

THE BIRDER'S GUIDE TO AFRICA presents the first comprehensive and detailed summary of bird watching in the African region, covering all mainland territories and associated islands. An overview of birding in the region is given in the **Introduction**, highlighting key destinations for different kinds of travellers. This is followed by **Country Accounts** in which details on travel and birding are provided for each territory, including a comprehensive list of important bird taxa to be targeted on a visit. In the **Family Accounts**, each family recorded from the region is briefly described and illustrated with spectacular photographs. Finally, the **Species Accounts** detail information on ease of seeing, distribution, status, habitat, subspecies, taxonomic issues and best places to see, for all species. Any serious world lister or keen African eco traveller will find an abundance of information of relevance to their interest.



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Tasso Leventis is a businessman with widespread involvement in wildlife conservation, substantially in Africa. His commitments to bird conservation have included the establishment of an avian research institute in Nigeria, as well as participation in and support for international and national conservation non-government organisations such as Birdlife International and a number of BirdLife's many country partner organisations. As an avowed amateur, he has enjoyed the challenge of attempting to photograph wildlife, birds in particular, and is happy to have contributed the vast majority of photographs for the book. He lives in London with his wife Myriam, their three grown up children and (so far) three grandchildren.

ISBN 978-0-620-71725-0



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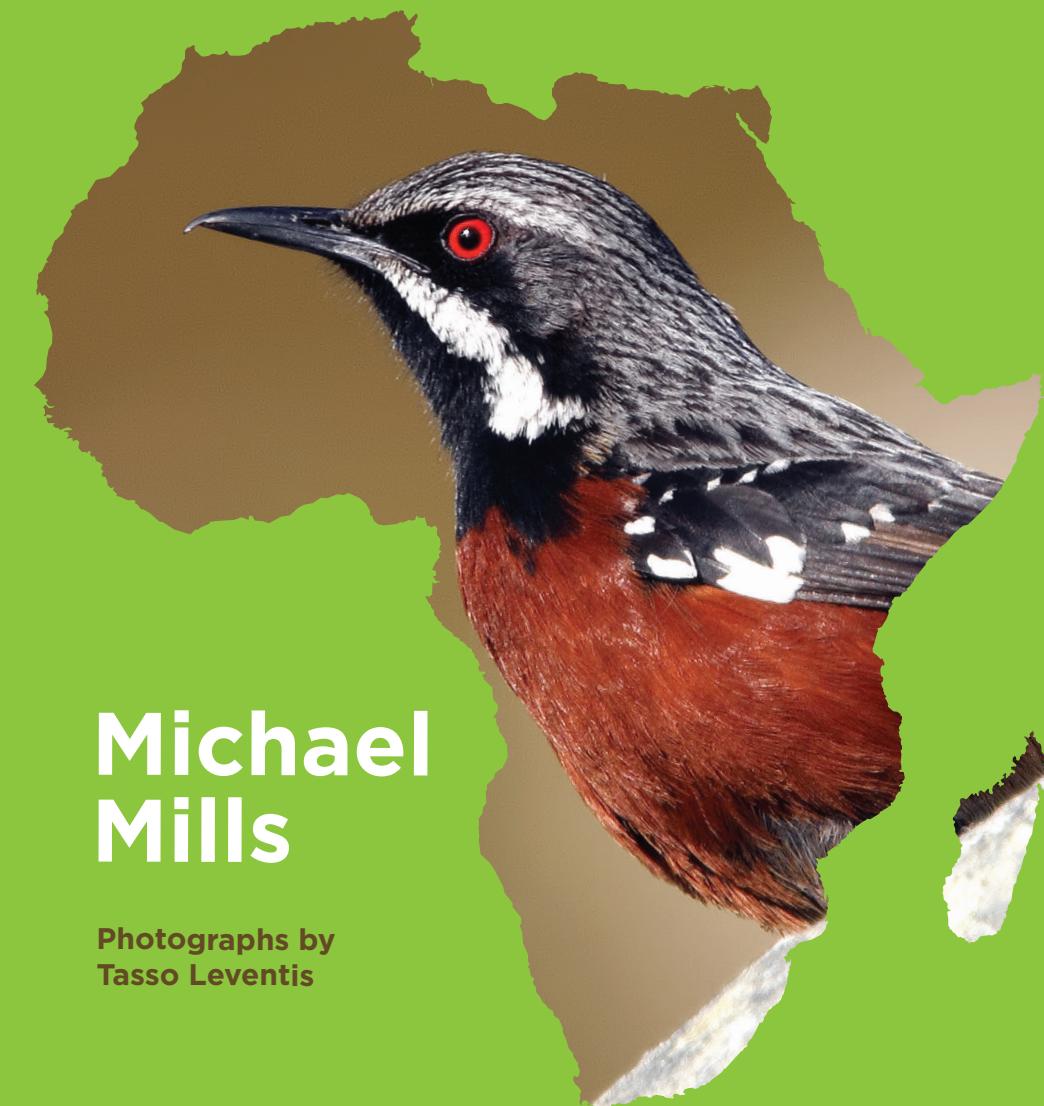
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Michael
Mills

The Birder's Guide to Africa

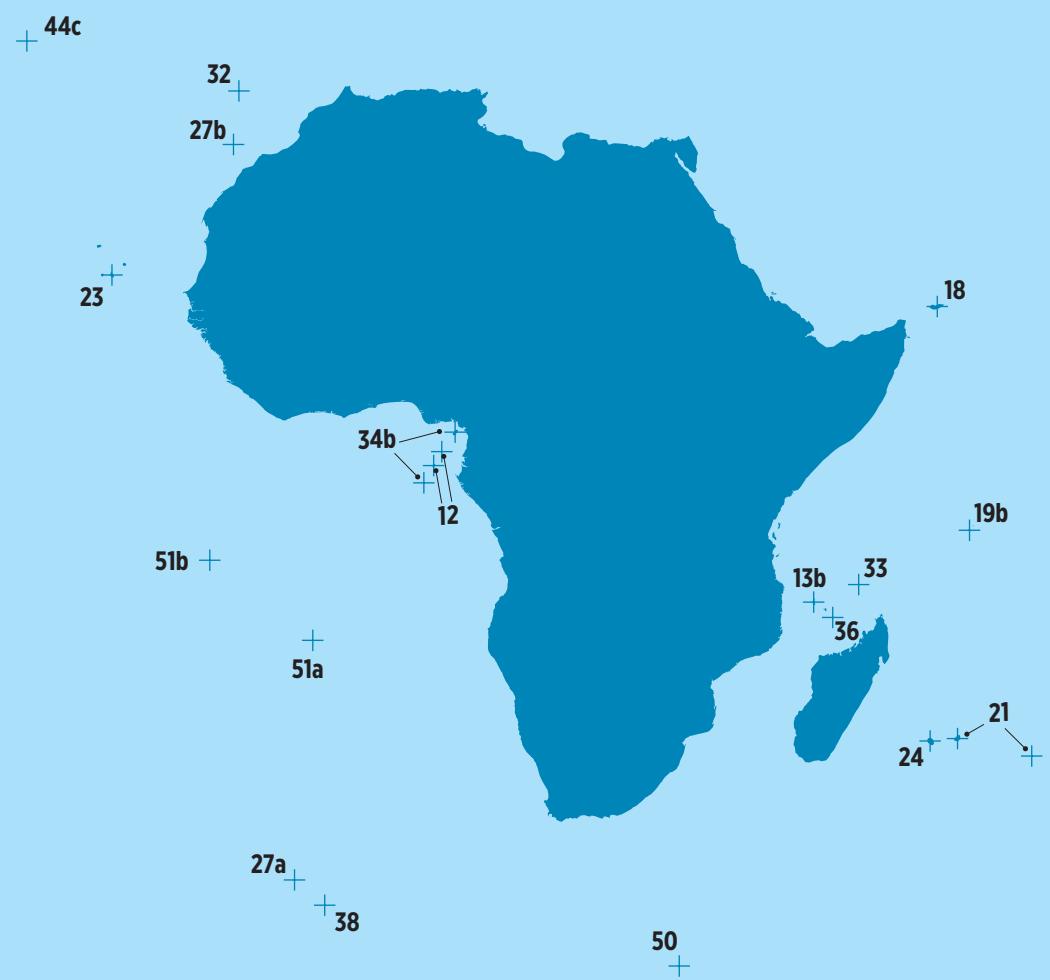
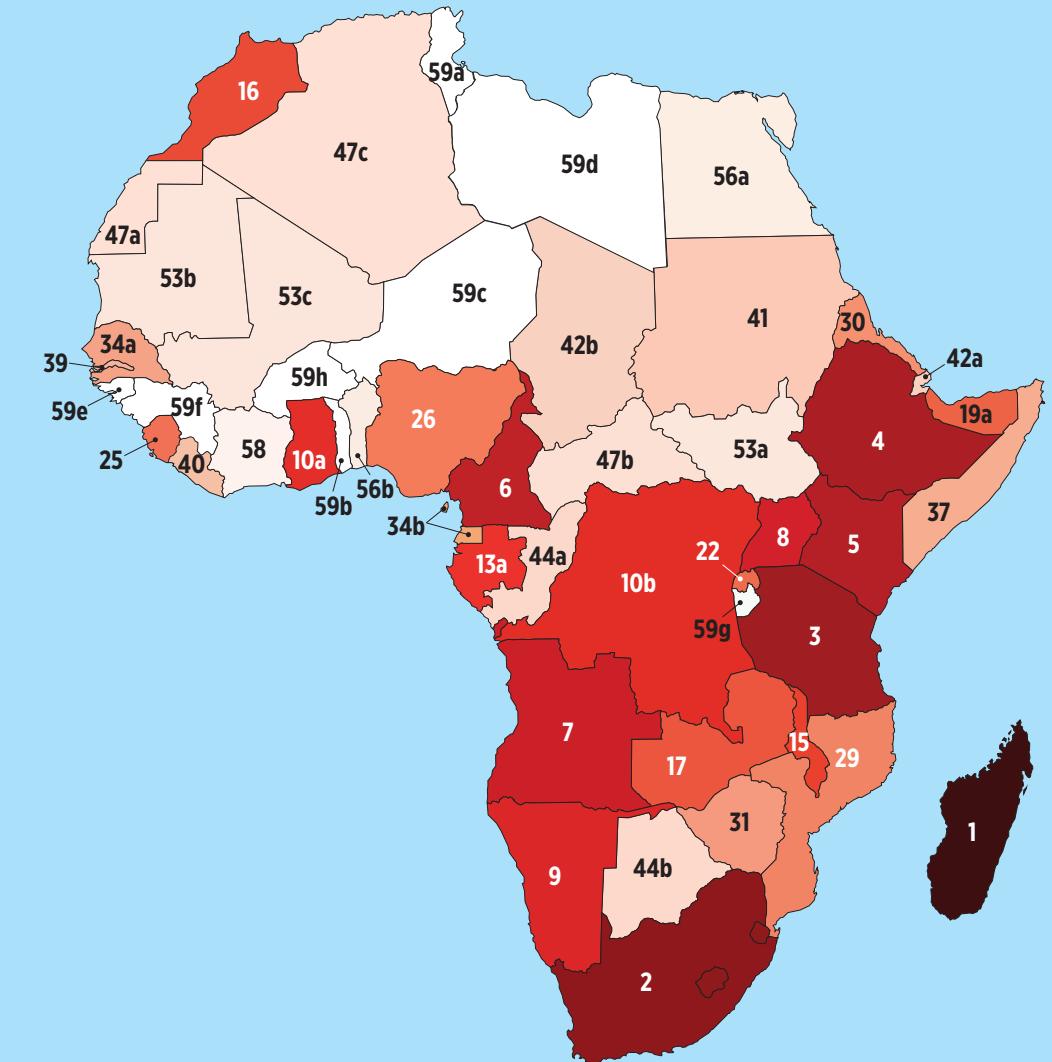
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GO-AWAY-BIRDING

The Birder's Guide to Africa



**Michael
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Photographs by
Tasso Leventis



Family Accounts



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Listing by families is appealing because families are highest taxonomic level for which it is possible to see all members. In simple terms, the goal of seeing all bird families is achievable, which is not the case when it comes to species. The manageable number of bird families, about 240 worldwide, is also a convenient way to think about bird diversity, whereas species number more than 10,000. The African region holds well over half of all families (142), and is the richest region globally as measured by the number of families and orders (Lotz *et al* 2013). What better way is there to celebrate the riches of African birding than with photographs from each family?

WHAT ARE BIRD FAMILIES?

The Family Accounts are listed in taxonomic order following the IOC List. Exceptions to this sequence are made in some cases where the aesthetics of the layout dictate otherwise. Each family account begins with the scientific and English family names. The names of endemic and near-endemic (>90% of species endemic) families are preceded by an asterisk. Names of families that are not reliably seen in the region, i.e. that are represented only by vagrants, are given in grey font and these families are not always depicted by photographs. After this, the number of species recorded in the region is given in square parentheses, first according to the IOC List and then according to the list presented in this book, out of the total number of species worldwide according to the IOC List. For example (p 284) lists Numididae as "[6/8 of 6]", which means that there are six species of guineafowl in the region according to the IOC List, eight according to the list in this guide, and six species worldwide on the IOC List. This is followed by a summary of endemism for the region, for families with endemics.

A brief description of the family is given in a text box, focussing on the diversity and distribution of species, and their habitats. The text refers to species depicted in the photographs (see p 17 for Photographic Credits), for which the English names are given in bold font, and the relevant number or location of the photograph is reported in parentheses.

Even more so than with species, defining bird families is inherently subjective. The only prerequisite is that families are clusters of most closely related species. Despite the inherent subjectivity, in the vast majority of cases there is agreement on family limits. Practically, for birders, this means that different world lists agree to a large degree on the delimitation of bird families. Everyone, for example, agrees that turacos, go-away-birds and plantain-eaters form a single family, and that Shoebill belongs in its own family.

However, in a relatively small number of cases there is unlikely ever to be agreement. For example, broadbills, asities and their allies are here treated as a single family, but they have also been divided into as many as five families. This assessment follows the treatment of the IOC List, but makes note of where families may be split so that family listers are aware of this.

Besides there being different opinions as to where family limits lie, recent advances in molecular techniques have resulted in the broad scale overhaul of the arrangement of families. Many new families have been recognised and some species have been moved from one family to another. Although analyses of diversity based purely on genes and degree of genetic difference between taxa have very limited use for setting species limits, such studies have been very powerful

in showing how birds are related to one another, and so have had a strong bearing on how birds are arranged into families. The reason for this is that genes are the best characters to demonstrate evolutionary relationships; changes in genetic sequences are the simplest and most direct evidence of evolution, and thus underpin how we understand evolutionary history.

Through these studies we have learnt many fascinating facts about how birds have evolved, both because birds that look similar may do so because they have evolved similar lifestyles rather than because they are close relatives, and because birds that look vastly different may be close relatives despite appearances. So we have learned, for example, that Long-billed Tetraka, in the past called Long-billed Greenbul, is not as previously thought closely related to greenbuls (Pycnonotidae), but instead to various other small insectivorous birds on Madagascar. As a result, a new family has been named for the Malagasy warblers (Bernieridae). In the case of Sao Tome Shorttail, previously thought to be some sort of warbler, we now know it to have evolved from wagtails (Motacillidae). The vangas of Madagascar are perhaps the most extreme example of a group of closely related birds looking very different, and include birds previously thought to be flycatchers (Ward's Vanga), babblers (Crossley's Vanga) and nuthatches (Nuthatch Vanga).

In a few cases unusual taxa have not been sufficiently well sampled to confidently place them in the tree of life, which means that their placement in families is, at best, a guess. This affects three species in the region, namely Tit-Hylia, Green Hylia and Grauer's Warbler, which here have not been assigned to any particular family, but are instead treated together as an unplaced cluster, awaiting further study (see p 241).

ENDEMIC FAMILIES

The African region is home to 30 endemic bird families plus one near-endemic family (Ploceidae | Weavers). There are also a few more may be recognised in the future, or that are recognised by other authorities. Five of these 30 families are endemic to the Indian Ocean Islands region. Endemic families are listed in Table 3 (p 129); note that families not recognised by the IOC List are reported in square parentheses. See p 539 for abbreviations used.

LISTING BY FAMILY

Of the 238 families listed by the IOC List, 142 families (60%) have been recorded from the African region. To the family lister, however, it is the 31 endemic and near-endemic families that would be the focus of any visit to the region.

Three families are restricted to Madagascar, namely Mesiornithidae | Mesites, Brachyptaciidae | Ground Rollers, and Bernieridae | Malagasy Warblers, and a further two are found only on Madagascar and the Comoros Islands, namely Leptosomidae | Cuckoo Roller and Vangidae | Vangas. This makes Madagascar a priority destination for family listers, especially with another endemic family, Philepittidae | Asities, also recognised by some authorities. Although ground rollers and mesites can be difficult species to see, even a one week trip to Madagascar should be long enough to find all these endemic families. In Madagascar, there is the added chance of seeing Scopidae | Hamerkop, Sarcophagidae | Flufftails (more easily seen here than anywhere else) and Ploceidae | Weavers. The only locality where all five families endemic to the Indian Ocean Islands are seen regularly is Ranomafana NP, so if you're a family lister and want to get all the Malagasy families on a short trip, going there is your best option, although Brown Mesite is very hard to see, so you may need to also visit Ifaty to see Subdesert Mesite.

Table 3. Endemic families of the region, listed by increasing species diversity (column 2) with a summary of ranges.

Scopidae Hamerkop	1	African mainland and Madagascar
Balaenicipitidae Shoebill	1	The eastern half of SSA
Sagittariidae Secretarybird	1	SSA
Pluvianidae Egyptian Plover	1	SSA, mostly north of the equator
Leptosomidae Cuckoo Roller	1	Madagascar, Comoros and Mayotte
Struthionidae Ostriches	2	African mainland
Bucorvidae Ground Hornbills	2	SSA
Picathartidae Rockfowl	2	West and western Central Africa
Chaetopidae Rockjumpers	2	South Africa and Lesotho
Promeropidae Sugarbirds	2	Southern Africa
Buphagidae Oxpeckers	2	SSA
Mesitornithidae Mesites	3	Madagascar
[Smithornithidae African Broadbills]	3	SSA
Nicatoridae Nicators	3	African mainland
Erythrocercidae Fan-tailed Flycatchers	3	SSA
[Grauer's Warbler, Green Hylia, Tit Hylia]	3	SSA
Arcanatoridae Modulatrixes	3	Highlands of tropical SSA
[Philepittidae Asities]	4	Madagascar
Hyliotidae Hyliotas	4	SSA
Brachyptaciidae Ground Rollers	5	Madagascar
Numididae Guineafowl	6	African mainland
Coliidae Mousebirds	6	SSA
Prionopidae Helmetshrikes	8	SSA
Sarothruridae Flufftails	9	SSA and Madagascar
Phoeniculidae Wood Hoopoes	9	SSA
Bernieridae Malagasy Warblers	11	Madagascar
Macrosphenidae Crombecs and allies	18	SSA
Viduidae Indigobirds & Whydahs	20	SSA
Vangidae Vangas	21	Madagascar and Comoros
Musophagidae Turacos	23	SSA
Platysteiridae Batises & Wattle-eyes	33	SSA and nearby islands
Lybiidae African Barbets	42	SSA
Malaconotidae Bushshrikes	50	African mainland
Ploceidae Weavers and allies	104	Africa and Madagascar

Of the remaining 26 families endemic to the region, about half are easy to see. Numididae | Guineafowl, Scopidae | Hamerkop, Musophagidae | Turacos, Coliidae | Mousebirds, Phoeniculidae | Wood Hoopoes, Lybiidae | African Barbets, Platysteiridae | Batises & Wattle-eyes, Prionopidae | Helmetshrikes, Malaconotidae | Bushshrikes, Nicatoridae | Nicators, Macrosphenidae | Crombecs and allies, Buphagidae | Oxpeckers, Ploceidae | Weavers, and Viduidae | Indigobirds & Whydahs can all be found in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, and so should be seen with relative ease while targeting the remaining 13 families that are harder to track down. Here some careful planning will be required.

Besides Madagascar, only South Africa (including Lesotho) holds a family endemic to a single country, namely Chaetopidae | Rockjumpers, making it the only other essential destination for family listers. Promeropidae | Sugarbirds are near-endemic to South Africa too. The Cape Town area offers the most convenient option for seeing these two families, with Cape Rockjumper and Cape Sugarbird both seen in the Rooi-Els area. Sani Pass, best accessed from Durban, provides a good backup location, with Gurney's Sugarbird occurring near the bottom of the pass and Drakensberg Rockjumper towards the top. Other rarer or more range-restricted families that a South African trip could yield include Struthionidae | Ostriches, Nicatoridae | Nicators, Sagittariidae | Secretarybird, Sarothruridae | Flufftails and Bucorvidae | Ground Hornbills.

That leaves seven families to focus on, the most restricted of which is Balaenicipitidae | Shoebill, most easily seen in Uganda, with Zambia the second best option for seeing it. Uganda also offers excellent general birding, and one could also see Erythrocercidae | Fan-tailed Flycatchers with Chestnut-capped Flycatcher at Budongo, Hyliotidae | Hyliotas with Yellow-bellied Hyliota in the Murchison Falls area, and Arcanatoridae | Modulatrixes with Grey-cheested Illadopsis at Bwindi.

Uganda also provides an extra chance for Sarothruridae | Flufftails (White-spotted Flufftail is the easiest member of the family to see on mainland Africa), Bucorvidae | Ground Hornbills with Northern Ground Hornbill at Murchison and Nicatoridae | Nicators with Western Nicator at Kibale or Budongo, all easier here than in South Africa. If split, Smithornithidae | African Broadbills can also be seen, with African Broadbill at Bwindi, in not seen previously at Bonamanzi in South Africa.

The remaining families are best tackled either in Ghana or Cameroon. Both countries offer Picathartidae | Rockfowl, with Yellow-headed Picathartes and Red-headed Picathartes, respectively, and Pluvianidae | Egyptian Plover, plus extra chances of trickier families such as Erythrocercidae | Fan-tailed Flycatchers with Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, Arcanatoridae | Modulatrixes (Cameroon only, Grey-cheested Illadopsis) and Hyliotidae | Hyliotas (both Violet-backed Hyliota and Yellow-bellied Hyliota).

It is also worth considering the three species from the region not yet assigned to a family, namely Grauer's Warbler, Green Hylia and Tit Hylia, as these may end up belonging to endemic families. All three can be seen in Uganda, although Tit Hylia is rare there, and the latter two can be seen in both Ghana and Cameroon.

In summary, to see all the endemic bird families of the African region requires trips to Madagascar, South Africa, Uganda, and Cameroon or Ghana. Visiting these countries would give you a good chance of seeing at least one species in each family, plus all three species not yet assigned to a family. Perhaps the most likely family to miss by visiting these four countries would be Secretarybird, although including a visit to the Kgalagadi on your South African trip would more or less guarantee this declining species. The two most difficult families to actually see due to their skulking natures are flufftails and modulatrixes, with hyliotas, nicators and fan-tailed flycatchers also challenging at times.

*Struthionidae – Ostriches

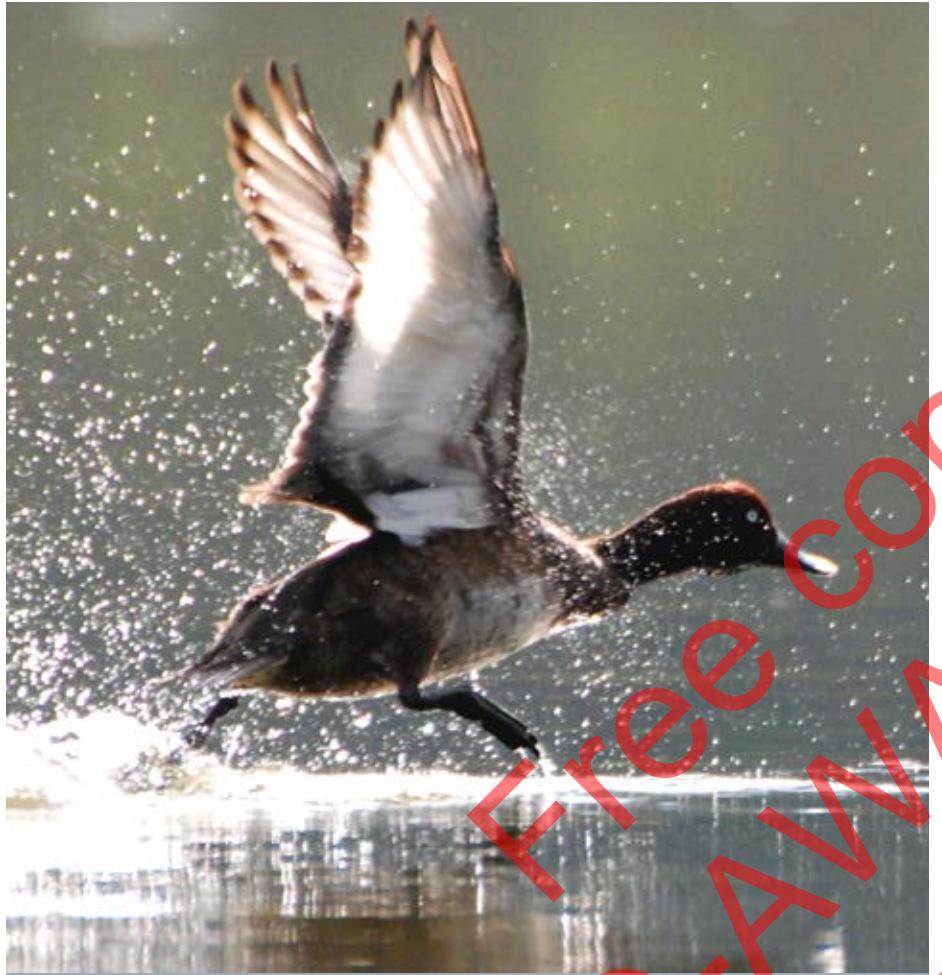
[2/2 of 2, both endemic]



Ostriches, the largest of extant birds, are now endemic to Africa although previously occurred in the Middle East. They are found widely across the savannas and deserts of sub-Saharan Africa, but are hunted for food where not protected so are best seen in savanna reserves in Southern Africa and East Africa. **Common Ostrich** is the easier of the two to see, being both more widespread and numerous than Somali Ostrich. The latter is confined to north-eastern Africa, where it can be seen in Kenya's arid parks with relative ease.

Anatidae - Ducks, Geese, Swans and allies

[75/75 of 165, 17 endemic]

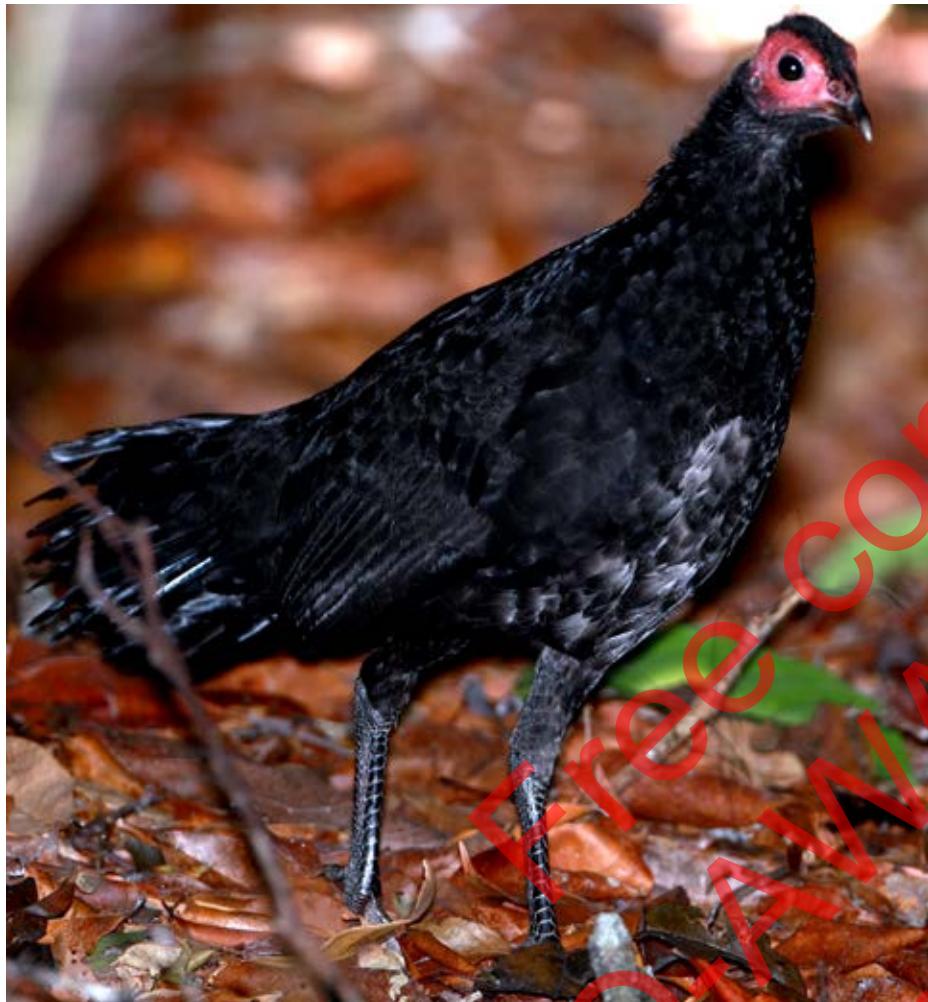


This large family of waterbirds with a near-global distribution is well represented in the region, and includes a significant number of vagrants and Palaearctic migrants. They can be seen on almost any wetland, although are often hunted for food so may be rare around human habitation. The largest genus *Anas*, the typical ducks, includes Yellow-billed Duck (1). More distinctive species include African Pygmy Goose (2), Blue-winged Goose (3), endemic to the Ethiopian highlands and allied to a clade of South American geese, and Knob-billed Duck (4). The rarest duck in the region, and perhaps the world, is Madagascar Pochard (this page) which was thought to be extinct until being rediscovered in a remote area of north-eastern Madagascar in 2006.



*Numididae – Guineafowl

[6/8 of 6, all endemic]



This small family of unusual, fowl-like birds is endemic to the region and, almost without exception, confined to the Afrotropics. Just one subspecies of Helmeted Guineafowl breaks the rule, and is found north of the Sahara in Morocco, although it is now thought to be extinct. Most are shy forest birds that can be hard to see, including the sought-after Black Guineafowl (this page) and Western Crested Guineafowl (3). Two species occur in savannas and are considerably easier to see; Helmeted Guineafowl (2) is a familiar bird across much of the continent, and Vulturine Guineafowl (1) is a key target for birders visiting Kenya and Ethiopia.

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Phasianidae - Francolins, Quails and allies

[45/50 of 181, 46 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This large family of terrestrial, fowl-like birds occurs almost globally and is well-represented in the region. Francolins compose the bulk of the family and are particularly diverse in grasslands and savannas, examples of which include **Shelley's Francolin** (1) and **Double-spurred Francolin** (2). **Latham's Forest Francolin** (3) is one of the few forest species; unlike most savanna taxa, such as **Yellow-necked Francolin** (right), it is difficult to see, although smaller savanna francolins, including **Coqui Francolin** (4), can prove challenging to see too. The combination of their intricate plumages and shy nature makes them a popular group. The most unique members are the rare Congo Peafowl and two *Xenoperdix* forest partridges, more closely related to species from Asia than any from Africa.



Odontophoridae - New World Quail

[2/2 of 34, both endemic]



This New World family is confined to the Americas with the exception of the two African species; both **Stone Partridge** and Nahan's Francolin were previously thought to be Phasianids, but genetic evidence places them as outliers of this family. **Stone Partridge** is certainly the easier of the two species to see, and occurs in the savannas of West Africa and Central Africa, especially in rocky areas. Nahan's Francolin, on the contrary, inhabits dense forests in Uganda and eastern DR Congo, and can be a devil to lay eyes on.

Gaviidae - Loons

[3/3 of 5]

The loons or divers are a family of the Arctic and near-Arctic regions. Species such as **Red-throated Diver** are recorded only as uncommon visitors and vagrants to North Africa, so they are much better searched for elsewhere.



Spheniscidae - Penguins

[10/10 of 18, 1 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This family of familiar, flightless birds is mostly restricted to Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters. Although well represented in the region, most species can be seen only on remote islands in the far south. **African Penguin** (1), the only endemic, is the easiest member of the family to see at its mainland breeding colonies near to Cape Town in South Africa. **Northern Rockhopper Penguin** (2) is the other specialty of the region, with 90% of the population breeding on Tristan da Cunha and Gough.



1

2

Diomedeidae - Albatrosses

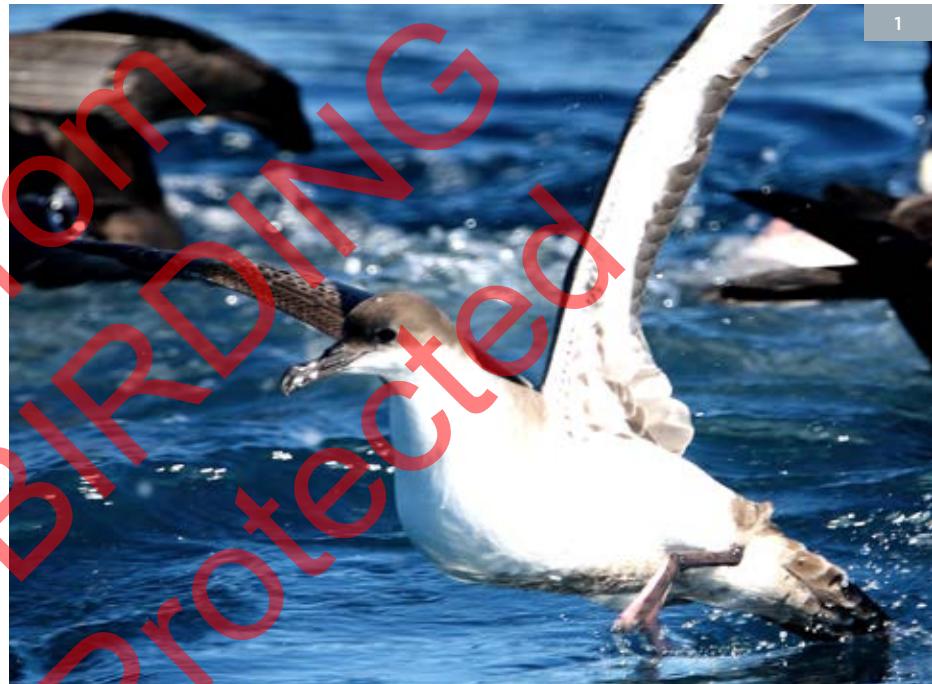
[16/16 of 21, 2 endemics and 1 near-endemic breeders]



This pelagic family of astoundingly mobile birds has its diversity concentrated across the southern oceans. Most members of the family have been recorded in the region as visitors, but a few also breed on remote oceanic islands, including the near-endemic Sooty Albatross, and endemic Tristan Albatross and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross of Tristan da Cunha and Gough. Pelagic trips off Cape Town offer a good opportunity to see a variety of species at close range, with common ones such as **Black-browed Albatross** virtually guaranteed and up to seven species recorded on some trips.

Procellariidae - Petrels & Shearwaters

[55/55 of 96, 11 endemics and 2 near-endemic breeders]



1

Petrels and shearwaters, including diving petrels (sometimes in their own family, Pelecanoididae) form a large, global family of pelagic seabirds. More than half are recorded from the region, including several rare breeding endemics, mostly confined to remote islands. The best way to see some member of this family is to take a pelagic trip from Cape Town or Madeira, where species such as **Great Shearwater** (1) are seen regularly. The diving petrels, such as **Common Diving Petrel** (2), are less mobile and confined to the vicinity of their breeding islands, such as Tristan da Cunha.



2

Oceanitidae - Austral Storm Petrels

[5/5 of 9]



A family of small pelagic birds with half recorded from the region. **Wilson's Storm Petrel** is the most abundant member of the family, and may even be the most numerous bird in the world. Note that storm petrels are now known to consist of two unrelated clades.

Hydrobatidae - Northern Storm Petrels

[7/7 of 17, 2 endemic breeders]

These small seabirds are a little under-presented in the region, but include two breeding endemics, Monteiro's Storm Petrel from Azores and Cape Verde Storm Petrel from Cape Verde. Note that storm petrels are now known to consist of two unrelated clades.

Podicipedidae - Grebes

[7/7 of 20, 1 endemic; also 1 extinct endemic]



Although grebes are familiar, widespread birds, they are rarely conspicuous in the African region, with only Little Grebe being fairly widespread and common. The one extant endemic, Madagascar Little Grebe, is confined to Madagascar whereas all of the remaining species, for example Black-necked Grebe, also occur in Eurasia.

Phoenicopteridae - Flamingos

[2/2 of 6]

Although the greatest diversity of flamingos is found in temperate parts of South America, two species of flamingo breed in large numbers on saline pans and lakes in Southern Africa and East Africa, creating some of the most spectacular bird congregations on earth. **Greater Flamingo** is generally more widespread and easily seen, although Lesser Flamingo occurs in larger concentrations on the Rift Valley lakes of Kenya.



Phaethontidae - Tropicbirds

[3/3 of 3]



Tropicbirds occur globally in tropical oceanic waters. Although Red-tailed Tropicbird (1) is seen in the region more often than the others, White-tailed Tropicbird is the most numerous, especially around Seychelles, and Red-billed Tropicbird (2) can be seen too.



2

Ciconiidae - Storks

[8/8 of 19, 4 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



1

Although found on all continents besides Antarctica, storks reach their greatest diversity in the tropics. They are well-represented in Africa and are often conspicuous around tropical wetlands. The group includes Palaearctic migrants such as White Stork, intra-African migrants such as Abdim's Stork (1) and resident species like Saddle-billed Stork (2). The family has the dubious honour of holding (arguably) the ugliest bird on the continent, the fabulous Marabou Stork (3) which often lives alongside humans in towns and villages.



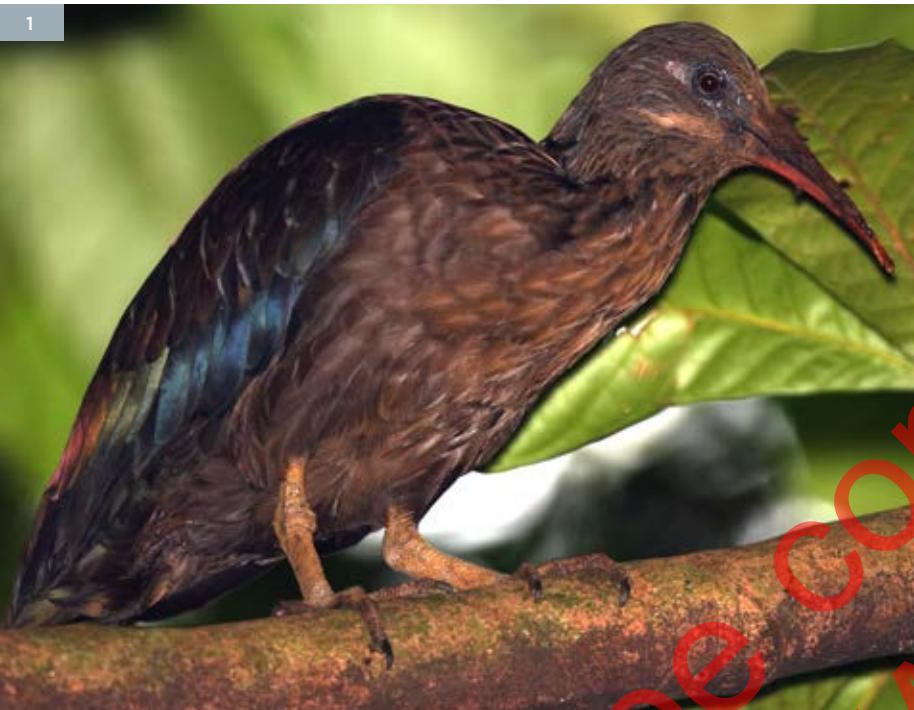
2



3

Threskiornithidae - Ibises & Spoonbills

[13/13 of 35, 9 endemic and 2 near-endemic]



Ibises and spoonbills occur almost globally and are represented in the region by one third of all species. Spoonbills are represented by **African Spoonbill** (2) in the Afrotropics and **European Spoonbill** (2) mostly north of the Sahara, so seeing them side-by-side is unusual. Among the ibises, most wetland species are easy to see, although **Madagascar Sacred Ibis** (3) is an exception to the rule. Forest ibises, on the other hand, present a major challenge to see, none more so than the Critically Endangered **Dwarf Olive Ibis** (1) from São Tomé.



2



3

Ardeidae - Herons, Egrets & Bitterns

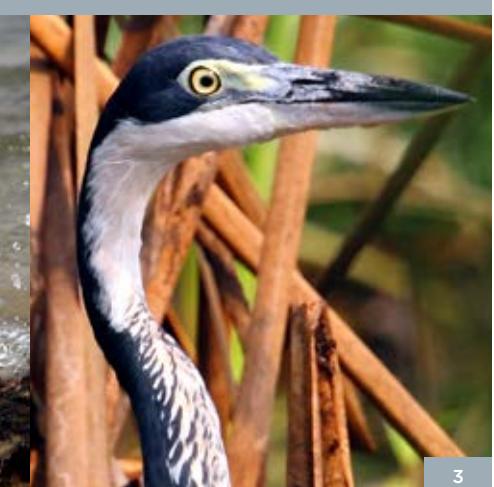
[35/35 of 66, 10 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



Herons are familiar birds, well-represented in the region and often conspicuous. They can be found at wetlands, such as **Dwarf Bittern** (1), along shorelines, such as **Western Reef Egret** (2), and in grasslands, for example **Black-headed Heron** (3).



2



3

***Scopidae - Hamerkop**

[1/1 of 1, near-endemic]



The singular **Hamerkop** is essentially an African endemic, but also found marginally into the Middle East. This strange bird, literally called 'hammer head' for its oddly-shaped head, is found at wetlands throughout the moister areas of sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar. Their massive stick nests, usually positioned in the fork of a large tree, are among the largest built by any bird in the region.

***Balaenicipitidae - Shoebill**

[1/1 of 1, endemic]



One of most the iconic birds of Africa, the rare, extraordinary and endemic **Shoebill** is found around permanent swamps from Sudan to Zambia. The opportunity of staring down a Shoebill's considerable bill is one of the major birding drawcards of Uganda, the easiest country in which to see it.

Pelecanidae - Pelicans

[3/3 of 8, 1 near-endemic]



Occurring on all continents bar Antarctica, pelicans are familiar wetlands birds despite numbering only eight. Within the region they are generally more conspicuous by size than number, although neither **Great White Pelican** (1) nor the near-endemic **Pink-backed Pelican** (2) are difficult to see.



Fregatidae - Frigatebirds

[5/5 of 5, 1 endemic breeder]



The frigatebirds, known as the pirates of the bird world, are a small family of kleptoparasites found in tropical oceanic waters. Although all five species have been recorded from the region, they are mostly confined to oceanic islands and so are not seen very often, although **Great Frigatebird** can be seen reliably in Seychelles. The endemic Ascension Frigatebird breeds only on Ascension Island.

Sulidae - Gannets & Boobies

[7/7 of 10, 1 endemic]



Gannets and boobies are found in pelagic waters across much of the globe, and breed mostly in temperate and tropical waters, respectively. The region's only endemic, **Cape Gannet**, is also the easiest to see, often feeding near to the shoreline of South Africa.

Phalacrocoracidae - Cormorants & Shags

[11/11 of 41, 5 endemic and 1 near-endemic]

1



Widespread birds of wetlands and shorelines, cormorant and shags occurs almost everywhere but are never very speciose. The region holds one quarter of all species, with the highest diversity found in the nutrient-rich Benguela current off western South Africa and Namibia. Here four species can be seen together, including three endemics of which the Endangered **Bank Cormorant** (1) is the rarest. Only Reed Cormorant and **White-breasted Cormorant** (2) occur widely through the Afrotropics, and both are easy to see.

2



Anhingidae - Darters

[1/1 of 4, near-endemic]

The four darters are diving, freshwater birds found on all continents except Europe and Antarctica. Africa is as good a region to see them in as any, with **African Darter** being relatively common and conspicuous around wetlands across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Sagittariidae - Secretarybird

[1/1 of 1, endemic]



The incredible **Secretarybird** is one of the region's most unique and iconic birds, and if it was as rare as Shoebill it would be just as desirable. Regrettably it is declining rapidly across much of its range, although it is still often seen striding across arid steppe country of Southern Africa and East Africa, where snakes are vulnerable to its formidable talons.

Pandionidae – Ospreys

[1/1 of 2]



Ospreys are specialist fish-catching raptors that occur on all continents except Antarctica. **Western Osprey** occurs mostly as a non-breeding Palaearctic visitor to the region, and while not rare, is less predictably found here than on its breeding grounds.

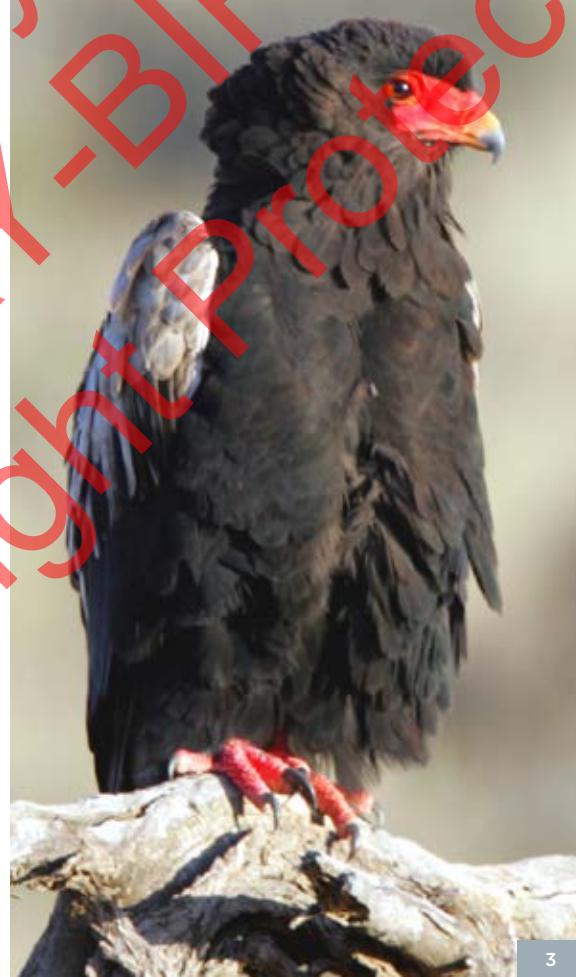
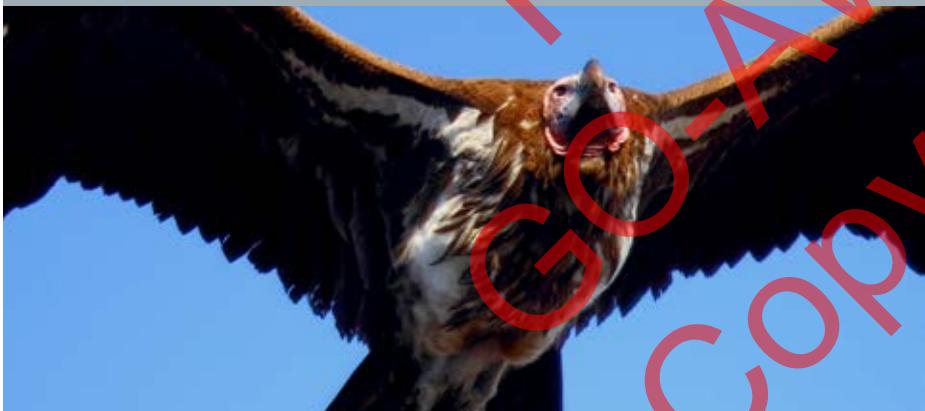


2

Accipitridae – Eagles, Hawks and allies

[96/96 of 255, 57 endemic and 6 near-endemic]

This large and familiar family occurs almost globally and is well represented in the region by nearly 100 species spread across all terrestrial habitats. Widespread members include the striking **Bateleur** (3) and **Lappet-faced Vulture** (this page) in savannas, and **African Goshawk** (5) in forests, whereas the graceful **African Swallow-tailed Kite** (4) of the Sahel, **Red-necked Buzzard** (1) of moist savannas, and **Ayres's Hawk-Eagle** (2) over woodland and forest, are seen less often. The two secretive, forest-dwelling serpent eagles – Congo Serpent Eagle and Madagascar Serpent Eagle – are among the most enigmatic birds in the region, and few birders have been lucky enough to see both.



4

Otididae - Bustards

[22/22 of 26, 18 endemic and 1 near-endemic]

1



The sought-after bustards are large, terrestrial birds of arid regions of the Old World. Their centre of diversity lies in Africa, and particularly Southern Africa; a trip to South Africa can turn up as many as nine species. Larger members include **Arabian Bustard** (3), whereas smaller species, called korhaans in Southern Africa, include the attractive **Southern Black Korhaan** (1) and **Northern Black Korhaan** (2). Unfortunately numbers of many species have suffered at the hands of hunters, none less so than Houbara Bustard of North Africa.



2



3

*Mesitornithidae - Mesites

[3/3 of 3, all endemic]



These unusual terrestrial birds are confined to Madagascar, with Brown Mesite occurring in the eastern rainforests, White-breasted Mesite in the western woodlands, and **Subdesert Mesite** in the spiny forest. The latter is the easiest to see and has the curious anti-predatory response of fleeing up into a tree and freezing, when pursued.

*Sarothruridae - Flufftails

[12/12 of 12, all endemic]

These terrestrial birds inhabit wetlands, moist grasslands and forests of Africa and Madagascar. They are notoriously difficult to see, causing utmost frustration by creeping invisibly through the densest vegetation at ones feet. The two least difficult species to see are **Madagascar Flufftail** and **Madagascar Wood Rail**, both found in forest on Madagascar.



Heliornithidae - Finfoots

[1/1 of 3, endemic]



Finfoots are shy waterbirds of forested tropical rivers and lakes, with one species in each of the Neotropics, Orient and Afrotropics. **African Finfoot** is best seen by taking a boat trip on a large, forested wetland and carefully scanning the vegetated margins.



This large family of mostly secretive, terrestrial birds of wetlands and forest is found almost globally. In the region **Red-knobbed Coot** (3) is among the easiest to see, whereas most species, such as **White-throated Rail** (2), prefer to remain well hidden. The group includes some widespread but challenging birds such as **Lesser Moorhen** (previous page) and **African Crake** (1), which follow the major rain fronts that move up and down Africa.

Rallidae - Rails, Crakes, Coots and allies

[32/32 of 134, 14 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



2

3

Gruidae - Cranes

[7/7 of 15, 4 endemic]

1



Tall, elegant birds of wetlands and grasslands, cranes are declining almost worldwide due to the degradation of their wetland breeding habitats. The African region holds almost half of all species, and they feature among the national birds of several nations, including **Blue Crane** (2) in South Africa. Of the endemic cranes **Black Crowned Crane** (1) is the trickiest to see, occurring around wetlands in the arid savannas north of the equator.



2

Turnicidae - Buttonquails

[5/5 of 17, 4 endemic]

1



This small family of terrestrial birds of grassland, forests and savannas is moderately well represented in the region, although Australia is endowed with the greatest diversity. The dominant genus is *Turnix*, and all members of the family bar one belong to it, including **Madagascar Buttonquail** (2). **Quail-plover** (1) is the exception; it is rarely seen outside of northern Cameroon, presently unsafe to visit. It is the sister taxon of all other buttonquails, and could thus potentially be placed in its own family.



2

Burhinidae - Thick-knees

[4/4 of 10, 2 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



The thick-knees are a small, almost cosmopolitan family of long-legged wetlands and steppe-country birds, moderately well-represented in the region. Although they are mostly nocturnal, **Senegal Thick-knee** and **Water Thick-knee** are not hard to see around wetlands.

Chionidae - Sheathbills

[2/2 of 2, 1 near-endemic]



Although Black-faced Sheathbill is a near-endemic resident on Marion and Prince Edward Islands and Snowy Sheathbill a vagrant to South Africa, the family is best looked for beyond the borders of the region.

Haematopodidae - Oystercatchers

[2/2 of 11, 1 endemic]



Recurvirostridae - Stilts & Avocets

[2/2 of 10]



Stilts and avocets form a small, near-global family of long-legged, wading waterbirds. Just two non-endemic species occur in the region; **Black-winged Stilt** (1) is widespread and common, and **Pied Avocet** (2) is not difficult to see either.

Dromadidae - Crab-plover

[1/1 of 1]



The unique **Crab-plover**, alone in the Dromadidae, breeds colonially on desert islands off the coasts of north-eastern Africa and the Middle East, placing its eggs in burrows below the scorching summer sands. When not breeding it migrates to coastal areas from India to Mozambique. Although not endemic to the region, Djibouti, Kenya and Madagascar all provide good opportunities to see this sought-after bird.

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Charadriidae - Plovers & Lapwings

[36/36 of 66, 17 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This moderately speciose family of long-legged, terrestrial birds of wetlands and open habitats is well represented in the region. Lapwings, such as **Long-toed Lapwing** (3), are especially prominent around the tropical wetlands of sub-Saharan Africa. The trickiest endemics to find are **Forbes's Plover** (1) and **Brown-chested Lapwing** (2), the latter displaying a unique migration pattern by breeding in upland grasslands in Cameroon and Nigeria and migrating east to short grasslands around lakes and rivers in the Lake Victoria region. The *Pluvialis* golden plovers may be placed in their own family, Pluvialidae.



2



3

*Pluvianidae - Egyptian Plover

[1/1 of 1, endemic]

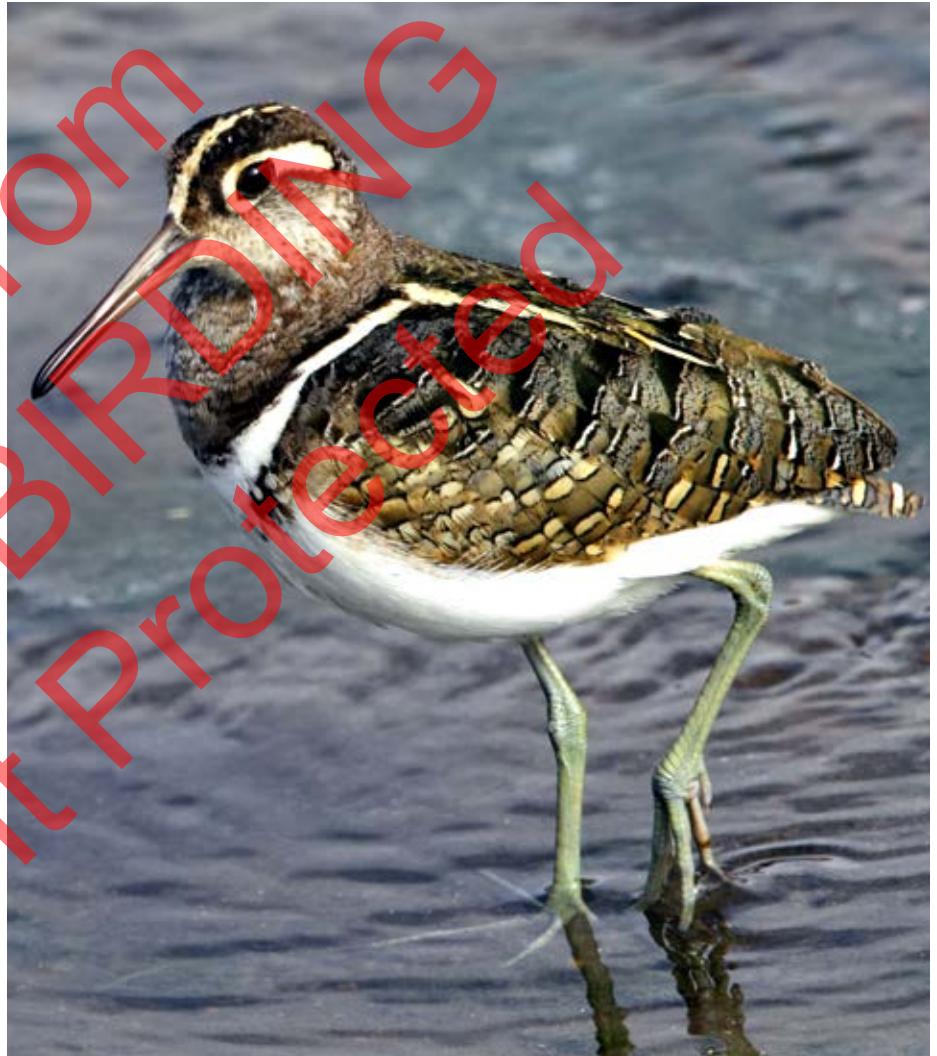


Also known as the Crocodile-bird, so named due to the rumour that it picks bits of meat from between the teeth of Nile Crocodiles, the dapper Egyptian Plover is one of most iconic birds in the region and is the emblem of the Africa Bird Club. Although striking to see when stationary, in flight its bold black-and-white wing pattern is even more of a sight to behold. It lives on the banks of large rivers in the northern Afrotropics, and can be found reliably in Cameroon, Gambia and Ghana.



Rostratulidae - Painted-snipes

[1/1 of 3]



Although painted-snipes occur on four continents, they are usually nomadic and notoriously difficult to track down. Their unpredictable nature and attractive plumages, especially of the more boldly-marked females, makes them a desirable family. **Greater Painted-Snipe** is the most common and widespread member of the family and occurs on the muddy margins of wetlands throughout the Afrotropics and into Asia. The two remaining species are found in Australia and South America.

Jacanidae - Jacanas

[4/4 of 8, 3 endemic]



This small family of tropical wetland birds possess exceptionally long toes that enable them to walk across emergent vegetation. With three of the eight species endemic, this is as good a region as any in which to see them. **African Jacana** (1) is the most widespread and common member, whereas the diminutive **Lesser Jacana** (2) is localised and scarce and Madagascar Jacana is now rare in the western coastal lowlands of Madagascar.



Scolopacidae - Sandpipers, Snipes and allies

[58/58 of 91, 2 endemic; also 1 extinct]



This large, global family of shorebirds is represented in the region mainly by non-breeding visitors from the Palaearctic, such as **Curlew Sandpiper** (1) and **Common Snipe** (2). Its members are among the most familiar birds worldwide, although their drab plumages often make them challenging to identify. There are only two endemics, namely African Snipe and Madagascar Snipe, but the most sought-after species is Slender-billed Curlew, previously seen as a non-breeding visitor along the North Africa coast, but now feared extinct.



Glareolidae - Coursers & Pratincoles

[13/13 of 17, 9 endemic]



This family of graceful Old World birds has its greatest diversity in the African region. The coursers are nomadic birds of arid steppes and savannas that are often difficult to track down, although **Cream-coloured Courser** (1) and **Double-banded Courser** (2) are reliably seen in certain areas. The aerial-feeding pratincoles, however, are found far more readily; **Collared Pratincole** (3) is the easiest member of the family to see.



Laridae - Gulls, Terns & Skimmers

[57/57 of 101, 3 endemic and 2 near-endemic]



This large and familiar family of wetlands and coasts is found globally. Despite being well represented in the region, a high proportion of species are vagrants, and only three species are endemic, namely Damara Tern, Hartlaub's Gull and **African Skimmer** (1). Terns are fairly evenly distributed worldwide, with many species, including Royal Tern (3), occurring in the region. However, gulls are far more diverse in north temperate regions, with Kelp Gull (3) being one of the few species resident in the region. Note that terns, noddies and skimmers may be placed in a family separate from gulls, the Sternidae.



Stercorariidae - Skuas

[6/6 of 7]

1



This small family of marine birds occurs globally in pelagic and coastal waters, although all species breed exclusively in temperate regions. Although well-represented in the region they are not often seen, and are mostly non-breeding visitors. **Brown Skua** (2) is fairly easy to see on pelagic trips off South Africa during the southern winter, whereas **Long-tailed Jaeger | Long-tailed Skua** (1) is probably the most difficult member to see in the region and **Parasitic Jaeger | Arctic Skua** (3) is of intermediate abundance.



2

3

Alcidae - Auks and allies

[6/6 of 24]

1



This family of stocky, black-and-white seabirds is represented in the region only by vagrants and rare visitors from their breeding grounds along northern temperate coastlines. **Little Auk | Dovekie** (1) and **Thick-billed Murre | Brünnich's Guillemot** (2) are two of the six species recorded.



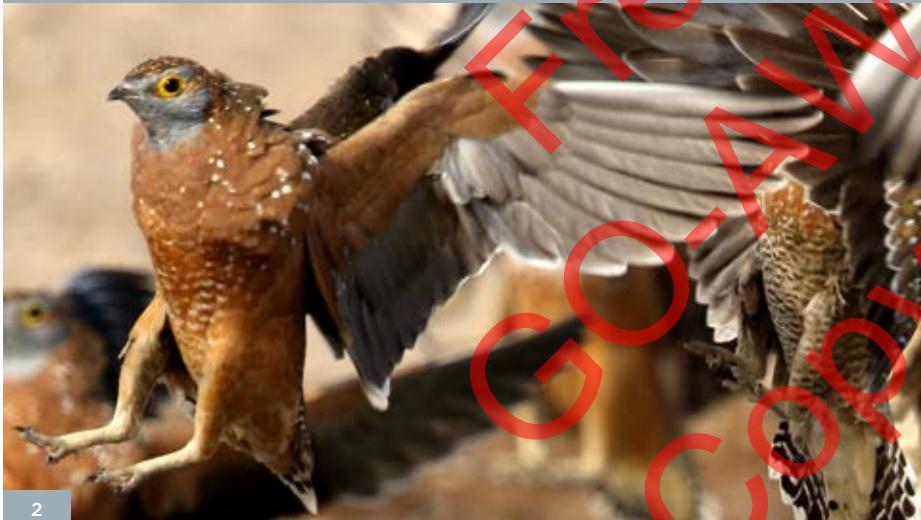
2

Pteroclidae - Sandgrouse

[13/13 of 16, 7 endemic]



This small family of finely-plumaged, ground-feeding birds with exceptional powers of flight is found through the deserts and arid savannas of southern Europe and Asia, but can be considered primarily African. The thirteen African species include **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** (1), found widely across the arid savannas north of the equator, and **Burchell's Sandgrouse** (2), confined to arid savannas on sandy soils in Southern Africa. Their predictable drinking habits make most species easy to see if drinking spots are known.



Columbidae - Doves & Pigeons

[49/49 of 330, 35 endemic and 6 near-endemic]



Doves and pigeons form a large and familiar family of grain- and fruit-eating birds, found almost globally. Despite being relatively poorly represented in the region, they are usually a dominant part of the avifauna in almost every habitat, and several species are particularly numerous. Most genera, such as the *Treron* green pigeons, here exemplified by **Sao Tome Green Pigeon** (2), are more speciose in Asia. However, the *Turtur* wood doves, such as **Black-billed Wood Dove** (1), are endemic to the region, and **Namaqua Dove** (3), in its own genus, is near-endemic.



*Musophagidae – Turacos & Go-away-birds

[23/23 of 23, all endemic]

The turacos are, arguably, the most spectacular endemic bird family of the region. They possess two colour pigments unique in birds, the reds and greens that make them such a showcase of exuberance. Turacos are found in wooded habitats throughout the Afrotropics, whereas the drabber go-away-birds, such as **White-bellied Go-away-bird** (4), thrive in the more open savannas. Cameroon, with eight species on show, stands out as the place to see them; from the drab **Western Grey Plantain-eater** (3) to spectacular **White-crested Turaco** (1). This is a good family to complete, as one would need to visit most of the top birding countries in the region to see them, namely South Africa, Ethiopia with the endemic **Prince Ruspoli's Turaco** (2), Cameroon, Angola, Uganda or Rwanda, and Kenya or Tanzania.



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Cuculidae - Cuckoos, Coucal and allies

[41/42 of 147, 31 endemic and 5 near-endemic]



1

The cuckoos and their relatives are a cosmopolitan family of medium-sized birds, reasonably well represented in the region. All the cuckoos are brood parasites, including the *gabonensis* subspecies of **Black Cuckoo** (3). However, most members of the family care for their own young, including coucals such as **White-browed Coucal** (4), malkohas like **Blue Yellowbill** (2) and the fabulous couas of Madagascar, for example **Running Coua** (1).



2



3

Tytonidae - Barn Owls

[4/4 of 19, 3 endemic]



1

This small family of nocturnal predators occurs almost globally, although its centre of diversity is in the Australian region. Four species are recorded from the African region, the widespread and familiar **Western Barn Owl** (1) and three endemics, including the highly localised **Madagascar Red Owl** (2) of eastern Madagascar and Congo Bay Owl, one of the least-known birds in Africa.



2

Strigidae - Owls

[49/50 of 218, 39 endemic and 2 near-endemic]

1



2



3



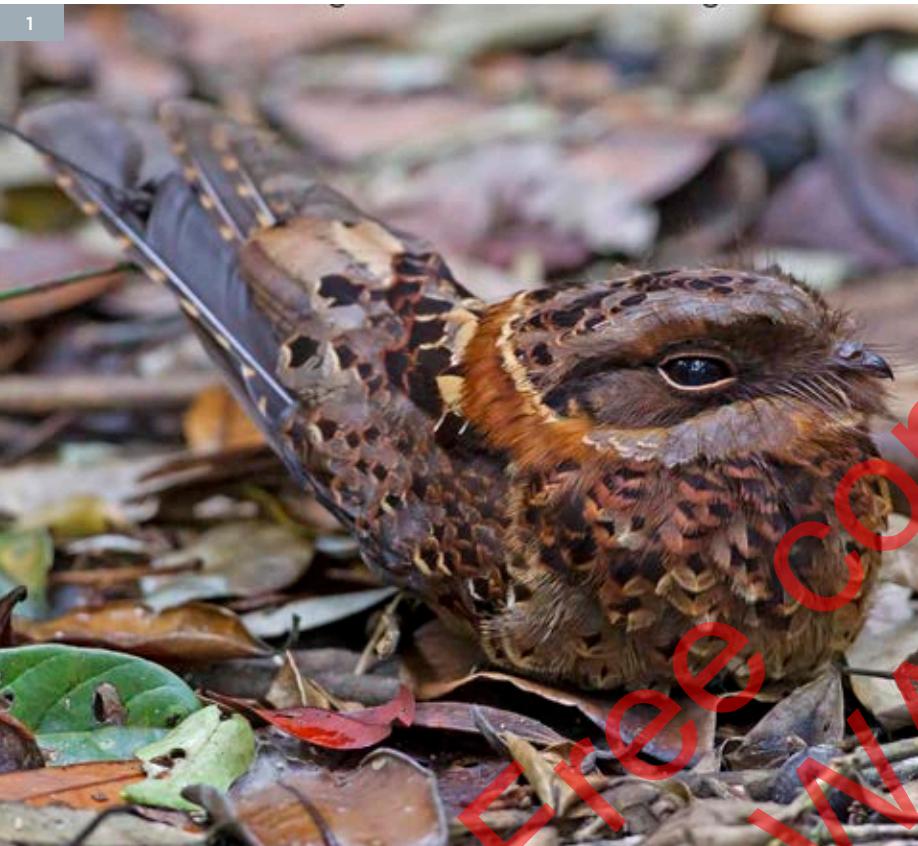
4



Owls are a near-cosmopolitan family of mostly-nocturnal predators. Of all bird families in the region with more than 25 species, seeing a high proportion of owls is the most challenging; several African endemics are hardly known in life; for example Shelley's Eagle-Owl and Maned Owl, the voice of the latter being unknown. Of those that birders stand a reasonable chance of seeing, **Akun Eagle-Owl** (2) and **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** (3) are among the most difficult, whereas species like **Northern White-faced Owl** (this page) and **Marsh Owl** (1) are easier to track down. The largest genus is the *Otus* scops owls, which includes the localised **Sokoke Scops Owl** (4).

Caprimulgidae - Nightjars

[28/28 of 98, 22 endemic and 2 near-endemic]



2

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The nightjars are a widespread family of nocturnal insectivores, found everywhere but Antarctica. They are well represented in the region, occurring in all terrestrial habitats from deserts to forest. Most belong to the genus *Caprimulgus*, which includes the familiar Fiery-necked Nightjar and European Nightjar. The most unusual species include **Standard-winged Nightjar** (2) and Pennant-winged Nightjar, previously placed together in the genus *Macrodipteryx*, **Brown Nightjar** (this page), alone in the genus *Veles*, and **Collared Nightjar** (1) from Madagascar, in its own genus, *Gactornis*.

Apodidae - Swifts & Spinetails

[32/32 of 106, 21 endemic and 3 near-endemic]



The swifts are a speciose family of aerial insectivores, occurring throughout the region and on all continents except Antarctica. Due to their simple brown, black and white plumages, similar shapes and rapid flight, they are among the most challenging birds in the region to identify, especially the very uniform members of the genus *Apus*, such as **Pallid Swift** (3). **Alpine Swift** (5) and **African Palm Swift** (4) are among the more distinctive species, the latter nesting under the leaves of palm trees. Due to their distinctive shapes, the easiest ones to recognise are the spinetails, including **Mottled Spinetail** (1) and **Cassin's Spinetail** (2).



3



5



2



4

*Coliidae - Mousebirds

[6/6 of 6, all endemic]



1

The endemic mousebirds are a family of long-tailed, group-living birds found throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Of the six species, **Speckled Mousebird** (1) is the easiest to see, and is often found in gardens and farmlands. Other members include **Blue-naped Mousebird** (2) and the Southern African endemic, **White-backed Mousebird** (3).



2



3

Trogonidae - Trogons

[3/3 of 43, all endemic]



*Leptosomidae - Cuckoo Roller

[1/1 of 1, endemic]



This tropical family of strikingly-coloured birds has its centres of diversity in the Neotropics and Oriental region, and is poorly represented in Africa. All three species in the region are endemic forest inhabitants, with Narina Trogon the most widespread, Bar-tailed Trogon restricted to montane forests, and Bare-cheeked Trogon confined to the lowland forests of Central Africa.

Undoubtedly the most evolutionarily-unique bird found in the region, **Cuckoo Roller** is one of only two extant birds to belong to a monospecific order, the other being Hoatzin from the Neotropics. It is as big as it is loud, and the far-carrying cry of Cuckoo Roller is a constant part of the soundscape of Madagascan and Comoros forests.

Coraciidae - Rollers

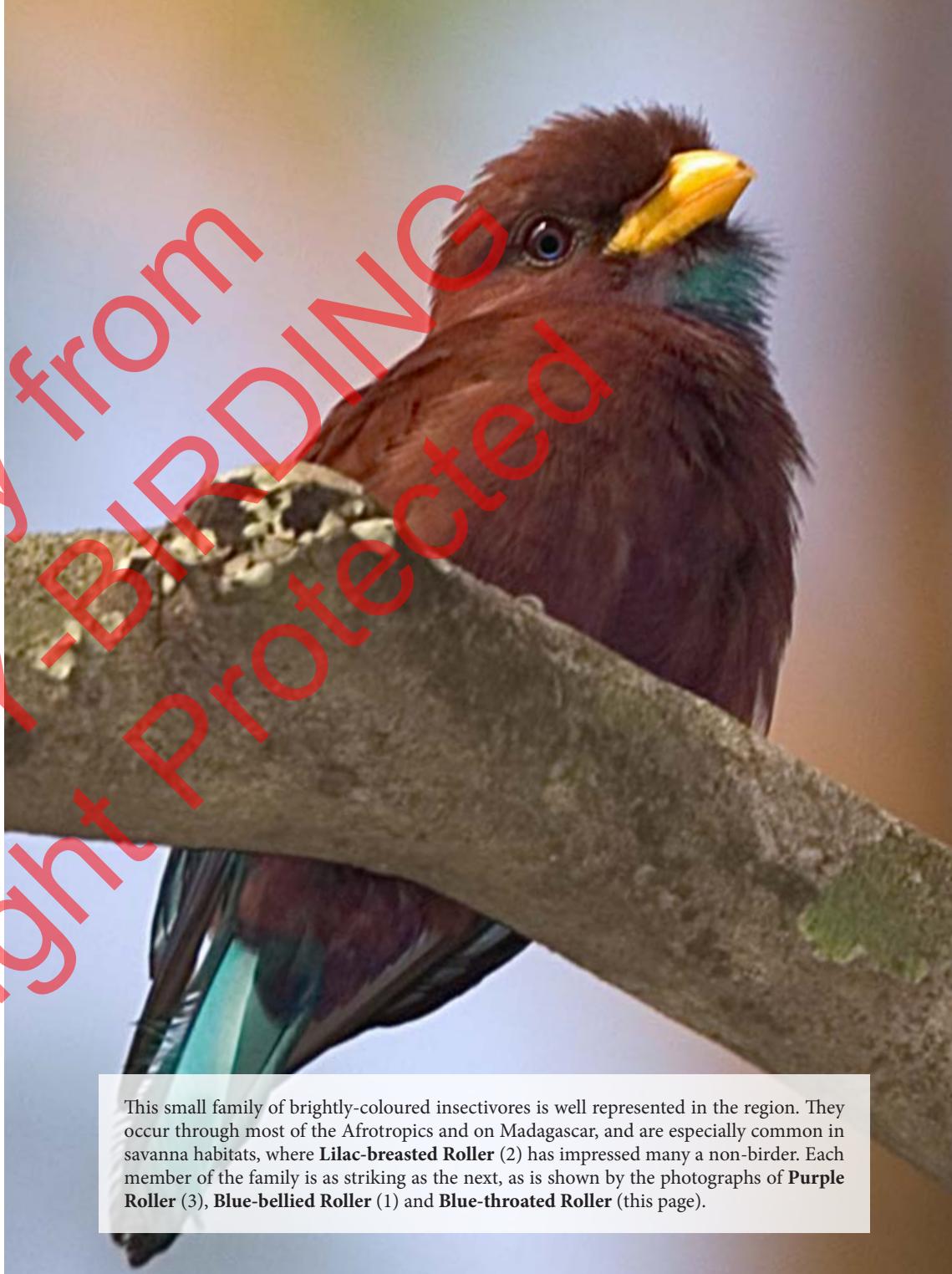
[9/9 of 12, 6 endemic and 1 near-endemic]

1



2

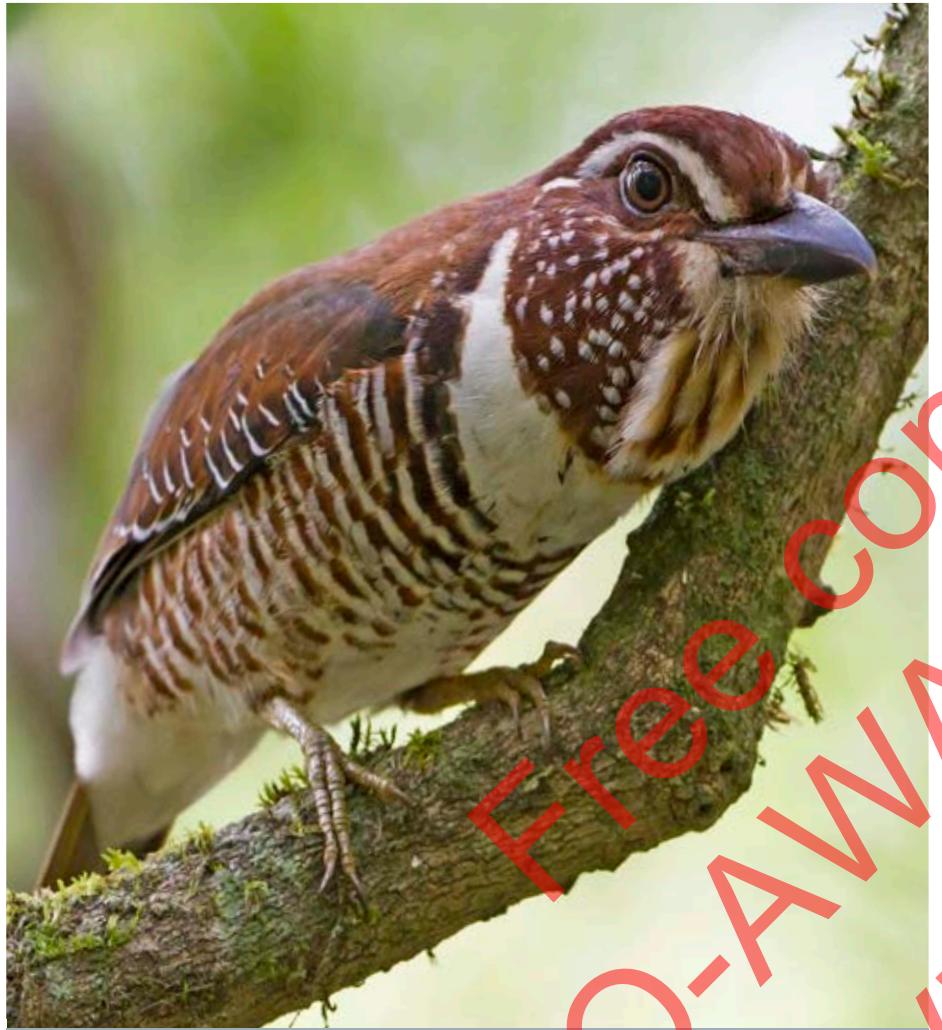
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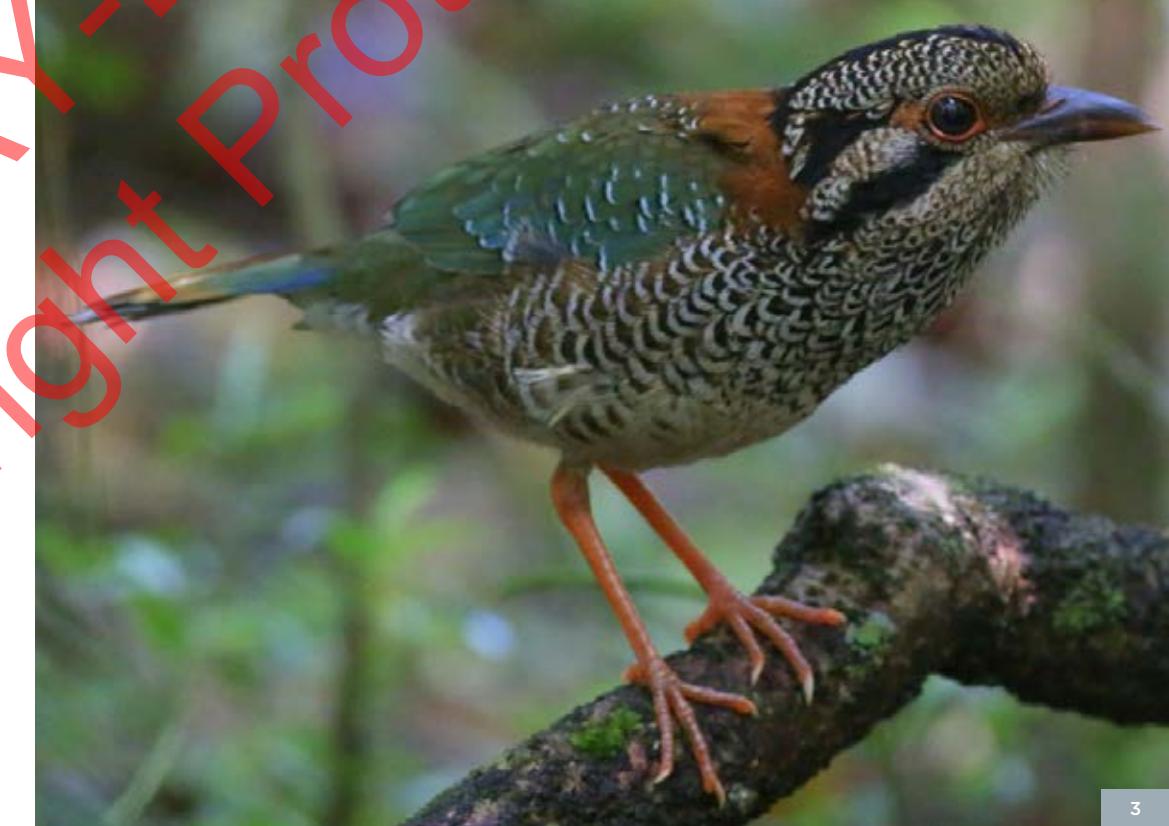
This small family of brightly-coloured insectivores is well represented in the region. They occur through most of the Afrotropics and on Madagascar, and are especially common in savanna habitats, where **Lilac-breasted Roller** (2) has impressed many a non-birder. Each member of the family is as striking as the next, as is shown by the photographs of **Purple Roller** (3), **Blue-bellied Roller** (1) and **Blue-throated Roller** (this page).

*Brachypteraciidae - Ground Rollers

[5/5 of 5, all endemic]



The fantastic ground rollers are a small family endemic to Madagascar. The challenge of seeing each of the five species, combined with their intricate and colourful plumages, make them one of the most brilliant bird groups in the region. The trickiest one to see is the arboreal **Short-legged Ground Roller** (this page) which spends long periods sitting still and is thus easily overlooked, followed by **Scaly Ground Roller** (3). Long-tailed Ground Roller (1) is found only in the spiny forests in the south-west, and **Rufous-headed Ground Roller** (2) favours ridge-top forest at higher altitudes in the eastern rainforests.



Alcedinidae - Kingfishers

[21/21 of 113, 14 endemic and 2 near-endemic]

1



Kingfishers are a widespread family with their greatest diversity in tropical Asia, but form a familiar component of the avifauna in tropical areas of the region. Wetland and savanna species, such as Giant Kingfisher and Striped Kingfisher (3), respectively, are not hard to see. However, forest species, such as African Dwarf Kingfisher (1), can present a significant challenge to find, although Blue-breasted Kingfisher (2) is usually not too elusive.



2

3

Upupidae - Hoopoes

[3/3 of 3, 2 endemic]

1



This small family of distinctive birds is essentially African, with all three species resident and two endemic. Given their similar appearances and habits they have been considered to represent a single species. All three species occur in savannas and woodlands, with African Hoopoe south of the equator, Eurasian Hoopoe (1) north of the equator and into Eurasia, and Madagascar Hoopoe (2) on Madagascar.



2

Meropidae - Bee-eaters

[20/21 of 27, 17 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



Bee-eaters are a small family of brightly-coloured aerial insectivores found in the Old World, but especially in the tropical savannas of Africa. The range of colours they display is extraordinary, from pink and grey in **Rosy Bee-eater** (1) to green and blue in **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, to black and turquoise in **Black Bee-eater** (this page). The scarcest and most localised species is **Black-headed Bee-eater** (2), a key target for any trip to Gabon.

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Phoeniculidae - Wood Hoopoes

[9/9 of 9, all endemic]



The endemic wood hoopoes and scimitarbills are found across the woodlands and forests of sub-Saharan Africa, where they pry under bark in search of invertebrates. The larger, family-living wood hoopoes are noisy and conspicuous, such as **Violet Wood Hoopoe** (1) which is confined to Namibia and southern Angola. The smaller scimitarbills, such as **Common Scimitarbill** (2), however, live in pairs and small family parties and are much more discreet than their cackling cousins.

*Bucorvidae - Ground Hornbills

[2/2 of 2, both endemic]



The two ground hornbills are enormous, terrestrial birds of savannas, their distributions more or less split by the equator. Both species are declining, but can still be seen with relative ease in large protected areas, **Abyssinian Ground Hornbill** in the north and **Southern Ground Hornbill** in the south.

Bucerotidae - Hornbills

[27/28 of 59, all endemic but for 1 near-endemic]



A tropical Old World family, the diversity of hornbills is split almost equally between the Afrotropics and Oriental region. Hornbills are conspicuous throughout sub-Saharan Africa, occupying savannas and forests. Open-country species such as **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill** (2) are typically easy to see. However, most hornbills occur in forests, and although larger ones like **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill** (this page) are often hard to miss, smaller ones such as **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** (1) can present much more of a challenge.



*Lybiidae - African Barbets

[42/44 of 42, all endemic]



1



2

3

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African barbets form an endemic family of fruit-eating birds. They are found throughout the Afrotropics and can be seen almost wherever there are trees. The more diminutive ones are called tinkerbirds, such as **Red-rumped Tinkerbird** (1). Larger barbets feature many colourful species such as **Bearded Barbet** (2) and **Yellow-breasted Barbet** (3), but also include a group of rather drab, colonially breeding species in the genus *Gymnobucco*, such as **Grey-throated Barbet** (this page).

Picidae - Woodpeckers

[37/39 of 235, 33 endemic]



The Picidae are a large family found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. While they are most diverse in tropical Asia and the Neotropics, they are found throughout the African continent and are an important component of the avifauna. The three most unique members in the region are **African Piculet** (3) and the two wrynecks, of which **Red-throated Wryneck** (1) is endemic. The rest are woodpeckers, which can be found in any wooded habitat, from lowland forest, for example **Little Green Woodpecker** (4), to patches of trees in semi-desert, as is the case for **Little Grey Woodpecker** (2).



Indicatoridae - Honeyguides

[15/15 of 17, all endemic]



The brood-parasitic honeyguides are chiefly African, with all but two species endemic to the region. In general they are rather rare birds, although their far-carrying calls make them quite conspicuous when in song. They occur in two main forms, the larger, stout-billed honeyguides such as **Lesser Honeyguide** (1), and smaller, fine-billed honeybirds such as **Brown-backed Honeybird** (2).

Psittaculidae - Old World Parrots

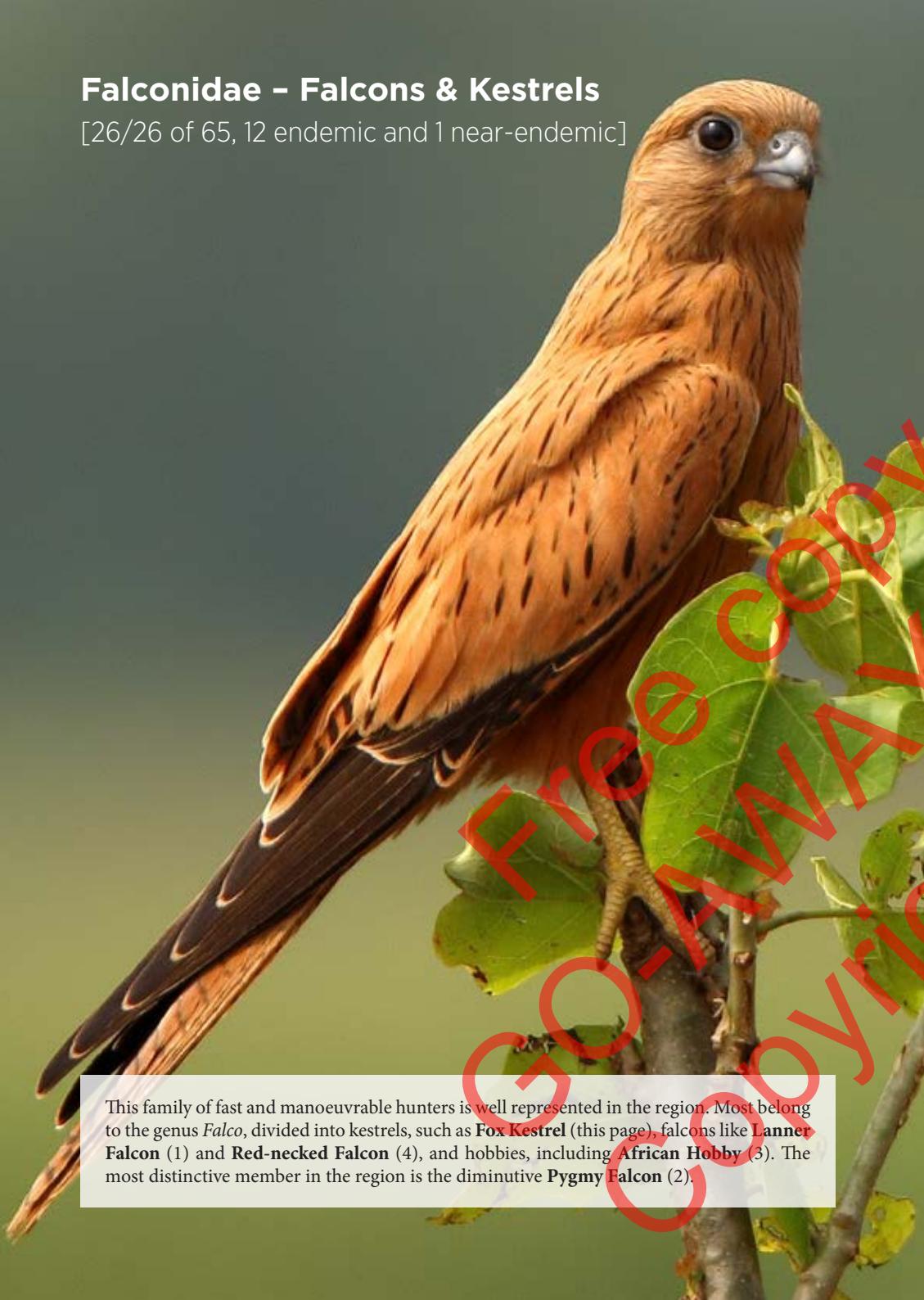
[14/14 of 180, 13 endemic]

The Old World parrots occur mainly in the Australian region, and are represented in the African region by the small lovebirds, such as **Red-headed Lovebird**, and the drab vasa parrots of the Indian Ocean Islands. The other parrots remain in the Psittacidae (p 208).



Falconidae - Falcons & Kestrels

[26/26 of 65, 12 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This family of fast and manoeuvrable hunters is well represented in the region. Most belong to the genus *Falco*, divided into kestrels, such as **Fox Kestrel** (this page), falcons like **Lanner Falcon** (1) and **Red-necked Falcon** (4), and hobbies, including **African Hobby** (3). The most distinctive member in the region is the diminutive **Pygmy Falcon** (2).

Psittacidae - African and New World Parrots

[12/12 of 176, all endemic]



This large family of colourful, noisy herbivores and frugivores is found mostly in the Neotropics, and is represented by just a dozen species in the region. They are typically found in forest and woodland, although **African Orange-bellied Parrot** occurs in arid savanna. Numbers of most species are declining in the wild due to the caged-bird trade.

Eurylaimidae - Broadbills & Asities

[8/8 of 20, all endemic]



This small family of rare forest birds has its centre of diversity in tropical Asia. Of the four broadbills in the region, three belong to the genus *Smithornis*, such as **Rufous-sided Broadbill** (2), whereas **African Green Broadbill** (4) is on its own. The Madagascan asities include four striking birds with two different body forms, the more typical ones like **Schlegel's Asity** (1) and the sunbird-like species such as **Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity** (3). The family can be divided into as many as five, of which the endemic asities (Philepittidae), eurylaimid broadbills (Eurylaimidae; mostly Asian but including African Green Broadbill), and the endemic *Smithornis* broadbills (Smithornithidae) are found in the region.



Pittidae - Pittas

[2/3 of 42, both endemic]



This family of brightly-coloured, terrestrial, forest-dwelling birds occurs mainly in the Oriental and Australian regions, with one to three species in Africa depending on taxonomy used. All are difficult to see, almost impossibly so when not displaying. However, in recent years sightings of **Green-breasted Pitta** at Kibale in Uganda have become regular, and Zambia has become established as the best country in which to find **East African Pitta**.

Tyrannidae - Tyrant Flycatchers

[1/1 of 435]

This massive and bewildering New World family is known from the region by a single instance of vagrancy of Eastern Kingbird to Tristan da Cunha.

*Platysteiridae - Batises & Wattle-eyes

[33/33 of 33, all endemic]



These small, short-tailed, endemic insectivores can be found throughout the Afrotropics. The batises are a fairly uniform group, with black, grey, white and chestnut plumage, such as **Cape Batis** (2), whereas the wattle-eyes are more variable and include both pied species such as **White-fronted Wattle-eye** (3) and more colourful ones like **Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye** (4). The unusual **White-tailed Shrike** (1) has recently been moved to this family based on genetic confirmation that it is a giant batis. Two species currently included in this family, Shrike-flycatcher and Black-and-white Flycatcher, may be more closely related to helmetshrikes and could even be placed in their own family.



*Prionopidae - Helmetshrikes

[8/8 of 8, all endemic]

1



The helmetshrikes are a small family of group-living birds, endemic to sub-Saharan Africa. **White-crested Helmetshrike** (2) occurs in savanna, whereas the remainder, such as **Red-billed Helmetshrike** (3), are found in forests. The most threatened of the lot is the Endangered **Gabela Helmetshrike** (1) of western Angola, although Yellow-crested Helmetshrike of eastern DR Congo is the hardest to see.



2

3

Campephagidae - Cuckooshrikes

[14/14 of 92, all endemic]

1



Most of these insectivores are found in the Orient and Australasia, with only a few species in the African region. They are found in forests and wooded savannas throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands. **Blue Cuckooshrike** (1) is one of the more striking members in the region, with most species having mostly-black males, as in **Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike** (2), or greyish plumage such as in **Grey Cuckooshrike** (3).



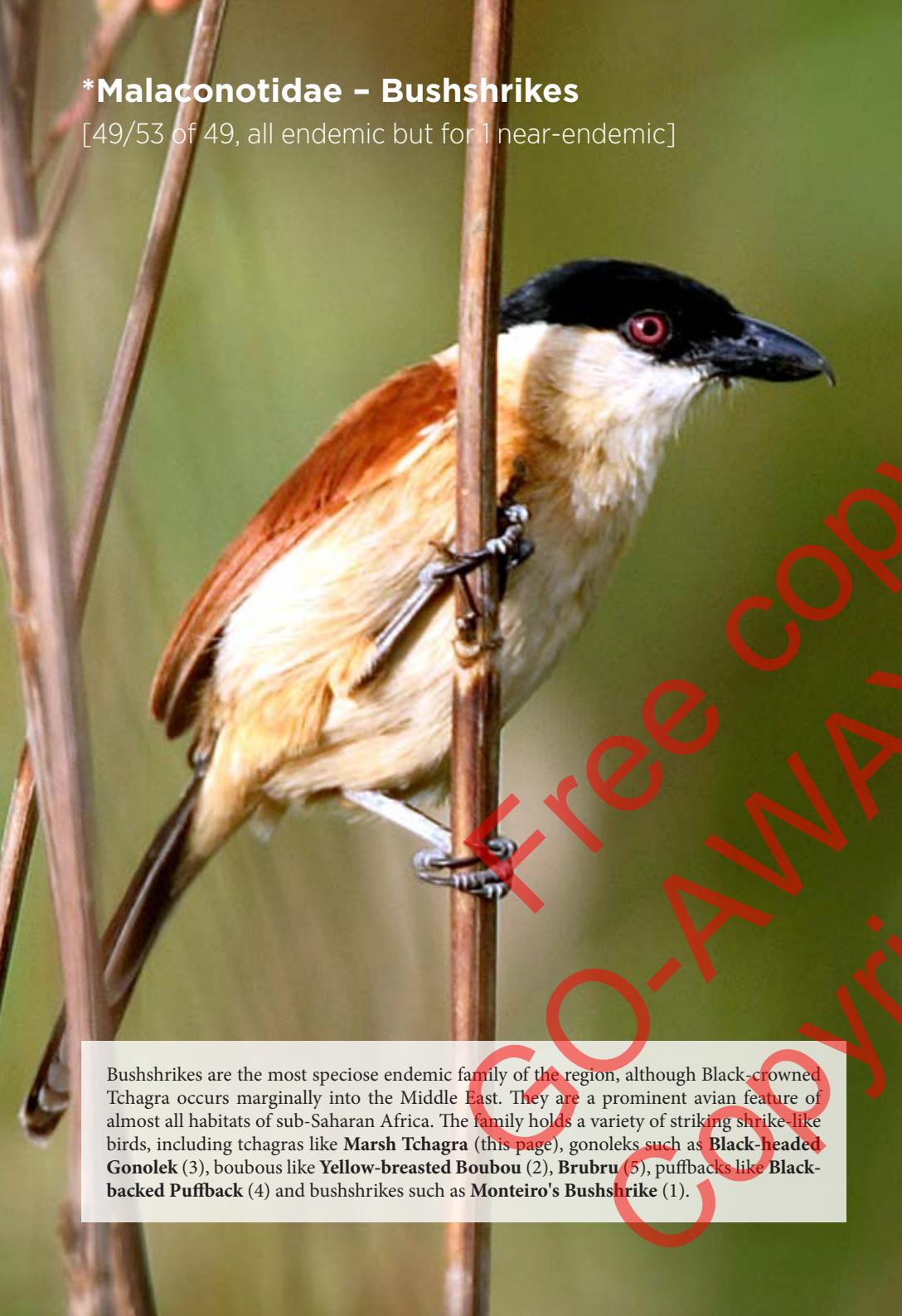
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3

*Malaconotidae - Bushshrikes

[49/53 of 49, all endemic but for 1 near-endemic]



Bushshrikes are the most speciose endemic family of the region, although Black-crowned Tchagra occurs marginally into the Middle East. They are a prominent avian feature of almost all habitats of sub-Saharan Africa. The family holds a variety of striking shrike-like birds, including tchagras like **Marsh Tchagra** (this page), gonoleks such as **Black-headed Gonolek** (3), boubous like **Yellow-breasted Boubou** (2), Brubru (5), puffbacks like **Black-backed Puffback** (4) and bushshrikes such as **Monteiro's Bushshrike** (1).

1

2

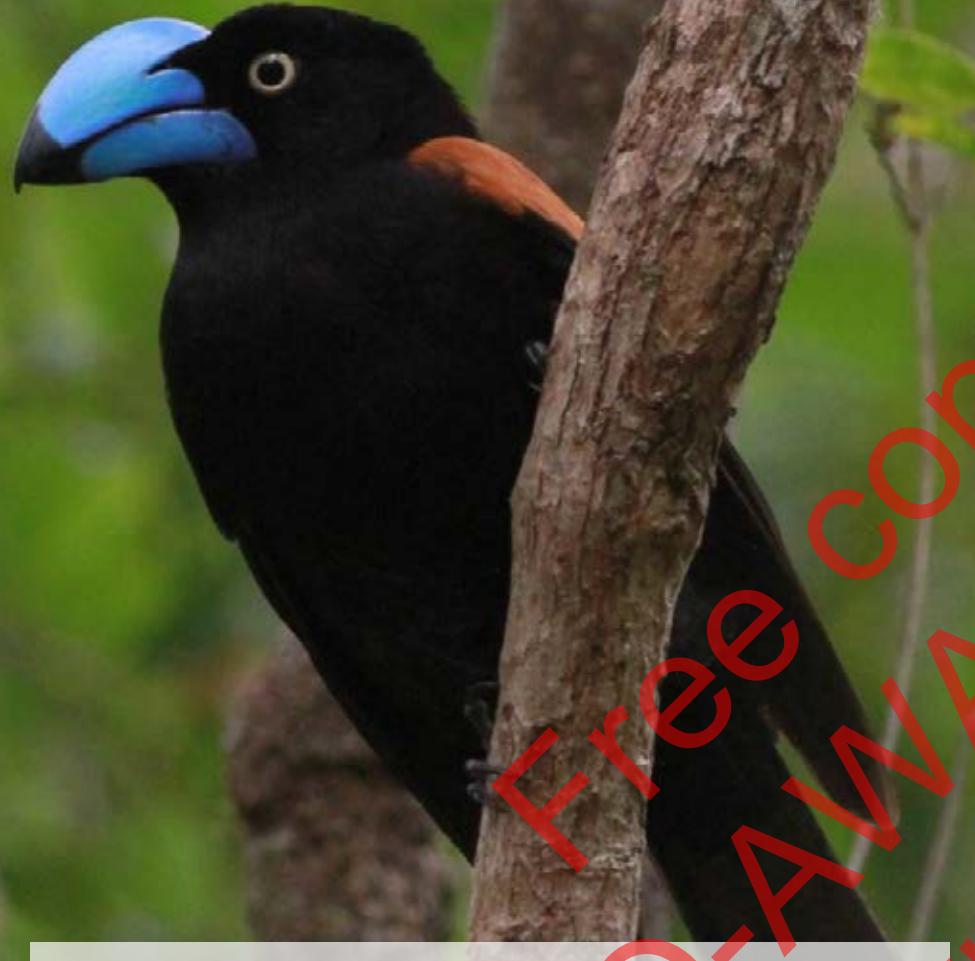
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4

5

*Vangidae – Vangas

[21/22 of 21, all endemic]



It is hard to believe that all the varied forms of vangas, endemic to Madagascar and Comoros, have evolved from a single origin; dreaming up an ecologically more disparate group of birds would seem silly. Not only are there large shrike-like species such as **Lafresnaye's Vanga** (4) and smaller insectivorous birds like **Red-shouldered Vanga** (3) and **Blue Vanga** (5), but also the extraordinary **Sickle-billed Vanga** (1), **Helmet Vanga** (this page) and **Nuthatch Vanga** (2). In addition, two species placed until recently in other families, namely Crossley's Vanga in the babblers and Ward's Vanga in the flycatchers, are now known to belong to this family. They are a dominant component of the Madagascan avifauna, and are found throughout the island.

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Laniidae - Shrikes

[22/25 of 33, 16 endemic]

1



These familiar and widespread birds are found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica, and form a prominent component of open-country avifauna of the region. Most belong to the genus *Lanius*, including the rare **Emin's Shrike** (1), but Magpie Shrike and **Yellow-billed Shrike** (2), are each placed in their own genus.



2

Vireonidae - Vireos and allies

[4/4 of 63]

This New World family is represented in the region by four species recorded as vagrants to Azores and Morocco. Go to the Americas if you want to see one.

Oriolidae - Orioles

[10/10 of 36, 8 endemic]



2

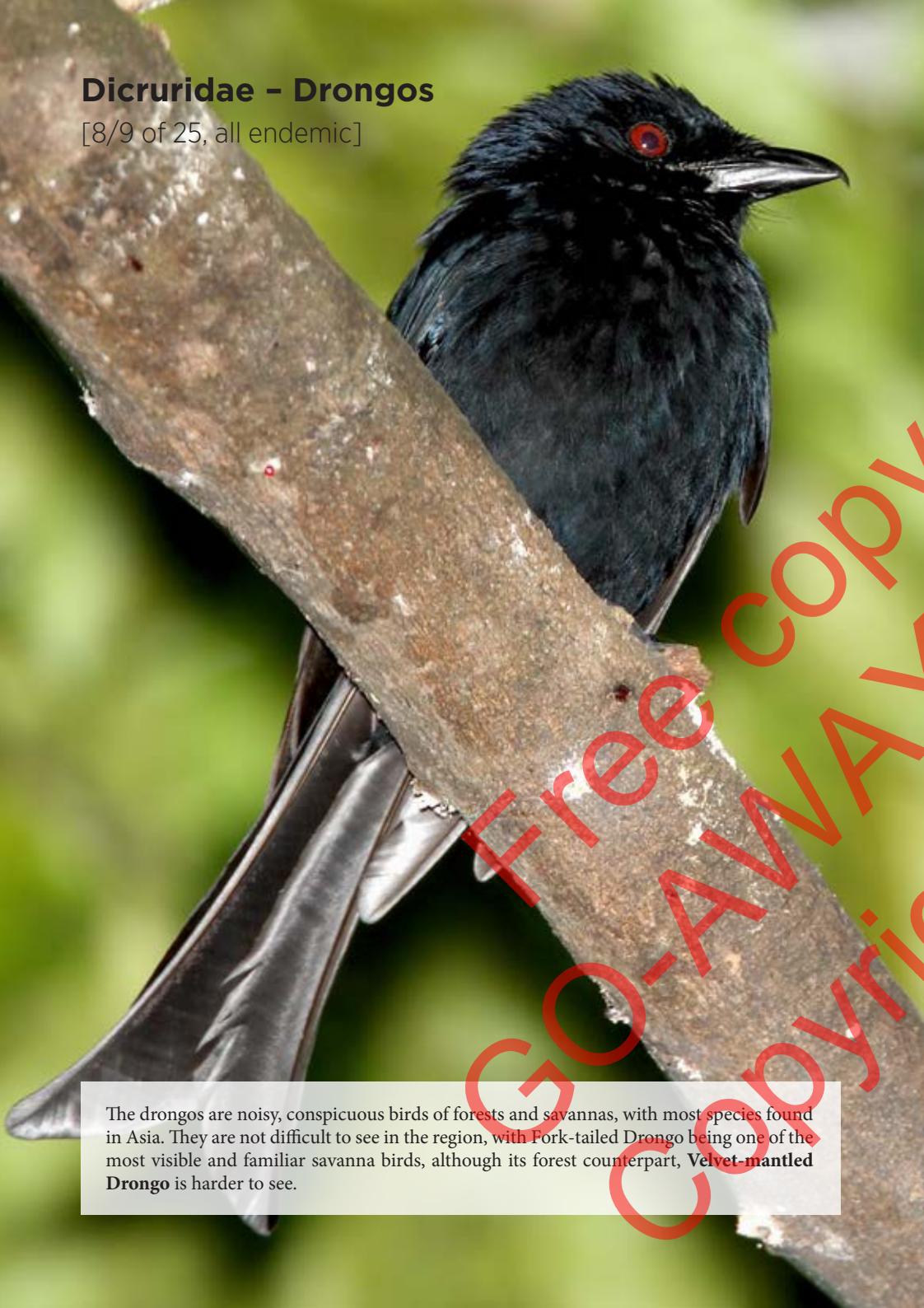
This Old World family of insectivores, with its centre of diversity in tropical Asia, is quite conspicuous in the forests and woodlands of Africa. They are typically yellow-and-black birds such as **Black-winged Oriole** (3) and **Abyssinian Black-headed Oriole** (2), notable exceptions being the striking Green-headed Oriole and subdued **Sao Tome Oriole** (1).



3

Dicruridae - Drongos

[8/9 of 25, all endemic]



The drongos are noisy, conspicuous birds of forests and savannas, with most species found in Asia. They are not difficult to see in the region, with Fork-tailed Drongo being one of the most visible and familiar savanna birds, although its forest counterpart, **Velvet-mantled Drongo** is harder to see.

Monarchidae - Monarchs

[12/12 of 98, all endemic but for 1 near-endemic]



The monarchs are an Old World family of busy, small-bodied insectivores found mainly in Australasia. Those in the region can be divided into the ten long-tailed *Terpsiphone* paradise flycatchers and two short-tailed *Trochocercus* crested flycatchers. Although African Paradise Flycatcher is found in savannas and woodlands throughout sub-Saharan Africa, most are forest birds, including Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher (1), Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher (3) and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher (2).



Corvidae - Crows and allies

[19/19 of 130, 7 endemic and 1 near-endemic]

1



This cosmopolitan family of large-bodied passerines is poorly represented in Africa, although not hard to see. In the region the genus *Corvus* is the most speciose and includes Pied Crow, one of the easiest birds to see, Thick-billed Raven (2) and White-necked Raven (3). The most sought-after member is Strelitzia's Bushcrow (1), a key target on bird watching trips to southern Ethiopia.



2



3

*Chaetopidae - Rockjumps

[2/2 of 2, both endemic]



The rockjumps of South Africa and Lesotho comprise the most restricted-range endemic family of the Africa. As the name suggests, rockjumps live on mountainsides where they bound across rocks and boulders. **Cape Rockjumper** occurs in the fynbos biome of southwestern South Africa, whereas Drakensberg Rockjumper is confined to the higher reaches of the Drakensberg of Lesotho and surrounding South Africa. Their bold plumages, interesting behaviour and elusive nature make them the key family to see in South Africa.

***Picathartidae - Rockfowl**

[2/2 of 2, both endemic]

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The Picathartes comprise the most desirable and enigmatic bird family of the African region. They inhabit lowland forests, **Red-headed Picathartes** (this spread) in western Central Africa and **Yellow-headed Picathartes** (next spread) in West Africa, where they plaster cup-shaped nests of mud to the undersides of large boulders scattered through the forest. Although both are rare, some breeding colonies in Cameroon and Ghana are now well known, making them relatively straightforward to see.



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Bombycillidae - Waxwings

[2/2 of 3]

Waxwings are birds of northern temperate forests, and the two recorded from the region are both very rare vagrants, so look for them elsewhere.

Hypocoliidae - Hypocolius

[1/1 of 1]

The sleek, distinctive Grey Hypocolius is the sole member of its family. It occurs in arid scrublands of the Middle East to India, and is known from the region by a single instance of vagrancy.

Stenostiridae - Fairy Flycatchers

[6/6 of 9, all endemic]



These dainty flycatchers are mostly found in Africa, with just three species in Asia. They are active little birds, such as **White-bellied Crested Flycatcher**, that chase insects through forests. The only non-forest member, Fairy Flycatcher, occurs in shrublands in South Africa.

Paridae - Tits

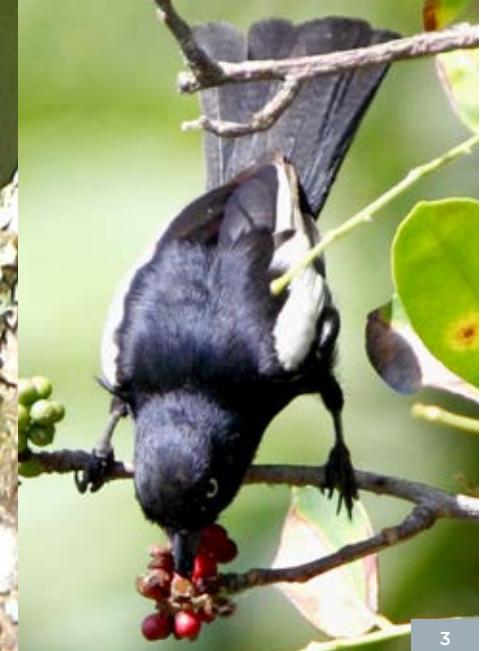
[19/19 of 64, 16 endemic]



The tits are a fairly uniform family of small-bodied birds that occur predominantly in Eurasia. However, they can be found in almost any treed area of mainland Africa. Most are simply-coloured black, white and grey birds, including **Ashy Tit** (1) in arid savannas, **White-shouldered Black Tit** (3) in mesic savannas and **Dusky Tit** (2) in forest.



2



3

Remizidae - Penduline Tits

[7/8 of 11, 7 endemic]



The tiny penduline tits are mostly African, with more than half endemic to the Afrotropics and the remaining species found in Eurasia. They are quiet birds that glean insects from fine branches of trees and shrubs, and so often go overlooked. Most occur in savannas and shrublands, including **Cape Penduline Tit**, but they are also found in forest.

*Nicatoridae - Nicators

[3/3 of 3, all endemic]



The endemic nicators are a small family of medium-sized insectivores found through the forested areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Previously they were thought to be related to either bulbuls or shrikes, but genetic evidence places them in their own lineage. Although they favour the densest habitats, all have loud voices which betray their presence. **Western Nicator** is the most widespread, occurring in forests throughout Central Africa and West Africa, whereas **Eastern Nicator** occurs along the eastern lowlands of the continent and **Yellow-throated Nicator** occurs patchily in Central Africa.

Panuridae - Bearded Reedling

[1/1 of 1]

Bearded Reedling is a Eurasian bird of reed beds surrounding wetlands, recorded only as a rare vagrant to North Africa. It is very unlikely to be seen in the region.

Alaudidae - Larks

[79/80 of 98, 62 endemic and 4 near-endemic]



2



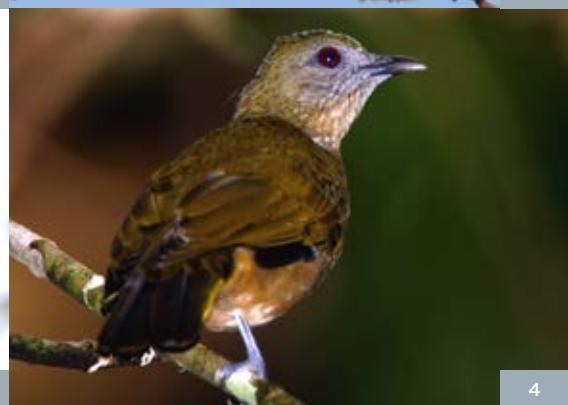
5



This large and, to many, bewildering family of subtly-marked birds of grasslands and desert can be found throughout the open areas of the region. It is predominantly an African group, with well over half of all species endemic, but they are also fairly speciose in Eurasia and occur in Australasia and North America too. They display an impressive range of bill morphologies, from the parrot-billed Thick-billed Lark of North Africa to the long and slender-billed long-billed larks of Southern Africa, such as **Benguela Long-billed Lark** (4). Most species, however, have fairly stubby bills that allow them to tackle both seeds and insects, such as **Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark** (1), **Red-capped Lark** (3) and **Flappet Lark** (5). The two rarest members of the group are **Beesley's Lark** (2) of northern Tanzania and **Archer's Lark** (left) of Ethiopia.

Pycnonotidae - Bulbs

[74/74 of 153, all but 1 endemic]



To most birders, bulbuls are the forest equivalent of larks, with a bewildering variety of drably-coloured species; the name **Sombre Greenbul** (3) says it all! Approximately half are endemic to the region, with the remainder found in Asia. The most familiar members belong to the Common Bulbul complex, including **Dodson's Bulbul** (2). Although most species are hard to identify, like **Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul** (4), there are some distinctive ones too, such as **Eastern Bearded Greenbul** (5), **Grey-headed Greenbul** (this page), **Yellow-lored Bristlebill** (6) and the attractive **Black-collared Bulbul** (1).

Hirundinidae - Swallows & Martins

[45/45 of 88, 34 endemic]

1



This familiar and widespread family of aerial insectivores is well-represented in Africa, and can be found over almost any habitat. Widespread species include Barn Swallow, Lesser Striped Swallow and **Rock Martin** (2), but there are also some restricted-range species, including **Pied-winged Swallow** (1). There is also the case of Red Sea Cliff Swallow, known for certainty from a single specimen collect in northern Sudan, although other members of the genus *Petrochelidon* are easier to see, such as **Red-throated Cliff Swallow** (3).



2

3

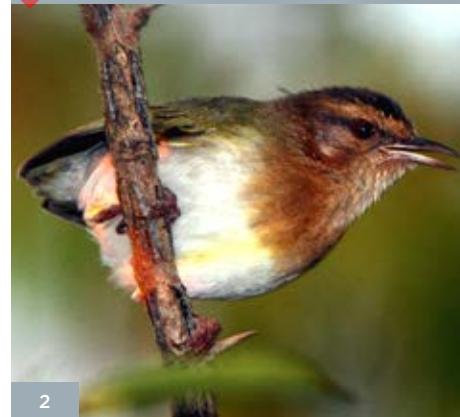
*Macrosphenidae - Crombecs and allies

[18/18 of 18, all endemic]

1



This small, endemic Afrotropical family is made up of an assortment of warbler-like birds. The two main groups are the five longbills, such as **Pulitzer's Longbill** (1) and nine tail-less crombecs, including **Green Crombec** (2), although four other rather distinctive looking species belong here too, namely Cape Grassbird, **Rockrunner** (3), African Moustached Warbler and Victorin's Warbler. Crombecs in savannas are generally the easiest members of the family to see.



2



3

Cettiidae - Cettia Bush Warblers and allies

[2/2 of 32, 1 endemic]

1



The cettia bush warblers and their allies are essentially an Asian family, represented in the region by just two species. The unusual **Neumann's Short-tailed Warbler** (1) is endemic to the Albertine Rift and often difficult to see in Uganda and Rwanda, whereas **Cetti's Warbler** (2) is familiar to many European birders and can be found in North Africa.



2

Scotocercidae - Scrub Warbler

[1/1 of 1]



Genetic evidence shows that **Scrub Warbler** is not related to the Cisticolidae as previously thought, but to a distinct lineage related to the Cettiidae. This little warbler occurs in arid scrublands across North Africa and southern Asia. In Africa it is best looked for on the fringes of the Sahara in Morocco, or in Sinai in Egypt. There is some evidence to suggest that two species may in fact be involved, one endemic to North-West Africa, and the other from North-East Africa to Pakistan. Note that it may be better placed within the Cettiidae.

*Erythrocercidae - Fan-tailed Flycatchers

[3/3 of 3, all endemic]



These three active, endemic flycatcher-like birds are unrelated to the Muscicapidae or Monarchidae, and are now placed in their own family. Although not especially easy to see, **Chestnut-capped Flycatcher** (1) occurs across the lowland forests of Central and West Africa and **Little Yellow Flycatcher** (2) is not uncommon in the coastal forests of Kenya and Tanzania. Livingstone's Flycatcher of eastern Central Africa completes the set.



2

*Grauer's Warbler, Green Hylia & Tit Hylia

[all endemic]

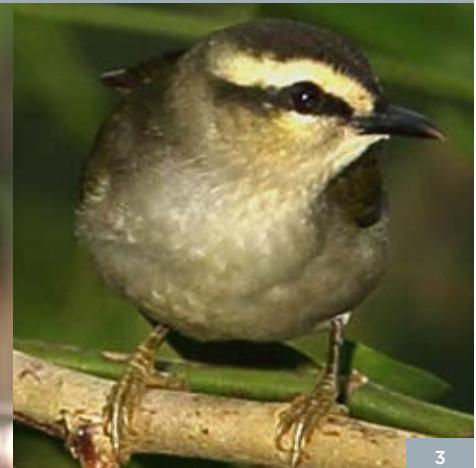


1

Grauer's Warbler, Green Hylia and Tit Hylia have proven rather challenging to place correctly in the phylogenetic tree of birds. **Grauer's Warbler** (2), confined to dense tangles in Afromontane forests of the Albertine Rift, most likely forms part of the Macrosphenidae. **Green Hylia** (3), widespread across the lowland forests of Central and West Africa, is probably sister to the long-tailed tits, but given how distinctive it is, probably deserves its own family, Hyliidae. The tiny **Tit Hylia** (1) occurs in the canopy of lowland forests of Central Africa and West Africa; it is thought to be closely related to Green Hylia, so could be placed within the Hyliidae, or may be distinct enough to deserve its own family.



2



3

Aegithalidae - Long-tailed Tits

[1/1 of 13]

Long-tailed tits or bushtits are northern hemisphere birds, represented in the region by Long-tailed Tit, recorded as a vagrant to North Africa.

Phylloscopidae - Leaf Warblers and allies

[19/19 of 77, 6 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This Old World family of small, leaf-gleaning warblers has its centre of diversity in Eurasia, with only a few forest species endemic to the region and a handful more visitors from the Palaearctic. Willow Warbler (3) is the most familiar member of the group, but more interesting, endemic species include Black-capped Woodland Warbler (1) of the Cameroon highlands and Red-faced Woodland Warbler (2) of the Albertine Rift.

Acrocephalidae - Reed Warblers and allies

[33/33 of 54, 15 endemic]

1



Reed warblers are generally drab insectivores that occur across the Old World. They are well-represented in the region and include a number of Palaearctic migrants, such as Great Reed Warbler (2), and five species from the Indian Ocean Islands. The yellow warblers, such as Dark-capped Yellow Warbler (1), are the most colourful members in the region.

2



Cisticolidae – Cisticolas, Apalis and allies

[130/137 of 158, all but two endemic]



1



2

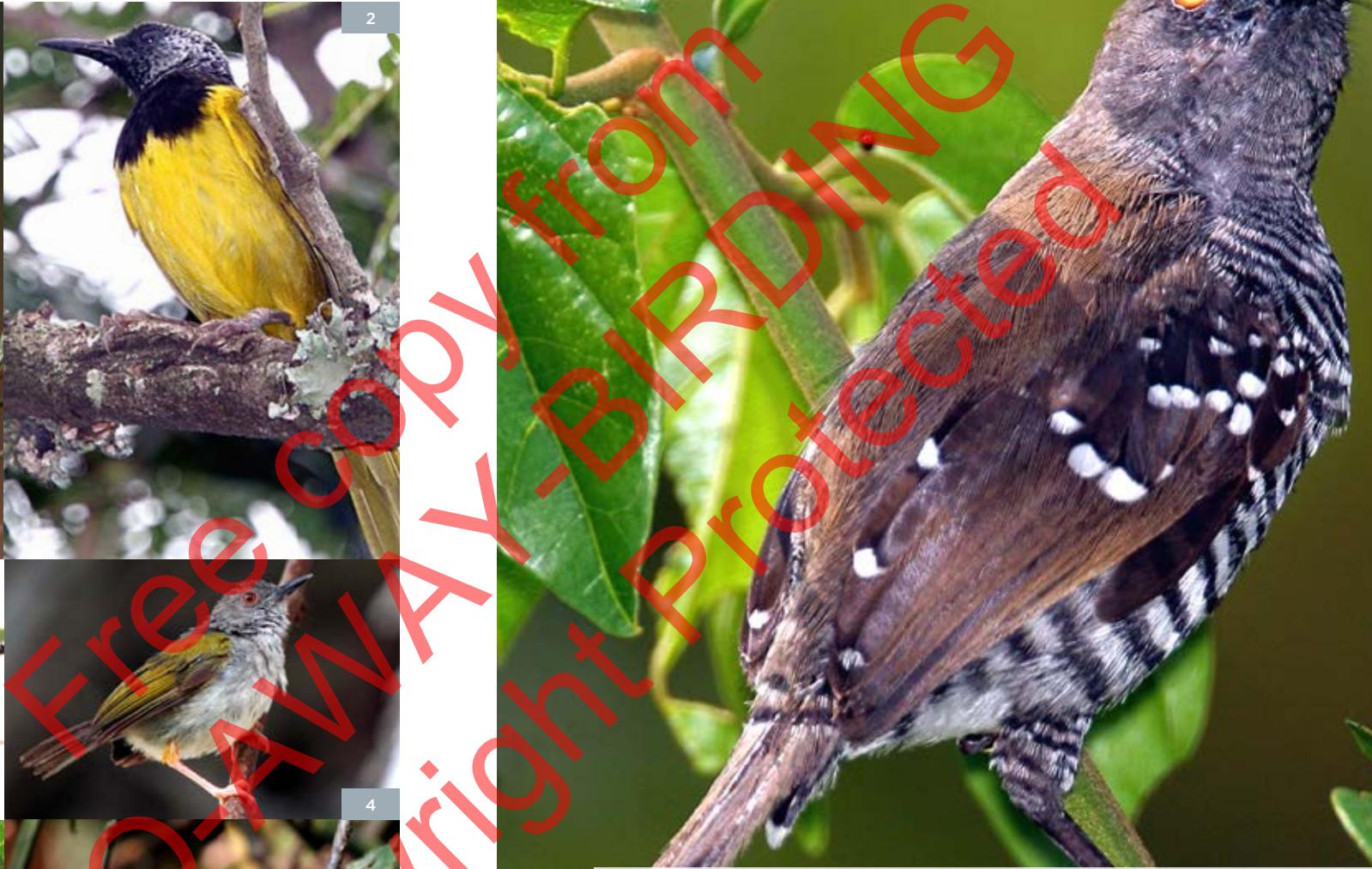


3



5

5 6



This large, mostly-African family of small, insectivorous birds is the second most speciose family in the region, and forms a significant component of the avifauna throughout the Afrotropics. The largest genus is *Cisticola* with more than 50 species, such as Levaillant's Cisticola (1). Other significant genera include *Apalis*, such as Kungwe Apalis (6), *Prinia* such as Banded Prinia (this page), *Camaroptera* such as Grey-backed Camaroptera (4) and *Eremomela*, for example Rufous-crowned Eremomela (5). More distinctive members include Oriole Warbler (2) and Rufous-eared Warbler (3).

Locustellidae - Grassbirds and allies

[17/17 of 61, 14 endemic]



These Old World warblers skulk in the densest vegetation in forests and wetlands, making them notoriously difficult to see. Although most are from Australasia and the Orient, the African region holds a good number of species, including Broad-tailed Warbler and eleven *Bradypterus* warblers, with Little Rush Warbler probably the easiest of the bunch to see.

*Bernieridae - Malagasy Warblers

[11/11 of 11, all endemic]



This family, endemic to Madagascar, is composed of insectivorous species that are either warbler-like, for example *Thamnornis* (2), or greenbul-like, such as Appert's Tetraka (1). They can be found in all pristine habitats across Madagascar, except grasslands.

Pellorneidae - Ground Babblers and allies

[8/9 of 70, all endemic]



The ground babblers are an Asian family of forest babblers, with a few endemic species found in the Afrotropics. Of these, all but one belong to the genus *Illadopsis*, rather drab birds of the forest understorey that are easier to hear than see, such as Mountain Illadopsis (2) and Puvel's Illadopsis (3). The scarce Spotted Thrush-Babbler (1) completes the set.



Leiothrichidae - Laughingthrushes and allies

[22/22 of 133, all but 1 endemic]



Like other babbler families, the Leiothrichidae are primarily Asian, although the group-living *Turdioides* babblers, such as **Black-lored Babbler** (1), are a conspicuously noisy component of savanna avifauna across the Afrotropics. The chattering, such as **Rufous Chatterer** (2), are far less vociferous, and the *Kupeornis* mountain babblers, such as **White-throated Mountain Babbler** (1), are the most sought-after members of the family.



2 3

Sylviidae - Sylviid Babblers and allies

[30/30 of 70, 11 endemic]



This Old World family of small, warbler-like babblers, many of which are Palaearctic migrants, is well represented in the region. Examples include **African Hill Babbler** (2) and **Abyssinian Catbird** (1) in montane forest, Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler (4) in lowland forest on Príncipe, and **Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler** (3) in Acacia thickets in Southern Africa.



2 3 4

Zosteropidae - White-eyes

[25/31 of 127, all endemic but for 1 near-endemic]

1



This diverse Old World family of small-bodied birds displays an impressive radiation on islands in the Oriental and Australian regions. Recent genetic work shows that the diversity in the African region is greatly underestimated, and we stand to gain as many as another dozen new species, most very similar in appearance. They can be seen throughout sub-Saharan Africa and on many islands in the region. Speirops, such as **Black-capped Speirops** (1) and **Principe Speirops** (2), include the most distinctive members of the family, whereas most white-eyes, such as **Cape White-eye** (3), are very similar in plumage.



2

3

*Arcanatoridae - Modulatrixes

[3/3 of 3, all endemic]

1



This family of three is perhaps the most difficult to see of the endemic families, as all are residents of dense, dark montane forest under-storey. **Dappled Mountain Robin** (2) is exceptionally rare and confined to remote parts of Tanzania and northern Mozambique, whereas **Grey-cheasted Illadopsis** (1) is found in southern Cameroon, the Albertine Rift and western Kenya, and Spot-throat in Tanzania and northern Malawi.



2

*Promeropidae - Sugarbirds

[2/2 of 2, both endemic]



This family of brush-tongued, nectar-feeding birds is confined to Southern Africa, where the two species associate strongly with flowering *Protea*. Previously thought to be related to sunbirds, genetic evidence has shown them to be an ancient and unrelated lineage. **Cape Sugarbird** can be seen easily in the Cape Town area, whereas Gurney's Sugarbird is best seen in the Drakensberg of eastern South Africa.

Regulidae - Goldcrests & Kinglets

[4/4 of 6, 1 endemic]



This small family of leaf warbler-like birds is confined to the Palaearctic and Nearctic regions, and in the African region is found only in Macaronesia and north of the Sahara. The single endemic, Madeira Firecrest, is restricted to Madeira Island, whereas **Common Firecrest** (1) and **Goldcrest** (2) are familiar European birds.



1

2

***Hyliotidae - Hyliotas**

[4/6 of 4, all endemic]



Hyliotas are small, insect-gleaning birds of the forests and woodlands of the Afrotropics. Due to their similar plumages, faint calls and habit of feeding at the tops of trees, they are easily overlooked and may include some cryptic species. **Yellow-bellied Hyliota** is the most widespread species and found widely across the broad-leaved woodlands of Africa.

Troglodytidae - Wrens

[1/1 of 88]



The wrens are almost exclusively a New World family. Only **Eurasian Wren** occurs outside of the Americas, and it can be seen in North Africa and Eurasia.

Sittidae - Nuthatches

[2/2 of 28, 1 endemic]



This family of specialist rock- and trunk-feeding species is found throughout the temperate northern hemisphere. Both species in the region occur north of the Sahara, and whereas **Eurasian Nuthatch** is relatively easy to see in Morocco, the endemic Algerian Nuthatch is very rare and confined to a small area of north-eastern Algeria that is unsafe to visit, making it the least-known species endemic to the Western Palaearctic.

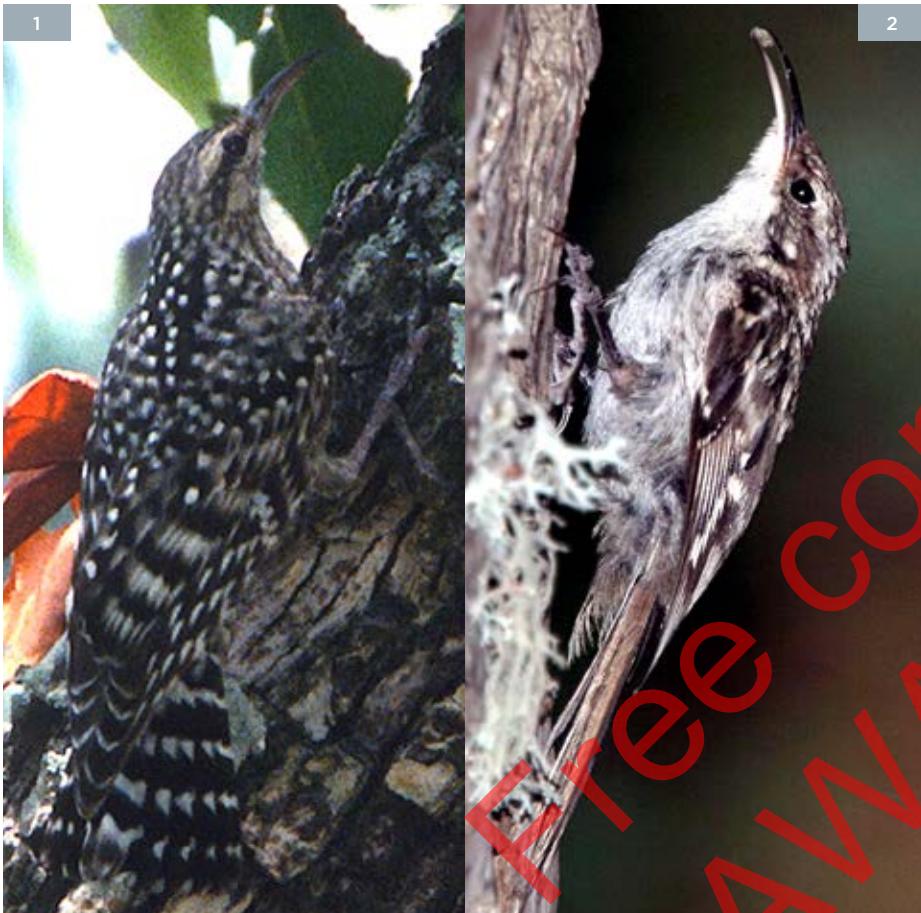
Tichodromidae - Wallcreeper

[1/1 of 1]

The unique Wallcreeper lives mostly on tall cliffs in Europe and Asia. It is known from the region by only two records of vagrancy to North Africa, so is best searched for elsewhere.

Certhiidae – Treecreepers

[2/2 of 11, 1 endemic]



1

2

The treecreepers are essentially a Eurasian family of specialist bark-feeding birds. **Short-toed Treecreeper** (2) is found in the forests of the Atlas Mountains of North-West Africa and **African Spotted Creeper** (1) frequents the tropical woodlands of sub-Saharan Africa.

Mimidae – Mockingbirds and allies

[2/2 of 34]

This New World family is represented in the region only by vagrants to Azores and Canary Islands. Look for them in the Americas.

Sturnidae – Starlings and allies

[51/51 of 118, 46 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



1

This Old World family is well-represented in the region, with most other species occurring in Asia. Starlings are a conspicuous part of the avifauna in most habitats, from arid savannas, as is the case with **Chestnut-bellied Starling** (1), to forests, for example **Forest Starling** (2), **Chestnut-winged Starling** (5). The family includes many strikingly-plumaged birds such as **White-crowned Starling** (4), **Long-tailed Glossy Starling** (2), **Shelley's Starling** (3) and **Violet-backed Starling** (6).



2



3



4



5



6

*Buphagidae - Oxpeckers

[2/2 of 2, both endemic]

1



The two endemic oxpeckers are found widely across the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa where they feed on ectoparasites and skin of wild and domesticated ungulate mammals. They are easiest to see in the large game parks of Southern Africa and East Africa, and may occur alongside one another, although Yellow-billed Oxpecker (2) typically associates with larger mammals than does Red-billed Oxpecker (1).



2

Turdidae - Thrushes and allies

[38/39 of 166, 26 endemic]

1



The thrushes are a near-global family of mostly ground-feeding birds of forests and woodlands. The *Geokichla* ground thrushes, such as **Kivu Ground Thrush** (1), are notoriously difficult to see, whereas the *Turdus* thrushes, such as **Abyssinian Thrush** (3), are far less secretive. Some of the more distinctive members of the group include **Groundscraper Thrush** (4) and **Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush** (2).



2



3



4

Muscicapidae - Chats, Flycatchers and allies

[157/160 of 324, 119 endemic and 7 near-endemic]



This large Old World family of small insectivores has more representatives in the region than any other; they can be seen just about anywhere and often form a significant component of the avifauna. Some of the easier groups to find include the *Cercotrichas* scrub robins such as White-browed Scrub Robin, *Cossypha* robin-chats like Rüpell's Robin-Chat (2), chats like Congo Moor Chat (6), *Oenanthe* wheatears like Red-breasted Wheatear (1), and *Muscicapa* flycatchers such as Yellow-footed Flycatcher (3). Forest understorey species such as Red-throated Alethe (this page) and Gabela Akalat (5) can, however, provide more of a challenge to find. More distinctive members include White-browed Forest Flycatcher (4), White-winged Cliff Chat (7) and Collared Palm Thrush (8).



1

2



7

8



Cinclidae - Dippers

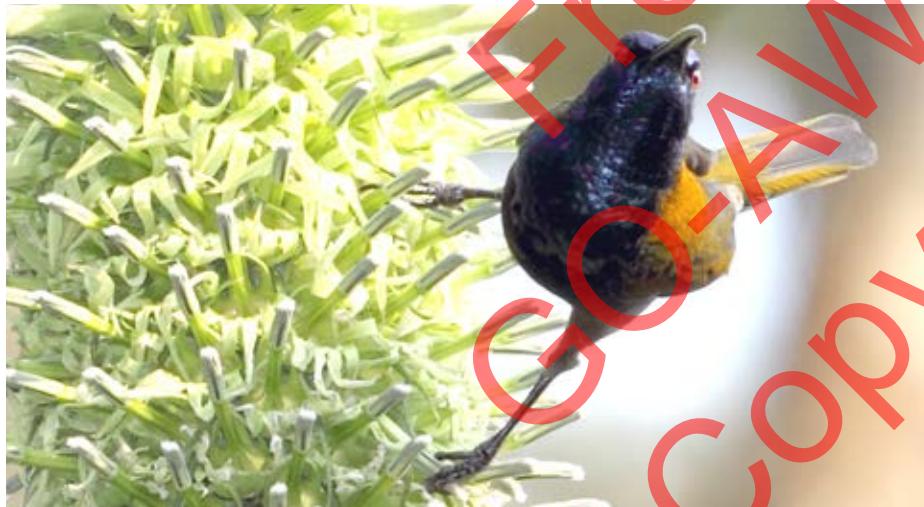
[1/1 of 5]



This small family of semi-aquatic birds is found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. **White-throated Dipper** can be seen in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa.

Nectariniidae - Sunbirds

[91/93 of 143, 90 endemic and 2 near-endemic]



The greatest numbers of this diverse family of small-bodied nectar- and spider-eaters occur in the Africa region, with the Orient being the second centre of diversity. Although the majority of species are bright and iridescent like **Pygmy Sunbird** (4) and **Orange-tufted Sunbird** (1), some, such as **Fraser's Sunbird** (2), are rather drab. Among the more restricted-range species are **Blue-headed Sunbird** (left) and **Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird** (3), both confined to the Albertine Rift.



Passeridae - Sparrows and allies

[36/36 of 51, 27 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This Old World family of mostly open-country granivores is well-represented in the region, especially in arid savannas. The typical *Passer* sparrows, such as **Great Sparrow** (5), are the most familiar members, although they are often outnumbered by colonial species such as **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver** (2), **Grey-capped Social Weaver** (3) and **Sociable Weaver** (4). Among the more colourful ones is **Sudan Golden Sparrow** (1) of the Sahel.



4

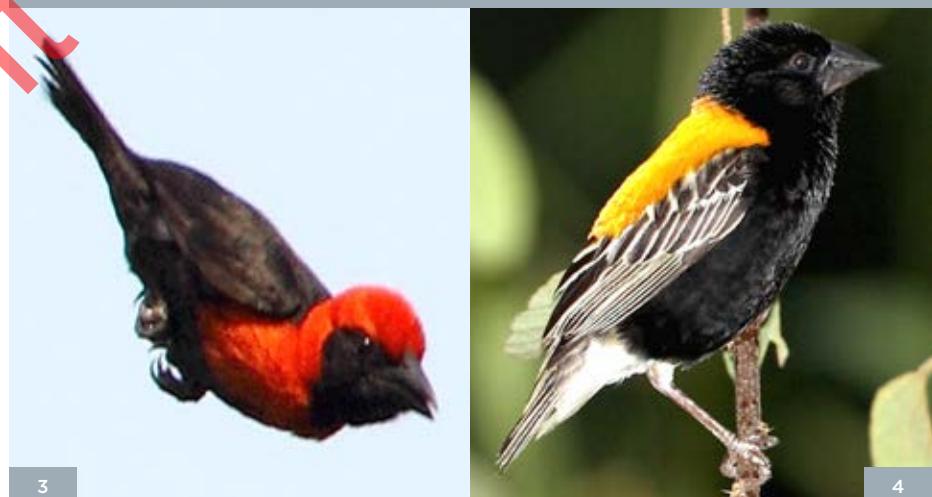
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*Ploceidae - Weavers and allies

[104/109 of 109, all endemic but for 1 near-endemic]



The weavers and their relatives form the third-most diverse family in the region, and all but a handful are endemic. During the wet season they are often a prominent component of savanna avifaunas, although they can be found in every type of habitat. The *Ploceus* weavers are by far the most speciose and can be divided into solitary insectivores such as **Brown-capped Weaver** (1) and colonial granivores such as **Black-and-chestnut Weaver** (2). Other significant groups include the malimbes, such as the rare **Ibadan Malimbe** (3), spectacular widows and bishops, such as **Golden-backed Bishop** (4), and queleas.



3

4

Estrildidae - Waxbills and allies

[78/79 of 141, all endemic but for 2 near-endemics]



This family of small, seed-eating birds has its greatest diversity in Africa. It includes many bright and beautiful species such as the *Estrilda* waxbills like **Anambra Waxbill** (5) and *Lagonosticta* firefinches such as **Rock Firefinch** (this page). Other groups include twinspots such as **Green Twinspot** (1), mannikins like **Maggie Mannikin** (2), crimsonwings like **Dusky Crimsonwing** (4), olivebacks such as **Grey-headed Oliveback** (6), pytilias such as **Green-winged Pytilia** (7) and seedcrackers like **Black-bellied Seedcracker** (8). Despite occurring in grassland, **Locust-Finch** (3) is one of the most difficult species to see perched.

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*Viduidae - Indigobirds & Whydahs

[20/20 of 20, all endemic]



These endemic Afro-tropical brood-parasites are granivores that lay their eggs in the nests of estrildids; the only exception is Cuckoo-Finch (3), which parasitises a variety of cisticolas and prinias. The short-tailed indigobirds, such as **Jos Plateau Indigobird** (2), differ from one another only very subtly, whereas the spectacular long-tailed whydahs are much more distinctive and include paradise whydahs such as **Sahel Paradise Whydah** (1) and other whydahs such as **Pin-tailed Whydah** (this page). They are best seen during the rains, when in breeding plumage.

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Prunellidae - Accentors

[2/2 of 13]



This Eurasian family of small sparrow-like birds is represented in the region by Alpine Accentor in the Atlas Mountains of North-West Africa, and Dunnock as a rare Palaearctic migrant to North Africa.

Motacillidae - Pipits, Wagtails and allies

[42/43 of 66, 28 endemic and 1 near-endemic]



This cosmopolitan family of terrestrial passersines has its greatest diversity in Africa. Most occur in open, grassy habitats and are thus easy to find. The drab pipits, such as **Long-legged Pipit** (2), provide some of the greatest identification challenges in the region, although certain ones like **Sokoke Pipit** (4) are quite distinctive. The other main groups are the wagtails, such as **Cape Wagtail** (this page) and longclaws such as **Abyssinian Longclaw** (1). Undoubtedly the most unusual member of the group is **Sao Tome Shorttail** (3), prior to genetic evidence thought to be related to the *Macrosphenus* longbills in the family Macrosphenidae.



Fringillidae - Canaries, Finches and allies

[67/68 of 207, 50 endemic]



This global family of small passerines is well represented in the region and forms a significant component of the granivorous avifauna. The canaries and seedeaters are typically either yellow like Northern Grosbeak-Canary (1) and Yellow-fronted Canary (2) or brown like Sao Tome Grosbeak (3) and Streaky Seedeater (4). Oriole Finch (this page) is arguably the prettiest endemic in the group.



Parulidae - New World Warblers

[18/18 of 119]

The New World warblers are petite passerines from the Americas, represented in the region only by vagrants to Macaronesia.

Icteridae - Oropendolas, Orioles & Blackbirds

[2/2 of 108]

A New World family represented in the region by vagrants recorded only from the Azores.

Emberizidae - Buntings and allies

[30/30 of 180, 10 endemic and 1 near-endemic]

1



These small-bodied, terrestrial birds have their centre of diversity in Eurasia and the Americas, although they are found in savannas and rocky areas across much of Africa. The stripy-headed *Emberiza* buntings are the dominant genus and include **Gosling's Bunting** (1) and the scarce **Brown-rumped Bunting** (2).

2



Thraupidae - Tanagers and allies

[4/4 of 394]



This large New World family is represented in the region by just four species on the islands of Gough and Tristan da Cunha, including **Gough Bunting**. Given how remote these islands are and the great diversity of species in South America, they are better seen outside the region.

Calcarriidae - Longspurs & Snow Buntings

[2/2 of 6]

This small family of bunting-like birds from the far northern hemisphere is represented in the region by two vagrant species.

Cardinalidae - Cardinals and allies

[6/6 of 53]

A New World family with six species recorded from the region, all as vagrants to Azores.