

Birds of SE Senegal and Saloum

Senegal is one of West Africa's most stable countries with a heavy French influence dating back to colonial days. The first half of the tour concentrates on the little-visited far east of the country on the border with Guinea Conakry at Wassadoo and the almost unknown Dindéfello region which is on the border with Guinea and Mali. The former area is the most reliable in West Africa for the beautiful Egyptian Plover and the localised African Finfoot. Dindéfello also holds significant numbers of mammals and over 220 species of birds, making it one of the premier wildlife areas of West Africa. Our final destination on this tour is Saloum National Park, an area of inter-tidal rivers, scrub and savannah. The range of bird species in Senegal is impressive - Arabian and Savile's Bustards, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Fox Kestrel, Adamawa Turtle Dove and Kulikoro Firefinch to name a few. Birdwatching Breaks has operated several tours to Senegal since the 1990s and is pleased to offer these unique birding tours at a peak time for birdlife.

Day 1: Fly to the new airport south of Dakar. On arrival, we transfer to the seaside village of Popenguine for a two-night stay.

Day 2: Dawn visit to the coastal scrub reserve of Popenguine where we should find Blue Rock Thrush and European Crag Martin, rare visitors from Europe. To the south of Mbour is Lac Sarene, bordered by farmland and just inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Lac Sarene is an incredible area for waders, wildfowl, terns and gulls with recent visits recording Greater Painted Snipe, Marsh and Curlew Sandpipers and high numbers of wintering Ospreys from Europe. Recent visits have produced rarer species, notably Great Snipe and Citrine Wagtail. In the surrounding acacia woodland we should locate a wide range of wintering warblers and flycatchers. Later in the afternoon we visit Lac Somone for close views of waders and terns and the possibility of the scarce Brown Sunbird.

Day 3: After breakfast, we travel to Wassadoo via Tambacounda, the largest city in eastern Senegal. En route we may encounter the beautiful African Swallow-tailed Kite, Dark Chanting Goshawk and, in the dry acacia woodland, Black-bellied Bustard, Black Scimitar-bill and Piapiac.

Dates

Friday January 10th - Thursday
January 23rd 2020

Leaders: Mark Finn and Ass Ndiaye
Group Size: 8
Birds: 260-320

Seasonal pools adjacent to the road lure small birds to drink including Cut-throat Finch, Exclamatory Paradise and Pin-tailed Whydahs, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Village Indigobird and hunting Shikra. Near Tambacounda we may locate Senegal Batis, Yellow Penduline Tit, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver and the uncommon and localised Brown-rumped Bunting. As dusk falls, we should encounter Four-banded Sandgrouse. Three nights at Wassadoo.

Days 4-5: The area is home to over 300 species of birds with some of the more interesting being Bateleur, Martial Eagle, Denham's Bustard, Egyptian Plover and Violet Turaco. The Gambia River meanders slowly through the region with extensive vegetation along the banks, sand-bars and banks attracting Saddle-billed and Woolly-necked Storks, African Finfoot, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, White-headed



Greater Honeyguide Photo: Roger Ridley

Lapwing and Oriole Warbler. In recent visits we have seen Pel's Fishing Owls at one of the few known sites in West Africa. During our stay within the park we make several excursions to birding hotspots. Savannah habitats offer us Helmeted Guineafowl, Stone Partridge, Black-headed Heron, Hadada Ibis, Palm-nut Vulture, Short-toed, Beaudouin's, Brown and Banded Snake Eagles, Bateleur and Black-crowned Crane. Also present in the savannah in lower numbers are Sun Lark, Pied-winged Swallow and a wide range of estrildids - Black-bellied and Black-faced Firefinches and Black-faced and Black-rumped Waxbills. Wassadoo also has patches of gallery forest holding Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Green Turaco, Spotted and Wahlberg's Honeyguides, Little Green and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Crombec and Crimson Seedcracker. Wassadoo attracts many birds, with previous visits recording Red-

throated, Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Greater Honeyguide, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-bellied and Senegal Eremomelas, Swamp Flycatcher, White-crowned Robin-chat, Blackcap and Brown Babblers, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, African Pied Wagtail, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, Vitelline Masked Weaver and Pygmy Sunbird.

Day 6: This morning we continue our journey south towards the border with Guinea and Mali. The habitat starts to change slowly as the border has cliffs, gallery forest and ravines. In the afternoon we visit the forest and bush area of Samecota. This is an interesting place where we may find the rare Senegal Lapwing, Lanner Falcon, Violet Turaco and Black-rumped Waxbill. Our base for the next three nights is in the regional town of Kedougou.

Days 7-8: Our main interest is visiting the Dindéfello Nature Reserve, which was formed by a partnership of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Rural Community of Dindéfello to protect an isolated population of chimpanzees. It also protects areas of forests, cliffs and waterfalls, which are rare habitats within Senegal. Rare species occurring include Fox Kestrel, Narina's Trogon, Mocking Cliff-chat, Neumann's Starling, Dybowski's Twinspot and Kulikoro Firefinch. Several recent surveys have found species at the edge of their ranges or rare migrants from Europe. These have included Black Stork, Red-cheded Goshawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Common Buttonquail, Forbes's Plover, Rock Martin, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Olive Sunbird and Wilson's Indigobird. In other areas, we may encounter Guinea and Violet Turacos, African Cuckoo, Northern White-faced Owl, Fanti Sawwing, Yellow-bellied Hylia, Singing, Short-winged and Rufous Cisticolas, Green-headed Sunbird and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. In the evenings the balcony viewing point of our hotel should give us views of Long-tailed and Standard-winged Nightjars and Pearl-spotted Owlet.

Day 9: A travel day back towards Kaolack and onto Keur Saloum where we have a four-night stay.

Days 10-12: Today we head to Saloum National Park, an extensive region of forests and mangrove swamps. As we approach our hotel, we expect to find Black Woodhoopoe, Fork-tailed Drongo, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, African and Bruce's Green Pigeons. On one morning, depending on tide times, we take a boat trip through mangrove swamps and visit isolated sandbars. The hotel quay sometimes has Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Goliath Heron. Shorebirds are numerous and include White-fronted, Kentish, Common and Little Ringed Plovers, Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Greenshank. On previous visits, we have observed White-crested Bittern, White-backed Night Heron, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Shikra, Bronze Mannikin, Brown Babbler, Klass's Cuckoo, Western

Grey Plantain-eater, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Lavender Waxbill and Brown Sunbird. An afternoon visit is planned to a forested area where birds of prey abound. We may find Grasshopper Buzzard, Brown and Baudouin's Snake Eagles, Short-toed Eagle, Grey Kestrel, African Hobby and Palm-nut Vulture. Open areas attract European, Blue-cheeked and, occasionally, Little Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters. On one evening, we visit a huge raptor roost site which holds hundreds of African Swallow-tailed Kites, Lesser Kestrels and possibly three species of hawks - Marsh, Montagu's and Pallid.

Day 13: Today we return to Popenguine and visit a series of wetland lagoons adjacent to the coast where it is possible to find wintering Audouin's and Mediterranean Gulls and, in recent years, Franklin's Gulls from across the Atlantic. Anything is possible here and recent rarities have included American Golden Plover. The dry acacia woodland holds many of Europe's warblers here on their wintering grounds.

Day 14: A remote lodge is visited for the scarce Black Scrub Robin whilst the nearby coast is a reliable spot for Pallid and White-rumped Swifts. Later today we return to Dakar for flights to Europe with arrival early the next day.

Prices

Ground Price: £2,695
Single room: £250
Deposit: £250
*Air Fare: £700

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: visa, drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*