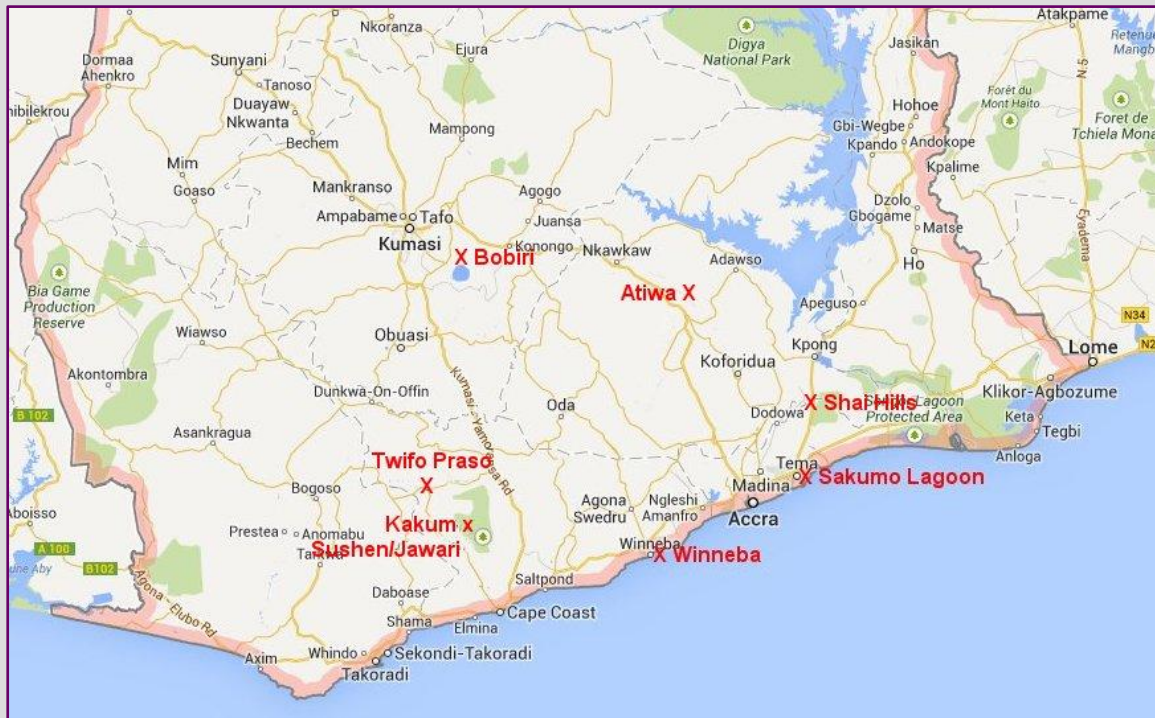


Ghana



7th to 13th March, 2014



Day 1 - Friday 7th	Sakumo Winneba lagoons Winneba plains	6.00-10.30 14.00 - 15.00 15.30- 17.20
Day 2 - Saturday 8th	Sushen Hans Cottage Hotel Jawari	6.30 - 11.45 13.00 - 15.30 16.30 - 18.20
Day 3 - Sunday 9th	Khakum	6.00 -11.00 16.30 - 19.00
Day 4 - Monday 10th	Antwikwa forest Bridge at Twifo Praso Picathartes site	6.00 10.00 12.00 16.30 - 18.30
Day 5 - Tuesday 11th	Bobiri Atiwa	6.30 - 12.00 16.00 - 17.45
Day 6 - Wednesday 12th	Atiwa	6.30 - 13.45
Day 7 - Thursday 13th	Shei hills	6.30 - 12.40

GHANA

March 7th to 13th, 2014

Introduction

Following the success of last year's trip to Thailand with birdingpaltours (birdingpaltours.com) we decided to give them another go again this year. We had looked into Ghana a couple of years ago, but the prices quoted on return emails seemed a little high. But the prices on the tours run by Kalu Afasi were much more reasonable. Our trips are usually around a week long, and one centring on the South offered a good mix. The reason for Ghana is that we had both visited other countries on the Continent before, but wanted some forest and open country specialities. This had to be balanced



by a safe country with a good deal of stability. Ghana fits the bill. Compared to other African experiences, it felt a lot safer, and the people were ultra friendly without being intrusive.

Kalu is a guide to be thoroughly recommended. Originally a promising footballer from Nigeria, he came to Ghana in 2001, started birding in 2005 and is now at the stage where he has seen all the list of regular Ghanaian birds, and his acute sight and knowledge of the calls and jizz of passing or even hidden birds belies the less than 10 years of experience. As witnessed by his section of the birdingpal website, he can tailor tours to suit species, habitat, and length of stay for a variety of party sizes. His cost quoted also was fully inclusive - we didn't need to have any Ghanaian currency at all. This includes lunches, drinks, etc, and the evening meals and breakfasts come with meals, where you can choose from the menu (we tried not to empty his pockets too much by choosing reasonably priced items!). All driving is done through a third party, so we had Boateng ferry us around in a Nissan 4x4 truck - not so comfortable in the back after some time between stops - and he was surprisingly careful. Some of the journeys were up to 3 hours long, which can seem longer due to the variation in quality of the driving surface.

The timing of the trip can make a difference to the enjoyment of the holiday. The rainy season starts around the end of April and lasts for a few months, which must make the roads impassable in places. Almost all the birds were in breeding plumage when we were there in early March, meaning March/early April is a good time to go. Despite the fact that we were there in the dry season, there was often a threat of rain, and we did go through a deluge one evening. Mosquitoes in the South at this time seemed to be non-existent, although antimalarials are still a must (as is the compulsory yellow fever certificate needed to obtain the visa before travel from the Ghana website). Temperatures at this time ranged from around 24 degrees C at night to the lower 30'sC through the day.



**Kalu Afasi, your local Birdingpal guide
(from Birdingpaltours website)**

Kalu Afasi is a highly experienced tour guide and has led tours for many companies in Ghana. His love of birds and his identification skills of the birds of West African are exceptional, as is his knowledge of where to find them.

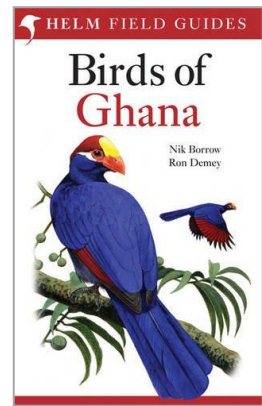
Kalu was taught the science and art of birdwatching by a Danish birdwatcher by name Jens Byskov. After receiving his first lesson from Jens, Kalu attached himself to David Daramani, who himself has birded in Ghana for close to 40 years. His youthfulness and sense of humour makes him the best.

kalu_afasi@yahoo.com

The airline we travelled with was TAP Portugal, which had a connecting flight in Lisbon. Full marks go to them on our transfers. The time between landing and take off at Lisbon outbound was only 45 minutes (a recognised transit apparently), which was reduced to 25 minutes due to a late first flight. Not only were we met off the plane by a taxi and taken straight to the second, which was held back for us, but the luggage even followed us to the other end. We stayed in all hotels for only one night, apart from the Hans Cottage Botel for 3, and the Crowne Plaza in Accra one night each end of the trip. The hotels are usually clean, reasonably basic, yet always good enough for a birding trip! All but one had air conditioning (a fan in the other), but other luxuries such as towels and toilet rolls sometimes needed to be requested. And of course don't rely on hot water - cold is so much more refreshing after a day in the field anyway. Full marks go the Crowne Plaza (NOT the well known luxury chain by far) who not only gave us the best room on the last night, but also allowed late afternoon check out so that we could freshen up and pack equipment at the last minute. The Hans Cottage is the only

accommodation where a reasonable amount of birding can be done on site, due to its small lake and weaver colony. Kalu uses it regularly for Kakum, and the usual few hours break in the middle of the day for either travel, lunch or rest from the sun, mean there is opportunity to explore this.

All electricity sockets encountered were the UK 3 square pin type. For reference I used the Birds of Western Africa by Borrow and Demey (Helm field guides), but the specific field guide to the Birds of Ghana is a much better recommendation, since it is lighter and the distribution maps much more accurate.



Sakuma Lagoons

(Day 1)



Kalu had positioned us in the Crowne Plaza Hotel for the first night - please don't confuse this with the well known upper price hotel chain in the UK, they seem to have merely pinched the name and not the ethos. However, as usual with birding hotels, it was definitely adequate, including the toast and egg breakfast and mood lighting in the room, ie barely one candlepower in the light bulbs. Yet the location meant that we were

only 5 minutes drive from our first Ghanaian birding delights, the lagoons at Sakuma. We drove the short way along predictably uneven tracks, heightening expectation with early goodies such as Purple Glossy Starling, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, and Green Woodhoopoe. The car disgorged us at what was apparently once the chosen entertainment location for the area, but seemed a little run down by now. But it started us off with our birding, picking up Splendid Glossy Starling amongst the abundant Pied Crows and Cattle Egrets.



The location is more than this obviously, with the central focus being on the large lagoon. This had a lot more water in than usual following the 5 hours of heavy rain the day before. This seemed to reduce the potential for wandering the shores due to the higher water line. The edge of the lagoon is bounded in the parking side by a few acres of loose

bushland, some more semi savannah, a second much smaller lagoon, and open slightly marshy ground. We went through the bushes for a short way first, unearthing a fairly static Jacobin Cuckoo amongst others. Opening on to the lagoon, following some very close Senegal Thick-knees, was an assault by the very vocal Lapwings - Spur-winged, African Wattled, and single Senegal. They were constantly threatening the ever present Pied Crows and Yellow-billed Kites. The open marshy area adjacent to the lagoon was constantly entertaining, both on the ground with Plain-backed Pipits and Yellow-throated Longclaws, and the bushes alongside, where a pair of displaying Malachite Kingfishers and 4 Mosque Swallows stole the show. An interesting observation also here was that some birds had only just changed into breeding plumage, such as Pin-tailed Wydah and Village Weaver, with a half effort from a Northern Red Bishop.



We finally satiated our thirst with some cold water from the kiosk, and then headed to the smaller lagoon. This wasn't quite as lively, with a Senegal Coucal vying for our attention in the open, although the only competition was from overflying Grey Hornbill and the ever present Yellow-billed Shrikes. Although only 10.30 by the time we wound up here, we set off to break free from the suffocation of Accra, or at

least its suburbs, and it seemed to take half of the time of the westward bound journey to lose the crowds.

Winneba

After a light lunch just short of Winneba, we then headed to two locations in the area. The afternoon session here was at a slower pace bird wise than the morning. First stop was Winneba Lagoon. Kalu explained again that the heavy rainfall had vastly decreased the muddy finges, which may have explained the lack of any numbers of waders and terns. The lagoon is directly adjacent to the ocean, with a fishing vilage attached. This resulted in small numbers of boys and young men casting their nets, but they didn't disturb the few birds to any great degree. A few Pied and single Malachite Kingfisher provided some entertainment, with a few Western Reef Herons trying to throw their weight around, but we didn't stay too long before leaving for Winneba Plains.



Winneba Plains came as a bit of a surprise, with the location consisting of a long and quite busy dirt track bisecting some open grassland with scattered trees. Apparently, this is best when some burning of the vegetation has been carried out, but we weren't here at that time. In addition, there was some ongoing work in the location for possible Black-



bellied Bustard. Thus, the first hour or so was trudging, with only Gabar Goshawk and Black-shouldered Kite to show for our troubles. Then the temperature seemed to drop, welcoming in the late afternoon, and birds suddenly started to enter the scene. These included small groups of Yellow-fronted Canaries, Double-toothed Barbet, and a group of Yellow-crowned Gonoleks. We even had the treat of a couple of Cisticolas, with breeding Croaking, and my

delight at actually correctly identifying Singing Cisticola - without the aid of the field guide! The dedication was rewarded with the last bird before leaving for our onward journey being a displaying Black-bellied Bustard, which apparently had not been seen by Kalu this year.

Sushen

(Day 2)

I suppose it had to happen sooner or later - Africa strikes again! We were due to have breakfast at 5am, with the intention of leaving at 5.30. Dutifully British and there on time, it was some time after that when Kalu turned up and informed us that the breakfast staff had indeed been up since 4am to prepare the meal, but someone had left the previous evening with the keys and locked them in reception (the staff, not the keys!).



So we left over half an hour later than expected, and headed for this site, which was somewhat closer to allow for the lost time. And what a choice, the woodland and forest birding along here was exceptional. The location is only 2km short of Kakum, and consists of a dirt track which runs through initially open areas with scattered trees, passing sparse habitation on the way, culminating in a path through the thicker rainforest. There was a constant but not overbearing traffic of people, in singles rather than crowds, and none were at all intrusive. The car dropped us off on the track next to one of the clearings, and we could have stayed in this spot for much longer than we did. Birds were constantly flying in or appearing in the vegetation, with overflying Pied Hornbills to add. A Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher kept returning to the overgrown vegetation in front of us, with singing Yellow-browed Camaroptera and perched Black and

White Mannikin next to it. Violet-backed Starlings were regular, and a Tambourine Dove flew in.

The walk seemed to get better as we progressed, with new species constantly appearing and often lingering. Pride of place was likely reserved for Black Bee-eaters, one of the most wanted in the list. They may not have been exceptionally close, but were stunning nevertheless. Not outdone, White-throated and Rosy Bee-eaters were always around, almost always airborne and noisy. Sunbirds provided the most common family, and also challenge, since they are a difficult clan anyway, and Ghana has variety in riches. Included in the roster here were Splendid, Green, Olive, Collared, and Blue-throated Brown. They often shared trees with Speckled Barbets, Golden Greenbuls, and Fanti Saw-wings. Two Kingfishers were on their own. Woodland was easy, but we couldn't agree on a Dwarf/Pygmy Kingfisher, since the presence or absence of a dark crown cap was debatable.



The birding became predictably more difficult as we entered the forest, with taller trees hemming us in and reducing bird density. We walked some way to a clearing, notching up Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Grey-headed Negrofinch, and my pride and joy, a Little Grey Greenbul - noted more for the fact that I managed to identify a small greenbul in the canopy than the excitement of its demeanour! The

skill of Kalu at identifying birds on call must be mentioned here. He not only recognises them, but sometimes can bring them in with recorded calls, but doesn't overuse this as some have been seen to. The clearing was particularly productive, with a large bare tree in the centre the focal point for birds. We spent some time here, and even came back for more, notching up Blue-throated Roller, Red-headed Malimbe, Usscher's Flycatcher, and overflying Emerald Cuckoo. Vying for attention were the swarms of White-throated Bee-eaters and Fanti Saw-wings overhead, which the roller joined for a snack on the flying insects.

The walk back turned up even more birds, with seemingly more action than on the way in, despite the increasing temperatures. A second Yellow-bearded Greenbul accompanied a Crested Malimbe, and Western Oriole added to the Black-winged Oriole of earlier in the morning. A small party of Rufous-crowned Flycatchers passed through, with more Golden Greenbuls in the canopy.

Hans Cottage Hotel.

Since we had a few hours to spare over early afternoon, we decided to see what the hotel grounds had to offer. They are not too extensive, with the focal point being a large lagoon with imported crocodiles for the tourists. Within the lagoon is a very small island, which hosts a colony of Cattle Egrets. It is also host to a vibrant colony of Weavers, as does the ever so enticing "crocodile petting" area next to the restaurant. The inhabitants of these are Village and Orange Weavers, with a small colony of Viellot's Black Weavers

over a large lily pond. An African Jacana had shown itself just before lunch here, and was joined after by a pair of Woodland Kingfishers.



Jawari

For the afternoon shift, we spent a few hours along this track. It is situated only few hundred metres after the turnoff to Sushen, following a sign for the "Stingless Bee Centre". We thankfully continued past this for a mile or so, being dropped off in an open area, to then walk back the way we had driven. Good numbers of White-throated Bee-eaters were immediately obvious overhead, as were a quartet of pied Hornbills. It wasn't long before we picked



up a pair of large raptors gliding in the distance, but luckily one was seen landing nearby. It took a little while to sort the branch obstructed views into Cuckoo Hawk, especially when the crest wasn't visible. Shortly after, a Black and White Flycatcher female was picked up following Kalu hearing a male call. A separate pair were seen later. Kalu then had the disappointment of not being able to call out a Rufous-sided Broadbill. We spent some time in the forest, just metres from the track, without success. As the light began to show signs of fading, we added Simple Greenbull and Pale Flycatcher to the list, before managing to pick out a Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird. This was the last of the days birds, but not the last of the "excitement". Within what seemed only minutes, the clear skies turned threatening, and the driver was called for. When we were safely in the car, he drove hastily along the poor track, but we were stopped by a fallen tree barring our exit. This had happened during our visit, but fortunately it wasn't too big an obstacle, with part thanks to the scooter rider behind whose machete helped immeasurably. The rain was by now torrential.

Kakum

Day 3

The canopy walkway at Kakum is reputed to be one of the better birding spots in this part of the country, due to the elevation reached on the walkway, being amongst, rather than above the higher branches. So the heartsink moment was as we reached the

entrance from the road, having set off early to beat the crowds, yet saw a busload of tourists, probably fairly local, getting off a bus. Shouldn't they have been at church or something? Not all bad news though, since we were allowed entry straight away, and they had to wait around until 8.30 to spoil our morning! We marched straight past the busload, and up the multitude of steps. This is where Kalu felt he made up for the disappointment of the missing Rufous-sided Broadbill yesterday evening, by locating one while still in the half light. In addition, we picked up a White-tailed Alethe a little further up the steps, even though it was only seen briefly.



And then to the walkway, which is a seemingly precarious yet stable contraption spanning between five platforms bolted to the trees. There is also partial shade here from the higher trees, which made the temperatures bearable through our morning stay. Birding here is of the patient sort, since some time has to be put in to see a reasonable variety of species. Early morning particularly was slow going, with birds such as Little Grey Greenbul, Ussher's Flycatcher, and Sharpe's Apalis bridging the monitoring of the vegetation. We spent some time on the first platform, where the trees were a little more closed in, but still productive as time went by. Slender-billed Greenbul and Black-capped Apalis were early, and Pied Hornbills constantly over. In the distance, a Harrier Hawk perched for a short time. Cassin's Greenbuls were flighty but constant, and Blue Malkoha an expert in hiding within small cospes of leaves. More obliging were Hairy-breasted Barbet and Grey-chinned Sunbird. One or two small groups

of tourists had also managed to escape capture at the gate, but were generally quiet and passed through quickly.

The third platform was our second stop, and this gave more expansive views over the forest. One tree in particular hosted Golden Greenbul, Grey-headed Nigrita, and Grey-chinned Sunbird at different times. Below and just away from the platform, a Blue Cuckooshrike was seen a few times, and singing Spotted Greenbul was on a favoured perch for some time. A Honeyguide Greenbul flew under the platform towards this spot, with regular Yellow-mantled Weaver nearby. A rather boisterous busload passed through while here, but the attendant from the park who was with us did a good job of ushering them onward.

We moved on to the last platform, which looked over the same set of trees as first thing, but from a different angle. The morning was predictably getting much hotter, but the number and variety of the birds continued to meander upwards. Two Orioles, a Northern and a Black-winged, were not too far from us, and a Fernando Po Batis was busy but stayed reasonable time. Kalu pointed out a Fraser's Sunbird - thankfully - it just looked like another female sunbird to us. Black-capped Apalis was much easier and this time more obliging, with a second group of Sharpe's Apalis passing close by. The alarm clock for leaving was the unfeasible amount of tourists who piled on to the walkway at 11am,

obviously satiated with praise and ready to fill our space with noise! However, as we exited the last platform, we stumbled on a huge scorpion ambling along the middle of the path. After we had gorged on the spectacle, the guide thankfully moved it into the undergrowth away from the noisy threat approaching, who no doubt would have shown it little mercy.

Before we boarded the car again to leave, a chance attempt at filling photos of Pied Crow led to a Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch nearby, which then led to much closer views of the stunning Black Bee-eater. This pair has apparently bred in a pile of builder's sand at the entrance to Kakum for the last four years. As we watched, an Olive-bellied Sunbird popped a bill out of a dense bush.



The afternoon session was again back at Kakum. This time it was a lot more sedate, with birds trickling in, but also no tourists messing around. We started with a quick visit to the Black Bee-eaters, where the light was by now ideal for photography. The walk up the many steps to the entrance to the walkway was a lot hotter than first light, so finding a calling Cameroon Sombre Bulbul on the way up to stop and tease out was welcome. Blue Malkoha and Ussher's Flycatcher welcomed us back, but we decided to move down to the third canopy where there was also a better view over the forest. A pair of Honey Buzzards watched overhead, and a Harrier-hawk also passed by. Two Palmnut Vultures were spotted from here, one overhead, and one perched in the distance. The sharp eyes of Kalu and the park guide picked up two groups of Hornbills in the far distance, perched on large trees on the horizon - Black-casqued and Brown-cheeked. As the light began to fade, hundreds of Common Swifts appeared overhead, and were joined by a pair of hawking Blue-throated Rollers. Last spot here was the welcome addition of a small troupe of Mona Monkeys, still feeding on yellow pods as they passed by the end of the walkway. To finish off the day, we turned off the road no more than half a mile short of the hotel to look for Nightjars, and lit up a Long-tailed Nightjar almost immediately. Searching the area on foot failed to find any more, but Kalu spotted a Plain Nightjar squatting on the track in the headlights as we were leaving.

Antwikwa

Day 4

Before leaving the area for further West, a further morning was spent mopping up birds of the forest edge. This could have been seeing many of the same birds as before, and adding a few misfits to the list, but the mix of species seemed different yet again. This was doubly surprising since the location was on the Western edge of the Kakum Forest, where we spent the day yesterday. The format was similar to the first morning in the area. We turned off the road some way after the Kakum canopy entrance, and then drove along a rough track for a couple of miles, passing a few small villages on the way. We parked at what was apparently a ranger station for the forest - in effect a couple of buildings with photos of birds on. We then walked the track for a few hours, passing initially through open sparse forest on either side, and turning back at a more enclosed area next to cocoa plantations.



The birding was slowish early morning, rising in variety as time went on, and on return along the track, with the heat rising, the birding slowed down again. There seemed to be a higher percentage of skulkers as compared with the first morning, so thanks to Kalu's expertise in recognising the calls and using playback of calls to make them more visible. Early birds to show were two Longbills - Grey first then Kemp's, with a couple of Palm

Swamp Warblers initially keeping to the interior of the palm fronds before showing. One of the higher trees next to the track was a magnet for a few species, including a trio of Fire-bellied Woodpeckers and Naked-faced & Bristle-nosed Barbets. Red-rumped Tinkerbird responded well to hearing its own call, but a pair of Chestnut Wattle-eyes passed slowly through. A Dusky Grey Flycatcher initially looked lighter and so more confusing initially, but the darkish front could be seen better out of the harsh light. It also showed a lot more obviously than a Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher steadfastly refused to appear in the open, limiting views to within the thick bushes hosting it. Just before a Cassin's Hawk Eagle passed over, we slipped into the forest next to a stream, but stopped only about 10 metres in. Kalu then successfully managed to lure in two Spotted Flufftails, with one being seen. Despite the lure, it had to be worked for, since they are incredibly shy, but we did manage to get good glimpses as it tried its hardest to evade our gaze. Before turning back again at the cocoa plants, we peered out at the other side, but only after checking the woodpiles and ground cover optimistically for snakes - a country apparently alive with them and still no sign. We did pick up a pair of Blue-throated Rollers however. As mentioned, the walk back again was a lot hotter and much quieter. When we neared the car again, a pair of Olive-bellied Sunbirds were in the company of the less likely Johanna's Sunbirds.

Bridge over the River Pra, Twifo Praso

Next on the agenda was a long drive on both "good" roads and very uneven, bumpy

tracks, broken by a couple of stops before the lunch break. On the outskirts of a small village with cocoa beans drying in the shade, we stopped next to a small stream, which had two narrowish tunnels under the road. One of these was humming with Preuss's Cliff Swallows, and Little Swifts trying to intermingle. We stepped down to the stream to view the seeming mayhem of the nesting colony. On the opposite side of the road, a Little Bee-eater tempted a closer look, which also resulted in a black form Senegal Coucal perched nearby.



Bridge over Swallow colony



Twifo Faso bridge

Shortly after this stop, we managed to evade a gridlock in the centre of Twifo Praso town (which was all caused by a truck broken down in the centre of a T junction), to turn left to the bridge. In order to avoid paying the toll for the car, we parked just before the barrier, and walked the short distance to the combined road and rail bridge over the river. This is a more or less guaranteed spot for Rock Pratincole, and the duly guaranteed bird was immediately picked up on a rock in the centre of the river below us. When we checked further up on the other side, another 6 birds were again predictably perched on rocks. The other speciality here is White-throated Blue Swallow. These rather smart birds actually took a little more time, since they showed only occasionally. They seemingly have a nest site in the central columns of the bridge, but patience was eventually rewarded by good flight views.

Picathartes site

It took us a couple of hours to travel here from the restaurant, at one time seeming to bounce on poor potholed tracks for ages. We arrived at a small village, where the kids swarmed around the car and we were allocated a "keeper" of the birds, or in other words, a lad from the village who could make some money from taking us to the site. The walk to the rocks where the birds are found is about 35 minutes at medium pace, and can get very hot and sweaty, beginning in open land, and then mainly meandering through the forest, with one or two small climbs on the way. The plan was to be at the site for 5pm, which usually means no stopping, but we did manage to eke out a few species on the way at one stop off - Buff-spotted Woodpecker, Dusky Crested-flycatcher, and Blue-billed Malimbe. Near to the site, the keeper suggested a newer site, where he reckoned the birds came in a little earlier. Kalu was unsure, but we decided to give it a go. This was where we had the misfortune to come across a grumpy and ignorant old goat of a British birdwatcher, who unfortunately let the side down. Passing him with a

smile, he kept his face like a slapped buttock, and when we were deciding where to sit, he muttered something about cameras. I challenged him on this, and he had the view that all bird photographers think only of themselves - I think he missed the irony of this. We decided to go to the other site, when I told him to enjoy "his own" birds, but not bother then to come to where we were. The established site is quite a little hike away, but when we arrived, Kalu was asked to stop the buffoon and his Ashanti Tours crew from joining us - Rockfowl wars had begun. Suffice to say that we were left to our own devices until we left at near dark. Some rough seats are placed below the small rock under which the nests are placed, and the *Picathartes* are reputed to usually wander in after 5pm. We waited patiently, eventually being rewarded with a single bird for some time below us before it retreated, and then a couple together, which also departed prematurely. None attempted to enter the nests when we were there, so presumably outside the breeding season their presence isn't always guaranteed.

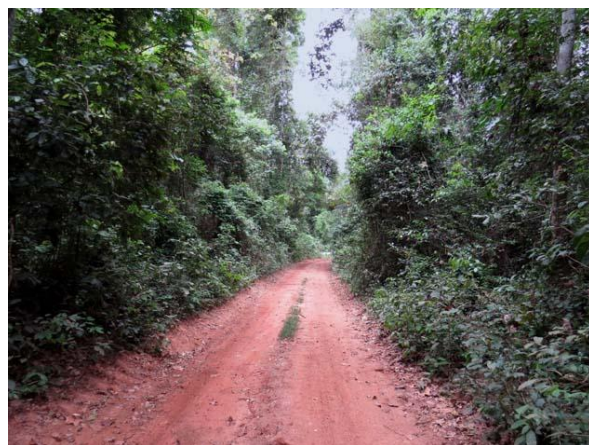


Nests under rock overhang

One more incident on the way back - the lights on the car failed as we were driving along a potholed track, only about 20 minutes into the journey. Luckily, Kalu had put his searchlight into the car that morning, so we managed to scrape to the next town, where also fortunately, we found an auto electrician. No hassles in mending the fuse, although it was interesting seeing this done under mobile phone light. Then the price haggling began, with him wanting to charge more than the driver wanted, due to their being white (rich?) passengers. He was eventually paid the equivalent of £5. I mentioned to Kalu that this was a pittance compared to costs of repair time in the UK, with the cool response of "pity for him that he works in Ghana, then!"

Bobiri Forest

Day 5



After a warmish night's sleep in a hotel with no hot water, towels, or air conditioning, we were unpacked and ready for a 3 night stay, until our driver asked as we were to leave if we needed a hand with our cases? 5 minutes later, the bags were on board and we made

the short drive to the forest. The signs for here seem more interested in pointing out the butterfly sanctuary, but the birding is excellent. Our morning consisted of walking a couple of miles along a track used by timber lorries (only a few early on) which ran through medium dense forest, some more open patches, and plenty of forest edge clearings. As usual, this took a little patience, but birds were regular and of a very interesting mix.

After notching up Pale Flycatcher in the car parking area next to the office, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon was picked out high up before departing the scene. Then came an excellent trio of Cuckoos, although African Cuckoo was a fly through. African Emerald Cuckoos were vocal, but enjoyed keeping to the canopy a little too much. The first was a male escorting a pair of females, with another male contesting song across the clearing. A calling male Black Cuckoo was somewhat closer, deigning to select a perch above us. An early fly through African Goshawk was followed a little later by a circling bird, as well as an African Hobby plying the same manoeuvre. To wrap up the birds of prey, a pair of Cassin's Hawk Eagles were high over, with singles of Harrierhawk passing through. One spot half way along our walk provided a mini "bird wave", initiated by a male Chestnut Wattle-eye. The same tree also held a Blue Cuckooshrike, Yellow-browed Cameroptera, and buzzing around was an Olive Green Cameroptera. Green Hylas were regular, and could eventually be pinned down to undercover singing branches. A perched Blue-throated Roller was only metres above us in a clearing for some time, also providing a bit of a rest stop, but a Western Nicator took more work. They have a powerful song, but have the irritating habit of producing this from dense cover. However, this bird did eventually fly out to a more obvious perch. Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes were high up but liked to be in the open, with at least 3 males vying for the girls. Quickest fly though was a Black-throated Coucal, which was seen very briefly but sufficiently for identification. We had been keeping our eye out for snakes through the trip, and a dead one on the track providing sustenance for butterflies was no compensation, but on the return a rustle of leaves from a bush very briefly picked part of what must have been one of the Mambas, judging by its arboreal preference and subsequent speed of leaving the scene.

Atiwa

After another 2-3 hour drive, where we seemed to be heading eastwards again towards Accra, we stopped off at a dirt track which seemed to initially be in fairly open land. Kalu couldn't hide his initial disappointment here, since trucks were regularly plying to and fro, leaving red clouds of dust in their wake. He summarised that they were taking rockfill to the original gold mine, the selfsame reason for the track. This also reduced the quantity of birds by the roadside. However, we plodded on, adding more Common Fiscals to the ones already counted on the wires before the village, although a Black-necked Weaver was much less obliging, hiding in palm fronds.



A couple of Sunbirds were seen as Collared, but then a third was made out - Buff-throated Sunbird. Viellot's Black Weavers were in almost constant view. Before crossing the track to a smaller, less used one, we spotted a male Black-and-White Flycatcher at the top of some spindly stems. The new track was devoid of any traffic, and a little more closed in than the makeshift motorway. It was also good for Barbets, with Naked-faced & Hairy-breasted and Yellow-throated Tinkerbird all seen. The track only went on for 100 metres or so, when it ended at a barred gate, which could be rounded to a footpath through the forest. This was quite a birdy spot, with Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Green Hylia, and Velvet-mantled Drongo in attendance. While standing beside the gate, a White-tailed Rufous Thrush zipped past close to us. Before arriving at tonight's hotel, we stopped off at a village where countless Straw-coloured Fruit Bats were roosting on bare trees, just before the evening sortie.

Atiwa

Day 6

When Kalu had mentioned we were going to climb the hill which overlooked our sedate yet noisy evening birding the night before, we thought it was that wacky old sense of humour shining through - the thought of an upward trek in this heat? Then when we pulled up at the same spot, and he said to take extra water on this one, our fears were founded. And if we had been told that to reach the terminus of the walk would take 5 hours, we might have just jacked it in and found a nice sunbathing pool somewhere instead. All right, not that severe, and in fairness, we were always happy to follow his decisions and the resulting birds. As it turned out, there was a point to the exercise, and the uphill climb wasn't in the least bit severe. Even the heat wasn't quite as sapping, since the generally dense forest offered a certain amount of shade.



The bit of track we already knew, which was more like 400m to the barred gate than the 100m I had the impression of the previous evening, was a lot more lively this morning, and we had also beaten the lorries with the early start. A group of Orange-billed Waxbills were feeding on the ground only metres from where we parked, with a Whistling Cisticola singing over their heads. Hairy-breasted Barbet was in a tree with Naked-faced Barbets, and Red-headed Malimbés nearby. As we

neared the gate, Kalu pulled out the bank of bird calls and played for a maestro of the undergrowth huggers. In fact, shortly after we managed to get fleeting flight views of Puvell's Illadopsis, he managed the same trick again with Brown Illadopsis. Don't get excited by the hunt for either, they take a lot of time and patience for a very brief and limited reward. Passing through the gate, the track narrowed and started its gentle ascent, with birds that were much more obliging. A female Emerald Cuckoo was almost directly above us, and a Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher perched for a short time. A group of busy Black Weavers were first thought to be more Viellot's, but this initial bird was the only one amongst Maxwell's. The track narrowed even further after this, with close in vegetation and few birds. The only ones of note were Olive Sunbird and a trio of

smart White-throated Bee-eaters, and a Cassin's Hawk Eagle high overhead. The path was narrow and enclosed for some time, but then broadened, and the trees became more dense. Birding was difficult here, being generally quiet both sight and sound wise. The momentary glimpse of another skulker, the White-tailed Alethe, helped a little, but morale was raised when we managed to pin down a Chocolate-backed Kingfisher high up. It had been calling for some time, but managed to evade positioning too well. We continued on, skirting a fallen tree which had blocked the path by trudging through the adjacent forest (Kalu evidently didn't have a chosen path here evidenced by him searching for a way out on our return!), and were wondering just why we were expending all this effort and time with no reward. Then paydirt. After Kalu had been disappointed at finding a seemingly destroyed nest, a hundred metres on we found a pair of Blue-headed Bee-eaters, which are well worth the trek for them alone. Vying for bird of the trip with Black Bee-eater, they are a similar shape and size, with equally stunning plumage. And for a forest bird, they *actually sit in the same place for some time!* We gorged on this pair of beauties for quite a while, then used them as an excuse to head back. Within a few metres, Kalu pulled bananas, biscuits, and energy drink from his bag. Relief! Couldn't see the next time we might have seen and smelled food.



The walk back down predictably took a lot less time - 2 hours including the snack break. Despite the time and heat, there were a few additions to the list for the day and the trip. Shining Drongos are one of the forest dwelling drongos, and we managed to pick out a pair in amongst the trees. Square-tailed Saw-wings were an awful lot easier, with a small group overhead further down. The only other birds of note were when we stopped to try to tease out one of the skulkers, and instead spotted Honeyguide Bulbul and White-breasted Negrofinch. Last treat was a Western Nicator which was calling from an open branch within the forest - the best look at this species we had had.

Shai Hills, near Accra

Day 7

This last session was far from just a time filler while waiting to leave for the airport. Two days ago, Kalu had asked if we wanted to spend two nights near Atiwa, and finish off with more forest birding. But we took the sensible option and chose to stay overnight in the same Accra hotel as our first night (the Crown Plaza) and visit the nearby savannah reserve instead. We only expected some similar birding habitat to the first morning session, but it turns out that this place is really quite a large area of typical African savannah, with seemingly



miles of open grassland studded with sparse bushes, and bounded on one side with forested rocky hills. We even had to have a reserve guide with us, attached to our trio as soon as we entered the ramshackle gates.

The first 3 hours or so were spent on foot, wading through savannah and woodland on the rough track. We immediately pinned down Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike and Brown-throated Wattle-eye. Looking for a Senegal Parrot which we eventually found, we also stumbled on to a pair of Violet Touracos nearby. A pair of Northern Puffbacks was back in the open area, with regular Grey Hornbills overhead. Just after luring a Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird into the open, we came across our first critters of the day - a small troupe of Green Monkeys feeding in the greenery. While scanning the rock escarpment above, we were very fortunate to see a pair of Mountain Cliff Chats. They are not always seen, and apparently almost impossible to bring closer using calls. An early Whistling Cisticola preceded many Croaking Cisticolas, and a reminder of Spring soon to come in the UK with Spotted Flycatchers and Whinchats.

We then called for the car, and spent the rest of the time slowly driving the track and scanning the open savannah. It looked and felt like being on safari, heightened by the regular sighting of Kob antelope. This was as good an experience as any we had had during a superb trip. Blue-throated Rollers were very regular, as opposed to only singles of Purple & Broad-billed Roller. Now in the open rather than the forest, the Drongos we saw were Fork-tailed, with Piapiac foraging in the long grass. We thought we had come across a couple of incoming Flappet Larks, which turned out to be Plain-backed Pipits when we located them. A trio of Yellow-throated Longclaws were instantly obvious on their tree perches. Just before a cave, which I assume is a bit of a tourist attraction, we managed to get half decent views of Black-crowned Tchagra, excellent views of Croaking Cisticola, and horizon only of a static Lanner. The cave itself was uninteresting geologically, but did add a Stone Partridge, and a pair of displaying and then mating Green-backed Cameropteras. Our best bird was also the last new one of the day and of the trip. We had wanted to see White Helmetshrike for 15 years, since our first trip to The Gambia. And finally, a small group were perched for a short time on a dead tree in the open area, and were watched flying on and away in stages. And lastly, back at reception, a troupe of Olive Baboons seemed to be used to the human presence, weaving in and around the reception area, and at the same time offering little threat to us. The alpha male even deigned to strut his way around, which apparently is not an everyday event at this spot.



SPECIES SEEN

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

A bird of open grassland, it was no surprise that they were only seen on the savannah of Shai Hills, where they were very timid, fleeing from the sight of the car (3 Shai Hills)

Stone Partridge

Ptilopachus petrosus

A little time was spent at the cave of Shai Hills searching for a view of one of these birds, which were calling constantly in the thick undergrowth covering the rocks just above us. 1 was eventually spotted

Double-spurred Francolin

Pternistis bicalcaratus

All birds were seen only briefly, legging it away from us as soon as we were detected (2 Sakumo, 1 Winneba Plains, Sushen 1 on track)

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

15-20 Sakumo

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

8 Sakumo

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

~40 Sakumo

Striated Heron

Butorides striata

1 Winneba Lagoon

Western Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Very common during most journeys through open country (common Sakumo, ~100 Hans Cottage Botel roost, Some on journey to Twifo Praso, Few on way to Atiwa)



Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

1 Sakumo

Great Egret

Ardea alba

The same single bird was present on the lake during our stay at Hans Cottage Botel



Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

~20 Sakumo

Western Reef Heron

Egretta gularis

All birds seem were dark phase (~10 Winneba Lagoon)



Reed Cormorant*Microcarbo africanus*

~80 Sakumo, Hans Cottage Botel - 4 (2 adults, 2 juveniles)

Black-winged Kite*Elanus caeruleus*

1 flying over Sakumo in the distance, 1 much closer at the top of a nearby tree briefly at Winneba Plains

**African Harrier-Hawk***Polyboroides typus*

3 over Kakum, with one perched in the distance, 2 Bobiri

Palm-nut Vulture*Gypohierax angolensis*

1 Winneba Plains, 2 Kakum, one being perched at the top of a tree in the valley

European Honey Buzzard*Pernis apivorus*

2 together flying over Kakum

African Cuckoo-Hawk*Aviceda cuculoides*

2 Jawari, which were first spotted flying over, following which they both landed. Views of the birds weren't great, which meant a little while before we confirmed their identification

Hooded Vulture*Necrosyrtes monachus*

~6 on journey to Winneba, 3 on way to Jawari, 1 from restaurant on way to Picathartes site, 1 on way to hotel from Atiwa, ~2 while at restaurant after Atiwa, ~5 on journey to Accra, 1 perched and 2 over Shai Hills

**Cassin's Hawk-Eagle***Aquila africana*

1 over Antwikwa, 2 & 1 over Atiwa

Gabar Goshawk*Micronisus gabar*

1 Sakumo, 2 Winneba Plains, one of which was perched close to on a telegraph wire

**African Goshawk***Accipiter tachiro*

1 Bobiri

Shikra*Accipiter badius*

1 Sakumo, 1 Winneba Lagoon

Western Marsh Harrier*Circus aeruginosus*

2 Sakumo

Yellow-billed Kite*Milvus aegyptius*

Abundant in most of the country where we travelled, with particular concentrations seemingly near to habitation



Common Kestrel*Falco tinnunculus*

2 on journey to Winneba Plains

African Hobby*Falco cuvierii*

1 over Atiwa

Lanner Falcon*Falco biarmicus*

1 flying high over and 1 perched Shai Hills

Black-bellied Bustard*Lissotis melanogaster*

1 Winneba Plains, where this site is reputed to be a standard location for these. There seems to have been some recent clearing of some of the land where they could be found, which may have caused disturbance. It took some searching a little further along the track to find this calling bird

**White-spotted Flufftail***Sarothrura pulchra*

2 heard, 1 seen Antwikwa. They are a notoriously difficult family of birds to even gain a glance of, so credit to Kalu who was patient and knew his fieldcraft, with one of the birds seen well briefly

Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

1 Sakumo

Senegal Thick-knee*Burhinus senegalensis*

4 Sakumo

**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Common Sakumo, common Winneba Lagoon

Spur-winged Lapwing*Vanellus spinosus*

~6 Sakumo, 2 Winneba Lagoon

**Senegal Lapwing***Vanellus lugubris*

1 Sakumo

African Wattled Lapwing*Vanellus senegallus*

~10 Sakumo

**Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius hiaticula*

1 Winneba Lagoon

African Jacana

Actophilornis africanus

2 Sakumo 1 adult, 1 juv Hans Cottage Botel



Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

1 Winneba Lagoon

Common Redshank

Tringa tetanus

1 Winneba Lagoon

Marsh Sandpiper

Tringa stagnatilis

~6 Sakumo

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

~20 Sakumo, ~6 Winneba Lagoon

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

At least 20 Sakumo

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

~6 Sakumo

Collared Pratincole

Glareola pratincola

18 Sakumo, all flying in groups at different times, one of 3 birds, the other over the lagoon of 15

Rock Pratincole

Glareola nuchalis

8 Twifo Praso



Royal Tern

Thalasseus maximus

1 in the distance over the water at Winneba Lagoon

Western Bronze-naped Pigeon

Columba iriditorques

1 Bobiri, where it was perched for a short time before flying off

Red-eyed Dove

Streptopelia semitorquata

This was a common sound in most areas away from habitation, including forests, but wasn't checked on view too often

Vinaceous Dove

Streptopelia vinacea

Abundant along coast

Laughing Dove

Spilopelia senegalensis

Common along coast, Small numbers Sushen



Tambourine Dove

Turtur tympanistria

2 separate birds Sushen, 1 Atiwa

African Green Pigeon

Treron calvus

~30 in one tree Antwikwa, 1 Atiwa

Grey Parrot

Psittacus erithacus

2 Bobiri were perched high up at some distance

Senegal Parrot

Poicephalus senegalus

1 Shai Hills

Violet Turaco

Musophaga violacea

2 Shai Hills

Western Plantain-eater

Crinifer piscator

4 Sakumo, ~8 around Winneba

Black-throated Coucal

Centropus leucogaster

1 Atiwa. This was seen in flight only briefly, but the colouring and much larger size compared with Senegal Coucal were obvious

Senegal Coucal

Centropus senegalensis

2 Sakumo, 1 black form near Preuss's Cliff Swallow colony



Blue Malkoha

Ceuthmochares aereus

2 Kakum. For a somewhat large and colourful bird, they can be hard to see. They have a habit of getting lost in the depths of leaves in even comparatively small trees, so patience is needed before they pop their yellow bills out again



Jacobin Cuckoo

Clamator jacobinus

1 Sakumo

Klaas's Cuckoo

Chrysococcyx klaas

1 Sushen, 1 Kakum



African Emerald Cuckoo

Chrysococcyx cupreus

1 heard Sushen, 3 males & 2 females Bobiri, 1 female Atiwa, which defied the canopy hugging behaviours of those seen previously, and perched just over our heads



Black Cuckoo

Cuculus clamosus

2 males Bobiri, calling separately. The variants in this part of the country are not wholly black, but have light barred underparts, with a rufous throat



African Cuckoo

Cuculus xxx

1 flew over Bobiri

Plain Nightjar

Caprimulgus inornatus

1 near Hans Cottage Botel, picked up in the headlights just before we were about to leave

Long-tailed Nightjar

Caprimulgus climacurus

1 near Hans Cottage Botel, caught in the torchlight as soon as we arrived at the open track and land

Sabine's Spinetail

Rhaphidura sabini

1 Sushen

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus

Common in pockets along coastal route, Few over Accra

Common Swift

Apus apus

1 Sushen, Abundant Kakum

Little Swift

Apus affinis

Common in pockets along coastal routem Common journey to Twifo Praso

Purple Roller

Coracias naevius

1 Shai Hills

Blue-bellied Roller

Coracias cyanogaster

~10 Shai Hills



Blue-throated Roller

Eurystomus gularis

2 Sushen, 2 Kakum, 2 perched in tree Antwikwa

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

1 Shai Hills

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher

Halcyon badia

1 Atiwa, which was calling from the forest at first, then clearly closer to the track. It took some tracking down to almost directly above our heads, but high up



Woodland Kingfisher

Halcyon senegalensis

Easily the most common kingfisher throughout and could be approached very closely (1 Sushen, 2 Hans Cottage Botel, 1 on way to Jawari, 1 Hans Cottage Botel, 1perched on

goalpost near Antwikwa, 1 in hotel grounds on 11th first light)

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*

1 Sushen, 4 Shai Hills, including a pair displaying



Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristatus*

Pair displaying Sakumo, 1 Winneba Lagoon

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

2 Sakumo, ~6 Winneba Lagoon, 1 Hans Cottage Botel



Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*

This was a stunning surprise, since we hadn't even expected a chance of seeing them. Kalu had made no mention of the possibility either, until we were well into the walk at Atiwa. After the disappointment of having what looked like a destroyed nest pointed out, we were over the moon to come across a pair further on using a favoured perch for as long as we decided to watch



Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis*

This is a stunning bird and even better in real life than in the illustrations. We were very pleased with first somewhat distant bird, until we realised that they bred in a pile of sand at Kakum and were regularly very close to (3 Sushen, 2 Kakum, 1 Antwikwa)

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*

2 Shai Hills

Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*

2 Sakumo, 1 near Preuss's Cliff Swallow colony



White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*

The most common and widespread of the Bee-eaters (100's Sushen, 10's Jawari, ~10 Kakum, 4 Bobiri, 4 Atiwa, ~20 Shai Hills)

European Bee-eater*Merops apiaster*

~40 Shai Hills, high overhead

Rosy Bee-eater*Merops malimbicus*

~30 Sushen, all overhead with none even looking like perching

White-headed Wood Hoopoe*Phoeniculus bollei*

1 over Kakum

Green Wood Hoopoe*Phoeniculus purpureus*

3 early morning Sakumo, 1 later Sakumo

**African Pied Hornbill***Tockus fasciatus*

The most common hornbill by far, although most were in flight. When they did land, this was often only for a brief period (~5 Sushen, Jawari, 2-3 regular ones over Kakum , ~20 over Antwikwa, ~10 Bobiri, ~10 Atiwa)

African Grey Hornbill*Tockus nasutus*

~6 Sakumo, 2 on route from Winneba Plains, 6 Shai Hills

Brown-cheeked Hornbill*Bycanistes cylindricus*

6 Kakum, seen in far distance perched on tree

Black-casqued Wattled Hornbill*Ceratogymna atrata*

4 Kakum, seen in far distance perched on tree

Bristle-nosed Barbet*Gymnobucco peli*

Not as common as Naked-faced Barbet, but often associated with them. The feathers on the nose are not always easy to see as in the ID books, so closer examination is usually necessary to ensure identification (1 Kakum, 2 Antwikwa, 1 Atiwa)

Naked-faced Barbet*Gymnobucco calvus*

Regularly seen in forest and forest edge. Some young birds also seemed to be present (1 Sushen, 5 Kakum, ~10 Antwikwa. 4 Bobiri, 2/~6 Atiwa)

**Speckled Tinkerbird***Pogoniulus scolopaceus*

Usually keeps to the canopy and upper branches (~10 Sushen, 2 Kakum, 1 Antwikwa)

Red-rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus atroflavus*

Initially heard, playing the call helps bring these birds very close (1 Antwikwa , 1 Atiwa)

**Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird***Pogoniulus chrysoconus*

Another species which responds well to palying the call (1 Shai Hills)

Yellow-throated Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus subsulphureus*

They really are as difficult to tell from Yellow-rumped as we thought. There was no suggestion of any yellow on the throat, but call library assisted ID (1 Sushen , 1/1 Atiwa)

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird*Pogoniulus bilineatus*

1 Jawari

**Hairy-breasted Barbet***Tricholaema hirsute*

1 Kakum, 1/1 Atiwa)

Vieillot's Barbet*Lybius vieilloti*

More a bird of open areas, the first we saw was a little dishevelled. The second was much smarter (2 Shai Hills)

**Double-toothed Barbet***Lybius bidentatus*

2 Sakumo, 1 Winneba Plains

Cassin's Honeybird*Prodotiscus insignis*

At least 1 bird was regularly seen and heard, constantly calling, from the Kakum canopy walkway. Good views were not to be had, so full ID was by call playback (1 regular bird Kakum)

Least Honeyguide*Indicator exilis*

These birds keep themselves high up near the canopy, so identification also relies on call playback (2-3 in canopy calling near Bobiri reception)

Spotted Honeyguide*Indicator maculatus*

1 calling from open branch Kakum

Greater Honeyguide*Indicator indicator*

1 male Shai Hills

Fine-spotted Woodpecker*Campethera punctuligera*

1 Sakumo

Buff-spotted Woodpecker*Campethera nivosa*

A single bird was seen, which was directly above our heads on a trunk on the walk to the Picathartes site

Cardinal Woodpecker*Dendropicos fuscescens*

2 Sakumo, 2 Winneba Plains, 1 Shai Hills

**Melancholy Woodpecker***Dendropicos lugubris*

The birds in this part of the country are of the Gabon Woodpecker subspecies, gabonensis, with boldly spotted rather than streaked underparts (2 separate birds xxx, 1

Antwikwa)

Fire-bellied Woodpecker

Dendropicos pyrrhogaster

The birds we saw don't greatly resemble the bright birds in the guide books - the red on the belly is usually difficult to see unless they are facing with feathers fluffed (3 Antwikwa 1 Bobiri)

Rufous-sided Broadbill

Smithornis rufolateralis

After an unsuccessful attempt at finding one of these little stunners at Jawari, we managed to see one first thing the next morning as we walked to the Kakum walkway. The bird we saw even displayed the little loop flight, where it flies up in a small circle continuously and lands back on the same branch

Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher

Bias musicus

One of the birds we wanted to see, those found were usually a little distant, but still rewarding (Pair and single female Jawari, 1 Atiwa)



Fernando Po Batis

Batis poensis

When seen well, the smudged supercilium over the eye section can be seen to help sort this one out from a confusing but impressive family (1 Kakum)

Chestnut Wattle-eye

Platysteira castanea

One of those birds where the very different female is arguably more impressive than the male, and whose back colour the name of the species comes from (Pair Antwikwa, 1 male Bobiri, 1 Atiwa)

Brown-throated Wattle-eye

Platysteira cyanea

1 Shai Hills

White-crested Helmetshrike

Prionops plumatus

We had wanted to see these birds since our first trip to The Gambia in 1999, when there was a chance of finding them. The fact that the group of 8 were the last new birds of the trip made them even more welcome (8 Shai Hills)

Black-crowned Tchagra

Tchagra senegalus

2 Shai Hills

Sabine's Puffback

Dryoscopus sabini

1 Bobiri

Northern Puffback

Dryoscopus gambensis

2 males, 2 females Shai Hills

Yellow-crowned Gonolek

Laniarius barbarous

Very vocal but also very elusive, these birds called from thick cover, only breaking this occasionally (~4 Sakumo, 6 Winneba Plains)

Blue Cuckooshrike

Coracina azurea

Both birds seen were males (1 Kakum, 1 Bobiri)

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike

Campephaga phoenicea

Probably the first bird we saw as we started along the track at Shai Hills, the only one we saw was a male (1 male Shai Hills)

Purple-throated Cuckooshrike

Campephaga quiscalina

2 males Bobiri

Yellow-billed Shrike

Corvinella corvine

We had thought this species would be widespread and easy to see, but the only location where this was true was our first morning at Sakumo lagoon. This was the only place we came across them (Common Sakumo, sometimes in groups up to 8 birds)



Northern Fiscal*Lanius humeralis*

Another of those usually prolific species which you would expect to be widespread and obvious, with its preference for roadside perches such as telegraph wires. The main concentration seemed to be around Atiwa (11 Atiwa/7 near Atiwa in open areas)

**Western Oriole***Oriolus brachyrynchus*

Both the orioles which occur here were regularly heard in the forests, and often seen well. The white in the wing of this species has to be checked carefully since it isn't always obvious (1 Sushen, 1 Kakum)

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

1 Sushen, 1 Kakum, 1 Bobiri, 2 Atiwa

Shining Drongo*Dicrurus atripennis*

This tends to be much more of a dense forest species than the other 2 drongos seen, and takes a bit of work and vigilance. The only ones seen were a pair on the return walk at Atiwa, where they were well in from the track

Fork-tailed Drongo*Dicrurus adsimilis*

The open land drongo of the area, the only ones seen were 5 on the savannah of Shai Hills

Velvet-mantled Drongo*Dicrurus modestus*

By far the commonest drongo seen, the ID book seems to differentiate the tail from Fork-tailed as being "fish tailed", but I couldn't see much difference in practice. Habitat is a better start at separating the two (~20 Sushen, 4-5 Kakum, ~10 Antwikwa, ~8 Bobiri, 2/~8 Atiwa)

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

A real skulker, the only bird seen was by the path at Antwikwa, and then we had to peer down on our haunches to get the views we did

Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher*Terpsiphone rufiventer*

Male Sushen, 2 Antwikwa, 1 Atiwa

African Paradise Flycatcher*Terpsiphone viridis*

1 Shai Hills

**Piapiac***Ptilostomus afer*

The only ones seen were a band of 5 sniffing out a meal in the long grass of Shai Hills savannah. 3 of them did oblige by flying up to some bare branches

Pied Crow*Corvus albus*

Abundant

**White-necked Rockfowl***Picathartes gymnocephalus*

In world birding terms, this is likely to be one of the two top targets for Ghana, along with Egyptian Plover in the North. Looking at the location we were taken to, which is over half an hour trek from a small village, I am amazed they were found at all. The form is that a "minder" from the village needs to accompany you to the site, and this is reached by 5pm, before the birds are expected. They then approach on the ground from any direction, but don't always go to the nests under the rocks. We saw 3, but I suspect that their presence outside of the breeding season isn't always guaranteed

Dusky Crested Flycatcher*Elminia nigromitrata*

Much like the very similar Blue-headed, this Crested Flycatcher is another notorious skulker. We caught eye level views briefly on the walk to the Picathartes site

White-shouldered Black Tit*Melaniparus guineensis*

2 Shai Hills

Western Nicator*Nicator chloris*

The song of this species has the volume and quality of larger reed warblers such as Great Reed, but is delivered usually from a hidden perch inside dense cover. We were lucky with all 3 we tried to locate, with increasingly better views, from flight only to exposed branch in the forest edge (1 Sushen, 1 Bobiri, 1 Atiwa)

**Common Bulbul***Pycnonotus barbatus*

Quite common Sushen, ~6 Atiwa

Slender-billed Greenbul*Stelgidillas gracilirostris*

One of the commoner and more widespread greenbuls, one of the distinguishing features of this species is no particular features. Much like the rest of the family then! (2 Kakum, 1 Antwikwa, 1 Bobiri, 2 Atiwa)

**Golden Greenbul***Calyptocichla serinus*

These are quite obvious when seen for the first time, with a green rather than red tail of Icterine Greenbul (5 Sushen, 2 Kakum)

**Little Greenbul***Eurillas virens*

A more wholly olive brown bird than other congeners, without any other noticeable marks (2 Jawari, 1 Antwikwa)

Little Grey Greenbul*Eurillas gracilis*

1 Sushen, ~6 Kakum

Plain Greenbul*Eurillas curvirostris*

1 Kakum

Honeyguide Greenbul*Baeopogon indicator*

Despite the name and resemblance to honeyguides, which we thought in theory should cause some confusion, the obvious black and white tail pattern with rich olive green back makes this an easy bird to identify, even in flight as was the first of our two individuals (1 Kakum, 1 Atiwa)

Spotted Greenbul*Ixonotus guttatus*

The only bird seen was singing below us from the third platform on the Kakum canopy walkway. It did have spotting in the throat and upper breast, but seemed to be plainer generally underneath

Simple Greenbul*Chlorocichla simplex*

2 Jawari

Swamp Palm Bulbul*Thescelocichla leucopleura*

Quite a vocal bird, they stayed more in the vicinity of palms than always in them (2 Antwikwa, 3 Atiwa)

Yellow-bearded Greenbul*Criniger olivaceus*

2 separate birds Sushen, where they tended to stay in the thicker vegetation

Square-tailed Saw-wing*Psalidoprocne nitens*

4 Atiwa, where they were flying directly over us, making identification easy

Fanti Saw-wing*Psalidoprocne obscura*

100's Sushen, mainly in mixed flocks overhead, but with some birds also obligingly perched

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Small colony at Twifo Praso

Ethiopian Swallow*Hirundo aethiopica*

More birds than those recorded will have been seen in mixed flocks and high overhead (Quite common Sakumo and along coastal route, small numbers over Kakum, small colony at restaurant on way to Picathartes site)

Rock Martin*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

1 perched on hotel before visit to Bobiri first light

Rufous-chested Swallow*Cecropis semirufa*

Very much like Red-rumped Swallow, but with a deeper rufous underside as suggested by the name (~6 Sushen)

Mosque Swallow*Cecropis senegalensis*

The birds seen here seem to have a much more obviously rufous underside than on previous trips to Africa (4 Sakumo, ~6 Sushen)

Preuss's Cliff Swallow*Petrochelidon preussi*

Colony under bridge on way to Twifo Praso

**Kemp's Longbill***Macrosphenus kempii*

1 Antwikwa, heard calling and seen briefly

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*

1 Antwikwa calling and seen feeding in insect on branch

Green Crombec *Sylvietta virens*

3 Antwikwa

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*

1 Kakum

Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mcallii*

~4 Sushen

Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*

3 Bobiri, 1 Atiwa, where many more could be heard calling during the walk. At first very active and difficult to pin down in the foliage, some were then seen very well

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

1 Sakumo, 2 Jawari

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

2 Kakum

Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*

1 Sushen

Singing Cisticola *Cisticola cantans*

1 Winneba Plains

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis*

1 Sushen, 1 Jawari, 1 Atiwa, 1 Shai Hills

**Croaking Cisticola** *Cisticola natalensis*

Quite an obvious call, although I would hardly describe it as a croak, initial impression was of a less stocky bird than the field guides suggest. They were a constant presence on the Shai Hills savannah (2 Winneba Plains, ~12 Shai Hills)

Short-winged Cisticola *Cisticola brachypterus*

(Also known locally as Siffling Cisticola) ~4 Shai Hills

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

4 Sakumo, where they were more often heard than seen, and preferred the marshy areas next to the lagoon

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

4 Winneba Plains, 2 Jawari, 4 Antwikwa

Black-capped Apalis *Apalis nigriceps*

2 Kakum

Sharpe's Apalis *Apalis sharpie*

~12 Kakum, where they were in two separate flocks. Luckily, they take their time foraging in each bush, and passed by the walkway close to and at eye level in both cases



Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyuran*

When seen well, the olive green on the backs of these birds is very bright, with the contrasting grey head making them obvious compared to Olive Green Camaroptera. They are also somewhat like the South American mannikins in display, with clicking sounds and manic jumping around the female. Their loud calls were a constant in the bushy areas of Shai Hills (1 Sakumo, ~8 Shai Hills)

Yellow-browed Camaroptera *Camaroptera superciliaris*

These can occasionally be seen well, but are much more obvious by their distinctive calls in forests and forest margins (2 separate birds Sushen, 1 Kakum, 1 Antwikwa, 1 Bobiri)

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota*

Much drabber dull olive overall than the more distinctive Green-backed Camaroptera, 1 Kakum, 1 Bobiri, 1 heard Atiwa

Senegal Eremomela *Eremomela pusilla*

3 Sakumo

Puvel's Illadopsis *Illadopsis puveli*

One of the skulkers par excellence. They respond well by calling back to tape, but generally stay well hidden. One of the two pinned down crossed the track, but otherwise identified on call (2 Atiwa)

Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens*

1 Atiwa, whereas with Puvel's, stayed under cover while playing calls. Seen, but only briefly

Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*

3 Sakumo, where they were very mobile in the closed bush

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus*

4 Sakum

African Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*

2 Atiwa

**Splendid Starling** *Lamprotornis splendidus*

1 Sakumo, where it was one of the first birds of the trip, 1 Atiwa

Purple Starling *Lamprotornis purpureus*

5 Sakumo. They were seen in the streets on wires before the lagoon was reached

Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis caudatus*

3 Sakumo, where they were along the walls of buildings in the back streets just before the lagoon was reached

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

~6 Sushen, where they were perched in the open with excellent light showing off the violet colouring

Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush *Stizorhina finschi*

1 Sushen, where the bird seen was under the cover of bushes and in the dark

White-tailed Rufous Thrush*Neocossyphus poensis*

1 Atiwa. We had been staking out an Illadopsis, when this bird flew across the track right in front of us, showing off the white tail and bright rufous undersides

African Thrush*Turdus pelios*

4 Sakumo, 2 Shai Hills

White-tailed Alethe*Alethe diademata*

One of the army of skulkers, both birds were seen very briefly. The bright white of the breast stands out in the darker cover they prefer (1 Kakum, 1 Atiwa)

Whinchat*Saxicola rubetra*

5 Shai Hills

Mocking Cliff Chat*Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*

Another of those species we didn't really expect to see. The pair we found were using the high vertical rock faces behind the closed woodland of Shai Hills as their territory, and it was a chance checking of these for calling baboons that found this gem. They plied to and fro along the length of the rocks high up

Fraser's Forest Flycatcher*Fraseria ocreata*

1 Antwikwa, 1 Picathartes site, 1 Atiwa

Pale Flycatcher*Bradornis pallidus*

2 Jawari, 1 Bobiri

Spotted Flycatcher*Muscicapa striata*

4 Shai Hills

Dusky-blue Flycatcher*Muscicapa comitata*

The overall relatively dark grey of this birds helps clinch its identity. They also perch out on obvious branches for prolonged views (1 Antwikwa, 1 Atiwa)

**Ussher's Flycatcher***Muscicapa ussheri*

Annoyingly, they like to stay high up at the top of the canopy, and perch for long periods, so not showing off the martin like profile often enough (1 Sushen, ~6 Kakum, 2 Bobiri)

European Pied Flycatcher*Ficedula hypoleuca*

1 Shai Hills

Fraser's Sunbird*Deleornis fraseri*

Kakum. At first another female type sunbird, a good look at this shows a general washed out green plumage

Grey-chinned Sunbird*Anthreptes rectirostris*

(Also known as Green Sunbird). We might at first have passed these off as Collared Sunbird, since the stripe on the male is not always immediately obvious (3 Sushen, 2 Kakum)

Collared Sunbird*Hedydipna collaris*

These can be confused easily with Green Sunbird, the latter of which doesn't always show an obvious neck strap unless looked at closely (Pair Sushen, 2 pairs Antwikwa, Pair Bobiri, Pair Atiwa)

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird*Cyanomitra cyanoaema*

1 Sushen

Olive Sunbird*Cyanomitra olivacea*

2 Sushen, 1 Bobiri, 1 Atiwa



Buff-throated Sunbird

Chalcomitra adelberti

1 Kakum, 1 Atiwa

Olive-bellied Sunbird

Cinnyris chloropygius

1 from Kakum walkway, Pair Antwikwa

Johanna's Sunbird

Cinnyris johannae

Female Antwikwa, part of a pair near to Olive-bellied Sunbirds, although I missed the male of the former

Superb Sunbird

Cinnyris superbus

2 Sushen, 1 Kakum, 1 Picathartes site, 1 Shai Hills



Copper Sunbird

Cinnyris cupreus

3 Sakumo, 2 Shai Hills

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow

Passer griseus

1 Twifo Praso, amongst the girders of the bridge itself. Other birds had been picked up earlier in the week, but this was the only one I saw well enough



Black-necked Weaver

Ploceus nigricollis

1 Atiwa, where it was found while watching Fiscal. It kept to the inside of palm fronds during most of its brief stay

Orange Weaver

Ploceus aurantius

Colony Hans Cottage Botel



Village Weaver

Ploceus cucullatus

4 Sakumo, Colony Hans Cottage Botel, ~5 Picathartes site

Vieillot's Black Weaver

Ploceus nigerrimus

Small colony Hans Cottage Botel, ~6 Sushen, ~20 Atiwa, and further 1 Atiwa, where it was the only one of its kind in a flock of Maxwell's Black Weavers



Yellow-mantled Weaver

Ploceus tricolor

1 Kakum, 2 Antwikwa, ~10 Bobiri

Maxwell's Black Weaver*Ploceus albinucha*

~15 Atiwa

Red-vented Malimbe*Malimbus scutatus*

1 Atiwa, showing on and off in palm leaves in the canopy

Blue-billed Malimbe*Malimbus nitens*

1 Antwikwa, 1 Picathartes site, 1 Atiwa

Red-headed Malimbe*Malimbus rubricollis*

2 separate birds Sushen, 1 Kakum, 1 Antwikwa, 2 Atiwa

Crested Malimbe*Malimbus malimbicus*

1 Sushen, 3 Bobiri

Northern Red Bishop*Euplectes franciscanus*

1 Sakumo. This was seen in the open only briefly, and was possibly the only bird seen which hadn't change to full breeding plumage, although it was well on its way to this stage

White-breasted Nigrita*Nigrita fusconotus*

1 Atiwa

Chestnut-breasted Nigrita*Nigrita bicolor*

1 at the reception area of Kakum, with a pair on the return walk from seeing the Blue-headed Bee-eaters at Atiwa

Grey-headed Nigrita*Nigrita canicapillus*

2 separate birds Sushen, ~6 Kakum, 4 Bobiri, 2 Atiwa

Orange-cheeked Waxbill*Lagonosticta senegala*

1 on track at Sushen, 4 Atiwa

**Bronze Mannikin***Lonchura cucullata*

2 at restaurant on way to Picathartes site

Black-and-white Mannikin*Lonchura bicolor*

4 Sushen, 3 Kakum, 5 on track near Picathartes site

**Pin-tailed Whydah***Vidua macroura*

Pair Sakumo, where the male was satisfyingly in full breeding plumage

Western Yellow Wagtail*Motacilla flava*

1 Sakumo

African Pied Wagtail*Motacilla aguimp*

3 on route to Winneba Lagoon, 2 Sushen, 2 Kakum, 2 Hans Cottage Botel, 2 at restaurant on way to Picathartes site

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

Pair Sakumo in the long grass next to the lagoon, 3 Shai Hills perched in bushes on the

savannah



Plain-backed Pipit

Anthus leucophrys

~8 Sakumo, 2 Shai Hills

Yellow-fronted Canary

Crithagra mozambica

At least 10 Winneba Plains

TOTAL SPECIES = 236

MAMMALS

Mona's Monkey

Cercopithecus mona

~6 Khakum

Green Monkey

Chlorocebus sabaesus

6 Shai Hills which were feeding on leaves or presumably fruit in the woodland below the rock face at Shei Hills



Olive Baboon

Papio anubis

A single male was the first found on a high cliff overlooking his territory mid morning. 2 were then seen in a tree on the savannah, but the ~20 at Shai Hills near to the reception were fairly well habituated and walking around us without problems

Slender-tailed Squirrel

Protoxerus aubinnii

2 Khakum which were feeding on leaves as they passed by the bottom of the walkway

African Straw-coloured Fruit Bat

Eidolon helvum

Colony between Atiwa and hotel in village probably numbered tens or even hundreds of thousands

Kob

Kobus kob

~12 Shai Hills, in groups of 1-3 on the open savannah

