

SIERRA LEONE

APRIL 01st - 08th
DANIEL BRANCH



Sierra Leone is an amazing country, with a vibrant atmosphere and amazing people. With so much to offer both culturally and birding, it is remarkable that so few birders make tracks here. My visit to Sierra Leone was not primarily for birding but to visit an old friend from my university, who had moved to the country earlier in the year. It would however, have been impossible to not do some birding for my first time in West Africa, and helpfully a friend of my friend was working in a National Park in the north, so I spent a very enjoyable two days there. The main purpose of this report is to increase the limited literature about this country, and to promote the work currently ongoing in the Outamba-Kilimi National Park.

LOGISTICS

FLIGHTS & TRAVELLING AROUND

I flew with Brussels airways from Manchester to Freetown Lungi international airport, the only international airport in the country. The price of flights worked out at around £600, including 23kg luggage. Once I arrived in Lungi I was met by my friend who drove us north to the city of Makeni in central Sierra Leone. On the whole the roads we drove on were very quiet, with most of the traffic consisting of motorbikes, and very few cars. These motorbikes were our main form of transport around Makeni, operating as a taxi service.

LIVING REQUIREMENTS & COST

A VISA is required to enter Sierra Leone, costing around £100. The VISA is best ordered early, as the relaxed nature of African culture means this process can take some time. Apparently a Yellow Fever vaccination is required to enter the country, although this was never checked. It is also necessary to obtain a prescription for malaria prior to your visit. Chlorine tablets are useful as they can be used to treat any water source, and tap water is not an option. Food and supplies are extremely cheap in the country, although the food does leave something to be desired.

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* Beach No.1



BIRDING

OUTAMBA-KILIMI NATIONAL PARK

During my short stay in Sierra Leone I was lucky enough to spend two days birding the Outamba-Kilimi National Park (9.670405, -12.172745) in the far north of the country. The park has a wide range to offer any birder visiting the country, with a huge diversity of habitats; open savannah through to dense forest, with both large and small water bodies. Park accommodation consists of small basic outhouses adjacent to one of the parks many rivers, providing birding right on the doorstep.

The river adjacent to campsite itself offered a wide range of sub-habitats, from narrow shallow streams to wide stretches of river. During my two days in the park I managed five species of Kingfisher, as well as desirable waders such as **Greater Painted Snipe**, **Senegal Thick-Knee** and **Rock Pratincole**. The riverside sedge offered excellent views of **African Black Crake** and **Hammerkop**, where the river itself provided great views of **African Finfoot**. The park offers a peaceful canoe trip to see the parks resident population of Hippopotamus, but also excellent views of a number of forest birds crossing the river; **White-faced Bee-eater** and vulnerable **Yellow-Casqued Hornbill** two of the highlights from my visit.

Birding around the savannah and forest in the park was very enjoyable. The savannah especially had a wide range of species to offer, a number of which are range restricted, the park being one of the best places to see them, for example **Dybowski's Twinspot** and the very poorly known **Emerald Starling**. A number of European migrants were also found here, including **Pied Flycatcher**,

Whinchat and **Tree Pipit**, as well as **Common Sandpiper** on the river.

Access to the park is difficult. The road is challenging, only a four-wheel drive will suffice, although it is possible to travel around using the motorbikes. All the villages near to the park are small and basic, supplies therefore being difficult to come by. Once at the park you are self-sufficient, but for a more adventurous birder it is certainly a destination worth visiting. Personally, I can only wish that I had more time to bird the park, as there is so much potential birding here.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaelatus occipitalis* Outamba-Kilimi National Park





Top left: **Blue-throated Roller** *Eurystomus gularis* Outamba-Kilimi National Park. Top right: **African Grey Hornbill** *Tockus nasutus* Outamba-Kilimi National Park. Middle left: **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis* Outamba-Kilimi National Park. Middle right: **Senegal Thick-Knee** *Burhinus senegalensis* Outamba-Kilimi National Park. Bottom left: **Black Crape** *Amaurornis flavirostra* Outamba-Kilimi National Park. Bottom right: **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* Outamba-Kilimi National Park ne 2019



Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* University of Makeni Campus

Species List:

Outamba-Kilimi National Park: Double-spurred Francolin, Hadada Ibis, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Striated Heron, Hammerkop, Long-tailed Cormorant, African Harrier-Hawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Yellow-billed Kite, Long-crested Eagle, Palm Nut Vulture, Black Crake, African Jacana, African Finfoot, Common Sandpiper, Rock Pratincole, Greater Painted Snipe, White-crowned Lapwing, Senegal Thick-Knee, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Shining Blue Kingfisher, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Blue-throated Roller, Bluebellied Roller, White-faced Bee-eater, African Grey Hornbill, African Pied Hornbill, Yellow-Casqued Hornbill, Levillant's Cuckoo, Tambourine Dove, Red-eyed Dove, Vinaceous Dove, Brown-backed Woodpecker, Common Swift, African Palm Swift, Mottled Spinetail, Pied Crow, Black-crowned Tchagra, White-crested Helmetshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Fanti Saw-Wing, Lesser Striped Swallow, Square-tailed Drongo, Fork-tailed

Drongo, African Golden Oriole, Northern Puffback, Senegal Badis, White-crested Helmetshrike, Green-headed Sunbird, Mangrove Sunbird, Emerald Starling, Violet-backed Starling, Common Bulbul, Western Nicator, Yellow-throated Leaf-love, African Pied Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat, Whinchat, White-browed Forest Flycatcher, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Pied Flycatcher, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Senegal Eremomela, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Red-breasted Paradise Flycatcher, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Red-winged Prinia, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Whistling Cisticola, Dybowski's Twinspot, Yellow-winged Pytilla, *Green Monkey*, *Campbell's Monkey*, *Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey*, *Hippopotamus*,

OTHER SITES

As mentioned before, birding was not my primary reason for visiting Sierra Leone but in travelling around the central city of Makeni I was able to chance across a few nice species. The university campus (8.887284, -12.058077) where I stayed had a few common African species; **Woodland Kingfisher**, **African Thrush** and **African Pied Hornbill**. The university cafeteria drew in a small group of **Hooded Vultures** which came and fed on the meat scraps thrown out. It offered a chance to get really close to these endangered birds.

The only other location outside of Makeni where I did any birding was at the location known as Beach No.1 (8.7528927, -12.3099103). Away from the beaten track, but quite a popular destination on the weekends, the beach provides an excellent location for some quiet birding. **Great Blue Turaco** was definitely a highlight, but other nice species included **Plain-backed Pipit** and **Collared Pratincole**.

Species List:

University of Makeni: Hooded Vulture, Yellow-billed Kite, Shikra, African Harrier-Hawk, Cattle Egret, Red-eyed Dove, Laughing Dove, Feral Pigeon, African Palm Swift, Woodland Kingfisher, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Standard-winged Nightjar, Senegal Coucal, African Golden Oriole, Western Plantain-Eater, Rock Martin, Fanti Saw-wing, Fork-tailed Drongo, Square-tailed Drongo, Pied Crow, Splendid Sunbird, Copper Sunbird, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Northern Puffback, African Thrush, Pied Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Red-winged Prinia, Whistling Cisticola, Grey-backed Cameroptera, Bronze Mannikin, Black-necked Weaver, Village Weaver,

Beach No. 1: Grey Heron, Cattle Egret, Long-tailed Cormorant, African Jacana, Common Sandpiper, African Wattled Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Laughing Dove, Red-eyed Dove, Malachite Kingfisher, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Great Blue Turaco, African Palm Swift, Pied Crow, Common Bulbul, Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail, Plain-backed Pipit, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, *Green Monkey*,

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* Outamba-Kilimi National Park



BIRDS

Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	2 OKNP
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Occasional throughout
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	4 OKNP
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	3 OKNP
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Abundant throughout
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1 OKNP
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1OKNP
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Occasional throughout
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1 OKNP
Long-tailed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>	3 OKNP
African Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	Occasional throughout
Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Occasional throughout
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Occasional throughout
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	1 OKNP
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	1 University Campus
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Occasional throughout
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	Occasional throughout
Red-necked Buzzard	<i>Buteo auguralis</i>	2 OKNP
African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>	1 OKNP
Black Crake	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>	3 OKNP
Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>	2 OKNP
White-crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus albiceps</i>	2 OKNP
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	1 Beach No.1
Greater Painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	1 OKNP
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	Occasional throughout
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common OKNP
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	30 Beach No.1
Rock Pratincole	<i>Glareola nuchalis</i>	Common OKNP
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Occasional throughout
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Common throughout

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis* Outamba-Kilimi National Park





Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* Outamba-Kilimi National

Vinaceous Dove	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>	2 OKNP
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	Occasional throughout
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	1 OKNP
Great Blue Turaco	<i>Corythaeola cristata</i>	2 OKNP 3 Beach No.1
Western Plantain-eater	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	Common University Campus
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	Occasional University Campus
Levaillant's Cuckoo	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>	1 OKNP
Greyish Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo cinerascens</i>	1 University Campus
Standard-winged Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus longipennis</i>	Occasional throughout
Mottled Spinetail	<i>Telacanthura ussheri</i>	1 OKNP
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	Common throughout
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Occasional throughout
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Occasional throughout
Abyssinian Roller	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	3 University Campus
Blue-bellied Roller	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	Occasional throughout
Blue-throated Roller	<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>	3 OKNP
Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	1 University Campus 1 OKNP
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	2 University Campus
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	2 University Campus
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>	3 OKNP
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	10+ OKNP
Shining-blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo quadribrachys</i>	2 OKNP
White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>	40 OKNP
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	Occasional throughout
African Pied Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros fasciatus</i>	Occasional throughout
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	3 OKNP
Yellow-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna elata</i>	2 OKNP
Brown-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos obsoletus</i>	1 OKNP
Senegal Batis	<i>Batis senegalensis</i>	5 OKNP
Brown-throated Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	3 University Campus
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	3 OKNP
Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	1 University Campus 2 OKNP

White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	2 OKNP
Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher	<i>Bias musicus</i>	2 Beach No.1
Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>	1 OKNP
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	Occasional throughout
Western Square-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus occidentalis</i>	10 University Campus
African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>	Occasional throughout
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	2 OKNP
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	1 OKNP
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Common throughout
Western Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>	1 OKNP
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	Common throughout
Yellow-throated Leaflove	<i>Atimastillas flavicollis</i>	1 OKNP
Fanti Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne obscura</i>	Occasional throughout
Red-chested Swallow	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	5 Lungi Airport
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Occasional throughout
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>	1 OKNP
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	5 Lungi Airport
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	1 University Campus
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	2 OKNP
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1 OKNP
Whistling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola lateralis</i>	Occasional throughout
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	Occasional throughout
Red-winged Warbler	<i>Heliolais erythropterus</i>	Occasional throughout
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brevicaudata</i>	2 University Campus 1 OKNP
Senegal Eremomela	<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>	3 OKNP
Emerald Starling	<i>Lamprotornis iris</i>	2 OKNP
Violet-backed Starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	3OKNP
African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	Occasional throughout

Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris* Outamba-Kilimi National Park





African Thrush *Turdus pelios* University of Makeni Campus

White-browed Forest Flycatcher	<i>Fraseria cinerascens</i>	2 OKNP
Grey Tit-Flycatcher	<i>Myioparus plumbeus</i>	3 OKNP
Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	1 OKNP
European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Occasional throughout
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	2 OKNP
Mangrove Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>	5 OKNP
Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>	1 OKNP
Splendid Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i>	4 University Campus
Copper Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	3 University Campus
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	3 Lungi Airport
Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	5 University Campus
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	Occasional throughout
Yellow-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia hypogrammica</i>	2 OKNP
Dybowski's Twinspot	<i>Euschistospiza dybowskii</i>	10 OKNP
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	15 Beach No.1
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	Occasional throughout
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Occasional throughout
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	2 OKNP
Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	1 Beach No.1
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1 OKNP

MAMMALS

Green Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus sabaeus</i>
Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus petaurista</i>
Campbell's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus campbelli</i>
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibious</i>

REPTILES

Rainbow Agama	<i>Agama lebretoni</i>
Nile Monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>

BUTTERFLIES

Danid Eggfly	<i>Hypolimnas misippus</i>
Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>
Nigerian Blue Forester	<i>Euphaedra luperca</i>
Soilder Pansy	<i>Junonia terea</i>
Forest Glade Nymph	<i>Aterica galene</i>
Veined Swordtail	<i>Graphium leonidas</i>
Angola White Lady	<i>Graphium angolanus</i>
Nemetes Sailer	<i>Neptis nemetes</i>
Forest Leopard	<i>Phalanta eurytis</i>
Lunulated Hairtail	<i>Anthene lunulata</i>
African Migrant	<i>Catopsilia florella</i>

DRAGONFLIES

Lucia Widow	<i>Palpopleura lucia</i>
Red-veined Dropwing	<i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>
Pied-Spot	<i>Hemistigma albipunctum</i>

Lucia Widow *Palpopleura lucia* Outamba-Kilimi National Park

