A pair of this furtive and stunning species was seen very well in Gola North.

**Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye** *Dyaphorophya concreta*

Another stunning and super restless bird, we had excellent scope views of a pair in Gola North.

**Senegal Batis** *Batis senegalensis*

At least four were seen very well in the Bumbuna area.

**Brown-throated Wattle-eye** *Platysteira cyanea*

A pair was seen at the Freetown Golf Course and another in the Bumbuna area.

### Helmetshrikes Prionopidae

**White[-crested] Helmetshrike** *Prionops plumatus*

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

**Red-billed Helmetshrike (NE)** *Prionops caniceps*

A flock of three was seen very well during the walk in Gola East.

### Bushshrikes Malaconotidae

**Grey-headed Bushshrike** *Malaconotus blanchoti*

A stunning pair was seen in the woodland at Bumbuna, one individual was seen eating a small snake.

**Lagden's Bushshrike** *Malaconotus lagdeni*



We had magnificent views of this rare species in Gola North.

**Many-colored Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus multicolor*

We had good views of one in the forest at Gola North of the stunning red-bellied form.

**Orange-breasted Bushshrike** *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus*

This striking species was seen first at the Freetown Golf Course with another sighting at Bumbuna.

**Black-crowned Tchagra** *Tchagra senegalus*

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

**Sabine's Puffback** *Dryoscopus sabinus*

We all enjoyed good views of one in the forest of Gola North.

**Northern Puffback** *Dryoscopus gambensis*

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

**[Lowland] Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus*

Some of us had fabulous scope views of one in Gola North.

**Turati's Boubou (E)** *Laniarius turatii*

We had excellent views of one during the drive from Kenema to Makeni and found several more in the Bumbuna area.

### Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae

**White-breasted Cuckooshrike** *Coracina pectoralis*

We had cracking views of one along the Kabala road.

**Blue Cuckooshrike** *Coracina azurea*

This is a superb looking species and we enjoyed a great sighting of a single bird in Gola East.

**Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** *Campephaga phoenicea*

Our first sighting was of a pair in Gola North with a further sighting of a female in the Bumbuna area.

### Shrikes Laniidae

**Common Fiscal** *Lanius collaris*

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

### Figbirds & Orioles Oriolidae

**African Golden Oriole** *Oriolus auratus*

We had superb views of two along the Kabala Road.

**Western Oriole** *Oriolus brachyrhynchus*

Our first sightings were of two in the Guma Valley where found nesting with further sightings at most forests.

**Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis*

We heard one in Gola East.

### Drongos Dicruridae

**Shining Drongo** *Dicrurus atripennis*

This forest interior drongo was seen once in Gola North.

**Fork-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus adsimilis*

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



**Velvet-mantled Drongo***Dicrurus modestus*

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

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

**Monarchs Monarchidae****Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher***Trochocercus nitens*

This smart, restless species was first seen briefly on the Western Peninsula with further good sightings in Gola North.

**Red-bellied (Black-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 one on Tiwai Island and several in Gola North

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

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

**Rockfowl Picathartidae****White-necked Rockfowl (E)***Picathartes gymnocephalus*

The poster species for Sierra Leone. We had a good encounter with this shy species on the Western Peninsula where we observed two birds near their nest site. Later in Kambui South we enjoyed the most incredible views of four bouncing around the vines and rocks near their roosting site, a truly incredible experience!

**Tits & Chickadees Paridae****White-shouldered Black Tit***Parus guineensis*

We had fantastic views of three in the Bumbuna area.

**Nicators Nicatoridae****Western Nicator***Nicator chloris*

We enjoyed good views of one in the Western Peninsula Forest Reserve and another at Regent Forest.

**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 many forest sites.

**[Little] Grey Greenbul***Andropadus gracilis*

We had good views of two at a roadside stop en route from Gola East to Kenema.

**Ansorge's Greenbul***Andropadus ansorgei*

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

**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 Guma Valley and Gola North.

**Golden Greenbul** *Calyptocichla serina*

We enjoyed good views of a pair at Guma Valley.

**Honeyguide Greenbul** *Baeopogon indicator*

Often heard calling, our best views were of one at Guma Valley.

**Spotted Greenbul** *Ixonotus guttatus*

A small flock was seen well in Gola East.

**Simple Greenbul** *Chlorocichla simplex*

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

**Yellow-throated Leaflove (Greenbul)** *Chlorocichla flavicollis*

We had fantastic views of a pair near Bumbuna.

**Swamp Palm Bulbul** *Thescelocichla leucopleura*

Small numbers were seen at Tiwai Island.

**Red-tailed Leaflove** *Pyrrhurus scandens*

We had good but brief views of three along the Kabala Road.

**Icterine Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus icterinus*

A pair was seen on the Western Peninsula and small numbers daily in Gola North.

**Red-tailed Bristlebill** *Bleda syndactylus*

Heard on many occasions, we had good views of one in Gola North.

**Green-tailed Bristlebill (E)** *Bleda eximius*

This is a very uncommon species and we had a good sighting of one in Gola North.

*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.*

**Grey-headed Bristlebill** *Bleda canicapillus*

We had fantastic views of two on Tiwai Island.

**Western Bearded Greenbul (NE)** *Criniger barbatus*

We enjoyed great views of three in Gola East.

**Red-tailed Greenbul** *Criniger calurus*

A single bird was seen in Gola North, a leader only sighting.

**Yellow-bearded Greenbul (E)** *Criniger olivaceus*

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

### **Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae**

**Square-tailed Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne nitens*

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

**Fanti Saw-wing** *Psalidoprocne obscura*

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

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*

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

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Commonly seen in open habitat throughout the country

**Red-chested Swallow** *Hirundo lucida*



We had fantastic views of six at the Freetown Golf Course.

**White-bibbed Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita*

Small numbers were seen daily on the Moa River where we obtained superb views during our boat trip. Our final sighting was of two near Bumbuna.

**Pied-winged Swallow** *Hirundo leucosoma*

We had fantastic views of a pair at the Freetown Golf Course.

**Lesser Striped Swallow** *Cecropis 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 during the drive from Kenema to Makeni.

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

**Preuss's [Cliff] Swallow** *Hirundo preussi*

Our first sighting was of two near Kambui South. A huge flock of around two hundred was later seen en route from Kenema to Makeni.

### Cettia Bush Warblers & Allies Cettidae

**Chestnut-capped Flycatcher** *Erythrocerus mccallii*

Three of this highly active species was seen very well in Regent Forest.

**Green Hylia** *Hylia prasina*

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

**Tit Hylia** *Pholidornis rushiae*

We had superb views of this, Africa's smallest bird, near Tiwai Island.

### Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

We had good views at widely scattered localities including a peak count of ten at Freetown Golf Course

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Seen at several forested sites including good views of three near Tiwai Island

### Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

We had good but brief views of one in the Kenema rice fields.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

At least two birds were seen in the Bumbuna area.

### Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

**Red-faced Cisticola** *Cisticola erythrops*

A pair was seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Whistling Cisticola** *Cisticola lateralis*

Our first sighting was of one near Gola North and a further two were seen near Kambui North.

**Chattering Cisticola** *Cisticola anonymus*

We had superb scope views of one near Zimmi, another species only recently discovered in Sierra Leone and a major range extension.



**Winding Cisticola***Cisticola marginatus*

One bird was seen at rice fields near Kenema.

**Tawny-flanked Prinia***Prinia subflava*

Another noisy and familiar African warbler, we recorded this species in small numbers at several sites.

**Red-winged Warbler (Prinia)***Heliolais erythropterus*

Seven of these smart birds were seen near Bumbuna.

**Sharpe's Apalis (E)***Apalis sharpii*

We heard this species in many forested areas and were finally rewarded with sightings in Gola North.

**Oriole Warbler***Hypergerus atriceps*

We had a good sighting of one at the Freetown Golf Course and another near Bumbuna.

**Grey-backed Camaroptera***Camaroptera brevicaudata*

One was seen at the Freetown Golf Course with scattered sightings elsewhere.

*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.

**Senegal Eremomela***Eremomela pusilla*

At least ten were recorded in the Bumbuna woodlands.

**Family Uncertain Incertae Sedis****Moustached Grass Warbler***Melocichla mentalis*

A single bird was seen very well in tall grass en route to Bo.

**Kemp's Longbill (E)***Macrosphenus flavicans*

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

**Grey Longbill***Macrosphenus concolor*

One was seen at its nest in the Guma Valley and another in Gola North.

**Green Crombec***Sylvietta virens*

We heard it on a number of occasions and a single bird was seen at Lalehun.

**Babblers & Parrotbills Timaliidae****Blackcap Illadopsis***Illadopsis cleaveri*

This is a tough bird to see well and we had fantastic views of a single calling bird en route to Gola North.

**Rufous-winged Illadopsis (E)***Illadopsis rufescens*

We were treated to outstanding views of this understory skulker in Gola East.

**Puvel's Illadopsis***Illadopsis puveli*

We heard this species along the Kabala Road.

**Brown Illadopsis***Illadopsis fulvescens*

Good looks were had of two on Tiwai Island.

**Blackcap Babbler***Turdoides reinwardtii*

We had fantastic views of a pair en route from Kenema to Makeni and a further three near Bumbuna.

**Brown Babbler***Turdoides plebejus*

We had fantastic views of four along the Kabala road.



**Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae****[Eurasian] Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

A stunning male was seen at River No.2

**Garden Warbler***Sylvia borin*

We found several birds at River No.2 and another at Freetown Golf Course.

**White-eyes Zosteropidae****African Yellow White-eye***Zosterops senegalensis*

We had good views of two at Guma Valley and another one at Bumbuna.

**Starlings Sturnidae****Copper-tailed (Glossy) Starling (E)***Hylopsar cupreocauda*

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

**Splendid (Glossy) Starling***Lamprotornis splendidus*

We had good views of three during the drive from Tiwai to Zimmi and a further two during the drive from Zimmi to Kenema.

**Emerald Starling (E)***Lamprotornis iris*

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

**Violet-backed Starling***Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Good numbers were recorded during the drive from Kenema to Makeni and several more at Bumbuna.

**Thrushes & Allies Turdidae****White-tailed [Rufous] (Ant-) Thrush***Neocossyphus poensis*

We had a glimpse of one on Tiwai Island. This bird was heard calling and responded to tape playback.

**Finsch's [Rufous] (Flycatcher-) Thrush (NE)***Stizorhina finschii*

We enjoyed wonderful sightings of one on Tiwai Island and several in Gola North.

**African Thrush***Turdus pelios*

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

**White-tailed Alethe***Alethe diademata*

We enjoyed outrageous sightings of one on Tiwai Island.

*NOTE: The East African form is sometimes split from the nominate White-tailed Alethe of West Africa, becoming A. castanea. Clements does not accept this split.***Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae****[Western] Forest Robin***Stiphrornis erythrothorax*

This is a shy species and we enjoyed stunning views of one on Tiwai Island and 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.***Common Nightingale***Luscinia megarhynchos*

We had fantastic views of two unusually confiding birds, in the Bumbuna area.

**Forest Scrub Robin***Erythropygia leucosticta*

We had decent views of one of these very shy and seldom seen birds at Regent Forest and then good views of another in Gola North.



**Whinchat***Saxicola rubetra*

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

**White-fronted Black Chat***Pentholaea albifrons*

We had superb views of a pair in stunted woodland en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Fraser's Forest Flycatcher***Fraseria ocreata*

We had great sightings of two in Gola East.

**White-browed Forest Flycatcher***Fraseria cinerascens*

This uncommon species was brilliantly seen at close range in Regent Forest and a further pair on the Moa River.

**Northern Black Flycatcher***Melaenornis edolioides*

We found several in the Bumbuna area.

**Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata*

We had great views of one en route from Kenema to Makeni.

**Cassin's Flycatcher***Muscicapa cassini*

A sprightly bird restricted to the vicinity of water, often hawking insects directly above it. We found a pair near Bumbuna.

**Ussher's Flycatcher (E)***Muscicapa ussheri*

Our first sighting was of a pair at Guma Valley with further sightings of three in Gola East.

**Grey-throated Tit-Flycatcher***Myioparus griseigularis*

We had good but brief views of three on Tiwai Island.

**Grey Tit-Flycatcher***Myioparus plumbeus*

We had good views of one at Bumbuna.

**European Pied Flycatcher***Ficedula hypoleuca*

Our first sighting was of one at forest edge in Gola North with further sightings near Bumbuna.

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

A confusing species that often looks more like a greenbul or warbler than a sunbird. Our first sightings were in Guma Valley with further sightings in Gola East and Gola North.

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

**Mangrove Sunbird***Anthreptes gabonicus*

We had wonderful views of many along River No.2

**Western Violet-backed Sunbird***Anthreptes longuemarei*

One stunning male was seen in the broad-leaved woodlands along the Kabala Road.

**Little Green Sunbird***Anthreptes seimundi*

Small numbers were seen at most of the forest sites.

**Grey-chinned Sunbird***Anthreptes rectirostris*

Our first sighting was of a male near Tiwai Island and a further two near Lalehun.

*NOTE: This species is sometimes split into two forms, the Eastern Grey-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 along the Kabala Road.

**Blue-throated Brown Sunbird***Cyanomitra cyanolaema*

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

**(Western) Olive Sunbird** *Cyanomitra olivacea*

Common and seen almost 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 (NE)** *Chalcomitra adelberti*

This spectacular species was first seen near Tiwai Island with further sightings near Lalehun and Bumbuna.

**Olive-bellied Sunbird** *Cinnyris chloropygius*

This is a typical forest edge species, seen near Lalehun and Kambui South.

**Tiny Sunbird** *Cinnyris minullus*

We had good views of one near Tiwai Island.

**Splendid Sunbird** *Cinnyris coccinigastrus*

Up to thirty of these fantastic birds were seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Johanna's Sunbird** *Cinnyris johannae*

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

**Superb Sunbird** *Cinnyris superbus*

We had good views of one near Tiwai Island and another near Lalehun.

**Variable Sunbird** *Cinnyris venustus*

Commonly seen around the Western Peninsula and Bumbuna areas

**Copper Sunbird** *Cinnyris cuprea*

Our first sighting was of two at the Freetown Golf Course and further sightings near Bumbuna

### Old World Sparrows Passeridae

**[Northern] Grey-headed Sparrow** *Passer griseus*

Fairly common in Freetown and other major towns

*NOTE: The Grey-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.*

**Bush Petronia** *Gymnoris dentata*

We had good views of one along the Kabala Road.

### Weavers & Allies Ploceidae

**Black-necked Weaver** *Ploceus nigricollis*

This snappy-looking weaver of forest edge was first seen 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*

We had wonderful views of a nesting colony near Regent Forest.

*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 our first one near Tiwai Island, and a further three at Lalehun.

**Maxwell's Black Weaver** *Ploceus albinucha*

We found one near Tiwai Island and a further six at Lalehun.



**Compact Weaver***Ploceus superciliosus*

We enjoyed great views of three en route to Bo and a further one at Bumbuna.

**Gola Malimbe (E)***Malimbus ballmanni*

After an intensive search we were finally rewarded with crippling views of a stunning male in 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*

We enjoyed great views of three at their intricate nests near Tiwai Island and another at Kambui South.

**Blue-billed Malimbe***Malimbus nitens*

A secretive species that forages in thick tangles, we enjoyed superb views of one on River No.2 and then again at Tiwai Island and Gola North.

**Red-headed Malimbe***Malimbus rubricollis*

We had superb views of three at Kambui North.

**Crested Malimbe***Malimbus malimbicus*

This is a fairly common species and was seen very well at Lalehun and in Gola North.

**Red-headed Quelea***Quelea erythrops*

A superb male was seen near River No.2 and a further ten at Bumbuna.

**Black-winged [Red] Bishop***Euplectes hordeaceus*

Good views were had of three on the Western Peninsula.

**Yellow-mantled Widowbird***Euplectes macrourus*

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

**Red-collared Widowbird***Euplectes ardens*

Our first sighting was of two en route from Freetown to Bo with further sightings in the Bumbuna area, the form here without the red collar.

**Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae****Chestnut-breasted Nigrita***Nigrita bicolor*

We enjoyed great views of a pair at the Freetown Golf Course and another near Tiwai Island.

**Grey-headed Nigrita***Nigrita canicapillus*

Two were seen near Tiwai Island and a further two at Lalehun.

**Red-winged Pytilia***Pytilia phoenicoptera*

We had awesome views of one in the Bumbuna area.

**Yellow-winged Pytilia***Pytilia hypogrammica*

We had fantastic sightings of six in the Bumbuna area.

**Crimson Seedcracker (E)***Pyrenestes sanguineus*

We enjoyed spectacular views of an adult and juvenile at the Freetown Golf Course and a stunning male near Bumbuna.

**Dybowski's Twinspot***Euschistospiza dybowskii*

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

**Red-billed Firefinch***Lagonosticta senegala*

One was seen in the Bumbuna area.

**African Firefinch***Lagonosticta rubricata*

We had good views of four in the Bumbuna area.

**Orange-cheeked Waxbill***Estrilda melpoda*

A small group of four was seen near Lalehun and a further six in the Bumbuna area.



**Common Waxbill***Estrilda astrild*

Two were seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Orange-breasted (Zebra) Waxbill***Amandava subflava*

This uncommon species was sighted in grassland en route from Makeni to Freetown.

**Bronze Mannikin***Lonchura cucullata*

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

**Black-and-white Mannikin***Lonchura 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*

We had superb scope views of two at Lalehun.

**Indigobirds & Whydahs 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.

**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.

**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 one on the Moa River and a pair near Bumbuna.

**Yellow-throated Longclaw***Macronyx croceus*

We heard one in the Bumbuna area.

**Plain-backed Pipit***Anthus leucophrys*

A pair was sighted in the Bumbuna area.

**Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis*

We had superb views of one near Gola North.

**Red-throated Pipit***Anthus cervinus*

We had great scope views of two in rice fields near Kenema.

**Finches Fringillidae****Yellow-fronted Canary***Crithagra mozambica*

A flock of four was seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Buntings Emberizidae**

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi*

Two birds were seen in the Bumbuna area.

**Cabanis's Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi*

We had great views of a pair en route from Freetown to Bo and a further one was seen near Bumbuna.

## 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*

A family group of five was seen on Tiwai Island.

**Western Red Colobus** *Colobus badius*

A total of fifteen were seen on Tiwai Island.

**Olive Colobus** *Colobus verus*

We had great views of two in Gola East.

### Cheek-Pouch Monkeys Cercopithecinae

**Sooty Mangabey** *Cercocebus atys*

Up to ten were seen daily on Tiwai Island.

**Campbell's Monkey** *Cercopithecus campbelli*

We had a total of twenty on our boat trip up the Moa River and further sightings in Gola East.

**Diana Monkey** *Cercopithecus diana*

One was seen on Tiwai Island.

**Lesser White-nosed Monkey** *Cercopithecus petaurista*

One was seen in Gola East and a further two at Kambui North.

**Callithrix Monkey** *Cercopithecus sabaesus*

We had good views of several near Tiwai Island and a further two along the Kabala Road.

### Squirrels Sciuridae

**Striped Ground Squirrel** *Xerus erythropus*

We saw one during the drive from Gola North to Kenema.

**Gambian Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus gambianus*

We found one on Tiwai Island.

**Red-legged Sun Squirrel** *Heliosciurus rufobrachium*

A single was seen on Tiwai Island.

**Green Bush Squirrel** *Paraxerus poensis*

We found a single in the Guma Valley and another on Tiwai Island.

**Fire-footed Rope Squirrel** *Funisciurus pyrropus*

We had good but brief views of one in Regent Forest.

### Hyraxes Procavidae

**Black-necked Rock Hyrax** *Procavia johstoni*

We found one on a rocky hillside along the Kabala Road.



**Western Tree Hyrax**

*Dendrohyrax dorsalis*

We heard one calling in Gola North.

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