

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.



Michael Mills is a freelance South African bird guide and bird conservationist with a close working relationship with Birding Africa. Since completing his Masters in Conservation Biology at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute/University of Cape Town, Michael has split his time between conducting various bird conservation and research projects in Angola for the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute and in collaboration with the BirdLife network, and guiding bird watching tours around Africa. He has a strong interest in recording bird vocalisations, and believes in the importance of publishing his research findings. When not exploring little-known regions of Africa, he can mostly be found dancing in a tutu with his partner Catherine and daughter Erin.



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.

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www.goawaybirding.com

Michael
Mills

The Birder's Guide to Africa

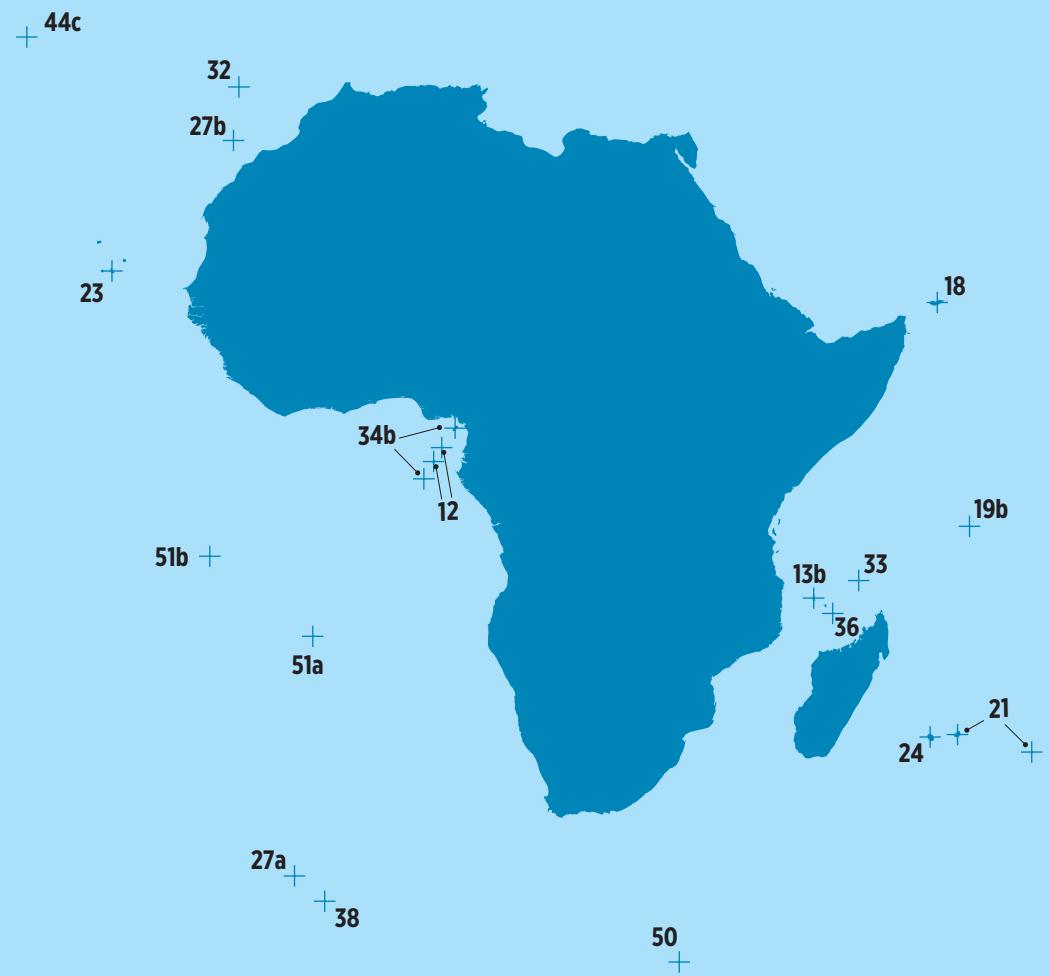
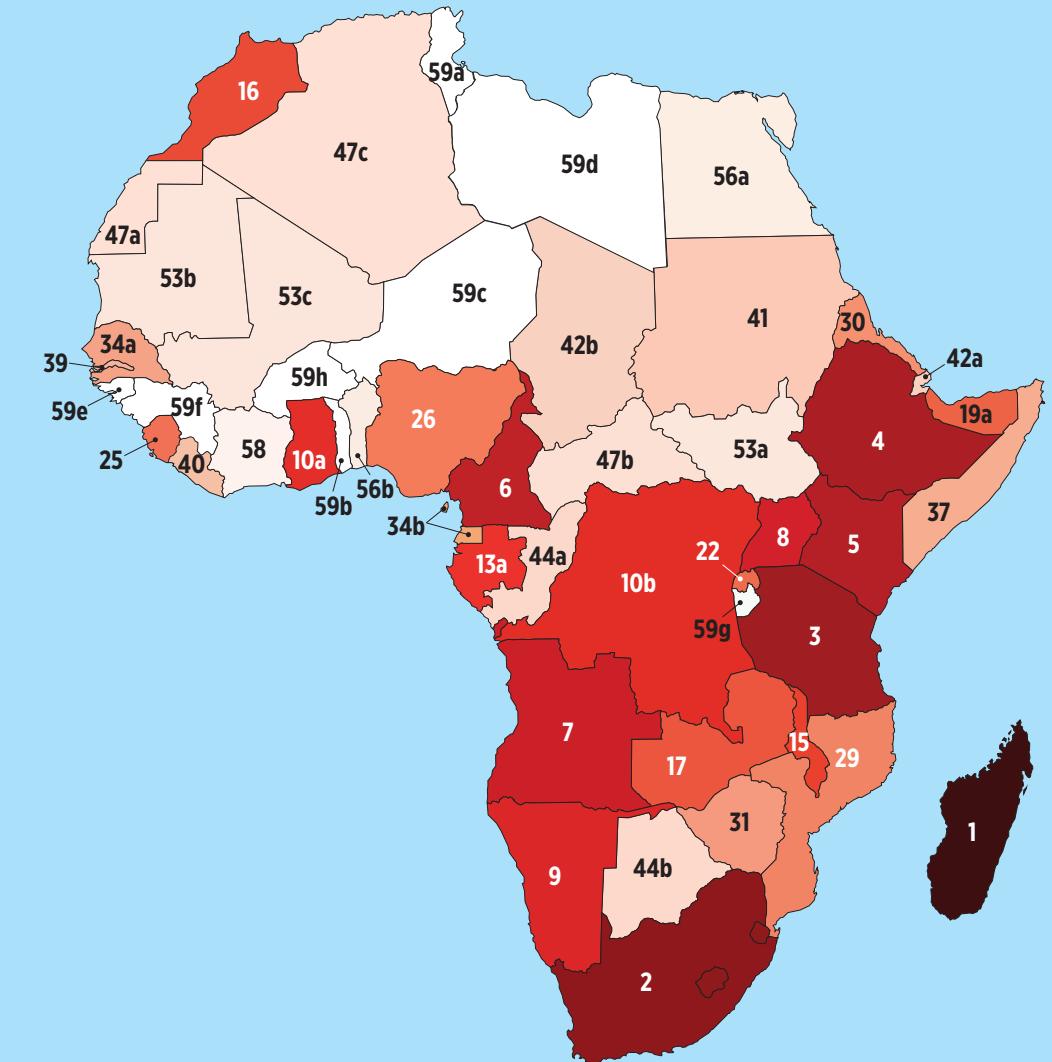
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The Birder's Guide to Africa



**Michael
Mills**

Photographs by
Tasso Leventis



RANK	COUNTRY	PAGE	RANK	COUNTRY	PAGE
1	Madagascar	72	37	Somalia	102
2	South Africa (+ Swaziland & Lesotho)	105	39	Gambia	58
3	Tanzania	112	40	Liberia	69
4	Ethiopia	53	41	Sudan	110
5	Kenya	65	42a	Djibouti	48
6	Cameroon	35	42b	Chad	42
7	Angola	25	44a	Congo	45
8	Uganda	118	44b	Botswana	31
9	Namibia	86	47a	Western Sahara	121
10a	Ghana	59	47b	Central African Republic	41
10b	DR Congo	46	47c	Algeria	24
13a	Gabon	56	53a	South Sudan	108
15	Malawi	76	53b	Mauritania	79
16	Morocco	83	53c	Mali	78
17	Zambia	122	56a	Egypt	49
19a	Somaliland	103	56b	Benin	30
22	Rwanda	93	58	Ivory Coast	64
25	Sierra Leone	100	59a	Tunisia	117
26	Nigeria	89	59b	Togo	115
29	Mozambique	85	59c	Niger	88
30	Eritrea	52	59d	Libya	70
31	Zimbabwe	124	59e	Guinea-Bissau	63
34a	Senegal	97	59f	Guinea	62
34b	Equatorial Guinea (+ Bioko & Annobón)	50	59g	Burundi	34
			59h	Burkina Faso	33

*Ranks are the ranks of the Bird Importance Score for each territory; see p 9 for details. This map includes only mainland states and Madagascar; see the inside back cover for other island territories.

The Birder's Guide to Africa

Michael Mills

Photographs by Tasso Leventis



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Contents

INTRODUCTION	004
Birding in the Region	006
Acknowledgements	016
Photographic Credits	017
COUNTRY ACCOUNTS	018
FAMILY ACCOUNTS	126
SPECIES ACCOUNTS	276
SUPPLEMENTS	520
References	521
Species Appendices	536
Glossary and Abbreviations	539
Quick Indexes	540

Intro- duction



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With 68 territories, 142 bird families and 2,792 bird species, making sense of birding in the African region can be a challenge. In this guide, to my knowledge the first of its kind globally, relevant information on territories, families and species is brought together to provide a coherent birders' summary of the region, with a global perspective. Its contents draws on a wide range of sources and is based on 25 years of experience in the region. The book is meant for everyone who travels to see birds, or has an armchair interest therein. Through it I hope to inspire and encourage travelling and bird watching in Africa, particularly to new or little-known areas. I hope also to arm readers with a wide range of information so that they can make informed decisions on where and when to go birding, and get the most out of their trips.

To maximise your benefit from this guide, it may help understanding some of the thinking behind it.

Geographical coverage. This book covers the continent of Africa and its islands, referred to as 'the region' or 'the African region'. All islands closer to Africa than any other continent, regardless of political affiliation, are included. Thus, the region incorporates Madeira (Portugal), the Canary Islands (Spain) and Socotra (Yemen), just some of the islands that are politically not African. For the sake of completeness, the Azores (Portugal) and Sinai are included too. The Azores are slightly closer to Europe than Africa, but form part of the region called Macaronesia (or the Atlantic Islands), which is mainly African and includes Cape Verde, Madeira and the Canary Islands. Finally, although Sinai is located in the Middle East it is politically part of Egypt.

Country Accounts. This chapter is essentially a traveller's summary of each territory, but written from a birder's perspective. It covers aspects of birds and birding, travel and literature. For world birders, I hope that the lists of key birds, arranged in categories, will be especially useful, as they provide comprehensive lists of all important birds to look for when visiting that territory.

Family Accounts. A growing number of world birders are realising that they don't have the time and resources to go everywhere and chase everything. Rather than trying to see as many species as possible, a more meaningful and achievable goal is to strive to see all the bird families in the world. Making this the primary goal ensures that as wide range of bird diversity as possible is sampled. Besides celebrating the bird diversity of the region through photographs, the Family Accounts provide a brief description of each family in the region, with tips on how to see them.

Species Accounts. A complete annotated list of all bird species recorded from the region, excluding introduced species, is provided under the Species Accounts. A general statement on the status, habitats and distribution of each species, and in most cases each subspecies, is given, plus a list of best sites to see each bird. Greater emphasis is placed on endemic birds.

Names and taxonomy. One of the most difficult decisions that I had to make during the preparation of this guide was which taxonomy and English bird names to use. There are several competing world bird lists, each with their own advantages and shortcomings, and it was tempting to follow

one of these lists to the letter, as this required the least amount of effort. However, the use of a well known taxonomy promotes complacency and misses the opportunity to point out bird taxa of interest that may otherwise be ignored as uninteresting, especially on a rushed birding trip. Also, the use of English names on world bird lists quite often contradicts names in common use in leading field guides, which creates confusion.

As a result of conversations with various birders and my own personal experiences with using different world lists, I have come to prefer the IOC World Bird List. Consequently, I have based this book on the latest version of the IOC World Bird List (7.1; hereafter 'IOC List'). However, other world lists make important contributions to our thinking about bird diversity and species limits. For this reason I have consulted as many sources as possible in my deliberations over taxonomy. In particular, the HBW & BirdLife Checklist (BirdLife International 2016) has provided a fresh look at bird diversity and challenges many established conventions on species limits. All these world lists have been blended with my own experiences and thinking on what makes a bird species, to produce an adaptation of the IOC List that I

hope will be both easy and interesting to use. Details of the adaptations made can be found in the introduction to the Species Accounts, but here I wish to point out that the English names of splits not accepted by the IOC List are given in green instead of black text. I do not lump any birds, simply because lumping tends to make birds invisible. However, I do note where there are proposals to lump birds and, through a specific formatting of scientific names (see Species Accounts), I share my opinion as to which should be lumped.

Regarding the use of English names, I spent many hours investigating their use by world bird lists, to understand why names in common use are often not followed. Together with experienced birding colleagues we have devised a philosophy for establishing a standardised world bird list of English names based on common use, which has been submitted for publication in the Bulletin of the African Bird Club (Mills *et al.*, submitted). Readers should refer to this for a full explanation on the selection of English names used in this guide. Where English names used differ from those of the IOC List, the IOC List name is given under notes in the individual Species Accounts.

BIRDING IN THE REGION

With almost 2,800 bird species spread across 68 territories, the African region could keep one busy for a lifetime. However, as is usually the case, certain things (here, territories for birding) have become popular, whereas others remain little visited. Birders are generally pretty adventurous and willing to go to extremes for their hobby, at least in the eyes of normal people. Thus, the most popular destinations for birding are generally those that have the best birds.

However, there are exceptions to this; based on the birds they hold, some territories are clearly under-birded while others attract more visitors than could be expected. Take for example Gambia, a country which based on its birding potential is clearly over-birded; it has no endemics and very few specials, yet is has become a popular destination. Comoros, on the other hand, holds a large number of endemics, yet is hardly ever visited by birders. There are many possible reasons for this, but I

believe the main one is that most of us follow what others before us have done. Going to little-known destinations provides a whole new set of challenges, including dealing with uncertainty. It is often this lack of information that prevents people from visiting certain areas. Few visitors, in turn, means that there will be little investment in travel infrastructure. And so many places remain at the point of being little visited.

Which places break out of this and which not, is hard to predict. Political stability, past and present, is certainly a major factor. Destinations that are dangerous to visit or politically unstable will receive few birders. However, some places, for some or other reason, have not made it onto the birder's radar. Malawi, for example, has reasonably comfortable travel conditions, excellent birding and good other wildlife viewing on offer, yet is hardly ever visited by birders.

Here I present an analysis which I hope will provide a fresh look at birding in the region. Most well-birded territories will, for good reason, come out high on the list of priorities. However, by drawing attention to territories with great potential for exploration, I hope to encourage you to forgo visiting a well known destination for a little-known one, where the birding is as good or even better and many exciting discoveries are to be made.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

What makes a destination good for birding depends both on its birds and travel conditions, and the relative importance of different criteria to you as the traveller. What follows is an analysis of birding in the region, by territory. The details of how the analyses were made (the methods) will be of limited interest to most, but those with an analytical mind might find what follows fun to think about. Those interested only in the results, please skip to the next section entitled 'Your next destination'.

While each of us places a different emphasis on the various criteria used when selecting a travel destination, for the purposes of this analysis I have identified five types of travellers, to act as reference points. As an individual you are likely to sit somewhere between these, but hopefully they will prove useful for thinking about different destinations.

- World Listers.** It is all about seeing new birds, which means a strong focus on areas with endemic birds. Safety is also a consideration, with very dangerous destinations avoided. There is also some consideration for cost. Otherwise any conditions will be endured for new birds.
- Balanced.** It is about many things; birds and safety are the major factors in choosing a destination, but you expect a reasonable level of comfort and are interested in destinations that offer other activities too, such as visits to historical and cultural sites, mammal watching, snorkelling and diving. You're not too worried about cost, as long as you have a great and interesting holiday.
- Leisure.** It is about comfortable hotels and lodges, good food and great natural environments; birds are just a part of the package.
- Budget.** Budget Birders are essentially World Listers on a restricted budget. Opportunity for travel is limited by funds, so the aim is to maximise the overall list in a few trips. This means that there is greater emphasis on all birds, not just endemics.
- Explorer.** No conditions are too tough and a little bit of danger just adds to the excitement. Everywhere has interesting birds, so the challenge is to go somewhere others have not.

For each of the five types of traveller, each criterion considered is given a weighting of 0–10, 1 for the least important criteria, 10 for very important criteria (see Table 1, p 8).

Criteria considered are as follows:

- Bird Endemism.** An objective measure of birding importance, based on the three objective Special Categories assigned to species (see the Species Accounts for further details, p 277). Each category is given a weighting; 10 for Endemics (EN), 1 for Near-Endemics (NE) and 1/10 for One-of-Two (1/2). Thus, the Bird Endemism score is calculated as $10 \times EN + NE + 0.1 \times 1/2$. Scores range from 0–1,163 for Madagascar. The score is converted to a category from 1 to 10, based on the binary number system of 10 is ≥ 1024 , 9 ≥ 512 , 8 ≥ 256 , 7 ≥ 128 , 6 is ≥ 64 , 5 is ≥ 32 , 4 is ≥ 16 , 3 is ≥ 8 , 2 is ≥ 4 and 1 is < 4 .
- Birds – Other.** A measure of the importance of non-endemic birds, based on the two subjective Special Categories of Best-Territory (BT) and Best-Two (B2), weighted 5 and 1, respectively. These categories are subjective because they include factors such as accessibility and knowledge of a territory, and not just species distributions. Thus, the score is calculated as $BT \times 5 + B2$ and ranges from 0, to 320 for South Africa. The

score is then converted to a rating of 1 to 10 using a binary numbering system of 10 is ≥ 256 , 9 is ≥ 128 , 8 is ≥ 64 , 7 is ≥ 32 , 6 is ≥ 16 , 5 is ≥ 8 , 4 is ≥ 4 , 3 is ≥ 2 , 2 is =1 and 1 is =0.

- Bird Diversity.** A measure of the number of bird species (sp) recorded from the territory (see individual Country Accounts for approximate numbers). The following ranking system is used: >999 sp = 10, 900–999 sp = 9, 800–899 sp = 8, 700–799 sp = 7, 600–699 sp = 6, 500–599 sp = 5, 400–499 sp = 4, 300–399 sp = 3, 200–299 sp = 2, <200 sp = 1.
- Safety.** Each territory is assigned a safety rating, as objectively as possible, from 1–10, with the safest territories ranked 10. Territories that are at civil war or where the risk of kidnap is extremely high are rated 1. Those that have a near-perfect safety record, good policing and excellent medical facilities are rated 10.
- Cost.** Each territory is assigned a cost rating with as much objectivity as possible, from 1–10, with the cheapest destinations ranked 10. This is based on the normal mode of travel for birders

– private vehicle hire, international standard accommodation and use of reserves. In many African destinations it is necessary to hire an expensive 4x4 to get to the best birding sites. Often this is the main cost of a trip. Territories with a good road infrastructure that can be birded in a normal vehicle are often a lot cheaper to visit as a birder.

- Ease.** Each territory is assigned a rating of 1 to 10 to reflect how easy and comfortable it is to travel in, with as much objectivity as possible. The easiest and most comfortable destinations for travel are rated 10. This takes into account entrance formalities, freedom to travel around within the territory, the standard of roads and the availability of tourist-standard accommodation.
- Other.** Each territory is assigned a rating based on the other outdoor interests it holds, including visits to historical and cultural sites, wildlife viewing, diving and snorkelling. Territories with the top attractions are rated 10.
- Opportunity for Exploration (Explore).** Each territory is assigned a rating of 2 to 10 of how much opportunity it presents for exploration. Two factors are considered; firstly the number of birders that visit it and secondly its habitats, size and degree of infrastructure development. The number of birders that visit a territory was measured by the number of trip reports available on *Cloud Birders* for each territory. This is given a score of 1–5, as follows: >100 trip reports = 1, 26–100 = 2, 11–25 = 3, 1–10 = 4, 0 = 5. Habitats, territory size and development are ranked 1–5 too. Small, well developed territories with open, arid habitats were scored 1, whereas larger, underdeveloped territories with a lot of forest were ranked 5. The rest were ranked between these two extremes. These two scores were then added together to give the total Opportunity for Exploration score (2–10).

Table 1. The weights given to each of the eight criteria for rating a territory, for each of the five kinds of birders.

Criterion	World Listers	Balanced	Leisure	Budget	Explorer
Bird Endemism	10	8	7	8	3
Birds - Other	2	5	7	7	1
Bird Diversity	1	2	4	8	1
Safety	3	7	10	7	2
Cost	1	5	1	10	0
Ease	0	5	10	4	0
Other	0	6	9	2	0
Explore	0	3	0	2	10

YOUR NEXT DESTINATION

The results of the analyses are summarised in Table 2 (p 10) and maps on pp 11–14.

Two countries feature in the Top 10 for all five types of birders, namely Madagascar and Tanzania. Both are rich in endemic birds, are major general wildlife destinations, have reasonably well developed infrastructures and boast good safety records. Both are tourist friendly.

Three additional countries feature on the Top 10 of four types of birders, namely Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa. All three fail to make the Explorer-Birder Top 10.

Together, these five countries comprise the region's top destinations and should be of interest to every birder. They are also the top five territories based on the **Bird Importance Score** (BIS; see maps inside of the book front and back covers). The BIS is calculated as the sum of the number of Endemics multiplied by 5, Near-Endemics by 4, Best-Territory species by 3, One-of-Two species by 2 and Best-Two species by 1.

A further three countries feature on three of the Top 10 lists, namely Angola, Namibia and Uganda. All are well known birding destinations, although Angola is just beginning to grow in popularity. Namibia has the least to offer serious birders; as Angola gains in popularity it will become less important because many of the special birds of Namibia can also be seen in Angola.

A further five territories make it onto two Top 10 lists; Cameroon, a brilliant birding destination that loses out on travel conditions and, currently, safety; Canary Islands and Madeira, both very easy travel destinations with several endemics; Gabon, another great birding destination that loses out on ease and expense; and Zambia, one of Africa's most under-birded countries.

Looking further down the lists among the Top 20 territories, other territories that feature highly but fail to make an impact on the Top

10 lists include: Ghana, the most accessible country in West Africa for forest birding; all four Indian Ocean Islands territories of Seychelles, Comoros, Réunion and Mauritius & Rodrigues, which hold many endemics and can be combined to form a single, longer and more productive trip; Malawi, probably the most under-birded country in the region; Morocco, North Africa's top destination and perhaps the most-birded country in Africa; Rwanda, an excellent addition to a Uganda trip; DR Congo, the African birder's Holy Grail; the endemic-rich islands of São Tomé and Príncipe; and Zimbabwe, a pleasant country with plenty on offer.

So what is missing? Among the endemic-rich territories, Socotra and Somaliland deserve a special mention for World Listers and Budget Birders, although both are currently unsafe to visit. Once security improves and political stability returns, birding there could become reasonably popular. For Balanced and Leisure Birders, Botswana is a wonderful country to visit and just misses out on a Top 20 spot. The Azores also make a good

destination for Leisure Birders. Gambia is a popular destination with Budget Birders, but only makes sense to visit if doing a very limited number of trips to the region. And for the Explorer, Liberia is ranked third, Congo fifth, Guinea sixth, Equatorial Guinea ninth and Sudan thirteenth; all great birding destinations that are very poorly known.

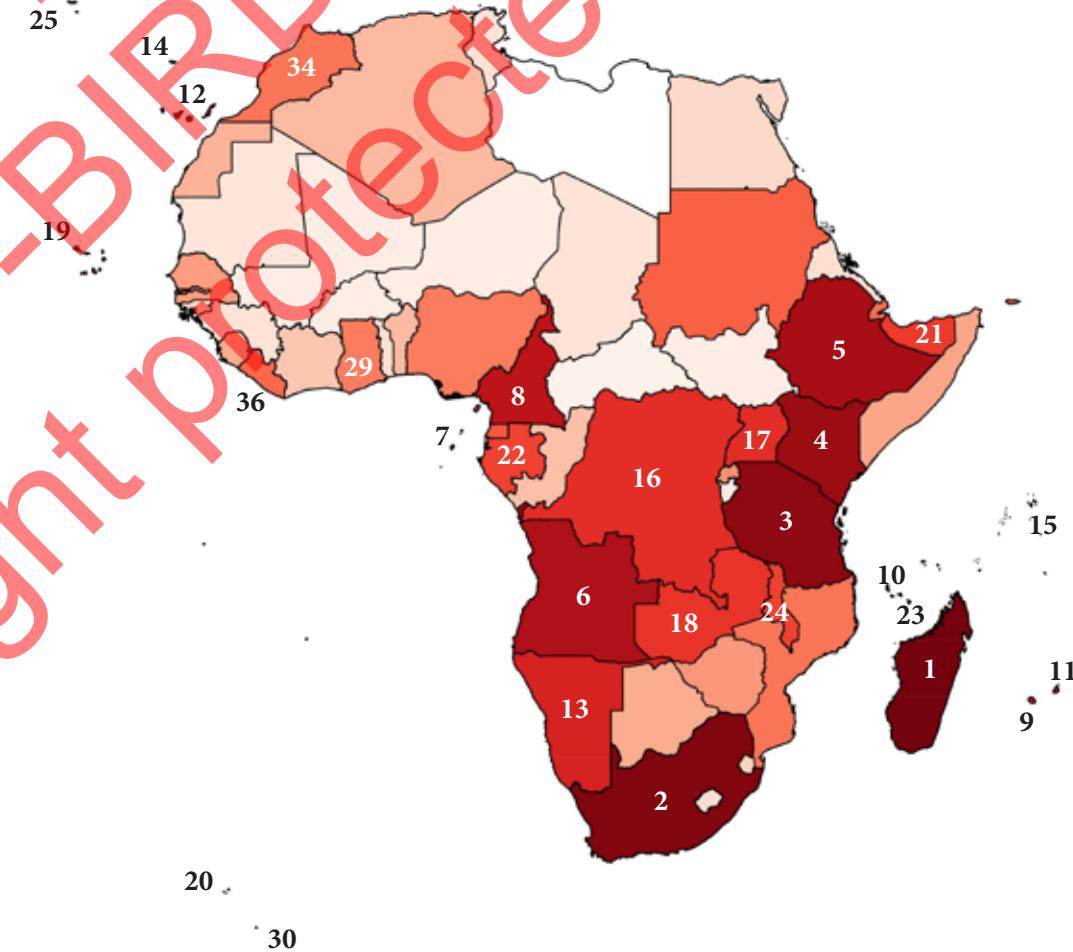
In summary, Africa's five must-see destinations are Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Madagascar. Angola is up and coming, and alongside Cameroon, Gabon, Uganda and Zambia round out the Top 10 for serious birders, excluding small islands. However, as political and security conditions change across the region, other desirable destinations will move up the list, especially DR Congo, but also Socotra and Somaliland. The numerous islands around the region, especially the more accessible ones that are closer to the mainland, are also worth visiting, including Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion, Comoros and Mayotte, Cape Verde, Canary Islands and Madeira.

Table 2. The Top 10 territories, listed from first to tenth, for each of the five kinds of birders.

World Listers	Balanced	Leisure	Budget	Explorer
Madagascar	South Africa	South Africa	South Africa	DR Congo
South Africa	Tanzania	Kenya	Uganda	Angola
Tanzania	Kenya	Tanzania	Tanzania	Liberia
Kenya	Madagascar	Uganda	Kenya	Tanzania
Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Namibia	Ethiopia	Congo
Angola	Uganda	Ethiopia	Namibia	Guinea
São Tomé & Príncipe	Namibia	Canary Islands	Cameroon	Madagascar
Cameroon	Madeira	Madagascar	Zambia	Equatorial Guinea
Réunion	Zambia	Madeira	Angola	Gabon
Comoros	Canary Islands	Gabon	Madagascar	Nigeria

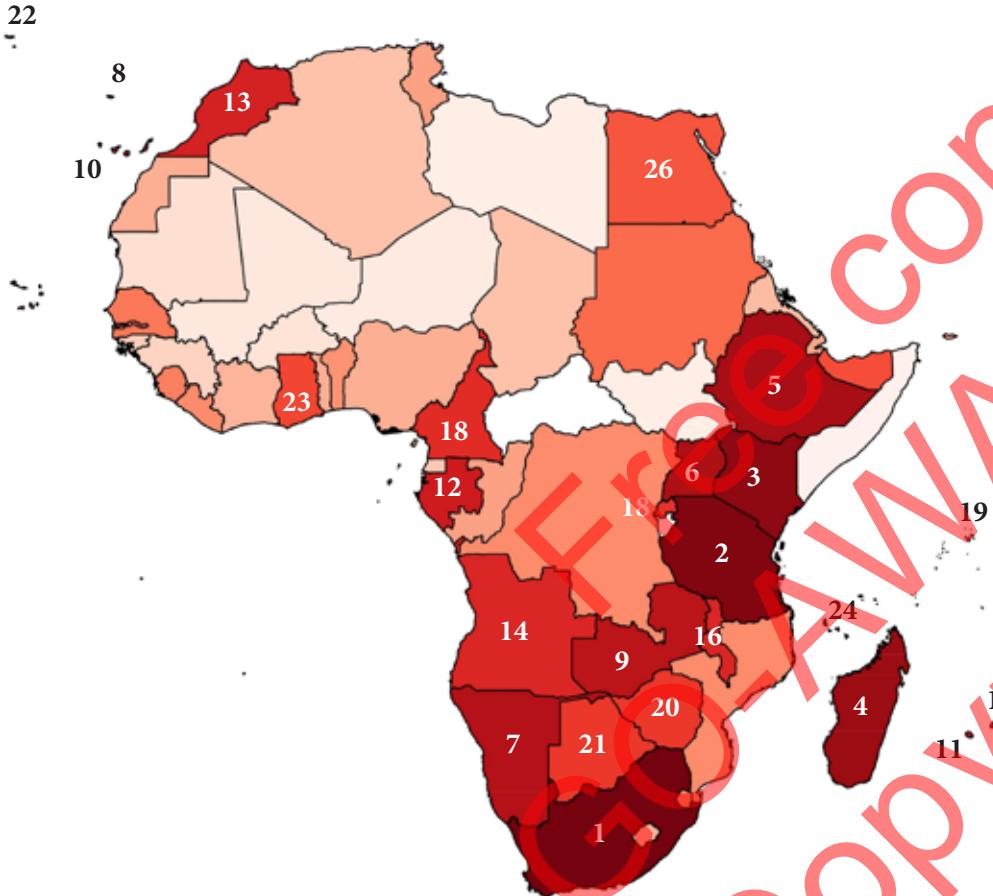
A Heat Map of the African Region for World Listers

Increasing darkness indicates greater attractiveness to World Listers, with endemism as the main criterion. The Top 10 territories are (1) Madagascar, (2) South Africa, (3) Tanzania, (4) Kenya, (5) Ethiopia, (6) Angola, (7) São Tomé and Príncipe, (8) Cameroon (9) Réunion and (10) Comoros. Overall, small islands rank very highly and in addition include (11) Mauritius & Rodrigues, (12) Canary Islands, (14) Madeira, (15) Seychelles, (19) Cape Verde, (20) Tristan da Cunha, (23) Mayotte, (25) Azores and (30) Gough; consider combining two or more on trips, for example Seychelles, Mauritius and Réunion, or Canary Islands and Madeira. Other top territories include (13) Namibia, (16) DR Congo, (17) Uganda, (18) Zambia, (21) Somaliland, (22) Gabon and (24) Malawi, not all of which are safe to visit. The two sub-regions without Top 25 territories are West Africa, for which (29) Liberia and (36) Ghana rank most highly, and North-West Africa where (34) Morocco is the top destination. Gabon, Zambia and Malawi are among the most under-birded countries in the region, of those that are safe to visit.



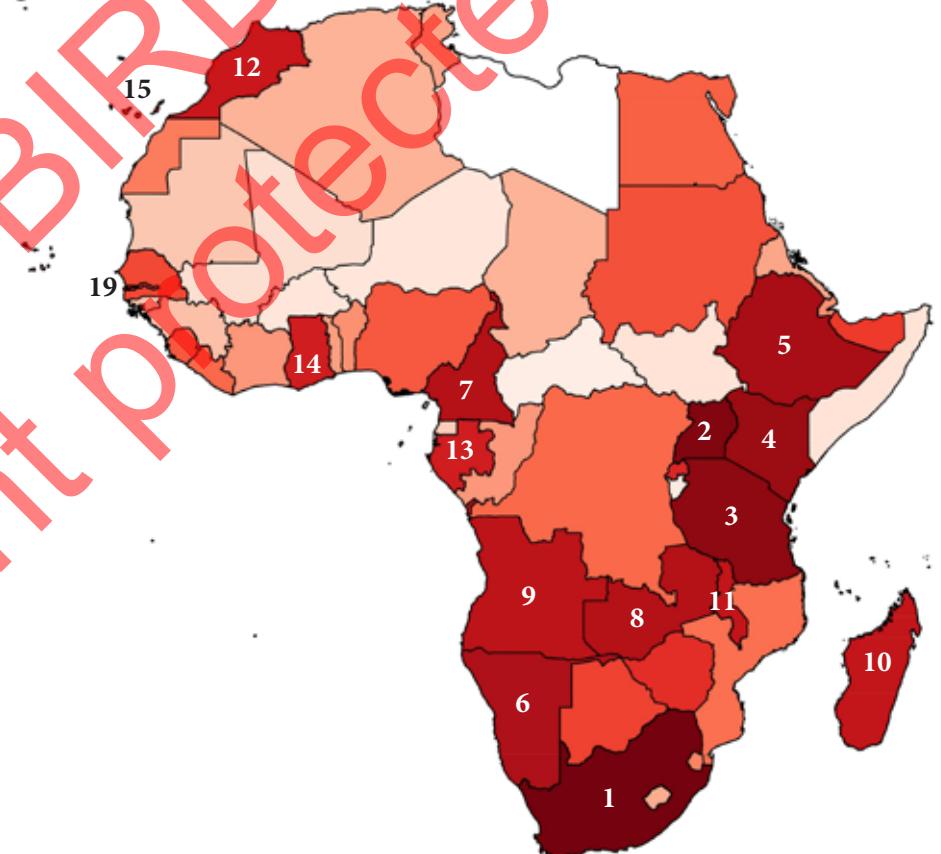
A Heat Map of the African Region for Balanced Birders

Increasing darkness indicates greater attractiveness to Balanced Birders. Safety and endemism are the dominant criteria, but all criteria have some bearing on the results. The top ten territories are (1) South Africa, (2) Tanzania, (3) Kenya, (4) Madagascar, (5) Ethiopia, (6) Uganda, (7) Namibia, (8) Madeira (9) Zambia and (10) Canary Islands. Small islands in the region rank highly and also include (11) Réunion, (15) Mauritius & Rodrigues, (19) Seychelles, (22) Azores and (24) Comoros; consider combining two or more into a single trip. Other top territories include (14) Angola, (16) Malawi, (18) Rwanda, (20) Zimbabwe and (21) Botswana. Sub-regions without Top 10 territories are Central Africa where (12) Gabon and (18) Cameroon rank most highly, North-West Africa where (13) Morocco is the top destination and West Africa where (23) Ghana comes out top. Egypt (26) stands out for its historical importance and offers reasonably good birding, ranking twenty-sixth.



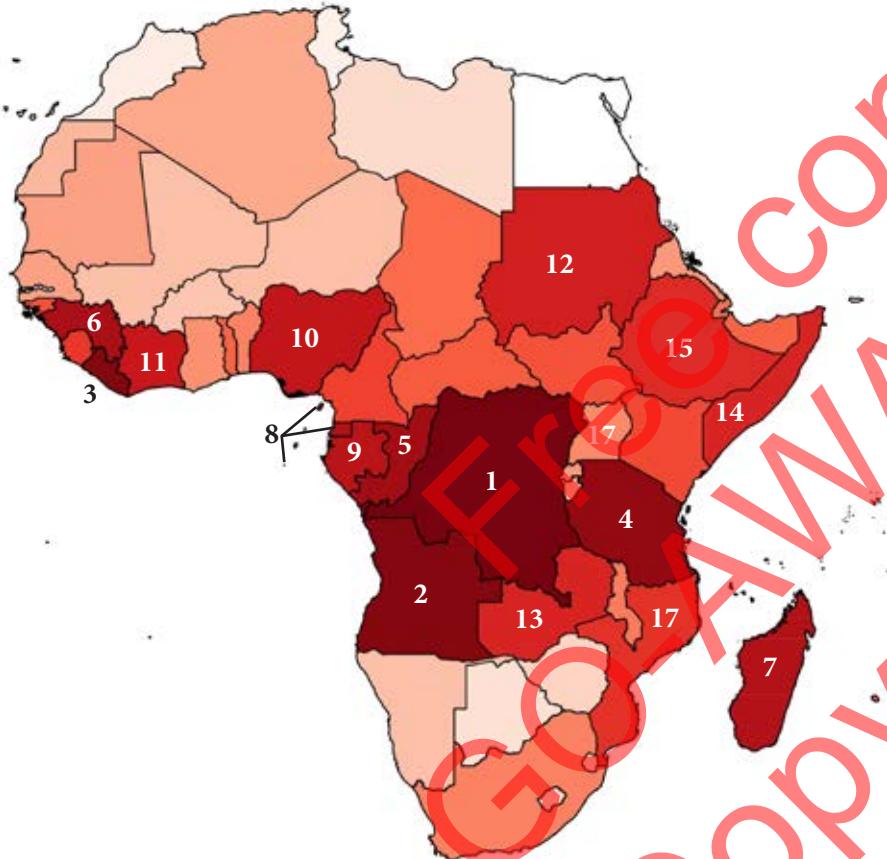
A Heat Map of the African Region for Budget Birders

Increasing darkness indicates greater attractiveness to Budget Birders, with a stronger emphasis on overall bird diversity and non-endemic specials than by World Listers. It is assumed that Budget Birders do not visit only less expensive destinations, but rather that they will do fewer trips than World Listers; this means that they will visit expensive destinations if the quality of birding justifies it. Top countries are (1) South Africa, (2) Uganda, (3) Tanzania, (4) Kenya, (5) Ethiopia, (6) Namibia, (7) Cameroon, (8) Zambia (9) Angola and (10) Madagascar. Small islands are generally expensive to visit and have low bird diversities, so don't rate highly in this analysis. Other territories ranking highly include (11) Malawi, (12) Morocco, (13) Gabon, (14) Ghana and (15) Canary Islands. Gambia (19), one of the most popular budget-trip countries, ranks only nineteenth.



The Heat Map of the African Region for Explorer-Birders

Increasing darkness indicates greater attractiveness to Explorer-Birders, with the opportunity for exploration being the main criterion by which countries are ranked. The Top 10 territories are (1) DR Congo, (2) Angola, (3) Liberia, (4) Tanzania, (5) Congo, (6) Guinea, (7) Madagascar, (8) Equatorial Guinea, especially Annobón and Bioko Islands, (9) Gabon and (10) Nigeria. Underdeveloped nations in the forest zones of Central Africa and West Africa hold the greatest potential, whereas arid countries and small islands tend to hide fewer secrets. Other top ranking countries include (11) Ivory Coast, (12) Sudan, (13) Zambia, (14) Somalia and (15) Ethiopia. Special mention should be made of (17) Mozambique, for the number of high, remote inselbergs in the north-east of the country. There are serious safety concerns with visiting some of these territories, so seek updated advice before travelling.



AFRICAN BIRDING CALENDAR

The best time to travel as a birder is when birds breed at your destination. At this time birds are often more vocal, responsive and visually conspicuous than at other times of the year, as they defend territories and display to attract mates.

In many parts of Africa, however, the lack of all-weather roads to birding sites means that, in moister regions, access can be problematic at the height of the rains. This should be considered when choosing when to travel. Another factor to consider, especially in very hot regions, is temperature; it may often be more pleasant to travel at the coolest time of the year. The final factor to consider when determining the timing of a trip is the presence of Palaearctic migrants (mostly Nov-Feb in sub-Saharan Africa) and passage migrants (typically Sep-Oct and Mar-Apr).

Straddling the equator, most of the African region is warm and tropical, with seasons typically less pronounced, especially in temperature, than in more temperate regions. On the whole, rainfall is the main stimulant of bird breeding behaviour in arid areas. The opposite appears to be true in moist regions, where birds tend to breed during the dry season, especially at higher altitudes. Thus, a general rule of thumb is: if it is an arid area (<800 mm rainfall/year) then visit during the rainy season, but if it is a mesic area then visit during the dry season. This applies to the tropics, but in the far north and south of the region, where seasonal variation in temperature is more pronounced and plays a more significant role in stimulating bird breeding, this is not the case. Here, spring and early summer are the peak times to visit, generally Mar-Jul north of the Sahara and Sep-Jan in Southern Africa.

Given the importance of rain, it is worth understanding the movement of the main rain belt that runs across the African continent within the tropics, parallel to the equator, called the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). The location of the ITCZ is

determined largely by the position of the sun. Heat from the sun warms the earth directly beneath it, which causes hot air to rise and moisture-laden winds to be drawn in from surrounding regions, bringing rain. The sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer in the northern hemisphere at around 20 Jun, whereas it is over the Tropic of Capricorn in the south at around 20 Dec. The sun and ITCZ move up and down during the year, crossing the equator at the two equinoxes (approximately 20 Mar and 20 Sep). Other factors affect the exact strength, width and movement of the ITCZ, but this basically explains why areas near the equator typically experience two peaks in rainfall, one each time the ITCZ crosses the equator, but areas away from the equator typically experience a single rainy season.

Rainfall in areas well outside the tropics is not influenced by the ITCZ; in these areas rain typically falls in the winter months (Nov-Feb in the north, May-Aug in the far south), when it is coldest.

Here is a summary of where to go, when:

Jan–Feb

Southern Africa is at its warmest and wettest and North Africa at its driest and coldest. Birding is good anywhere in the tropics north of the equator, as it is drier and cooler, with popular destinations including Ghana, Uganda, Morocco and Ethiopia. Arid parts of Southern Africa are at their best, including eastern South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Mar–Apr

The wettest time of the year in southern Central Africa, the end of the rains in Southern Africa, the end of the dry season in north Central Africa and West Africa and spring in North Africa. This is probably the best time to bird Namibia, Morocco, Cameroon, north-western Tanzania and Ethiopia. Birding is still good anywhere in West Africa, but avoid southern Central Africa.

May-Jun

The rains have mostly moved north of the equator now. This is a good time to visit Somaliland and Kenya. But almost anywhere south of the equator is poor at this time, immediately post-breeding. And the mesic belt of northern Central Africa and West Africa is probably too wet to consider.

Jul-Aug

The rains north of the equator are in full swing, especially through West Africa. From the equator southwards, however, it is generally dry. This is a good time to visit Angola, Zambia and Gabon, and is the peak period for Uganda.

Sep-Oct

The rains have now turned and are starting to move south over the equator. The onset of the rains in southern Central Africa bring a

sparse of bird breeding activity in the savannas of this region, making it a good time to visit Angola, southern Tanzania, Malawi, Madagascar, the Indian Ocean Islands and Gabon. Western South Africa is also excellent at this time. Arid areas north of the equator and south of the Sahara should be starting to cool down, making it a good time to visit.

Nov-Dec

The rains are arriving at the edge of the southern tropics. This is the peak period for South Africa as a whole. Madagascar is excellent too. West Africa and northern Central Africa are just starting to get good and there is the added benefit that many indigobirds and whydahs are in breeding plumage in this region. It is also cool in the desert areas south of the Sahara, so a good time to travel there.

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Thraupidae, p 275: (Gough Bunting) Peter Ryan.

Country Accounts



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The African region, as defined here, is composed of 68 territories, of which 50 are mainland states and 18 are island territories. While each territory offers something different to the travelling birder, certain ones are a must-see whereas others are best avoided due to concerns over safety and security. A few territories receive hundreds of visiting birders every year, while others provide excellent opportunities for exploration and are virtually unknown, despite being safe. Certain destinations offer comfortable travel, whereas others will be enjoyed only by the most rugged of travellers. In the Country Accounts, a general overview of birding and travel in the region is provided, by territory, serving as a starting point for thinking about new places to visit.

Territories are listed in alphabetical order. Those comprised of multiple land masses, such as Equatorial Guinea (Río Muni, Bioko and Annobón) and Mauritius (Mauritius and Rodrigues), are treated as one except where different sections are likely to be visited on separate trips, as is the case for St Helena, Ascension, Gough and Tristan da Cunha, all part of the same British Overseas Territory.

The name of each territory is followed, in parentheses, by the approximate latitudinal range at which it lies and details such as alternative territory names, abbreviations used or political affiliations. An introductory paragraph then gives a brief birder's summary of the territory, before more detailed information is conveyed under Birds and Birding, Travel and Literature. This information is intended to be a brief summary and starting point for anyone who may be interested in a particular place. Sources of further relevant information include *Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands* 2001 by Evans & Fishpool, country pages of the African Bird Club website, the BirdLife Data Zone, WikiTravel, Africa Infrastructure Knowledge Program, Climate Data, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice and literature listed under each territory.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

This section summarises information regarding the birds of that territory, and when and where to see them.

First, each territory is assigned to one of ten sub-regions based on geographic position, namely Southern Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Horn of Africa, West Africa, North-East Africa and North-West Africa (together forming North Africa), Oceanic Islands, Macaronesia (also called Atlantic Islands) or Indian Ocean Islands (including Madagascar and also called the Malagasy region). Note that North-East Africa refers to a region excluding the Horn of Africa, whereas ne Africa is the north-eastern part of Africa and can include North East Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Some territories may span multiple sub-regions, in which case the dominant region by area is used, for example parts of both Southern Africa and Central Africa fall within the borders of Mozambique.

Then keys SPECIES information is listed: first, in parentheses, the **Bird Importance Score (BIS)** is given, calculated based on the Special Category birds that occur there (see p 9 for details; e.g. 27 for Aldabra), followed by the BIS rank out of the 66 territories assessed (Swaziland and Lesotho are assessed together with South Africa), e.g. 33/66 for Aldabra.

Thereafter a detailed list of key birds to be found is given, following the taxonomy used in this guide (see p 278 for details). English bird names in red font denote *species recently extinct*. Categories used are

—EN, Endemic species excluding vagrancy.

—NE, Near-Endemic species, i.e. with >75% of range or population in that territory.

—BT, Best-Territory, for birds best found in that territory but occurring more widely.

—1/2, One-of-Two, for birds occurring in only two territories but not EN, NE or BT.

—B2, Best-Two, for birds best found in two territories but occurring in more.

—other, for other taxa of interest. These include *splits* in addition to those adopted in the Species Accounts and *lumps* for species lumped on the IOC List but split in this guide (see details on p 278). After the word 'also', a list is given of subspecies endemic to that territory (ESS), regionally endemic subspecies (subspecies listed with ESS) and other sought-after birds to be found (without subspecies).

This is followed by information on the diversity and composition of the avifauna (—diversity), including the approximate number of species recorded and, in parentheses, its rank for the ten territories with the longest bird lists. A statement on the general composition of the avifauna is made and, in some cases, how many birds are typically recorded by focussed and competent birders during a trip of typical duration that covers the key birding areas in that territory.

Further information includes:

HABITATS: a list of the most important birding habitats, sometimes with key birds mentioned.

AREAS: information on key areas for birding, divided into

—EBAs: all Endemic Bird Areas and Secondary Areas (SAs), as defined by BirdLife International, found in each territory.

—sites: top birding sites, sometimes with key birds and habitats mentioned. For abbreviations used, see p 539.

TIMING: the three best months to visit are given in bold text in parentheses, followed by an explanation. In certain cases different parts of the territory are best to visit at different times; this is noted where appropriate. Periods to avoid may be mentioned too.

EXPLORE: a rating of how much opportunity there is for exploration, given as very low, low, moderate, high or very high, followed by an explanation. In general more arid, open habitats harbour fewer secrets than dense forest, so this is taken into consideration. See p 9 for further discussion.

TRAVEL

General travel information is summarised under:

SAFETY: safety information is based on that issued at the time of writing (May 2017) by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office of the government of the United Kingdom. There is a risk of encountering crime or terrorism in any part of the globe, and situations can often change very rapidly. Before travelling you should make your own personal assessment of whether a country or region is safe or not. In general, election periods are often heated affairs, with protests and an increase in police roadblocks, so check ahead and make sure that you are not travelling immediately before or during elections. A certain degree of alertness and sensibility is required wherever you travel. When on a trip, always keep cash, travel documents and other valuable items on your person; do not leave them on your trip vehicle or in a locked hotel room.

For medical advice, please see your local medical travel experts. Prophylaxis and inoculations for Malaria, Yellow Fever and a host of other tropical diseases should be considered before travelling, but only taken with proper consultation.

CITIES: key cities for travellers are listed, including capitals and international airports.

EASE: general information is provided regarding the ease of

—entry: entry documentation requirements and air, water and land access. Exact entry requirements should be checked with your nearest diplomatic office, as these can change at short notice and vary according to nationality. Yellow Fever vaccinations are a requirement for entry into many African countries and are not listed individually. Note that virtually all land border crossings, even if safe, are generally chaotic and can be quite stressful to use, but officials are usually courteous and friendly if you are. For virtually all territories with a coastline it is possible to arrive by boat, but in most cases this is a time consuming and unpopular means of travel, so arrival by water is only mentioned in certain cases where it is a convenient option. Note that some countries require foreigners to officially register on arrival; this is not always mentioned, so obtain advice locally.

—within: details of travelling within the territory, including main languages and use of English, road and internal transport infrastructure and availability and range of accommodation. Availability of local and national bird watching guides may be mentioned, as may the availability of set departure birding trips offered by international tour companies.

Communication networks are not discussed, as almost all African countries now have good cellular phone networks; these often work better on local SIM cards than on international roaming. Almost all territories have a network of public transport, but this is mostly chaotic, fairly unsafe and uncomfortable and does not allow access to wildlife reserves, so in most cases public transport is not mentioned. The majority of countries have road and driving conditions well below standards in Europe and North America, which means that self-drive is not

usually recommended. Four wheel drive vehicles are often needed to reach key birding sites.

ATTRACTIOnS: a brief list of other top outdoor attractions or sites of interest, where appropriate.

MONEY: a rating of the expense of travel as a bird watcher to and in the territory is given as inexpensive, fairly inexpensive, moderate, expensive or very expensive, compared with global travel prices. This takes into account the most likely way of travelling as an independent birder. While it is possible to travel fairly cheaply in Africa by using public transport, camping or sleeping in basic accommodation and eating local food, many of the best birding sites require a private 4x4 to reach them and public transport makes it slow to get around. Most birders utilise tourist-standard facilities and services, which are generally expensive across Africa, especially considering their quality. Add to this the high entry fees to some conservation areas, especially in East Africa, and most birding trips to Africa become quite an expensive exercise, especially when compared with Asia and South America.

Information on the expense of travel is followed by the name of the currency/ies of legal tender and its exchange rate/s if fixed to any major currency. Availability of electronic banking facilities (ATMs and credit cards) is briefly discussed and the need to bring cash mentioned. Travellers on fully inclusive, pre-paid trips will obviously need very little local currency. In general, cash is still the main means of payment in Africa, except in areas that receive a lot of visitors. Regarding foreign exchange, note that most banks and money changers throughout Africa will only accept USD notes of recent mint (post 2006) and in excellent condition. Smaller denomination bills will also often attract lower rates of exchange. Exchange rates of free-trading currencies are not given; please consult XE Currency. See p 539 for abbreviations used.

GEOGRAPHY: a summary is given of the main geographical features of the territory, including its location and neighbouring territories, topography, major mountain ranges and significant freshwater bodies.

SIZE: the size of the territory is given in square kilometres to three significant figures, usually together with a comparison of its size to that of the United Kingdom (UK) and/or South Africa (SA), the latter the ninth largest country in the region. Where appropriate, a number in parentheses gives the rank by size of the top 10 largest territories in the region. If a territory is fragmented, sizes of separate areas may be given.

CLIMATE: a generalised statement of the climate, detailing seasonality and geographic variation in rainfall and temperature. This is followed by more detailed rainfall and temperature data for one or more places in each territory. Figures given include annual average rainfall in millimetres (annual), the range of average monthly rainfall of the driest and wettest months in millimetres (monthly), and the three months with highest (wettest) and lowest (driest) rainfall. Temperature information in degrees Celsius includes the annual average daily minimum and maximum temperature (annual), the range of average daily maximum temperatures for the coolest and hottest months (monthly), and the three months with the highest (hottest) and lowest (coldest) daily average temperatures.

LITERATURE

This section lists recommended books, ebooks, CDs, DVDs and Apps for travelling birders. In cases where appropriate literature is in regional rather than country-specific guides, only the most recommended source is listed and the reader is directed to Morocco for North African and European literature, Azores for Macaronesian literature, Madagascar for Indian Ocean Islands sources and South Africa for Southern African

references. Refer to the References section (p 521) full details of each source. Titles of books, websites and other publications are given in italics. The *Natural History Book Store* can be consulted for new books and other sources, including books on plants and unfeathered and hairless animals. See also the country pages of the *African Bird Club* or *Important Bird Areas in Africa* 2001 by Evans & Fishpool, for more detailed reference lists. Sources are divided into

ID: bird identification guides, with the most highly recommended guide listed first.

SOUND: CDs and DVDs with bird sounds, excluding apps. *Xeno Canto* also provides free bird sounds.

APPS: birding applications for smartphones and other mobile devices. Details of given in the references (p 536).

SITE: sources with details on bird watching locations or sites. Almost all territories are covered by *Where to Watch Birds in Africa* 1995 by Wheatley, so it is not listed individually. Various trip reports on the internet are good sources too; see *Cloud Birders*.

TRAVEL: general travel guide books.

OTHER: other useful bird books, including journal publications where little other information is available, the best mammal identification guide and summaries of natural history. Note that the seven volume *The Birds of Africa* series, the six volume *Mammals of Africa*, *The Kingdom Field Guide to the Mammals of Africa* 2015 by Kingdon and the two *Handbooks of the Birds/Mammals of the World* series are applicable to virtually all territories, so also not listed individually.

WEB: websites, blogs and email groups. For the region as a whole, join the *African Birding Discussion Group* and visit the website of the *African Bird Club*. Full web addresses are listed in the references (see p 533). BirdLife partners are listed together on p 535 for territories with partners.

Aldabra Group (9–10°S, Seychelles)

This outlying group of Seychellois islands is famous for the remote and pristine Aldabra Atoll, touted as one of the world's most remarkable natural history sites. It holds thousands of giant tortoises and spectacular seabird colonies. However, reachable only by boat it is a very expensive and specialist destination with only a small number of bird specials. There are three endemics; a drongo and fody endemic to Aldabra Atoll (A) and Abbott's Sunbird on Assumption (Ass), Astove (Ast) and Cosmoledo Islands (C).

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES** (27, 33/66) —EN (3): Aldabra Drongo (A), *Aldabra Brush Warbler*, Abbott's Sunbird (*Ass abbotti*, *Ast & C buchenorum*), Aldabra Fody (A). —1/2 (6): Madagascar Sacred Ibis (ESS *A abbotti*), White-throated Rail (ESS *A aldabranus*), Madagascar Coucal (ESS *A insularis*), Madagascar Nightjar (ESS *aldabrensis*), Madagascar Kestrel (ESS *A aldabranus*), Souimanga Sunbird (ESS *A aldabrensis*). —other: *Aldabra White-throated Rail* (EN A), *Aldabra Turtle Dove* (EN A & C), *Aldabra White-eye* (EN A *aldabrensis*, *Ast & C menaiensis*). Also Tropical Shearwater (ESS *A colstoni*), Striated Heron (ESS *crawfordi*), Madagascar Pond Heron, Great Frigatebird (A & C), Lesser Frigatebird, Red-footed Booby (C), Brown Booby (C), Black-naped Tern, Comoro Blue Pigeon (ESS *minor*), Madagascar Bulbul (ESS *A rostratus*). —diversity: 120, Malagasy with many vagrants and seabirds. Expect 20–30 sp in 2–3 days. **HABITATS:** coastal scrub, estuaries. **AREAS —EBAs:** Aldabra. —sites: Aldabra Atoll, Assumption Is. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains when most birds breed. Avoid cyclone season (Dec–Mar). **EXPLORE:** low. Aldabra is small and well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is virtually no risk of crime, although there have been instances of piracy in the region in the past. There are no medical facilities. **CITIES:** Assumption (landing strip). **EASE —entry:** no visa is required for Seychelles, but entry is conditional (see Seychelles). Entry to Aldabra must be requested via the Seychelles Islands Foundation. Getting to the Aldabra Group is challenging; there are occasional scheduled flights to Assumption Is by the Island Development Company and a supply vessel from Mahé belonging to the Island Development Company, but most visitors arrive by private charter flight to Assumption, or by private boat. —within: English. Travel between islands is by boat only; Aldabra Atoll is 50 km from Assumption. There is a research centre at La Gigi on Picard Island, but only visitors conducting research can stay; tourists are to sleep aboard vessels. Several cruise ships visit Aldabra. **ATTRACTI**
ONS: giant tortoises. Sea turtles. Remote wilderness. **MONEY:** very expensive; the cost of getting to Aldabra is prohibitive for most people. Seychellois Rupee. There is little to spend money on. **GEOGRAPHY:** politically part of Seychelles, the Aldabra Group of islands form part of the Outer Islands and consist of Aldabra Atoll (with four main islands), Assumption Island, Cosmoledo Atoll and Astove Is. Aldabra Atoll is the world's second largest coral atoll. Due to their remoteness they are treated separately from the rest of the Seychelles. Aldabra is located 420 km north-west of Madagascar, 1,100 km south-west of Mahé and 640 km east of the African continent. The four main islands are spread over 200 km of ocean. They reach a maximum altitude of 8 m. **SIZE:** 176 km², with Aldabra (155 km²) by far the largest of the four islands. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a single rainy season (Nov–Apr) and minor variations in monthly temperature. Aldabra rainfall = annual 960 mm, monthly 78–358

mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Aldabra temperatures = hottest Mar–May, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

See also Seychelles. OTHER: (1) *A systematic list of the birds of Aldabra* 2002 by Betts. (2) *Birds of Aldabra* 1999 by Skerrett. WEB: *Aldabra Marine Programme*.

Algeria (19–37°N)

Located close to Europe and possessing a well-developed infrastructure, Algeria could be a popular birding destination if it was not for concerns over safety. Although species diversity is not particularly high, a good selection of North-West African specialties can be seen and the endemic Algerian Nuthatch is potentially a major attraction. Unfortunately the entire range of the nuthatch is considered unsafe to visit at present. With all other North-West African specialties easily seen in neighbouring, tourist-friendly Morocco, Algeria will remain little visited until the safety situation improves.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-West Africa. SPECIES (7, 47/66) —EN (1): Algerian Nuthatch. —1/2 (1): African Crimson-winged Finch. —other: Barbary Partridge, Houbara Bustard, Balearic Shearwater, Yelkouan Shearwater, European Turtle Dove (*hoggara*), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (ESS *ledouci*), Great Spotted Woodpecker (*numidus*), Levaillant's Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Jay (*minor* + *cervicalis*), Western Jackdaw (ESS *cirtensis*), Coal Tit (*ledouci*), Maghreb Lark, Dupont's Lark, Tristram's Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper (*mauritanica*), Common Blackbird | Eurasian Blackbird (*mauritanicus*), European Robin (*witherbyi*), Atlas Flycatcher, Moussier's Redstart, Seeböhm's Wheatear, Black Wheatear (*riggenbachi*), Maghreb Wheatear, White-throated Dipper (*minor*), House Sparrow

(*tingitanus*), Hawfinch (*buvryi*), European Greenfinch (*voousi*). —diversity: 360. Palaearctic in the north, more Afrotropical in the south. Expect 150–250 sp in 2–3 weeks. HABITATS: montane forest for Algerian Nuthatch and other regional specials. Desert. AREAS —EBAs: North Algerian Mountains SA. —sites: Mt Babor & Taza NP for Algerian Nuthatch and montane sp. Belezma NP for montane sp. Tassili N'Ajjer NP & Ahaggar NP for desert sp. TIMING (Feb–Apr): the north is best in spring, after the rains (Mar–May), and the south is best when cooler (Nov–Mar), so Feb–Apr is a good compromise. Passage migrants are numerous Sep–Oct and Feb–Apr. Palaearctic migrants are most numerous Nov–Feb. Avoid Jul–Sep if possible. EXPLORE: moderate. The north is quite well known whereas the little visited south is arid with lower bird diversity; however, large areas are unexplored.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: although some of the main cities are considered safe in terms of crime and terrorism, there are security issues in large parts of the south and east, including the entire range of Algerian Nuthatch. CITIES: Algiers (capital). EASE —entry: citizens of most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa, which can be difficult and time consuming (up to four weeks) to obtain. Israeli visa stamps in your passport may be a problem. Algiers is very well connected to Europe by flights. There are regular ferries to Spain,

France and Italy. It is not advisable to use any land borders. Until recently it was the fifth most-visited African country by international visitors. —within: Arabic (official), French (widely spoken); little English. Roads, internal flights and accommodation are generally of a reasonable standard in the north, less so in the south. A handful of tour operators have recently started to offer bird watching tours to Algeria. ATTRACTIONS: Timgad, Hippo Regius & Djemila Roman Ruins, Desert exploration. MONEY: fairly inexpensive. Algerian Dinar, which may not be exported. Fairly limited electronic banking; bring some Euro or USD. GEOGRAPHY: situated on the north coast of Africa, east of Morocco and west of Tunisia, Algeria has almost 1,000 km of coast line. It is generally mountainous in the north, reaching up to 2,321 m at Djebel Mahmel, with numerous wetlands. South of the Atlas Mts the country is mostly covered by flat desert below 500 m altitude, although in the far south several mountain ranges rise to over 2,000 m, including the highest peak in the country, Mt Tahat in the Hoggar Mts, at 2,908 m. SIZE (1): 2.38 million km². 2xSA, 10xUK. The tenth largest country in the world. CLIMATE: generally a warm, dry

climate, although much moister and cooler in the north than the south. Winter rainfall (Oct–Apr), which varies from almost 0 mm in the south up to around 800 mm in the north. Winters are significantly colder than summers. Algiers (north, coastal) rainfall = annual 690 mm, monthly 2–117 mm; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Jun–Aug. Algiers temperature = annual min/max 15–22°C, monthly max 15–30°C; hottest Jul–Sep, coldest Dec–Feb. Adrar (central) rainfall = annual 15 mm, monthly 0–4 mm. Adrar temperature = annual min/max 16–33°C, monthly max 21–45°C; hottest Jun–Aug, coldest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

See also Morocco. SITE: (1) *The Good Bird Guide* 2005 by Marsh, basic. TRAVEL: (1) *Algeria* 2008 by Oakes/Bradt, outdated. (2) *Algeria* 2007 by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, outdated. (3) chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. OTHER: (1) *Birds of Algeria* 2000 by Isenmann & Moali. (2) *Mammals of Algeria* 1991 by Kowalski & Rzebik-Kowalska. WEB: *Algerian Birds Yahoo Group*, in French.

Angola (6–18°S)

Angola covers an impressive diversity of habitats, from Congo Basin forests to the Namib Desert, and has an equally remarkable bird list including a host of rarely-seen endemics and specials. Over the last 15 years, great strides have been made to improve its infrastructure, to the point where it is now a destination suitable for most birders. Difficulties with obtaining visitor visas are the greatest obstacle to overcome. There is ample opportunity for serious exploration, although the threat of landmines still exists in many areas. If it remains stable and peaceful and opens up to visitors, the country stands to become a major birding destination in Africa.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. SPECIES (216, 7/66) —EN (17): Grey-striped Francolin, Swierstra's Francolin, Red-crested Turaco, Red-backed Mousebird, White-fronted Wattled-eye, Gabela Helmetshrike, Monteiro's Bushshrike, Braun's Bushshrike, Gabela Bushshrike, Pulitzer's Longbill, *Huambo Cisticola*, Hartter's Camaroptera, Angola Slaty Flycatcher, Gabela Akalat, *Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird*, Golden-backed Bishop, Angola Swee Waxbill. —NE (9): Pale-olive Greenbul, Bubbling Cisticola, Angola Cave Chat, Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush, Bocage's Sunbird, Landana

Firefinch, *Ansorge's Firefinch*, Cinderella Waxbill, Grimwood's Longclaw. —**BT** (18): Gabon Coucal, Anchietá's Barbet, Angola Batis, Yellow-throated Nicator, Yellow-necked Greenbul, Brazza's Martin, Black-and-rufous Swallow, Black-tailed Cisticola, Salvadori's Eremomela, *Forest Hyliota*, Sharp-tailed Starling, Forest Scrub Robin, White-headed Robin-Chat, *Bocage's Akalat* (*ESS bocagei*), Oustalet's Sunbird (*ESS oustaleti*), Dusky Twinspot (*ESS cinereovinacea*), Grey Waxbill, Black-faced Canary. —**1/2** (12): Hartlaub's Francolin, Rüppell's Korhaan, Violet Wood Hoopoe, Monteiro's Hornbill, Rüppell's Parrot, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit, Gray's Lark, Benguela Long-billed Lark, Rockrunner, Bare-cheeked Babbler, Herero Chat. —**B2** (17): Finsch's Francolin, Bradfield's Swift, Damara Hornbill, *Western Black-backed Barbet*, *West African Pitta*, Margaret's Batis (*ESS margaritae*), Angola Lark, Black-collared Bulbul, Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Black-necked Eremomela, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Bannerman's Sunbird, Black-chinned Weaver, Bocage's Weaver, Red-headed Bluebill, Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, Fülleborn's Longclaw. —**other**: *Cunene River Francolin* (1/2), *Angola Mountain Nightjar* (EN), *Loanda Swift* (EN), *Angola Naked-faced Barbet* (EN), *Angola White-headed Barbet* (EN), Perrin's Bushshrike (BT), *Angola White-throated Greenbul* (EN), *Lepe Cisticola* (EN), Benguela Long-tailed Starling (EN), *Cunene Long-tailed Starling* (NE), *Benguela Seedeater* (NE). *Bocage's Akalat* (BT). Also White-throated Francolin (*dewittei*), Red-necked Spurfowl (*afer*), Ludwig's Bustard, Royal Tern, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Fernando Po Swift (status uncertain), Olive Bee-eater (*alternans*), Black Scimitarbill (*anchietae*), Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill (*ESS elegans*), Pale-billed Hornbill, *Eastern Piping Hornbill*, Western Green Tinkerbird (*ESS angolensis*), Pallid Honeyguide, Elliot's Woodpecker (*ESS gabela*), Rosy-faced Lovebird, African Broadbill, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye (*ESS ansorgei*), Pink-footed Puffback, Swamp Boubou, Petit's Cuckooshrike, Purple-

throated Cuckooshrike, Dusky Tit (*gabela*), Angola Lark, Cabanis's Greenbul, White-headed Saw-wing (*ESS suffusa*, controversial), Yellow Longbill, Long-billed Crombec (*ansorgei*), Red-capped Crombec, Laura's Woodland Warbler (*ESS laurae*), Evergreen Forest Warbler (*boultoni*), Tinkling Cisticola, Wailing Cisticola (*ESS namba*), Chirping Cisticola, Banded Prinia (*ESS heinrichi*), Masked Apalis, Grey Apalis (*ESS grandis*), Miombo Wren-Warbler | Pale Wren-Warbler (*ESS huilae*), Scaly-breasted Illadopsis (*ESS trentsei*), Brown Illadopsis (*ESS dilutior*), Hartlaub's Babbler, White-winged Babbling Starling (*ESS gutturalis*), Forest Scrub Robin (*ESS reichenowi*), Miombo Scrub Robin, Brown-chested Alethe (*ESS hallae*), Miombo Rock Thrush, Mountain Wheatear (*ESS albipileata + nigricauda*), Arnott's Chat (*ESS harterti*), Carmelite Sunbird (*fuliginosa*), Bronzy Sunbird (*ESS gadowi*), Red-headed Malimbe (*ESS praedi*), Loango Weaver, White-winged Widowbird (*asymmetriurus*), Woodhouse's Antpecker (*ESS ansorgei*), Fawn-breasted Waxbill, Wood Pipit, Yellow-crowned Canary (*ESS huillensis*), Cape Bunting (*ESS nebularum*). —**diversity**: 940 (5th). Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 500–550 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS**: escarpment forest, Afromontane forest and gallery forest for endemics. Miombo woodland, desert. **AREAS**—**EBAs**: Western Angola, Gabon-Cabinda coast SA. Namibian escarpment SA. West Zaire and North Angola forests SA. —**sites**: Mt Moco & Tundavala for montane and miombo sp. Kumbira Forest, Kissama NP (central) and Quibaxe (northern) for escarpment endemics. Kalandula Falls for White-headed Robin-Chat and miombo sp. Namibe for desert sp. **TIMING** (Aug–Oct): best at the start of the rains (Aug–Oct) when most birds breed. Some places, including Kumbira, may be inaccessible during the rains (Nov–Mar). Feb–May is good for breeding plumaged Golden-backed Bishop and various *Vidua* sp. Jun–Jul is unproductive in the highlands. **EXPLORE**: high. Large areas remain unexplored, especially in the eastern half of the country, but beware of land mines.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: on the whole there is little threat from crime or banditry, except in Cabinda and parts of the north-east. However, some areas still have unmarked landmine fields. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES**: Luanda (capital), Lubango. **EASE**—**entry**: almost all nationalities require a visa. Requirements are strict and include a letter of invitation from Angola. Visas can take up to six weeks to obtain. Luanda is fairly well serviced by international and regional flights and it is possible to fly from Windhoek in Namibia to Lubango. Land border entry from Namibia is fairly straightforward, but from Zambia and DR Congo it is more challenging to cross and should only be attempted by experienced and well-equipped travellers. —**within**:

Portuguese, little English. Road conditions have improved vastly in the past ten years and are now reasonable, but there are many police roadblocks and lots of pot holes. There is a reasonable network of flights between Luanda and other cities, although there are often delays. Reasonable quality hotels are generally limited to the main towns and cities. Car hire is difficult and expensive to organise. A few bird tour operators offer camping-only tours, but Birding Africa offers fully accommodated bird tours. **ATTRACTIOnS**: spectacles such as Kalandula Falls and Leba Pass. **MONEY**: very expensive, especially car hire. Kwanza. Fairly limited electronic banking, which often does not work; bring USD or Euro. **GEOGRAPHY**: located within the tropics on the west coast of Central Africa, north of Namibia, south and west of DR Congo and west of Zambia; the enclave of Cabinda is surrounded by the DR Congo and Congo. There is a narrow coastal plain at 0–300 m altitude, an escarpment rising, steeply in parts and more gradually in others, to a mostly flat inland plateau covering most of the country and generally lying above 1,000 m. A series of mountain ranges run east of the escarpment in the south of the country and include the highest peak, Mt Moco, at 2,620 m. Major rivers include the Congo (forming the northern border), Kwanza (flowing

into the ocean just south of Luanda) and Cunene (forming the southern border with Namibia). Most of the Okavango drainage lies in south-eastern Angola and large parts of the upper reaches of the Zambezi lie in far eastern Angola. **SIZE** (7): 1.27 million km², including Cabinda at 7,270 km². 5xUK, =SA. **CLIMATE**: generally warm and tropical, although cool in the highlands and far south in winter. Rain falls during the summer months (Oct–Apr) and winters are very dry. Rainfall varies from around 60 mm in the south-west to over 1,600 mm in the north-east and montane areas; generally rainfall increases away from the coast, towards the equator and with altitude. Annual variation in temperature is minor in the north, but much more pronounced in the south and mountains. Luanda (central coast) rainfall = annual 370 mm, monthly 0–124 mm; wettest Feb–Apr, driest Jun–Aug. Luanda temperature = annual min/max 22–28°C, monthly max 24–31°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Jul–Sep. Huambo (western highlands) rainfall = annual 1,400 mm, monthly 1–239 mm; wettest Nov–Dec and Mar, driest Jun–Aug. Huambo temperature = annual min/max 12–26°C, monthly max 25–29°C; hottest Aug–Oct, coolest May–Jul.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID**: *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan.

_SOUND: (1) *Vocalisations of Angolan Birds* 2007 by Mills, most specials. (2) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis, most sp excluding specials. (3) *Southern African Bird Sounds* 1995 by Gibbon, most sp excluding specials.

SITE: *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen *et al*, basic. **TRAVEL**: *Angola* 2013 by Stead *et al*/Bradt. **OTHER**: (1) *The Special Bird of Angola* 2017 by Mills. (2) *The Birds of Angola* 2000 by Dean. (3) *Ornitologia de Angola* 1983 by Rosa Pinto, Portuguese. (4) *The Checklist of the Birds of Angola* 2013 by Mills & Melo. **WEB**: *Angola Birders Email Group*, *Birds Angola*, *Mount Moco*.

Ascension Island (8°S, United Kingdom)

This remote volcanic island is rarely visited by birders. All indigenous landbirds are extinct, leaving the breeding-endemic Ascension Frigatebird as the only major avian attraction. While there are good populations of breeding seabirds, the expense and difficulty of getting there means few people have bothered.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Oceanic Islands. **SPECIES** (5, 51/66) —EN (1): Ascension Frigatebird (br). —other: Band-rumped Storm Petrel | Madeiran Storm Petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, White-tailed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, Red-footed Booby, Brown Booby, Black Noddy, White Tern, Sooty Tern. —diversity: 60. Composed entirely of seabirds, vagrants and introduced sp. Expect 10–20 sp in 1–2 days. **HABITATS**: sea cliffs for breeding seabirds. **AREAS** —sites: Boatswainbird Is for Ascension Frigatebird and other breeding seabirds. Mars Bay area for breeding Sooty Tern. Green Mountain for breeding White Tern. **TIMING (Oct–Dec)**: best at the peak breeding season of Ascension Frigatebird is Oct–Dec. Any time of the year is fine. **EXPLORE**: low. The island is small and well known.

TRAVEL

CITIES: Georgetown (capital). **EASE —entry**: an entry permit must be requested in advance in writing from the Administrator's Office. Currently the only regular means of arrival are on a British military aircraft from the United Kingdom, twice a week, which accepts civilian bookings, or on the *Royal Mail Ship* from Cape Town via St Helena. —within: English. The island is small enough to walk around, although car hire is available. There is accommodation in Georgetown. It is possible to charter a boat to sail around Boatswainbird Island, but landing is by permit only. Some cruise ships stop at Ascension.

ATTRACTIOnS: hiking. Sea turtles. **MONEY**: expensive. St Helena Pound and GBP, which trade at 1:1; USD also accepted. Limited electronic banking; bring GBP. **GEOGRAPHY**: forms part of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. It is located 1,550 km west of Liberia in West Africa, 2,250 km east of the coast of South America and 1,250 km north-west of St Helena. The island is a fairly recent volcano, which rises to 859 m at Green Mountain. **SAFETY**: although there is very little risk of crime, medical facilities are basic. Air evacuation insurance is a prerequisite for being granted permission to visit. **SIZE**: 96 km², with the main island 88 km². **CLIMATE**: generally warm and dry with rain mostly Mar–Jul and relatively small fluctuations in temperature. Rainfall is much higher in the highlands (up to 680 mm) than at the coast. Georgetown (coastal) rainfall = annual 140 mm, monthly 4–33 mm; wettest Mar–May, driest Nov–Jan. Georgetown temperature = annual min/max 23–30°C, monthly max 28–31°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Aug–Oct.

LITERATURE

ID: *A Guide to the Birds of St Helena and Ascension Island* 2004 by McCulloch. **SITE**: section in ID guide. **TRAVEL**: (1) *St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha* 2015 by Britt-Gallagher & Hayne/Bradt. (2) *Ascension Island* 2004 by McFall. **OTHER**: (1) *The Birds of St Helena* 1998 by Rowlands. (2) *St Helena and Ascension Island* 2000 by Ashmole & Ashmole. (3) *Britain's Treasure Islands* 2016 by McPherson. **WEB**: *Ascension Island Government*.

Azores (37–40°N, Portugal)

Well connected by flights and possessing a good tourism infrastructure, the Azores make for an interesting, short birding trip. Only two islands are essential to visit: São Miguel in the east for Azores Bullfinch, the only endemic landbird, and seas surrounding Graciosa in the north for Monteiro's Storm Petrel, the one endemic seabird. Overall the avifauna consists largely of vagrants, including numerous species from the Americas, and hence is popular with birders wishing to enlarge their Western Palaearctic lists, but there are also several endemic subspecies to watch out for.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Macaronesia. **SPECIES** (10, 44/66) —EN (2): Monteiro's Storm Petrel (br), Azores Bullfinch. —other: Common Quail (*ESS conturbans*), Cory's Shearwater, Barolo Shearwater, Common Buzzard (*insularum*), Yellow-legged Gull (*atlantis*), Sooty Tern, Roseate Tern, Common Wood Pigeon (*ESS azorica*), Goldcrest (*ESS azoricus* + *sanctaemariae* + *inermis*), Common Starling (*ESS granti*), Common Blackbird | Eurasian Blackbird (*ESS azorensis*), Eurasian Blackcap (*gularis*), Grey Wagtail (*ESS patriciae*), Common Chaffinch (*ESS moreletti*), Atlantic Canary. —diversity: 300. Palaearctic, with many vagrants. Expect 40–60 sp in 2–3 days. **HABITATS**: montane laurel forest on São Miguel for Azores Bullfinch. Offshore islets near Graciosa for Monteiro's Storm Petrel and other seabirds. **AREAS** —EBA: Azores SA. —sites: Pico de Vera on São Miguel for Azores Bullfinch. Graciosa for Monteiro's Storm Petrel. Between Terceira and Faial for seabirds. **TIMING (May–Jun, Oct)**: best in spring, after the rains and once the weather warms and most birds breed (Apr–Jul). Sep–Nov is best time for Nearctic vagrants. Avoid winter (Dec–Mar). **EXPLORE**: very low. The Azores are well known and unlikely to harbour any unknown resident birds.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: considered very low risk for crime. **CITIES**: Ponta Delgada on São Miguel (main airport), Angra do Heroísmo on Terceira and Horta on Faial are the main administrative centres. **EASE —entry**: visa requirements are as for Portugal; most westerners do not require a visa. Ponta Delgada Airport on São Miguel is quite well connected by flight to Europe and North America. —within: Portuguese; some English. There is a good road infrastructure and a good network of buses operates on most islands. Self-drive is popular and car hire is possible on most islands. All the main islands have airfields and daily internal flights to them; most towns can also be reached by boat or ferry. There is a good range of accommodation available. A few companies offer birding tours, usually combined with Madeira and the Canary Islands. **ATTRACTIOnS**: Setes Cidades caldera. Architecture at Angra do Heroísmo. Hiking, including Mt Pico. Whale watching. **MONEY**: moderate. Euro. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro. **GEOGRAPHY**: these isolated Portuguese islands lie some 1,500 km west of Portugal and Africa and 3,900 km east of North America. There are nine main islands spread over a distance of 600 km. Situated on the junction of three large tectonic plates, the Azores are volcanic in origin and the landscapes are quite mountainous, with the highest peak, Mt Pico, at 2,351 m. **SIZE**: 2,330 km², with nine islands >10 km². 0.01xUK. **CLIMATE**: the Azores have a moist, temperate climate. Rain can be expected throughout the year, but falls mostly Sep–Apr. Precipitation increasing from east to west (700–1,600 mm). Winters (Nov–Apr) are much cooler than summers. Ponta Delgada (São Miguel) rainfall = annual 1,030 mm, monthly 30–133 mm; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Jun–Aug. Ponta Delgada temperature = annual min/max 14–20°C, monthly max of 17–26°C; Jul–Sep warmest, Jan–Mar coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* 2006 by Clarke *et al.* (2) *Field Guide to the Birds of Macaronesia* 2011 by García-del-Rey. **SITE:** *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Portugal, the Azores and Madeira Archipelagos* 2014 by Moore *et al.*

Benin (6–12°N)

Benin has failed to capture the attention of birders, and with a recent coup attempt its reputation for stability is in question. Located in the Dahomey Gap, the savanna zone that separates the Upper and Lower Guinea forests, Benin is more arid than the surrounding countries, but holds a good range of habitats and birds in a small area. The recent discovery of Anambra Waxbill in the south-east offers reason for more dedicated birders to visit, but Benin is unlikely to become a major player on the birding scene.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (3, 56/66) — BT (1):** Anambra Waxbill. —**other:** Dahomey Forest Robin (1/2). Also Ahanta Francolin, Grey Pratincole, Savile's Bustard, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Baumann's Greenbul, Puvel's Illadopsis, Exclamationary Paradise Whydah. —**diversity:** 570. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 250–350 sp in 1–2 weeks. **HABITATS:** grassy river valleys for Anambra Waxbill. Guinea woodland, lowland forest, arid savanna. **AREAS — sites:** >40 km north-east of Cotonou for Anambra Waxbill. W NP for Guinea woodland and savanna sp. Lama Forest for lowland forest sp. **TIMING (Oct–Nov, Apr):** best to travel in the dry season (Sep–Apr) when access is easier and Palaearctic migrants are present. Most birds breed Apr–Jul. Avoid the middle of the rains (May–Jul). —**EXPLORE:** moderate. Benin is not well known, but is small with little forest.

al. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Azores 2016* by Sayers/Bradt. (2) *Azores 2011* by Martin/Rother Walking Guides, possibly worthwhile. **OTHER:** (1) *Seabirds of Spain and Portugal* 1997 by Paterson. (2) *Birding the Azores* 2000 by Clarke. (3) *Aves dos Açores 2010* by Pereira, Portuguese. **WEB:** *Azores Bird Club*.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low, although there have been recent cases of civil unrest. Medical facilities are basic.

CITIES: Porto-Novo (capital), Cotonou (airport). **Ease — entry:** most nationalities, but not Africans, require a visa to be obtained before travelling. Cotonou is well connected by flights from Europe and major African cities. It is possible to use land borders with Nigeria and Togo, but those with Burkina Faso and Niger may be unsafe. —**within:** French; little English. There is a reasonable road network and good public bus services, but to get to most birding sites a private 4x4 is needed. Accommodation is basic outside the main centres. **ATTRACTIOnS:** Ganvié Stilt Village. Pendjari NP for wildlife. Dahomey Kingdom ruins. **MONEY:** moderate. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** this thin slice of Africa is located immediately west of Nigeria, east of Togo and south of Burkina Faso and Niger, well within the tropics. It has a short coastline in the south. It lies in the savanna zone called the Dahomey Gap, which separates the forest blocks of Upper Guinea and Lower Guinea. Most of the country is flat and low-lying, with the highest peak, Mt Sokbaro, at 658 m. **SIZE:** 113 thousand km². 0.5xUK. **CLIMATE:** generally tropical; hot and humid year round, with most of the country receiving 1,000–1,400 mm of rain.

There is a long rainy season (Apr–Jul) and a short rainy season (Sep–Oct), with the main dry period Nov–Mar. Temperature fluctuation is small throughout the year, but greater inland. Cotonou (south, coastal) rainfall = annual 1,310 mm, monthly 9–356 mm; May–Jul wettest, Dec–Feb driest. Cotonou temperature = annual min/max 24–30°C, monthly max 28–32°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Benin 2006* by Butler/Bradt, outdated. (2) chapter in *West Africa* 2013 by Ham *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. (3) *Benin 2010* by Kraus & Reid, possibly worthwhile. **OTHER:** (1) *The avifauna of Benin* 2011 by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire. (2) *Les Oiseaux du Complexe WAP* 2007 by Balanca *et al.*

Botswana (18–27°S)

Tourist-friendly Botswana is world famous for its luxury big game safaris and the Okavango Delta. Although the country has no endemics it is the best in which to look for Slaty Egret and among the best for Pel's Fishing Owl. Most serious birders visit Botswana for a few days as an add-on to a trip to Namibia, with the Okavango region readily accessible via the Caprivi Strip. For the casual birder and nature enthusiast not on a tight budget, Botswana offers an abundance of birds and wildlife with relatively few tourists and trouble-free travel.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES (10, 44/66) — NE (1):** Slaty Egret. —**BT (1):** Bradfield's Hornbill. —**1/2 (1):** Short-clawed Lark. —**B2 (1):** Luapula Cisticola. —**other:** Pretoria Rock Thrush (1/2). Also African Pygmy Goose, Red-billed Francolin, Swainson's Francolin, Northern Black Korhaan, White-backed Night Heron, Black Heron, Secretarybird, Red-crested Korhaan, Wattled Crane, Long-toed Lapwing, Black-winged Pratincole, Southern White-faced Owl, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Pel's Fishing Owl, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Southern Ground Hornbill, Dickinson's Kestrel, Red-footed Falcon, Pritit Batis, Crimson-breasted

Shrike, Ashy Tit, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Fawn-coloured Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark, Monotonous Lark, Pink-billed Lark, Long-billed Crombec, Chirping Cisticola, Barred Wren-Warbler, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Hartlaub's Babbler, Southern Pied Babbler, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler, Meves's Starling, Burchell's Starling, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Chat Flycatcher, Marico Flycatcher, Ant-eating Chat, Boulder Chat, Scaly-feathered Finch, Brown Firefinch, Violet-eared Waxbill, Shaft-tailed Whydah.

—**diversity:** 590. Afrotropical. Expect 200–400 sp in 1–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** Okavango system for Slaty Egret. Woodlands for Bradfield's Hornbill. *Acacia* savannas for Short-clawed Lark. **AREAS — sites:** Shakawe for Pel's Fishing Owl. Chobe for Slaty Egret. Lobatse area of Short-clawed Lark. **TIMING (Dec–Feb):** being arid, it is best to visit at the start of the main rains (Dec–Feb), when most birds breed. Mid winter (Jun–Aug) is less productive, especially in the south, but may be good for game viewing. **EXPLORE:** low. Botswana is well known and arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is little risk of unrest or violent crime, although keep an eye out for petty crime in built up areas. **CITIES:** Gaborone (capital), Maun (gateway to Okavango). **EASE —entry:** most westerners do not require a visa. Botswana is not particularly well connected with direct international flights, but there are regular flights from neighbouring South Africa to Maun and other towns. Most ecotourists will prefer to arrive in Maun. Land border crossings from South Africa, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe are straightforward. **—within:** English. Botswana has a relatively good road infrastructure, making self-drive a popular option. There is a reasonable internal network of flights and fly-in safaris to various parts of the Okavango Delta are popular. Camping may be necessary in remote areas, but good tourist accommodation is widely available. There are many local tour operators and several international bird tour companies offer trips. **ATTRACTIOnS:** Okavango Delta. Wildlife viewing in Chobe, Moremi & Kgalagadi. Tsodilo Hills for rock art. **MONEY:** fairly inexpensive, although the country targets mainly high-end tourism, so many tour packages can be expensive. Pula. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some USD, GBP or Euro. **GEOGRAPHY:** this landlocked country is located on the edge

of the tropics, north of South Africa, east of Namibia and west of Zimbabwe. Most of the country is situated on a large, flat plain at 900–1,100 m altitude. The highest peak is Otse Hill at 1,491 m. The Okavango Delta is located in the north and the Zambezi River forms a short section of the north-eastern border with Zambia. **SIZE:** 582 thousand km². 0.5xSA, 2.4xUK. **CLIMATE:** a fairly arid country with warm, wet summers (Oct–Apr) and dry, cool winters (May–Aug). Rainfall generally decreases towards the south and west, from 650 mm to 250 mm. Winters are much cooler than summers. Maun (north central) rainfall = annual 470 mm, monthly 0–110 mm; Dec–Feb wettest, Jul–Sep driest. Maun temperature = annual min/max 14–31°C, monthly max 25–35°C; hottest Oct–Dec, May–Jul coolest.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** *Birds of Botswana* 2015 by Hancock & Weiersbye. **SITE:** *Birds in the Gaborone Area and where to find them* 1998 by Tyler & Borello. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Botswana and Namibia* 2013 by Murphy *et al.*/Lonely Planet. (2) *Botswana Safari Guide* 2014 by McIntyre/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Bird Atlas of Botswana* 1994 by Penry. (2) *Birds of Botswana* 1997 by Borello & Borello. **WEB:** *Southern African Birding – Botswana*.

Burkina Faso (10–15°N)

This underdeveloped, arid country has failed to capture the attention of many birders and for the world lister there is no real reason to visit. With the added recent political unrest and terrorism threat that has shattered its reputation for being safe, birders can put Burkina Faso towards the bottom of the list of countries to visit. For those wishing to explore, there are some good species on offer, especially in the far north where Kordofan Lark and Sudan Golden Sparrow are possibilities.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other:** African Swallow-tailed Kite, Four-banded Sandgrouse, Bearded Barbet, Red-chested Swallow, Pied-winged Swallow, Black Scrub Robin, Heuglin's Wheatear, Cricket Warbler, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Rufous-rumped Lark, Kordofan Lark, Sennar Penduline Tit. **—diversity:** 460. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 200–250 sp in 1–2 weeks. **HABITATS:** arid savanna. **AREAS —sites:** Nazinga Game Ranch, W NP, Kaboré Tambi NP & Sahel Partial R. **TIMING (Oct–Nov, Apr):** being a dry country it is best to visit immediately after the main rains (Oct–Dec), or when woodland birds are preparing to breed (Mar–May), although it may be unpleasantly hot then. Avoid the main rains (Jun–Sep) due to access difficulty. **EXPLORE:** moderate. Burkina Faso is not very well known, but fairly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: recently the security situation has deteriorated significantly, especially in the northern areas near the borders of Mali and Niger. There have also been signs of political unrest, ruining its previous reputation for being safe and friendly. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Ouagadougou (capital).

EASE —entry: most western nationalities require a pre-arrival visa, which is not too hard to obtain. Burkina Faso is reasonably well connected with flights from Europe and major African cities. Overland travel is possible but not advised. **—within:** French; little English. Hiring a 4x4 and driver is really the only option for getting around. International quality accommodation is limited. **ATTRACTIOnS:** culturally significant buildings such as Bobo-Dioulasso Mosque and at Niansogoni Village.

MONEY: moderate. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euros or USD.

GEOGRAPHY: a landlocked country situated south of Mali, west of Niger and north of Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin and Ghana. The country is generally flat and lies at an average of 400 m, with the highest peak, Tena Kourou, at 749 m. **SIZE:** 273 thousand km². 1.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical and hot, with a pronounced rainy season (May–Sep). Rainfall varies from 400 mm in the north to 1,000 mm in the south. Annual fluctuations in temperature are minor. Ouagadougou (central) rainfall = annual 790 mm, monthly 0–280 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Nov–Jan. Ouagadougou temperatures = annual min/max 22–35°C, monthly max 31–40°C; hottest Mar–May, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Burkina Faso* 2011 by Manson & Knight/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Birding in Burkina Faso, more than just birding* 2002 by Portier. (2) *Les Oiseaux du Complexe WAP* 2007 by Balanca *et al.*

Burundi (2–4°S)

Struggling to emerge from years of political turmoil, this small, mountainous country is failing to capture its tourism potential. While political stability has improved in recent years and infrastructure is being expanded, there are still security and safety concerns and a recent coup attempt that make this a destination suitable only for the adventurous. With neighbouring Rwanda offering easy and safe access to all of the interesting birds Burundi holds, there is little reason for the world birder to visit. For the adventurous birder, exploration of the montane forest in Kibira NP and swamps of Ruvubu NP may turn up some interesting records.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

East Africa. SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other: Red-faced Barbet, Ruwenzori Turaco, Kungwe Apalis, Red-collared Mountain Babbler, Shelley's Crimsonwing, Grauer's Rush Warbler, Papyrus Yellow Warbler, Shoebill, Papyrus Canary, White-collared Oliveback, Papyrus Gonolek. —diversity: 600. Strongly Afro-tropical. Expect 300–350 sp in 7–10 days. HABITATS: Afromontane forest, swamps. AREAS —EBAs: Albertine Rift mountains. —sites: Kibira NP for montane forest. Ruvubu NP for swamps and Red-faced Barbet. TIMING (Jun–Aug): best in the main dry season when most montane birds breed (Jun–Sep). The height of the rains (Mar–Apr, Dec) is best avoided. EXPLORE: moderate. Few birders have visited Burundi, but there are few remote areas.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: political instability and the lack of rule of law make Burundi a fairly dangerous place. **CITIES:** Bujumbura (capital). **EASE —entry:** most western nationalities require a visa which, in theory is possible to obtain on arrival, but in practice is better to obtain

before travelling. Burundi is not particularly well connected with flights. It is possible to travel overland from Rwanda. —within: French; little English. Hiring a vehicle and driver is really the only option for getting around. **MONEY:** expensive. Burundian Franc. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euros or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a mountainous and landlocked country located south of Rwanda, east of DR Congo and west of Tanzania. Most of the country is above 1,500 m, with the lowest point at 774 m in the south-west and the highest peak, Mt Heha, at 2,684 m. Parts of the west drain into the Congo Basin and parts of the east into the Nile. Lake Tanganyika forms much of the western border with DR Congo. **SIZE:** 27,800 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical and warm. Rain falls Oct–May; it is much drier Jun–Sep. Rainfall varies geographically from 500 to 2,000 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Bujumbura (west) rainfall = annual 850 mm, monthly 5–125 mm; wettest Dec and Mar–Apr, driest Jun–Aug. Bujumbura temperatures = annual min/max 19–29°C, monthly max 28–31°C; hottest Aug–Oct, coolest Jan–Mar.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe. SOUND: see Apps. APPS: *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*. TRAVEL: chapter in *East Africa* 2015 by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, some info. OTHER: *La Faune Ornithologique du Burundi* 1966 by Schouteden, French.

Cameroon (2–13°N)

With a diverse range of habitats, one of the most significant Endemic Bird Areas on the continent and lots of special birds, Cameroon ranks among the top five birding countries on the continent. A better tourism infrastructure would make it a very popular destination, but for now it is a destination for the connoisseur, willing to put up with some hardships. Unfortunately the far north is currently off limits due to threat of terrorism, putting specials such as Quail-plover, Golden Nightjar, Rock Firefinch and Sennar Penduline-Tit out of reach. But there are plenty of other birds to make it a worthwhile destination. Hopefully the threat of terrorism can be kept at bay, political differences between English and French speaking parts of the country resolved and more spent on infrastructure, in which case Cameroon could take its rightful place among the most popular birding destinations of the region.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. SPECIES (266, 6/66) —EN (6): Mount Cameroon Francolin, Bannerman's Turaco, Banded Wattle-eye, Bamenda Apalis, Mount Cameroon Speirops, Bates's Weaver. —NE (20): Cameroon Olive Pigeon, *Tullberg's Woodpecker*, Green-breasted Bushshrike, Mount Kupe Bushshrike, *Mountain Sooty Boubou*, Yellow-breasted Boubou, Cameroon Montane Greenbul, Western Mountain Greenbul, Cameroon Olive Greenbul, Grey-headed Greenbul, Black-capped Woodland Warbler, Bangwa Forest Warbler, Green Longtail, White-tailed Warbler, White-throated Mountain Babbler, Mountain Robin-Chat, Cameroon Sunbird, Ursula's Sunbird, Bannerman's Weaver, Shelley's Oliveback. —BT (32): Adamawa Turtle Dove, White-crested Turaco, Zenker's Honeyguide, Brown-backed Woodpecker, Fox Kestrel, Grey-headed Broadbill, Black-necked Wattle-eye, Emin's Shrike, Red-headed Picathartes, Sun Lark, Mountain Saw-wing, Forest Swallow, Rock-loving Cisticola, Dorst's Cisticola, Rufous Cisticola, Spotted Thrush-Babbler (*ESS harterti*), Forest White-eye, Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling, Neumann's Starling, White-collared Starling, Crossley's Ground Thrush, Yellow-footed Flycatcher, *Alexander's Akalat*, Heuglin's Wheatear, Orange-tufted Sunbird, Grey-headed Oliveback, Yellow-winged Pytilia, Dybowsky's Twinspot, Chad Firefinch, Oriole Finch, West African Seedeater, Brown-rumped Bunting. —1/2 (3): Dja River Warbler, Rock Firefinch, Jos Plateau Indigobird. —B2 (54): Black Guineafowl, Plumed Guineafowl, White-throated Francolin, Schlegel's Francolin, Grey Pratincole, White-naped Pigeon, Black-throated Coucal, Shelley's Eagle-Owl, Vermiculated Fishing Owl, Sjöstedt's Owl, Black-shouldered Nightjar, Bates's Nightjar, Bates's Swift, Bare-cheeked Trogan, Blue-moustached Bee-eater, Willcocks's Honeyguide, Gabon Woodpecker, Red-headed Lovebird, *West African Pitta*, Verreaux's Batis, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Black-shouldered Puffback, Eastern Wattled Cuckooshrike, Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher, Bates's Paradise Flycatcher, Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul, Xavier's Greenbul, Eastern Bearded Greenbul, White-bearded Greenbul, Preuss's Cliff Swallow, Chattering Cisticola, Black-collared Apalis, Red-winged Grey Warbler, *Western Buff-throated Apalis*, Gosling's Apalis, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, Black-eared Ground Thrush, Gambaga Flycatcher, White-crowned Robin-Chat, White-crowned Cliff Chat, Violet-tailed Sunbird, Bates's Sunbird, Yellow-capped Weaver, Cassin's Malimbe, Rachel's Malimbe, Woodhouse's Antpecker, Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch, Pale-fronted Negrofinch, Red-winged Pytilia, Black-bellied Firefinch, Black-headed Waxbill, Cameroon Indigobird, Long-legged Pipit. —other: Verreaux's Turaco (B2), Eastern White-crested Hornbill (B2), Johnston's Woodpecker

(NE), Western Grey-throated Barbet (B2), Yellow-lored Bristlebill (B2), Shari Saw-wing (BT), Petit's Saw-wing (B2), Cameroon Forest Warbler (BT), Brown-backed Cisticola (NE), Red-pate Cisticola (B2), Gabon Forest Robin (B2), Neumann's Weaver (BT), Grey Black-faced Firefinch (B2), Cameroon Pipit (NE), Bannerman's Pipit (BT). Also Hartlaub's Duck, Stone Partridge, Double-spurred Francolin, Western Reef Egret, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Red-chested Goshawk, Grasshopper Buzzard, Arabian Bustard, Nkulengu Rail, Black Crowned Crane, Black-headed Lapwing, White-crowned Lapwing, Brown-chested Lapwing, Egyptian Plover, Rock Pratincole, Four-banded Sandgrouse, African Collared Dove, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Violet Turaco, Ross's Turaco, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Golden Nightjar, Standard-winged Nightjar, African Black Swift (ESS *serlei*), Fernando Po Swift, Bar-tailed Tropicbird, Blue-bellied Roller, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, White-headed Wood Hoopoe (ESS *okuensis*), White-bellied Kingfisher, Western Green Tinkerbird (*coryphaea*), Eastern Piping Hornbill, White-thighed Hornbill, Vieillot's Barbet, Bearded Barbet, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide, African Piculet, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, Senegal Parrot, Senegal Batis, West African Batis, Yellow-bellied Wattled-eye, Monteiro's Bushshrike (ESS *perspicillatus*, controversial), Many-coloured Bushshrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Mackinnon's Shrike | Mackinnon's Fiscal, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher (*albiventris*), Sennar Penduline Tit, Yellow Penduline Tit, White-throated Blue Swallow, West African Swallow, Yellow Longbill, Tit Hylia, Southern Stout Cisticola (*santae*), River Prinia, Banded Prinia, Grey Apalis (ESS *scaleri*; *funebris*), Cricket Warbler, Oriole Warbler, Western Olive-green Camaroptera, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Senegal Eremomela, Pale-breasted Illadopsis, African Hill Babbler (*claudiae*), Ruwenzori Hill Babbler, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Forest Hyliota, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Waller's Starling (*preussi*), African

Thrush (*nigrilorum*), Black Scrub Robin, White-browed Forest Flycatcher, White-bellied Robin-Chat (*roberti*), Grey-winged Akalat, Reichenbach's Sunbird, Carmelite Sunbird, Green-throated Sunbird (*crossensis*), Tiny Sunbird, Northern Double-collared Sunbird (*preussi*), Black-billed Weaver (*melanogaster*), Heuglin's Masked Weaver, Preuss's Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Yellow Bishop (*phoenicomerus*), Red-faced Crimsonwing (*reichenovii*), Brown Twinspot, Lavender Waxbill, Black-crowned Waxbill (*eisentrauti*), Oriole Finch (*olivaceus*), Thick-billed Seedeater (*burtoni*), Gosling's Bunting. —diversity: 940 (6th). Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 500–600 sp in 3–4 weeks. **HABITATS:** Afromontane forest for endemics. Lowland forest, Guinea woodlands, arid savanna. **AREAS —EBAs:** Cameroon mountains. Cameroon and Gabon lowlands. —sites: Mt Kupe, Bakossi Mts, Mt Cameroon & Mt Oku in Bamenda highlands for montane endemics. Ngaoundaba Ranch & Bénoué NP for Guinea woodland sp. Waza NP & Mora for arid savanna sp. Campo Ma'an & Korup NP for lowland forest birding. **TIMING (Nov, Mar–Apr):** best when it is dry and easy to get around, which is when most forest birds breed (Dec–Apr). Red-headed Picathartes breeds May–Oct. Immediately after the rain (Oct–Dec) many whydahs and indigobirds are in breeding plumage. Avoid the main rainy season (May–Sep) due to access problems. **EXPLORE:** high. Large areas are unexplored.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: mostly low risk of serious crime or terrorism, but there is a serious risk of kidnap in the Far North province near Nigeria. Road safety is poor, especially in the south. **CITIES:** Douala (main airport), Yaounde (capital), Garoua (gateway to the north). **EASE —entry:** most visitors require a pre-arrival visa. Douala is well connected with international and regional flights; Yaoundé has an international airport too. It is possible to travel overland from Nigeria,

Chad and Gabon. —within: mostly French; English in the south-west. There are regular flights between the south and the north. Road conditions are reasonable, although a 4x4 is needed to reach some of the best birding areas. Accommodation is very simple at some of the best birding sites, but reasonable in larger towns. There are a handful of local birding guides. A few international companies offer tours. **ATTRACTIOnS:** hiking Mt Cameroon. Cultural hill villages in the north and Bamenda Highlands. Wildlife viewing in Waza NP. **MONEY:** moderate. Central African Franc, shared with other Central African countries, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Cameroon has a 350 km long coastline and stretches inland from the rainforest zone of Central Africa right to the Sahel, just south of the Sahara. It shares borders with Nigeria to the west, Chad and CAR to the east and Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to the south. Much of the south is low-lying and flat, although a series of high mountains rise along a volcanic chain in the south-west and include the highest peak in West Africa, Mt Cameroon, at 4,040 m. The Adamawa Plateau cuts across the south-centre of the country and lies at an altitude of 900–1,500 m. North of this the land drops rapidly to a mostly-flat plain below 300 m altitude, which extends all the

way to Lake Chad, although there are some high mountains on the border with Nigeria. The Bénoué River flows through the centre of the country and the Sanaga River mouth is located just south of Douala. **SIZE:** 475 thousand km². 2xUK, 0.4xSA. **CLIMATE:** mostly tropical, very humid in the south and dry and hot in the north. There is a single rainy season (May–Oct), which is shorter in the north. Rainfall varies enormously, from 10,000 mm on the slopes of Mt Cameroon to 400 mm in the far north. Douala (south, coastal) rainfall = annual 3,850 mm, monthly 35–755 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Dec–Feb. Douala temperatures = annual min/max 23–30°C, monthly max 27–32°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest. Garoua (far north) rainfall = annual 1,000 mm, monthly 0–248 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Dec–Feb. Garoua temperatures = annual min/max 22–35°C, monthly max 31–40°C; Mar–May hottest, Nov–Jan coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Cameroon* 2011 by West/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Birding Cameroon* 2003–4 by Mills & Cohen. (2) *The Birds of Cameroon* 1981 by Louette.

Canary Islands (27–29°N, Spain)

With quick and easy access from Europe and a good infrastructure, these Spanish islands are a popular destination for holidaymakers. Lying within the Western Palaearctic, they are a must-visit area for regional listers. World birders will find six endemics and several other regional specialities to make a short trip worthwhile. All specials can be seen by concentrating on the islands of Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Macaronesia. SPECIES (39, 27/66) —EN (6): Bolle's Pigeon, Laurel Pigeon, Canary Islands Chiffchaff, Fuerteventura Stonechat, Tenerife Blue Chaffinch, Gran Canaria Blue Chaffinch. —**1/2 (2):** Plain Swift, Berthelot's Pipit. —**B2 (5):** Houbara Bustard (ESS *fuertaventurae*), Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Desert Grey Shrike (ESS *koenigi*), African Blue Tit, Atlantic Canary. —**other:** Palma Blue Tit (EN), Canary Islands Blue Tit (EN), Tenerife Goldcrest (EN), Canary Islands Robin (EN). Also Barbary Partridge (*koenigi*), Cory's Shearwater, Barolo Shearwater, White-faced Storm Petrel (*hypoleuca*), Egyptian Vulture (ESS *majorensis*), Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*granti*), Common Buzzard (*insularum*), Eurasian Stone-curlew | Eurasian Thick-knee (ESS *distinctus* + *insularum*), Yellow-legged Gull (*atlantis*), Western Barn Owl (ESS *gracilirostris*), Long-eared Owl (ESS *canariensis*), Great Spotted Woodpecker (ESS *canariensis* + *thanneri*), Common Kestrel (ESS *dacotiae*; *canariensis*), Northern Raven | Common Raven (ESS *canariensis*), African Blue Tit (ESS *degener*), Lesser Short-toed Lark (ESS *rufescens* + *polatzeki*), Spectacled Warbler (*orbitalis*), Sardinian Warbler (ESS *leucogastra*), Common Blackbird (*cabreræ*), Common Chaffinch (ESS *canariensis* + *ombriosa* + *palmae*), Trumpeter Finch (ESS *amantium*), Common Linnet (ESS *meadewaldoi* + *harterti*). —**diversity:** 310. A

blend of Palaearctic and Afro-tropical, with many vagrants. Expect 60–100 sp in 4–7 days. **HABITATS:** laurel forest for endemics. Coastal desert. **AREAS —EBAs:** Madeira and the Canary Islands. —**sites:** Los Molinos Reservoir & Costa Calma on Fuerteventura for arid country sp. Monte del Agua & El Teide NP on Tenerife for forest sp. Inagua Natural Res on Gran Canaria for Gran Canaria Blue Chaffinch. **TIMING (Mar–May):** the best time is spring, after the rains and when most birds breed (Mar–Jun). Avoid the hottest, driest time of the year (Jul–Sep). **EXPLORE:** very low. The islands are small and well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the threat of crime is considered to be very low. **CITIES:** main airports are at Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. **Ease —entry:** visa requirements are as for Spain. There are regular flights to Tenerife and Gran Canaria from Europe, but it is also possible to fly direct to some of the other islands. —**within:** Spanish; some English. A good road network and easy car hire means self-drive is popular. There is a good bus network and many inter-island flights, ferries and boats. There is plenty of good accommodation. A limited number of tour companies offer trips. **ATTRACTONS:** spectacular scenery such as at Mt Teide Volcano, the third tallest in the world. Cueva de los Verdes Caves. Hiking. **MONEY:** moderate. Euro. Widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro. **GEOGRAPHY:** these Spanish islands are located 100 km to the north-west of Morocco. The seven main islands are spread across 420 km of ocean. They are volcanic in origin, making them rather mountainous, with the highest peak, Mt Teide, at 3,718 m. **SIZE:** 7,490 km², divided between seven main islands >250 km², with Tenerife (2,030 km²),

Fuerteventura (1,660 km²) and Gran Canaria (1,560 km²) the three largest. 0.03xUK. **CLIMATE:** typically warm and dry, with a rainy season from Oct–Mar. Summers are quite a bit warmer than winters. Las Palmas (Gran Canaria) rainfall = annual 118 mm, monthly 0–22 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Las Palmas temperatures = annual min/max 19–24°C, monthly max 21–26°C; Aug–Oct hottest, Jan–Mar coolest.

LITERATURE

See also Azores and Morocco. **ID:** (1) *Birds of the Canary Islands* 2018 by García-del-Rey. (2) *Birds of the Canary Islands* 2015

Cape Verde (15–17°N)

These laid back islands are gaining in popularity as a tourism destination. Although bird diversity is low, several endemics and distinctive island forms and a variety of seabirds make Cape Verde an interesting destination for a short trip. It should continue to grow in popularity as a birding destination, especially given its close proximity to Europe and direct flights from Portugal. Birders chasing down all the endemics need to visit São Nicolau, Raso (by boat) and Santiago. Pelagic trips are also worthwhile.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Macaronesia. SPECIES (46, 23/66) —EN (9): Fea's Petrel (br), Cape Verde Shearwater (br), Boyd's Shearwater (br), Cape Verde Storm Petrel (br), Cape Verde Buzzard, Cape Verde Swift, Raso Lark, Cape Verde Warbler, Iago Sparrow. —**B2 (1):** Brown-necked Raven. —**other:** Cape Verde Purple Heron (EN), Cape Verde Kite (EN), Cape Verde Barn Owl (EN), Neglected Kestrel (EN), Alexander's Kestrel (EN), Cape Verde

by García-del-Rey. **SOUND:** (1) *Songs and calls of the birds of the Canary Islands* 2000 by Moreno. (2) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** (1) *A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands* 1996 by Clarke & Collins, outdated. (2) *Finding Birds in the Canaries* 1994 by Gosney, outdated. **TRAVEL:** *Canary Islands* 2016 by Corne & Quintero/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *Rare Birds of the Canary Islands* 2013 by García-del-Rey & García Vargas. (2) *Checklist of the Birds of the Canary Islands* 2001 by García-del-Rey. (3) *Mamíferos de España* 2016 by Purroy & Varela, Spanish. (4) *Birds of Spain* 2017 by de Juana & Varela. **WEB:** *Birding Canarias*, Spanish.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be very low. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Praia on Santiago (capital), Espargos on Sal (main airport). **Ease —entry:** all visitors require a visa which, for some nationalities, can be obtained on arrival. Sal Is has the main international airport with regular flights from various European cities, but there are regular international flights also to Boa Vista. **—within:** Portuguese; some English. There is a good ferry and flight network between most of the islands, although rough sea conditions can cause delays. On islands there is a basic public transport system of minibuses. It is possible to hire a vehicle for self-drive on some of the islands. Road conditions are fairly basic, so a 4x4 might be required. Reasonable accommodation is widely available.

ATTRACTIOnS: scenery and hiking on Santo Antão and Pico do Fogo Volcano.

MONEY: moderate. Cape Verdean Escudo, fixed at 100 to the Euro; Euro also accepted in some places. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located 600 km west of Senegal, the ten main islands are spread across >300 km of ocean. The older, eastern islands are generally flat,

whereas the younger western islands are quite mountainous. The highest peak, Mt Fogo on Fogo Is at 2,829 m, is a volcano which last erupted in 2014. The islands are of volcanic origin. **SIZE:** 4,030 km², divided between ten main islands, with Santiago (990 km²), Santo Antão (780 km²) and Boa Vista (620 km²) the three largest. 0.02xUK. **CLIMATE:** generally a warm, dry climate, with a single warmer, rainy season Jul–Nov, although rainfall varies from 100–1,200 mm. Sal rainfall = annual 70 mm, monthly 0–34; wettest months Aug–Oct, driest Apr–Jun. Sal temperatures = annual min/max 21–26°C, monthly max 24–29°C; Aug–Oct hottest, Jan–Mar coolest.

LITERATURE

See also Azores. **ID:** (1) *Birds of the Cape Verde Islands* 2016 by García-del-Rey. (2) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **SITE:** *A Birders Guide to the Cape Verde Islands* 1997 by Sargeant. **TRAVEL:** *Cape Verde* 2017 by Stewart *et al*/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Cape Verde Islands* 1995 by Hazevoet.

Central African Republic (2–11°N, CAR)

Located at the transition between the Congo forests and Guinea savannas, CAR has lots of intact habitat and some interesting birds. Years of political strife, however, means that it has remained underdeveloped and under-explored. Serious political problems persist and CAR is regarded as unsafe to visit, except perhaps for Dzanga-Sangha bordering Congo and Cameroon, which is excellent for large rainforest mammals and sees a trickle of high-paying guests. When calm does eventually return, CAR should become a more popular destination for adventurous travellers.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES** (7, 47/66) —NE (1): Niam-niam Parrot. —1/2 (1): Sladen's Barbet. —B2 (1): Schlegel's Francolin. —other: *Sangha Forest Robin* (EN). Also Heuglin's Francolin, Black-breasted Barbet, Emin's Shrike, Rufous-rumped Lark, Dja River Warbler, White-collared Starling, Dybowski's Twinspot. —diversity: 750. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 100–150 sp in a week at Dzanga-Sangha. **HABITATS:** lowland forest, moist savanna. **AREAS —sites:** St Floris NP & Bamingui-Bangoran NP for savanna sp including Niam-niam Parrot, Black-breasted Barbet, Emin's Shrike and White-collared Starling. Dzanga-Sangha NP for lowland forest sp. **TIMING (Jan–Mar):** best to go when it is dry to avoid access problems (Dec–Apr), which is probably when most forest birds breed. Avoid the main rains (Aug–Oct). **EXPLORE:** very high. Very poorly known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: political instability and armed internal conflict means that most of CAR is considered very unsafe, although there is a lower risk with visits to the Dzanga-Sangha. **CITIES:** Bangui (capital). **EASE —entry:** all visitors require a pre-arrival visa. There are

only a handful of international and regional flights to CAR. Most land borders have been closed. **—within:** French; little English. Police road blocks are likely to make travelling around difficult. Road and infrastructure is underdeveloped, so a 4x4 is recommended. Accommodation is limited, but there are some reasonable camps at Dzanga-Sangha. **ATTRACTIOnS:** Western Gorillas and other forest mammals at Dzanga-Sangha. **MONEY:** very expensive. Central African Franc, shared with other Central African countries, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD.

GEOGRAPHY: situated on the northern edge of the Congo Basin between Chad, DR Congo, Cameroon and South Sudan, CAR is a landlocked country. Most of it lies at 500–900 m altitude, but the land rises in the west to the highest peak, Mt Ngaoui, at 1,420 m and the east to Bongos Massif at 1,326 m. **SIZE:** 623 thousand km². 2.6xUK, 0.5xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical and warm, with a single rainy season (Mar–Oct in the south, shorter in the north). Mean annual rainfall decreases away from the equator but varies from 700–1,800 mm. Temperatures fluctuate little throughout the year. Bangui (south) rainfall = annual 1,560 mm, monthly 20–230 mm; wettest Aug–Oct, driest Dec–Feb. Bangui temperatures = annual min/max 20–32°C, monthly max 29–34°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of the Central African Republic* 1988 by Carroll. (2) *The birds of Bamingui-Bangoran National Park, Central African Republic* 1983 by Green. **WEB:** Dzanga-Sangha NP.

Chad (7–23°N)

With most Saharan and Sahelian fringe countries plagued by terrorist groups, Chad offers some of the safest access to these habitats with specials such as Nubian Bustard on offer. Despite being little-explored and an expensive destination, largely due to the need for 4x4 hire, the country seems to have put most of its political problems behind it and is starting to gain more interest from birders. If it can keep out religious extremism and settle internal niggles, it is set to become a much more popular destination, with Zakouma NP a major draw for wildlife enthusiasts.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. SPECIES (12, 42/66)

—BT (3): Nubian Bustard, Niam-niam Parrot, Kordofan Rufous Sparrow. —1/2 (1): Chad Firefinch. —B2 (1): Rusty Bush Lark. —other: Red-pate *Cisticola* (B2). Also Clapperton's Francolin, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Arabian Bustard, Savile's Bustard, Black Crowned Crane, Golden Nightjar, Quail-Plover, Cream-coloured Courser, African Collared Dove, Black-breasted Barbet, Little Grey Woodpecker, Barbary Falcon, Cricket Warbler, Fulvous Babbler, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Black Scrub Robin, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Sennar Penduline Tit, Sahel Paradise Whydah, Striolated Bunting. —diversity: 570. Afrotropical, but with many Palaearctic migrants. Expect 250–300 sp in 2–3 weeks. HABITATS: desert, arid savanna, Guinea woodland. AREAS —sites: Ennedi & Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim for desert sp including Nubian Bustard. Zakouma NP for Black-breasted Barbet. Moundou area for Guinea woodland sp and Niam-niam Parrot. TIMING (Sep, Jan–Feb): best when it is cooler (Nov–Mar), or immediately after the rains when many desert birds breeding and passage migrants pass through (Sep–Oct). Zakouma may be inaccessible Jul–Nov.

EXPLORE: high. Chad is largely unexplored with lots of remote areas, but largely arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is a threat of terrorism, especially near Nigeria. Political instability may spill over from neighbouring Sudan and CAR. There are also armed rebel groups within the country, so only travel with up-to-date advice on security and an experienced ground operator. **CITIES:** N'Djamena (capital). **EASE —entry:** most visitors require a pre-arrival visa and letter of invitation. Visitors are required to register on arrival. N'Djamena receives a limited number of international flights. It is possible to travel overland from Cameroon, but other land borders are best avoided. **—within:** French and Arabic (official); little English. Road infrastructure is poor, so a sturdy 4x4 is needed, although long distance buses along major routes are quite comfortable. There is very limited accommodation outside of N'Djamena, so camping is necessary in most areas, although Zakouma has reasonable accommodation. It is possible to hire internal charter flights, which saves a lot of time. Some bird tour operators are starting to offer trips.

ATTRACTIOnS: desert scenery and rock art at Ennedi & Tibesti Mts. Wildlife viewing at Zakouma. **MONEY:** very expensive. Central African Franc, shared with other Central African countries, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** an arid, landlocked, country located west of Sudan, east of Niger and Cameroon, north of CAR and south of Libya. Most of it is flat and located at about 400 m altitude, but rocky outcrops are a feature in some areas and the north has some high mountains, including the Ennedi Massif and Tibesti Massif, the latter with the highest point in the country, Emi Koussi, at 3,445 m. The Chari and

Logone are the main river systems in the country, both draining into Lake Chad on the western border. **SIZE (5):** 1.28 million km². 5xUK. **CLIMATE:** hot and tropical, with a single rainy season May–Sep. Rainfall varies greatly from <40 mm in the north to >1,150 mm in the south. Winters (Nov–Mar) are significantly cooler than summers, although this is less pronounced in the south. N'Djamena (central west) rainfall = annual 510 mm, monthly 0–174 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Jan–Mar. N'Djamena temperatures = annual min/max 21–36°C, monthly max 32–41°C; Mar–May hottest, Dec–Feb coolest. Fada (north-east) rainfall = annual 72 mm, monthly 0–44 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Jan–Mar. Fada temperatures = monthly max

30–40°C; Apr–Jun hottest, Dec–Feb coolest. Moundou (south-west) rainfall = annual 1,080 mm, monthly 0–285 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Jan–Mar. Moundou temperatures = annual min/max 20–34°C, monthly max 30–39°C; Mar–May hottest, Nov–Jan coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic.

OTHER: *The Birds of Ouadi Rime-Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve* 1979–1980 by Newby. **WEB:** *African Parks - Zakouma*.

Comoros (11–12°S)

Due to an underdeveloped infrastructure the Comoros are failing to realise the tourism potential offered by their picture-perfect beaches. The distinctive avifauna includes 18 endemics scattered across the three main islands of Grande Comore (GC), Mohéli (M) and Anjouan (A), making for a productive trip. With political stability and good governance it will only be a matter of time before the tourism network expands and these islands become a popular tourism and birding destination. Note that Mayotte, politically part of France but biogeographically part of Comoros, is normally visited with Comoros.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. SPECIES (110, 13/66) —EN (17): Comoro Green Pigeon (M), Karthala Scops Owl (GC), Anjouan Scops Owl (A), Moheli Scops Owl (M), Comoro Cuckooshrike (GC *cucullata*, M *moheliensis*), Grande Comore Drongo (GC), Grande Comore Bulbul (GC), Moheli Bulbul (M), Anjouan Brush Warbler (A),

Grande Comore Brush Warbler (GC), Moheli Brush Warbler (M), Kirk's White-eye (GC), Karthala White-eye (GC), Comoro Thrush (GC *comorensis*, M *moheliensis*, A *bewsheri*), Humblot's Flycatcher (GC), Humblot's Sunbird (GC *humbloti*, M *mohelicus*), Anjouan Sunbird (A). —BT (1): Persian Shearwater (ESS M *temptator*). —1/2 (10): Madagascar Grebe (GC), Madagascar Harrier, Comoro Olive Pigeon, Madagascar Spinetail (ESS GC *mariae*), Greater Vasa Parrot, Blue Vanga, Crested Drongo (ESS A *potior*), Madagascar Brush Warbler (ESS M *moheliensis*), Madagascar Green Sunbird, Comoro Fody (ESS GC *cosobrina* + A *anjuanensis* + M *eminentissima*). —B2 (2): Comoro Blue Pigeon (*sganzini*), Madagascar White-eye. —other: Moheli Shearwater (EN), Comoro Turtle Dove (1/2), Grande Comore Cuckoo Roller (EN GC), Anjouan Cuckoo Roller (EN A), Comoro Parrot (EN GC), Comoro Blue Vanga (EN M *comorensis*, GC *bensonii*), Anjouan White-eye (EN A), Moheli White-eye (EN M), Grande Comore Thrush (EN GC), Moheli Thrush (EN M), Anjouan Thrush (EN A), Grande Comore

Green Sunbird (EN GC), Moheli Green Sunbird (EN M), *Grande Comore Fody* (EN GC). Also Striated Heron (*rhizophorae*), Grey Heron (*firasa*), Madagascar Pond Heron, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher (*johannae*), Frances's Sparrowhawk (ESS GC *griveaudi*), Common Moorhen (*pyrrhorhoa*), Western Barn Owl (*hypermetra*), African Palm Swift (*griveaudi*), Madagascar Black Swift (*mayottensis*), Peregrine Falcon (*radama*), Greater Vasa Parrot (*comorensis*), Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (ESS A *vulpina* + M *voeltzkowiana* + GC *comorensis*), African Stonechat (ESS *voeltzkowi*). —**diversity:** 120. Strongly Malagasy. Expect 50–60 sp in 7–14 days. **HABITATS:** lowland and montane forest for endemics. **AREAS —EBAs:** Comoro Islands. —**sites:** Mouth Karthala on Grande Comore. Lac Dzianlandzé on Anjouan. Djando forest on Mohéli. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains when most birds breed (Aug–Dec). Avoid the cyclone season (Dec–Apr). **EXPLORE:** moderate. While the islands are quite small, not many birders visit.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk from crime is considered small, although there has been some recent political unrest. **CITIES:** Moroni (capital) on Grande Comore, Fomboni on Mohéli, Moutsamoudou on Anjouan. **EASE —entry:** all visitors require a visa, generally obtainable on arrival. The islands are not particularly well connected with flights, but it is possible to fly to Moroni from several regional cities and to Anjouan from Mayotte. It is possible to travel from Mayotte and Mahajanga in Madagascar by boat with *SGTM*. —**within:** Arabic and French (official), Comorian (widely spoken); little English. There are weekly flights between all the islands, but expect last minute changes to schedules. Various boats also travel regularly between the islands, but beware of overloaded ferries. It is possible to rent vehicles with drivers on the islands. Reasonable accommodation

is available in the larger towns, but it may be necessary to camp on Mt Karthala. **ATTRACTIOnS:** hiking on Mt Karthala. Sea turtles. Diving in Marine NP. **MONEY:** moderate. Comoro Franc. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** the Comoros, excluding Mayotte, include three main islands spread across 170 km of ocean, located 300 km east of northern Mozambique, 70 km north-west of Mayotte, 400 km north-west of Madagascar. They are of volcanic origin and are quite mountainous, with the highest peak, Mt Karthala, at 2,360 m. **SIZE:** 1,860 km², divided mainly between Grande Comore (1,030 km²), Anjouan (424 km²) and Mohéli (211 km²). **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet with a single rainy season (Dec–Jul), although rain can be expected through the year. Rainfall increases with altitude and varies from 1,000 mm along the coast to almost 6,000 mm in the highlands. Annual variation in temperature is minor. Moroni (Grande Comore) rainfall = annual 2,560 mm, monthly 89–357 mm; wettest Jan–Feb and Apr, driest Sep–Nov. Moroni temperatures = annual min/max 22–30°C, monthly max 28–31°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

See also Madagascar. **ID:** *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands* 2015 by Hawkins *et al.* **SOUND:** *Sound Guide to the Breeding Birds of the Comoros* 2001 by Herremans. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Madagascar and Comoros* 2008 by Anderson/Lonely Planet, outdated. (2) chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. (3) *Comoros Travel and Guide* 2015 by Jerry & Jones. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of the Comoro Islands* 1960 by Benson. (2) *Atlas des Oiseaux Nicheurs de la Grande Comore, de Mohéli et d'Anjouan* 2008 by Louette *et al.*, French. (3) *Les Oiseaux des Comores* 1988 by Louette.

Congo (3°N–5°S)

With some excellent rainforest parks, relatively intact large mammal populations and a few ecotourism operations opening up, there are signs that Congo might grow in popularity as a birding destination. That is if the past political problems can be kept under control. For now, visiting is logically tricky and expensive, which means that Congo is likely to remain a low-volume, connoisseur's destination for some time to come.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (10, 44/66) —BT (2):** Olivaceous Flycatcher, Bob-tailed Weaver. —**1/2 (2):** Congo Martin, Congo Sunbird. —**other:** Finsch's Francolin, Grey-throated Rail, Black-headed Bee-eater, Zenker's Honeyguide, African River Martin, Brazza's Martin, Congo Moor Chat, Loango Weaver, Black-chinned Weaver. —**diversity:** 680. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 300–350 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** lowland forest, grasslands, coastal savanna. **AREAS —sites:** Odzala NP & Nouabalé-Ndoki NP for lowland forest sp. Léfini on the Téké Plateau for grassland sp. Conkouati NP for Rosy Bee-eater and African River Martin. Brazzaville area for Congo River sp. **TIMING (Jun–Jul, Dec):** best in the dry season when access is easier, although this varies between the north (Dec–Feb) and south (Jun–Aug, Dec). Avoid the main rains (Sep–Oct, Apr–May). **EXPLORE:** very high. Few birders have visited and there are some remote areas.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is low, although armed banditry in the greater Brazzaville area is a problem; border areas with CAR and DR Congo can be volatile. **CITIES:** Brazzaville (capital), Pointe Noire (main port), Ouesso (north). **EASE —entry:** almost everyone requires a pre-arrival visa and

letter of invitation. Brazzaville is moderately well connected with flights. The use of land borders is not recommended. —**within:** French (official); little English. Roads between Pointe Noire, Brazzaville and Oyo are good, but are poor further north. A 4x4 with driver is recommended. Expect regular police blocks. There are some internal flights and charter planes available. Accommodation is limited outside cities. **ATTRACTIOnS:** rainforest wildlife at Odzala, Nouabalé-Ndoki and Conkouati-Douli NPs. **MONEY:** expensive. Central African Franc, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD.

GEOGRAPHY: located on the west coast of Central Africa, south of Gabon and Cameroon and north of DR Congo. A narrow coastal strip, 170 km long, lies below 150 m altitude. Much of the rest of the country lies at 300–500 m, although there are some higher lying areas on the Téké Plateau and Mayombe, reaching 1,020 at the summit of Mt Nabeba. The Congo River forms much of the border with the DR Congo. **SIZE:** 342 thousand km². 1.4xUK, 0.3xSA. **CLIMATE:** warm and humid, with a marked wet season, Nov–Apr in the south and Mar–Nov in the north. Temperatures vary little. Rainfall ranges from 1,000 to 2,000 mm. Brazzaville (south-central) rainfall = annual 1,870 mm, monthly 29–253 mm; wettest Sep–Oct and Apr, driest Jun–Jul and Dec. Brazzaville temperatures = annual min/max 21–30°C, monthly max 29–32°C; Mar–May hottest, Jul–Sep coolest. Ouesso (north) rainfall = annual 1,670 mm, monthly 50–233 mm; wettest Sep–Oct and May, driest Dec–Feb. Ouesso temperatures = Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Congo* 2012 by Rorison.

DR Congo (5°N–13°S, Democratic Republic of Congo)

This vast chunk of Central Africa is the African birder's Holy Grail. With 18 endemics in the east and home of one of Africa's most exquisite and unusual birds, Congo Peacock, DR Congo sits at the top of many a birder's wish list of African countries to visit. However, serious concerns over safety, particularly in the endemic-rich east, mean that it remains off limits as a birding destination. We wait in hope!

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (136, 10/66)** — **EN (18)**: Congo Peacock, Congo Bay Owl, Prigogine's Nightjar, Schouteden's Swift, Yellow-crested Helmetshrike, Grauer's Cuckooshrike, Bedford's Paradise Flycatcher, Prigogine's Greenbul, Sassi's Olive Greenbul, Kabobo Apalis, Chapin's Babbler, Itombwe Flycatcher, Prigogine's Double-collared Sunbird, Rockefeller's Sunbird, Lufira Masked Weaver, Golden-naped Weaver, Yellow-legged Weaver, Black-lored Waxbill. —**NE (4)**: Sladen's Barbet, Ituri Batis, Grey-headed Sunbird, Grant's Bluebill. —**1/2 (15)**: Nahan's Francolin, Albertine Owllet, African Green Broadbill, Pale-olive Greenbul, Congo Martin, Black-tailed Cisticola, Oberländer's Ground Thrush, White-headed Robin-Chat, Bocage's Sunbird, Congo Sunbird, Katanga Masked Weaver, Bob-tailed Weaver, Jameson's Antpecker, Landana Firefinch. —**other**: Neumann's Coucal (NE), Eastern Black Dwarf Hornbill (NE), Yellow-eyed Bristlebill (1/2), Rudder's Forest Robin (EN), Mangbettu Saw-wing (1/2), Chapin's Crombec (EN), Upemba Masked Weaver (EN). Also Plumed Guineafowl (ESS *schubotzi*), Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk (ESS *beniensis*), White-naped Pigeon, Ruwenzori Turaco (ESS *bredoii*), Maned Owl, African Barred Owllet (*castaneum*), Zenker's Honeyguide, Grey-headed Broadbill (ESS *eurylaemus*), Rufous-sided Broadbill (*budongoensis*),

Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike (*mentalis*), Striped-breasted Tit (ESS *kaboboensis*), Forest Penduline Tit (ESS *ruthae*), Grey-olive Greenbul (ESS *cerviniventris*), Yellow-streaked Greenbul (ESS *graueri*), Square-tailed Sawwing (ESS *centralis*), Red-faced Woodland Warbler (ESS *schoutedeni*), Chubb's Cisticola (ESS *marungensis*), Wing-snapping Cisticola | Ayres's Cisticola (ESS *itombwensis*), Black-collared Apalis (ESS *murphyi*), Mountain Masked Apalis (ESS *marungensis*), Black-capped Apalis (*collaris*), Brown-headed Apalis (*dowsetti*), Olive-green Camaroptera (ESS *kamitugaensis*), Scaly-breasted Illadopsis (ESS *albipectus*), Brown Parisoma (ESS *prigoginei*), Crossley's Ground Thrush (ESS *pilettei*), Black-eared Ground Thrush (*graueri*), Forest Scrub Robin (*collsi*), White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher (ESS *semicinctus*), Swamp Flycatcher (ESS *lualabae*), Red-throated Alethe (ESS *kaboboensis*), Archer's Robin-Chat (ESS *kimbutui*), Alexander's Akalat (ESS *kaboboensis* + *schoutedeni*), Lowland Akalat (*lopezi*), Blue-headed Sunbird (ESS *kaboboensis* + *deroof*), Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird (ESS *itombwensis*), Golden-winged Sunbird (ESS *shellyae*), Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird (ESS *chapini*), Red-crowned Malimbe, Red-bellied Malimbe, Shelley's Crimsonwing, Black-headed Waxbill (ESS *marungensis*). —**diversity**: 1,150 (1st; 10th globally). Strongly Afrotropical. **HABITATS**: montane forest for endemics. Lowland forest, moist savanna. **AREAS** —**EBAs**: Albertine Rift mountains. Eastern Zaire lowlands, Gabon-Cabinda coast SA. Lake Lufira SA. Upemba plains SA. West Zaïre and North Angola forests SA. —**sites**: Itombwe Mts, Mt Kabobo & Kahuzi-Biéga NP for montane endemics. Okapi Res in Ituri Forest & Lomako-Yokokala Res for lowland forest sp. Mbandaka Town for Congo Sand Martin and Congo Sunbird. **TIMING (Jul–Sep)**: in moister, northern areas it is best to travel when it is dry and most forest birds breed (Jun–Aug), whereas in the south it is

best immediately before the rains (Aug–Sep). Avoid the main rains, which fall Mar–Apr and Oct–Nov in the north and Dec–Feb in the south. **EXPLORE**: very high. This colossal country is little-explored.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: while parts of DR Congo are considered to hold a low risk of crime, armed rebel groups operate in large areas making most parts of the east and south very dangerous. **CITIES**: Kinshasa (capital), Bukavu and Goma (major cities in the east) and Lubumbashi (far south). **EASE —entry**: almost everyone requires a pre-arrival visa, which can be difficult to obtain and for which a letter of invitation may be necessary. Kinshasa is fairly well connected with international and regional flights; there are also direct flights to Lubumbashi from South Africa. Most land borders should be avoided, but those from Zambia are not too hard to use. —**within**: French; little English. The vast country is difficult to travel around, with a poor road network. Reaching some of the more remote areas requires lengthy charter flights and boat trips up forested rivers.

ATTRACTIOnS: Eastern Gorilla trekking and scenery in Virunga and Kahuzi-Biéga NP. Okapi. **MONEY**: very expensive. Congolese Franc. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: covering much of Central Africa, most of the DR Congo lies in the Congo Basin below 300 m altitude. However, in the east, along the Albertine Rift, are a series of some of the continent's highest mountains, reaching 5,109 m at Margherita Peak on Mt Stanley in the Ruwenzori Mts, the third highest peak in Africa. The Congo River flows across the width of the country, rising along the Albertine Rift and lower down flowing along much of the border of

Congo before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean on the border with Angola. In the east lie a series of massive lakes along the Albertine Rift, forming part of the borders with Uganda (Lakes Albert and Edward), Rwanda (Lake Kivu), Tanzania and Burundi (Lake Tanganyika) and Zambia (Lake Mweru). **SIZE (2)**: 2.34 million km². 2xSA, 10xUK. **CLIMATE**: moist and tropical, with rainfall and rainy season varying by region. There is a pronounced wet (Nov–Mar) and dry season in the south, whereas northern areas receive rain throughout the year, but with a double peak (Mar–May, Sep–Nov). Rainfall varies from c. 1,000–3,300 mm.

Temperature varies little throughout the year, but more so in the south. Kinshasa (central west) rainfall = annual 1,480 mm, monthly 2–247 mm; wettest Nov and Mar–Apr, driest Jun–Aug. Kinshasa temperatures = annual min/max 21–30°C, monthly max 27–31°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jun–Aug coolest. Goma (central east) rainfall = annual 1,180 mm, monthly 22–145 mm; wettest Oct–Nov and Apr, driest Jun–Aug. Goma temperatures = annual monthly average 19°C; Jan–Mar hottest, Jun–Aug coolest. Lubumbashi (south-east) rainfall = annual 1,220 mm, monthly 0–272 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Lubumbashi temperatures = annual monthly average 17–23°C; Sep–Nov hottest, May–Jul coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. (2) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey, better for most sp. **SOUND**: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL**: *Congo* 2012 by Rorison/Bradt. **OTHER**: (1) *The Birds of the Belgian Congo* 1932–1954 by Chapin. (2) *Birds of Katanga* 2012 by Louette & Hasson.

Djibouti (11–12°N)

This tiny, arid Horn of Africa country may have been completely overlooked by birders if it wasn't for its single endemic, Djibouti Francolin. With few other specials on offer it certainly is a destination for the most serious world listers. However, getting there is not difficult; with daily flights from Addis Ababa, it makes a worthwhile 3–4 day addition to an Ethiopia trip.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. SPECIES (12, 42/66) —EN (1): Djibouti Francolin. —BT (2): Somali Starling, Arabian Golden Sparrow. —B2 (1): Somali Bulbul. —other: Crab-plover, Sooty Gull, White-eyed Gull, White-cheeked Tern, *Arabian Grey Shrike*, Arabian Warbler, Gambaga Flycatcher, Sombre Rock Chat, Nile Valley Sunbird, Somali Sparrow, Yellow-throated Seedeater. —diversity: 330. Significant Afrotropical and Palaearctic elements. Expect 120–150 sp in 3–7 days. HABITATS: highland juniper forest for Djibouti Francolin. Coastal mudflats and mangroves. AREAS —EBAs: Djibouti juniper forest. —sites: Day Forest for Djibouti Francolin and Somali Starling. Djibouti City area for Arabian Golden Sparrow and shorebirds. TIMING (Nov, Feb–Mar): because Djibouti is a dry country, visit in the wettest months when most birds breed (Mar–Apr, Nov). Passage migrants most prominent Sep–Oct and Mar–Apr. Avoid the hottest time of the year (May–Sep). EXPLORE: moderate. Djibouti has not been extensively explored, but is quite small and arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of danger is considered to be low, although it is advisable to stay away from border areas with Eritrea. **CITIES:** Djibouti City (capital). **EASE —entry:** a visa is required by most nationalities, but

this can generally be issued on arrival at the international airport. Those coming overland from Ethiopia should obtain a visa before arrival. There are a limited number of international flights, but regular ones from Addis Ababa and Nairobi. Overland travel from Ethiopia and Somaliland is possible. —within: French and Arabic (official); little English. There is a reasonable road network, but little public transport, so hire 4x4 with driver to get around. Outside Djibouti City good accommodation is limited. **ATTRACTIOnS:** Lake Assal, the lowest point in Africa. Whale Sharks. Rock Art at Abourma. **MONEY:** moderate. Djiboutian Franc, fixed at 178 to the USD. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Djibouti is nestled on the coast of the Horn of Africa, between Somaliland and Eritrea, and borders Ethiopia in the west. Most of the country is mountainous and of volcanic origin, with the highest point, Mousa Ali, at 2,028 m. Large salt lakes include Lake Assal. **SIZE:** 23,200 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** hot and dry, with rain falling at almost any time, but with a double peak, Mar–Apr and Oct–Nov. Summers (May–Sep) are much hotter than winters. Inter-annual variation in rainfall can be massive. Djibouti City (coastal) rainfall = annual 160 mm, monthly 0–29 mm; wettest months Mar–Apr and Nov. Djibouti City temperatures = annual min/max 27–33°C, monthly max 28–41°C; Jun–Aug hottest, Dec–Feb coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook. SOUND: see apps. APPS: *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*, most sp. TRAVEL: *Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland* 2013 by Carillet *et al*; *Lonely Planet*. OTHER: *Djibouti au Rythme du Vivant* 2002 by Laurent & Laurent, French.

Egypt (22–31°N)

This land of colossal historical importance should once again become a major player on the African tourism scene if its internal political differences can be resolved peacefully and terrorist groups kept at bay. Although the birding itself is not a major reason to visit, birds and history tours are likely to grow in popularity.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. SPECIES (6, 56/66) —BT (1): Sinai Rosefinch —B2 (3): Scrub Warbler, Mourning Wheatear, White-crowned Wheatear. —other: Streaked Scrub Warbler (BT), Eastern Mourning Wheatear (BT). Also Chukar Partridge, Sand Partridge, Levant Sparrowhawk, Macqueen's Bustard, White-cheeked Tern, White-tailed Lapwing, Senegal Coucal (ESS *aegyptius*), Pallid Scops Owl, Desert Owl, Pharaoh Eagle-Owl | Desert Eagle-Owl, Egyptian Nightjar, White-throated Kingfisher, Collared Kingfisher, Little Green Bee-eater (*cleopatra*), Eurasian Hoopoe (ESS *major*), Syrian Woodpecker, Sooty Falcon, White-spectacled Bulbul, Sand Martin | Bank Swallow (ESS *shelleyi*), Barn Swallow (ESS *savignii*), Lesser Short-toed Lark (ESS *nicollii*), Clamorous Reed Warbler (ESS *stentoreus*), Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (ESS *pallida*), Arabian Babbler, Tristram's Starling, Hooded Wheatear, Cyprus Wheatear, Finsch's Wheatear, Palestine Sunbird, House Sparrow (ESS *niloticus*), Western Yellow Wagtail (ESS *pygmaea*), Trumpeter Finch. —diversity: 480. Mostly Palaearctic, with a strong migratory component. Expect 150–300 sp in 1–3 weeks. HABITATS: desert, riverine habitats of the Nile Valley. AREAS —sites: Ain Sokhna for raptor migration. Hurghada for coastal sp. Wadi Gamal NP for desert sp. St Catherine for Sinai Rosefinch. TIMING (Oct, Mar–Apr): best in spring, after the rains and when most birds breed (Mar–May). Passage migrants numerous Oct and Mar, the latter

especially good for raptors. Avoid the hottest time of the year (May–Aug). EXPLORE: very low. Egypt is quite well known and largely covered by desert.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the threat of terrorism has increased dramatically of late, especially in Sinai and western Egypt, and the political situation in Cairo remains tense. The risk in eastern Egypt is considered to be much lower. **CITIES:** Cairo (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a visa, which for many is obtainable on arrival. Cairo is well connected with international flights; there are several other international airports too. Land borders are best avoided. —within: Arabic; English is spoken fairly widely. There is a reasonable road infrastructure and good internal public transport system, but for birders it is best to hire a private vehicle and driver. Police roadblocks are common. Some areas are off limits to foreigners, so check before travelling. There are also many internal flights, plus boat trips on the Nile River. A good variety of accommodation is available in the larger centres. Several companies offer tours. **ATTRACTIOnS:** historical sites such as the Pyramids of Giza and around Luxor, including Valley of the Kings. Diving and snorkelling along the Red Sea coast. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Egyptian Pound. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of North Africa between Libya and Sudan. Generally flat west of the Nile, but more mountainous east of the Nile and in Sinai, with the highest point, Mt Catherine in Sinai, at 2,629 m. Sinai is politically part of Egypt but situated in the Middle East. The Nile River is a major ecological feature, flowing from south to north across the length of the country and forming the massive Nile Delta north of Cairo. In the

south, the damming of the river created Lake Nasser, one of the largest man-made water bodies in the world. **SIZE:** 1.00 million km² including the Sinai Peninsula of 60,000 km². 4xUK, 0.8xSA. **CLIMATE:** hot and dry, with a pronounced rainy season (Nov–Mar). Summers (May–Sep) are much hotter than winters. Coastal areas receive higher rainfall (up to 200 mm), with much of the country receiving less than 10 mm per year. Cairo (north-east) rainfall = annual 26 mm, monthly 0–7 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jul–Sep. Cairo temperatures = annual min/max 16–28°C, monthly max 19–35°C; Jun–Aug hottest, Dec–Feb coolest.

LITERATURE

See also Morocco. **ID:** (1) *Collins Bird Guide* 2010 by Svensson *et al.* (2) *Birds of the Middle East* 2010 by Porter & Aspinall, also as ebook. **SOUND:** *Bird Songs of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East* 2007 by Schulze & Dingler, most sp. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** (1) *Finding Birds in Egypt* 1993 by Gosney, outdated. (2) *The Good Bird Guide* 2005 by Marsh, basic. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Egypt* 2015 by Sattin & Lee/Lonely Planet. (2) *The Rough Guide to Egypt* 2013 by Richardson & Jacobs, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Egypt* 1989 by Goodman & Meininger. (2) *Common Birds of Egypt* 1994 by Bruun & Baha el Din. (3) *Directory of Important Bird Areas in Egypt* 1999 by Baha el Din. (4) *A Photographic Guide to Birds of Egypt and the Middle East* 2001 by Cottridge & Porter. (5) *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Egypt* 2009 by Hoath.

Equatorial Guinea

(2°N, 3°N Bioko, 1°S Annobón)

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (26, 34/66) — EN (4):** *Annobón Scops Owl* (A), Annobón Paradise Flycatcher (A), Fernando Po Speirops (B), Annobón White-eye (A). —1/2 (3): Sao Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon (A), Mountain Saw-wing (B), Ursula's Sunbird (B). —**other:** *Bioko Batis* (EN B), *Cameroon Forest Warbler* (1/2, ESS B *lopezi*). Also Red-chested Goshawk (ESS B *lopezi*), Cameroon Olive Pigeon, African Green Pigeon (ESS B *poensis*), Western Barn Owl (ESS B *poensis*), Fernando Po Swift, Speckled Tinkerbird (ESS B *stellatus*), Yellow-throated Tinkerbird (ESS B *sub sulphureus*), Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (ESS B *poensis*), Least Honeyguide (ESS B *poensis*), Buff-spotted Woodpecker (ESS B *poensis*), Grey-headed Broadbill (ESS B *sharpei*), *Mountain Sooty Boubou* (ESS B *poensis*), Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher (ESS B *tricolor*), Red-headed

Picathartes, Western Mountain Greenbul, Little Greenbul (ESS B *amadoni*), Cameroon Olive Greenbul, Green Hylia (ESS B *poensis*), Tit Hylia (ESS B *bedfordi*), Black-capped Woodland Warbler (ESS B *herberti*), Green Longtail (ESS B *mariae*), Olive-green Camaroptera (ESS B *granti*), White-tailed Warbler (ESS B *lopezi*), Blackcap Illadopsis (ESS B *poensis*), Pale-breasted Illadopsis (ESS B *bocagei*), Splendid Glossy Starling (ESS B *lessoni*), Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush (ESS B *fraseri*), African Thrush (ESS B *poensis*), *Alexander's Akalat* (ESS B *poensis*), Fraser's Sunbird (ESS B *fraseri*), Little Green Sunbird (ESS B *seimundi*), Collared Sunbird (ESS B *hypodila*), Blue-throated Brown Sunbird (ESS B *cyanolaema*), Cameroon Sunbird (ESS B *poensis*), Green-throated Sunbird (ESS B *stangerii*), Tiny Sunbird (ESS B *amadoni*), Ursula's Sunbird, Black-necked Weaver (ESS B *po*), Maxwell's Black Weaver (ESS B *maxwelli*), Red-headed Malimbe (ESS B *rufovelatus*), Pale-fronted Negrofinch (ESS B *alexanderi*), Shelley's Oliveback, Green Twinspot (ESS B *virginiae*), Black-crowned Waxbill (ESS B *elizae*). —**diversity:** 400, 360 from Río Muni, 190 on Bioko and 30 on Annobón. Afrotropical. **HABITATS:** montane forest on Bioko for endemics. Lowland forest. **AREAS —EBAs:** Annobón. Cameroon mountains (Bioko). Cameroon and Gabon lowlands (Río Muni). —**sites:** Basilé Peak for the speirops and Luba Caldera for the batis on Bioko. Annobón. Mt Alen in Río Muni for lowland forest sp. **TIMING (Jan–Mar):** best when it is dry and easier to get around, which is when most forest birds breed (Dec–Apr). Avoid the main rains (Jun–Oct). **EXPLORE:** very high. Few birders have visited, although it is small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the threat of crime is considered to be low. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Malabo (capital, on Bioko), Bata (mainland airport), Pale (Annobón). **Ease —entry:** most nationalities require a visa, to be obtained

in advance. Obtaining permission to access Annobón is difficult and requires additional paperwork. There are direct flights to Malabo from the mainland and Europe. Land border access is easy from Gabon (paved roads) but not Cameroon (gravel roads). Access to Annobón is by private boat or plane.

—**within:** Spanish and French (official); Portuguese on Annobón; little English. Road infrastructure is generally poor, but distances are small. Hiring a 4x4 with driver would be best. Travel around Bioko is difficult and roadblocks are common; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has to be notified if travelling outside Malabo or Bata. Accommodation is limited. **ATTRACTIOnS:** primates and hiking on Bioko and in Mt Alen NP. **MONEY:** very expensive. Central African Franc, shared with other Central African countries, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD.

GEOGRAPHY: Equatorial Guinea is divided into three land areas: Bioko Island, which is 35 km from the Cameroonian coastline and 160 km from mainland Equatorial Guinea; Annobón Is which is 350 km west of Gabon, 190 km south-west of São Tomé and 500 km from mainland Equatorial Guinea; and mainland Equatorial Guinea, called Río Muni, situated south of Cameroon and north and west of Gabon. The islands are mountainous, with the highest point, Basilé Peak on Bioko, at 3,008 m. **SIZE:** 28,100 km², including Bioko (2,000 km²) and Annobón (18 km²). 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with rain possible almost throughout the year but with a distinct drier season from Dec–Feb (Bioko), Jan–Feb and Jun–Aug (Río Muni) or Jun–Sep and Jan (Annobón). Temperatures fluctuate little. Rainfall varies from 1,800 mm to 10,000 mm on Bioko, 1,700–3,500 mm on Bioko and is around 1,200 mm on Annobón. Malabo (Bioko) rainfall = annual 1,890 mm, monthly 33–284 mm; wettest Jul and Sep–Oct, driest Dec–Feb. Malabo temperatures = annual min/max 21–30°C, monthly max 29–32°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jun–Aug coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Equatorial Guinea* 2015 by Scafidi/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) A survey

of birds of Annobón Island, Equatorial Guinea 2001 by Perez del Vaz. (2) *Birds of the Parque Nacional de Monte Aten* 1999 by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett. **WEB:** *Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program*.

Eritrea (12–18°N)

Poor infrastructure and an ongoing territorial dispute with Ethiopia mean that Eritrea sees few visitors. With virtually all regional specials readily accessible and well known in neighbouring Ethiopia, it stands to reason that few birders have bothered to visit. However, most of the country is safe to visit and there are some good birds on offer, plus several localised Palaearctic migrants for those wanting to augment their African lists. Eritrea certainly is worthy of more ornithological attention than it has received until now, and must be considered a good country for adventure and exploration.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. **SPECIES (30, 34/66) —1/2** (17): Wattled Ibis, Rouget's Rail, White-collared Pigeon, White-cheeked Turaco, Banded Barbet, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Black-winged Lovebird, Abyssinian Oriole, Thick-billed Raven, White-backed Black Tit, Ethiopian Cisticola, *Montane White-eye*, White-billed Starling, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, White-winged Cliff Chat, Rüppell's Black Chat, Yellow-rumped Seedeater — **other:** Rüppell's Francolin (1/2), Erckel's Francolin, *Ethiopian Goshawk* (1/2), *Blue Saw-wing* (1/2), *Ethiopian Stout Cisticola* (1/2), *Ethiopian Groundscraper Thrush* (1/2). Also Socotra Cormorant, White-eyed Gull, Bridled Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Collared Kingfisher, White-headed Babbler, Cinereous Bunting, Cretzschmar's Bunting. — **diversity:** 580. A blend of Afrotropical

and Palaearctic sp. Expect 200–300 sp in 1–2 weeks. **HABITATS:** montane moorlands and forest, coastal deserts, savanna. **AREAS — EBAs:** Central Ethiopian highlands. — **sites:** Filfil Rainforest for forest and escarpment sp. Massawa area & Dahlak Islands for coastal, marine and desert sp. Akurdet for White-headed Babbler. **TIMING (Oct, Feb–Mar):** best in spring and after the rains in the coastal deserts (Mar–Apr) and at the start of the rains in the highlands, when most birds start to breed (Mar–May). Passage migrants active Sep–Oct and Mar–Apr. Palaearctic visitors present Oct–Mar. Avoid the hottest month on the coast (May–Sep). **EXPLORE:** moderate. Few birders have visited and there are some remote areas.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: mostly considered to be safe, although border areas with Ethiopia and Djibouti are best avoided due to ongoing territorial dispute. **CITIES:** Asmara (capital), Massawa (main port). **EASE — entry:** almost all nationalities require a pre-arrival visa. There are a limited number of international flights, mostly from within the greater region, but none from Ethiopia. It would be ill-advised to travel overland to Eritrea. — **within:** Tigrinya; Arabic and English spoken fairly widely; some Italian. The internal transport system is limited, so it is best, if somewhat expensive, to hire a 4x4 with driver, preferably through a local travel agent that can organise necessary

travel permits. **ATTRACTIOnS:** historical buildings in Massawa old town. **MONEY:** fairly inexpensive; car hire is expensive, other costs inexpensive. The Nakfa, which trades at 15 to the USD. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the coast of North-East Africa between Sudan and Djibouti, and north of Ethiopia. The country is equally divided between flat coastal and western lowlands, and mountainous uplands in the interior; the highest point is Emba Soira at 3,018 m. There are several offshore islands. **SIZE:** 118 thousand km². 0.5xUK, 0.1xSA. **CLIMATE:** a warm climate, but very different along the coast to in the highlands. Highland are cooler and moister, with Apr–Sep rainfall peaking in Jul–Aug; temperatures vary little through the year. Coastal areas are dry with rainfall occurring Oct–Feb. Summers (May–Sep) much hotter than winters. Rainfall varies from 40–1,000 mm. Massawa (central coast)

rainfall = annual 180 mm, monthly 0–40; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Apr, Jun and Sep. Massawa temperatures = annual min/max 23–35°C, monthly max 29–41°C; Jun–Aug hottest, Dec–Feb coolest. Asmara (central highlands) rainfall = annual 520 mm, monthly 2–175 mm; wettest Jun–Aug, driest Dec–Feb. Asmara temperatures = annual min/max 16–23°C, monthly max 22–25°C; May–Jul hottest, Nov–Jan coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman et al, also as ebook. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*, most sp. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Ethiopia and Eritrea* 2009 by Carillet/Lonely Planet, outdated. (2) *Eritrea* 2007 by Denison/Bradt, outdated. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* 2009 by Ash & Atkins. (2) *Guide to Endemic Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* 2001 by Vivero Pol. **WEB:** *Birdwatching in Eritrea*.

Ethiopia (4–15°N)

Ethiopia is certainly one of Africa's most exciting birding countries, with an interesting, unique and diverse avifauna, including more than 40 endemics and near-endemics. The birding is easy too, with tame birds and lots of open country. For the world birder it is a must, and there is plenty to keep the generalist interested too: spectacular landscapes, unusual culture and some great mammals. Only its lack of tourism infrastructure has prevented Ethiopia from becoming a major tourist destination, but this is slowly changing, and in the coming years Ethiopia will no doubt establish itself as such. Hopefully the current political instability is simply a minor hiccup.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. **SPECIES (352, 4/66) — EN (20):** Blue-winged Goose, Harwood's Francolin, Moorland Francolin, Black-fronted Francolin, Spot-breasted Lapwing, Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, Nechisar Nightjar, *Ethiopian Blue-breasted Bee-eater*, Yellow-fronted Parrot, Stresemann's Bushcrow, Archer's Lark, Erlanger's Lark, White-tailed Swallow, Abyssinian Catbird, Red-billed Pytilia, Abyssinian Longclaw, Yellow-throated Seedeater, Salvadori's Seedeater, Ankober Serin, *Ethiopian Siskin*. — **NE (29):** Chestnut-naped Francolin, Erckel's Francolin, Wattled Ibis, Rouget's Rail, White-collared Pigeon, White-cheeked Turaco, Abyssinian Owl, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Banded Barbet, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Black-winged Lovebird, *Ethiopian Puffback*,

Ethiopian Boubou, Abyssinian Oriole, Thick-billed Raven, White-backed Black Tit, Ethiopian Cisticola, *Ethiopian Stout Cisticola*, White-rumped Babbler, *Montane White-eye*, White-billed Starling, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, White-winged Cliff Chat, Rüpell's Black Chat, Sombre Rock Chat, Swainson's Sparrow, Abyssinian Waxbill, Yellow-rumped Seedeater, Brown-rumped Seedeater. —**BT** (27): African White-winged Dove, Hemprich's Hornbill, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Grey-headed Batis, Red-naped Bushshrike, Somali Fiscal, Somali Crow, Fan-tailed Raven, Singing Bush Lark, Gillett's Lark, Somali Short-toed Lark, Somali Bulbul, Boran Cisticola, *Abyssinian White-eye*, Shelley's Starling, White-crowned Starling, *Abyssinian Ground Thrush*, Little Rock Thrush, Moorland Chat | Alpine Chat, Red-breasted Wheatear, Blackstart, Nile Valley Sunbird, Shining Sunbird, Rüpell's Weaver, Juba Weaver, Barka Indigobird, Northern Grosbeak-Canary. —**1/2** (7): Little Brown Bustard, White-winged Flufftail, Star-spotted Nightjar, Masked Lark (*ESS personata*), Philippa's Crombec, Somali Wheatear, *Stripe-breasted Seedeater*. —**B2** (41): Somali Ostrich, Vulturine Guineafowl, *Archer's Francolin*, Clapperton's Francolin, Hartlaub's Bustard, Black-winged Lapwing, Somali Courser, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Cape Eagle-Owl, African Dusky Nightjar, Donaldson Smith's Nightjar, Nyanza Swift, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Black-billed Barbet, Fox Kestrel, Pringle's Puffback, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark, Thekla Lark, Dodson's Bulbul, Somali Crombec | Somali Long-billed Crombec, Ashy Cisticola, Tiny Cisticola, Foxy Cisticola, Pale Prinia, *Brown-tailed Apalis*, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Green-backed Eremomela, Scaly Chatterer, Rufous Chatterer, Bristle-crowned Starling, Magpie Starling, Gambaga Flycatcher, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Black-capped Social Weaver, Shelley's Rufous Sparrow, Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Black-cheeked Waxbill, African Citril. —**other**: Rüpell's Francolin (BT), *Ethiopian Goshawk* (NE), Donaldson

Smith's Turaco (EN), Ethiopian Bare-faced Go-away-bird (EN), Mackinder's Eagle-Owl (B2, *dillonii*), *Lilac-throated Roller* (BT), Blue Saw-wing (NE), Brown Saw-wing (EN), Ethiopian Saw-wing (NE), Bale Parisoma (EN), Kaffa White-eye (EN), Ethiopian Red-breasted Wheatear (BT), Ethiopian Groundscraper Thrush (NE), White-winged Scrub Robin (B2), Ethiopian Grey Flycatcher (BT), Abyssinian Wheatear (BT), African Shining Sunbird (NE), Ethiopian Black-faced Firefinch (NE). *Moorland Francolin* (BT), *Montane White-eye* (BT). Also White-backed Duck, African Pygmy Goose, Black Heron, Pink-backed Pelican, African Swallow-tailed Kite, Lammergeier, Verreaux's Eagle, African Goshawk (*ESS croizati*), Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (*ESS perspicillaris*), Arabian Bustard, Allen's Gallinule, Black Crowned Crane, Wattled Crane, Egyptian Plover, Lesser Jacana, African Snipe, Three-banded Courser | Heuglin's Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Dusky Turtle Dove, Eastern Grey Plantain-eater, Montane Nightjar, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Half-collared Kingfisher, Black Scimitarbill (*ESS notatus*), Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird (*ESS xanthostictus*), Red-fronted Barbet, Black-throated Barbet, Red-and-yellow Barbet, *D'Arnaud's Barbet*, Red-throated Wryneck (*ESS aequatorialis*), Eastern Grey Woodpecker, African Orange-bellied Parrot, Pygmy Batis, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, Red-billed Chough (*ESS baileyi*), White-winged Black Tit (*ESS leucomelas*), Northern Grey Tit, *Sharpe's Lark*, Dark-capped Bulbul (*ESS spurius*), Red-chested Swallow (*ESS rothschildi*), Brown Woodland Warbler, Basra Reed Warbler, Little Rush Warbler (*ESS abyssinicus*), Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Bamboo Warbler, Grey Wren-Warbler, White-headed Babbler, Banded Parisoma, African Spotted Creeper (*ESS erlangeri*), Golden-breasted Starling, African Bare-eyed Thrush, Abyssinian Thrush, Rüpell's Robin-Chat, Tacazze Sunbird, Variable Sunbird (*albiventris*), Grey-capped Social Weaver,

Yellow-crowned Bishop (*ESS strictus*), Yellow Bishop (*ESS xanthomelas*), *Red-naped Widowbird* (*laticauda*), Yellow-bellied Waxbill (*quartinia*), Straw-tailed Whydah, Mountain Wagtail (*ESS clara*). —**diversity**: 840 (8th). Mostly Afrotopical with a high degree of endemism. Expect 500–600 sp in 2–4 weeks. **HABITATS**: montane moorlands, escarpments and forests for endemics. Arid savanna. **AREAS —EBAs**: Central Ethiopian highlands, Jubba and Shabeelle valleys. South Ethiopian highlands. Northern Ethiopia SA. —**sites**: Bale Mts, Jemma Valley, Bishangari Lodge, Harenna Forest & Debre Libanos for montane and escarpment sp. Negele, Yavello, Awash & Lake Langano for arid savanna sp. Gibe Gorge & Gambela for savanna sp. **TIMING (Oct, Mar-Apr)**: best to visit at the start of the rains in the highlands (Mar-May) and the main rains in the arid lowlands (Apr-May, Oct), when most birds breed. Passage migrants best Sep-Oct and Palaearctic migrants Oct-Mar. Avoid the main rains in the highlands (Jun-Sep). **EXPLORE**: moderate. Despite being a popular birding destination, large parts of the country are never visited by birders.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the main tourist circuit in Ethiopia is generally considered to be safe, although recent political unrest has seen an upsurge in violence and the declaration of a state of emergency, so make sure you have up-to-date advice. Areas bordering Eritrea, Somalia, Somaliland and South Sudan hold higher risks. Armed attacks on birders have occurred in the Ali Dege area near Awash. **CITIES**: Addis Ababa (capital). **EASE —entry**: most nationalities require a visa. The majority of visitors can purchase one on arrival at the international airport in Addis Ababa, although not at land borders. Ethiopia is very well connected with international and regional flights. Land borders to Kenya, Djibouti and Somaliland are reasonable. —**within**: Amharic (official); some English

in larger centres. There is a reasonable road network and public transport, although it is advisable to hire a private 4x4 and driver. Accommodation standards are variable and are basic in the more remote birding areas. A good internal flight network is worth using to visit the northern historical sites. Many companies offer tours. There are a few good national and site bird guides. **ATTRACTIOnS**: spectacular scenery, wildlife and hiking in the Simien and Bale Mts. Wildlife in Awash NP. Historical sites such as Lalibela, Axum and Gondar. Tribal villages in the Omo Valley. The Hyena Man of Harar. **MONEY**: inexpensive. Birr. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: a landlocked country situated in the Horn of Africa, immediately north of Kenya. The landscapes are tremendously varied, but generally divided into substantial highland areas and arid lowlands. The Great Rift Valley divides the largest upland (>1,500 m altitude) area in Africa into two blocks, namely the northern and western highlands and the southern and south-eastern highlands. The highest point is Ras Dejen in the Simien Mts at 4,550 m; the lowest is 116 m below sea level in the Afar Depression. The Blue Nile rises out of Lake Tana and flows west to Sudan. A series of smallish lakes are scattered along the Rift Valley floor and include Abaya, Chamo, Ziway, Shala, Langano, Awasa, Abijatta and Shala. In the far south, the northern tip of Lake Turkana extends just into the country. **SIZE (10)**: 1.11 million km². 0.9xSA, 4.6xUK. **CLIMATE**: tropical, but much cooler in the highlands than the lowlands. Most of the country has a single, pronounced rainy season (May–Sep), but southern areas experience a double rainy season (Apr–May and Oct–Nov). In the northern highlands, winters (Nov–Feb) are significantly colder than summers. Rainfall is lower in the southern lowlands (around 400 mm) than in the highlands (up to 2,500 mm). Addis Ababa (central highlands) rainfall = annual 1,090 mm, monthly 9–269 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Nov–Jan. Addis Ababa temperatures =

annual min/max 9–23°C, monthly max 20–25°C; Mar–May warmest, Oct–Dec coolest. Negele (south central) rainfall = annual 650 mm, monthly 6–177; wettest Apr–May and Oct, driest Jun–Aug. Negele temperatures = annual min/max 13–26°C, monthly max 23–29°C; Jan–Mar hottest, Jun–Aug coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook. **SOUND:** see apps. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*,

many sp. **SITE:** (1) *Where to Watch Birds in Ethiopia* 2010 by Spottiswoode *et al*. (2) *Birding Ethiopia* 2010 by Behrens *et al*. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Ethiopia* 2015 by Briggs/Bradt. (2) *Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland* 2013 by Carillet *et al*/Lonely Planet. (3) *The Rough Guide to Ethiopia* 2015 by Rough Guides, ebook. (4) *Ethiopia* 2016 by Jenner. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* 2009 by Ash & Atkins. (2) *A Guide to Endemic Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* 2001 by Vivero Pol. (3) *Important Bird Areas of Ethiopia* 1996 by Edwards. **WEB:** *Ethiobirdsnet* Yahoo Group.

Gabon (2°N–4°S)

This forest-filled Central African country with a reasonably modern infrastructure would be a major birding destination if it were not for the extortionate prices and lack of tourism operators. The birding is spectacular and Gabon offers the easiest access to a host of tricky lowland forest species. There is also excellent open country birding on the Téké Plateau. The avian highlight must be the charismatic African River Martin, for which Gabon holds the majority of the breeding population. Add to this the opportunity to see Western Gorilla and other interesting rainforest species, and you have an ecotourist's destination that is hard to beat.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (114, 13/66) — EN (1):** *Teke Cisticola* —**BT (24):** Black Guineafowl, Plumed Guineafowl, Spot-breasted Ibis, White-crested Tiger Heron, Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawk, Forbes's Plover, Bates's Nightjar, Black-headed Bee-eater, Rufous-bellied Helmetshrike, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, African River Martin, Dja River Warbler, Gosling's Apalis, Congo Moor Chat, Violet-tailed Sunbird,

Black-chinned Weaver, Loango Weaver, Red-crowned Malimbe, Cassin's Malimbe, Red-bellied Malimbe, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Black-headed Waxbill, Long-legged Pipit, Short-tailed Pipit. —**B2 (37):** Finsch's Francolin, Long-tailed Hawk, Grey Pratincole, Gabon Coucal, Vermiculated Fishing Owl, Sjöstedt's Owlet, Bates's Swift, Bare-cheeked Trogon, Blue-headed Bee-eater, Rosy Bee-eater, Black Dwarf Hornbill, *Western Black-backed Barbet*, Gabon Woodpecker, Grey-headed Broadbill, Angola Batis, Verreaux's Batis, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Black-necked Wattle-eye, Black-shouldered Puffback, Eastern Wattled Cuckooshrike, Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher, Bates's Paradise Flycatcher, Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul, Xavier's Greenbul, Eastern Bearded Greenbul, White-bearded Greenbul, Black-collared Bulbul, Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Chattering Cisticola, Dambo Cisticola, *Western Buff-throated Apalis*, Forest White-eye, Bates's Sunbird, Yellow-capped Weaver, Rachel's Malimbe, Woodhouse's Antecker, Pale-fronted Negrofinch. —**other:** Southern White-bellied Korhaan (B2), Verreaux's Turaco (B2), *Western Black Dwarf Hornbill* (B2), *Eastern White-crested Hornbill* (B2), *Western Grey-throated Barbet* (B2),

Malbrant's Lark (BT), Yellow-lored Bristlebill (B2), *Petit's Saw-wing* (B2), *Olive-backed Forest Robin* (EN), *Gabon Forest Robin* (B2), *Black-chinned Quailfinch* (B2). Also Hartlaub's Duck, Latham's Forest Francolin, Scaly Francolin, White-backed Night Heron, Congo Serpent Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Grey-throated Rail, African Finfoot, Black-rumped Buttonquail, White-crowned Lapwing, Senegal Lapwing, African Skimmer, Afep Pigeon, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Pel's Fishing Owl, Maned Owl, Brown Nightjar, Swamp Nightjar, Black Spinetail, Cassin's Spinetail, Blue-throated Roller, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Shining-blue Kingfisher, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, *Eastern Piping Hornbill*, White-thighed Hornbill, Black-casqued Hornbill, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Spotted Honeyguide, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide, African Piculet, Rufous-sided Broadbill, *West African Batis*, *Perrin's Bushshrike*, Sabine's Puffback, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Swamp Boubou (*bicolor*), Blue Cuckooshrike, Souza's Shrike, Shining Drongo, Red-headed Picathartes, *African Penduline Tit*, Yellow-throated Nicator, Yellow-necked Greenbul, Leaflove, Red-chested Swallow (*subalaris*), White-throated Blue Swallow, Forest Swallow, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Tit Hylia, Tinkling Cisticola, Banded Prinia, Masked Apalis, Black-capped Apalis, Salvadori's Eremomela, Blackcap Illadopsis, *Violet-backed Hyliota*, Purple-headed Glossy Starling, Red-tailed Ant Thrush, Fire-crested Alethe, White-browed Forest Flycatcher, Yellow-footed Flycatcher, Forest Robin, Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush, Brown Sunbird, Reichenbach's Sunbird, Carmelite Sunbird, Tiny Sunbird, Johanna's Sunbird, Orange Weaver, Compact Weaver, Preuss's Weaver, Blue-billed Malimbe, Western Bluebill, Black-faced Canary. —**diversity:** 690. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 300–400 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** lowland forest, coastal savanna, grasslands, miombo woodland. **AREAS —EBAs:** Cameroon and Gabon

lowlands. Gabon-Cabinda coast SA. —**sites:** Lopé NP & Makokou, including Ipassa & Belinga Road, for lowland forest sp. Lékoné for grasslands and miombo sp. Gamba Area Coastal Complex for coastal savanna sp. **TIMING (Jul–Sep):** best to travel in the dry season when access is easier and most forest birds breed (Jun–Sep). Note that African River Martin and grassland sp breed mostly Sep–Dec. This makes Sep the best month overall. Avoid the main rains (Oct–Dec, Mar–Apr). **EXPLORE:** high. There are quite a few areas that are remote and poorly known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there are no real security concerns. **CITIES:** Libreville (capital), Franceville (airport and end of train line). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa. Libreville is fairly well connected by international and regional flights. Overland travel from Cameroon is reasonably straightforward. —**within:** French; little English. The road infrastructure is limited, but reasonable on major routes. There are a limited number of internal flights, needed to reach the coastal savannas. A rail line between Libreville and Franceville provides regular services and is of reasonable quality. Travelling through the coastal regions is often best done by boat. Several tour companies offer trips. **ATTRACTI0NS:** forest mammals and primates at Lopé, Ivindo and Loango NPs. Nesting sea turtles. **MONEY:** very expensive. Central African Franc, shared with other Central African countries, which trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the west coast of Central Africa, north of Congo and south of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. There is a narrow coastal plain, with most of the country lying on a plateau at 450–800 m altitude. Mountainous areas are a minor feature, with the highest point at Mt Bengoué at 1,070 m. The coastal plain is littered with lakes and lagoons, mostly part of the Ogooué River, the largest

in the country. **SIZE:** 268 thousand km². 1.1xUK, 0.2xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a pronounced dry season (Jun–Aug) and a double peak in rainfall (Oct–Nov and Mar–Apr). Rainfall varies from 1,400 to 3,500 mm. Temperatures fluctuate little through the year. Libreville (coastal) rainfall = annual 2,840 mm, monthly 7–490 mm; wettest Mar, Oct–Nov, driest Jun–Aug. Libreville temperatures = annual min/max 23–29°C, monthly max 26–30°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jun–Aug coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **SITE:** (1) *A birders guide to Gabon* 1993 by Sargeant, outdated. **TRAVEL:** *Gabon* 2014 by Hickendorff/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Les Oiseaux des Régions Forestières du Nord-est du Gabon* 1986 by Brosset & Erard, French. (2) *Guide des Oiseaux de la Réserve de la Lopé* 1994 by Christy & Clarke, French.

Gambia (13°N)

Popular with European birders as an easy and accessible destination, many visitors to Africa have their first taste of the continent on a cheap package tour to 'The Gambia'. The country holds a wide range of colourful and easy-to-see birds, although world birders soon realise it has little unique to offer, with no endemics and only a few specials. However, an abundance of local bird guides, useful also to avoid being hassled by local vendors, and low prices means it is likely to remain a fairly popular destination. More adventurous birders should consider combining Gambia with a visit to Senegal.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (17, 39/66) —BT (4):** Blue-bellied Roller, Red-chested Swallow, West African Swallow, Lavender Waxbill. —**B2 (5):** Northern White-faced Owl, Western Red-billed Hornbill, Pied-winged Swallow, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, White-crowned Robin-Chat. —**other:** Brown-necked Parrot (B2), Vinaceous Black-faced Firefinch (BT). Also Stone Partridge, Ahanta Francolin, White-backed Night Heron, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Grasshopper Buzzard, Egyptian Plover, Four-banded Sandgrouse, Adamawa Turtle Dove, Violet Turaco, Vieillot's Barbet, Bearded Barbet, Fine-spotted Woodpecker,

Senegal Parrot, Senegal Batis, Piapiac, Fanti Saw-wing, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Yellow Penduline Tit, Rufous Cisticola, Oriole Warbler, Senegal Eremomela, Blackcap Babbler, Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling, White-fronted Black Chat, Heuglin's Masked Weaver, Exclamatory Paradise Whydah, Gosling's Bunting, Brown-rumped Bunting. —**diversity:** 560. Afrotrropical. Expect 250–300 sp in 1–2 weeks. **HABITATS:** savanna, Guinea woodland, gallery forest. **AREAS** —**sites:** Abuko, Tendaba, Faraba Banta, Tanji, Bateling Woods & Tujereng. **TIMING (Nov, Mar–Apr):** probably best to go in the dry season when site access is best (Nov–May). Avoid the main rains (Jul–Sep). **EXPLORE:** very low. Gambia is small and well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: generally considered to be safe. **CITIES:** Banjul (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities do not require a visa. There are regular flights from Europe and regional cities. It is possible to travel overland from Senegal. —**within:** English. There is a poor road infrastructure, but distances are small. There is some reasonable accommodation. There are many local and national bird guides, variable in quality. Quite a few international operators offer tours. **MONEY:** inexpensive.

Dalasi. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the coast of West Africa, Gambia is engulfed by Senegal. A tiny, low-lying country that follows the Gambia River, with the highest point at Red Rock at 53 m. **SIZE:** 11,300 km², 0.05xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a very pronounced rainy season (Jun–Oct). Rainfall varies from 900–1,300 mm. Temperature varies little throughout the year. Banjul (coastal) rainfall = annual 1,200 mm, monthly 0–458 mm; wettest months Jul–Sep. Banjul temperatures = annual min/max 22–31°C, monthly max 30–32°C; Sep–Nov hottest, Dec–Feb coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Senegal and The Gambia* 2012 by Borrow & Demey. (2) *Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* 2005 by Barlow *et al.*, lacks distribution maps. (3) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** (1) *The Bird Song of Gambia and Senegal* 2002 by Barlow *et al.*, many local recordings. (2) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **SITE:** *Finding Birds in The Gambia* 2012 by Gosney. **TRAVEL:** *The Gambia* 2014 by Briggs/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of The Gambia* 1991 by Gore. (2) *Birding in Tanji Bird Reserve and Bijol Island* 1998 by Nason. (3) *Field Guide to Wildlife of The Gambia* 2012 by Penney.

Ghana (5–11°N)

Over the past decade Ghana has rapidly emerged to become the easiest and most comfortable way to access the Upper Guinea forest region and many of its birding riches. Although the quality of the avifauna may not match that of nearby Ivory Coast, Liberia or Sierra Leone, tourist-friendly Ghana is likely to enjoy this advantage as long as its neighbours remain politically unstable and underdeveloped with regard to tourism.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (139, 10/66) —BT (42):** Black-throated Coucal, Akun Eagle-Owl, Black Spinetail, Blue-moustached Bee-eater, *Western Piping Hornbill*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, White-crested Hornbill, Yellow-footed Honeyguide, Little Green Woodpecker, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Melancholy Woodpecker, Black-collared Lovebird, West African Wattled-eye, Red-cheeked Wattled-eye, Red-billed Helmetshrike, *Lagden's Bushshrike*, Sabine's Puffback, Yellow-headed Picathartes, Baumann's Greenbul, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Grey-

headed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Kemp's Longbill, Sharpe's Apalis, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Capuchin Babbler, *Violet-backed Hyloti*, Copper-tailed Glossy Starling, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, White-tailed Alethe, Little Grey Flycatcher, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Ussher's Flycatcher, Buff-throated Sunbird, *Black-and-chestnut Weaver*, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Red-vented Malimbe, Blue-billed Malimbe, Red-fronted Antpecker, Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch, Wilson's Indigobird. —**B2 (13):** White-breasted Guineafowl, White-throated Francolin, Long-tailed Hawk, Rosy Bee-eater, Forest Wood Hoopoe, Black Dwarf Hornbill, Sun Lark, Fanti Saw-wing, Preuss's Cliff Swallow, Dorst's Cisticola, Nimba Flycatcher, White-crowned Cliff Chat, Red-winged Pytilia. —**other:** *Yellow-billed Turaco* (BT), *Chestnut Owlet* (BT), *West African Pied Hornbill* (BT), *Western Black Dwarf Hornbill* (B2), *Western White-crested Hornbill* (BT), *Hairy-breasted Barbet* (BT), *Western Yellow-billed Barbet* (BT), *Togo Yellow-billed Barbet* (BT), Brown-necked Parrot (B2), *Black-crowned Capuchin Babbler* (BT), *Western Forest Robin* (BT), *Ghana*

Forest Robin (EN), Dahomey Forest Robin (BT), Yellow-chinned Green Sunbird (BT), Grey Black-faced Firefinch (B2). **Blue-headed Bee-eater** (BT). Also Hartlaub's Duck, Stone Partridge, Latham's Forest Francolin, Double-spurred Francolin, Western Reef Egret, Congo Serpent Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Red-chested Goshawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Grasshopper Buzzard, African Finfoot, Nkulengu Rail, Forbes's Plover, Rock Pratincole (*iberiae*), Four-banded Sandgrouse, Afep Pigeon, Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Violet Turaco, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Sandy Scops Owl, Red-chested Owlet, Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Brown Nightjar, Plain Nightjar, Standard-winged Nightjar, Blue-bellied Roller, Blue-throated Roller, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, African Dwarf Kingfisher, White-bellied Kingfisher, Shining-blue Kingfisher, Black Bee-eater, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Yellow-casqued Hornbill, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Vieillot's Barbet, Cassin's Honeybird, Thick-billed Honeyguide, African Piculet, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, Senegal Parrot, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Senegal Batis, **West African Batis**, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Blue Cuckooshrike, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Emin's Shrike, Shining Drongo, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, Yellow Penduline Tit, Forest Penduline Tit, Rufous-rumped Lark, Square-tailed Saw-wing, White-throated Blue Swallow, Pied-winged Swallow, West African Swallow, **Western Green Crombec**, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Tit Hylia, Rufous Cisticola, Rock-loving Cisticola, Black-backed Cisticola (ESS *winneba*), Black-capped Apalis, Oriole Warbler, **Western Olive-green Camaroptera**, Senegal Eremomela, Blackcap Illadopsis (ESS *cleaveri*), Puvel's Illadopsis, Pale-breasted Illadopsis, Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling, Forest Chestnut-winged Starling, Narrow-tailed Starling, Forest Scrub Robin (ESS *leucosticta*), Lowland Akalat, White-fronted Black Chat, Johanna's Sunbird, Orange Weaver, Yellow-mantled Weaver, Preuss's Weaver, Crested Malimbe, Western

Bluebill, Black-bellied Firefinch, West African Seedeater. —**diversity**: 740. Strongly Afro tropical. Expect 350–400 sp 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS**: lowland forest for regional specials. Moist savanna, Guinea woodlands. **AREAS —EBAs**: Upper Guinea forests. —**sites**: Kakum NP, Atewa Hills, Kalakpa, Ankasa & Bobiri for lowland forests. Mole for Guinea woodland sp. Shai Hills & Brenu Beach Road for moist savannas. Bonkro for Yellow-headed Picathartes. **TIMING (Oct–Nov, Apr)**: best to travel in the dry season when access is easier and most forest birds breed in the south (Oct–Mar), or at the start of the rains in the north (Mar–Apr). Avoid the main rains (May–Sep). **EXPLORE**: moderate. Ghana is quite well known, but still has some remote areas.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of violent crime is considered to be low. **CITIES**: Accra (capital). **EASE —entry**: most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa. Accra is well connected with international and regional flights. Land borders with Togo and Ivory Coast are generally fine to use. —**within**: English. Ghana has a reasonable road network in the south, less so in the north. A 4x4 is recommended to access some birding sites. There are some good local and national guides. Quite a few international companies offer trips. **ATTRACTI ONS**: historical buildings such as Cape Coast Castle and other slave-trading sites. Primates and canopy walkway at Kakum NP. Savanna wildlife at Mole NP. **MONEY**: moderate. Cedi. Fairly limited electronic banking; bring some Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: located on the coast of West Africa between Togo and Ivory Coast, with Burkina Faso in the north. Generally low-lying with an undulating terrain, the highest point is Mt Afadjato at 880 m. Volta Lake on the Volta River, the largest man-made wetland in Africa, dominates the south-east of the country. **SIZE**: 239 thousand km². =UK, 0.2xSA. **CLIMATE**: tropical, with a rainy

season from Apr–Nov, shorter in the north. Rainfall is higher in the south (mostly above 2,000 mm but much drier in the south-east) than the north (900–1,300 mm); the south has a double peak in rainfall in Mar–Jun and Oct. Accra (south, coastal) rainfall = annual 790 mm, monthly 16–193; wettest Apr–Jun, driest Aug and Dec–Jan. Accra temperatures = annual min/max 23–30°C, monthly max 27–32°C; Feb–Apr hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Field Guide to the Birds of Ghana* 2010 by Borrow & Demey. (2) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND**: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL**: *Ghana* 2016 by Briggs/Bradt. **OTHER**: (1) *The Birds of Ghana* 2014 by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett. (2) *Birding in Ghana, West Africa* 1996 by Moyer.

Gough Is (40°S, Tristan da Cunha, United Kingdom)

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is little risk of crime. **CITIES**: there is a single research base. **EASE —entry**: tourists may not land on the island. Access is by boat only. —**within**: it is not possible to land on the island as a tourist, but weather permitting it is possible to get close enough to the shore to see the endemic landbirds.

ATTRACTI ONS: spectacular scenery and marine mammals. **MONEY**: very expensive. There is nothing to buy. **GEOGRAPHY**: Gough Is is administratively part of Tristan da Cunha, which forms part of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Given its distance from Tristan Is (350 km), it is treated separately. It is located 2,600 km south-west of South Africa and 3,500 km from South America. It is volcanic in origin, so quite mountainous, with the highest peak, Edinburgh Peak, at 909 m. **SIZE**: 91 km². **CLIMATE**: temperate and wet, with year-round rain. Winters (May–Sep) are much colder than summers. Rainfall = annual 3,070 mm, monthly 183–310 mm; wettest May–Jun, Aug, driest Nov, Jan–Feb. Temperatures = annual min/max 9–14°C, monthly max 11–17°C; warmest Jan–Mar, coldest Jun–Aug.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Oceanic Islands. **SPECIES (20, 38/66) — EN (2)**: Gough Moorhen, Gough Bunting. —**NE (2)**: Tristan Albatross (br), Atlantic Petrel (br). —**1/2 (1)**: Northern Rockhopper Penguin. —**other**: Grey-backed Storm Petrel, White-faced Storm Petrel (*marina*), Sooty Albatross, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Kerguelen Petrel, Great-winged Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Grey Petrel, Subantarctic Shearwater, Common Diving Petrel, Antarctic Tern, Brown Skua (*hamiltoni*). —**diversity**: 50. Mostly seabirds. **HABITATS**: heathland, coastal cliffs. **AREAS —EBAs**: Gough Island. —**sites**: Gough Is. **TIMING (Oct–Dec)**: best in summer when it is warmer and birds breed. Avoid winter (May–Aug). **EXPLORE**: very low. Gough is small, isolated and well studied by researchers.

LITERATURE

ID: *Field Guide to the Animals and Plants of Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands 2007* by Ryan. **TRAVEL:** St Helena, Ascension and

Guinea (7–12°N)

Although the name is well known, the country is relatively obscure and little visited. While it is regarded as safe to visit, it is poor, underdeveloped and is not known to offer any birds that are not found elsewhere more easily. However, those with a sense for adventure should find it rewarding.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other:** Rufous Fishing Owl, Western Wattled Cuckooshrike, Sierra Leone Prinia, Black-headed Rufous Warbler, Nimba Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Picathartes, Dybowski's Twinspot, Emerald Starling. —**diversity:** 660. Strongly Afrotropical. **HABITATS:** lowland forest, moist savanna. **AREAS —EBAs:** Upper Guinea forests. —**sites:** Mt Nimba & Ziama Massif for forest sp. Balandougou for Emerald Starling and savanna sp. **TIMING (Feb–Apr):** best to travel when it is dry and easier to get around (Dec–Mar). Avoid the main rainy season (Jun–Sep). **EXPLORE:** very high. Guinea is poorly-known ornithologically

TRAVEL

SAFETY: considered low risk. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Conakry (capital). **EASE —entry:** almost all visitors require a pre-arrival visa. There are a limited number of international and regional flights to Conakry. Land border crossings are best avoided. —**within:** French; little English. The road network is poor and public transport

Tristan da Cunha 2015 by Britt-Gallagher & Hayne/Bradt. **WEB:** South African National Antarctic Programme - Gough. *The Tristan da Cunha Website*.

very basic, so hire a 4x4 with driver to get around. Accommodation outside the main cities is basic. **MONEY:** moderate. Guinean Franc. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a coastal West African country, located west of Sierra Leone and south of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. The coastal plain is 30–90 km wide, but inland there are significant highland areas with most of the region above 1,200 m and reaching a maximum height of 1,752 m at Mt Nimba. The Niger River headwaters come from these highlands and flow north-east to Mali. **SIZE:** 246 thousand km², =UK, 0.2xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet, with a rainy season from May–Nov and much drier Dec–Mar. Rainfall is higher on the coast and highlands and varies from 1,200 to 4,400 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Conakry (coastal) rainfall = annual 3,780 mm, monthly 1–1130 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Jan–Mar. Conakry temperatures = annual min/max 21–32°C, monthly max 30–34°C; Mar–May hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa 2014* by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds 2001* by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *West Africa 2013* by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** *Liste des oiseaux de Guinée* by 1988 Morel & Morel, French.

Guinea-Bissau (11–12°N)

This little-known West African country receives few visitors. There is little on offer in terms of birding and no notable tourist attractions, so this is unlikely to change even if the basic infrastructure improves.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other:** Ahanta Francolin, Turati's Boubou, Crimson Seedcracker. —**diversity:** 420. Afrotropical. **HABITATS:** coastal wetlands and islands, moist savanna. **AREAS —sites:** Cafudas Lakes for Turati's Boubou. Islands and coastal wetlands for shorebirds. **TIMING (Oct, Mar–Apr):** the best time to visit is just after and before the rains, when it is dry. **EXPLORE:** high. Guinea-Bissau is poorly known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low, but there has been some recent political unrest that could re-erupt. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Bissau (capital). **EASE —entry:** most visitors require a pre-arrival visa. There are a limited number of international and regional flights, but daily flights from Portugal. —**within:** Portuguese; little English. The road infrastructure is poor, so hire a 4x4 and driver to get around. It is possible to charter private boats to go to the Bijagos

Islands. Accommodation is basic outside main centres. **ATTRACTIOnS:** scenic islands such as Ilha de Rubane. It is possible to see Chimpanzee at Cantanhez NP. **MONEY:** moderate. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of West Africa, north of Guinea and south of Senegal. The entire country is low-lying, with an abundance of coastal wetlands and offshore islands in the Bijagos archipelago. The highest point is 262 m, in the north-east of the country. **SIZE:** 36,100 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet, with a pronounced rainy season Jun–Oct and almost no rain Dec–Apr. Rainfall varies from 1,500 to 2,000 mm and is generally higher along the coast. Bissau (coastal) rainfall = annual 1,980 mm, monthly 1–617 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Feb–Apr. Bissau temperatures = annual min/max 21–32°C, monthly max 29–34°C; Mar–May hottest, Jul–Sep coolest.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa 2014* by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds 2001* by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *West Africa 2013* by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** *Important Bird Areas in Guinea-Bissau 2004* by Dodman *et al*.

Ivory Coast (5–10°N, Côte d'Ivoire)

Previously a fairly popular birding destination and regarded as the best country in which to see Upper Guinea forest endemics, political unrest put a stop to almost all visitors to Ivory Coast, who have instead turned their attention to neighbouring Ghana and nearby Sierra Leone. While safety has greatly improved since then, there is still a threat from militia in the south-west where some of the best forest birding is to be had. Hopefully Ivory Coast will regain its rightful reputation for being a top birding destination.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. SPECIES (2, 58/66) —B2 (2): Black-headed Rufous Warbler, Nimba Flycatcher. —other: White-breasted Guineafowl, Congo Serpent Eagle, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Yellow-footed Honeyguide, Melancholy Woodpecker, Timneh Parrot, Yellow-headed Picathartes, Western Wattled Cuckooshrike, West African Wattle-eye, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Rufous-rumped Lark, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Pied-winged Swallow, Emin's Shrike, Kemp's Longbill, Sierra Leone Prinia, Sharpe's Apalis, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Copper-tailed Glossy Starling, Emerald Starling, White-tailed Alethe, Little Grey Flycatcher, Ussher's Flycatcher, Red-fronted Antpecker, Exclamatory Paradise Whydah. —diversity: 720. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 300–400 sp in 2–3 weeks. HABITATS: lowland forest, Guinea savanna. AREAS —EBAs: Upper Guinea forests. —sites: Tai, Mt Nimba & Yapo for lowland forest sp. Comoé for Guinea savanna sp. Maroua on the ecotone of forest and savanna. TIMING (Jan–Mar): best in the dry season (Nov–Apr) when access is easy and most forest birds breed. Avoid the main rains (May–Sep). EXPLORE: very high.

Although Ivory Coast is quite well known, there are lots of areas still to explore.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the return of peace and stability has seen a great reduction in the risk of encountering violence in Ivory Coast. Some activity from militia groups in the south-west, however, means that great caution should still be exercised in certain areas. **CITIES:** Yamoussoukro (capital), Abidjan (major city). **EASE —entry:** almost all visitors require a pre-arrival visa. Abidjan has a regular service of international and regional flights. Travelling overland to Ghana is not too difficult. —within: French; little English. There is a reasonable road and public transport network, but a 4x4 is recommended to reach some birding sites. Good accommodation is limited to larger centres. **ATTRACTI**ONS: forest mammals at Taï NP. **MONEY:** expensive. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the coast of West Africa, west of Ghana and east of Liberia, with Mali to the north. Most of the country is relatively flat, although Mt Nimba and other mountains rise in the north-west rise to 1,752 m, forming part of the Niger River drainage. **SIZE:** 322 thousand km². 1.3xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet. Rain falls Apr–Nov, with a double peak (Apr–Jul and Oct–Nov) in the wetter south (1,250–2,400 mm) and single peak (May–Oct) in the north drier north (900–1,500 mm). Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Abidjan (south-east, coastal) rainfall = annual 1,850 mm, monthly 16–562 mm; wettest May–Jul, driest Jan–Feb and Aug. Abidjan temperatures = annual min/max 24–30°C, monthly max 27–31°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. SOUND: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. TRAVEL: *Ivory Coast* 2016 by

Sykes/Bradt. OTHER: (1) *The Birds of Ivory Coast* 1985 by Thiollay. (2) *Birding Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast* 1999 by Salewski.

Kenya (4°N–4°S)

With so many birds, including numerous specials, easy birding and a great ecotourism infrastructure, Kenya has long been a key birding destination, renowned for producing big lists. A well-established network of national parks and game reserves with good, if somewhat expensive, tourist infrastructure offer great landscapes and excellent mammal viewing too. If Kenya can remain safe and peaceful it will long continue to enjoy a steady stream of birders and other ecotourists.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

East Africa. SPECIES (337, 5/66) —EN (13): Jackson's Francolin, Grant's Wood Hoopoe, Williams's Lark, Tana River Cisticola, Aberdare Cisticola, Taita Apalis, Turner's Eremomela, Hinde's Babbler, Kikuyu White-eye, Taita White-eye, Taita Thrush, Clarke's Weaver, Sharpe's Longclaw. —NE (7): Elgon Francolin, Friedmann's Lark, Golden-winged Sunbird, Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, Parrot-billed Sparrow, Fire-fronted Bishop, Sokoke Pipit. —BT (40): Somali Ostrich, Kenya Crested Guineafowl, Olive Ibis, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Sokoke Scops Owl, White-headed Mousebird, Mangrove Kingfisher, Blue-headed Bee-eater, Somali Bee-eater, Jackson's Hornbill, Mombasa Woodpecker, East Coast Puffback, Somali Boubou, Taita Fiscal, White-bellied Tit, Collared Lark, Masked Lark, Fischer's Greenbul, Tiny Greenbul, Scaly Babbler, Kenyan White-eye, Bafilewar's Pale Flycatcher, Fischer's Starling, Abbott's Starling, Plain-backed Sunbird, Amani Sunbird, Hunter's Sunbird,

Lark, Dodson's Bulbul, Joyful Greenbul, Toro Olive Greenbul, Somali Crombec | Somali Long-billed Crombec, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Highland Rush Warbler, Boran Cisticola, Ashy Cisticola, Lynes's Cisticola, Tiny Cisticola, Pale Prinia, Black-collared Apalis, **Brown-tailed Apalis**, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Rufous Chatterer, **Abyssinian Ground Thrush**, Bristle-crowned Starling, Magpie Starling, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, East Coast Akalat (*sokokensis*), Moorland Chat | Alpine Chat, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Grey Sunbird | Mouse-coloured Sunbird, Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird, Black-capped Social Weaver, White-billed Buffalo Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Red-naped Widowbird (*suaheicus*), Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Black-cheeked Waxbill, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, African Citril, Northern Grosbeak-Canary. —**other**: Kirk's Francolin (BT), Mackinder's Eagle-Owl (B2), Scheffler's Owl (BT), Eastern Grey-throated Barbet (B2), Coastal Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (BT), Kenyan White-headed Barbet (EN), Southern Rosy-patched Bushshrike (1/2), Kulal White-eye (EN), White-winged Scrub Robin (B2, Schalow's Wheatear (1/2), Gorgeous Sunbird (1/2), Yellow-shouldered Widowbird (B2). **Moorland Francolin** (B2). Also Common Ostrich (*massaicus*), Maccoa Duck, Shelley's Francolin (ESS *macarthuri*), Scaly Francolin, Hildebrandt's Francolin, Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, Mountain Buzzard, African Rail | African Water Rail, Grey Crowned Crane, Quail-plover, Crab-plover, Long-toed Lapwing, Black-headed Lapwing (*latifrons*), Chestnut-banded Plover (*venustus*), Greater Painted-snipe, Double-banded Courser (*gracilis*), Three-banded Courser | Heuglin's Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Dusky Turtle Dove, **Grey-breasted Green Pigeon**, White-crested Turaco, African Scops Owl (ESS *nivosus*), Montane Nightjar, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, White-eared Barbet, Green Barbet (*olivacea*), Moustached Green Tinkerbird, Red-fronted Barbet, Black-throated Barbet, **Common White-headed Barbet**, Red-and-yellow Barbet, **D'Arnaud's Barbet**, Pallid Honeyguide, Fine-banded Woodpecker (*hausburgi*), Eastern Grey Woodpecker, D'Arnaud's Barbet (*boehmi*), Pygmy Falcon, Red-fronted Parrot, African Orange-bellied Parrot, Pale Batis, Forest Batis (ESS *ultima*), Pygmy Batis, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike (ESS *keniensis*), Tropical Boubou (*ambiguus*), Papyrus Gonolek, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Montane Oriole, Northern Grey Tit, Kakamega Greenbul, Olive-breasted Mountain Greenbul, Placid Greenbul, White-browed Crombec, Brown Woodland Warbler, Basra Reed Warbler, Papyrus Yellow Warbler, White-winged Warbler, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Carruthers's Cisticola, **Southern Stout Cisticola**, Rock-loving Cisticola (*eminii*), Black-faced Prinia, Black-headed Apalis, Chestnut-throated Apalis, Karamoja Apalis, Red-fronted Warbler, Grey-capped Warbler, Grey Wren-Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Forest Hyliota, Golden-breasted Starling, Stuhlmann's Starling, Red-tailed Ant Thrush (*rufus*), **Abyssinian Ground Thrush**, African Bare-eyed Thrush, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Spotted Morning Thrush, Northern Anteater Chat (*cryptoleuca*), Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Tacazze Sunbird, Black-bellied Sunbird, Chestnut Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Northern Brown-throated Weaver, Speke's Weaver, Golden-backed Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Black Bishop (*friedrichsenii*), Long-tailed Widowbird (*delamerei*), Kandt's Waxbill (ESS *keniensis*), Straw-tailed Whydah, Cuckoo-finch, African Citril (ESS *kikuyensis*), Papyrus Canary, Thick-billed Seedeater (ESS *albifrons*), West African Seedeater (*elgonensis*), Somali Golden-breasted Bunting | Somali Bunting. —**diversity**: 1,110 (2nd). Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 500–700 sp in 2–4 weeks. **HABITATS**: arid savanna, coastal forest, lowland rainforest, montane forest and grassland, moist savanna, desert. **AREAS —EBAs**: East African coastal forests, Jubba and Shabeelle valleys, Serengeti plains.

Tanzania - Malawi mountains. Kenyan mountains. Kakamega and Nandi forests SA. Mount Kulal SA. North Kenyan short grass plains SA. —**sites**: Arabuko-Sokoke, Manda Is & Tana River Primate Res for coastal habitats. Taita Hills, Mt Kenya, Kinangop & Aberdares for montane sp. Tsavo, Shaba, Samburu & Lake Baringo for arid savanna sp. Marsabit for desert sp. Kakamega for lowland forest sp. Maasai Mara & Nairobi NP for moist savanna sp. **TIMING (Apr-May, Nov)**: being an arid country, it is best to visit during the rains (Apr-May and Oct-Nov) when birds breed, although timing and quality of rainfall can be quite unpredictable. Palaearctic migrants are mostly present Oct-Mar. Any time of the year is good though. **EXPLORE**: low. Kenya is very well known, although there are some remote areas that few birders have visited.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: generally considered to hold a low risk of crime, although eastern areas near Somalia are potentially very dangerous. There have also been cases of terrorism in Nairobi, and parts of the city are dangerous to walk through. **CITIES**: Nairobi (capital), Mombasa (main port). **EASE —entry**: most nationalities require a visa, but this can generally be obtained on arrival. East African visas can be issued that are valid for Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. Nairobi is very well connected with flights, with some to Mombasa. Overland borders with Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia are generally fine to use. —**within**: English, Swahili. There is a reasonable road network and fairly comprehensive public transport system, but hiring a 4x4 is advised for visiting some of the top birding sites. There is a good range of accommodation available at most sites, although accommodation in reserves is typically expensive. A good internal flight network operates regular flights, including small-plane flights to many of the main parks. There are some excellent national and site guides. Many international companies offer trips. **ATTRACTI**NNS: some of Africa's

best savanna game viewing at Maasai Mara, Tsavo, Samburu, Shaba and Amboseli. Climbing Mt Kenya. Historical town of Lamu. **MONEY**: expensive; parks and associated accommodation are the most expensive on the continent, but outside parks it is generally moderate. Kenyan Shilling. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: located on the coast of East Africa, north of Tanzania and south of Ethiopia and Somalia, with Uganda to the west and South Sudan to the north-west. The country has a varied topography, with the Great Rift Valley running through its centre and significant highland areas on either side of it, reaching 5,199 m at the summit of Mt Kenya, the second highest peak in Africa. The Tana River is the largest in the country, flowing east from the central highlands. The Rift Valley is littered with lakes, by far the largest of which is Lake Turkana, but many others are good for birding and include Baringo, Naivasha, Bogoria, Elmenteita, Magadi and Nakuru. Lake Victoria forms part of the border with Uganda and Tanzania. **SIZE**: 580 thousand km². 2.4xUK, 0.5xSA. **CLIMATE**: mostly arid and warm (much receiving 400–800 mm), but cooler and moister in the central highlands (up to 2,000 mm). Rainfall pattern varies with locality, but generally there are two rainy seasons, Mar-May and Oct-Dec. Temperature varies little throughout the year. Nairobi (south central, highlands) rainfall = annual 930 mm, monthly 19–206 mm; wettest Apr-May, Nov, driest Jul-Sep. Nairobi temperatures = annual min/max 12–24°C, monthly max 21–26°C; hottest Jan-Mar, coolest Jun-Aug. Mombasa (east, coastal) rainfall = annual 1,080 mm, monthly 14–236 mm; wettest Apr-May, Nov, driest Jan-Mar. Mombasa temperatures = annual min/max 21–31°C, monthly max 29–34°C; hottest Feb-Apr, coolest Jun-Aug. Lodwar (north-west) rainfall = annual 210 mm, monthly 5–58 mm; wettest Apr-May, Nov, driest Jun, Aug–Sep. Lodwar temperatures = annual min/max 24–35°C, monthly max 33–36°C; hottest Jan-Mar, coolest Jun-Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* 1996 by Zimmerman et al. (2) *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe. (3) *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* 2005 by Zimmerman et al. **SOUND:** *The Bird Song of Kenya and Tanzania* 2002 by Hammick, basic. Also see apps. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*. **SITE:** *Where to Watch Birds in Kenya* 1982 by Moore, outdated. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Kenya* 2015 Ham et al/Lonely Planet. (2)

The Rough Guide to Kenya 2016 by Trillo, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) *Wildlife of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* 2007 by Hosking & Withers. (2) *Birds of the Masai Mara* 2012 by Kennedy. (3) *Important Bird Areas in Kenya* 1994 by Bennun & Njoroge. (4) *Birding Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Kenya's northern coast* 1994 by Fanshawe. (5) *A Bird Atlas of Kenya* 1989 by Lewis & Pomeroy. (6) *Kenya* 2013 by Spawls & Matthews. **WEB:** *Kenya Birding Email Group*.

Lesotho (28–30°S)

This tiny, highland country is entirely surrounded by South Africa. From a birding perspective it is usually visited briefly as part of a birding trip to South Africa, from the famous Sani Pass. Staying longer is unlikely to produce anything of particular interest.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES** (treated as part of South Africa, so not assessed separately) —**other**: Lammergeier, Cape Vulture, Ground Woodpecker, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Grey Tit, Large-billed Lark (*ESS montivaga*), Layard's Tit-Babbler (*barnesi*), Sentinel Rock Thrush, Sickle-winged Chat, Mountain Pipit (NE), Drakensberg Siskin, Yellow Canary (*guillarmodi*). —**diversity**: 280. A temperate, highland avifauna. **HABITATS**: alpine moorlands, rocky mountainsides. **AREAS** —**EBAs**: Lesotho highlands. Southern African grasslands. —**sites**: Sani Top, Mafika-Lisiu Pass & Katse Dam. **TIMING (Nov–Jan)**: best is summer when birds breed and Mountain Pipit is present (Nov–Mar). Avoid winter (May–Aug). **EXPLORE**: very low. Lesotho is well known and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low. **CITIES:** Maseru (capital). **EASE—entry**: most westerners do not require an entry visa for shorter visits. It is possible to fly to Maseru, but only from neighbouring South Africa. Land borders from South Africa are easy to use, so most visitors come overland. —**within**: Sotho, English (widely spoken). There is a reasonable road infrastructure, but a self-drive 4x4 is the best way to get around. **ATTRACTI0NS:** mountain scenery and hiking, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. **MONEY:** inexpensive. The Loti, which trades one-to-one to the South African Rand. South African Rand is also legal tender. Widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a mountainous, highland country entirely surrounded by South Africa. Its lowest point, at 1,400 m altitude, is the highest lowest-point for any territory in the world. Thabana Ntlenyana reaches 3,482 m altitude. It forms an important part of the drainage of the Orange River of South Africa. **SIZE:** 30,400 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** a temperate climate, with pronounced summer rainfall Oct–Apr) but with some rain possible throughout the year. Rainfall varies mostly from 700 to 1,000 mm. Winters (May–Sep) are significantly colder

than summers. Maseru rainfall = annual 690 mm, monthly 12–114 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Maseru temperatures = annual min/max 8–23°C, monthly max 15–28°C; warmest Dec–Feb, coldest May–Jul.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa* 2011 by Sinclair et al. **SOUND:** *Southern African Bird Sounds* 1995

by Gibbon. **APPS:** *Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa*. **SITE:** *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen et al. **TRAVEL:** (1) *South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* 2015 by Bainbridge et al/Lonely Planet. (2) *The Rough Guide to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* 2015 by Heuler et al, ebook. **OTHER:** *Birds of Lesotho* 1996 by Bonde. **WEB:** *Southern African Birding - Lesotho*.

Liberia (4–8°N)

Falling from border to border within the lush rainforest zone, Liberia must surely be the best forest birding destination in the Upper Guinea region. Historical political unrest and a past outbreak of Ebola virus, together with a poor infrastructure, have discouraged many visitors, but the country is now regarded as safe to visit. With many remote forests and some highly desirable birds on offer, Liberia ranks among the top countries in the region for adventurous birders to visit.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES** (15, 40/66) —**EN** (1): Liberian Greenbul. —**BT** (2): Sierra Leone Prinia, Grey Ground Thrush. —**B2** (4): Shelley's Eagle-Owl, Rufous Fishing Owl, Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike, Black-headed Rufous Warbler. —**other**: White-breasted Guineafowl, Latham's Forest Francolin, Ahanta Francolin, White-crested Tiger Heron, Congo Serpent Eagle, Long-tailed Hawk, Grey-throated Rail, Sandy Scops Owl, Maned Owl, Akun Eagle-Owl, **Chestnut Owlet**, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, **Western White-crested Hornbill**, Yellow-footed Honeyguide, Little Green Woodpecker, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Melancholy Woodpecker, Timneh Parrot, Black-collared Lovebird, West

African Wattled-eye, **Rufous-bellied Wattled-eye**, Red-cheeked Wattled-eye, Yellow-headed Picathartes, Forest Penduline Tit, Baumann's Greenbul, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Kemp's Longbill, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Capuchin Babbler, Copper-tailed Glossy Starling, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, White-tailed Alethe, Nimba Flycatcher, Olivaceous Flycatcher, Ussher's Flycatcher, Buff-throated Sunbird, Gola Malimbe, Crimson Seedcracker, Red-fronted Antpecker. —**diversity**: 615. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 250–350 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS**: lowland forest. **AREAS** —**EBAs**: Upper Guinea forests. —**sites**: Mt Nimba for forest sp. Sapo NP for lowland forest sp. Zwedru area for the chance of Liberian Greenbul. **TIMING (Dec–Jan, Apr)**: best during the dry season (Oct–Apr) when access is easier and most forest birds breed. Whydahs and indigobirds are more likely to be in breeding plumage immediately after the rains (Oct–Jan). Avoid the main rains (May–Sep). **EXPLORE**: very high. There is lots of unexplored forest.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Liberia is generally regarded to hold a low risk for crime, despite past atrocities and political unrest. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Monrovia (capital), Robertsfield (airport). **EASE — entry:** all nationalities require a pre-arrival visa, issued only with a letter of invitation. There is a limited selection of international and regional flights. The use of land borders is not advised. **—within:** English is spoken fairly widely. Internal transport is very limited, so it is best to hire a private 4x4 with driver. **ATTRACTI**

ONS: rainforest at Sapo NP and Mt Nimba. **MONEY:** expensive. Liberian Dollar. Very limited electronic banking; bring USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the coast of West Africa, between Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, with Guinea to the north. A flat coastal plain about 40 km in width gives way to rolling hills inland. Higher mountains are found along the border of Sierra Leone and Guinea. The highest point is Mt Wuteve at

1,440 m. **SIZE:** 111 thousand km². 0.5xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, wet and humid. Rainfall can occur throughout the year, but it is much wetter May–Oct. Rainfall decreases away from the coast, from 5,000 mm to 1,900 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Monrovia (coastal) rainfall = annual 4,620 mm, monthly 51–958 mm; wettest Jun–Jul and Sep, driest Jan–Mar. Monrovia temperatures = annual min/max 21–31°C, monthly max 29–32°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *West Africa* 2013 by Ham *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Liberia* 1998 by Gatter. (2) *The Birds of the Mount Nimba Region in Liberia* 1986 by Colston & Curry-Lindahl.

Libya (20–33°N)

This North African country is at civil war, and along with Somalia is presently among the most dangerous countries on the continent. Without any endemic birds on offer, considering the risks there is no good reason for birders to visit Libya. Once peace returns, the country's modern infrastructure should make it a suitable birding destination once again, and there are several endemic subspecies found in the mountains of the north-east.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) — other:** *Libyan Blue Tit* (EN). Also *Barbary Partridge (barbata)*, *Thick-billed Lark*, *Scrub Warbler*, *Western Orphean Warbler*

(*ESS cyrenicae*), *Marmora's Warbler*, *Eurasian Wren (ESS juniperi)*, *Maghreb Wheatear*, *Moussier's Redstart*, *Desert Sparrow*, *Common Chaffinch (ESS harterti, spodiogenys)*. **—diversity:** 320. Mostly Palaearctic, including many non-breeding migrants, passage migrants and vagrants; only about 100 sp breed. **HABITATS:** desert, coastal wetlands, remnant montane woodland. **AREAS —sites:** Mt Akhdar for *Libyan Blue Tit* and other montane sp. Zallaf & Ghat Oases for desert sp. **TIMING (Feb–Apr):** best in spring, after the rains and before it gets too hot. There are also many migrants passing through at this time. Avoid the hot, dry season (Jun–Sep). **EXPLORE:** moderate. Libya is not very well known, but habitats are open and arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Libya is at civil war and is considered very unsafe due to widespread threat of kidnap and terrorism. Avoid! **CITIES:** Tripoli (capital). **EASE — entry:** almost all visitors require a pre-arrival visa, which can be hard to obtain and require a letter of invitation. Tripoli was previously well serviced by regional and international flights, but most airlines have stopped operations. It is not advisable to use land borders. **—within:** Arabic (official); Italian and English are spoken in larger cities of the north. There is a reasonable infrastructure of roads and hotels in the north, but the south is more basic. There was a good internal flight network, but it is currently defunct. **ATTRACTI**

ONS: ancient Roman cities such as Leptis Magna and Cyrene. **MONEY:** moderate. Dinar. Widespread electronic banking in the north; bring some Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of North-East Africa, between Egypt and Tunisia, with Algeria to the west and Niger, Chad and Sudan along its southern border. The 1,770 km long coastline is bordered by a 70 km wide plain. Most of the county lies at 300–600 m, but there are some tall mountains in the south, the highest point being Bikku Bitti in the Tibesti

Mts at 2,667 m. **SIZE (4):** 1.76 million km². 1.4xSA, 7.2xUK. **CLIMATE:** generally arid, but cooler and wetter in the north than the south. Annual rainfall varies geographically from 1–500 mm. Winters (Nov–Mar) are much cooler than summers. Tripoli (north-west, coastal) rainfall = annual 250 mm, monthly 0–74; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Jun–Aug. Tripoli temperatures = annual min/max 14–27°C, monthly max 17–35°C; hottest Jun–Aug, coolest Dec–Feb. Kufra (south-east) rainfall = annual 1 mm, monthly 0–1 mm. Kufra temperatures = annual min/max 15–31°C, monthly max 21–39°C; hottest Jun–Aug, coolest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

See also Morocco. **ID:** *Collins Bird Guide* 2010 by Svensson *et al.* **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** see the *African Bird Club - Libya* website for some details. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Libya* 2007 by Ham/Lonely Planet, outdated. (2) chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Libya* 2016 by Isenmann *et al.* (2) *The Birds of Libya* 1976 by Bundy.

Madagascar (12–25°S)

Madagascar is a no-brainer. With six endemic bird families, including some of the world's most fabulous and fascinating birds such as Cuckoo Roller, mesites, couas, asities and ground rollers, and more than 130 endemics and near-endemics, in birding terms Madagascar has no equal in the region. Add to this all the fantastic lemurs and unusual plants, and you have a natural history mecca that only political instability could possibly keep from birders. The low species diversity means that you can focus on birds but still enjoy all the other fantastic offerings while on a serious birding trip. Once a rough destination only for the hardest birders, the tourism infrastructure has developed massively in the last ten years and now most travelling birders will find it well within their comfort levels. Go!

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES (671, 1/66)**
—EN (114): Meller's Duck, Madagascar Teal, Madagascar Pochard, Madagascar Partridge, **Alaotra Grebe**, Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Heron, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Madagascar Serpent Eagle, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Madagascar Sparrowhawk, Henst's Goshawk, Madagascar Fish Eagle, Madagascar Buzzard, White-breasted Mesite, Brown Mesite, Subdesert Mesite, Madagascar Wood Rail, Tsingy Wood Rail, Madagascar Flufftail, Slender-billed Flufftail, Madagascar Rail, Sakalava Rail, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Plover, Madagascar Jacana, Madagascar Snipe, Madagascar Pratincole (br), Madagascar Sandgrouse, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Crested Coua, Verreaux's Coua, Blue Coua, **Red-capped Coua**, **Green-capped Coua**, Red-fronted Coua, Coquerel's Coua, Running Coua, Giant Coua, Red-breasted Coua, Madagascar Cuckoo (br), Madagascar Red Owl,

Totororoka Scops Owl, Rainforest Scops Owl, White-browed Owl, Madagascar Long-eared Owl, Collared Nightjar, Short-legged Ground Roller, Scaly Ground Roller, Pitta-like Ground Roller, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Long-tailed Ground Roller, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Madagascar Hoopoe, Banded Kestrel, Grey-headed Lovebird, Velvet Asity, Schlegel's Asity, Common Sunbird-Asity, Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity, Red-tailed Vanga, Red-shouldered Vanga, Hook-billed Vanga, Bernier's Vanga, Lafresnaye's Vanga, Van Dam's Vanga, Pollen's Vanga, Sickle-billed Vanga, White-headed Vanga, Chabert Vanga, Rufous Vanga, Helmet Vanga, **Eastern Tylas Vanga**, **Western Tylas Vanga**, Nuthatch Vanga, Dark Newtonia, Common Newtonia, Archbold's Newtonia, Red-tailed Newtonia, Ward's Vanga, Crossley's Vanga, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Madagascar Lark, Subdesert Brush Warbler, Madagascar Swamp Warbler, Brown Emu tail, Grey Emu tail, White-throated Oxylabes, Long-billed Tetraka, Cryptic Warbler, Wedge-tailed Tetraka, Thamnornis, Spectacled Tetraka, Appert's Tetraka, Dusky Tetraka, Grey-crowned Tetraka, Madagascar Yellowbrown, Rand's Warbler, Common Jery, Green Jery, **Stripe-throated Jery**, **Subdesert Jery**, Madagascar Cisticola, Madagascar Starling, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Littoral Rock Thrush, Forest Rock Thrush, Madagascar Stonechat, Nelicourvi Weaver, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Fody, Forest Fody, Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Wagtail. —**NE (23):** Madagascar Grebe, Madagascar Sacred Ibis (*ESS bernieri*), Frances's Sparrowhawk (*ESS francesiae*), Madagascar Harrier, White-throated Rail (*ESS civieri*), Madagascar Turtle Dove (*ESS picturatus*), Madagascar Coucal (*ESS toulou*), Madagascar Nightjar (*ESS madagascariensis*), Madagascar Spinetail (*ESS grandidieri*), Madagascar Black Swift (*ESS balstoni*), Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher (*ESS vintsioides*), Madagascar Kestrel (*ESS newtonii*), Greater

Vasa Parrot (*ESS drouhardi + vasa*), Lesser Vasa Parrot (*ESS libis + nigra*), Blue Vanga (*ESS madagascarinus*), Crested Drongo (*ESS forficatus*), Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (*ESS mutata + singetra*), Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar Brush Warbler (*ESS typica + obscura*), Madagascar White-eye, Souimanga Sunbird (*ESS apolis*), Madagascar Green Sunbird (*ESS notatus*). —**BT (3):** Madagascar Pond Heron, Dimorphic Egret, Mascarene Martin (*ESS madagascariensis*).

—**other:** Madagascar White-throated Rail (EN), Madagascar Three-banded Plover (EN), Madagascar Gull (EN), Madagascar Turtle Dove (EN), Chestnut-vented Coua (EN), Madagascar Cuckoo Roller (NE), Lesser Vasa Parrot (EN), Madagascar Blue Vanga (EN), Madagascar Brown-throated Martin (EN), Madagascar White-eye (NE), Pelzeln's Magpie-Robin (EN), Amber Mountain Rock Thrush (EN), Benson's Rock Thrush (EN), Madagascar Green Sunbird (EN), **Stripe-throated Jery** (EN), **Tylas Vanga** (EN). Also White-backed Duck (*ESS insularis*), African Openbill | African Open-billed Stork (*madagascariensis*), Little Bittern (*ESS podiceps*), Purple Heron (*ESS madagascariensis*), Black Heron, Reed Cormorant | Long-tailed Cormorant (*ESS pictilis*), African Darter (*ESS vulsini*), Allen's Gallinule, Crab-plover, White-fronted Plover (*ESS tenellus*), Namaqua Dove (*ESS aliena*), Thick-billed Cuckoo (*ESS audeberti*), Marsh Owl (*ESS hova*), African Palm Swift (*ESS gracilis*), Alpine Swift (*ESS willsi*), Eleonora's Falcon, Sooty Falcon, Broad-billed Roller (*ESS glaucurus*), Olive Bee-eater. —**diversity:** 270. Highly distinctive, with six endemic families. Expect 160–200 sp in 2–4 weeks.

HABITATS: moist eastern forest, dry western woodland, arid spiny forest, grassland, wetlands. **AREAS —EBAs:** East Malagasy wet forests. East Malagasy wetlands. South Malagasy spiny forests. West Malagasy dry forests. West Malagasy wetlands. Ile Sainte-Marie SA (no longer valid since Snail-eating Coua is extinct). Isalo massif SA (no longer valid since Benson's Rock Thrush has been lumped). —**sites:** Ankarafantsika (Ampijoroa

& Kirindy Forest for western woodland sp. Andasibe-Mantadia, Ranomafana & Masoala for eastern rainforest sp. Zombitse for transition forest. Ifaty & Tolari for spiny forest and arid scrub birds. Betsiboka Delta for Bernier's Teal. Bemanevika for Madagascar Pochard. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains, when birds breed and it is not too wet. For more remote areas, go before the rains (Aug–Sep). Avoid cyclone season (Jan–Apr). **EXPLORE:** high. Although Madagascar sees a lot of birders, many areas are unexplored.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: most of Madagascar is considered to hold a low risk of crime, although there have been cases of armed hijackings in the south. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Antananarivo (capital), Mahajanga (some regional flights). **EASE —entry:** most visitors can obtain a free visa on arrival. There are a limited number of international flights to Antananarivo, Mahajanga (going to Comoros) and Nosy Be. —**within:** French; some English. The road network is fairly basic and overland travel is slow. There is a network of internal flights, but Madagascar Airlines is notoriously unreliable. Most visitors get around by a combination of internal flights and private vehicle hire. It is possible to charter private boats to visit many coastal areas. There are many site guides (compulsory in reserves) and a few good national guides. Numerous international companies offer trips. **ATTRACTIOnS:** lemurs. Hiking in Isalo NP. Unique and distinctive vegetation in the Spiny Forest. **MONEY:** fairly inexpensive. Ariary; the Malagasy Franc is now obsolete. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** the world's fourth-largest island and the largest island-state. It broke off from Africa and Gondwanaland 165 million years ago and from India 90 million years ago. It is located in the Indian Ocean, 400 km east of the African mainland off northern Mozambique. The topography

is rather varied, but most of the country has a narrow coastal plain below 100 m, most of the inland areas lie between 100 and 800 m, and there is a higher plateau in the east, reaching 2,876 m at Maromokotro. Lake Alaotra and the Betsiboka River are the most significant water bodies in the country. **SIZE:** 587 thousand km². 2.4xUK, 0.5xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, but with rain quantity and timing varying greatly across the island. Rainfall generally ranges from 1,600 to 4,000 mm in the east and from 800 to 1,600 mm in the west, and the south receives less than 500 mm. The south and west receive strongly seasonal rains Nov–Mar, but in the east rain can fall throughout the year with peaks generally Nov–Mar. In the south, winters (May–Aug) are significantly cooler than summers, but this is less marked in the north. Antananarivo (central, highlands) rainfall = annual 1,460 mm, monthly 8–310 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Antananarivo temperatures = annual min/max 13–24°C, monthly max 20–27°C; hottest Dec–Feb, coolest Jun–Aug. Antalaha (northeast, coastal) rainfall = annual 2,380 mm, monthly 91–358 mm; wettest Jan–Mar, driest Sep–Nov. Antalaha temperatures = annual min/max 20–28°C, monthly max 26–31°C; hottest Dec–Feb, coolest Jul–Sep. Toliara (south-west, coastal) rainfall = annual 420 mm, monthly 6–97 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jul–Sep. Toliara temperatures = annual min/max 19–30°C, monthly max 27–32°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands* 2015 by Hawkins *et al.* (2) *Birds of Madagascar* 2000 by Morris & Hawkins. (3) *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands* 2013 by Sinclair & Langrand. **SOUND:** (1) *Bird Sounds of Madagascar* 2007 by Hawkins & Ranft. (2) *Bird Sounds of Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros, Seychelles, Réunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues* 2003 by Huget & Chappuis. **SITE:** *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen *et al.* **TRAVEL:** (1) *Madagascar* 2014 by Austin & Bradt/Brad. (2) *Madagascar* 2016 by Filou *et al.*/Lonely Planet. (3) *The Rough Guide to Madagascar* 2015 by Trillo, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Africa. The Malagasy Region* 2013 by Safford & Hawkins. (2) *Madagascar Wildlife* 2014 by Austin & Garbutt/Brad. (3) *Guide to the Birds of Madagascar* 1990 by Langrand. (4) *The Birds of Southeastern Madagascar* 1997 by Goodman *et al.* (5) *Mammals of Madagascar* 2007 by Garbut. (6) *Lemurs of Madagascar* 2010 by Mittermeier & Louis. (7) *Wildlife of Madagascar* 2016 by Behrens & Barnes.

mm, monthly 6–97 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jul–Sep. Toliara temperatures = annual min/max 19–30°C, monthly max 27–32°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug.

Madeira Islands (32–33°N, Portugal)

Well connected with Europe and with an excellent tourism infrastructure, these Portuguese islands hold four endemics and several other specialties, making for an excellent short getaway. Madeira is especially well known for seabird watching. Consider combining it with Azores and Canary Islands. All special landbirds plus Zino's Petrel (breeding Apr–Oct) are best at Madeira itself, but for a chance of Desertas Petrel (Jul–Dec) and Barolo Shearwater (Feb–May) a day-long boat trip to their breeding grounds on the Desertas Islands is recommended.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Macaronesia. **SPECIES** (28, 32/66) —EN (4): Zino's Petrel (br), Desertas Petrel (br), Trocaz Pigeon, Madeira Firecrest. —BT (1): Barolo Shearwater. —1/2 (2): Plain Swift, Berthelot's Pipit. —B2 (1): Atlantic Canary. —other: White-faced Storm Petrel (*hypoleuca*), Band-rumped Storm Petrel | Madeiran Storm Petrel, Cory's Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Bulwer's Petrel, Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*granti*), Common Buzzard (ESS *harterti*), Yellow-legged Gull (*atlantis*), Western Barn Owl (ESS *schmitzi*), Common Kestrel (*canariensis*), Spectacled Warbler (*orbitalis*), Common Blackbird | Eurasian Blackbird (*cabrerae*), Grey Wagtail (ESS *schmitzi*), Common Chaffinch (ESS *maderensis*), Common Linnet (ESS *nana*). —diversity: 280. Mostly Palaearctic, including many vagrants. Expect 40–50 sp in 3–4 days. **HABITATS:** temperate forest for landbirds. Islands for seabirds. **AREAS —EBAs:** Madeira and the Canary Islands. —sites: Desertas Islands for breeding seabirds. Balcões on Madeira for endemic landbirds. **TIMING (May–Jul):** best in early summer, after the rains and once it warms up and when most birds breed, including most seabirds. Avoid winter (Oct–Mar). **EXPLORE:** very low. Madeira is well known and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Madeira is considered to hold a very low risk of crime. **CITIES:** Funchal (capital). **EASE —entry:** visa requirements are as for Portugal. Regular flights operate between Funchal and numerous European cities. There are also flights to Cape Verde, Canary Islands and Azores. —within: Portuguese; some English. Madeira has a good road infrastructure and it is easy to hire a car, so self-drive is popular. A ferry and internal flights connect Madeira and Porto Santo, although the landbirds can be seen on Madeira. Regular pelagic trips are offered from Madeira. **ATTRACTIOnS:** spectacular scenery such as Cabo Girão Coastal Cliffs. São Vicente Volcanic Caves. Whale watching. **MONEY:** moderate. Euro. Widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro. **GEOGRAPHY:** this Portuguese territory consists of the inhabited islands of Madeira and Porto Santo, plus the uninhabited Desertas & Savage Is. Madeira Is is located 700 km west of the Moroccan shoreline, 1,000 km south-west of Portugal and 400 km north of the Canary Islands. The Savage Islands lie 280 km south of Madeira and 165 km north of the Canary Islands, whereas Porto Santo lies 43 km north-east of Madeira and the Desertas 25 km south-east of Madeira. Madeira is volcanic in origin and mountainous, reaching 1,862 m at Ruivo Peak. **SIZE:** 801 km², divided between the islands of Madeira (740 km²), Porto Santo (42 km²), Desertas Islands (14 km²) and Savage Islands (4 km²). **CLIMATE:** sub-tropical, with moderate and pronounced winter rainfall (Oct–Apr). Rainfall mostly varies from 550–700 mm. Summers (Jun–Oct) are warmer than winters. Funchal (Madeira) rainfall = annual 640 mm, monthly 2–103; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Jun–Aug. Funchal temperatures = annual min/max 16–22°C, monthly max 19–26°C; warmest Jul–Sep, coolest Jan–Mar.

LITERATURE

See also Azores and Morocco. **ID:** *Field Guide to the Birds of Macaronesia* 2011 by García-del-Rey. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** (1) *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Portugal, the Azores and Madeira Archipelagos* 2014 by Moore et al. (2) *Where to Watch Birds in the Madeira*

Malawi (10–17°S)

Why Malawi hasn't taken off as a popular birding destination is a mystery. With a reasonable tourism infrastructure and excellent safety record, Malawi offers fantastic birding in lovely landscapes with the opportunity of also seeing some big game. It holds several bird specialties and deserves to draw more birders than it does.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (97, 15/66)** —EN (1): Yellow-throated Apalis. —BT (23): *Kikuyu Red-winged Francolin*, *Whyte's Francolin*, Stierling's Woodpecker, Lilian's Lovebird, Souza's Shrike, Southern Mountain Greenbul, Olive-headed Greenbul, Sharpe's Greenbul, Black-lored Cisticola, Churring Cisticola, White-winged Apalis, Chapin's Apalis, White-winged Babbling Starling, Thyolo Alethe, Olive-flanked Robin-Chat, Sharpe's Akalat, *Whyte's Double-collared Sunbird*, Forest Double-collared Sunbird, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver, Bertram's Weaver, Montane Marsh Widowbird, Yellow-browed Seedeater, Vincent's Bunting. —1/2 (4): Dark Batis, Fülleborn's Black Boubou, Shelley's Greenbul, Spot-throat. —B2 (15): Böhm's Bee-eater, Miombo Pied Barbet, Brown-breasted Barbet, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, Livingstone's Flycatcher, Böhm's Flycatcher, White-chested Alethe, East Coast Akalat (*ESS bensoni*), Scarlet-tufted Malachite

Archipelago 2006 by Delgado. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Madeira Pocket Guide* 2016 by Di Duca/ Lonely Planet. (2) *Madeira Travel Handbook* 2015 by Marco Polo. **OTHER:** (1) *Madeira's Natural History in a Nutshell* 2000 by Sziemer. (2) *Birding in Madeira* 2004 by Siddle. **WEB:** *Birding Madeira*. *Madeira Birds*. Portuguese Rarities Committee.

Pipit. —**diversity:** 650. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 350–400 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** montane forest and grassland, miombo woodland, lowland riparian thickets, mopane woodland, lowland forest. **AREAS —EBAs:** South-east African coast. Tanzania - Malawi mountains. —**sites:** Nyika NP, Zomba Plateau & Mt Thyolo for montane sp. Dzalanyama for miombo woodland sp. Liwonde NP for savanna and woodland sp. Mukwadzi forest for lowland forest sp. **TIMING (Oct-Dec):** visit around the start of the rains when most birds breed. Whydahs and indigobirds are in breeding plumage Jan–May. The worst time is probably Jun–Jul. **EXPLORE:** moderate. Malawi is fairly well known and small, but there are some areas which are little visited.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Lilongwe (capital), Blantyre (commercial capital). **EASE —entry:** most westerners do not require a visa. Lilongwe is reasonably well served by regional and international flights. Land borders are generally fine to use to Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. —**within:** English. Malawi has a reasonable road and tourism infrastructure, although road conditions dictate that it is best to hire a car with driver; a 4x4 is needed for many areas, especially during the rains. A few international birding companies offer trips. **ATTRACTI0NS:** big game at Liwonde, Majete and Nyika. Hiking on Mt Mulanje. Fresh water diving in Lake Malawi. **MONEY:** moderate. Malawian Kwacha. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or

USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** this small, landlocked country lies in the southern end of the Great Rift Valley and is bordered by Tanzania in the north-east, Zambia in the north-west and Mozambique in the south. Lake Malawi forms much of its eastern border, but most of the country lies on a plain above 500 m. Mountainous areas are scattered throughout, with the highest point, Mt Mulanje, at 3,002 m. The lowest point, at 37 m, is on the lower Shire River. The Shire River drains from Lake Malawi into the Zambezi River in Mozambique. **SIZE:** 118 thousand km². 0.5xUK, 0.1xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with pronounced summer rainfall (Nov–Mar) and virtually no rain May–Sep. Rainfall varies from 700 to 3,000 mm. Winters (May–Aug) are a bit cooler than summers. Blantyre (south) rainfall = annual 900 mm, monthly 1–198 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Blantyre temperatures = annual min/max 18–28°C, monthly max 24–31°C; hottest Oct–Dec, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** (1) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. (2) *Birds of Malawi* 1992 by Newman et al, only sp not in Southern African guides. **APPS:** *Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa*, most sp. **SITE:** *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen et al. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Malawi* 2016 by Briggs/Bradt. (2) *Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi* 2013 by FitzPatrick et al/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Malawi* 2006 by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett. (2) *Birdwatching in Malawi* 1995 by Medland.

Mali (10–25°N)

With an interesting selection of arid country birds, including a few specials, Mali has the potential to become a fairly popular birding destination if it were not for the threat of terrorism. The fascinating Dogon cliff villages and historical towns such as Djenne and Timbuktu give the country great but unrealised tourism potential, largely due to the underdeveloped infrastructure and insecurity. If political radicalism can be controlled, Mali may start to feature as a more prominent tourism destination.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. SPECIES (4, 53/66) —NE (1): Mali Firefinch. —other: Egyptian Plover, Cream-coloured Courser, Western Red-billed Hornbill, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Fox Kestrel, Pharaoh Eagle-Owl | Desert Eagle-Owl, Golden Nightjar, Little Grey Woodpecker, Rusty Bush Lark, Rock-loving Cisticola, River Prinia, Cricket Warbler, Neumann's Starling, White-crowned Cliff Chat (*ESS cavernicola*), Sennar Penduline Tit, Lavender Waxbill, Desert Sparrow, Sudan Golden Sparrow, House Bunting. —diversity: 520. Mostly Afrotropical, with a significant migratory Palaearctic element. Expect 200–300 sp in 2–3 weeks. HABITATS: arid savanna (with rocky hills), desert, lakes and wetlands of the Niger River. AREAS —EBAs: Upper Niger valley SA. —sites: Bamako area & Dogon Country for Mali Firefinch. Timbuktu & Gao for arid-country birds. TIMING (Oct–Nov, Mar): being an arid area, breeding activity is stimulated by rain so best immediately after the rains (Sep–Dec), or immediately prior to the rains (Mar–Apr). EXPLORE: moderate. Mali is not very well known but most of its habitats are sparsely vegetated.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of terrorism is considered to be very high in the north and moderate in the south. **CITIES:** Bamako (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa, for which a letter of invitation is required. Bamako is moderately well connected with international and regional flights. Land borders are best avoided. —**within:** French; little English. The road network is fairly basic and a 4x4 is required for most sites. There are some internal flights. Accommodation outside of main centres is basic. **ATTRACTI**ONS: fascinating culture, Dogon cliff villages, Djenne Mosque, Timbuktu, local music. **MONEY:** moderate, West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a landlocked West African country, located on the southern edge of the Sahara, north of Burkina Faso, Guinea and Ivory Coast, east of Senegal and Mauritania, west of Niger and south of Algeria. Most of the country is fairly flat and lies at 200–500 m altitude, although there are some mountainous areas, with the highest point, Hombori Tondo, at 1,155 m. The Niger River flows from west to east across the width of the country; it forms important wetlands habitats for birds. **SIZE (8):** 1.24 million km². =SA, 5xUK. **CLIMATE:** hot and generally dry, but with a pronounced rainy season (Jun–Oct in the south) and virtually no rain Nov–Mar. Rainfall decreases from south to north, from over 1,000 mm to below 100 mm. Winters (Nov–Feb) are significantly cooler in the north, but this is less pronounced in the south. Bamako rainfall = annual 1,100 mm, monthly 1–311 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Dec–Feb. Bamako temperatures = annual min/max 21–35°C, monthly max 30–39°C; hottest Mar–May, coolest Nov–Jan.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. SOUND: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. TRAVEL: (1) *Mali* 2009 by Velton/

Bradt, outdated. (2) chapter in *West Africa* 2013 by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, fairly basic.

Mauritania (15–27°N)

This arid country on the far west coast of Africa is little explored. While it has generally been fairly peaceful, a recent spate in militant activities in the region means that visitors should make enquiries before travelling there. The coastal wetlands of Banc d'Arguin form the country's most famous birding site, but exploration inland may produce some sought-after desert birds. Some definitions of the Western Palaearctic include parts of Mauritania, which makes it a desirable destination for regional listers.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. SPECIES (4, 53/66) —BT (1): Kordofan Lark. —B2 (1): Dunn's Lark. —other: *Pallid Heron* (EN), *African Dunn's Lark* (B2). Also Eurasian Spoonbill (*ESS balsaci*), Nubian Bustard, Savile's Bustard, Golden Nightjar, Little Grey Woodpecker, Maghreb Lark, Temminck's Lark, Cricket Warbler, Fulvous Babbler, Black Wheatear, Desert Sparrow, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Trumpeter Finch, House Bunting. —diversity: 550. Significant Afrotropical and Palaearctic elements. HABITATS: coastal wetlands, arid savanna, desert. AREAS —sites: Banc d'Arguin for waterbirds. Wadi Initi for desert sp. TIMING (Nov–Jan): best in the cool season (Oct–Feb). Avoid the hottest time of the year (May–Sep), when Palaearctic migrants are also absent. EXPLORE: moderate. Mauritania is not very well known, but it is largely arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: eastern parts of Mauritania are regarded as unsafe to visit and there is some threat of terrorism throughout the country. **CITIES:** Nouakchott (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a visa, but this can generally be obtained upon arrival at Nouakchott. Those coming overland need a pre-arrival visa. There are a limited number of regional and international flights to Nouakchott. Coming overland from Western Sahara and Senegal is reportedly not difficult.

—**within:** Arabic and some French; little English. There is a basic road infrastructure; the best way to get around is with a 4x4 and driver. Most larger towns have reasonable accommodation. **ATTRACTI**ONS: desert scenery in the Adrar Mts and Banc d'Arguin. Monk Seals at Cap Blanc Reserve. **MONEY:** moderate. Ouguiya, which cannot be exported or converted back to forex. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of West Africa, north of Senegal and south of Western Sahara; bordered mostly by Mali to the east and Algeria in the far north. A wide coastal plain, 250–300 km wide, lies below 100 m altitude. Most inland areas lie on a plain of 180–230 m altitude, with a scattering of inselbergs, the highest of which is Kediet ej Jill at 915 m. The Senegal River forms the southern border with Senegal. **SIZE:** 1.03 million km², 4xUK, 0.8xSA. **CLIMATE:** hot and dry, with pronounced rainfall Jul–Oct. Rainfall varies from 550 mm in the south to almost nothing in the north. Winters (Dec–Feb) are significantly cooler than summers.

Nouakchott (west, coastal) rainfall = annual 160 mm, monthly 1–81; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Mar–May. Nouakchott temperatures = annual min/max 19–32°C, monthly max 29–35°C; hottest May and Sep–Oct, coolest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *West Africa* 2013 by Ham *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Mauritania* 2010 by Isenmann *et al.* (2) *The Birds of the Banc d'Arguin* 2006 by Isenmann. **WEB:** *Atlas of the Birds of Mauritania*.

Mauritius (19–20°S, including Rodrigues)

The remote islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues (R) are easy and safe, if somewhat expensive, to visit. With eight endemics on Mauritius, two endemics on Rodrigues and lots of breeding seabirds, they make for an excellent, short getaway or addition to a trip to Madagascar. Given their close proximity to Réunion, it makes sense to combine visits to these three islands, and you also might consider including Seychelles and Comoros on the same trip.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES** (57, 21/66) —EN (10): Pink Pigeon, Mauritius Kestrel, Echo Parakeet, Mauritius Cuckooshrike, Mauritius Bulbul, Rodrigues Warbler (R), Mauritius Grey White-eye, Mauritius Olive White-eye, Mauritius Fody, Rodrigues Fody (R). —BT (1): Trindade Petrel. —1/2 (2): Mascarene Swiftlet (M), Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher. —other: Round Island Petrel (EN br), Mauritius Paradise Flycatcher (EN). Also Herald Petrel, Barau's Petrel, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Bulwer's Petrel, Red-tailed Tropicbird, White-tailed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, Common Moorhen (*pyrrhorhhoa*), Lesser Noddy, Sooty Tern, Mascarene Martin (*borbonica*). —diversity: 100 on Mauritius, 50 on Rodrigues. Distinctive Malagasy avifauna, but with many introduced sp. Expect 40–50

sp in 4–7 days. **HABITATS:** native forest for endemic landbirds. Islands and pelagic waters for seabirds. **AREAS —EBAs:** Mauritius. Rodrigues. —sites: Black River Gorges NP & Aux Aigrettes for Mauritian forest sp. Round Is for Mauritian seabirds. Highlands of Rodrigues. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains when most birds breed. Avoid the main rains and cyclone season (Dec–Apr). **EXPLORE:** very low. The islands are well known and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Mauritius has a very low risk of crime. **CITIES:** Port Louis (capital), Mahébourg (airport). **EASE —entry:** most westerners do not require a visa to visit Mauritius. Mauritius is fairly well serviced by regional and international flights. —within: mainly French, some English. There is a good road network and it is easy to hire a car. There is also a network of buses. On Rodrigues the best way to get around is by taxi. Daily flights link Mauritius and Rodrigues. A range of accommodation is available on both islands. **ATTRACTI**

ons: hiking in Black River Gorges NP. Snorkelling and diving off the west coast. **MONEY:** moderate. Mauritian Rupee. Widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Mauritius Is is located 900 km east of Madagascar and 180 km north-east of Réunion. The country includes several other islands: Rodrigues, 560 km east of Mauritius, St Brandon, 430 km north-east of Mauritius, and Agaléga, 1,000 km north of Mauritius and 800 km north-east of Madagascar. Mauritius and Rodrigues are volcanic in origin, reaching heights of 828 m at Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire and 293 m, respectively. **SIZE:** 2,040 km², split between Mauritius (1,860 km²), Rodrigues (108 km²), Agaléga Islands (24 km²) and the archipelago of Saint Brandon (1.3 km²). **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet, with some rain falling throughout the year but with Dec–Apr significantly wetter. Rainfall increases with altitude and varies from 1,000 mm on the coast to 5,000 mm in the highlands of Mauritius. On Rodrigues rainfall varies from 1,000 to 1,700 mm. Winters (May–Aug) are only slightly cooler than summers. Port Louis (north-west Mauritius)

rainfall = annual 1,616 mm, monthly 51–263 mm; wettest Jan–Feb, Apr, driest Aug–Oct. St Louis temperatures = annual min/max 22–30°C, monthly max 25–30°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

See also Madagascar. **ID:** *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands* 2015 by Hawkins *et al.* **SOUND:** *Bird Song of Mauritius* 2004 by Hammick. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Mauritius, Rodrigues and Réunion* 2016 by Richards/Bradt. (2) *Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles* 2016 by Carillet & Ham/Lonely Planet. (3) *The Rough Guide to Mauritius* 2015 by Rough Guides, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) *The Lost Land of the Dodo* 2008 by Cheke & Hume. (2) *Birds of the Mascarene* 2012 by Ramen.

Mayotte Is (12–13°S, France, geographically Comoros)

The island of Mayotte is politically part of France, but biologically part of the Comoros and usually visited at the same time as the three Comoros islands. With four endemics there is some interest for world birders, although a two-night's stay is normally more than long enough to find them all.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES** (25, 36/66) —EN (4): Mayotte Scops Owl, Mayotte Drongo, Mayotte White-eye, Mayotte Sunbird. —1/2 (2): Comoro Olive Pigeon, Comoro Fody (ESS *algondae*). —B2 (1): Comoro Blue Pigeon —other: *Comoro Turtle Dove* (1/2). Also Striated Heron (*rhizophorae*), Madagascar Pond Heron, Frances's Sparrowhawk (ESS *brutus*), Western Barn Owl (*hypermetra*), African Palm Swift (*griveaudi*), Madagascar Black

Swift (*mayottensis*), Cuckoo Roller, Crab Plover, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher (*johannae*), Peregrine Falcon (*radama*), Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (ESS *pretiosa*), Madagascar Bulbul. —diversity: 90. Malagasy in origin. Expect about 30 sp in 2–3 days. **HABITATS:** forest for endemics. **AREAS —EBAs:** Comoros. —sites: Pic Compani & Mayotte Botanical Gardens for endemics. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains, when most birds breed (Aug–Nov). Avoid the cyclone season (Dec–Apr). **EXPLORE:** low. The islands are small and fairly well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is a very low risk of crime. **CITIES:** Mamoudzou (capital), Dzaoudzi (airport). **EASE —entry:** entry requirements are as for France. The international airport

at Dzaoudzi on Petite-Terre connects to Grande-Terre by ferry. It receives flights from other Indian Ocean Islands (often unreliable), France, Kenya and Tanzania. —**within:** French; little English. There are plenty of hotels. The best way to get around the island is with taxis. **ATTRACTIOnS:** nesting sea turtles. Humpback Whale watching. Diving and snorkelling. Hiking up Mt Choungui. **MONEY:** moderate. Euro, Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** biologically part of the Comoros, but administered as an overseas department of France and hence treated separately; it is the outermost region of the European Union. The two main islands are Grande-Terre (or Maore) and Petite-Terre (or Pamanzi). There are also several islets surrounding these. Mayotte lies 300 km north-west of Madagascar and 64 km south-east of Anjouan Island in Comoros. It is mountainous and volcanic in origin, with the highest point, Benara, at 660 m. **SIZE:** 374 km², divided between two main islands, Grande-Terre and Petite-Terre. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a pronounced rainy season (Nov–Apr) but some rain throughout the year. Rain increases with altitude and varies from 1,000 mm to

2,000 mm. Temperatures hardly vary through the year. Dzaoudzi (Petite-Terre) rainfall = annual 1,190 mm, monthly 11–280 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Dzaoudzi temperatures = annual min/max 21–29°C, monthly max 26–31°C; hottest Nov–Dec, Apr, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

See also Madagascar. **ID:** *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands* 2015 by Hawkins *et al.* **SOUND:** (1) *Bird Sounds of Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues* 2003 by Huget & Chappuis. (2) *Sound Guide to the Breeding Birds of the Comoros* 2001 by Herremans. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Madagascar and Comoros* 2008 by Anderson/Lonely Planet, outdated. (2) chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. (3) *Discovering of Mayotte* 2015 by Jones & Jerry, possibly worthwhile. **OTHER:** (1) *Les Oiseaux de Mayotte* 2008 by Clement *et al.* French. (2) *The Birds of the Comoro Islands* 1960 by Benson. (3) *Les Oiseaux des Comores* 1988 by Louette. (4) *La Faune Terrestre de Mayotte* 1999 by Louette, French.

MOROCCO (27–36°N)

With a good safety record, a great tourism infrastructure and easy access from Europe, Morocco is the most-visited African country by tourists. For birders there are a good number of North-West African specials on offer (all except for Algerian Nuthatch) and the charismatic Northern Bald Ibis is a major birding highlight. Although overall diversity is fairly low, Morocco offers access to many desert birds that are hard to see elsewhere, plus a lot of other species of interest to Western Palearctic listers. As long as Morocco can keep extremists at bay, it should continue to see a great influx of visiting birders.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-West Africa. **SPECIES** (79, 16/66) —**NE** (2): Northern Bald Ibis, African Crimson-winged Finch. —**BT** (21): White-headed Duck, Barbary Partridge, Crowned Sandgrouse, Pharaoh Eagle-Owl | Desert Eagle-Owl, Egyptian Nightjar, Levant's Green Woodpecker, Barbary Falcon, Thick-billed Lark, Maghreb Lark, Temminck's Lark, Dupont's Lark, Scrub Warbler, Fulvous Babbler, African Desert Warbler, Tristram's Warbler, Atlas Flycatcher, Moussier's Redstart, Red-rumped Wheatear, Seeböhm's Wheatear, Black Wheatear (*riggenbachi*), Desert Sparrow, House Bunting. —**B2** (8): Houbara Bustard, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Desert Grey Shrike, Brown-necked Raven, African Blue Tit, Thekla Lark, Mourning Wheatear, White-crowned Wheatear. —**other**: Maghreb Tawny Owl (BT), Maghreb Magpie (BT), Ultramarine Tit (BT), African Scrub Warbler (BT), Maghreb Wheatear (BT), Moroccan Wagtail (EN), African Chaffinch (BT). Also Ferruginous Duck | Ferruginous Pochard, Double-spurred Francolin (ESS *ayesha*), European Shag (ESS *riggenbachi*), Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk (ESS *theresae*), Western

Marsh Harrier (*harterti*), Cream-coloured Courser, Audouin's Gull, Spotted Sandgrouse, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Crowned Sandgrouse, Common Wood Pigeon (*excelsa*), Little Owl, Marsh Owl (ESS *tingitanus*), Red-necked Nightjar (*desertorum*), Pallid Swift, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*chrysocercus*), Great Spotted Woodpecker (ESS *mauritanus*), Eleonora's Falcon, Black-crowned Tchagra (*cucullatus*), Eurasian Jay (*whitakeri, minor*), Red-billed Chough (*barbarus*), Northern Raven | Common Raven (*tingitanus*), Coal Tit (ESS *atlas*), Great Tit (*excelsus*), Bar-tailed Lark, Eurasian Skylark (*harterti*), Horned Lark (ESS *atlas*), Common Bulbul (*barbatus*), Brown-throated Martin (ESS *mauritanica*), Sardinian Warbler (*valverdei*), Short-toed Treecreeper (*mauritanica*), Spotless Starling, Common Blackbird | Eurasian Blackbird (*mauritanicus*), White-throated Dipper (*minor*), House Sparrow (*tingitanus*), Rock Sparrow (*barbara*), Hawfinch (*buvryi*), European Greenfinch (*voousi*). —**diversity:** 470. Palearctic in the north, more Afrotropical in the south. Expect 200–250 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** arid scrubland, desert, temperate forest and moorland.

AREAS —sites: Oukaïmeden for montane sp. Ifrane for temperate forest sp. Merzouga & Tagdilt Track for desert sp. Tamri for Northern Bald Ibis. **TIMING (Feb–Apr):** best after the rains, in spring and when most birds breed (Feb–May). Passage migrants are present mostly Sep–Oct and Feb–Apr. Over-wintering migrants are present Oct–Mar. Avoid the hot, dry season Jun–Sep. **EXPLORE:** very low. Morocco is well known and most habitats are arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime in Morocco is considered to be low, but there might be some threat in areas bordering Algeria. **CITIES:** Rabat (capital), Casablanca (main airport),

Marrakesh (tourism centre). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities do not require a visa. Marrakesh, Casablanca and several other cities are well connected by international flights. There are also daily ferries from southern Europe. Travelling overland from Western Sahara is easy. —**within:** Arabic; French widely spoke, some English. There are many police roadblocks but one is rarely stopped. The road network is quite good, with most roads now asphalted; self-drive is popular. A 4x4 is needed for the Merzouga area, but can be hired locally. A variety of accommodation is available throughout. Several bird tour operators offer regular departures. **ATTRACTIOnS:** scenery in the Atlas Mts and tall sand dunes in the southern deserts. Cultural cities such as Fez and the Medina in Marrakesh. Volubilis Roman ruins. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Dirham. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Morocco lies on the coast of North-West Africa, immediately south of Spain, north-east of Western Sahara and west of Algeria. The Atlas Mts are the main geological feature of the country, with flat, coastal deserts to the north-west, deserts to the south, and moister steppes and woodlands to the north-east. The highest point is Jbel Toubkal at 4,165 m. The Souss River is one of the most significant rivers; there is an abundance of lakes along the coastal plain. **SIZE:** 447 thousand km². 1.8xUK, 0.4xSA. **CLIMATE:** generally arid and temperate, but cooler and moister in the north. Rain falls in winter (Oct–Mar) and increases to the north and with altitude, varying from 25 to 2,000 mm. Winters

(Nov–Mar) are significantly colder, with snowfalls being common in the high Atlas at this time. Marrakesh rainfall = annual 280 mm, monthly 1–41 mm; wettest Nov and Mar–Apr, driest Jun–Aug. Marrakesh (central) temperatures = annual min/max 13–27°C, monthly max 17–37°C; hottest Jul–Sep, coolest Dec–Feb. Rabat (north) rainfall = annual 523 mm, monthly 0–106 mm; wettest Nov–Jan, driest Jun–Aug. Marrakesh temperatures = annual min/max 13–24°C, monthly max 17–28°C; hottest Jul–Sep, coolest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Collins Bird Guide* 2010 by Svensson *et al.* (2) *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* 2005 by Jonsson. **SOUND:** (1) *Bird Sounds of Europe and North-west Africa* 2002 by Roché & Chevereau. (2) *Bird Songs of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East* 2007 by Schulze & Dingler. (3) *Birds of North-West Africa* 2002 by Roché & Chevereau. (4) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** (1) *Where to Watch Birds in Morocco* 2017 by Bergier & Bergier. (2) *Finding Birds in Morocco, The deserts* 2009 by Gosney. (3) *Finding Birds in Morocco, Coast and mountains* 2011 by Gosney. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Morocco* 2014 by Clammer *et al.* /Lonely Planet. (2) *The Rough Guide to Morocco* 2016 by Rough Guides, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Morocco* 2004 by Thévenot *et al.* (2) *The Special Birds of Morocco* 2010 by Price. (3) *Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East* 2009 by Aulagnier *et al.* **WEB:** *MagrebOrnitho*.

Mozambique (11–27°S)

With vast swathes of relatively-pristine habitat remaining, and a relatively poor infrastructure, Mozambique offers great exploration opportunities to birders. As a destination for world listers, however, it has several limitations: its single endemic is very difficult to reach, there are no other species not seen more easily elsewhere, and the tourism infrastructure is mostly poor except along the coast. That said, the south of the country is likely to remain popular among Southern African listers.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES** (35, 29/66) —EN (1): Namuli Apalis. —NE (3): Woodward's Batis, Neergaard's Sunbird, Pink-throated Twinspot. —1/2 (8): Kretschmer's Longbill, Roberts's Warbler, Chirinda Apalis, Long-billed Forest Warbler | Long-billed Tailorbird, Red-capped Forest Warbler | African Tailorbird, Dappled Mountain Robin, Brown Scrub Robin, Thyolo Alethe (ESS *namuli*). —B2 (2): Stierling's Woodpecker, Olive-headed Weaver. —other: Steppe Whimbrel (BT), Malawi Batis (1/2), Mozambique Forest Warbler (EN), Maputoland Scrub Robin (1/2), Southern Olive-flanked Robin-Chat (1/2). Also Kirk's Francolin, Blue Quail, Eurasian Bittern | Great Bittern (*capensis*), Greater Crested Tern (ESS *enigma*), Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Green Barbet (*belcheri*), Eastern Green Tinkerbird, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, East African Pitta, Cape Batis (*dimorpha*), Pale Batis, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Green-headed Oriole (ESS *speculifer*), Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, Olive-headed Greenbul, Yellow-streaked Greenbul (*vincenti*), Tiny Greenbul, Livingstone's Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (ESS *quelimanensis*), Wailing Cisticola (ESS *oreobates*), Rufous-winged Cisticola, Rudd's Apalis, African Hill Babbler (*stictigula*),

Spotted Ground Thrush (*belcheri*), Abyssinian Thrush (*milanensis*), White-chested Alethe, Swynnerton's Robin, East Coast Akalat (ESS *gunningi*), Plain-backed Sunbird (ESS *reichenowi*), Eastern Miombo Sunbird (ESS *amicorum*), Forest Double-collared Sunbird (*bensonii*), African Golden Weaver | Yellow Weaver (ESS *tongensis*), Lesser Seedcracker, Violet-eared Waxbill (ESS *retusus*), Lemon-breasted Canary, Vincent's Bunting. —**DIVERSITY:** 690. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 300–400 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** coastal lowland forest, montane forest, miombo woodland, floodplain grassland. **AREAS** —**EBAs:** Eastern Zimbabwe mountains. South African forests. South-east African coast. Tanzania - Malawi mountains. —**SITES:** Mt Namuli, Mt Gorongosa & Njesi Plateau for montane forest. Zambezi Coutadas for lowland forest sp including *East African Pitta*. **TIMING (Aug–Sep, Dec):** best at the end of the dry season, when most birds breed. *East African Pitta* displays mostly in Dec. Avoid the main rains (Jan–Apr). **EXPLORE:** high. There are many remote, little visited areas in Mozambique, especially in the north.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Mozambique is generally considered to have a low risk of crime, although some areas still have land mines and there are armed groups that recently held up a birding group. **CITIES:** Maputo (capital), Beira. **EASE —entry:** most visitors require a pre-arrival visa. Maputo receives regular international and regional flights; Vilankulo also receives some regional flights. Land borders from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi are not too hard to cross, and some areas are best accessed from these countries rather than by flying into Mozambique. —**within:** Portuguese; some English. The country has a moderate road infrastructure, although accessing some of the more remote

birding areas requires a 4x4; self-drive is popular with South Africans, but road blocks can be frustrating. There is a basic public transport network and a reasonable internal flight network. Larger towns and coastal areas have reasonable accommodation, but camping is necessary at some sites.

ATTRACTIOnS: mammals at Gorongosa NP. Marine life and diving at Bazaruto NP. **MONEY:** moderate. Metical. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD.

GEOGRAPHY: taking up much of the east coast of south Central Africa, from Tanzania in the north to South Africa in the south, with western borders with Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe and a short border with Swaziland in the south-west. Most of the country is fairly low-lying. However, several mountain ranges and high inselbergs, especially in the north, punctuate the landscape, the highest being Mt Binga at 2,436 m, with other important ones including Mt Gorongosa, Mt Namuli, Njesi Plateau and Mt Mabu. The Zambezi River cuts the country in half, the Rovuma River forms the border with Tanzania and the Limpopo River flows to the sea in the south. Lake Malawi forms much of the border with Malawi. **SIZE:** 802 thousand km². 3xUK, 0.7xSA. **CLIMATE:** warm and tropical with hotter, wetter summers (Nov–Apr). Rainfall is higher along the coast, varying from 400 to 1,800 mm. Maputo (south, coastal) rainfall

= annual 770 mm, monthly 13–130 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Maputo temperatures = annual min/max 18–28°C, monthly max 25–30°C; hottest Dec–Feb, coolest Jun–Aug. Lichinga (north, inland) rainfall = annual 1,135 mm, monthly 1–238 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Lichinga temperatures = annual min/max 13–25°C, monthly max 22–28°C; hottest Sep–Nov, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. **_SOUND:** *Southern African Bird Sounds* 1995 by Gibbon. **APPS:** *Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa*. **SITE:** *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen et al. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Mozambique* 2017 by Briggs/Bradt. (2) *Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi* 2013 by Fitzpatrick et al/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Southern Mozambique* 1996 by Clancey. (2) *The Atlas of the Birds of Sul do Save, Southern Mozambique* 1999 by Parker. (3) *The Atlas of the Birds of Central Mozambique* 2005 by Parker. (4) *The birds of Namuli, northern Mozambique: retracing Vincent's footsteps* 1999 by Ryan et al. **WEB:** *Southern African Birding - Mozambique*.

Namibia (17–29°S)

Offering an abundance of sunshine and good travel conditions and game parks, Namibia is a popular wildlife destination. Although arid and not especially diverse, it offers the best access to some great birds in attractive landscapes. That said, almost all the specials can be seen in neighbouring Angola, so its importance is diminishing for serious listers with the opening up of Angola. Consider adding a few days around the Okavango Delta of Botswana to your Namibia trip.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES (162, 9/66)** —EN (1): Dune Lark. —NE (4): Rüppell's Korhaan, Damara Tern (br), Gray's Lark (*ESS grayi*), Herero Chat. —BT (22): Hartlaub's Francolin (*ESS bradfieldi + crypticus*), Red-billed Francolin, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Burchell's Courser, Bradfield's Swift, Violet Wood Hoopoe, Damara Hornbill, Monteiro's Hornbill, Rüppell's Parrot, Rosy-faced

Lovebird, White-tailed Shrike, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Carp's Tit, Stark's Lark, Rockrunner, Black-faced Babbler, Southern Pied Babbler, Bare-cheeked Babbler (*ESS kaokensis*), Dusky Sunbird, Great Sparrow, Red-headed Finch, Cinderella Waxbill. —1/2 (26): Cape Francolin, Crowned Cormorant, Bank Cormorant, Karoo Korhaan, Blue Crane, African Black Oystercatcher, Hartlaub's Gull, Grey Tit, Karoo Long-billed Lark (*ESS damarensis*), Benguela Long-billed Lark (*ESS kaokoensis*), Cape Long-billed Lark, Black-eared Sparrow-Lark, Barlow's Lark (*ESS barlowi*), Cape Clapper Lark, Slater's Lark, Karoo Prinia, Namaqua Warbler, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela (*ESS damarensis*), Layard's Tit-babbler, Orange River White-eye, Karoo Scrub Robin, Angola Cave Chat, Sickle-winged Chat, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Black-headed Canary. —B2 (23): South African Shelduck, African Penguin, Cape Gannet, Cape Cormorant, Namaqua Sandgrouse, White-backed Mousebird, Cape Penduline Tit, Sabota Lark, Monotonous Lark, African Reed Warbler, Burchell's Starling, Pale-winged Starling, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Karoo Chat (*ESS schlegelii*), Ant-eating Chat, Tractrac Chat (*ESS barlowi + albicans*), Mountain Wheatear (*ESS monicola*), Sociable Weaver (*ESS xericus + geminus*), Cape Sparrow, Scaly-feathered Finch, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Black-throated Canary, Yellow Canary, Lark-like Bunting. —other: Cape Eagle-Owl (1/2), Cunene River Francolin (BT), Bradfield's Lark (1/2), Damara Canary (1/2). Also Orange River Francolin, Swainson's Francolin, Slaty Egret, Secretarybird, Ludwig's Bustard, Red-crested Korhaan, Northern Black Korhaan, Chestnut-banded Plover, Double-banded Courser, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Copper-tailed Coucal, Southern White-faced Owl, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Olive Bee-eater (*alternans*), Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Bradfield's Hornbill, Bennett's Woodpecker (*capricorni*), Pygmy Falcon, Greater Kestrel, Fairy Flycatcher, Pritit Batis, Bokmakierie, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Ashy Tit, Spike-

heeled Lark, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Fawn-coloured Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark, Pink-billed Lark, African Red-eyed Bulbul, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Long-billed Crombec, Grey-backed Cisticola (*ESS windhoekensis*), Rufous-eared Warbler (*ESS etoshae*), Barred Wren-Warbler, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Hartlaub's Babbler, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler, Cape Glossy Starling, Burchell's Starling, Kalahari Scrub Robin (*ESS damarensis*), Chat Flycatcher, Marico Flycatcher, Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush, Shelley's Sunbird, Chestnut Weaver (*trothae*), Brown Firefinch, Violet-eared Waxbill, Black-faced Waxbill, White-throated Canary (*ESS sordahliae*). —diversity: 640. Afrotropical in the north-east, subtropical in the south. Expect 250–300 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** desert, arid savanna, woodlands along the Caprivi Strip. **AREAS —EBAs:** Karoo. Namib desert SA. Namibian escarpment SA. Western Angola. —sites: Spitzkoppe and Spreetshoogte Pass for escarpment sp including Herero Chat. Walvis Bay area for Damara Tern, Gray's Lark and Dune Lark. Brandberg for Benguela Long-billed Lark. Etosha NP for arid savanna sp and large game. Also Windhoek area, Erongo Mts & Ruacana. **TIMING (Oct, Mar–Apr):** being a dry country, it is best after the main rains (Jan–Apr). Spring (Sep–Oct), when some birds start to breed, can also be a good time to visit. The cold winter months (May–Aug) are less productive. **EXPLORE:** very low. Namibia is well known and mostly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime in Namibia is very low. **CITIES:** Windhoek (capital), Walvis Bay (main port). **EASE —entry:** Windhoek is fairly well connected with regional and international flights. Most nationalities do not require a visa. Land border travel to South Africa and Botswana are easy, Zambia quite easy and Angola difficult. —within: English. Namibia has an excellent road infrastructure and many hire car agencies, so

self-drive is popular. Most parks cannot be accessed by public transport. Remote areas may require 4x4. There is a limited internal flight network, but a wide range of good quality accommodation found throughout. Many tour companies offer bird watching tours. **ATTRACTIOnS:** large mammals at Etosha NP. Rock art in the Brandberg. Desert sand dunes at Sossusvlei. Seal colony at Cape Cross. Hiking the Fish River Canyon. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Namibian Dollar, which trades 1:1 with the South African Rand; the Rand is also legal tender. Widespread electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the west coast of Southern Africa, north of South Africa, west of Botswana and south of Angola, as well as south of Zambia at the end of the Caprivi Strip. It has varied landscapes with many mountains, especially along the escarpment. The highest peak is Königstein at 2,606 m. The Orange River forms the southern border with South Africa and the Cunene River the northern border with Angola. The Okavango River flows for a short distance through the Caprivi Strip, which is also bordered by the Zambezi River

in part. **SIZE:** 826 thousand km². 3.4xUK, 0.7xSA. **CLIMATE:** dry, sub-tropical, with pronounced summer rainfall (Nov–Mar). Rainfall increases with distance from the coast, from 5 mm to 680 mm in the eastern Caprivi Strip. Winters are significantly colder than summers. Windhoek (central) rainfall = annual 370 mm, monthly 0–81 mm; wettest Jan–Mar. Windhoek temperatures = annual min/max 12–26°C, monthly max 20–30°C; hottest Nov–Jan, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** SASOL Birds of Southern Africa 2011 by Sinclair *et al.* **SOUND:** Southern African Bird Sounds 1995 by Gibbon. **APPS:** Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa. **SITE:** (1) Southern African Birdfinder 2006 by Cohen *et al.* (2) Birding in Namibia 1999 by Damasius & Marais. **TRAVEL:** (1) Namibia 2015 by McIntyre/Bradt. (2) The Rough Guide to Namibia 2015 by Humphreys, ebook. (3) Botswana and Namibia 2013 by Murphy *et al.*/Lonely Planet. **WEB:** Namibian Bird Club. Southern African Birding - Namibia.

Niger (12–23°N)

With a poor reputation for safety, Niger sees very few birders. This is a pity, as it holds some of the most pristine areas of Sahelian and Saharan habitats that remain. When Niger does become safe to visit, it is likely to draw some adventurous birders, in search of specials such as Nubian Bustard, Savile's Bustard, Rusty Bush Lark and Kordofan Lark.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other:** Nubian Bustard, Savile's Bustard, African Swallow-tailed Kite. Golden Nightjar,

Quail-Plover, Little Grey Woodpecker, Rusty Bush Lark, Kordofan Lark, Rufous-rumped Lark, Sennar Penduline Tit, Sudan Golden Sparrow, White-rumped Seedeater (*pallens*). **—diversity:** 500. **Afrotropical.** **HABITATS:** desert, arid savanna. **AREAS —sites:** W NP for Savile's Bustard. Zinder for Kordofan Lark and Rusty Bush Lark. Termit & Tin Toumma Res for Nubian Bustard and desert mammals. **TIMING (Oct–Nov, Feb):** being arid, most birds breed at the end of the rains (Sep–Nov). But the cooler months (Dec–Feb) when most migrants are present are good too. Avoid Apr–Jun due to heat. **EXPLORE:** moderate. Niger is poorly-known, but mostly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of terrorism in Niger is considered to be high in the north and moderate in the south. **CITIES:** Niamey (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa. Niamey receives a limited number of international and regional flights. Overland entry is not advised. **—within:** French, little English. The road network is fairly poor, but improving. It is best to rent a 4x4 to get around. International quality accommodation is confined to the main centres. No international bird tour companies offer tours. **ATTRACTIOnS:** rare Saharan mammals at Termit & Tin Toumma Res. **MONEY:** expensive. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Niger is landlocked, bordered by Nigeria in the south, Chad in the east, Mali in the west, Algeria in the north and Burkina Faso and Benin in the southwest. Most of the country is flat and situated at 300–500 m altitude, although there are some high mountains in the north, including the Air Massif. The highest point is Mt

Idoukal-n-Taghès at 2,022 m. The Niger River crosses the south-west of the country. Lake Chad is situated in the south-east. **SIZE (6):** 1.27 million km². =SA, 5.2xUK. **CLIMATE:** generally hot and dry. Virtually all rain falls Jun–Sep, with Nov–Mar very dry. Rainfall decreases to the north, from 800 to 50 mm. Temperatures vary little in the south, but in the north winters are cooler. Niamey (south) rainfall = annual 540 mm, monthly 0–171 mm; wettest Jul–Sep. Niamey temperatures = annual min/max 22–36°C, monthly max 33–41°C; hottest Mar–May, coolest Aug and Dec–Jan.

LITERATURE

ID: Birds of Western Africa 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** African Bird Sounds 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** (1) Niger 2006 by Geels/Bradt. (2) chapter in West Africa 2013 by Ham *et al.*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) Avifaune du Niger 1988 by Giraudoux *et al.* (2) Les Oiseaux du Complexe WAP 2007 by Balanca *et al.* **WEB:** Sahara Conservation Fund. West African Bird Database.

Nigeria (4–13°N)

With a good range of habitats and reasonable infrastructure, Nigeria could be a popular birding destination if it wasn't for its socio-political problems. With several specialties on offer and an excellent variety of species to be seen, Nigeria should grow in popularity as a birding destination if these problems could be solved.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (41, 26/66) —EN:** (1): Ibadan Malimbe. —NE (2): Anambra Waxbill, Jos Plateau Indigobird. —1/2 (10): Green-breasted Bushshrike, Mount Kupe Bushshrike, Yellow-breasted Boubou, Cameroon Montane Greenbul, Grey-headed Greenbul, Bangwa Forest Warbler, White-throated Mountain Babbler, Mountain Robin-Chat, Bannerman's Weaver, Rock Firefinch. —B2 (8): Cameroon Olive Pigeon, Western Mountain Greenbul, Cameroon Olive Greenbul, Black-capped Woodland Warbler, Green Longtail, White-tailed Warbler, Cameroon Sunbird, Shelley's Oliveback. —other: Johnston's Woodpecker (1/2), Brown-backed Cisticola (1/2), Cameroon Pipit (1/2). Also Black Guineafowl, Latham's Forest Francolin, Coqui Francolin

(*spinotorum*), White-throated Francolin, Savile's Bustard, Brown-chested Lapwing, Verreaux's Turaco, Sjöstedt's Owl, Freckled Nightjar (ESS *pallidogriseus*), Fernando Po Swift, Bates's Swift, Rosy Bee-eater, Western Green Tinkerbird, Tullberg's Woodpecker, Senegal Parrot, White-spotted Wattle-eye, Mountain Sooty Boubou, Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher, Red-headed Picathartes, Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul, Baumann's Greenbul, Western Bearded Greenbul (ESS *ansorgeanus*), White-bearded Greenbul, Kemp's Longbill (*flammeus*), Rock-loving Cisticola, Black-throated Apalis (*bambuluensis*), Western Buff-throated Apalis, Ruwenzori Hill Babbler, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Crossley's Ground Thrush, Yellow-footed Flycatcher, White-bellied Robin-Chat, Alexander's Akalat, Green-throated Sunbird (*crossensis*), Neumann's Weaver, Oriole Finch, West African Seedeater. —diversity: 910 (7th). Strongly Afro-tropical. HABITATS: lowland forest, montane forest, savannas, Guinea woodlands. AREAS —EBAs: Cameroon and Gabon lowlands. Cameroon mountains. Lower Niger valley SA. South-west Nigeria SA. —sites: Jos Plateau for the indigobird and Rock Firefinch. Obudu Plateau for montane sp. Ifon Forest Res for Ibadan Malimbe. Cross Rivers NP for lowland forests. Chad Basin NP for arid savannas. Yankari NP for Guinea woodlands. TIMING (Oct, Mar–Apr): the north is probably best after the rains (Oct–Dec) and the south in the dry season (Feb–Apr). Avoid the main rains (May–Sep). EXPLORE: high. Large areas are poorly known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: while most of southern Nigeria is considered to be low risk for crime and terrorism, oil producing areas in the Niger Delta area are best avoided and there is a very high risk of terrorism and kidnap in the north-east. **CITIES:** Abuja (capital), Lagos (largest city). **EASE —entry:** almost all visitors require a pre-arrival visa, which is

not easy to obtain. Lagos and Abuja are well connected with international and regional flights. Land borders are not easy to use. —within: English. There is a reasonable road infrastructure, but expect to be stopped at many road blocks. To get around it is best to hire a 4x4 with driver. There is a fairly extensive internal flight network. A good range of accommodation is available in the larger centres. No international bird tour companies operate tours. **ATTRACTIOnS:** hiking on the Obudu Plateau. **MONEY:** moderate. Naira. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of West Africa, west of Cameroon and east of Benin and south of Niger, and having a short border with Chad in the north-east. Nigeria is a low-lying, tropical country with altitude generally increasing from sea level in the south, gradually to 600 m in the north. Part of the Cameroon Mts spills over the border in the south-east, reaching their highest point at Chappal Waddi on the Mambilla Plateau at 2,419 m. The vast Niger River is the most significant river in the country and forms a large inland delta in the south-east, before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. Lake Chad is situated in the far north-east and there are some large coastal lagoons near Lagos. **SIZE:** 924 thousand km². 3.8xUK, 0.8xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical with a pronounced wet season (May–Oct) which is shorter in the north. Rainfall decreases to the north, from 4,000 to 600 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Lagos (south-west, coastal) rainfall = annual 1,510 mm, monthly 13–316 mm; wettest May–Jul, driest Nov–Jan. Lagos temperatures = annual min/max 23–31°C, monthly max 28–33°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Jun–Aug. Kano (north) rainfall = annual 752 mm, monthly 0–257 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Dec–Feb. Kano temperatures = annual min/max 20–32°C, monthly max 30–38°C; hottest Mar–Mat, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: Birds of Western Africa 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** African Bird Sounds 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** Nigeria 2012 by

Williams/Bradt. **OTHER:** The Birds of Nigeria 1994 by Elgood *et al.*

Prince Edward Is (46–47°S, including Marion, SA)

The remote sub-Antarctic islands of Prince Edward and Marion lie midway between South Africa and Antarctica, and constitute one of the least-visited areas on earth. There is little chance of setting foot on them unless visiting for research purposes, although they hold impressive seabird colonies.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Oceanic Islands. **SPECIES** (6, 50/66) —BT (2): Crozet Shag, Kerguelen Tern. —other: Lesser Sheathbill (3,200 pairs), King Penguin (220,000), Gentoo Penguin (900), Macaroni Penguin (417,000), Southern Rockhopper Penguin (208,000), Wandering Albatross (3,000), Grey-headed Albatross (8,100), Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (200), Sooty Albatross (2,400), Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (7,000), Blue Petrel (200,000), Kerguelen Petrel (20,000), Salvin's Prion (100,000). —diversity: 29 breeding sp. No landbirds. **HABITATS:** moist scrubland, grassland. **AREAS —sites:** Prince Edward & Marion Islands. **TIMING (Nov–Jan):** best in summer, when most birds breed (Oct–Mar). Avoid winter (May–Aug). **EXPLORE:** very low. The islands are small and well-studied.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is virtually no risk of crime. There are no medical facilities. **CITIES:** none. The only settlement is a research base on Marion. **EASE —entry:** only researchers are permitted to visit. The SA

Agulhas research vessel makes several trips a year. —within: the only way to get around is to walk. There is no accommodation.

ATTRACTIOnS: seabird colonies and seals. **MONEY:** expensive due to the cost of getting there. There is nothing to spend money on.

GEOGRAPHY: administered by South Africa, the sub-Antarctic islands of Prince Edward and Marion lie 1,770 km south-east of the African continent. The islands are volcanic and mountainous, reaching a height of 1,230 m on Marion and 762 m on Prince Edward. They lie 20 km apart. **SIZE:** 335 km², divided between Marion (290 km²) and Prince Edward (45 km²). **CLIMATE:** cold and wet, with high rainfall throughout the year (over 170 mm in every month) and winters (May–Sep) significantly colder. Marion rainfall = annual 2,400 mm, monthly 170–232 mm; wettest Jan, Apr–May, driest Sep–Nov. Marion temperatures = annual mean 6°C, monthly max 6–11°C; warmest Jan–Mar, coldest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: Newman's Birds of Southern Africa 2010 by Newman. **OTHER:** Marion and Prince Edward 2010 by Terauds *et al.* **WEB:** South African National Antarctic Programme.

Réunion Island (21°S, France)

This tropical island located south-east of Madagascar holds eight endemics and a couple of other regional specialties. Add to this the good tourist infrastructure and it is surprising that it sees so few birding visitors. A visit could be combined with both Madagascar and Mauritius, with regular inter-island flights linking them.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES** (45, 24/66) —**EN** (8): Mascarene Petrel (br), Barau's Petrel (br), Reunion Harrier, Reunion Cuckooshrike, Reunion Bulbul, Reunion Grey White-eye, Reunion Olive White-eye, Reunion Stonechat. —**BT** (1): Mascarene Paradise Flycatcher. —**1/2** (1): Mascarene Swiftlet. —**other**: Reunion Paradise Flycatcher (EN). Also Tropical Shearwater, Striated Heron (*rutenbergi*), Common Moorhen (*pyrrhorhoa*), Lesser Noddy, Mascarene Martin (*borbonica*). —**diversity**: 78. Malagasy in origin, but with 20 introduced sp.

HABITATS: montane forest and scrubland for endemic landbirds. Coastal waters for seabirds. **AREAS —EBAs**: Réunion. —**sites**: La Roche Écrite in the highlands for endemics. The south-west coast for seabirds. **TIMING (Oct-Dec)**: best at the start of the rains, when most birds breed (Sep-Dec). Avoid cyclone season (Jan-Apr). **EXPLORE**: low. The island is small and well known, although there may be an undescribed sp of scops owl on the island.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be very low. The greatest threat is probably from volcanic eruptions from Piton de la Fournaise volcano, which is still active. **CITIES**: Saint-Denis (airport), Saint Pierre. **EASE —entry**: entry requirements are as for France. There is

a limited service of international and regional flights to Réunion. —**within**: French; little English. There is a good road around the island and into the highlands, although roads can become congested. Car hire is available, so self-drive is a popular option. Taxis are expensive. A good range of accommodation is available. **ATTRACTIOnS**: hiking in the central mountains. Volcanic scenery such as at Plaine des Sables and Piton de la Fournaise. **MONEY**: moderate. Euro. Widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro. **GEOGRAPHY**: a French territory, located 700 km east of Madagascar and 165 km south-west of Mauritius. Volcanic and mountainous, the island reaches 3,069 m at Piton des Neiges. **SIZE**: 2,510 km². **CLIMATE**: moist and tropical climate, with rain throughout the year but mostly Dec–Apr. Moister at higher altitudes, varying from 1,500 to 9,000 mm. Winters (May–Sep) are slightly cooler. Saint Denis (coastal) rainfall = annual 1,540 mm, monthly 44–290 mm; wettest Jan–Mar, driest Aug–Oct. Saint Denis temperatures = annual min/max 20–27°C, monthly max 25–30°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

See also Madagascar. **ID**: *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands* 2015 by Hawkins *et al.* **SOUND**: *Bird Sounds of Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues* 2003 by Huget & Chappuis. **SITE**: section in *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands* 2013 by Sinclair & Langrand, basic. **TRAVEL**: (1) *Mauritius, Rodrigues and Réunion* 2016 by Richards/Bradt. (2) *Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles* 2016 by Carillet & Ham/Lonely Planet. **OTHER**: (1) *Le Grand Livre des Oiseaux de la Réunion* 1996 by Barau *et al.* French. (2) *Birds of the Mascarene* 2012 by Ramen. **WEB**: Reunion Tourist Board.

Rwanda (1–3°S)

The small, mountainous country of Rwanda is gaining a reputation for being a great birding destination. The combination of savanna birding at Akagera, montane forest birding at Nyungwe and Eastern Gorilla trekking at Volcanoes make for an excellent 1–2 week getaway or a worthwhile add-on to a Uganda trip. Constant improvements in the tourism infrastructure mean that popularity is likely to continue to grow.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

East Africa. **SPECIES** (57, 22/66) —**EN** (1) *Albertine Hyliota*. —**BT** (8): Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Albertine Owlet, Short-tailed Warbler, Kungwe Apalis, Red-collared Mountain Babbler, Ruaha Chat, Purple-breasted Sunbird, Papyrus Canary. —**1/2** (1): Willard's Sooty Boubou. —**B2** (25): Handsome Francolin, Black-billed Turaco, Ruwenzori Turaco, Red-faced Barbet, Dwarf Honeyguide, Ruwenzori Batis, *Albertine Bushshrike*, Doherty's Bushshrike, *Albertine Sooty Boubou*, Stripe-breasted Tit, Grauer's Warbler, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, Grauer's Rush Warbler, Collared Apalis, Mountain Masked Apalis, *Kivu Ground Thrush*, Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher, Red-throated Alethe, Archer's Robin-Chat, Blue-headed Sunbird, Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird, Regal Sunbird, Strange Weaver, Dusky Crimsonwing, Western Citril. —**other**: Ruwenzori Nightjar (B2). *Lagden's Bushshrike* (B2). Also Ring-necked Francolin, Shoebill, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Brown-chested Lapwing, *Common Bare-faced Go-away-bird*, Red-chested Owl, Ruwenzori Nightjar, Scarce Swift, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Spot-flanked Barbet, *Fine-banded Woodpecker*, Many-coloured Bushshrike, Papyrus Gonolek, Black-headed Gonolek, Souza's Shrike (*buriqi*), Montane Oriole, White-necked Raven, White-tailed Blue

Flycatcher, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, Kakamega Greenbul, Olive-breasted Mountain Greenbul, Cabanis's Greenbul, White-browed Crombec, Brown Woodland Warbler, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Highland Rush Warbler, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, *Evergreen Forest Warbler*, Trilling Cisticola, Carruthers's Cisticola, Long-tailed Cisticola, Black-faced Prinia, Chestnut-throated Apalis, Grey-capped Warbler, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Mountain Illadopsis, Black-lored Babbler, Ruwenzori Hill Babbler, Grey-chested Illadopsis, Slender-billed Starling, Stuhlmann's Starling, Sharpe's Starling, White-bellied Robin-Chat (*rufescens*), Equatorial Akalat, Stuhlmann's Weaver, Black-billed Weaver, Central Red Bishop, White-collared Oliveback, Shelley's Crimsonwing, Kandt's Waxbill. —**diversity**: 680. Afrotropical. Expect 250–300 sp in 7–10 days. **HABITATS**: montane forests, swamps, savanna. **AREAS —EBAs**: Albertine Rift mountains. Dry woodlands west of Lake Victoria SA. —**sites**: Nyungwe NP for Albertine Rift endemics. Akagera NP for savanna sp including Red-faced Barbet, Nyabarongo Wetlands for Papyrus Canary and other swamp sp. **TIMING (Jan, Jul–Aug)**: best in the dry season (Jun–Sep) when most birds breed. Dec–Feb is drier too and Palearctic migrants are also present then. Avoid the main rains (Feb–May, Sep–Nov). **EXPLORE**: low. Few birders visit Rwanda, although it is small and quite well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low, although border areas with DR Congo can be volatile at times. **CITIES**: Kigali (capital). **EASE —entry**: most nationalities require a visa, but this can generally be obtained upon arrival. East African visas can be issued that are valid for Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. Kigali is reasonably well

connected by international and regional flights. Land border crossings with Uganda and Tanzania are straightforward. —**within:** French and English (official). The road and tourism infrastructure is reasonably good, but travel is slow due to the undulating terrain. It is best to hire a 4x4 with driver to get around, although it is possible to visit Nyungwe using public transport. A good range of accommodation is available at most tourist sites. Birding Africa offers set-departure birding trips. **ATTRACTIOnS:** gorilla trekking at Volcanoes NP. Chimpanzee trekking at Nyungwe NP. Savanna game viewing at Akagera NP. **MONEY:** moderate. Rwandan Franc. Fairly widespread electronic banking; bring some Euro, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a small, highland country located south of Uganda, east of DR Congo, north of Burundi and west of Tanzania. Most of it is very mountainous; the western half forms part of the Albertine Rift highlands, with the highest point, Mt Karisimbi in the Virunga Mts, at 4,519 m. The lowest point, in the south-west, is at 800 m altitude. Waters from the west of the main mountains drain into the Congo River, whereas those

east drain into the White Nile. Lake Kivu forms part of the border with DR Congo. The Akagera River, which flows into the Nile catchment, forms part of the border with Tanzania. **SIZE:** 26,300 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, but higher altitudes keep the weather cooler. Some rain falls throughout the year, with a double peak (Mar–May and Oct–Nov) and the only dry months being Jun–Aug. Rainfall increases with altitude and to the west; it ranges from 600 to 2,400 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Kigali (central) rainfall = annual 1,030 mm, monthly 9–183 mm; wettest Mar–Apr and Nov, driest Jun–Aug. Kigali temperatures = annual min/max 15–26°C, monthly max 25–27°C; warmest Aug–Oct, coolest Apr–Jun.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe. **SOUND:** see Apps. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*. **SITE:** *Wild Rwanda* 2015 by Behrens *et al.* **TRAVEL:** *Rwanda* 2015 by Briggs/Bradt. **OTHER:** *Birds in Rwanda* 2011 by Vande weghe & Vande weghe. **WEB:** *Birding in Rwanda*.

St Helena Island (16°S, United Kingdom)

The remote island of St Helena is home to one endemic landbird, St Helena Plover, although several more have become extinct since humans first arrived. Until recently the island was reachable only by boat, but a new airport has been constructed and is set to receive commercial flights from South Africa once some issues have been ironed out. Due to its remote location it may make for an interesting short break. Seabird enthusiasts may also enjoy travelling on the *Royal Mail Ship* from Cape Town to St Helena and on to Ascension, which already has flights from the UK.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Oceanic Islands. **SPECIES (5, 55/66) — EN (1):** St Helena Plover. —**other:** also White-faced Storm Petrel, Band-rumped Storm Petrel | Madeiran Storm Petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, Brown Booby, Common Moorhen, Black Noddy, White Tern, Sooty Tern. —**diversity:** 65. Mostly seabirds, vagrants and introduced sp. **HABITATS:** short grasslands for St Helena Plover. Coastal waters for seabirds. **AREAS — EBAs:** St Helena SA. —**sites:** Deadwood Plain for St Helena Plover. Egg Is for breeding seabirds. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best to visit

in spring and early summer (Sep–Dec). Most seabirds breed throughout the year, with peak breeding season varying for different sp, but Sep–Oct probably being best overall. **EXPLORE:** very low. St Helena is well known and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is virtually no risk of crime. Medical facilities are limited. **CITIES:** Jamestown. **EASE — entry:** all visitors must apply for a visa in advance. Medical insurance is a pre-requisite for entry. It is possible to reach St Helena by boat - the *Royal Mail Ship* from Cape Town takes five days and continues on to Ascension. A new runway has been built with planned weekly flights from Johannesburg in South Africa, but the commencement of flights has been postponed. —**within:** English. Once there, getting around the islands is quite simple, with buses and taxis or rental car. It is also possible to charter a boat for seabird watching. Accommodation is available in Jamestown. **ATTRACTIOnS:** heritage buildings in Jamestown. Hiking in the mountains, especially to Diana's Peak. **MONEY:** expensive. St Helena Pound, which trades at 1:1 to the British Pound, which is also legal tender. Very limited electronic banking; bring GBP. **GEOGRAPHY:** St Helena forms part of the British Overseas

Territory of Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. It lies 1,800 km west of northern Namibia on the African mainland, 1,125 km south-east of Ascension and 2,400 km north-east of Tristan da Cunha. The island is fairly mountainous, being of volcanic origin, reaching 818 m at Diana's Peak. **SIZE:** 121 km². **CLIMATE:** sub-tropical, with rain throughout the year, but a slightly drier period Oct–Feb. Winters (May–Oct) are cooler than summers. Rainfall in the highlands is much higher (up to 1,200 mm) than on the coast (around 150 mm). Jamestown (coastal) rainfall = annual 140 mm, monthly 0–33; wettest Mar, May–Jun, driest Oct–Dec. Jamestown temperatures = annual min/max 19–24°C, monthly max 22–28°C; hottest Feb–Apr, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *A Guide to the Birds of St Helena and Ascension Island* 2004 by McCulloch. **SITE:** see the relevant section in the ID guide. **TRAVEL:** *St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha* 2015 by Britt-Gallagher & Hayne/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of St Helena* 1998 by Rowlands. (2) *St Helena and Ascension Island* 2000 by Ashmole & Ashmole. (3) *St Helena Wirebird* 1999 by McCulloch. (4) *Britain's Treasure Islands* 2016 by McPherson. **WEB:** *St Helena Government*. *St Helena Tourism*.

São Tomé and Príncipe (0–2°N)

The little-known islands of São Tomé (ST) and Príncipe (P) are, considering their unique avifauna with more than 25 endemics, underbirded. Tourism infrastructure is developing steadily and with direct flights from Portugal these islands are likely to become a more popular destination. Although several of the rarer endemics require a mini-expedition to see, usually in very damp conditions, most birds can be seen in relative comfort on day trips. The country makes for an interesting and productive 7–10 days visit.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. SPECIES (134, 12/66) — EN (26): Dwarf Olive Ibis (ST), São Tome Olive Pigeon (ST), São Tome Green Pigeon (ST), São Tome Scops Owl (ST), São Tome Spinetail (ST, P), São Tome Fiscal (ST), São Tome Oriole (ST), São Tome Paradise Flycatcher (ST), São Tome Prinia (ST), Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler (P), Príncipe Speirops (P), São Tome Speirops (ST), Príncipe White-eye (P), São Tome White-eye (ST), Príncipe Glossy Starling (P), São Tome Thrush (ST), Príncipe Thrush (P), Príncipe Sunbird (P), Newton's Sunbird (ST), Giant Sunbird (ST), Príncipe Golden Weaver (P), Giant Weaver (ST), São Tome Weaver (ST), São Tome Shorttail (ST), Príncipe Seedeater (ST, P), São Tome Grosbeak (ST). — NE (1): São Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon (ST, P). — OTHER: São Tome Lemon Dove (EN, ST), São Tome Kingfisher (EN, ST), Príncipe Kingfisher (EN, P), Príncipe Drongo (EN, P), São Tome Chestnut-winged Starling (EN, ST), Príncipe Seedeater (EN, P), São Tome Seedeater (EN, ST). Also Harlequin Quail (ESS ST *histrionica*), Olive Ibis (ESS P *rothschildi*), Western Reef Egret, Lemon Dove (ESS P *principalis*), African Green Pigeon (ESS P *virescens*), Western Barn Owl (ESS ST *thomensis*), Blue-breasted Kingfisher (ESS P *dryas*), Olive Sunbird (P

obscura), Southern Masked Weaver (ESS ST *peixotoi*), Common Waxbill (ESS ST *sousae*). — DIVERSITY: c. 100 on São Tomé, 80 on Príncipe. Strongly Afrotropical but with a high level of endemism. Expect 40–60 sp in 7–10 days. HABITATS: forest for endemics. Moist savanna. AREAS — EBAs: Príncipe, São Tomé. — SITES: Amelia Lake & Monte Carmo on São Tomé for forest sp. The surrounds of Santo António town and remote southern forests on Príncipe. TIMING (DEC, JUN–JUL): best when it is driest (Jun–Aug, Dec–Jan). Avoid the main rains (Feb–May, Sep–Nov). EXPLORE: moderate. Although the islands are small and there are few birds, there are some remote areas that are difficult to get to. A scops owl has only recently been discovered on Príncipe.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is very low. Medical facilities are basic. CITIES: São Tomé (capital), Santo António (Príncipe airport). EASE — ENTRY: all visitors require a pre-arranged visa and letter of invitation from the islands, although the visa can be issued on arrival if pre-processed. There are direct flights from Portugal, Angola and Gabon. — WITHIN: Portuguese; little English. While roads are basic, distances are not great. It is best to hire a 4x4; self-drive is possible. There are weekly flights between São Tomé and Príncipe. Hiking and remote camping with a knowledgeable guide is necessary to see some sp. Reasonable accommodation is available in the main towns. ATTRACTIONS: old colonial buildings of São Tomé town. Hiking in the mountains of São Tomé. MONEY: fairly inexpensive. São Toméan Dobra. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro. GEOGRAPHY: São Tomé lies 230 km west of Gabon, whereas Príncipe is 215 km west of Equatorial Guinea and 150 km north-east of São Tomé. The Tinhosa Islands, with many

breeding seabirds, lie 20 km south of Príncipe. Both islands are volcanic and mountainous, forming part of the mountain chain running from Annobón to Bioko and the Cameroon Mts. The highest point is São Tomé Peak on São Tomé Is at 2,024 m, whereas Príncipe Peak is at 948 m. SIZE: 1,000 km², divided between São Tomé (854 km²) and Príncipe (136 km²). CLIMATE: tropical and wet. Rain falls throughout the year, with a double peak (Mar–May and Oct–Nov). The only really drier spell being Jun–Aug. Rainfall varies massively from below 900 mm to over 7,000 mm on the south of São Tomé and 5,000 mm on the south of Príncipe. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. São Tomé rainfall = annual 870 mm, monthly 0–132 mm; wettest Mar–May, driest Jun–Aug. São Tomé

temperatures = annual min/max 22–29°C, monthly max 28–31°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. SOUND: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. SITE: (1) *A Birders Guide to the Gulf of Guinea Islands of São Tomé and Príncipe* 1992 by Sargeant. TRAVEL: *São Tomé and Príncipe* 2014 by Becker/Bradt. OTHER: (1) *The Birds of São Tomé e Príncipe* 2009 by Leventis & Olmos. (2) *Birds of São Tomé and Príncipe with Annobón* 2006 by Jones & Tye. (3) *Guide des Oiseaux de São Tomé et Príncipe* 1998 by Christy & Clarke, French & Portuguese.

Senegal (12–16°N)

Although there are no endemics, Senegal offers some of the easiest and safest access to the arid savannas and birds of the Sahel zone, making it especially important since northern Cameroon is presently unsafe to visit. The reasonable road and tourism infrastructure allows access to arid habitats in the north of the country. As long the security situation is kept under control, Senegal is likely to grow as a destination for birders. Consider combining it with a visit to Gambia.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. SPECIES (26, 34/66) — BT (7): Savile's Bustard, Little Grey Woodpecker, Sennar Penduline Tit, River Prinia, Chestnut-bellied Starling, Black Scrub Robin, Sudan Golden Sparrow. — 1/2 (1): Mali Firefinch. — B2 (3): x, Cricket Warbler, White-billed Buffalo Weaver. — OTHER: African Green Bee-eater (BT), African Scrub Robin (BT). Also Ahanta Francolin, African Swallow-tailed

Kite, Beaudouin's Snake Eagle, Grasshopper Buzzard, Arabian Bustard, Black Crowned Crane, Quail-plover, Black-headed Lapwing, Egyptian Plover, Greater Painted-snipe, Cream-coloured Courser, Royal Tern, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, African Collared Dove, Plain Nightjar, Vieillot's Barbet, Desert Grey Shrike, Rufous-rumped Lark, Kordofan Lark, Aquatic Warbler, Red-chested Swallow, Northern Anteater Chat, Vinaceous Black-faced Firefinch, Lavender Waxbill, Black-rumped Waxbill, Sahel Paradise Whydah, Exclamatory Paradise Whydah, White-rumped Seedeater.

— DIVERSITY: 640. Afrotropical, with a minor Palaearctic element. Expect 250–350 sp in 2–3 weeks. HABITATS: arid savanna, wetlands. AREAS — EBAs: Upper Niger valley SA. — SITES: Richard Toll & Djoudj NP. TIMING (AUG–SEP, MAR): being arid, most birds breed at the end of the rains (Sep–Nov). EXPLORE: moderate. Few birders visit, but mostly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: generally considered to be safe. Medical facilities are basic. **CITIES:** Dakar (capital). **EASE —entry:** most western nationalities do not require visas. Dakar is quite well connected with regional and international flights. Land borders with Mauritania and Gambia are not hard to use. **—within:** French; little English. Senegal has a reasonable road infrastructure. Hiring a 4x4 with driver is the best way to get around. Accommodation is of a reasonable standard in larger centres. **MONEY:** moderate. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** situated on the coast of West Africa, south of Mauritania and north of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, with Mali to the east and Gambia almost totally surrounded. Most of the country is flat and low-lying, with the highest peak, near Népen Diakha, at 581 m. The Senegal River forms the entire northern and eastern

border of Senegal, flowing from neighbouring Guinea. **SIZE:** 197 thousand km². 0.8xUK. **CLIMATE:** warm and generally arid, with a distinctive rainy season (Jul–Oct). Rainfall decreases to the north and varies from 330 to 1,550 mm. Temperatures vary little through the year. Dakar (north, coastal) rainfall = annual 410 mm, monthly 0–165 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Mar–May. Dakar temperatures = annual min/max 21–28°C, monthly max 25–30°C; hottest Jul–Sep, coolest Jan–Mar.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Senegal and The Gambia* 2012 by Borrow & Demey. (2) *Birds of The Gambia and Senegal* 2005 by Barlow *et al.* (3) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** (1) *The Bird Song of Gambia and Senegal* 2002 by Barlow *et al.* (2) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Senegal* 2015 by Connolly/Bradt. **WEB:** *Bird Watching in Senegal*.

Seychelles (4–10°S, excluding Aldabra Group)

These small, far-flung tropical islands are a popular if somewhat expensive holiday destination. With a good infrastructure catering to up-market tourists, the expense of travel has probably discouraged most birders. However, with 12 endemics and some great seabird spectacles, the Granitic Seychelles must be considered under-birded. The little visited outer islands hold no endemics, except for the Aldabra Group (treated separately).

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Indian Ocean Islands. **SPECIES (60, 19/66)** —EN (12): Seychelles Blue Pigeon, Seychelles Scops Owl, Seychelles Swiftlet, Seychelles Kestrel, Seychelles Black Parrot, Seychelles

Paradise Flycatcher, Seychelles Bulbul, Seychelles Warbler, Seychelles White-eye, Seychelles Magpie-Robin, Seychelles Sunbird, Seychelles Fody. —other: *Seychelles Turtle Dove* (EN). Also Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Tropical Shearwater, Red-tailed Tropicbird (*rubricauda*), White-tailed Tropicbird, Yellow Bittern, Striated Heron (*ESS degens*), Grey Heron (*frater*), Great Frigatebird, Lesser Frigatebird, Brown Noddy, Lesser Noddy, White Tern, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern. —diversity: 240. Mostly vagrants, but also many seabirds; residents are Malagasy in origin with a high degree of endemism. **HABITATS:** forest for endemic landbirds. Seabird breeding islands. **AREAS —EBAs:** Granitic Seychelles. —sites: Vallée de Mai on Praslin for *Seychelles Black Parrot*. La Veuve Res on

La Digue for the paradise flycatcher. Cousin & Aride Is for the warbler, fody, magpie-robin and breeding seabirds. Highlands of Mahé for the scops owl, white-eye and kestrel. **TIMING (Sep–Nov):** best at the start of the rains when most birds breed (Sep–Dec). Avoid the main rains (Dec–Mar). **EXPLORE:** very low. Seychelles is well known and very developed.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is virtually no threat of violent crime. **CITIES:** Victoria (capital). **EASE —entry:** no visas are required, but return flight tickets, proof of accommodation and means of subsistence need to be provided on arrival. There is a good selection of international and regional flights to Victoria. **—within:** English, French. There are daily flights between the main islands, and it is possible to charter flights to more remote islands. There are also fast inter-island ferries. Rental cars are available on Mahé and Praslin, and there is a reasonable road and bus transport network. It is best to stay on Mahé and Praslin, where a range of accommodation is available, and commute to other islands. **ATTRACTI**ONS: diving and snorkelling. Seabird colonies, including Bird Is. Hiking in Morne Seychellois NP. **MONEY:** expensive. Seychellois Rupee, but Euros, USD and GBP are all legal tender. Widespread electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** the Seychelles, excluding The Aldabra Group, consist of >115 islands spread over >1,200 km of the western Indian Ocean. They are divided into three main groups: Granitic Seychelles, Amirantes Group and Farquhar

Group; the latter two form the Outer Islands together with the Aldabra Group, due to its isolation dealt with separately. Only the Granitic Seychelles are important to visit and consist of 45 islands all within 60 km of Mahé, plus the coralline islands of Bird and Denis located 90 km north of Mahé. Mahé lies 1,600 km east of the African mainland in Kenya and 920 km north-east of Madagascar. The highest point is Morne Seychellois on Mahé at 905 m. **SIZE:** 283 km², the largest island being Mahé at 157 km², followed by Praslin at 38 km², Silhouette at 20 km² and La Digue at 10 km². **CLIMATE:** tropical and wet, with rainfall throughout the year but a peak in summer (Oct–Apr). Rainfall increases with altitude, but is everywhere above 1,500 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Victoria (Mahé) rainfall = annual 2,200 mm, monthly 78–358 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Victoria temperatures = annual min/max 25–29°C, monthly max 28–31°C; hottest Mar–May, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

See also Madagascar. **ID:** *Birds of Seychelles* 2011 by Skerrett & Disley. **SOUND:** *Bird Sounds of Madagascar, Mayotte, Comoros, Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues* 2003 by Huget & Chappuis. **SITE:** *Birdwatchers' Guide to Seychelles* 1992 by Skerrett & Bullock. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Seychelles* 2016 by Mair & Beckley/Bradt. (2) *Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles* 2016 by Carillet & Ham/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *A Checklist of the Birds of Seychelles* 2007 by Skerrett. (2) *Wildlife of Seychelles* 2006 by Bowler. **WEB:** *Seychelles Bookings*.

Sierra Leone (7–10°N)

Now peaceful, anglophone Sierra Leone has grown in popularity as a bird watching destination over the past decade, although it has lost out to the better infrastructure and more comfortable travel offered by Ghana. With a combination of intact lowland forest and moist savanna, Sierra Leone will become much more popular if it can remain stable and develop. Gola Forest offers some of the best rainforest birding on the continent and is a great destination for more adventurous birders.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. SPECIES (42, 25/66) —BT (9): White-breasted Guineafowl, Rufous Fishing Owl, Timneh Parrot, Turati's Boubou, Emerald Starling, Gola Malimbe, Crimson Seedcracker, Jambandu Indigobird, Togo Paradise Whydah. —B2 (15): Little Green Woodpecker, Melancholy Woodpecker, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Western Wattled Cuckooshrike, Yellow-headed Picathartes, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, Fanti Saw-wing, Pied-winged Swallow, Kemp's Longbill, Copper-tailed Glossy Starling, Yellow-winged Pytilia, Cameroon Indigobird. —other: Rufous-bellied Wattle-eye (BT), Grey-hooded Capuchin Babbler (BT). Also Latham's Forest Francolin, Ahanta Francolin, Double-spurred Francolin, Congo Serpent Eagle, Yellow-billed Turaco, Brown Nightjar, Black-shouldered Nightjar, African Black Swift (ESS *glanvillei*), Blue-moustached Bee-eater, Western Piping Hornbill, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Yellow-casqued Hornbill, Western White-crested Hornbill, Hairy-breasted Barbet, Spotted Honeyguide, Brown-eared Woodpecker (*arizela*), Fire-bellied Woodpecker, West African Wattle-eye, Fiery-breasted Bushshrike, Lagden's Bushshrike, Sabine's Puffback, Lowland Sooty

Boubou, Yellow-crowned Gonolek (ESS *helenae*), Blue Cuckooshrike, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Yellow-throated Leaflove, White-throated Blue Swallow, Sierra Leone Prinia, Sharpe's Apalis, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Puvel's Illadopsis, Capuchin Babbler, Blackcap Babbler, Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush, Grey Ground Thrush, White-tailed Alethe, Forest Scrub Robin (*colstoni*), White-browed Forest Flycatcher, Nimba Flycatcher, Ussher's Flycatcher, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Lowland Akalat, Brown Sunbird, Buff-throated Sunbird, Black-and-chestnut Weaver, Maxwell's Black Weaver, Red-vented Malimbe, Red-fronted Antpecker, Bannerman's Pipit. —diversity: 650. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 250–350 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** lowland forest, moist savanna. **AREAS —EBAs:** Upper Guinea forests. —sites: Gola Forest, Tiwai Island, Freetown Peninsula & Loma Mts for forest sp. Bambuna & Outamba Kilimi NP for savanna sp. **TIMING (Nov, Feb–Mar):** best when it is dry and access easier (Oct–Mar). Whydahs and indigobirds are likely to be in breeding plumage straight after the rains (Oct–Dec). Avoid the main rains (Jun–Sep). **EXPLORE:** high. There are some areas that are very poorly-known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low. **CITIES:** Freetown (capital). **EASE —entry:** almost all visitors require a visa, to be obtained before travelling. Freetown is quite well serviced by international and regional flights. Land borders are not easy to use. —within: English. The road infrastructure is basic but improving. It is best to hire a 4x4 and driver. Accommodation is basic outside of main centres. A few tour operators offer tours. **ATTRACTI0NS:** rainforest hiking at Gola Forest. Primates at Tiwai Is. **MONEY:** moderate. Leone. Very limited

electronic banking; bring GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of West Africa between Liberia and Guinea. The southern third of the country lies on a coastal plain below 75 m altitude, which continues inland to cover more than half of the country, before reaching an escarpment and inland plateau at 300–600 m altitude. Here there are two significant mountains, the highest of which is Mt Bintumani at 1,948 m. The coast has some significant lagoons. **SIZE:** 71,700 km². 0.3xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a single rainy season (May–Oct). Rainfall generally varies between 2,000 and 3,000 mm. Temperatures vary little throughout the year. Freetown (coastal) rainfall = annual 2,950

mm, monthly 3–791 mm; wettest Jul–Sep, driest Jan–Mar. Freetown temperatures = annual min/max 24–30°C, monthly max 28–31°C; hottest Mar–May, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *Sierra Leone* 2012 by Manson & Knight/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Birding in Sierra Leone* 2009 by Lambert. (2) *The Conservation of the Birds in Gola Forest, Sierra Leone* 1989 by Allport et al. (3) *The Birds of Gola Forest and Tiwai Island, Sierra Leone* 2010 by Klop et al. **WEB:** *Tiwai Island*.

Socotra Island (12–13°N, Yemen)

This fabulous island with amazing scenery and unusual habitats could become a superb ecotourism destination if it wasn't for the safety and security problems of Yemen, and the lack of infrastructure. With 12 endemics and a very distinctive avifauna, the island makes for an excellent addition to a birding trip to Yemen or a separate trip all together. The neighbouring island of Abd al Kuri (AK) is included here and holds one endemic.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. SPECIES (64, 18/66) —EN (12): Jouanin's Petrel (br), Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, *Socotra Grey Shrike*, Socotra Cisticola, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Abd al-Kuri Sparrow (AK), Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting. —BT (1): Forbes-Watson's Swift. —B2 (1): Persian Shearwater. —other: *Socotra White-eye* (EN). Also Harlequin Quail (*arabica*), Masked Booby (*melanops*), Brown Booby, Socotra Cormorant, Sooty Gull, Saunders's Tern,

Bridled Tern, Laughing Dove (ESS *sokotrae*), White-browed Coucal (*sokotrae*), Nubian Nightjar (ESS *jonesi*), Common Kestrel (*archeri*), Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark (ESS *forbeswatsoni*), Somali Starling, Long-billed Pipit (ESS *sokotrae*), Cinnamon-breasted Bunting (ESS *insularis*). —diversity: 190. A blend of Middle Eastern and Afrotropical components. Expect 50–60 sp in 5–10 days. **HABITATS:** arid scrubland, mountains.

AREAS —EBAs: Central Somali coast. East African coastal forests. Jubba and Shabeelle valleys. —sites: Wadi Ayhaft NP & Dixem Highlands. **TIMING (Nov, Apr–May):** best when most birds breed, during and after the rains (Oct–Dec, Apr–May). Forbes-Watson's Swift is absent Sep–Feb. Seabirds breed May–Sep. **EXPLORE:** low. The island is well known, isolated and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Yemen is at civil war and there is no rule of law, although Socotra is quite isolated and less dangerous than the mainland.

CITIES: Hadibu (airport). **EASE —entry:** almost all visitors require a pre-arrival visa for Yemen. There were regular flights to Hadibu from Yemen, but due to unrest in Yemen all flights have been suspended. **—within:** Arabic; little English. Socotra has a basic road network, but public transport is very limited so hire a 4x4 with driver. It is possible to hire a boat to visit Abd el Kuri. Accommodation is fairly basic. **ATTRACTIOnS:** hiking in the mountains. Spectacular landscapes. Diving and snorkelling. **Money:** inexpensive. Rial. Very limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** politically part of Yemen, the island of Socotra lies 230 km east off the Horn of Africa and 350 km south-east of Yemen. Included here is the island of Abd el Kuri which lies 100 km west of Socotra and only 95 km from the Horn of Africa, plus the islands of Samhah and Darsa (The Brothers) that lie between Socotra and Abd el Kuri. Socotra is of continental origin, which means that it is not volcanic, but it is still quite mountainous. A narrow coastal plain gives way inland to a limestone plateau and the Hagier Mts, which reach 1,503 m at their highest point. **SIZE:** 3,840

km², divided between Socotra (3,670 km²), Abd el Kuri (133 km²), Samhah (40 km²) and Darsa (5 km²). **CLIMATE:** sub-tropical and arid, with some rain throughout the year and no distinct peaks. Summers (Apr–Sep) are warmer. Rainfall = annual 258 mm, monthly 12–38 mm; wettest May, Sep–Oct, driest Mar, Jul–Aug. Temperatures = annual min/max 21–31°C, monthly max 27–34°C; hottest Apr–Jun, coolest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook. (2) *Birds of the Middle East* 2010 by Porter & Aspinall, also as ebook. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Yemen* 2008 by McLaughlin/Bradt, outdated. (2) chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** (1) *The populations and distribution of the breeding birds of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen* 2013–4 by Porter & Suleiman. (2) *The Lost World of Socotra* 2009 by Boggs. (3) *Fauna of the Socotra Archipelago* 2003 by Wranik. (4) *Socotra* 2006 by Cheung. **WEB:** *Friends of Soqatra*.

Somalia (8°N–2°S, excluding Somaliland)

With a diabolical safety record and continuous political strife, Somalia is no place to go birding. Some curious birders may wonder about travelling there to look for the region's two endemic larks, but nobody has been foolish enough to attempt it recently. If and when the country is able to sort out its socio-political problems, a small core of hardy birders are likely to make the journey in search of the few regional specialties.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. **SPECIES (22, 37/66) —EN (2):** Ash's Lark, Obbie Lark. —**NE (2):** Somali Boubou, Red Weaver. —**1/2 (4):** Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Lark, Violet-breasted Sunbird, Malindi Pipit. —**other:** Spotted Thick-knee (*ESS dodsoni*), African White-winged Dove, Forbes-Watson's Swift (*ESS bensonii*), Brown-tailed Rock Chat (*ESS validior*), Juba Weaver. —**diversity:** 660. Afrotropical. **HABITATS:** arid coastal grassland, coastal and riverine forest, arid savanna. **AREAS —EBAs:** Central Somali coast. East African coastal forests. Jubba and Shabeelle valleys. —**sites:** the coastal plain at

Jowhar-Warshiikh for the two endemic larks.

TIMING (May–Jul): being a dry country, best during the rains when most birds breed. **EXPLORE:** very high. Very few birders have set foot in Somalia.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Somalia is dangerous to visit and carries an extreme threat of terrorism. **CITIES:** Mogadishu (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities require a visa, which in some cases can be obtained on arrival. There are some regional flights to Mogadishu. Overland travel is strongly discouraged. **—within:** Somali (official), Arabic, some English. Internal travel is not currently an option, but the best way to get around would be with a 4x4 and driver. Tourist standard accommodation is limited to Mogadishu. **MONEY:** expensive. Somali Shilling. Very limited electronic banking; bring GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Somalia, here including the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, but excluding independent Somaliland, is situated on the east coast of the Horn of Africa, north of Kenya, south-east

of Somaliland and east of Ethiopia. It has a broad coastal plain, 100–200 km wide, and the entire country is low-lying except for parts of Puntland, which are quite mountainous and rise to around 2,000 m. The Jubba and Shabeelle Rivers rise in the Ethiopian highlands and join before flowing into the Indian Ocean in the far south. **SIZE:** 500 thousand km². 2xUK, 0.4xSA. **CLIMATE:** hot and dry, with a double peak in rainfall (Apr–Jul and Nov) and Jan–Mar the only rain-free months. Rainfall varies from 300 to 500 mm. Temperatures are cooler when it rains. Mogadishu (south, coast) rainfall = annual 400 mm, monthly 0–82 mm; wettest May–Jul, driest Jan–Mar. Mogadishu temperatures = annual min/max 24–30°C, monthly max 29–31°C; hottest Mar–May, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook. **TRAVEL:** chapter in *Africa* 2013 by Richmond *et al*/Lonely Planet, basic. **OTHER:** *Birds of Somalia* 1998 by Ash & Miskell.

Somaliland (8–11°N)

With fairly pristine landscapes, great scenery and some special birds, the independent state of Somaliland could be a fairly popular birding destination among more hardy travellers if it wasn't for the concerns over security. It was safely accessible for just a few years, during which time some adventurous birders had the chance to visit. However, the safety situation has again deteriorated, so at present visitors should think carefully about visiting.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Horn of Africa. **SPECIES (60, 19/66) —EN (6):** Archer's Buzzard, Somali Pigeon, Sharpe's Lark, Somali Thrush, Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak, Warsangli Linnet. —**BT (6):** Little Brown Bustard, Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Lark (*ESS somalica*), Blanford's Lark, Philippa's Crombec, Somali Wheatear. —**1/2 (3):** Chestnut-naped Francolin, Somali Crow, Archer's Lark. —**B2 (6):** Heuglin's Bustard, Somali Bee-eater, Gillett's Lark, Collared Lark, Somali Short-toed Lark, Bafirawar's Pale Flycatcher. —**other:** Mangrove Reed Warbler (BT). Also Archer's Francolin,

Crab-plover, Crowned Plover (*ESS demissus*), Somali Courser, Double-banded Courser (*hartingi*), White-eyed Gull, Sooty Gull, African Collared Dove (*arabica*), Little Owl (*somaliensis*), Nubian Nightjar, Nyanza Swift (*ESS somalicus*), Lilac-throated Roller, Black-throated Barbet (*ESS blandi*), Yellow-breasted Barbet (*somalicus*), Grey-headed Batis, Red-naped Bushshrike (*ruficeps*), Somali Fiscal, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Foxy Lark (*alopex*), Short-tailed Lark (*fremantlii*), Somali Bulbul, Somali Crombec | Somali Long-billed Crombec, Pale Prinia (*somalica*), Brown-tailed Apalis, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Arabian Warbler (*somaliensis*), White-crowned Starling, Somali Starling, Magpie Starling (*ESS hamertonii*), Little Rock Thrush, Abyssinian Wheatear (*ESS vaurieei*), Somali Sparrow (*castanopterus*), Northern Grosbeak-Canary. —diversity: 400. Mostly Afrotropical; also a Middle Eastern component. Expect 200–300 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** arid grasslands, escarpments, temperate forest, arid savanna. **AREAS —EBAs:** North Somali mountains. North-west Somalia SA. Northern Ethiopia SA. —sites: Daalo for forest and escarpment sp. Burao area for arid savanna and grassland sp. **TIMING (Apr–May, Oct):** being an arid country, best during the rains when most birds breed (Mar–May, Aug–Oct). Passage migrants are most common Sep–Oct and Mar–Apr. Avoid coastal areas May–Aug due to heat. **EXPLORE:** moderate. Somaliland is poorly known, but mostly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is a moderate threat of terrorism throughout. Visitors must be accompanied by an armed tourist police escort at all times. **CITIES:** Hargeisa (capital), Berbera (main port). **EASE —entry:** all visitors require a visa, obtained embassies in London or Addis Ababa. Visas are valid for seven days, but can be extended in-country. There are flights to Hargeisa from Ethiopia,

Djibouti and Somalia. It is possible to cross land borders from Ethiopia (at Wajaale) and Djibouti. —within: Somali; some English. The road and tourism infrastructure is limited, so some camping is necessary for birders. A 4x4 with driver is essential. There are reasonable hotels in the main centres. **ATTRACTIOnS:** excellent scenery. Desert mammals such as Beira and Speke's Gazelle. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Somaliland Shilling. Very limited electronic banking; bring GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** generally regarded to be part of chaotic and dangerous Somalia, but is independent and has a functioning government. It borders on Djibouti to the west, Ethiopia to the south and Somalia to the east, and has a long coastline in the north. A narrow coastal plain gives way to a steep escarpment and mountains, including the Cal Madow with the highest peak at Mt Shimbiris at 2,450 m, with much of the interior lying on a plateau above 1,000 m altitude. **SIZE:** 138 thousand km². 0.6xUK, 0.1xSA. **CLIMATE:** warm and dry, with the only real rain-free period Nov–Feb and a double peak in rainfall (Apr–May and Aug–Sep). Coastal areas are hotter and drier than inland, with rainfall as low as 10 mm along the coast. Winters (Nov–Feb) are cooler. Hargeisa (inland) rainfall = annual 410 mm, monthly 2–67 mm; wettest Apr and Aug–Sep, driest Dec–Feb. Hargeisa temperatures = annual min/max 15–28°C, monthly max 24–31°C; hottest May–Jun and Sep, coolest Nov–Jan.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Somaliland* 2012 by Briggs/Bradt. (2) *Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland* 2013 by Carillet *et al*/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Somalia* 1998 by Ash & Miskell. (2) *The Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden* 1937–1961 by Archer and Godman. (3) *Photospot: Endemic and special birds of Somaliland* 2011 by Cohen *et al*.

South Africa (22–35°S)

South Africa, for good reason, is probably the region's most-birded country. With more than 75 endemics and near-endemics and essentially two endemic bird families (rockjumpers and sugarbirds), it is among Africa's top birding countries. Add to this Africa's finest travel infrastructure, good food, low prices, easy birding in spectacular landscapes, fantastic game reserves, wineries and a whole host of other tourist attractions, and you have a first class destination for any birder.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. SPECIES (560, 2/66) —EN (42): Grey-winged Francolin, Southern Red-winged Francolin, Southern Bald Ibis, Forest Buzzard, Blue Korhaan, Southern Black Korhaan, Hottentot Buttonquail, Knysna Turaco, Knysna Woodpecker, Ground Woodpecker, Cape Parrot, Southern Tchagra, Cape Rockjumper, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Agulhas Long-billed Lark, Karoo Lark, Red Lark, Rudd's Lark, Botha's Lark, Large-billed Lark, Cape Bulbul, Victorin's Warbler, Knysna Warbler, Drakensberg Prinia, Bush Blackcap, Cape Sugarbird, Pied Starling, Chorister Robin-Chat, Cape Rock Thrush, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Buff-streaked Chat, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Weaver, Mountain Pipit (br), African Rock Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Forest Canary, Cape Siskin, Drakensberg Siskin, Protea Canary. —NE (36): Cape Francolin, Cape Vulture, Black Harrier, Jackal Buzzard, Karoo Korhaan (*ESS vigorsii*), Northern Black Korhaan, Blue Crane, Southern Boubou, Fairy Flycatcher, Grey Tit, Cape Long-billed Lark, Black-eared Sparrow-Lark, Cape Clapper Lark, Melodious Lark, Slater's Lark, South African Cliff Swallow (br), Cape Grassbird (*ESS natalensis* + *intermedius* + *afer*), Barratt's Warbler (*barratti* + *godfreyi* + *cathkinensis*), Cloud Cisticola (*ESS textrix* + *major*), Karoo Prinia (*ESS maculosa* + *exultans*), Namaqua Warbler (*ESS substriata*), Cinnamon-breasted Warbler (*ESS subcinnamomea*), Karoo Eremomela, Layard's Tit-babbler (*ESS layardi* + *subsolana*), Cape White-eye, Gurney's Sugarbird (*ESS gurneyi*), Olive Thrush (*ESS transvaalensis* + *culminans* + *olivaceus* + *pondensis*), Karoo Thrush, Karoo Scrub Robin (*ESS cinerea*), Brown Scrub Robin, Fiscal Flycatcher, Sickle-winged Chat (*ESS simuata*), Southern Double-collared Sunbird (*ESS subalaris*), Swee Waxbill, Cape Longclaw (*ESS capensis*), Cape Canary (*ESS canicollis*), Black-headed Canary. —BT (59): South African Shelduck, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Maccoa Duck, Southern Crested Guineafowl, Orange River Francolin, Natal Francolin, Swainson's Francolin, African Penguin, Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, Spectacled Petrel, Cape Gannet, Crowned Cormorant, Bank Cormorant, Striped Flufftail, White-winged Flufftail, Hartlaub's Gull, Burchell's Sandgrouse, African Grass Owl, African Black Swift (*ESS barbatus*), Amur Falcon, Woodward's Batis, Olive Bushshrike (*ESS olivaceus*), Bokmakierie (*ESS zeylonus*), Short-clawed Lark, Barlow's Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark, Pink-billed Lark, White-throated Swallow, Pearl-breasted Swallow, Greater Striped Swallow, Lazy Cisticola (*ESS minor*), Grey-backed Cisticola (*ESS namaqua* + *subruficapilla* + *jamesi*), Rufous-winged Cisticola, Levaillant's Cisticola (*ESS elegans*), Pale-crowned Cisticola (*egregius*), Wing-snapping Cisticola | Ayres's Cisticola, Rudd's Apalis, Rufous-eared Warbler (*ESS pectoralis*), Green-backed Camaroptera (*ESS brachyura*), Orange River White-eye (*ESS sundevalli*), Spotted Ground Thrush (*ESS guttata*), White-throated Robin-Chat, Red-capped Robin-Chat (*ESS natalensis*), Malachite Sunbird, Neergaard's Sunbird, Yellow-crowned Bishop, Southern Red Bishop, Long-tailed Widowbird (*progne*), Pink-

throated Twinspot, Purple Indigobird, Dusky Indigobird, Zambezi Indigobird, Cape Wagtail, Bushveld Pipit | Bush Pipit, Lemon-breasted Canary, Streaky-headed Seedeater (*ESS humilis*), Cape Bunting. —1/2 (2): African Black Oystercatcher, Karoo Long-billed Lark (*ESS subcoronata + gilli*). —B2 (25): Cape Cormorant, Burchell's Courser, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Namaqua Sandgrouse, White-backed Mousebird, Taita Falcon, Cape Penduline Tit (*ESS gigi*), Sabota Lark, Monotonous Lark, African Reed Warbler, Burchell's Starling, Pale-winged Starling, Karoo Chat (*ESS pollux*), Tractrac Chat (*ESS nebulosa + tractrac*), Ant-eating Chat, Mountain Wheatear, Grey Sunbird | Mouse-coloured Sunbird (*ESS veroxii*), Sociable Weaver, Great Sparrow, Cape Sparrow (*ESS melanurus*), Scaly-feathered Finch, Shaft-tailed Whydah, Black-throated Canary, Yellow Canary, Lark-like Bunting (*sloggetti*). —other: Southern White-bellied Korhaan (BT), Striped Flufftail (EN), Cape Gull (BT), Grey-breasted Green Pigeon (BT), Cape Eagle-Owl (NE), Cape Barred Owl (EN), Woodward's Barbet (BT), Southern Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher (EN), Bradfield's Lark (1/2), Sabota Lark (BT), Agulhas Clapper Lark (EN), Cape White-eye (EN), Green White-eye (NE), Four-coloured Bushshrike (BT), Maputoland Scrub Robin (BT), Brown Scrub Robin (EN), Pretoria Rock Thrush (NE), Damara Canary (BT). Red-winged Francolin (BT), Orange River Francolin (BT). Also White-backed Duck, African Black Duck (*ESS sparsa*), Southern Pochard, Red-necked Spurfowl (*ESS castaneiventer*), Secretarybird, Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Verreaux's Eagle, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Ludwig's Bustard, Denham's Bustard (*ESS stanleyi*), Red-crested Korhaan, African Rail | African Water Rail, African Snipe (*ESS nigripennis*), Chestnut-banded Plover, Bronze-winged Courser, Black-winged Pratincole, Damara Tern, Burchell's Coucal (*burchellii*), Livingstone's Turaco, Purple-crested Turaco, Southern White-faced Owl, Marsh Owl, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar,

Bradfield's Swift (*ESS deserticola*), Red-faced Mousebird (*ESS indicus*), Eastern Bronzewing Pigeon, Brown-hooded Kingfisher (*ESS albiventris*), Half-collared Kingfisher, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-eared Barbet, Crested Barbet, Red-fronted Tinkerbird (*pusillus*), Acacia Pied Barbet (*leucomelas*), Red-throated Wryneck, Bearded Woodpecker (*coalescens*), Olive Woodpecker (*ESS griseocephalus*), Pygmy Falcon, Rock Kestrel, Greater Kestrel, Brown-headed Parrot, Cape Batis (*ESS capensis*), Pririt Batis, Black-backed Puffback (*ESS cubla*), Crimson-breasted Shrike, Magpie Shrike, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Ashy Tit, Fork-tailed Drongo (*adsimilis*), White-necked Raven, Eastern Nicator, Fawn-coloured Lark, Dusky Lark, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark (*ESS verticalis*), African Red-eyed Bulbul (*ESS superior*), Sombre Greenbul (*importunus*), Terrestrial Brownbul (*ESS terrestris*), Blue Swallow, Long-billed Crombec, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (*ESS voelckeri + ruficapilla*), Little Rush Warbler (*ESS baboecala*), Wailing Cisticola (*ESS monticola + lais + maculatus*), Nedicky, Desert Cisticola, Black-chested Prinia (*ESS ortleppi*), Bar-throated Apalis, Barred Wren-Warbler, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler (*ESS subcaerulea*), African Pied Wagtail (*aguimp*), Cape Glossy Starling (*ESS culminator*), Black-bellied Starling, Red-winged Starling, Orange Ground Thrush (*ESS gurneyi*), Chat Flycatcher (*ESS seimundi*), Cape Robin-Chat (*ESS namaquensis*), Kalahari Scrub Robin, White-bellied Sunbird (*ESS arestus*), Dusky Sunbird, Yellow-throated Petronia (*ESS supercilialis*), Spectacled Weaver (*brevior*), African Golden Weaver | Yellow Weaver (*subaureus*), Southern Brown-throated Weaver (*marleyi*), Southern Masked Weaver (*nigrifrons*), Yellow Bishop (*ESS approximans + macrorhynchus*), Red-headed Finch, Jameson's Firefinch, Nicholson's Pipit, Striped Pipit, Brimstone Canary (*ESS sulphurata*), White-throated Canary. —diversity: 830 (9th). Distinct temperate avifauna with high degree of

endemism in the south, Afrotropical in the north. Expect 500–550 sp in 3–4 weeks. **HABITATS:** Karoo shrublands, Fynbos scrublands, Benguela current shorelines, Afromontane forest, montane grasslands, coastal sand forests, savanna, desert. **AREAS** —EBAs: Cape fynbos, Karoo, Lesotho highlands, South African forests, South-east African coast, Southern African grasslands. —sites: Tankwa Karoo & Bushmanland for Karoo sp, Hottentot's Holland Mts, De Hoop & West Coast NP for Fynbos sp, Wakkerstroom & Sani Pass for montane grassland sp, Mkhuze GR & Kruger NP for savanna sp, Kgalagadi & Polokwane GR for arid savanna sp, Grootvadersbosch, Nxumoni & Magoebaskloof for Afromontane forest sp. Also Eshowe & St Lucia. **TIMING** (Oct–Nov, Jan): best to visit the west in spring (Sep–Nov), after the rains and when most birds breed. Best to visit the east in early summer, once the rains start (Nov–Jan) and more migrants are present (Dec–Mar). Highland areas are unproductive in winter (May–Aug). **EXPLORE:** very low. South Africa is one of the best-known countries on the continent, with a large number of resident birders.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: overall South Africa is a safe country to visit, although petty crime is common so visitors should be careful about where they go, especially after dark. It is the second most-visited African country by international visitors. **CITIES:** Johannesburg (main airport), Cape Town, Durban. **EASE** —entry: most westerners do not require a visa. Johannesburg is very well connected with international and regional flights; there are also international and regional flights to Cape Town and Durban. Overland travel to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia is not difficult. —within: English. South Africa has a very good road infrastructure, so self-drive is popular and 4x4 not generally necessary. There is an excellent network of internal flights.

Public transport is underdeveloped so a car is essential for getting to most wildlife sites. Regular pelagic trips are offered out of Cape Town with *Cape Town Pelagics*. Many tour companies offer tours. There are many excellent national and site guides. **ATTRACTIOnS:** abundant mammal watching at Kruger, Kgalagadi, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi and various luxury private reserves. Scenery and hiking in the Drakensberg Mts, Boer War Battleground historical sites. Human archaeological sites such as the Cradle of Humankind. Whale watching and White Shark cage diving around Cape Town. Flower watching in Namaqualand. **MONEY:** very inexpensive. Rand. Widespread electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located at the far south of the continent, South Africa has land borders with Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Mozambique, as well as totally encircling Lesotho, and a very long coastline. A narrow plain runs along most of the coast, inland of which an escarpment and associated mountain ranges rise, often steeply, to a plateau above 1,000 m altitude, which covers most of the country. The highest point is Mafadi in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg at 3,450 m. The two largest rivers are the Orange River, which forms part of the border with Namibia, and the Limpopo River, which borders Zimbabwe and parts of Botswana. **SIZE** (9): 1.22 million km², 5xUK. **CLIMATE:** mostly sub-tropical and generally arid, with 30% of the country receiving less than 250 mm and only 10% more than 750 mm. There are three distinct climatic zones, to do with the timing of rainfall; the southwest receives winter rains (May–Aug), most of the rest receives summer rains (Oct–Mar), and the contact zone receives year-round rain. Rainfall increases from west to east and is higher near the east coast. Winters are significantly cooler than summers. Johannesburg (east) rainfall = annual 540 mm, monthly 4–125; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Johannesburg temperatures = annual min/max 10–22°C, monthly max 17–26°C; hottest Dec–Feb, coolest May–Jul.

Cape Town (south-west) rainfall = annual 480 mm, monthly 1–93; wettest Jun–Aug, driest Dec–Feb. Cape Town temperatures = annual min/max 12–22°C, monthly max 17–26°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) SASOL Birds of Southern Africa 2011 by Sinclair *et al.* (2) Roberts Bird Guide 2016 by Chittenden *et al.* (3) Newman's Birds of Southern Africa 2010 by Newman. **SOUND:** Southern African Bird Sounds 1995 by Gibbon. **APPS:** (1) Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa. (2) Sasol eBirds of Southern Africa. (3) Rare Bird Alert. **SITE:** (1) Southern African Birdfinder 2006 by Cohen *et al.* (2) The Chamberlain Guide to Birding Gauteng 2009 by Peacock & Marais. **TRAVEL:** (1) South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland 2015 by Bainbridge *et al.*/Lonely Planet. (2) The Rough Guide to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland 2015 by Heuler *et al.*, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) Roberts Birds of Southern Africa 2005 by Hockey *et al.* (2) Roberts

South Sudan (4–12°N)

South Sudan, the newest country in the region, holds a good array of bird species and a few specials. While it is underdeveloped, it would make a great destination for adventuresome birders if it was not for the ongoing conflicts that mar the country's social landscape and make it very dangerous to visit. With one of the continent's greatest wildlife spectacles on offer, a migration of one million White-eared Kob, South Sudan could become a reasonably popular destination among hard core wildlife enthusiasts.

Geographic Variation of Southern African Birds 2012 by Chittenden *et al.* (3) *Roberts Nests and Eggs of Southern African Birds* 2012 by Tarboton. (4) *The Atlas of Southern African Birds* 1997 by Harrison *et al.* (5) *Important Bird Areas of Southern Africa* 1998 by Barnes. (6) *The 2015 Eskom Red Data Book of Birds of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* 2015 by Taylor *et al.* (7) *The Complete Book of Southern African Birds* 1997 by Ginn *et al.* (8) *Chamberlains LBJs* 2012 by Peacock. (9) *Chamberlain's Waders* 2016 by Peacock. (10) *Roberts Bird Guide: Kruger National Park and Adjacent Lowveld* 2008 by Chittenden & Whyte. (11) *Guide to Birds of the Kruger National Park* 2016 by Tarboton & Ryan. (12) *Smithers' Mammals of Southern Africa* 2012 by Apps. (13) *Stuarts' Field Guide to Mammals of Southern Africa* 2015 by Stuart & Stuart. **WEB:** *BirdLife South Africa Birding Routes. Cape Birding Route. The Diamond Birding Route. Eastern Cape Birding. Greater Limpopo Birding Route. Southern African Bird Atlas Project. Southern African Birding. Southern African Birdnet. Zululand Birding Route.*

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. **SPECIES** (4, 53/66) —1/2 (2): Cinnamon Weaver, Abyssinian Waxbill. —other: *Ethiopian Saw-wing* (1/2), *Mangbettu Saw-wing* (1/2), *Mongalla Cisticola* (1/2). Also Schlegel's Francolin, Heuglin's Francolin, Clapperton's Francolin (*ESS heuglini*), Shoebill, Black-breasted Barbet, Niam-niam Parrot, Emin's Shrike, Yellow-billed Shrike (*ESS caliginosa*), Rufous-rumped Lark, Red-winged Lark (*ESS kathangorensis*), Little Rush Warbler (*ESS sudanensis*), Cinnamon Bracken Warbler (*cavei*), Wing-snapping Cisticola | Ayres's Cisticola (*imatong*), Rufous-crowned Eremomela (*ESS latukae*), Spotted Thrush-

Babbler (*turdinus*), Dusky Babbler, *Abyssinian Ground Thrush* (*ESS hadii*), Spotted Ground Thrush (*ESS maxis*), Equatorial Akalat (*ESS acholiensis*), Northern Masked Weaver. —diversity: 810 (10th). Strongly Afrotropical. **HABITATS:** Guinea woodlands, moist savannas, swamps. **AREAS —sites:** The Sudd for Shoebill, Cinnamon Weaver and wetland sp. Bengangai for Niam-niam Parrot, Boma NP & Bandingilo NP for White-eared Kob. Imatong Mts for Afromontane forest sp. Kidepo GR for savanna sp. **TIMING (Jan–Mar):** best in the dry season (Nov–Mar) when access is easier and Palaearctic migrants present. **EXPLORE:** very high. South Sudan is little-explored.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: South Sudan is at civil war and among the least safe countries to visit in the region, with a high risk of encountering armed conflict. Border areas with Sudan and CAR are especially volatile. **CITIES:** Juba (capital). **EASE —entry:** most visitors require a visa, issued on arrival for a select few nationalities. There are a limited number of regional flights to Juba. It is not advised to use any land borders. —within: English and Arabic (official); English is spoken fairly widely. Internal transport infrastructure is almost non-existent. The only asphalted road of any length is the main road from Juba to Uganda, so hire a 4x4 with a driver who knows the routes and safety conditions. Tourist quality accommodation is limited, so camping may be necessary. **ATTRACTI**ONS: White-eared Kob migration. **MONEY:** expensive. South Sudanese Pound. Very limited electronic banking; bring USD.

GEOGRAPHY: situated on the north-eastern edge of Central Africa, east of CAR, north of DR Congo, Uganda and Kenya and west of Ethiopia, South Sudan is a landlocked country that was, until 2011, part of Sudan, its northern neighbour. Most of the country is relatively flat and lies at 400–500 m, although altitude rises in the south-east to an altitude of 3,187 m at Mt Kinyeti. The White Nile flows into South Sudan from Uganda in the south and out of South Sudan and into Sudan in the north, forming the massive swamplands of the Sudd in South Sudan. **SIZE:** 620 thousand km². 2.6xUK, 0.5xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a single long rainy season (Apr–Oct). Temperatures fluctuate little through the year. Juba (south) rainfall = annual 970 mm, monthly 4–149 mm; wettest May and Jul–Aug, driest Dec–Feb. Juba temperatures = annual min/max 21–34°C, monthly max 30–37°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jul–Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. (2) *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe, almost all sp. (3) *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al.*, also as ebook, most sp. (4) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey, most sp. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** *South Sudan* 2013 by Lovell-Hoare & Lovell-Hoare/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds with Notes on Habitat and Status* 1987 by Nikolaus. (2) *Birds of the Sudan* 1955 by Cave & MacDonald. (3) *Birds of South Sudan* 1989 by Nikolaus. **WEB:** *Bahr-el-Jebel Safaris*.

Sudan (10–22°N)

This arid country in North-East Africa is little-known by birders despite holding some interesting species. Instead, it is perhaps best known for social strife in the Darfur region. While most of the country is safe for visitors, travel restrictions can make it difficult to get around, although adventurous birders may find it worthwhile to visit. The enigmatic Red Sea Cliff Swallow is also of interest for those seeking a challenge.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. **SPECIES** (14, 41/66) —EN (1): Red Sea Cliff Swallow. —BT (2): White-headed Babbler, Cinnamon Weaver. —1/2 (1): Kordofan Rufous Sparrow. —B2 (1): Rusty Bush Lark (*ESS lynesi*). —other: Sand Partridge, Clapperton's Francolin (*ESS koenigseggi*), Erckel's Francolin, Arabian Bustard (*ESS butleri*), Nubian Bustard, Savile's Bustard, Little Owl (*spilogastera*), Nubian Nightjar (*ESS nubicus*), Golden Nightjar (*ESS eximius*), Long-tailed Nightjar (*ESS nigricans*), Mottled Swift (*ESS furensis*), Vieillot's Barbet (*vieilloti*), Grey-headed Batis (*ESS lynesi*), Rosy-patched Bushshrike (*ESS kordofanicus*), Arabian Grey Shrike (*ESS jebelmarrae*), Kordofan Lark, Green-backed Eremomela (*ESS elegans*), Northern Anteater Chat (*ESS sudanensis*), Palestine Sunbird, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Northern Masked Weaver, Striolated Bunting (*jebelmarrae*). —diversity: 630. Palaearctic and Afrotropical elements. **HABITATS**: thickets along the Nile River, arid savanna, desert. **AREAS —EBAs**: North-east Sudan SA. —sites: Tuti Is in Khartoum for White-headed Babbler and Cinnamon Weaver. Darfur & Kordofan provinces for Kordofan Lark, Kordofan Rufous Sparrow and Rusty Bush Lark. Port Sudan area to search for Red Sea Cliff Swallow. **TIMING (Aug–Sep, Dec)**: being a dry country, best at the end of the rains (Aug–Dec). Most migrants are present Nov–Mar.

Avoid the hottest time of the year (Apr–Jun). **EXPLORE**: high. Sudan is rather poorly known, although is mostly arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: although the risk of crime and terrorism in Sudan is generally considered to be low, areas bordering South Sudan in the south and Chad in the west are considered unsafe. **CITIES**: Khartoum (capital). **EASE —entry**: most nationalities require a pre-arrival visa. Israeli passport stamps may be a problem. Register with the Aliens Department within three days of arrival. Khartoum has a limited number of regional and international flights; some also land at Port Sudan. Overland travel is not difficult. —within: Arabic and English (official). Travel permits are required to visit some areas of the country. Sudan has a limited road network, so it is best to hire a 4x4 with driver to get around. There are a limited number of internal flights, which are often subject to last-minute changes. Most larger towns have reasonable accommodation. **ATTRACTIOnS**: historical sites such as Meroe Pyramids, Gebel Barkal and El Kurru Tombs. Diving on the Red Sea Coast. **MONEY**: moderate. Sudanese Pound. Limited electronic banking; bring GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: located in North-East Africa, south of Egypt, east of Chad, west of Ethiopia and Eritrea and north of South Sudan. Most of the country is covered in flat plains, with a narrow coastal plain along the Red Sea Coast, but high mountain ranges include the Red Sea Hills in the north-east which peak at 2,780 m at Mt Hamoyet, and Marrah Mts in the west, with Deriba Caldera at 3,042 m the highest point in the country. The Blue Nile from the east and White Nile from the south join at Khartoum and flow northwards into Egypt. **SIZE (3)**: 1.89 million km². 1.5xSA, 8xUK. **CLIMATE**: generally dry and hot, with winter rainfall along the coast

(Oct–Dec) and summer rainfall across most of the country (Jul–Sep). Rainfall increases to the south and with altitude. Winters are colder. Khartoum (south) rainfall = annual 160 mm, monthly 0–75; wettest months Jul–Sep. Khartoum temperatures = annual min/max 22–37°C, monthly max 32–42°C; hottest Apr–Jun, coolest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. (2) *Birds of the Horn of Africa* 2011 by Redman *et al*, also as ebook, almost all sp. (3) *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey, most sp. **SOUND**: *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis.

TRAVEL: *Sudan* 2012 by Ibbotson & Lovell-Hoare/Bradt. **OTHER**: (1) *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds with Notes on Habitat and Status* 1987 by Niklaus. (2) *Birds of the Sudan* 1955 by Cave & MacDonald. **WEB**: *Birding Sudan*.

Swaziland (26–27°S)

This small, varied country next to South Africa has a few good wildlife reserves but offers nothing to birders that South Africa does not. For those interested in seeing a different country and culture or birding a little visited region, Swaziland is worth a short visit.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES** (treated as part of South Africa, so not assessed separately) —other: Southern Red-winged Francolin, Striped Flufftail, Southern Bald Ibis, Knysna Turaco, Ground Woodpecker, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Buff-streaked Chat, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Blue Swallow, Gurney's Sugarbird, Cape Grassbird, Bush Blackcap. —diversity: 480. Mostly Afrotropical. **HABITATS**: montane grassland, montane forest, savanna. **AREAS —EBAs**: South African forests. South-east African coast. —sites: Malolotja NR for montane sp. Hlane GR for lowland sp. **TIMING (Nov–Jan)**: best at the start of the rains, when most birds breed. Highland areas are unproductive in winter (May–Aug). **EXPLORE**: low. Swaziland is small and well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of violent crime is very low. **CITIES**: Mbabane (capital). **EASE —entry**: most visitors do not require a visa. There are a limited number of flights from neighbouring South Africa. Most visitors arrive overland from South Africa. —within: English. There is a good road infrastructure; self-drive is popular. A good range of accommodation is available at most sites. **ATTRACTIOnS**: annual grass festival by the King of Swaziland. Game viewing at Hlane & Mkhaya GRs. Mantenga Cultural Village. **MONEY**: very inexpensive. Lilangeni, which trades 1:1 with the South African Rand, also legal tender. Widespread electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY**: this landlocked country is bordered by Mozambique in the east and South Africa on all other sides. Landscapes are fairly varied; generally altitude increases from 150 m in the lowlands of the east to 1,862 m at Emlembé in the west. The Lebombo Mts form the eastern border with Mozambique. **SIZE**: 17,400 km². 0.1xUK. **CLIMATE**: sub-tropical, with a pronounced summer rainfall (Nov–Mar). Winters are cooler. Mbabane rainfall = annual 1,340 mm, monthly 16–228 mm; wettest Dec–

Feb, driest May–Jul. Mbabane temperatures = annual min/max 11–23°C, monthly max 19–25°C; hottest Dec–Feb, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** SASOL Birds of Southern Africa 2011 by Sinclair *et al.* **SOUND:** Southern African Bird Sounds 1995 by Gibbon. **APPS:** Roberts VII Multimedia

Tanzania (1–12°S)

With nearly 40 endemics and a high species diversity, Tanzania is among Africa's top birding destinations. From a birder's perspective, the country is split in two. The easily accessible northern savanna parks with a good, if somewhat expensive infrastructure and excellent large game viewing opportunities, where birds are easy to see but there are fewer endemics. And the endemic-rich montane forests of the Eastern Arc Mts, including the Usambara, Udzungwa, Rubeho and Uluguru Mts, that hold some of the most exciting birds on the continent. These mountains are mostly remote, difficult to access and require putting up with a high level of discomfort, but for the world lister the rewards are great. With an exemplary safety record and well-developed tourist infrastructure, Tanzania will continue to grow as a top birding destination, the only downside being the expense of travel.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

East Africa. **SPECIES (366, 3/66) —EN (39):** Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Udzungwa Forest Partridge, Rubeho Forest Partridge, Pemba Green Pigeon, Pemba Scops Owl, Usambara Eagle-Owl, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill, Fischer's Lovebird, Yellow-collared Lovebird, Reichenow's Batis, Uluguru Bushshrike,

Birds of Southern Africa. SITE: Southern African Birdfinder 2006 by Cohen *et al.* **TRAVEL:** (1) Swaziland 2012 by Unwin/Bradt. (2) South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland 2015 by Bainbridge *et al./Lonely Planet.* (3) *The Rough Guide to South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* 2015 by Heuler *et al.*, ebook. **OTHER:** (1) Swaziland Bird Atlas 1994 by Parker. (2) *Birds of the Malolotja Nature Reserve, Swaziland* 2003 by Boycott & Parker. **WEB:** Southern African Birding - Swaziland.

Beesley's Lark, Uluguru Mountain Greenbul, Yellow-throated Mountain Greenbul, Usambara Greenbul, Kilombero Cisticola, Mrs Moreau's Warbler, Rubeho Warbler, Tanzanian Illadopsis, Pemba White-eye, Kilimanjaro White-eye, South Pare White-eye, Usambara Hyliota, Ashy Starling, Usambara Thrush, Rubeho Akalat, Usambara Akalat, Iringa Akalat, Banded Green Sunbird, Moreau's Sunbird, Loveridge's Sunbird, Hofmann's Sunbird, Pemba Sunbird, Rufous-winged Sunbird, Rufous-tailed Weaver, Ruvu Weaver, Kilombero Weaver, Usambara Weaver, Kipengere Seedeater. —NE (5): Shelley's Greenbul (ESS *roehli*), Kretschmer's Longbill (ESS *kretschmeri*), Spot-throat (ESS *stictigula*), Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird, Usambara Double-collared Sunbird. —BT (12): Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Dark Batis, Green-headed Oriole (*amani*), Buff-bellied Penduline Tit, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Karamoja Apalis, Long-billed Forest Warbler | Long-billed Tailorbird (ESS *moreaui*), Red-capped Forest Warbler | African Tailorbird (ESS *altus*), Mbulu White-eye, Dappled Mountain Robin (ESS *sanjei* + *amani*), Swahili Sparrow. —1/2 (40): Fischer's Turaco (ESS *zanzibaricus*), Hartlaub's Turaco, Sokoke Scops Owl, Usambaro Barbet, Mombasa Woodpecker, Forest Batis (ESS *mixta*), Eastern Black-headed Batis, Grey-

crested Helmetshrike, Fülleborn's Black Boubou (ESS *usambaricus*), East Coast Boubou, Long-tailed Fiscal, Red-throated Tit, Athi Short-toed Lark, Black-headed Mountain Greenbul, Sharpe's Greenbul, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Hunter's Cisticola, Black-lored Cisticola, Churring Cisticola (ESS *njombe*), Coastal Cisticola, Chapin's Apalis (ESS *chapini*), Northern Pied Babbler (ESS *rufuensis*), Hildebrandt's Starling, Kenrick's Starling (ESS *kenricki*), Abbott's Starling, Sharpe's Akalat (ESS *usambarae*), Amani Sunbird, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Tsavo Sunbird, Kenya Rufous Sparrow, Bertram's Weaver, Taveta Golden Weaver, Tanzania Masked Weaver, Fire-fronted Bishop, Zanzibar Red Bishop, Montane Marsh Widowbird, Jackson's Widowbird, Sokoke Pipit, Southern Grosbeak-Canary, Yellow-browed Seedeater. —B2 (35): Kenya Crested Guineafowl, Dimorphic Egret, White-headed Mousebird, Mangrove Kingfisher, Böhm's Bee-eater, Eastern Green Tinkerbird, Brown-breasted Barbet, Speckle-throated Woodpecker, Taita Falcon, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Three-streaked Tchagra, East Coast Puffback, Cinnamon-breasted Tit (pallidiventris), Fischer's Sparrow-Lark, Pink-breasted Lark, Red-winged Lark, Southern Mountain Greenbul, Fischer's Greenbul, Tiny Greenbul, Lynes's Cisticola, White-winged Apalis, Kungwe Apalis, Scaly Chatterer (ESS *mentalis*), Fischer's Starling, White-chested Alethe, Olive-flanked Robin-Chat, Plain-backed Sunbird (*yokanae*), Golden-winged Sunbird, Forest Double-collared Sunbird, Black Bishop (friederichseni), Red-naped Widowbird (*suahelicus*), Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Grey-headed Silverbill, Pangani Longclaw, Rosy-breasted Longclaw. —other: Scheffler's Owlet (B2), Usambara Nightjar (B2), Coastal Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (1/2), White-lined Barbet (EN), Woodward's Barbet (1/2), Yellow-cheeked Barbet (EN), Emin's Barbet (EN), Southern Rosy-patched Bushshrike (1/2), Uhehe Fiscal (EN), Usambara Drongo (EN), Mbulu Olive-flanked Robin-Chat (EN), Northern Olive-flanked Robin-Chat (1/2), Gorgeous Sunbird (BT), White-tailed Cisticola (EN), Schalow's Wheatear (1/2), Usambara Bluebill (EN). **Montane White-eye** (B2). Also African Pygmy Goose, Scaly Francolin (ESS *usambarae* + *uzungwensis*), Hildebrandt's Francolin, Cranch's Spurfowl, Olive Ibis (*akeleyorum*), Secretarybird, Southern Banded Snake Eagle, African Goshawk (*pembensis*), Mountain Buzzard, Hartlaub's Bustard, Grey Crowned Crane, Chestnut-banded Plover, Double-banded Courser, Grey-breasted Green Pigeon, Livingstone's Turaco (*reichenowi*), Common Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Green Yellowbill, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo (*patulus*), African Grass Owl, African Dusky Nightjar, Montane Nightjar, Bar-tailed Trogon, Racket-tailed Roller, Half-collared Kingfisher, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Southern Ground Hornbill, Pale-billed Hornbill, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, White-eared Barbet (*kilimensis*), Green Barbet (ESS *howelli*), Moustached Green Tinkerbird, White-headed Barbet (ESS *lynesi*), Pallid Honeyguide, Olive Woodpecker (ESS *kilimensis*), Greater Kestrel (*arthuri*), Dickinson's Kestrel, Brown-headed Parrot, Black-and-white Flycatcher (*changamensis*), Pale Batis, Pygmy Batis, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye (ESS *kungwensis*), Black-fronted Bushshrike, Marsh Tchagra (*reichenowi*), Pink-footed Puffback (ESS *kungwensis*), Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike (ESS *muenzneri*), Magpie Shrike (*aeguatorialis*), Souza's Shrike (*burigi*), Square-tailed Drongo (*muenzneri*), Eastern Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, White-tailed Crested Flycatcher (ESS *subcaerulea*), White-tailed Lark, Short-tailed Lark, Kakamega Greenbul (*kungwensis*), Little Greenbul (ESS *zanzibarica*), Yellow-whiskered Greenbul (ESS *australis*), Grey-olive Greenbul, Placid Greenbul, Yellow-streaked Greenbul (*uzungwensis* + *kungwensis*), Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (ESS *ochrogularis*), Mountain Yellow Warbler, Bar-throated Apalis (ESS *uluguru* + *parensis*), Brown-headed Apalis, Black-headed Apalis, Brown-headed Apalis, Rufous Chatterer (*schnitzeri*), Northern Pied Babbler (*rufuensis*), African

Hill Babbler (*ESS stierlingi*), Brown Parisoma (*ESS clara*), Black-bellied Starling (*ESS vaughani*), Red-tailed Ant Thrush (*rufus*), **Abyssinian Ground Thrush** (*rowei*), Orange Ground Thrush, Abyssinian Thrush (*ESS deckeni*), Bearded Scrub Robin (*ESS greenwayi*), Silverbird, Swynnerton's Robin (*ESS rodgersi*), **Bocage's Akalat** (*ESS ilyai*), **Alexander's Akalat** (*ESS kungwensis*), East Coast Akalat (*ESS alticola*), Collared Palm Thrush, Moorland Chat | Alpine Chat (*olimotiensis*), Northern Anteater Chat (*cryptoleuca*), Arnott's Chat, Olive Sunbird (*ESS granti*), Grey Sunbird | Mouse-coloured Sunbird (*zanzibarica*), **Whyte's Double-collared Sunbird** (*ESS skye*), Regal Sunbird (*ESS anderseni*), Black-bellied Sunbird, Grey-capped Social Weaver (*ESS dorsalis*), Chestnut Sparrow, **Stuhlmann's Weaver** (*ESS sharpii*), African Golden Weaver | Yellow Weaver, Cardinal Quelea, Black Bishop (*friederichseni*), **Central Red Bishop**, Fawn-breasted Waxbill (*ESS marwitzii*), Red-backed Mannikin, Fülleborn's Longclaw (*fülleborni*), Bushveld Pipit | Bush Pipit (*blayneyi*), Oriole Finch, Southern Citril. —**diversity:** 1,050 (3rd). Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 500–600 sp in 3–4 weeks. **HABITATS:** montane forest for endemics. Swamps, savannas, miombo woodland, lowland forest. **AREAS —EBAs:** Albertine Rift mountains. Dry woodlands west of Lake Victoria SA. East African coastal forests. Kenyan mountains. Tanzania - Malawi mountains. Pemba, Serengeti plains. Southwest Tanzanian swamps SA. Kilombero floodplain SA. —**sites:** Usambara, Uluguru & Udzungwa Mts for montane forest sp. Mikumi, Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater & Tarangire for savanna sp. Also Kilombero Swamp, Lariboro Plains, Arusha NP & Pemba Is. **TIMING (Apr, Sep-Oct):** the northwest is best during the rains (Feb–May), when most birds breed. The mountains are best before the rains (Sep–Oct). Avoid the main rains in the mountains (Nov–May). **EXPLORE:** very high. There are many remote mountains and the west is little visited.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low. **CITIES:** Dar es Salaam (capital), Arusha (gateway to the north). **EASE —entry:** visas can generally be obtained on arrival. Arusha & Dar es Salaam are quite well connected with regional and international flights. Land borders to Kenya, Uganda and Zambia are generally fine to use. —**within:** Swahili; English is spoken widely. There is a reasonable road infrastructure, but a 4x4 is essential for reaching some of the top birding sites. There is a good internal flight network between the main tourist sites. A range of accommodation on offer at most sites, although camping is necessary in the mountains. There are a few good national and site guides. Several international operators offer tours.

ATTRACTIOnS: wildlife in Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Tarangire, Ruaha, Selous and Mikumi. Climbing Mt Kilimanjaro. Historical towns of Zanzibar and Pemba.

Chimpanzee trekking at Gombe Stream NP
MONEY: expensive; very expensive on the main tourism circuit. Tanzanian Shilling. Fairly limited electronic banking; bring some GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the coast of East Africa, south of Kenya and north of Mozambique, and with a long western inland border with Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Zambia and Malawi. Landscapes are varied. The Great Rift Valley is the most significant geographical feature and splits into the Eastern or Gregory Rift and Western or Albertine Rift. Most of the country is low-lying, but there are numerous high mountains, most along the edge of the Eastern Rift and including the Udzungwas, Rubehos, Ngurus, Ulugurus, Usambaras, Crater Highlands, Mt Meru and the highest peak in Africa, Mt Kilimanjaro at 5,892 m. Along the Albertine Rift are the Mahale Mts. Pemba and Zanzibar are significant islands. The Rufiji River is the largest in the country, flowing into the Indian Ocean along the central coast, opposite Mafia Island. The country has numerous large lakes including Malawi, Rukwa, Tanganyika (the deepest in Africa), Victoria, Manyara and Natron, all

associated with the Rift Valley. **SIZE:** 945 thousand km². 3.9xUK, 0.8xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a single rainy season in the south (Nov–Apr) and a double peak in the north (Mar–May and Nov–Dec). Rainfall increases with altitude and varies from 350 to 3,000 mm. Temperatures mostly vary little through the year, although it is colder in the mountains in winter (May–Sep). Dar es Salaam (north, coast) rainfall = annual 1,150 mm, monthly 27–269 mm; wettest Apr–May, Nov, driest Jul–Sep. Dar es Salaam temperatures = annual min/max 21–31°C, monthly max 29–32°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug. Arusha (north, inland) rainfall = annual 1,240 mm, monthly 15–368 mm; wettest Mar–Apr and Nov, driest Jul–Sep. Arusha temperatures = annual average low-high 10–25°C, monthly max 21–29°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug. Mbeya (south) rainfall = annual 940 mm, monthly 0–207 mm; wettest Dec–Jan and Mar, driest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: (1) *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe. (2) *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* 1996 by Zimmerman et al. (3) *Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania* 2005 by Zimmerman et al. **SOUND:** *The Bird Song of Kenya and Tanzania* 2002 by Hammick. See Apps. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Tanzania* 2015 by Fitzpatrick et al/Lonely Planet. (2) *The Rough Guide to Tanzania* 2015 by Finke, ebook. (3) *Northern Tanzania* 2017 by Briggs & McIntyre/Bradt. (4) *Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia* 2017 by McIntyre & McIntyre/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Important Bird Areas in Tanzania* 2002 by Baker & Baker. (2) *Tanzania Safari Guide* 2017 by Briggs & McIntyre/Bradt. (3) *Birding in the Usambara Mountains, Tanzania* 1997 by Williams. (4) *Wildlife of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* 2007 by Hosking & Withers. (5) *A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Tanzania* 2014 by Foley et al. **WEB:** *Birding Tanzania*. *Tanzania Bird Atlas*. *Tanzania Bird Email Group*.

Togo (6–11°N)

This small slice of Africa located between the two Guinea Forest blocks has little of interest to world birders and is unlikely to receive many visitors. However, it has a good range of habitats and is reportedly friendly to travel in, so for those in search of some exploration it may prove a rewarding destination.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66) —other:** **Togo Yellow-billed Barbet**, Baumann's Greenbul, Pied-winged Swallow, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Puvel's Illadopsis, Buff-throated Sunbird, Western Bluebill (*togoensis*), Togo Paradise Whydah. —**diversity:** 630. Afrotropical. **HABITATS:**

moist savanna, lowland forest, Guinea woodland. **AREAS —sites:** Kérán NP for savanna sp. Misahöhe Forest Res for forest sp.

TIMING (Nov-Dec, Mar): best during the dry season when access is easier (Nov–Apr). Best to avoid the main rains (May–Sep).

EXPLORE: high. Although the country is small, it is not well known to birders.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime is considered to be low. **CITIES:** Lomé (capital). **EASE —entry:** most nationalities can purchase a visa on arrival, but this is only valid for 7 days. If you plan to stay longer then a pre-arrival visa is advised. There are a limited

number of regional and international flights to Lomé. Overland travel from Ghana and Benin is not difficult. —**within:** French; little English. The roads are basic, but distances are small. There is a rudimentary public transport network, but it is best to hire a 4x4 with driver to get around. **ATTRACTIOnS:** cultural tourism and traditional villages such as Tamberma Compound. **MONEY:** moderate. West African Franc, shared with other West African countries and trades at 656 to the Euro. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a slender country on the coast of West Africa, between Ghana and Benin, which reaches 570 km inland but has a coastal strip only 70 km wide. It also has a short northern border with Burkina Faso. Most of the country is flat and low-lying, although a range of hills runs through its centre, with the highest point, Mt

Agou, at 986 m. **SIZE:** 56,800 km². 0.2xUK. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a double peak in rainfall (Apr-Jul and Oct) and a proper dry season Nov-Mar. Rainfall is higher in the south. Temperatures vary little through the year. Lomé (coastal) rainfall = annual 880 mm, monthly 8–252; wettest Apr-Jun, driest Nov-Jan. Lomé temperatures = annual min/max 23–31°C, monthly max 28–33°C; hottest Feb-Apr, coolest Jul-Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of Western Africa* 2014 by Borrow & Demey. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **TRAVEL:** (1) chapter in *West Africa* 2013 by Ham *et al*/Lonely Planet, fairly basic. (2) *Togo* 2015 by Jerry & Jerry, possibly worthwhile. **OTHER:** *The Birds of Togo* 1996 by Cheke & Walsh.

Tristan da Cunha (37°S, excluding Gough, UK)

These isolated islands are rarely visited by birders, although they hold spectacular seabird colonies and some interesting endemic landbirds, not least Inaccessible Rail. The best way to visit is on an occasional cruise ship, however, Inaccessible Is (I) and Nightingale Is (N) are not usually visited due to access difficulties, with landing only possible at Tristan Is (T).

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Oceanic Islands. **SPECIES (39, 27/66)** —**EN (6):** Spectacled Petrel (br I), Inaccessible Rail (I), Tristan Thrush (T, I, N), Inaccessible Bunting (I), Nightingale Bunting (N), Wilkins's Bunting (N). —**BT (1):** Sooty Albatross. —**1/2 (3):** Northern Rockhopper Penguin, Tristan Albatross (br), Atlantic Petrel (br). —**other:** White-faced Storm Petrel, White-bellied Storm Petrel, Black-

bellied Storm Petrel, Broad-billed Prion, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Great Shearwater, Subantarctic Shearwater, Common Diving Petrel (*dacunhae*), Antarctic Tern (*tristanensis*), Brown Skua (*hamiltoni*). —**diversity:** 60 on Tristan, 50 on Nightingale, 50 on Inaccessible. Mostly seabirds and vagrants. **HABITATS:** shrublands, seabird breeding cliffs. **AREAS —EBAs:** Tristan Islands. —**sites:** Tristan, Inaccessible & Nightingale Is. **TIMING (Oct-Dec):** best in early summer when most birds breed. Avoid winter (May-Aug). **EXPLORE:** very low. The islands are well studied and small.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: there is no real risk of crime. Medical facilities are limited. **CITIES:** Edinburgh of the Seven Seas on Tristan, the only settlement. **EASE —entry:** no visa

is required, but permission to visit must be sought from the Administrator before travelling. Access is by boat only. —**within:** English. Forms part of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Getting around is best done by a combination of walking and boat. There is accommodation at Edinburgh of the Seven Seas. **ATTRACTIOnS:** seabird colonies. Visit the most remote inhabited island in the world. **MONEY:** expensive. GBP is legal tender. No electronic banking facilities; bring GBP. **GEOGRAPHY:** the islands of Tristan da Cunha form part of the British Overseas Territory of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. Tristan da Cunha consists of the main island of Tristan, plus Inaccessible and the three Nightingale Islands. Gough Is is usually included too, but here treated separately due to being 350 km south-east of Tristan. Tristan lies 2,700 km west of South Africa and is the most remote inhabited island on earth. Inaccessible is 45 km southwest of Tristan, whereas Nightingale is 30

km south of Tristan and 22 km south-east of Inaccessible. The islands are volcanic and mountainous, with the highest point, Queen Mary's Peak on Tristan, at 2,060 m. **SIZE:** 116 km², divided between Tristan (98 km²), Inaccessible (14 km²) and Nightingale (4 km²). **CLIMATE:** temperate, with rain throughout the year (>90 mm every month). Winters (Jun-Oct) are significantly cooler. Tristan rainfall = annual 1,680 mm, monthly 93–169 mm; wettest Jul-Sep, driest Jan-Mar. Tristan temperatures = annual min/max 13–17°C, monthly max 14–21°C; hottest Jan-Mar, coldest Jul-Sep.

LITERATURE

ID: *Field Guide to the Animals and Plants of Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands* 2007 by Ryan. **TRAVEL:** *St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha* 2015 by Britt-Gallagher & Hayne/Bradt. **OTHER:** *Britain's Treasure Islands* 2016 by McPherson. **WEB:** *The Tristan da Cunha Website*.

Tunisia (30–37°N)

Located conveniently close to Europe and possessing a good tourism infrastructure, Tunisia sees a large number of visitors. However, with many regional specialities missing and no endemics, world birders will continue to focus on Morocco as their destination of choice in this region. Still, a nice cross section of birds can be seen.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-West Africa. **SPECIES (0, 59/66)** —**other:** White-headed Duck, Barbary Partridge, Scopoli's Shearwater, Yelkouan Shearwater, **Maghreb Tawny Owl**, Red-necked Nightjar (*desertorum*), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*ledouci*), Levaillant's Green

Woodpecker, Eurasian Jay (*cervicalis*), **Maghreb Magpie**, Brown-necked Raven, Coal Tit (*ledouci*), African Blue Tit (*ultramarinus*), Thick-billed Lark, Great Tit (*excelsus*), Common Bulbul (*barbatus*), African Desert Warbler, Marmora's Warbler, Tristram's Warbler (*deserticola*), Short-toed Treecreeper (*mauritanica*), Fulvous Babbler, European Robin (*witherbyi*), Atlas Flycatcher, **Maghreb Wheatear**, **African Chaffinch**, Desert Sparrow. —**diversity:** 380. Palaearctic. Expect 150–200 sp in 1–2 weeks. **HABITATS:** desert, wetlands, mountains. **AREAS —sites:** Lake Sedjoumi for waterfowl. Bou Hedma NP for montane sp. J'Bil NP for deserts. **TIMING (Feb–Apr):** best after rain and once it warms up (Feb–May). Raptors passage best Mar–Apr. Many Palaearctic visitors Nov–Feb. Avoid the

hot, dry season (Jul–Sep). **EXPLORE:** low. Tunisia is quite well known and mostly arid.

TRAVEL

GEOGRAPHY: located on the coast of North Africa between Algeria and Libya. Most of the country is low-lying, although there are several highland areas, including the coastal ranges which rise to 1,200 m, and western Mt Chaambi, Tunisia's highest at 1,544 m. **SAFETY:** while much of the north and east is considered safe to visit, there have recently been some high profile terrorist attacks, so caution should be exercised.

CITIES: Tunis (capital). **EASE —entry:** most westerners do not require a visa. Tunis is well connected with flights; there are other international airports too. Regular ferries run from southern Europe. Overland travel is discouraged at present. **—within:** French; some English. There is a good road network, plus a reasonable network of internal flight, trains and buses. Self-drive is popular. A range of accommodation is available. The fourth most-visited African country. **ATTRACTI**

ONS: ancient cities and historical

buildings such as Carthage, El Jem, El Kef and Sfax Medina. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Tunisian Dinar. Fairly widespread electronic banking in the north; bring some Euro or USD. **SIZE:** 164 thousand km². 0.7xUK. **CLIMATE:** generally dry and temperate, but the north is wetter and cooler, with rainfall mostly in winter (Oct–Apr). Annual rainfall varies from 20–1,000 mm across the country. Winters are significantly colder. Tunis (north, coastal) rainfall = annual 470 mm, monthly 3–67; wettest Oct–Dec, driest Jun–Aug. Tunis temperatures = annual min/max 13–24°C, monthly max 16–33°C; hottest Jul–Sep, coldest Dec–Feb.

LITERATURE

See also Morocco. **ID:** *Collins Bird Guide* 2010 by Svensson *et al.* **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** *The Good Bird Guide* 2005 by Marsh, basic. **TRAVEL:** *Tunisia* 2010 by Wheeler *et al.*/Lonely Planet. **OTHER:** (1) *Birds of Tunisia* 2005 by Isenmann *et al.* (2) *The Birds of Tunisia* 1979 by Thomsen & Jacobsen. **WEB:** *Birding Tunisia*.

Uganda (4°N–1°S)

Over the past two decades Uganda has emerged from birding obscurity to become one of the most frequently-visited countries on the continent, with the tourism infrastructure developing apace. With a rich diversity of species, friendly people, pleasant climate, attractive, green landscapes and a well-established network of birding sites, this is set to continue for the foreseeable future. Add to this a good number of Albertine Rift endemics and the opportunity to see gorillas and chimpanzees, and this comes as no surprise. Despite all the visitors, the only endemic, Fox's Weaver, remains almost unknown.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

East Africa. **SPECIES (192, 8/66) —EN (1):** Fox's Weaver. —NE (1): Weyns's Weaver. —BT (43): *Western Crested Guineafowl*, Nahan's Francolin, Ring-necked Francolin, Heuglin's Francolin, Shoebill, Brown-chested Lapwing, White-naped Pigeon, Eastern Grey Plantain-eater, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Black-breasted Barbet, Speckle-breasted Woodpecker, African Green Broadbill, Green-breasted Pitta, Ituri Batis, *Albertine Bushshrike*, Papyrus Gonolek, White-throated Greenbul,

White-headed Saw-wing, Papyrus Yellow Warbler, White-winged Warbler, Carruthers's Cisticola, Red-pate Cisticola, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Puvel's Illadopsis, Dusky Babbler, Albertine Yellow White-eye, Purple-headed Glossy Starling, Oberländer's Ground Thrush, Brown-backed Scrub Robin, Swamp Flycatcher, Chapin's Flycatcher, Grey-headed Sunbird, Red-chested Sunbird, Slender-billed Weaver, Northern Brown-throated Weaver, Northern Red Bishop, Jameson's Antpecker, White-collared Oliveback, Shelley's Crimsonwing, Grant's Bluebill, Red-headed Bluebill. —1/2 (2): *Elgon Francolin*, Willard's Sooty Boubou. —B2 (50): *Archer's Francolin (archeri)*, Clapperton's Francolin (*gedgii*), Handsome Francolin, Black-billed Turaco, Ruwenzori Turaco, Black-shouldered Nightjar, Forest Wood Hoopoe, Jackson's Hornbill, Red-faced Barbet, Black-billed Barbet, Dwarf Honeyguide, Willcocks's Honeyguide, Red-headed Lovebird, Ruwenzori Batis, Jameson's Wattle-eye, Doherty's Bushshrike, *Albertine Sooty Boubou*, Stripe-breasted Tit, Joyful Greenbul, Toro Olive Greenbul, Short-tailed Warbler, Grauer's Warbler, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, Uganda Woodland Warbler, Highland Rush Warbler, Grauer's Rush Warbler, Foxy Cisticola, Collared Apalis, Red-winged Grey Warbler, Mountain Masked Apalis, Green-backed Eremomela, *Kivu Ground Thrush*, Black-eared Ground Thrush (ESS *kibalensis*), Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher, Red-throated Alethe, Archer's Robin-Chat, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, Blue-headed Sunbird, Purple-breasted Sunbird, Ruwenzori Double-collared Sunbird, Regal Sunbird, Orange-tufted Sunbird, Shelley's Rufous Sparrow, Strange Weaver, Brown-capped Weaver, Black Bishop, Dusky Crimsonwing, Dusky Twinspot (*graueri*), Black-bellied Firefinch, Western Citril, Papyrus Canary. —other: *Cranch's Spurfowl* (BT), *Neumann's Coucal* (BT), *Ruwenzori Nightjar* (B2), *Eastern Black Dwarf Hornbill* (BT), *Eastern Grey-throated Barbet* (B2), *Yellow-eyed Bristlebill* (BT), *Mongalla Cisticola* (BT), *Eastern Olive-green Camaroptera* (BT), *Grey-capped Capuchin Babbler* (BT), *Central Forest Robin* (BT), *Victoria Masked Weaver* (EN), *Yellow-shouldered Widowbird* (B2). *Lagden's Bushshrike*. Also *Kikuyu Red-winged Francolin*, Dwarf Bittern, Pink-backed Pelican, Western Banded Snake Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, White-spotted Flufftail, African Finfoot, Nkulengu Rail, African Rail | African Water Rail, African Crake, Grey Crowned Crane, Long-toed Lapwing, Black-headed Lapwing, Senegal Lapwing, Lesser Jacana, Rock Pratincole, Afep Pigeon, White-crested Turaco, Ross's Turaco, Black Coucal, Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo (*montanus*), Red-chested Owlet, *Chestnut Owl* (*castaneum*), Ruwenzori Nightjar, Standard-winged Nightjar, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Bar-tailed Trogon, Blue-throated Roller, African Dwarf Kingfisher, Shining-blue Kingfisher, Black Bee-eater, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Red-throated Bee-eater (*frenatus*), Northern Carmine Bee-eater, White-headed Wood Hoopoe, Black Scimitarbill (*eminii*), Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, White-thighed Hornbill, Western Green Tinkerbird (*hildamariae*), *Common White-headed Barbet*, *Fine-banded Woodpecker*, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Elliot's Woodpecker, Rufous-sided Broadbill (*budongoensis*), Lowland Sooty Boubou, Black-headed Gonolek, Petit's Cuckooshrike, Yellow-billed Shrike (*affinis*), Mackinnon's Shrike | Mackinnon's Fiscal, Montane Oriole, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Piapiac, White-bellied Crested Flycatcher, White-tailed Lark, Red-winged Lark (*kidepoensis*), Olive-breasted Mountain Greenbul, Red-tailed Greenbul (*eminii*), Yellow Longbill (*hypochondriacus*), White-browed Crombec, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher (*conicus*), Mountain Yellow Warbler, Trilling Cisticola, Boran Cisticola, Black-faced Prinia, Black-capped Apalis (*collaris*), Chestnut-throated Apalis, *Eastern Buff-throated Apalis* (*kigezi*), Karamoja Apalis (ESS *karamojae*), Grey-capped Warbler, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Mountain Illadopsis, Black-lored Babbler, Grey-chested

Illadopsis, Stuhlmann's Starling, Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush (*vulpina*), Fire-crested Alethe (*woosnami*), Forest Scrub Robin (*collsi*), Grey-throated Flycatcher, Sooty Flycatcher (*minuscula*), Silverbird, White-bellied Robin-Chat (*rufescentior*), Lowland Akalat (*lopezi*), Equatorial Akalat, Spotted Mourning Thrush (*guttata*), White-fronted Black Chat (*clericalis*), Reichenow's Weaver, Little Weaver (*kavirondensis*), Orange Weaver (*rex*), Compact Weaver, Cardinal Quelea, Red-headed Quelea, Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird, Brown Twinspot, Fawn-breasted Waxbill, Kandt's Waxbill, Magpie Mannikin, Oriole Finch (*prigoginei*), White-rumped Seedeater (*leucopygia*), Streaky Seedeater (*graueri*), Brown-rumped Bunting (*affinis*).

—diversity: 1,050 (4th). Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 500–600 sp in 3–4 weeks. **HABITATS:** swamps, montane forest for Albertine Rift endemics, tropical forest, moist savanna.

AREAS —EBAs: Albertine Rift mountains. Eastern Zaïre lowlands. Kenyan mountains. North Ugandan swamps SA. Dry woodlands west of Lake Victoria SA. North-east Uganda SA. —**sites:** Ruhiza, Buhoma & The Neck at Bwindi Impenetrable NP and Mgahinga NP for montane forest sp. Kibale Forest, Budongo Forest, Semuliki NP & Mabira Forest for lowland forest sp. Queen Elizabeth NP, Murchison Falls NP & Lake Mburo NP for savanna sp. Mabamba Swamp for Shoebill.

TIMING (Jan, Jul–Aug): best when it is dry in the south (Dec–Feb, Jul–Sep) and wet in the north (Jul–Sep). Green-breasted Pitta is best Jul–Aug. Palaearctic migrants are present Oct–Mar. Avoid the main rains in the south (Mar–May, Oct–Nov). **EXPLORE:** low. Uganda is well birded, although northern areas are more remote and little visited and Fox's Weaver is poorly known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: Uganda is considered to be safe to visit, except for concerns over banditry in the north-east bordering Kenya. **CITIES:** Kampala (capital), Entebbe (airport). **EASE**

—entry: most nationalities can obtain a tourism visa on arrival. East African visas can be issued that are valid for Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. Entebbe is well connected with international and regional flights. Land borders to Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda are not difficult to use. —**within:** English. There is a reasonable road network, but a sturdy vehicle is recommended to visit some birding sites. There is a good range of accommodation at most tourist sites. Many international companies offer bird watching tours. There are some good national and local guides. **ATTRACTIOnS:** gorilla trekking at Bwindi Impenetrable NP. Chimpanzee trekking at Kibale NP. Game viewing and Nile River cruises at Murchison Falls and Kidepo Valley NP. Murchison Falls. Hiking in the Ruwenzori Mts. **MONEY:** moderate. Ugandan Shilling. Limited electronic banking; bring GBP, Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** located on the border between East and Central Africa, landlocked Uganda lies west of Kenya, east of DR Congo, north of Rwanda and Tanzania and south of South Sudan. Most of the country lies on a plateau between 900 and 1,500 m altitude, although it drops in altitude to the north, to 600 m on the border with South Sudan. In the west there is a series of mountains associated with the Albertine Rift, including several high volcanoes and the Kigezi highlands in the south-west, and the Ruwenzori Mts with the highest point, Margherita Peak on Mt Stanley reaching 5,109 m, the third highest in Africa. Mt Elgon on the border with Kenya rises to 4,320 m. The White Nile flows out of Lake Victoria at Jinja, northwards to South Sudan. A large proportion of Uganda is covered by lakes, including Victoria, Albert, Edward and Kyoga. **SIZE:** 242 thousand km², =UK, 0.2xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with a double rainy season in the south (Mar–May, Sep–Dec) and a single, longer rainy season in the north (Apr–Oct). Rainfall decreases to the north, but most of the country receives 1,000–2,000 mm. The temperature varies little through the year. Entebbe (south-east) rainfall = annual 1,570 mm, monthly 73–279

mm; wettest Mar–May, driest Jan, Jul and Sep. Entebbe temperatures = annual min/max 17–26°C, monthly max 25–27°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug. Arua (north) rainfall = annual 1,404 mm, monthly 16–209 mm; wettest Aug–Oct, driest Dec–Feb. Arua temperatures = annual min/max 17–29°C, monthly max 26–32°C; hottest Jan–Mar, coolest Jun–Aug.

LITERATURE

ID: *Birds of East Africa* 2004 by Stevenson & Fanshawe. **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *eGuide to Birds of East Africa*. **SITE:** *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda* 1998 by Rossouw & Sacchi. **TRAVEL:** *Uganda* 2016 by Briggs & Roberts/Bradt. **OTHER:** (1) *Important Bird Areas in Uganda* 2001 by Byaruhangwa *et al.* (2) *The Bird Atlas of Uganda* 2005 by Carswell *et al.* (3) *Wildlife of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda* 2007 by Hosking & Withers.

Western Sahara

(21–27°N, Morocco)

Avoid the hot dry season (May–Aug).

EXPLORE: low. Western Sahara has seen quite a few visitors of late, and is arid.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the majority of the territory is Moroccan controlled and considered to be safe to visit, although there are still land mines and areas in the east are considered unsafe. **CITIES:** Dakhla (airport). **EASE**

—entry: entry requirements are as for Morocco. There are daily flights to Dakhla from Casablanca in Morocco, and regular flights from Agadir. It is also easy to drive from Morocco, although distances are large.

—**within:** Arabic and French; little English. The main roads are tarred and in good condition, so self-drive is possible. Dakhla has a selection of hotels. **MONEY:** inexpensive. Moroccan Dinar. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** Western Sahara is a disputed territory, but is practically governed by Morocco. It borders on Morocco and Algeria to the north and Mauritania to the south and east, and has a long coastline. Most of it is flat and low-lying, with the highest point at 805 m. **SIZE:** 266 thousand km², =UK, 0.2xSA. **CLIMATE:** generally hot

BIRDS AND BIRDING

North-East Africa. **SPECIES (7, 47/66) —BT** (2): Golden Nightjar, Dunn's Lark. —**B2 (1):** Cricket Warbler. —**other:** *African Dunn's Lark* (BT), *African Scrub Warbler* (B2). Also Spotted Sandgrouse, Pale Crag Martin, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Fulvous Babbler, Pied Crow, Scrub Warbler, African Desert Warbler, Desert Sparrow, Sudan Golden Sparrow.

—**diversity:** 340. A mix of Afrotropical and Palaearctic elements. Expect 100–150 sp in 4–5 days. **HABITATS:** sandy desert, coastal wetlands. **AREAS —sites:** Dakhla Bay, Aousserd area & Knifiss Lagoon. **TIMING (Jan–Mar)**: best after the rains (Jan–Apr).

and dry, but cooler on the coast, with winter rainfall (Sep-Jan). Winters are colder. Dakhla (coastal) rainfall = annual 33 mm, monthly 0–10; wettest Sep and Nov-Dec, driest May-Jul. Dakhla temperatures = annual min/max 17–24°C, monthly max 22–27°C; hottest Aug-Oct, coolest Dec-Feb.

LITERATURE

See also Morocco. **ID:** *Collins Bird Guide* 2010 by Svensson *et al.* **SOUND:** *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis. **APPS:** *Collins Bird Guide*. **SITE:** *Where to Watch Birds in Morocco* 2017 by Bergier & Bergier. **TRAVEL:** *Morocco* 2014 by Clammer *et al.*/Lonely Planet. **WEB:** Association Nature Initiative.

Zambia (8–18°S)

This under-birded country on the interface of Southern and Central Africa still holds vast swathes of miombo woodland, and is the best country in which to see the specialties of this habitat. It also has three endemics and several species better found here than anywhere else, the most desirable perhaps *East African Pitta*, best found when displaying in early Dec. Politically stable and safe to visit, as well as boasting good travel infrastructure, it is strange that the country has not become more popular with birders, especially with the added attraction of Victoria Falls and big game in the Luangwa Valley.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Central Africa. **SPECIES (76, 17/66)** —EN (3): White-chested Tinkerbird, Chaplin's Barbet, Black-cheeked Lovebird. —NE (1): Shelley's Sunbird. —BT (11): Rufous-bellied Heron, Chestnut-headed Flufftail, *Eastern Black-backed Barbet*, *East African Pitta*, Laura's Woodland Warbler (*eustacei*), Bamboo Warbler (*kungwensis*), Dambo Cisticola (*dambo*), Katanga Masked Weaver (*katangae*), Bar-winged Weaver, Red-throated Twinspot, Grimwood's Longclaw. —1/2 (1): Tanzania Masked Weaver. —B2 (22): Shoebill, Streaky-breasted Flufftail, Anchietas Barbet, Miombo Pied Barbet, Margaret's Batis (*kathleenae*), Angola Lark, Black-and-rufous Swallow, Livingstone's Flycatcher, Luapula

Cisticola, Black-necked Eremomela, Sharp-tailed Starling, *Bocage's Akalat* (*chapini*), Böhm's Flycatcher, Bannerman's Sunbird, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Weaver, Bocage's Weaver, Locust Finch, Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, Fülleborn's Longclaw, Short-tailed Pipit, *Reichard's Seedeater*, Black-eared Seedeater. —other: Zambian Yellow Warbler (EN), Whyte's Double-collared Sunbird (1/2), Black-chinned Quailfinch (B2), Benguela Seedeater (1/2). *African Pitta* (BT), *Bocage's Akalat* (B2). Also White-backed Duck, White-throated Francolin (*dewittei*), Shelley's Francolin, Whyte's Francolin, Blue Quail, Slaty Egret, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, African Finfoot, Striped Crake, Lesser Moorhen, Wattled Crane, Black-rumped Buttonquail, Forbes's Plover, Greater Painted-snipe, Lesser Jacana, Bronze-winged Courser, Lemon Dove (*samaliyae*), Schalow's Turaco, Ross's Turaco, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Thick-billed Cuckoo, African Grass Owl, Böhm's Spinetail, Racket-tailed Roller, Blue-breasted Bee-eater (*bangweoloensis*), Böhm's Bee-eater, Pale-billed Hornbill, Whyte's Barbet, Grey-headed Parrot, African Broadbill, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Black-fronted Bushshrike (*manningi*), Souza's Shrike, Rufous-bellied Tit, Miombo Tit, Eastern Nicator, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark (ESS *harterti*), Eastern Clapper Lark (ESS *jappi*), Joyful Greenbul (*schoutedeni*), Grey-olive Greenbul, Black-collared Bulbul, Red-throated Cliff Swallow, Long-billed Crombec (*adelphus*), Red-capped

Crombec, White-winged Warbler, Tinkling Cisticola, Chirping Cisticola, Long-tailed Cisticola, Cloud Cisticola (*anselli*), Pale-crowned Cisticola, Miombo Wren-Warbler | Pale Wren-Warbler (*katangae*), Spotted Thrush-Babbler (*upembae*), Southern Hyliota (*inornata*), Miombo Blue-eared Starling, Splendid Glossy Starling (*bailundensis*), Meves's Long-tailed Starling, White-winged Babbling Starling, Miombo Scrub Robin, Swamp Flycatcher (ESS *grimwoodi*), Collared Palm Thrush, Miombo Rock Thrush, Arnott's Chat, Ruaha Chat, Anchietas Sunbird, *Eastern Miombo Sunbird*, *Western Miombo Sunbird*, Oustalet's Sunbird (*rhomdesiae*), Hartlaub's Marsh Widowbird, Long-tailed Widowbird (*delacourii*), Orange-winged Pytilia, Brown Firefinch, Grey Waxbill, Black-and-white Mannikin (*woltersi*), Zambezi Indigobird, Cuckoo-finch, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Wood Pipit, Striped Pipit, Black-faced Canary, Vincent's Bunting. —diversity: 760. Strongly Afrotropical. Expect 350–450 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** miombo woodlands, dambo grasslands. Mopane woodland for Black-cheeked Lovebird. Moist fig savanna for Chaplin's Barbet. Gallery forest for *East African Pitta*. **AREAS—EBAs:** Tanzania - Malawi mountains. North-west Zambia SA. South-west Tanzanian swamps SA. Southern Zambia SA. —sites: Nkanga River Conservation Area for Chaplin's Barbet, Siavonga area for *East African Pitta*, Mwinilunga for north-west specials. Mutinondo Wilderness for miombo sp. Mulobezi & Simungoma for Black-cheeked Lovebird. **TIMING (Sep–Oct, Dec):** best at the start of the rains when most birds breed (Sep-Dec). *East African Pitta* starts to display in Dec and Chestnut-headed Flufftail is best found Dec-Jan. Accessing Black-cheeked Lovebird is more accessible in the dry season (Jul-Nov). May-Jul is least productive. **EXPLORE:** moderate. Zambia is fairly well known, but there are some remote areas, especially on the northern and western borders.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: the risk of crime and terrorism is very low in Zambia. **CITIES:** Lusaka (capital), Livingstone (second airport). **EASE—entry:** most westerners require a visa, generally obtainable on arrival. A joint Zimbabwe-Zambia visa can also be issued. Lusaka is quite well connected by international and regional flights; Livingstone has some international flights. Land borders are not too hard to cross from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Botswana and Malawi. —within: English. Zambia has a fairly good road infrastructure, but 4x4 is recommended for most birding sites. There is a reasonable selection of accommodation at most sites. A few companies offer trips. **ATTRACTIOnS:** Victoria Falls. Wildlife viewing at Luangwa, Lower Zambezi & Kafue NPs. **MONEY:** moderate. Kwacha. Limited electronic banking bring Euro or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a landlocked country bordered by Angola in the west, Zimbabwe and Namibia in the south, Mozambique and Malawi in the east and DR Congo and Tanzania in the north. Most of the country lies on a plateau of 900–1,250 m altitude, but in the north-east the land rises up to the summit of the Mafinga Hills at 2,329 m. The Zambezi River forms the southern border, and other major rivers and lakes include the Luangwa River in the east, Kafue River in the centre, Lakes Tanganyika and Mweru in the north, Bangweulu, and Lake Kariba on the Zambezi River. **SIZE:** 753 thousand km². 3xUK, 0.6xSA. **CLIMATE:** tropical, with pronounced summer rainfall (Nov-Mar) and almost no rain May-Sep. Rainfall varies from 700–1,500 mm, increasing in the north and with altitude. Lusaka (south) rainfall = annual 880 mm, monthly 0–245 mm; wettest Dec-Feb. Lusaka temperatures = annual min/max 14–28°C, monthly max 24–32°C; hottest Sep-Nov, coolest May-Jul.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** (1) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* 2010 by Sinclair & Ryan. (2) *Field Guide to Zambian Birds not found in Southern Africa* 1998 by Aspinwall & Beel, covers sp not included in Southern African field guides. **SOUND:** (1) *Sounds of Zambian Wildlife* 2008 by Stjernstedt. (2) *African Bird Sounds* 2001 by Chappuis, most sp. **APPS:**

Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa, most sp. **SITE:** *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen *et al.* **TRAVEL:** (1) *Zambia* 2016 by McIntyre/Bradt. (2) *Zambia, Mozambique & Malawi* 2013 by FitzPatrick *et al./Lonely Planet*. **OTHER:** (1) *The Birds of Zambia* 2008 by Dowsett *et al.* (2) *Important Bird Areas in Zambia* 2005 by Leonard. (3) *The Birds of the Luangwa Valley* 2008 by Hide. **WEB:** *Southern African Birding - Zambia*.

Zimbabwe (15–22°S)

Political problems over the past 15 years have damaged Zimbabwe's well-established reputation of being a friendly, safe and easy country to visit, although in reality there is little danger to visiting birders and it is still possible to visit the best birding sites without trouble. The country supports a good range of bird species and a few specials, mostly concentrated in the Eastern Highlands. This, together with good wildlife watching in Hwange NP, attractive landscapes and the Victoria Falls, makes Zimbabwe an excellent getaway, or short add on to Zambia or South Africa trips.

BIRDS AND BIRDING

Southern Africa. **SPECIES (32, 31/66)** —NE (1): Boulder Chat. —BT (5): Streaky-breasted Flufftail, Stripe-cheeked Greenbul, Roberts's Warbler, Chirinda Apalis, Swynnerton's Robin (*swynnertoni*). —1/2 (2): Melodious Lark, Cape Longclaw. —B2 (9): Natal Francolin, Cinnamon-breasted Tit (*stenotopicus*), Cape Grassbird (*excisus*), Barratt's Warbler (*priesti*), Gurney's Sugarbird (*ardens*), Olive Thrush (*swynnertoni*), Lesser Seedcracker, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Cape Canary (*griseitergum*). —other: Chestnut-breasted Flufftail (BT), Eastern Saw-wing (B2). Also White-backed Duck, Shelley's Francolin, Red-billed Francolin, Red-necked Spurfowl

(*swynnertoni*), Swainson's Francolin, Abdim's Stork, Verreaux's Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, Red-crested Korhaan, African Finfoot, Striped Crake, Lesser Moorhen, Black-winged Pratincole, Mottled Swift (*ESS gelidus*), African Black Swift (*oreobates*), Bradfield's Hornbill, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Whyte's Barbet, Dickinson's Kestrel, Lilian's Lovebird, East African Pitta, Cape Batis (*ESS kennedyi* + *erythrophthalma*), Olive Bushshrike (*interfluvius*), Bokmakierie (*restrictus*), Tropical Boubou (*limpopoensis*), White-tailed Crested Flycatcher (*swynnertoni*), White-necked Raven, Miombo Tit, Dusky Lark, Monotonous Lark, Blue Swallow, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler (*alacris*), Lazy Cisticola, Tinkling Cisticola (*ESS vicinior*), Wailing Cisticola (*mashona*), Bar-throated Apalis (*quarta* + *arnoldi*), Southern Hyliota (*australis*), African Spotted Creeper (*xyloclomus*), Miombo Blue-eared Starling, Orange Ground Thrush (*disruptans*), White-throated Robin-Chat, Collared Palm Thrush, Eastern Miombo Sunbird, Red-throated Twinspot (*niveoguttatus*), Jameson's Firefinch, Purple Indigobird, Zambezi Indigobird, Rosy-breasted Longclaw, Wood Pipit (*frondiculus*), Lemon-breasted Canary, Black-eared Seedeater, Cape Bunting (*smithersii*). —diversity: 670. Afrotropical. Expect 300–400 sp in 2–3 weeks. **HABITATS:** montane forest, upland marshes, miombo woodland. **AREAS** —EBAs: Eastern Zimbabwe mountains.

South-east African coast. —sites: Vumba & Nyanga for montane sp. Harare marshes for wetland sp. Gosha Park for miombo sp. Hwange NP for savanna sp. **TIMING (Oct, Jan–Feb):** best just before the rains when most miombo birds breed (Sep–Nov). But Streaky-breasted Flufftail and indigobirds are best Jan–Feb. Mid winter (May–Aug) is least productive. **EXPLORE:** low. Zimbabwe is well known.

TRAVEL

SAFETY: despite recent and ongoing political problems, Zimbabwe is generally considered to be a safe country for visitors. **CITIES:** Harare (capital), Victoria Falls (second airport). **EASE —entry:** most westerners require a visa which can, in most cases, be obtained upon arrival or processed online. A joint Zimbabwe-Zambia visa can also be issued. Harare is quite well serviced by regional and international flights, and Victoria Falls has regional air connections. It is quite easy to use land borders with South Africa, Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique. —within: English. Zimbabwe has a reasonable road infrastructure, and self-drive is popular, although roadblocks are now common. There are some internal flights. A range of accommodation is available at most sites. A few companies offer bird watching tours. **ATTRACTI0NS:** Victoria Falls. Great Zimbabwe historical site. Wildlife watching at Hwange & Gonarezhou NPs. Hiking in the Nyanga Mts. **MONEY:** fairly inexpensive. USD. Limited electronic banking; bring Euro, Rand, GBP or USD. **GEOGRAPHY:** a landlocked country located between South

Africa in the south, Botswana in the west, Zambia in the north and Mozambique in the east. Most of the country lies on a plateau above 1,000 m altitude, but a chain of mountains running along the border with Mozambique in the east form what is known as the Eastern Highlands, reaching 2,592 m at the summit of Mt Nyangani in the Nyanga Mts. The Zambezi River forms its northern border with Zambia, and the Limpopo River its southern border with South Africa. Lake Kariba on the Zambezi River is the largest water body. **SIZE:** 391 thousand km². 1.6xUK, 0.3xSA. **CLIMATE:** generally warm and tropical, with pronounced summer rainfall (Nov–Mar). Rainfall varies from 400–3,000 mm and increases with altitude. Winters (May–Aug) are significantly cooler. Harare (central) rainfall = annual 810 mm, monthly 2–191 mm; wettest Dec–Feb, driest Jun–Aug. Harare temperatures = annual mix/max 12–25°C, monthly max 21–28°C; hottest Sep–Nov, coolest May–Jul.

LITERATURE

See also South Africa. **ID:** *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa* 2011 by Sinclair *et al.* **SOUND:** *Southern African Bird Sounds* 1995 by Gibbon. **APPS:** *Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa*. **SITE:** (1) *Southern African Birdfinder* 2006 by Cohen *et al.* (2) *Birdwatch Zimbabwe* 1991 by Solomon & Williams. **TRAVEL:** (1) *Zimbabwe* 2016 by Murray/Brad. (2) chapter in *Southern Africa* 2013 by Murphy *et al./Lonely Planet*. **OTHER:** *The Birds of Zimbabwe* 1981 by Irwin. **WEB:** *Southern African Birding - Zimbabwe*.