

8 December 2019 – 3 January 2020: Senegal and Gambia

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Following decades of birdwatchers' attention that has concentrated almost exclusively on the Gambia, the last 3-4 years have seen a slow emergence of Senegal as one of far Western Africa's preferred birding destinations. Even commercial tours now increasingly combine their Gambia itinerary with some time at key spots in Senegal. The reasons for this are obvious: in addition to all of the Gambia's top birds, Senegal boasts Sahel endemics and a selection of sparse escarpment specialties with an infrastructure that at least equals – but often surpasses – that of neighbouring countries. With these developments in mind, Wei and I decided to concentrate on Senegal during this winter break (with a quick birding interlude in the Gambia en route between the two disconnected parts of Senegal).

Birding strategy, guides and site information: Most birders visiting recently have gone with Senegal's top guide Abdou "Carlos" Lo (+221-77-554-1645), widely known as Carlos. Unfortunately, Carlos was busy with other clients during most of our visit. However, I still met up with him twice, birded together for ~1.5 days, and was happy that he offered his reasonably priced services remotely, e.g. by facilitating boat tours in Toubacouta and Kaolack in his absence or by sharing information. Carlos is an extremely helpful and knowledgeable guide and I warmly recommend him.

We like independent birding the most, and were happy that it was possible (after some searching) to find a long-term rental car in Senegal through the services of Mr Babacar (+221-77-637-1173). Driving in Dakar can be a challenging, and smaller rural highways are extremely dangerous at night because of poor visibility of pedestrians and animals, but otherwise self-driving was straightforward. The frequent police and military roadblocks were mostly unproblematic, although a few unpleasant exceptions definitely stand out. Tourists intending to self-drive should beware that experiences will not always be smooth. Generally, encounters of 'problematic' police officers in Senegal were greatly outnumbered by those in the Gambia, where I felt that a high percentage of traffic police personnel were angry and threatening, regardless of one's conduct.

We definitely benefitted a lot from the local knowledge of expat birders residing in Senegal, predominantly Bram Piot (bram.piot [at] gmail.com) from Dakar (who we overlapped with in Senegal shortly before his move abroad) and Frédéric Bacuez (fretback2010 [at] yahoo.fr) from St Louis, both extremely friendly gentlemen who we birded with together on two days, and who shared details generously. Bram was also so kind as to provide his helpful comments on this trip report itself. Otherwise, rough information was obtained from a medley of 2-3 trip reports that already exist on the internet – a number that is likely to rise steeply over the next few years. Although I am not a photographer and we do not have expensive lenses, I started to take more photos on this trip using my mobile phone in conjunction with the telescope, enabling me to go back to the literature in difficult ID situations.

Timing: It's often tough to find the perfect timing for countries that encompass a wealth of different biomes and habitats. Senegal is no different. Most people go during

the winter half of the year (Nov – March), which is a prerequisite for northern migrants to be present and for Swallow-tailed Kites to be at their roost. A December/January slot was probably a good compromise, ensuring that the Quail-Plover was already back at its stake-out (Carlos struggles to see them before mid- to late December). A much later visit (after April) would have ensured top vocal activity in the little rainforest patches around Ziguinchor, which were rather quiet during my visit and failed to provide good viewing experiences of various skulker populations that may prove to be taxonomically interesting. On the other hand, during the trip, I most often wished we could have gone a bit earlier (Nov) when seabird action in Dakar would have been truly interesting, and weavers, cisticolas, bishops, glossy-starlings and whydahs would have been in full breeding gear or display. I'm not sure I missed any crucial targets as a consequence of being slightly late for this breeding peak, but both the Exclamatory Paradise-Whydah and the Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling were certainly more problematic than they would have been 1-2 months earlier, and some of the more fascinating cisticolas in the southeast would have been easier to pin down, while common weavers, bishops and widowbirds would have been more of a pleasure to deal with. (Weavers were quite unenjoyable on this trip, and I completely gave up on bishops). In hindsight, though, I prefer having seen a Quail Plover to getting views of breeding Village Weavers, so it was all good...

Itinerary: In the following itinerary, birdwatching sites that are later mentioned in the bird list are reproduced in **bold**.

8 Dec 2019: I had arrived at Dakar's new international Blaise-Diagne Airport the previous night on my own, taking the rental car into my possession and struggling to find appropriate accommodation in the chaotic and unpleasant town of Mbour. On this morning, I set out significantly before sunrise to arrive at wonderful **Popenguine** in the dark, where random driving immediately to the east of the large church pilgrimage area produced my first tantalizing observation of a Standard-winged Nightjar – albeit not yet at the level of viewing quality that would satisfy my demands. As the sun rose, I birded the beautiful lagoon and scrub all the way up to the top of the cliffs, where I watched a hunting Barbary Falcon over multiple hours. After lunch at a fish restaurant, I set out on the long drive to **Kaolack**, where I arrived in time to see some of the impressive waterbird congregations in wetlands surrounding town, but too late for any raptor action. The resort in Kaolack was extremely pleasant compared to last night's accommodation.

9 Dec 2019: Not having had the time to pre-arrange any visit to Kousmar Island, I tried my own luck in the surroundings of **Kaolack** in the early morning, hoping to catch streams of outbound raptors from the famous Kousmar roost in flight. My dawn attempts focused on the area to the north of Kousmar Island, a little south of Linndiane, which quickly turned out to be the wrong location, as I shifted my attention to south of Kousmar around Ndiaffate. By the end of the early morning, I had obtained reasonable views of multiple little streams of Scissor-tailed Kites, although views of kestrels remained distant and unsatisfactory. Kaolack is the main crossroads to so many places, so I knew I was going to come back and have multiple opportunities to do the raptor roost proper justice. By the late morning, I continued my long and fairly uninterrupted

drive eastwards to **Wassadou** Lodge, where I arrived in the late afternoon, in time for my first waterside observations at the pleasant lodge along the Gambia River. Searches for Adamawa Turtle-Doves in the adjacent gallery forest failed to be productive.

10 Dec 2019: In the morning, chance had it that I ran into the famous Senegalese guide Carlos and his UK client by pure coincidence. We took the same boat ride down the Gambia River from **Wassadou** Lodge, where Carlos's client focused on photos of Egyptian Plovers and I focused on Adamawa Turtle Doves that did not show in the end. Following another stroll through gallery forests, I departed around noon, knowing that Wassadou would always be en route along the way back in case I hadn't seen Adamawas by then. I breezed along the newly-upgraded stretch of road through **Niokolo-Koba National Park**, allowing myself fewer birding stops than I should have. After Mako, the road became badly damaged, with a particularly serious pothole bumping against my car's electric box, damaging the traction control system, with annoying implications for the remainder of the trip. I tried to have it fixed in Kédougou and continue to Dindéfélo all the way, but the mechanic took a long time and ultimately told me that the traction control can only be fixed in Dakar, forcing me to drive extremely slowly and cautiously for the next few days. As the sun was about to disappear at the end of my car-repair troubles, I decided to settle in a pleasant resort in Kédougou and make my way to Dindéfélo the next morning. Wonderful views of a White-faced Owl in the resort's shady trees during dinner were an added bonus.

11 Dec 2019: I coordinated my pre-dawn start from Kédougou to end up spending the golden morning hours along the stretch of small side-road to Dindéfélo that runs adjacent to the western bank of the Gambia River, as this area constituted one of two clusters of eBird sightings of Vinaceous Firefinch – a major sub-regional endemic and target of mine. I was dazzled by the diversity of savannah birds coming in for nice views in this area during the morning's peak, but also grew concerned that Vinaceous Firefinch was not among them. Although I frequently changed strategies (e.g., sticking to exact uploaded coordinates, or extending the search radius to adjacent dry savannah and even lush riverside vegetation), no Vinaceous had surfaced by the late morning, when I decided to postpone this search and find my way to **Dindéfélo** proper. Unfortunately, the convoy of Senegal's Minister of the Interior narrowly passed me en route, not allowing me to pass them again in return. This mistake cost me several hours of birding time during the hot midday period when I was stuck behind a convoy that stopped at every human settlement for photo opportunities with the Minister. Finally making it to Dindéfélo by the afternoon, I settled into the Campement Villageois, obtained my compulsory guide by the name of Bala (+221-77-1030823) and made my way into the lush gallery forest towards the waterfall. This hike yielded many widespread African forest birds that I would not run into again on this trip, and could have yielded more (e.g. trogons) with additional time investment – as I found out later. However, with my focus on regional specialties and a lack of interest to take photos of waterfalls, we stopped short of the tourist attraction and returned to the forest–scrub–rocky slope interface for a satisfying study experience of Mali Firefinches, one of the main targets of my trip. There was barely enough time to climb up to the top of the escarpment, where the late-afternoon views of a scenic African savannah landscape were one of the

spiritual highlights of the trip. As dusk approached, we descended to the Campement, although later conversations with other people revealed that I should have put in some effort to find Freckled Nightjar around the rockface at sunset.

12 Dec 2019: On my second full day near **Dindéfélo**, I asked my local guide Bala to take me to the Vallée de Ségou, another forested canyon in the area with a slightly different mix of targets. The main quarry here was Adamawa Turtle Dove, a long-time bogey of mine, missed not only earlier this trip at Wassadou but also previously in other countries. So it was all the more joyous that this bird showed up vocalizing on a tree in plain sight almost first-thing in the morning. Additional Mali Firefinches appeared in a similar rocky-forested interface as yesterday, with viewing experiences equally tricky but eventually satisfying with patience. The birding was pleasant but failed to yield more novelties after two colorful species of turaco were finally lodged toward noon, so we slowly returned to the car and had a rustic local lunch in Ségou. With only the mid- and late afternoon left, I decided we'd drive back to Dindéfélo at an extremely slow pace, checking likely savannah hang-outs around a second eBird cluster of sightings of Vinaceous Firefinch in this area. The savannah did not cease to amaze, with a flurry of new birds trickling in steadily. But Vinaceous Firefinches remained in hiding until quite late in the afternoon, when I had an intriguing ~5min encounter with a pair of them perched deep within a thicket, allowing for steadily improving puzzle views through the branches and twigs. Relieved to have found this exceedingly tricky specialty, Bala and I returned to Dindéfélo, where I spent the last 30min of daylight with rewarding observations around a swampy trash dump next to town.

13 Dec 2019: Having done at least some justice to the key habitats and birds below the escarpment at **Dindéfélo** on the previous days, I could finally concentrate on the Dandé Plateau atop the escarpment today. Local guide Bala and I hiked up the escarpment at first light – a brisk 30-45min speed hike without interruptions for those who don't mind a throbbing pulse. On arrival, peak bird activity kept me near the escarpment's edge for longer than I had initially planned, but yielded key observations of Neumann's Starling and the distinct local Mocking Cliff Chat that I would not see again elsewhere. By the time we arrived at the Dandé Plateau, the sun was high and piercing, with late-morning raptor action leading to the only observations of adult Beaudouin's Snake-Eagles for the whole trip. I knocked myself out zig-zagging across vast fields of mushroom termite mounds in the searing heat. With only one more mushroom cluster to go, my strategy worked out, as a cooperative pair of Heuglin's Wheatear finally appeared and even let itself be photographed through my amateur scope-phone arrangement. Relieved at the successful outcome, we slowly hiked back to Dandé Village near the escarpment around noon, the sun now taking its proper toll. At Dandé, Bala proceeded to his Friday prayers while I rested in the shade and then walked out for some more cliff chat observations at the escarpment. After hiking down to Dindéfélo, I bade farewell to Bala, paid my dues and commenced the return drive to Kédougou, with a number of birding stops along the way. By the time I had reached the main road from Casamance to Kédougou, it was almost dark. In Kédougou, I stayed at the same hotel as three nights prior.

14 Dec 2019: I timed my pre-dawn start from Kédougou to spend most of the golden morning hours along the stretch of road through **Niokolo-Koba National Park**, with a

bunch of diverting but mostly low-key observations during roadside stops. As the sun picked up intensity, my birding stops declined in frequency. At Tambacounda, I was forced to load up military passengers to give them a lift to Kaolack. This coincided with my car presenting serious problems as a consequence of the damaged traction control system. The highway was full of slow trucks, and driving with a car that sometimes stalled out of nowhere was extremely intense and stressful. At last, I found the button that deactivates traction control, allowing for a mostly normal remainder of the trip. I unloaded the military men at Kaolack and quickly resumed my drive to Toubacouta with only fleeting observations of Scissor-tailed Kites near Kaolack towards dusk. I made it to Toubacouta slightly after dark, meeting Carlos at Africa Strike Lodge to prepare for a one-day stint of birding together before he'd be forced to go off with his next clients.

15 Dec 2019: The White-crested Tiger-Heron is a difficult beast. Decent chances to see it during mangrove boat rides are restricted to the lowest tide, introducing timing challenges. As today's only suitable low tide at **Toubacouta** was in the afternoon, I carried out some dawn observations around the hotel on my own and was joined by Carlos after breakfast. First we checked out glossy starlings on a leisurely walk around the neighbourhood, and then he took me to an agricultural and wetland area almost exactly 10km east of town, slightly south of Keur Mama Lamine, for exciting observations of Quailfinches and other goodies. After a long lunch break that I mostly spent looking at migrant warblers and resident seedeaters around town, we embarked on the afternoon's boat ride. A Mouse-brown Sunbird and Goliath Herons were probably the highlight, but the tiger-heron remained elusive. It's not unusual for Carlos to require two, and sometimes even three, boat rides to show a tiger-heron to his clients, so this was not unexpected. Towards dusk, Carlos took me to his sunset waterhole for Four-banded Sandgrouse, a coveted species I'd missed in other countries before. The drinking well was an unassuming little hole amidst agricultural land about 200m southeast of the tiny settlement at almost 12km along the road from Toubacouta to Kaolack. But something was different this time: villagers had started to build a dense straw fence around this parcel of land, indicating this would soon become unsuitable. Carlos instructed me to position myself quite close to the waterhole before the birds' appearance, but – perhaps because of the changed circumstances on the ground – the birds were spooked and did not allow for views beyond flushed shadows, thereby putting an end to an extremely disappointing afternoon.

16 Dec 2019: Some soul-searching during the previous night had led to a change in plans. This week's most suitable low-tide periods would all be during afternoon hours, reducing chances at the tiger-heron. I'd be better off investing these days into my planned excursion to the Casamance region, and returning to Toubacouta a few days later when the suitable low tide would coincide with the morning. Hence, I had bidden farewell to Carlos the previous night and now embarked on the long drive to Ziguinchor (in Casamance) via the Gambia. A little detour in the early morning led me to yesterday's wetlands area near Keur Mama Lamine about 10km east of **Toubacouta**, with a bit of low-key birding. But soon I headed northeastwards to Kaolack, and then southeastwards into the Gambia, where the trans-Gambian bridge at Farafenni had just been completed recently. I allowed myself a quick birding detour east of Farafenni along

the **Farafenni-Njau Road**, but otherwise tried to cross the ~25km stretch through the Gambia as quickly as possible. It would be a lie to describe the transit from one Senegal into the other Senegal (=Casamance) via the Gambia as uncomplicated. The border formalities were daunting, intransparent and extremely poorly set-up, and the brief stretch of road through the Gambia was frequently lined by military and police checkpoints requesting payment for puzzling reasons and conducting strip searches through all my luggage down to the dirtiest piece of underwear. My recommendation is definitely to avoid a transit through the Gambia when visiting the Casamance region. Back on the Senegal side (now to the south of Gambia), I quickly made my way to Ziguinchor, where I connected with Bruno Bargain (+221-77-143-0763; Bruno.Bargain [at] gmail.com), a French ornithologist who has made this region his home and graciously hosted me during my stay. Bruno had been invited to a formal tie-and-dinner event with the French consul and Ziguinchor's French expat community at the city's most fine-dining restaurant that evening and took me along for an unexpected but welcome experience.

17 Dec 2019: As a first destination, Bruno took me to a tiny woodland reserve called Djibélor, just a couple of kilometers west of **Ziguinchor**, where we successfully tracked down my major target for Casamance: Turati's Boubou. From there, we proceeded to a community forest reserve a few kilometers further west next to the village of Kamobeul, where an inquisitive family of Capuchin Babblers eventually allowed themselves to be tracked down after a couple of hours' searching. Following a lunch break at Bruno's house, we spent the mid- and late afternoon at a birdy wetlands area at the outskirts of Ziguinchor as a nice way to end a successful day.

18 Dec 2019: Following yesterday's gigantic success, today's excursion with Bruno was possibly a little bit less auspicious. We left **Ziguinchor** after breakfast to visit some remnant patch of Guinean rainforest west of Oussouye, but the session there was plagued by low activity and poor accessibility. A lack of forest trails and machetes meant that we had to crawl through hundreds of meters of dense, thorny, overgrown plantation before we hit the best little gullies of rainforest. At one point, we struck a little mixed flock containing at least one target illadopsis (by voice), but we did not stick around with it for long enough as the pre-arranged itinerary suggested a departure for a mixed wetlands-grasslands area north of Kagnout for the late morning. This matrix of open savannah and wetlands had previously yielded such gems as Cuckoo Finch for Bruno (still the only record for Senegal), but our visit was unseasonal and did not produce many unexpected species. Bruno was hopeful to show me my lingering target, Four-banded Sandgrouse, in an area where he sees them a lot, but by the time we reached it, it was high noon, and we only managed flushed flight views that kept me wishing for more. All in all, it was not such a bad morning, but the most highly desired species remained in the "flushed", "glimpsed", or "heard only" categories. After a late lunch with Bruno, I bade farewell to him and his lovely family, and embarked on the long return drive. I made it to the Gambia's southern border before dark, and – given the late hour and some remaining birding business that was waiting for me in the Gambia – I decided to check into this trip's most sub-standard hotel in Farafenni, the only accommodation I could find.

19 Dec 2019: As unpleasant as the Gambia's military and police checkpoints can be, it was worth investing a full morning and early afternoon into some birding hotspots along **Farafenni-Njau Road**. My main target was the Exclamatory Paradise-Whydah, one of the birds that people tend to see at random roadside spots in Senegal's south, but for which the season had already become problematic as many males had turned into the much more inconspicuous non-breeding plumage. A glance at eBird suggested that various spots along the Farafenni-Njau Road provide the highest density of previous Exclamatory observations in all of Senegambia. The furthest east I ventured was the village of Njau itself, where I spent most of the morning around an amazing and extremely productive pond a few meters south of town that eventually produced female and breeding-plumage male Exclamatories, along with more Egyptian Plovers and many other goodies. Slowly retracing my steps back to Farafenni around noon, I added rewarding bird observations around the extensive marshflats west of Kauur. After some further interactions with angry Gambian army personnel in Farafenni, I couldn't wait to get back into Senegal, driving northwest to Kaolack (the third occasion of passing through here during a time of day that allowed me to see overflying kites), and turning left (southwestwards) to reach the sandgrouse drinking hole near **Toubacouta** just in time. The villagers had nearly completed their straw fence around the drinking hole and had started to modify the shape of the hole, making me extremely nervous about its continued suitability for the sandgrouse. However, two handfuls of sandgrouse finally alighted after dark, allowing for great observations. The only blight on the whole experience was cast by the waning batteries of my torchlight: I had spent the previous three nights in rooms with no light and electricity, exhausting the torch to a point that made views of the Four-banded Sandgrouse less bright than I would have wished. The technical malfunction notwithstanding, I decided to leave the place happy.

20 Dec 2019: Enough days had lapsed since my last **Toubacouta** visit for the low tides to shift into the morning. By now, Carlos was on tour with new clients, but he'd organized my second mangrove boat ride for me. Boatman Abdoul and I spent the best hours of the morning on his *pirogue*, checking roughly the same spots that we had checked during the first ride five days prior, but the tiger-heron remained elusive. After lunch, I got ready to drive out to reach Ndiaffate (in **Kaolack's** surroundings) by mid-afternoon. At 3.30pm, I connected with local guide Bocar, arranged through Carlos, at the town hall (=hôtel de ville) of Ndiaffate, and we drove out north to the riverine salt plains' edge, parking the car and making our way across a couple of hundred meters of water by boat. Once we'd reached Kousmar Island, we remained in waiting mode until the incredible spectacle unfolded: first thousands of Scissor-tailed Kites, then even more Lesser Kestrels. In utter awe, I could not cut myself loose from the steady stream of kestrels coming in even after dark, so by the time we made it back to Ndiaffate and I arrived back at the hotel in Toubacouta, it was quite late.

21 Dec 2019: Third time's the charm? My third mangrove boat ride at **Toubacouta** with Carlos's boatman Abdoul took us the other way (seawards), exploring numerous little side-channels. Towards the end of what had become a very repetitive kind of experience, I had a split-second encounter with a tiger-heron that made me more frustrated than pleased: Abdoul and I must have already given up internally when he

increased engine speed on one of the last quiet serpentines of side-channel, as a tiger-heron suddenly flushed from the side of the boat and was gone in just as quick a moment. Urging Abdoul to stop the engine and turn around was futile, as the bird was long gone by the time we arrived back. As usual in situations like this, I quickly decided I was not going to count this sighting, as my possibly only-ever White-crested Tiger-Heron sighting would need to be better than that. Following a late lunch, I had to hit the road in order to make it to Blaise-Diagne Airport in time to pick up Wei from her Singapore-Addis-Dakar flight for the second half of this trip, which would take us north. Passing the familiar surroundings of Kaolack for the sixth time, I took the northern route through Diourbel and via the convenient tollway to reach the airport, allowing me to avoid the traffic disaster that is Mbour. After unsurprising flight delays, I was happy to see Wei safely arrive after sunset, whereupon we made our way to the Hotel Calao at Lac Rose in Dakar's greater surroundings.

22 Dec 2019: On Wei's first morning, and following a kind tip-off by Bram Piot, we explored an area of dune vegetation a few kilometers northeast of Lac Rose in **Dakar's** greater surroundings, specifically to connect with Savile's Bustard, a bird that had eluded me on my first morning at Popenguine. While the bustard did not show, we had a lovely morning in a beautiful dune and baobab landscape with a few nice waterbirds in addition. We ran into and then had lunch at an attractive lakeside restaurant with Bram and his friend Frédéric Bacuez, both of whom would become close friends who provided a wealth of tips during this trip. After lunch, Wei and I hit the modern highway to **Touba**, and were surprised that we still made it to the main target area (a little piece of open scrub and low-stature savannah) near the town of Tip with an hour of daylight left to search for the Quail-Plover. As the sun set on the horizon, no Quail-Plover had been encountered, and we gradually learnt that Touba (with its roughly 0.5 million people) and its satellite town of Mbacké are possibly the largest human agglomeration on Earth without a functioning hotel. The reasons for this are too complicated to explain in a report of this sort, but it suffices to say that these circumstances forced us to backtrack all the way to Diourbel to find an accommodation for the night.

23 Dec 2019: A pre-dawn start from Diourbel ensured that we were back at the area of open scrub near the town of Tip, close to the city of **Touba**, at sunrise. It took us until 1.30pm to finally connect with the Quail-Plover, but the long search made the experience even sweeter. The bird stayed for good views, photos (through amateurish phone-scope contraptions) and even phone video, and engaged in all the amazing chameleon-walk behavior previously reported. Exhausted from the sun exposure, we drove to Touba to find one of its few restaurants for lunch and take photos of its world-famous mosque. It was late, so we had to hit the road to reach St Louis. The long drive north was interspersed only by an exceptional stop for a "vulture restaurant" at the roadside north of Touba.

24 Dec 2019: We left our **St Louis** hotel early to visit the nearby Trois Marigots, where we loved the aquatic and savannah bird activity even though the main target, Savile's Bustard, did not materialize. We proceeded to the historic but derelict town center of St Louis for an authentic lunch and some shopping errands during the heat of the noon. By mid-afternoon, we were back out near the wetlands and scrub south of town around

the village of Ndiébène. We sank our car in deep sand along a quarry track that's been badly damaged by daily truck use but were helped out by local youths, and found an alternative track to reach our target savannah patch at ~500m east-southeast of Ndiébène. Even so, serious time investment in this habitat would not yield the coveted bustard either. At nightfall we returned to the same St Louis hotel.

25 Dec 2019: Savile's Bustard had developed into one of the more problematic targets of the trip, so a full-blown early-morning stealth visit to the same savannah patch at Ndiébène, south of **St Louis**, finally yielded an unobtrusive male walking in on me for fantastic views. On the return drive to St Louis, we stopped at various promising wetland spots, most notably the sewage field south of town, for additional pleasant birding. After another authentic St Louis lunch, this time at a different restaurant, we slowly drove out of town for our protracted journey to Djoudj – at first with long and frequent wetland stops just north of town, but gradually with fewer and fewer stops in a more and more arid agricultural landscape. As we neared Djoudj, wetlands became more frequent again. We drove through the gates of the visitor centre at **Djoudj** exactly at sunset against the backdrop of thousands of whistling-ducks and dozens of flamingos at the adjacent lake.

26 Dec 2019: Our local guide Vieux, a good friend of Bram Piot and Frédéric Bacuez, who had agreed to guide us for our time in **Djoudj**, suggested a boat ride for this morning. Although Djoudj boat rides don't deliver many rare or restricted species, they provide nice viewing opportunities of a Great White Pelican colony and general waterbirds, and yielded my only local Stonechat of the trip on the drive back. After lunch, Vieux headed out with us onto the savannah plain to look for Arabian Bustards and Egyptian Nightjars at his stake-outs. We succeeded in neither of the two: a complete blank on the bustard and only unsatisfactory flushed views of what should have been an Egyptian Nightjar, although an immature eagle generated some excitement. The night was spent at the Djoudj headquarters again.

27 Dec 2019: For our second morning at **Djoudj**, we retraced our foot steps from the previous afternoon with Vieux, this time scoring with passable views of one Arabian Bustard and repeat views of the eagle, although no Egyptian Nightjar obliged. At noon, we bade farewell to wonderful Vieux and continued onto **Richard Toll**, where we settled into the Gîte d'Étape Hotel with enough daytime for a brief birding outing to the acacia grove along the antenna track just ~3km east of town.

28 Dec 2019: This morning we worked our way eastwards from **Richard Toll** along a sequence of birding sites: some open scrub just east of town with little reward, then last night's antenna track with a Sahel Woodpecker, followed by the problematic tree grove around Keur Mbaye, which eventually yielded the penduline-tit. Following our trip's most uninspiring lunch in Dagana, we spent the heat of the noon in the shade of the awesome Forêt de Bokhol, only 9km east of Dagana (and still listed under Richard Toll for most species). From there, we drove east to Gamadji Saré, a relatively new birding location sussed out by Bram and Fréd, where we checked into an inexpensive local lodge that became the favourite accommodation of our trip: the Jardins du Fouta. We spent the remaining daylight observing our first individuals of the newly-discovered local population of Horus Swift along the river and went to a nearby track through red-

dune habitat for a tantalizing view of Golden Nightjar after dusk. Only remarkable bird sightings at **Gamadji Saré** are listed under this name, while more widespread birds seen here are listed under the general name **Richard Toll**.

29 Dec 2019: I returned to the red-sand track near **Gamadji Saré** (variably listed under **Richard Toll**) at pre-dawn for some more attempts at better views of the nightjar, followed by general birding, and then gave the riverside near the Jardins du Fouta more attention during the morning's best hours. In the late morning, we left for Podor – way too early as it turned out, as the habitat around Gamadji Saré is immeasurably better than the degraded agricultural scrub surrounding Podor. After finding a hotel at noon, one of the most eventless afternoons of the trip unfolded as Podor's sun-scorched and impoverished landscape failed to yield much avian novelty. Yet when the sun disappeared, nightjars became alive around Podor. Two species provided fantastic views, one of them – the Golden Nightjar – much easier here than at Gamadji Saré at least during our limited time window. As with Gamadji Saré, most birds seen in Podor are listed under the more general **Richard Toll**.

30 Dec 2019: Having spent sufficient time at Podor the previous day, we left the town in the dark of the pre-dawn hours and made our way back to the Forêt de Bokhol for the bulk of the morning hours (listed under **Richard Toll**), which had become a site that I greatly enjoyed. Towards noon, we finally prepared to embark on our trip's most challenging section: the side-trip into Mauritania via the Rosso border crossing. We reached the border by noon – a chaotic, crowded, unfathomable place. Two hours of being sent from one office to another – still on the Senegalese side – while being hounded by a handful of private agents pretending to sell essential services only resulted in the realization that they would not allow us to cross in the end, given that we had no Mauritanian papers. The excursion into Mauritania had always been a big “maybe” in my mind, fully knowing that such undertakings are not guaranteed unless intricately planned. But I felt it had been worth a try! The main attraction in Mauritania would have been an improved chance to see Kordofan Lark, so we swiftly returned to Richard Toll, checking into the Gîte d'Étapes, with a view to intensifying our search specifically for this lark in red-sand habitat while continuing to look for rare wheatears. Identifying particular red-sand tracts of land by Google Earth, we spent the afternoon checking one spot after the other. By the late afternoon, no special lark had surfaced but new developments and realizations in wheatear ID suggested that I should give Forêt de Bokhol some additional attention tomorrow.

31 Dec 2019: Having the unusual benefit of an additional 1-2 days that we were unable to spend in Mauritania meant that I could go back to Forêt de Bokhol and nearby sites of red earth – all in the greater surroundings of **Richard Toll** – to look for both wheatears and Kordofan Lark during this morning. The former quest was more successful than the latter. Shortly before noon, we checked out of the Gîte d'Étapes and drove to St Louis – slowly and with many stops at likely red-sand areas, either as pre-determined through satellite maps or by ground-truthing from the car. The ~100km drive to **St Louis** took so long that we only reached the Trois Marigots near sunset, in time for some unforgettable sandgrouse observations. We checked back into our previous St Louis

hotel, wanting to go to the historic city centre for New Year's celebrations, but eventually too knackered (both of us) to be bothered to head back out of the room.

1 January 2020: This day marked the slow and gradual return drive from St Louis to Dakar, with a great deal of birdwatching interruptions in the red-sand dune country **north of Louga**. In fact, from mid-morning to the early afternoon, we took an immense detour from Ngueune Sarr (northwest of Louga) along sandy tracks to Niomre (northeast of Louga), spending a good time in about a handful of red sand dune areas between these two towns to specifically search for Kordofan Lark, including one spot just outside Niomre from where there has been a historic record. The lark remained elusive, but I felt its presence here is definitely a possibility, given a number of other desert scrub species at surprisingly southerly latitudes. By mid-afternoon, we desisted from any further birding to make it to Dakar in time, but were unlucky with extremely unpleasant police checkpoint experiences that would cost us dearly in time and other resources, and that I do not want to describe in closer detail. We only made it to Dakar 2-3 hours after sunset, and checked into the Calao in Ngor on Bram's kind recommendation.

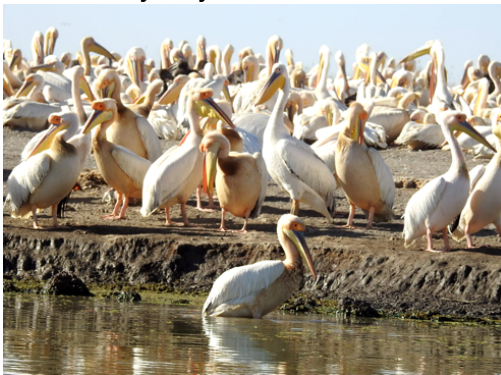
2 January 2020: A pleasant morning was spent in Bram's company watching seabirds at the famous seawatching spot at the Calao Hotel in Ngor, in **Dakar's** outskirts. We had so much fun that we left much later than our day's itinerary allowed. Following lunch and another errand, we briefly stopped by the Technopole – Bram's local birdwatching patch and an impressive wetland site with a diversity of species. It was my great regret that we only had a brief 30min here as I would have loved to give this spot a half-day. But we had to hit the road as our plan for the last day foresaw a return visit to Toubacouta for that last chance of a tiger-heron. I wanted to time the arrival in Toubacouta so that we'd get a chance to see the sandgrouse after dusk, and was initially happy that the diversion along the new Touba highway allowed us to beat the clock and get there in time. However, as the sun went down on us, the sandgrouse did not materialize – or more precisely, ~2-3 individuals were only heard briefly but did not alight. Carlos's waterhole for these sandgrouse had by now been modified and degraded while the straw fence had been fully completed, presumably making this site unsuitable. I count myself lucky that I still saw them during the last days of their occurrence on 19 December 2019, although it was disappointing for Wei not to see them.

3 January 2020: My fourth attempt at the tiger-heron, and Wei's first! Carlos had booked us his boatman – Abdoul – for another morning's mangrove ride at **Toubacouta**, and this time we succeeded with a nice experience, thanks to Wei's eagle-eyes spotting it first and telling Abdoul to turn the boat for an individual that stuck around for multiple good views. Overjoyed, we had lunch and drove back towards Dakar. By the late afternoon, we arrived in **Popenguine**, which I had selected as our last destination. We birded the beautiful lagoon, checked out the beach, went back to where I had started the trip almost a month prior and – incredibly – succeeded with an intimate viewing experience of the Standard-winged Nightjar where I had failed a month before – again thanks to Wei's eagle-eyes first spotting the individuals that ended up providing the greatest views. We topped this off with a dinner at the restaurant where Dakar's arts and movie scene seems to meet, handed the car keys back to the company's messenger,

packed our stuff, caught a few hours of sleep, and proceeded to the international airport in the wee hours of the morning.

Bird List: Locations generally follow the bold-printed birding sites in the itinerary. Subspecies taxonomy follows the Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World, although I sometimes deviate in my opinions regarding species versus subspecies status. As during all intense and bird-rich itineraries, keeping notes can sometimes be challenging, especially for common species seen at multiple locations, so these notes will often be incomplete (regarding presence/absence at any one site) or approximate (regarding numbers seen), especially for species encountered repetitively in succession.

1. *Tachybaptus ruficollis capensis* – Little Grebe: ~5 Popenguine; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 Djoudj (Frédéric Bacuez reminded me that this last individual in far northern Senegal may also be referable to wintering nominate *ruficollis*)
2. *Anhinga rufa rufa* – African Darter: ~8 Toubacouta; ~20 Ziguinchor; 1 Saint Louis; ~30 Djoudj
3. *Phalacrocorax africanus africanus* – Long-tailed Cormorant: ~10 Popenguine; ~60 around Kaolack; 1 Wassadou; ~35 Toubacouta; ~20 Ziguinchor; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~75 Saint Louis; ~50 Djoudj; ~2 greater Richard Toll area
4. *Phalacrocorax [carbo] lucidus* – White-breasted Cormorant: ~10 Popenguine; ~65 Kaolack; ~55 Ziguinchor; ~5 Saint Louis; ~35 Djoudj; ~30 Dakar
5. *Pelecanus rufescens* – Pink-backed Pelican: ~15 Ziguinchor; ~30 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~30 Kaolack; ~20 Saint Louis; ~20 Technopole (Dakar)
6. *Pelecanus onocrotalus* – Great White Pelican: ~35 near Kaolack, a lot more pelicans in the distance likely also referring to this species; ~550 Saint Louis; ~550 Djoudj



GREAT WHITE PELICAN COLONY DURING BOAT RIDE AT DJOUDJ

7. *Sula bassana* – Northern Gannet: total of ~8 seen mostly far offshore at Ngor (Dakar), none fully adult but predominantly in first-winter plumage... I didn't spend effort to explore the infinitesimally unlikely possibility of straggler Cape Gannets *Sula capensis* for any of these (and many would have been unidentifiable at present knowledge anyway).
8. *Ardea cinerea cinerea* – Grey Heron: ~12 Popenguine; ~5 around Kaolack; ~10 Toubacouta; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~30 Saint Louis; ~15 Djoudj; min 1 greater Richard Toll area; min 1 Dakar; doubtless also elsewhere but memory lapsed

9. *Ardea melanocephala* – Black-headed Heron: ~10 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; min 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~2 Dakar; 1 near Touba; 1 Djoudj
10. *Ardea purpurea purpurea* – Purple Heron: ~12 Toubacouta; ~3 Ziguinchor; 1 Saint Louis; ~15 Djoudj; ~3 greater Richard Toll area
11. *Ardea goliath* – Goliath Heron: total of ~11 on the occasion of four mangrove boat rides in Toubacouta, sometimes probably referring to identical individuals



ONE OF THE GOLIATH HERONS SEEN ALONG THE TOUBACOUTA BOAT RIDES

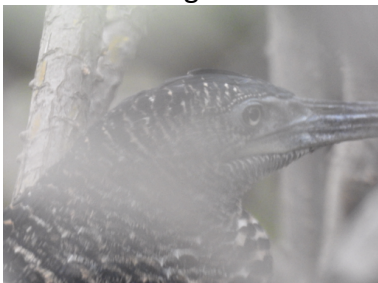
12. *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* – Black-crowned Night-Heron: ~8 Wassadou; 1 Toubacouta; ~6 Ziguinchor; ~30 Djoudj
13. *Ardeola ralloides* – Squacco Heron: ~7 Toubacouta; ~3 Ziguinchor; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~6 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~13 greater Richard Toll area; doubtless also around Dakar but memory lapsed; resident (ssp *paludivaga*) and migrant (ssp *ralloides*) individuals are both possible, but no subspecies identification was attempted.
14. *Egretta gularis gularis* – Western Reef Egret: My notes contain the following site information: “...seen ~6 Popenguine; ~50 (mostly dark, with only ~20% white ones) around Kaolack; ~60 Toubacouta; ~5 Ziguinchor; ~120 Saint Louis (here probably ~75% being white); ~15 Djoudj (color percentages as in St Louis); in greater Richard Toll area all ~10 individuals white but not counted because of potential confusion with *Egretta garzetta*; doubtless also around Dakar but memory lapsed...”. Against the kind objections of both my resident birder friends, I am not listing Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* as unequivocally encountered during this trip because I personally found it impossible to perform the identification of white-morph Western Reef from Little Egrets, even along the coast where white individuals were sometimes feeding side-by-side with confirmed dark-morph Western Reef Egrets. Foot and leg coloration as well as bill size and shape (slightly decurved) across white individuals looked nearly uniform throughout the country, even far inland (e.g. Richard Toll) where no black individuals were seen by me (although Frédéric Bacuez informed me that black ones occasionally occur there as well). Having paid so much attention to these egrets during this trip only reinforces my notion that *gularis* could well be a coastal morph of Little Egret, with a clinal percentage of black individuals increasing towards the coast and decreasing up the rivers. This notion echoes claims previously made in the East African birding literature regarding Dimorphic Egret. Alternatively, Bram Piot (who’s equally stumped by so-called “white-morph birds”) outlined his idea that there may actually be no white-morph

Western Reef Egrets in Senegal, all white individuals instead referring to Little Egrets. A genome-wide analysis will need to lift this mystery.



THIS EGRET FROM LES TROIS MARIGOTS (NEAR ST LOUIS) – IN FRESHWATER HABITAT – IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL VERY LIKELY TO REFER TO LITTLE EGRET EGRETTE GARZETTA, BUT VIRTUALLY UNIDENTIFIABLE FROM IDENTICAL-LOOKING INDIVIDUALS IN SALTWATER FEEDING ALONGSIDE BLACK-MORPH WESTERN REEF EGRETS *E. GULARIS*.

15. *Egretta ardesiaca* – Black Heron: ~4 Djoudj
16. *Bubulcus ibis ibis* – Cattle Egret: ~12 Popenguine; ~100 around Kaolack; ~40 Wassadou; ~60 Toubacouta; ~20 Ziguinchor; ~50 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~15 Dakar; ~10 near Touba; ~230 Saint Louis; ~30 Djoudj; ~35 greater Richard Toll area; many en route
17. *Ardea brachyrhyncha* – Yellow-billed Egret: Only 1 was unequivocally identified near Lac Rose close to Dakar, although additional individuals may have been overlooked.
18. *Ardea alba melanorhynchos* – Great Egret: ~5 Popenguine; ~15 around Kaolack; 2 Toubacouta; ~2 Ziguinchor; 2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~16 Saint Louis; ~8 Djoudj; doubtless also around Dakar but memory lapsed.
19. *Butorides striata atricapilla* – Mangrove Heron: ~3 Wassadou; ~5 Toubacouta
20. *Tigriornis leucolopha* – White-crested Tiger-Heron: This was one of the trip's major targets, and was tried for intensively by taking four different mangrove boat trips at Toubacouta, therefore making it the most time-intensive bird (as any single day usually only allows for a single low-tide boat trip)... One individual was finally seen well on the fourth boat ride at lowest tide around 10am on the last day of the trip, even allowing us to take close-up photos after we had absorbed our first good views. Another individual was glimpsed only by me on the third boat trip at a suboptimal viewing standard when I spotted the bird for a split second along the waterway disappearing into the mangrove roots, but by the time I got the boatman to stop and reverse, the bird was gone.



THE BEST PHOTO WE MANAGED OF THE WHITE-CRESTED TIGER-HERON DURING THE FOURTH BOAT RIDE...

21. *Scopus umbretta umbretta* – Hamerkop: ~5 Wassadou; 2 Dindéfelo; ~6 Ziguinchor; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~6 greater Richard Toll area
22. *Mycteria ibis* – Yellow-billed Stork: ~20 Ziguinchor; ~3 Djoudj
23. *Ciconia ciconia ciconia* – White Stork: flock of ~500 climbing up the thermals along Gambia River at Farafenni; flock of ~300 circling over Tip (near Touba)
24. *Ciconia nigra* – Black Stork: ~10 Kaolack (flight views in too great a distance to discern color details, but long bill and December season rule out Abdim's Stork); ~9 Saint Louis (good views); ~35 Djoudj (good views)
25. *Ciconia microscelis* – African Woolly-necked Stork: 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
26. *Platalea alba* – African Spoonbill: ~25 Ziguinchor
27. *Platalea leucorodia leucorodia* – Eurasian Spoonbill: ~265 Saint Louis; ~30 Djoudj; the presence of many yellow-tipped beaks leaves no doubt regarding the subspecific affinity of the majority of individuals
28. *Phoenicopterus roseus* – Greater Flamingo: ~140 Kaolack; easily ~20,000 at Djoudj, most of them at the largest lake within the reserve creating a sea of pink
29. *Phoeniconaias minor* – Lesser Flamingo: ~100 Djoudj, many of them adjacent to headquarters
30. *Plegadis falcinellus* – Glossy Ibis: 1 Saint Louis; ~30 Djoudj
31. *Bostrychia hagedash brevirostris* – Hadada Ibis: ~7 Wassadou; 2 Ziguinchor
32. *Threskiornis aethiopicus* – African Sacred Ibis: 3 Toubacouta; ~18 Ziguinchor; 1 Djoudj
33. *Dendrocygna viduata* – White-faced Whistling-Duck: ~6 Ziguinchor; 2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~6000 Djoudj
34. *Dendrocygna bicolor* – Fulvous Whistling-Duck: ~6 Saint Louis; ~30 Djoudj
35. *Nettapus auritus* – African Pygmy Goose: 6 Ziguinchor
36. *Sarkidiornis melanotos* – African Comb Duck: 1 female near Lac Rose (Dakar); total of ~12 Djoudj



SINGLE FEMALE COMB DUCK AT THE PRODUCTIVE BAOBAB POND NORTHEAST OF LAC ROSE (CLOSE TO DAKAR)

37. *Plectropterus gambensis gambensis* – Spur-winged Goose: 3 Wassadou; 1 female Ziguinchor; ~10 Djoudj
38. *Alopochen aegyptiaca* – Egyptian Goose: only 1 at Djoudj throughout the whole trip

39. *Anas clypeata* – Northern Shoveler: ~30 Djoudj; ~15 Technopole (Dakar)
40. *Anas acuta* – Northern Pintail: ~3000 mostly at main lake inside Djoudj
41. *Anas querquedula* – Garganey: ~10,000 mostly at main lake inside Djoudj
42. *Marmaronetta angustirostris* – Marbled Duck: 3 found by scanning through thousands of *Anas* ducks with a scope at the main lake inside Djoudj
43. *Haliaeetus vocifer* – African Fish Eagle: ~3 Wassadou; 1 Niokolo Koba; 1 Ziguinchor; 1-2 Saint Louis; ~2 Djoudj
44. *Pandion haliaetus haliaetus* – Osprey: ~15 Popenguine; ~4 Kaolack; ~20 Toubacouta; ~21 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; 1-2 Dakar
45. *Gypohierax angolensis* – Palm-nut Vulture: 1 adult Toubacouta; 2 Ziguinchor
46. *Terathopius ecaudatus* – Bateleur: total of ~6 in Niokolo Koba National Park en route
47. *Polyboroides typus pectoralis* – African Harrier Hawk: 1 subadult Wassadou; total of 4 Dindefelo; 1 en route near Kaffrine; 1+1 Toubacouta; 2-3 Ziguinchor; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
48. *Necrosyrtes monachus monachus* – Hooded Vulture: total of ~25 en route near Tambacounda; ~3 near Wassadou; ~10 Dindefelo; ~4 Toubacouta; ~20 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~70 Ziguinchor; ~5 north of Touba; ~5 north of Louga; apparently more common in the south, while in the north (i.e., at latter two sites) almost exclusively seen at vulture restaurants
49. *Gyps africanus* – African White-backed Vulture: 1 Dindefelo; min 3 near Wassadou; ~10 Toubacouta; ~10 at Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~2 Ziguinchor; 1+2 around Kaolack; ~4 around Touba; total of ~7 north of Louga (here mostly at vulture restaurant)
50. *Gyps rueppelli rueppelli* – Rüppell’s Vulture: ~2 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor; 2 north of Touba (at vulture restaurant); ~27 north of Louga (most of which associated with other vultures at a giant roadside kill comprising a count of nearly 100 vultures all in all)



ADULT (BACK) AND IMMATURE RUEPPELL’S VULTURES AT VULTURE RESTAURANT NORTH OF LOUGA (PHOTOGRAPHED BY WEI)

51. *Gyps fulvus fulvus* – Eurasian Griffon Vulture: ~4 north of Touba; ~72 north of Louga; virtually all individuals seen on this trip associated with other vultures at involuntary “vulture restaurants”, e.g., north of Louga at a giant roadside kill comprising a count of nearly 100 vultures all in all.



A EURASIAN GRIFFON AT A LARGE VULTURE RESTAURANT AROUND TWO DEAD DONKEYS NORTH OF LOUGA (PHOTOGRAPHED BY WEI)

52. *Torgos tracheliotos tracheliotos* – Lappet-faced Vulture: 1 adult north of Touba at road kill with other vultures; 2 at a giant roadside “vulture restaurant” (=two dead donkeys) north of Louga



A LAPPET-FACED VULTURE WITHIN A LARGE VULTURE CONGREGATION ASSEMBLING AROUND TWO DEAD DONKEYS NORTH OF LOUGA (PHOTOGRAPHED BY WEI)

53. *Milvus aegyptius parasitus* – Yellow-billed Kite: ~20 Popenguine; ~100 around Kaolack; ~3 near Wassadou; ~380 Toubacouta (most of which referred to a large mangrove roost predominantly composed of immatures); ~70 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~50 Ziguinchor; ~50 Dakar area; ~20 around Touba; ~90 Saint Louis; generally common to abundant in some areas en route; most individuals on this trip seen near towns and rubbish dumps... I performed rather poorly in not pinning down a single positively-identified migratory Palearctic Black Kite *Milvus migrans migrans* among many potential candidates seen. I partly blame this on the presence of so many dark-billed immatures of *parasitus* complicating identification, but also on the fact that I usually got distracted by more appealing birds whenever the chance arose to put some study time into *Milvus* ID. In the south and centre of Senegambia, I am assuming the vast majority of individuals with bills that were not completely yellow were immature *parasitus*, often showing intense body streaking. Bram Piot tells me that the mangrove roosts at Toubacouta usually contain good numbers of migratory *migrans* in the winter, but despite paying attention, I only saw individuals whose body streaking looked like that of immature Yellow-billed Kites (see photo below). In the north at

Djoudj (where ~15 were seen), local guide Vieux identified distant black-billed individuals as migratory *migrans* on the basis of their location far from human settlements (and Frédéric Bacuez confirmed they're quite common here). In retrospect, therefore, I assume kites in the far north could well have been dominated by *migrans*, although I also saw a small number of adult yellow-billed *parasitus* (~5) along the route here (roughly between Djoudj and Richard Toll) closer to towns... Despite its presumably common occurrence, I am not admitting *Milvus migrans migrans* to this list, and should have spent more time to sort this out in the field.



ONE OF HUNDREDS OF YELLOW-BILLED KITES (MOSTLY IMMATURES LIKE THIS ONE) AT A MANGROVE ROOST NEAR TOUBACOUTA

54. *Circus aeruginosus aeruginosus* – Eurasian Marsh Harrier: 1+1 males Toubacouta; 1 female Ziguinchor; 1 female Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Saint Louis; ~15 Djoudj; 1 greater Richard Toll area
55. *Circus pygargus* – Montagu's Harrier: 1 unequivocal adult male along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 adult male near Saint Louis; all remaining sightings referred to likely immatures (often seen briefly or distantly) and cannot be put down as certain because of my rusty harrier ID skills, e.g. 1 immature on Kousmar Island near Kaolack, 1 immature near Dakar and 2-3 immatures at Djoudj
56. *Circaetus beaudouini* – Beaudouin's Snake-eagle: This was a target that did not show as frequently as I would have hoped, but I was happy with a couple of sufficiently good viewing experiences at two sites: (1) Two adults were seen near Dindéfelo on the Dandé Plateau, one of which was quite distant but the other came flying by fairly close and was seen in the scope for a short time: apart from the dark neck ruff typical for snake-eagles (to whose extent I didn't pay much attention in the precious few seconds), I discerned a fairly pale underwing with barring only on flight feathers (not on underwing coverts), and pale underparts distinctly barred on flanks to belly (with long, unbroken bars). I was initially nervous regarding potential ID confusion after having seen a particularly pale Short-toed Snake-eagle at Popenguine a few days prior; however, searches through dozens of internet photos confirmed that Short-toeds would never show long, unbroken underpart bars but instead exhibit dark scales, particularly so in birds that are sufficiently pale to lack any barring on underwing coverts. (2) Later at Toubacouta, I had one sighting of an individual in the rarely-noticed immature plumage of this species: extremely tawny underwing coverts (leading Carlos to call it out as a Tawny Eagle at first!) combined with barred underwing remiges

(ruling out Brown Snake-Eagle); this sighting took place during a raptor bonanza in between sightings of two other snake-eagle species (Short-toed and Brown) and appeared impeccable as judged by descriptions in the book and internet photos – and despite my previous lack of general knowledge of the immature plumage of this species.

57. *Circaetus gallicus gallicus* – Short-toed Snake-eagle: 1 white individual – presumably an immature – at Popenguine, with a white face and no semblance of a neck ruff, but merely a dark cheek crescent and some remix and rectrix barring on underparts, all brown upperparts and pale shoulder bars; 2-3 at Toubacouta, all of which were on the pale side, and one of which greatly resembled the Popenguine individual; 1 near Kaolack; 2-3 Djoudj (with one white-headed individual photographed and the others more typical-looking)



A WHITE-HEADED (PRESUMABLY IMMATURE) SHORT-TOED SNAKE-EAGLE AT DJOUDJ

58. *Circaetus cinereus* – Brown Snake-eagle: ~4 en route near Tambacounda; 2+2+1 Toubacouta; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
59. *Elanus caeruleus caeruleus* – Black-winged Kite: 1-2 Dakar; 1+1+1 near Djoudj
60. *Chelictinia riocourii* – African Swallow-tailed Kite: A spectacle unfolded on Kousmar Island near Kaolack as thousands descended from great heights, where they had been hardly visible as mere specks even through binoculars, and finally settled down on the island's trees around 6pm, from where they only occasionally flushed when a Yellow-billed Kite soared past. Local guide Bocar talked about numbers in the low tens of thousands, although I would have guessed around ~3000. I also saw a much smaller number of individuals occasionally when driving past the south side of Kaolack on multiple occasions during my itinerary, especially when passing early in the morning or late in the afternoon.
61. *Aviceda cuculoides cuculoides* – African Cuckoo Hawk: 1 on the Dandé Plateau near Dindefelo
62. *Accipiter badius sphenurus* – Shikra: ~5 Wassadou; 1-2 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor
a. prob. *Micronisus gabar niger* – Gabar Goshawk: 1 immature in flight at Wassadou should clearly have been this species (larger and darker than immature Shikras seen in vicinity; long, barred tail with white rump), but I don't feel the confidence to put this down as 100%
63. *Melierax metabates metabates* – Dark Chanting Goshawk: 2 Dindefelo; 1 near Kaolack; 1 Saint Louis
64. *Butastur rufipennis* – Grasshopper Buzzard: total of ~5 en route around Tambacounda; ~11 Dindefelo; ~6 Niokolo Koba; ~3 near Wassadou; at least 1 Farafenni (Gambia)



THIS WAS MY FIRST GRASSHOPPER BUZZARD, INCITING ME TO STOP THE CAR EN ROUTE NEAR TAMBACOUNDA; THIS SPECIES TURNED OUT TO BECOME QUITE A REGULAR RAPTOR ON THE SOUTHEASTERN PARTS OF MY ITINERARY...

65. *Buteo auguralis* – Red-necked Buzzard: A total of ~5 soaring adults around Dindefelo were unequivocal. A single immature individual perched and photographed at a waterhole north of Touba, which showed pale windows on the upper primaries during brief moments in flight, was much more confusing and was only identified after the trip with recourse to my photos in comparison with online material (see photos below).



TWO PHOTOS OF A RED-NECKED BUZZARD (LIKELY AN IMMATURE) AT A WATERHOLE NORTH OF TOUBA: THE STURDY BEAK AND FEATHERED TARSUS INITIALLY SUGGESTED AN EAGLE TO ME, AND THE PALE UPPER PRIMARY WINDOW IN FLIGHT MADE ME SUSPECT AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE FOR A WHILE, BUT THE LATTER'S IMMATURE PLUMAGE DIFFERS IN MANY RESPECTS. IN THE END, THE SPECKLES ON THE LOWER BREAST AND FLANKS (REACHING ALL THE WAY ONTO THE THIGHS) IN COMBINATION WITH THE REDDISH HEAD AND RED UPPERTAIL GAVE THIS AWAY AS A RED-NECKED BUZZARD. THE PALE EYES SEEM UNUSUAL FOR THIS SPECIES, BUT I FOUND A NUMBER OF ONLINE PHOTOS OF SUSPECTED IMMATURES WITH EQUALLY PALE EYES AND THICK BEAKS. EVEN THE UPPER PRIMARY WINDOW IS FULLY COMPATIBLE WITH THIS SPECIES.

- 66. *Kaupifalco monogrammicus monogrammicus* – Lizard Buzzard: 1 adult Wassadou; 2+1 Niokolo Koba; 1 Ziguinchor
- 67. *Hieraaetus wahlbergi* – Wahlberg's Eagle: 1-2 Niokolo Koba; I'm not counting 1 perched (seen from boat until flushed) and 1 in flight (distant and brief) at Wassadou because of poor viewing
- 68. *Aquila spilogaster* – African Hawk Eagle: 1 immature Niokolo Koba; 1 adult near Wassadou
- 69. *Hieraaetus pennatus* – Booted Eagle: 1 pale-morph Ziguinchor; 1 pale-morph Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 pale-morph Toubacouta
- 70. *Aquila fasciata* – Bonelli's Eagle: One immature at Djoudj was seen and photographed over two days at an identical location. It was immediately called out as an immature Bonelli's Eagle by local guide Vieux. Inexperienced with immature eagles of this sort, I photographed the bird (using my phone through

the scope) as best as I could and took copious notes: “...in flight underwing very pale with distinct but thin black carpal markings and a rufous flush to underwing coverts (not very distinct), but perhaps only a vestigial dividing line between coverts and remiges (near carpal area); upperwing uniform with perhaps a little bit of a paler inner primary window (but unlike the pale upperwing window of African Hawk Eagle, which covers all primary bases); in flight the bird looked massive with round crop hanging out; perched bird looked unstreaked buffy overall; and no clear indication of white back, although there may have been a small white spot on lower back...”. I only attempted to confirm Vieux’s ID after the trip – with recourse to the photos and internet material. My opinion on this eagle evolved quite a bit during this process (see photo caption) but I was happy in the end to settle on Bonelli’s. After my identification process was completed, Frédéric Baczuez sent me an unequivocal and clear photo taken at the same location a few days prior to our visit, and presumably referring to the very same individual.



THREE PHOTOS – TAKEN BY ME [WITH THE MOBILE PHONE THROUGH THE SCOPE] OVER TWO DAYS AT AN IDENTICAL LOCATION IN DJOUDJ – OF AN IMMATURE BONELLI’S EAGLE: I SPENT QUITE A BIT OF TIME AFTER THE TRIP TRYING TO CONVINCING MYSELF THAT THIS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN AN IMMATURE AFRICAN HAWK EAGLE (WHICH HAS ALSO BEEN REPORTED FROM DJOUDJ, ALBEIT MORE RARELY). APART FROM GENERAL LIKELIHOOD, MULTIPLE FIELD MARKS SEEMED TO POINT TOWARDS BONELLI’S, BUT MANY OF THEM WERE TENDENTIAL RATHER THAN ABSOLUTE: (1) THE BIRD LOOKED UNSTREAKED ON THE BREAST; AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLE MORE OFTEN SHOWS STREAKING ON THE UPPER FLANKS AND BREAST, BUT PHOTOS OF UNSTREAKED IMMATURES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE. (2) MANY PHOTOS EXIST OF BONELLI’S WITH SUCH A CONSISTENTLY STRONG CROP, BUT A FEW SUCH PHOTOS OF AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLE CAN ALSO BE FOUND ONLINE. (3) MY NOTES DESCRIBE THE NEAR-COMplete LACK OF A BLACK DIVIDER BETWEEN RUFous UNDERWING COVERTS AND WHITE REMIGES, WHICH IS STANDARD IN BONELLI’S, BUT I’VE SEEN 1-2 PHOTOS OF IMMATURE AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLES WITH SUCH WEAK DIVIDERS, TOO. (4) SOME OF MY PHOTOS (E.G., LEFT-HAND PHOTO) SUGGEST A WHITE UPPER-BACK PATCH, WHICH IS TYPICAL FOR ADULT BONELLI’S BUT SHOULD BE UNUSUAL FOR AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLE; HOWEVER, I HAVEN’T REALLY FOUND PHOTOS OF IMMATURE BONELLI’S WITH A STRONG INDICATION OF SUCH A BACK PATCH, AND IT MAY JUST BE A LIGHTING ARTIFACT. (4) IN THE END, I DECIDED TO TRUST MY FIELD NOTES: WHAT PERSUADED ME THAT THIS REALLY CANNOT BE AN AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLE IS THE FIELD STATEMENT THAT THE UPPERWING LOOKED FAIRLY UNIFORM, WITH ONLY AN INDICATION OF A PALE INNER PRIMARY WINDOW NOT EXTENDING TO OUTER PRIMARIES. EXTENSIVE INTERNET SEARCHES REVEAL THAT IMMATURE BONELLI’S INDEED DO SPORT A PALE UPPERWING WINDOW FROM PRIMARIES 1-4, WHILE ON IMMATURE AFRICAN HAWK-EAGLES THIS WINDOW IS STRONG AND OBVIOUS, EXTENDING ACROSS VIRTUALLY ALL PRIMARIES.



PHOTO TAKEN BY FRÉDÉRIC BACUEZ AT THE SAME DJOUDJ LOCALITY A FEW DAYS PRIOR TO OUR VISIT: THIS PROBABLY REFERS TO THE SAME INDIVIDUAL OF IMMATURE BONELLI'S EAGLE, WHICH WAS VERY SITE-FAITHFUL OVER MULTIPLE DAYS EVEN DURING OUR VISIT. DETAILS OF THE UNDERWING PATTERN EXACTLY MIRROR MY FIELD NOTES FROM A FEW DAYS LATER.

- a. prob. *Falco alopex* – Fox Kestrel: 1-2 on Dandé Plateau near Dindéfelo were very likely this species, but views weren't to my standards
- b. prob. *Falco tinnunculus* – Common Kestrel: 2-3 at Djoudj and 3-4 in the greater Richard Toll area were not pinned down to terminal taxon and were generally not seen in great detail. Hence I'm not listing the species as part of the accepted list.

71. *Falco naumanni* – Lesser Kestrel: At the famous raptor roost at Kousmar Island near Kaolack, these kestrels were even more impressive for me than the African Swallow-tailed Kites. When the main bulk of kites trickled in from the lofty heights in the later afternoon, they were accompanied by only occasional kestrel individuals. At this time, the main agglomeration of kestrels was seen hanging around the open salt flats to dust their plumage, visible through the scope at great distance, and only streamed in long after the kites had already settled into trees. *Contra* the kites, the kestrels didn't descend from great heights but flew in from the flats in a never-ending stream of individuals, well into the darkness. I estimated ~4000, more than the kites present, although local guide Bocar spoke of numbers in the low tens of thousands. The kestrels were not as easy to see well, but many dozens passed close enough for excellent flight views, and I managed to get a number of nice males perched into the scope. On other occasions while passing south of Kaolack, Wei and I saw evening streams of dozens in Kousmar-bound flight.



ONE OF COUNTLESS LESSER KESTRELS STREAMING IN TO ROOST ON KOUSMAR ISLAND (NEAR KAOLACK) AT LAST LIGHT

72. *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* – Peregrine Falcon: 2 perched on building in Ngor (Dakar) at the Calao seabirding spot, where Bram Piot said this particular pair winters regularly... They looked good for the European nominate *peregrinus*, i.e. not overly large and pale.

73. *Falco pelegrinoides pelegrinoides* – Barbary Falcon: At Popenguine, one actively hunting individual was visible intermittently more or less during a 2-3 hour period in the morning around the coastal cliffs, occasionally flying very close overhead, but unfortunately very rarely affording side views or views from above. I first sighted it shortly before it perched on a large emergent tree ~1-2km in the distance for ~5 min, where I watched it through the scope. Despite the distance, the bird instantly did not strike me as a Peregrine because its crown appeared distinctly paler than the dark facial mask. Initially, I still considered Lanner but soon ruled that out when better close-up flight views revealed black bars on the underparts. In total, my notes characterize this obviously adult bird as follows: "...underparts white, no warm flush apparent, with modestly intense black barring on underwings (both remiges and coverts) as well as flanks and probably breast, while mid-belly appeared unbarred; upperparts quite pale grey (perched views at great distance in aggressive light suggested a darker mantle triangle contrasting with paler-grey remaining upperparts); both under- and uppertail black-barrred; moustachial streak narrow, allowing for extensive white cheek unlike typical Peregrine; one brief flight view at good angle strongly suggested rufous nape, but this view was fleeting; crown color uncertain, but many views confirmed that the crown was not rufous, and that it was paler than the black facial mask and moustache...". Immature Red-necked Falcon, whose jizz is quite unlike the small peregrine jizz of this individual, can have very little rufous on crown (akin to Barbary), but – apart from coastal cliffs being an unusual habitat for it – it would have shown coarse black barring on upperparts and an extensive black terminal tail bar that should have been obvious. In the end, I am happy with the identification as a Barbary Falcon, not having expected this species on this trip.
74. *Falco biarmicus abyssinicus* – Lanner: 1 immature near Wassadou (brown above with patterned underwing coverts and typical head pattern); 1 ad. Toubacouta; 1 ad. Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll); for this last individual, subspecies attribution must remain uncertain as both Bram Piot and Frédéric Bacuez informed me that wintering *erlangeri* may be more likely near the Mauritanian border.
75. *Falco ruficollis ruficollis* – Red-necked Falcon: 1+1 around Kaolack (one of which was remarkably perched on Kousmar Island amidst roosting Lesser Kestrels); 2+2 Dindéfelo; 1 Ziguinchor
76. *Falco ardosiaceus* – Grey Kestrel: 1 Wassadou; min 2 Dindéfelo; 1+2 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor
77. *Podica senegalensis senegalensis* – African Finfoot: Two were seen easily during the boat ride at Wassadou... At the point of finalizing this account (i.e., weeks after the actual observation), I'm noticing that I have not listed the mangrove boat ride at Toubacouta for this species, even though I am nearly certain that I saw one individual during one of these boat rides, which must have been accidentally omitted during my usual late-night bird-listing exercise, sometimes

at low levels of concentration. Given my sketchy memory, I'm not admitting this species for Toubacouta on this list.

78. *Numida meleagris galeatus* – Helmeted Guineafowl: ~2 Popenguine; ~120 Niokolo Koba
79. *Pternistis bicalcaratus bicalcaratus* – Double-spurred Francolin: great views of family group with 1 adult and ~5 juveniles by roadside in early morning at margin of Niokolo Koba National Park; 1 briefly perched in the open in the early morning in the outskirts of Toubacouta; ~5 in dunes near Lac Rose close to Dakar; ~13 around Saint Louis (mostly Les Trois Marigots); at Dindefelo multiple sightings comprising a total of perhaps ~15 individuals, but here always brief and flushed, yet countable; heard only at Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll)
80. *Coturnix coturnix coturnix* – Common Quail: a loose congregation of ~15 flushed in Djoudj over two days at identical location, all sufficiently brown with white stripes to rule out the off-chance of an extralimital Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*
- a. prob. *Ptilopachus petrosus petrosus* – Stone Partridge: at least 2 at Dindefelo seen briefly along roadside, but flushed by an untimely motorbike rider in an instance of very bad luck; hence not seen to my viewing standards and not here counted...
81. *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* – Quail Plover: 1 individual, hard-earned, hard-won, after ~6 hours of searching the plains around Tip (near Touba) in the searing heat, engaging in fascinating chameleon walk behavior and coming in for close views, mobile phone photos and videos...



BIG PRIZE: A SOLE QUAIL PLOVER NEAR TIP...

82. *Zapornia flavirostra* – Black Crake: ~10 Saint Louis; 1+1 Djoudj
83. *Gallinula chloropus* – Common Moorhen: 1 Ziguinchor; ~15 Saint Louis; ~4 Djoudj; no attempt was made in the field to distinguish wintering nominate ssp *chloropus* from resident ssp *meridionalis*, but Frédéric Baez told me after the trip that the Ziguinchor sighting likely refers to *meridionalis*, while the St Louis and Djoudj sightings are unlikely to be anything but northern migrant *chloropus* at this time of year.
84. *Porphyrio alleni* – Allen's Gallinule: 1 seen well at Djoudj
85. *Porphyrio porphyrio madagascariensis* – Purple Swamphen: ~10 Saint Louis

86. *Actophilornis africanus* – African Jaçana: 3 immatures near Dindéfelo; 2-3 near Toubacouta; ~6 Ziguinchor; 3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~18 Saint Louis; ~8 Djoudj
87. *Balearica pavonina pavonina* – Black Crowned-Crane: total of ~12 around Djoudj
88. *Lophotis savilei* – Savile’s Bustard: This target was initially problematic and defied my best intentions at finding it around Popenguine, Lac Rose (near Dakar) and Les Trois Marigots. With some effort over two calendar days, I finally had great views of 1 male walking in on me (waiting quietly seated for one to walk past) in a conducive savannah patch south of Saint Louis near the village of Ndiébène. This is one of the species that would have been much easier to see in November, when birds are reported to be very vocal and much easier to track down visually.
89. *Ardeotis arabs stieberi* – Arabian Bustard: I spotted one at Djoudj at a fairly great distance (~400m) on the second day of searching. It was clearly visible through the scope, allowing to appreciate its fully grey neck and grey crown above the black supercilium, along with the brownish-grey upperparts that had some white wing spots. Shy at the sight of humans, it soon disappeared behind bushes. As we approached on foot, it allowed us a further quick glance before taking to its wings, permitting us to see the brown upperwing coverts separated from the black remiges by a white divider. The black remiges had more white speckles in them than the field guide would suggest, but internet photos confirm this to be normal.
90. *Burhinus senegalensis* – Senegal Thick-knee: 4-5 Popenguine; ~20 around Kaolack; ~7 Wassadou; ~8 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Toubacouta; 4 Dakar; ~6 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; 2 greater Richard Toll area
91. *Burhinus capensis maculosus* – Spotted Thick-knee: 1 Dindéfelo; 1 Kaolack; 2 Saint Louis; 2 north of Louga
92. *Himantopus himantopus himantopus* – Black-winged Stilt: ~30 around Kaolack; 1 Wassadou; 9 north of Farafenni (but on Senegal side); ~2 Ziguinchor; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 2 Toubacouta; ~25 Dakar; ~115 Saint Louis; ~50 Djoudj; ~100 greater Richard Toll area; 3 Popenguine
93. *Recurvirostra avosetta* – Pied Avocet: ~500 Djoudj; ~5 Saint Louis
94. *Gallinago gallinago gallinago* – Common Snipe: 2-3 seen in Saint Louis area (one with quite worn plumage photographed)



95. *Pluvianus aegyptius* – Egyptian Plover: ~15 Wassadou; 2-3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
96. *Rostratula benghalensis* – Greater Painted Snipe: ~15 at Djoudj around the headquarters, reliably seen in the same area multiple times
97. *Glareola pratincola pratincola* – Collared Pratincole: ~12 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~50 Djoudj; ~8 unidentified pratincoles at Podor (east of Richard Toll) would have likely been this species; my subspecies assignment follows Frédéric Baczek, who shared that the migratory Palaearctic nominate subspecies *pratincola* and Afrotropical subspecies *fuelleborni* only overlap briefly in October and early November (at least in the north of the country), after which *fuelleborni* leaves for intra-African migratory movements.
98. *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* – Bronze-winged Courser: 2 at Forêt de Bokhol (east of Richard Toll) were a completely unexpected find



TWO COMPLETELY UNEXPECTED BRONZE-WINGED COURSERS AT FORÊT DE BOKHOL NEAR RICHARD TOLL

99. *Vanellus tectus tectus* – Black-headed Lapwing: generally in drier areas; ~16 Popenguine; 2 Toubacouta; ~4 Tip (near Touba); ~40 greater Richard Toll area; ~7 north of Louga
100. *Vanellus spinosus* – Spur-winged Lapwing: the most common lapwing throughout; ~10 Popenguine; ~60 around Kaolack; ~30 Wassadou; ~15 Toubacouta; ~10 Ziguinchor; ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~40 Dakar; ~3 near Touba; ~160 Saint Louis; ~35 Djoudj; ~20 greater Richard Toll area
101. *Vanellus albiceps* – White-headed Lapwing: ~3 Wassadou
102. *Vanellus senegallus senegallus* – African Wattled Lapwing: ~35 Wassadou; ~13 Dindéfelo; 2-3 Toubacouta; ~3 Dakar; ~8 Saint Louis
103. *Arenaria interpres interpres* – Ruddy Turnstone: total of ~45 Saint Louis
104. *Charadrius pecuarius* – Kittlitz's Plover: total of ~18 around Djoudj



A MEMBER OF A LITTLE GROUP OF KITTLITZ'S PLOVERS IN AN OPEN GRASSY AREA AT DJOUDJ

105. *Charadrius hiaticula* – Common Ringed Plover: ~12 Toubacouta; ~12 Dakar; ~45 Saint Louis; ~25 Djoudj; 1 Podor (in greater Richard Toll area); no subspecies identification was attempted
106. *Charadrius dubius curonicus* – Little Ringed Plover: ~10 Saint Louis; ~3 Djoudj; 1 Podor (in greater Richard Toll area)
107. *Pluvialis squatarola squatarola* – Grey Plover: 8-9 Toubacouta; 4 Dakar; 2 Saint Louis
108. *Limosa limosa limosa* – Black-tailed Godwit: ~30 Ziguinchor; ~30 Dakar; ~300 Saint Louis; ~220 Djoudj
109. *Limosa lapponica* – Bar-tailed Godwit: ~3 Saint Louis
110. *Numenius phaeopus* – Whimbrel: 1 Popenguine; ~50 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor; ~2 Saint Louis; subspecies identification was not attempted
111. *Numenius arquata* – Eurasian Curlew: 1 Toubacouta (by distribution this would likely be ssp *suschkini*, although no visual subspecies ID was attempted)
112. *Calidris minuta* – Little Stint: 1 north of Farafenni (but on Senegal side); ~45 Dakar; ~510 Saint Louis; ~120 Djoudj; ~4 Podor (in greater Richard Toll area)
113. *Calidris alpina* – Dunlin: ~4 near Lac Rose close to Dakar; subspecies identification was not attempted
114. *Calidris ferruginea* – Curlew Sandpiper: ~35 Djoudj; ~3 Saint Louis
115. *Actitis hypoleucos* – Common Sandpiper: min 1 Popenguine; ~3 Wassadou; ~22 Toubacouta; ~4 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); min 1 Dakar; ~6 Saint Louis; ~3 Djoudj; ~3 greater Richard Toll area; ~2 Kaolack
116. *Calidris pugnax* – Ruff: 7 north of Farafenni (but on Senegal side); 1 Ziguinchor; ~25 Dakar; ~100 Saint Louis; ~50 Djoudj; ~100 greater Richard Toll area
117. *Tringa ochropus* – Green Sandpiper: ~3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 Saint Louis; ~3 Djoudj; ~2 greater Richard Toll area
118. *Tringa glareola* – Wood Sandpiper: ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar; ~18 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~3 greater Richard Toll area
119. *Tringa totanus totanus* – Common Redshank: ~10 near Kaolack; ~15 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~15 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj
120. *Tringa erythropus* – Spotted Redshank: ~2 Saint Louis
121. *Tringa nebularia* – Common Greenshank: ~11 near Kaolack; 1 Wassadou; ~7 Toubacouta; 2 Dakar; ~15 Saint Louis; ~5 greater Richard Toll area
122. *Tringa stagnatilis* – Marsh Sandpiper: ~25 Dakar; ~7 Saint Louis; 1 greater Richard Toll area
123. *Larus audouinii* – Adouin's Gull: ~8 seen well at Technopole (Dakar) but in great haste... Only 1-2 of them were in adult plumage with the fancy bill color, the rest being immatures.
124. *Larus fuscus graellsii* – Lesser Black-backed Gull: A total of ~10 adults was seen well – albeit under aggressive lighting – at Kaolack, with faint to moderate nape streaking, pale iris and some black around red gonys spot (see photo); ~12 individuals were seen in the greater Saint Louis area (mostly of the same

phenotype, see photo); ~40 were seen around Dakar, mostly at Technopole, where I discerned a range of mantle color hues (see photo below). The majority of individuals (especially lighter-mantled ones with more distinct head streaking) looked typical for *graellsii* and are here counted as such. I cannot rule out that some of the Technopole individuals with darker mantles may have been subspecies *intermedius*, but I consider this uncertain.



(LEFT): ADULT LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL SOUTH OF ST LOUIS, TYPICAL OF THE MOST COMMON PLUMAGE SEEN ON THIS TRIP (MID-GREY MANTLE AND SOME HEAD STREAKING TYPICAL OF GRAELLSII)

(RIGHT): ADULT LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL AT KAOLACK, PERHAPS MORE INTENSELY STREAKED ON HEAD THAN MANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS, AND SEEMINGLY PALE IN AGGRESSIVE BACKLIGHTING – VERY TYPICAL FOR GRAELLSII



MIXED GULL ASSEMBLAGE AT

TECHNOPOLE (DAKAR), WITH A SINGLE FIRST-WINTER MEDITERRANEAN GULL (BACK LEFT) BEHIND MULTIPLE ADULT LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS OF DIFFERENT MANTLE HUES (DARKER ONES PERHAPS SUBSPECIES INTERMEDIUS?), AS WELL AS BLACK-HEADED AND GREY-HEADED GULLS MIXED AMONG THEM.

125. *Larus melanocephalus* – Mediterranean Gull: Unfortunately, we only had ~30min at Technopole (Dakar), where I would have loved to have at least half a day for more in-depth observations. Bram Piot had alerted me of the presence of a group of Mediterranean Gulls here among the main gull flock, but given the great haste, I only found one immature in the end (see photo).
126. *Larus genei* – Slender-billed Gull: ~30 around Kaolack; ~20 around Saint Louis
127. *Larus cirrocephalus poiocephalus* – Grey-headed Gull: the common coastal gull in Senegal; ~100 around Kaolack; 8 Toubacouta; ~380 around Saint Louis; ~40 around Dakar; ~10 Popenguine

128. *Larus ridibundus* – Black-headed Gull: only 1 identified at Djoudj; ~40 around Dakar mostly at Technopole
129. *Sterna hirundo hirundo* – Common Tern: ~25 Ngor (Dakar) at seafront
130. *Gelochelidon nilotica nilotica* – Gull-billed Tern: ~14 Kaolack; ~7 Toubacouta; 1 Dakar; ~14 Saint Louis; ~3 Djoudj
131. *Thalasseus sandvicensis* – Sandwich Tern: ~5 Kaolack; ~4 Toubacouta; ~20 Saint Louis; ~8 Djoudj; ~150 Dakar
132. *Hydroprogne caspia* – Caspian Tern: ~20 Toubacouta; ~8 Ziguinchor; ~7 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~15 Dakar; 1 Popenguine
133. *Thalasseus bengalensis emigratus* – Lesser Crested Tern: ~6 at Ngor (Dakar) seafront, extensively studied within a large tern congregation in comparison with Royal Terns... The ID of this species was definitely more challenging than I had anticipated, as it required close attention, even through the scope on perched birds, to pick them out from among the Royals based on their slightly smaller size, slightly darker back, slightly thinner bill and subtle differences in the “bald man’s” crest pattern



MIXED TERN CONGREGATION AT NGOR (DAKAR) SEAFRONT DOMINATED BY COMMON TERN (MOSTLY IN FRONT)... ONE ORANGE-BILLED LESSER CRESTED TERN JUST BARELY STICKS OUT IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN TWO ORANGE-BILLED AFRICAN ROYAL TERNS, BUT CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY SLIGHTLY SMALLER SIZE (ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO SANDWICH TERN IN FRONT OF IT), SLIGHTLY DARKER MANTLE AND MORE BLACK (EXTENDING FURTHER TO THE FRONT) ON HINDCROWN

134. *Thalasseus [maximus] albididorsalis* – African Royal Tern: A total of ~40 at Ngor (Dakar) seafront was studied extensively in comparison with Lesser Crested Terns.
135. *Chlidonias hybrida hybrida* – Whiskered Tern: ~2 Saint Louis; ~15 Djoudj
136. *Sternula albifrons albifrons* – Little Tern: ~8 Djoudj (all non-breeding plumage with black bill); 1 Technopole (Dakar)... My subspecies assignment follows Frédéric Bacuez’s information that the locally breeding subspecies *guineae* deserts the north of Senegal in the winter and gets replaced by northern migratory *albifrons*. Beyond these considerations, subspecies ID would probably not be feasible in the winter plumage anyway. HBW3 declares uncertainty over whether the population breeding in Senegal refers to *guineae* (which is

otherwise a Niger River breeder) or to *albifrons*, but Bram Piot informs me that breeders at Lac Rose (near Dakar) are clearly *guineae* (i.e., all yellow-billed in the breeding plumage).

137. *Pterocles exustus exustus* – Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse: ~50 at Les Trois Marigots near Saint Louis flying in at pre-dusk and seen well on the ground; this was a lucky late sighting during the trip, as I previously only managed distant flight views at Djoudj that I was not willing to count



MALE AND FEMALE CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE AT LES TROIS MARIGOTS (NEAR ST LOUIS)

138. *Pterocles quadricinctus* – Four-banded Sandgrouse: This species made for nail-biting suspense before granting nice perched views. In the following, I outline my searches for this species on four different days, only one of which yielded satisfactory views: (1) In a first dusk session at his regular waterhole near Toubacouta, Carlos noticed the recent development of a straw fence that would probably discourage the sandgrouse from using this site in due time. Indeed, the birds were extremely cautious this evening and a suboptimal viewing strategy led to a fumbled attempt, providing only glimpses of shadows. (2) Later near Ziguinchor, local host Bruno and I repeatedly flushed a loose congregation of ~4-5 individuals at a suitable grassland site, but it was already high noon and the birds were too furtive, so I never managed identifiable views. (3) Finally, upon my return to Toubacouta with another solo dusk attempt at Carlos's site, I had a satisfactory encounter of ~10 individuals drinking at the waterhole slightly after nightfall – despite the progressing deterioration of the site. A torch malfunction meant that I didn't see them as brightly as I would have liked to, but the males displayed clear black-and-white *frons* markings and a triple breast band (white bounded by dark on both sides), along with black tiger stripes on a plain sandy background on the wing-coverts, while the mantle and back showed finely marbled dark tiles on a sandy background. The birds gave a multi-syllabic flight call with rolling elements. (4) In a third session at this waterhole on the second-but-last evening of the trip, Wei and I returned after the villagers had completed construction of the fence; ~2-3 sandgrouse only briefly showed in flight, not settling down, probably as the degradation of the waterhole had permanently discouraged them from using this site now.

139. *Treron waalia* – Bruce's Green Pigeon: ~2 Kaolack; ~5 Dindéfelo; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 Toubacouta

140. *Columba guinea guinea* – Speckled Pigeon: common throughout, including near settlements; ~15 Popenguine; ~15 Kaolack; ~6 Wassadou; ~8

Dindefelo; 1 Niokolo Koba; ~10 Toubacouta; ~5 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); min 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar; ~6 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~12 greater Richard Toll area

141. *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* – Adamawa Turtle Dove: Apparently people see them relatively easily in Wassadou during the boat ride along the Gambia River and from land in the gallery forest, but my searches over two calendar days did not result in success. I was all the happier to see one individual two days later, at Vallée de Ségou in the Dindefelo area, vocalizing and perched openly in the morning light for good views.



FINALLY MY FIRST ADAMAWA TURTLE DOVE, IN VALLÉE DE SÉGOU NEAR DINDEFELO

142. *Streptopelia turtur* – European Turtle Dove: ~4 Wassadou; 1 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); 3 Podor (in greater Richard Toll area); subspecies identification was not attempted as various Western Palearctic subspecies are possible.
143. *Streptopelia roseogrisea roseogrisea* – African Collared Dove: I had long wanted to connect with this pigeon, and carefully learnt its vocalizations and those of all similar species (particularly Vinaceous Dove) to be prepared in the field, expecting to run into it eventually, especially towards the northern leg of the trip. However, by the time we reached Richard Toll, I still hadn't seen it. It took some dedicated searching at Forêt de Bokhol (east of Richard Toll) to finally see a total of ~3 individuals in among many dozens of other *Streptopelia* species. This area must be one of the world record holders of *Streptopelia* diversity, with five species present.



AFRICAN COLLARED DOVE AT FORÊT DE BOKHOL WITH A DARK IRIS AND PLAIN LORES.

144. *Streptopelia decipiens shelleyi* – Mourning Collared Dove: common throughout; ~4 Popenguine, ~10 Wassadou; ~12 Toubacouta; ~6 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~6 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~15 Dakar; ~25 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~50 greater Richard Toll area
145. *Streptopelia semitorquata* – Red-eyed Dove: only encountered in more humid areas; ~2 Wassadou; ~7 Dindefelo; ~35 Ziguinchor
146. *Streptopelia vinacea* – Vinaceous Dove: the most common *Streptopelia* at many southern sites outside settlements; ~2 Popenguine; ~2 Kaolack; ~30 Wassadou; ~18 Dindefelo; ~8 Niokolo Koba; ~60 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); min 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~4 Toubacouta; ~6 near Touba; ~10 greater Richard Toll area; 1 north of Louga
147. *Streptopelia senegalensis senegalensis* – Laughing Dove: one of the most common birds of the trip; ~27 Popenguine; ~20 Kaolack; ~30 Wassadou; ~20 Dindefelo; ~5 Niokolo Koba; ~50 Toubacouta; ~10 Ziguinchor; ~10 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~20 Dakar; ~10 near Touba; ~35 Saint Louis; ~100 greater Richard Toll area
148. *Oena capensis capensis* – Namaqua Dove: ~22 Popenguine; ~15 near Wassadou; many en route near Tambacounda; ~37 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor; ~35 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar; ~4 near Touba; ~11 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~70 greater Richard Toll area; ~10 north of Louga
149. *Turtur abyssinicus* – Black-billed Wood Dove: ~2 Popenguine; ~18 Wassadou; ~15 Dindefelo; ~10 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~2 Toubacouta; ~5 Dakar; ~7 Saint Louis
150. *Turtur afer* – Blue-spotted Wood Dove: ~5 Ziguinchor
151. *Psittacula krameri krameri* – Rose-ringed Parakeet: ~4 Popenguine; ~5 Kaolack; ~8 Wassadou; ~4 Dindefelo; ~2 Niokolo Koba; ~40 Toubacouta; 2 Ziguinchor; ~3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~3 Saint Louis; ~6 greater Richard Toll area
152. *Poicephalus senegalus senegalus* – Senegal Parrot: ~4 Popenguine; ~2 Kaolack; 2 Wassadou; ~2 Kédougou (hotel grounds); ~6 Dindefelo; ~55 Toubacouta; ~5 Ziguinchor; ~10 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar
153. *Tauraco persa buffoni* – Green Turaco: 1 seen reasonably well at Vallée de Ségou near Dindefelo; also 1 at Ziguinchor
154. *Crinifer piscator* – Western Plantain-eater: ~6 Wassadou, ~15 Dindefelo; ~10 Niokolo Koba; ~5 Ziguinchor; ~10 Dakar
155. *Musophaga violacea* – Violet Turaco: 3 near Dindefelo



ONE OF THE VIOLET TURACOS AT VALLÉE DE SÉGOU NEAR DINDEFELO

156. *Chrysococcyx klaas* – Klaas's Cuckoo: 1 Dindefelo
157. *Clamator glandarius* – Great Spotted Cuckoo: 1 at Forêt de Bokhol (east of Richard Toll), likely originating from the Western Palearctic breeding population because of the date.
158. *Clamator levaillantii* – Levaillant's Cuckoo: 1 in dunes near Lac Rose close to Dakar
159. *Centropus senegalensis senegalensis* – Senegal Coucal: 1 adult Wassadou; ~5 Dindefelo; 1 Niokolo Koba; ~5 Toubacouta; 1-2 Ziguinchor; ~5 Dakar area; 1 Saint Louis; 1 Djoudj; 1 greater Richard Toll area
160. *Tyto alba affinis* – Barn Owl: 1 adult with 3 juveniles at a wetlands observation tower in Djoudj, and 1 adult observed in the lodge grove at Djoudj; also heard in Richard Toll (from hotel)



BARN OWL AT DJOUDJ NEAR WETLANDS OBSERVATION TOWER

161. *Asio flammeus flammeus* – Short-eared Owl: 1 was flushed twice in Djoudj allowing for satisfactory identification
162. *Glaucidium perlatum perlatum* – Pearl-spotted Owlet: 1+1 Niokolo Koba; 1 along Farafenni-Njau Road (Gambia); 1 greater Richard Toll area (in Forêt de Bokhol); heard only at Dindefelo and Toubacouta. The individual at Forêt de Bokhol (where Frédéric Bacuez tells me this species is very unusual) was vocalizing loudly and attracting a massive mob of songbirds as well as a local shepherd, who began to use his slingshot on the bird until I showed my displeasure.



A PEARL-SPOTTED OWLET ALONG THE HIGHWAY IN NIOKOLO-KOBA NATIONAL PARK, MOBBED BY A DRONGO

163. *Otus senegalensis senegalensis* – African Scops Owl: 1 at Wassadou, seen vehemently singing in spotlight near lodge; more individuals heard here and at Dindefelo
164. *Ptilopsis leucotis* – Northern White-faced Owl: 1 easily spotlighted in hotel grounds at the “Relais” in Kédougou after dark
165. *Caprimulgus climacurus climacurus* – Long-tailed Nightjar: two loose day-roosting congregations totaling ~18 at Djoudj; 3 ad. and 2 juv. (guarded by one of the three adults) near Podor (in greater Richard Toll area) in flashlight during Golden Nightjar search



LONG-TAILED NIGHTJARS: [LEFT] DAYTIME-ROOSTING AT DJOUDJ; [RIGHT] ADULT (WITH LONG TAIL EXTENDING FRONTWARDS) GUARDING JUVENILE AT NIGHT NEAR PODOR

166. *Caprimulgus eximius simplicior* – Golden Nightjar: At Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll) I called one in around open red-dune savannah at dusk upon hearing it nearby and managed to spotlight it on the ground for a good ~5-7 sec (with binocular views) at ~15m distance, but – albeit countable – it was not yet the experience I wanted. The following night at Podor, Wei and I had a wonderful encounter with a more cooperative individual, with several perched views, the last of which lasted for ~3 min at ~12m distance, during which we managed to take photos



BEST PHOTO WE MANAGED OF THE GOLDEN NIGHTJAR DURING SPOTLIGHTING AT PODOR (TAKEN ON MOBILE PHONE THROUGH SCOPE)

- a. prob. *Caprimulgus aegyptius saharae* – Egyptian Nightjar: Despite much searching around local guide Vieux’s stake-out area for this species at Djoudj, I only had two unsatisfactory flushed views of an individual that was likely this species, but remains unconfirmed...
167. *Caprimulgus longipennis* – Standard-winged Nightjar: This prime target was both the first and the last species seen on this trip, but remained a nail-biter until the final evening. One male with long remix extensions visible as an odd black structure on the ground was seen perched for ~2 minutes in the car’s headlights pre-dawn on first morning at Popenguine, but flushed so rapidly that I couldn’t get a nice flight impression of dangling rackets. On the final evening at Popenguine, Wei and I put in proper post-dusk effort and eventually saw one male exceedingly well both perched and in an almost 5-min long balancing act of flycatching above our heads... An unforgettable experience!
168. *Telacanthura ussheri ussheri* – Mottled Spinetail: ~8 Popenguine; ~5 near Wassadou; 4 Toubacouta
169. *Apus horus horus* – Horus Swift: A maximum total of ~20 were seen along a tributary of the Senegal River at Lérabé near Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll), feeding in the air and entering their breeding holes along the river’s steep banks. Frédéric Bacuez tells me this population was newly discovered on 5 Jan 2018, extending the species’ known range more than 3000km westwards.
170. *Apus affinis aerobates* – Little Swift: ~15 Popenguine; ~12 Kaolack; ~5 near Wassadou; ~15 Toubacouta; ~20 Ziguinchor; ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~60 Saint Louis
 - a. *Apus* spec.: 2 individuals at Toubacouta – the only two dark-rumped *Apus* swifts of the trip – were likely Common Swifts *Apus apus* but the sighting (from the boat) lasted only ~2sec and Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* cannot be ruled out...
171. *Cypsiurus parvus parvus* – African Palm Swift: 1 Popenguine; ~10 Kaolack; ~40 Wassadou; ~55 Dindéfelo; ~40 Toubacouta; ~20 Ziguinchor; ~20 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~1 near Touba; ~2 Saint Louis; ~15 greater Richard Toll area
172. *Urocolius macrourus macrourus* – Blue-naped Mousebird: strictly seen in the north; ~25 Saint Louis; ~50 greater Richard Toll area; ~7 north of Louga
173. *Corythornis cristatus galeritus* – Malachite Kingfisher: ~3 Popenguine; 2 Wassadou; ~5 Toubacouta; ~3 Saint Louis; ~4 Djoudj

174. *Ceryle rudis rudis* – Pied Kingfisher: ~3 around Kaolack; ~14 Wassadou; ~13 Toubacouta; ~12 Ziguinchor; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Saint Louis; ~6 Djoudj; ~2 greater Richard Toll area
175. *Halcyon senegalensis senegalensis* – Woodland Kingfisher: surprisingly rare on this trip; only 1 at Popenguine
176. *Halcyon leucocephala leucocephala* – Grey-headed Kingfisher: 1 Popenguine; 1 Wassadou
177. *Halcyon malimbica torquata* – Blue-breasted Kingfisher: ~5 Wassadou; ~3 Toubacouta
178. *Halcyon chelicuti chelicuti* – Striped Kingfisher: 1 Dindéfelo; 1-2 greater Richard Toll area; 2-3 north of Louga
179. *Megaceryle maxima maxima* – Giant Kingfisher: ~5 Wassadou; 1 Ziguinchor; 1 Toubacouta
180. *Merops pusillus pusillus* – Little Bee-eater: ~15 Popenguine; ~4 Wassadou; ~5 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~3 Dakar area; ~18 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~3 greater Richard Toll area
181. *Merops bulocki bulocki* – Red-throated Bee-eater: ~14 Wassadou; ~12 Dindéfelo; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
182. *Merops hirundineus chrysolaimus* – Swallow-tailed Bee-eater: only 4 near Ziguinchor (seen in flight)
183. *Merops albicollis* – White-throated Bee-eater: only 1 immature perched on roadside wire near Ziguinchor
184. *Merops persicus chrysocercus* – Blue-cheeked Bee-eater: ~6 Toubacouta; ~10 Ziguinchor; ~10 Saint Louis; ~20 Djoudj
185. *Merops viridissimus viridissimus* – African Green Bee-eater: 1+1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 Saint Louis; ~35 greater Richard Toll area
186. *Eurystomus glaucurus afer* – Broad-billed Roller: ~12 Wassadou; 1 Niokolo Koba; ~8 Ziguinchor; 1 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); 1 Toubacouta
187. *Coracias naevius naevius* – Purple Roller: 1-2 Dindéfelo
188. *Coracias cyanogaster* – Blue-bellied Roller: ~5 Dindéfelo; ~10 Ziguinchor
189. *Coracias abyssinicus* – Abyssinian Roller: the common roller throughout; ~10 Kaolack; ~10 Niokolo Koba; ~4 Toubacouta; min 1 Ziguinchor; ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~3 near Touba; 1 Saint Louis; ~10 greater Richard Toll area; ~3 north of Louga; also regular en route via Tambacounda
190. *Phoeniculus purpureus* – Green Woodhoopoe: [*guineensis*] ~15 Wassadou; ~18 Dindéfelo; ~4 Ziguinchor; 1 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); [*senegalensis*] ~8 Forêt de Bokhol east of Richard Toll; subspecies identification purely based on locality
191. *Rhinopomastus aterrimus aterrimus* – Black Scimitarbill: total of ~7 in Forêt de Bokhol east of Richard Toll; they appeared very small and invariably had dark greyish legs, although the bill colour appeared pale-grey to cream-horn; at first I only saw immatures with brown heads, feeling uncertain how to tell them from Green Woodhoopoes (except for size), but the appearance of adults with

an all-iridescent purple plumage (including head) combined with black legs left no doubt...

192. *Upupa epops* – Hoopoe: This species presented interesting subspecific diversity on this trip; [*epops*] by far most individuals on this trip were identified as northern nominate migrants through their distinct wing coloration, e.g. 2 at Tip (near Touba) with a particularly olive-tinged back (see photos); ~5 north of Louga (also see photographs); and 1 near Saint Louis, which was seen briefly but well enough in flight to be comfortably identified as subspecies *epops*; [*senegalensis*] a total of ~13 Hoopoes seen in the greater Richard Toll area (including Gamadji Saré and Forêt de Bokhol) were mostly northern *epops*, but one individual at Forêt de Bokhol (see photograph) was a clear *senegalensis* on the basis of wing pattern and back color; 1 at Toubacouta was seen too briefly and was not identified to subspecies level. Frédéric Bacuez has written up an amazing documentation of a mixed pair of *epops* and *senegalensis* breeding in the vicinity of St Louis here: <https://ornithondar.blogspot.com/2014/04/1-evenement-huppes-senegalaise-x.html>



HOOPOES: [LEFT] AN EXAMPLE OF A CLEAR NOMINATE EPOPS FROM FORÊT DE BOKHOL (EAST OF RICHARD TOLL), WITH WELL-SEPARATED WHITE WINGBARS; [CENTRE AND RIGHT] TWO PHOTOS OF AN IDENTICAL EPOPS INDIVIDUAL AT TIP (NEAR TOUBA), WITH A PARTICULARLY COLD OLIVE BACK REINFORCING THE IDENTIFICATION AS EPOPS.



MORE HOOPOES: [LEFT] AN INDIVIDUAL NORTH OF LOUGA WITH A WING PATTERN AND A COLD-TINGED BACK TYPICAL FOR MIGRATORY EPOPS; [CENTER] THE TRIP'S ONLY UNEQUIVOCAL SENEGALENSIS, SEEN AT FORÊT DE BOKHOL (EAST OF RICHARD TOLL), WITH AN INTENSELY ORANGE BACK AND SOME OF THE WHITE WINGBARS MERGED; [RIGHT] A PUZZLING INDIVIDUAL AT GAMADJI SARÉ (EAST OF RICHARD TOLL), INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN EPOPS AND SENEGALENSIS IN MANY WAYS (I.E., IN BACK COLOR AND WING PATTERN), BUT EVENTUALLY NOTED DOWN AS EPOPS BECAUSE OF LACK OF FULL MERGER BETWEEN ANY WHITE WINGBARS.

193. *Lophoceros nasutus nasutus* – African Grey Hornbill: ~7 Popenguine; min 3 around Kaolack; ~2 Wassadou; ~7 Dindefelo; ~10 Niokolo Koba; ~6

- Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar area; ~2 greater Richard Toll area
194. *Lophoceros semifasciatus* – West African Pied Hornbill: 2 Ziguinchor
195. *Tockus kemp* – Western Red-billed Hornbill: extremely common throughout; ~18 Popenguine; ~15 around Kaolack; ~20 Dindéfelo; 1 Niokolo Koba; ~18 Toubacouta; ~3 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 near Touba; ~8 Dakar area; ~25 Saint Louis; ~20 greater Richard Toll area; ~10 north of Louga; also common en route.
196. *Pogoniulus chrysoconus chrysoconus* – Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird: 1 Wassadou; ~6 Dindéfelo; 1 Ziguinchor
197. *Pogoniulus bilineatus leucolaimus* – Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird: ~3 seen Dindéfelo, where more heard
198. *Lybius vieilloti* – Vieillot’s Barbet: [*rubescens*] 1 Dindéfelo, 1 Toubacouta; [*buchanani*] 2 Tip (near Touba), ~3 Saint Louis, ~10 greater Richard Toll area; subspecies identification purely based on locality
199. *Pogonornis dubius* – Bearded Barbet: ~8 Dindéfelo; ~6 Toubacouta; ~3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); also multiple individuals flying over road in Casamance en route
200. *Indicator indicator* – Greater Honeyguide: 1+1 Dindéfelo; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
201. *Indicator minor senegalensis* – Lesser Honeyguide: Only 1 silent individual was briefly observed in hotel grounds at Toubacouta; the bird looked typical for this species in all respects. I am not – in retrospect – considering the possibility of the much smaller and streakier Willcock’s Honeyguide, which has been recorded recently at Dindéfelo, or of Least Honeyguide, which seems to be unrecorded in Senegal, albeit erroneously mentioned by HBW.
202. *Campethera punctuligera punctuligera* – Fine-spotted Woodpecker: ~3 Dindéfelo; 2 males Toubacouta
203. *Dendropicos elachus* – Sahelian Woodpecker: 1 female in acacia grove along antenna track ~3km east of Richard Toll; after this great sighting, I discontinued the use of playback and did not see any further individuals.



THE ONLY SAHELIAN WOODPECKER OF THE TRIP: A FEMALE CLOSE TO RICHARD TOLL

204. *Dendropicos goertae goertae* – Grey Woodpecker: the most common woodpecker of the trip; 1 female Wassadou; 3 females Dindéfelo; 1 male and 1

female Niokolo Koba; 2 females Toubacouta; 1 male Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 2 Saint Louis; total of ~7 in greater Richard Toll area

205. *Dendropicos fuscescens lafresnayi* – Cardinal Woodpecker: 3 Dindefelo

206. *Jynx torquilla* – Eurasian Wryneck: 1+1 Dindefelo; 1 Tip (near Touba); 3 greater Richard Toll area



ONE OF THE WRYNECKS AT DINDEFELO

207. *Mirafra cantillans chadensis* – Singing Bushlark: always shy and tough to see well, but a number of good perched sightings were achieved in the end; ~4 Tip (near Touba during Quail Plover search); 1 north of Louga



TWO SINGING BUSHLARKS: [LEFT AND CENTER] ONE IN TIP (NEAR TOUBA) CLOSE TO QUAIL PLOVER SIGHTING; [RIGHT] ONE IN RED-SAND COUNTRY NORTH OF LOUGA; ALL PHOTOGRAPHED BY MOBILE PHONE THROUGH SCOPE

208. *Galerida cristata senegallensis* – Crested Lark: 1 Popenguine, ~5 near Kaolack; ~3 Tip (near Touba); ~70 Saint Louis; ~80 Djoudj; ~10 greater Richard Toll area; ~3 north of Louga



CRESTED LARK AT PODOR (NEAR RICHARD TOLL)

209. *Galerida modesta modesta* – Sun Lark: ~6 on Dandé Plateau near Dindefelo



SUN LARK AT DANDÉ PLATEAU NEAR DINDEFELO

210. *Calandrella brachydactyla* – Greater Short-toed Lark: a loose flock of ~40 at a fallow field at Djoudj; both European nominate *brachydactyla* and Maghreb *rubiginosa* seem possible, but I did not attempt subspecies ID
211. *Eremopterix leucotis melanocephalus* – Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark: ~8 on Dandé Plateau near Dindefelo; min 2 near Wassadou; ~7 Toubacouta; ~4 Tip (near Touba); ~25 Djoudj; ~15 greater Richard Toll area
212. *Eremopterix nigriceps albifrons* – Black-crowned Sparrowlark: ~5 female-colored birds seen well in Djoudj; ~100 in greater Richard Toll area (including adult males); ~5 north of Louga



FEMALE [LEFT] AND MALE [RIGHT] BLACK-CROWNED SPARROWLARK NEAR GAMADJI SARÉ (EAST OF RICHARD TOLL)

213. *Riparia riparia riparia* – Bank Swallow: ~3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~2 Toubacouta; ~30 Saint Louis; ~250 Djoudj
214. *Hirundo rustica rustica* – Barn Swallow: ~10 Djoudj; ~20 Saint Louis; ~5 north of Louga; at other localities likely candidates were discarded because difficult to identify when poorly sighted, e.g. in mangroves at Toubacouta
215. *Hirundo smithii smithii* – Wire-tailed Swallow: ~8 Ziguinchor; ~7 Toubacouta
216. *Hirundo lucida lucida* – Red-chested Swallow: Studied at length wherever seen to practice ID from similar Barn Swallow; ~5 along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~35 in and near Toubacouta; ~8 Djoudj. My Djoudj record would be slightly out of range according to books that haven't been updated yet, but Frédéric Bacuez has written an interesting report to document the range extension of this species in the Senegal River Valley here:
<https://ornithondar.blogspot.com/2016/11/17-confirmation-lhirondelle-de-guinee.html>
217. *Hirundo [daurica] rufula* – Western Red-rumped Swallow: a flock of ~30 at a savannah waterhole near Wassadou; I spent ~45min watching them circle over the waterhole, associating with House Martins and swifts. In the field, I couldn't figure out whether they were *domicella* or migrant *rufula*, but in

hindsight – following extensive literature review – I attribute them to migrant *rufula*. They showed no apparent breast streaking, but that shouldn't disqualify them because *rufula*'s breast streaking is very faint and hardly discernible unless seen well on a perched bird. They were in heavy molt, looking "dirty" overall, which seems to agree with their migrant origin and was unlike any *domicella* seen later during the trip; they were generally buffy-white bleached out underneath without a contrast between underwing coverts and underparts, and – more crucially – with an apparent lack of contrast between underwing coverts and remiges, which seems to be typical for *rufula* in December, whereas *domicella* would show an extensive black-and-white contrast on the underwing in December. The rump also looked washed-out although some views seemed to suggest a bicolored rump on some individuals; the little blue crown area seemed to give way to a seemingly isolated eye, which also supports *rufula*. Last but not least, they moved in a compact flock associating with other European migrant swallows (house martins), which is at least suggestive. In the end, I am happy about the taxon identification.

218. *Hirundo [daurica] domicella* – West African Red-rumped Swallow: ~12 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1+3 Toubacouta; my first sighting at Toubacouta occurred ~1 day after I'd had the Wassadou experience with the migrant *rufula* flock, but later sightings in the Gambia even allowed for photos of perched birds (see below), leaving no doubt... The *domicella* individuals were invariably very crisp, not as "dirty" molt-ridden as *rufula*, and they had uniformly orange rumps, all-white underparts (ruling out Mosque Swallow), a clear black-and-white underwing pattern and an extremely squarish cut-off black vent (again unlike Mosque, which should have a roundish extension of rufous into the black undertail coverts).



TWO WEST AFRICAN RED-RUMPED SWALLOWS PERCHED AT ROADSIDE IN A WETLAND ALONG FARAFENNI–NJAU ROAD

219. *Delichon urbicum* – Northern House Martin: ~40 Dindéfelo; ~25 near Wassadou; ~20 en route near Tambacounda; ~10 Toubacouta; no subspecies identification was attempted.
220. *Psalidoprocne obscura* – Fanti Saw-wing: min 1 in Vallée de Ségou near Dindéfelo

221. *Anthus trivialis trivialis* – Tree Pipit: ~5 seen on Dandé Plateau near Dindéfelo; probably one perched in acacia grove near Richard Toll but I was too busy watching Sennar Penduline Tits to pay much attention; heard only at Saint Louis
222. *Anthus campestris* – Tawny Pipit: 3 at Djoudj studied at length; 2 near Richard Toll (iPhone photos obtained through scope at both sites); 1 north of Louga



TAWNY PIPITS: [LEFT] ONE PHOTOGRAPHED AT DJOUDJ; [RIGHT] ONE PHOTOGRAPHED NEAR RICHARD TOLL

223. *Motacilla aguimp vidua* – African Pied Wagtail: ~5 along Gambia River at Wassadou
224. *Motacilla alba alba* – White Wagtail: 2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~20 Saint Louis; ~40 Djoudj; ~30 greater Richard Toll area; many individuals in wintering plumage were oddly dark-grey, which must be a seasonal phenomenon
225. *Motacilla flava flava* – Western Yellow Wagtail: generally widespread, especially in the north; ~3 Wassadou; ~3 Toubacouta; ~15 Saint Louis; ~50 Djoudj; ~40 greater Richard Toll area... Initially this taxon was not noted down unless I made a firm subspecies identification, but later – once I started paying less attention to subspecies ID (especially at St Louis, Djoudj and Richard Toll) – all sightings were noted down under this widespread subspecies. In retrospect, this was probably negligent as Bram Piot informs me that *iberiae* can be locally common and must have been overlooked by me. However, I'm happy to retain all northerly localities for nominate *flava* as I am confident that the latter would have also been around among the high number of individuals lodged for those sites.
226. *Motacilla flava flavissima* – British Yellow Wagtail: 1 example of a nice-looking male was observed at the quailfinch fields near Toubacouta
227. *Macronyx croceus croceus* – Yellow-throated Longclaw: 1 at Forêt de Djibélor outside of Ziguinchor
228. *Campephaga phoenicea* – Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike: only one pair at Dindéfelo
229. *Pycnonotus barbatus inornatus* – Common Bulbul: 1 Kaolack; ~15 Wassadou; ~75 Dindéfelo; min 1 Niokolo Koba; ~75 Toubacouta; ~25 Ziguinchor; ~15 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~15 Dakar area; ~8 Saint Louis; ~2 Djoudj; ~22 greater Richard Toll area
230. *Eurillas virens erythroptera* – Little Greenbul: 1 seen near Ziguinchor

231. *Atimastillas flavicollis* – Yellow-throated Greenbul (=Leaflove): 1 in densest forest near the waterfall at Dindefelo
232. *Bleda canicapillus* – Grey-headed Bristlebill: 2-3 near Ziguinchor
233. *Nicator chloris* – Western Nicator: 1 near Ziguinchor
234. *Turdus pelios chiguancooides* – African Thrush: ~2 in waterfall forest at Dindefelo; ~2 near Ziguinchor
235. *Cossypha niveicapilla* – Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat: ~2 in forest at Dindefelo; 1 near Ziguinchor
236. *Cossypha albicapillus albicapillus* – White-crowned Robin-Chat: surprisingly easy around the riverside lodge at Wassadou, where a total of ~12 were seen
237. *Monticola solitarius solitarius* – Blue Rock Thrush: 2 females along sea-cliffs at Popenguine
238. *Phoenicurus phoenicurus phoenicurus* – Common Redstart: 2-3 Popenguine; 1 Dindefelo; 2 Toubacouta; 1-2 Saint Louis; ~15 greater Richard Toll area
239. *Cercotrichas podobe podobe* – Black Scrub-Robin: ~5 Dakar area; 1 Saint Louis; 1 Djoudj; ~15 greater Richard Toll area



A CONFIDING BLACK SCRUB-ROBIN COMING IN TO A FEEDER AT OUR HOTEL IN PODOR EAST OF RICHARD TOLL

240. *Cercotrichas galactotes* – Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin: 1-2 at Tip (near Touba) during Quail Plover search; 1-2 near Saint Louis; 1 Djoudj; all (except for the one at Djoudj) were photographed and sound-recorded. Subspecies identification remained a vexing problem, as both resident *minor* and migratory *galactotes* are possible, and – given Clements’s split of *minor* as a species of its own – I was understandably eager to pin down the taxon. Extensive post-trip comparison of my photos and sound-recordings to material in the literature, eBird, Xeno-Canto and other online sources, however, led to only one insight: that differentiation between *minor* (at least the populations in West Africa) and *galactotes* must be extremely minor (no pun intended), and Clements’s split likely unjustified. While the two easterly subspecies (*syriaca*, *familiaris*) have more complex song phrases, I do not discern much difference between song recordings of *galactotes* from Spain/Morocco and of *minor* from Senegal in the spring/summer, both being characterized by simple melodious, thrush-like phrases. As far as looks are concerned, most books describe *minor* as more

pinkish-brown and *galactotes* as darker-brown (although the type description of *minor* by Cabanis [1850] from Abyssinia does the complete opposite by describing *minor* as “...darker reddish-brown on the upperparts...” [translation mine]). However, online photos of both confirmed *galactotes* and confirmed *minor* appear identical in that respect. There is great confusion about the use of the width of the black subterminal tail band as an ID marker (especially considering Borrow & Demey’s contradictions between text and drawing), but – again – online photos show substantial black on the tail of Senegal birds photographed in May, arguing against its use. A slight difference in size – indiscernible in the field – may in the end remain all that sets Senegal’s breeders apart from *galactotes*. In fact, the population in Senegal may ultimately need to be re-assigned to Western Palearctic *galactotes* if breeding populations in Ethiopia and Sudan (closer to the type locality of *minor*) can be shown to be substantially different from those in Senegal. For the purposes of the present trip report, I’m simply omitting a subspecies name.



FOUR PHOTOS OF PERHAPS THE SAME INDIVIDUAL OF RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB-ROBIN AT TIP (NEAR TOUBA); THE FAR-LEFT AND FAR-RIGHT PHOTOS GIVING AN IMPRESSION OF THE SUBSTANTIAL WIDTH OF BLACK SUBTERMINAL TAIL COLORING. THIS INDIVIDUAL WAS EXTREMELY VOCAL AND WAS SOUND-RECORDED BY ME.



ANOTHER SINGING AND SOUND-RECORDED INDIVIDUAL OF RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB-ROBIN, THIS TIME NEAR SAINT LOUIS, DEMONSTRATING THE BRIGHT RUFOUS-BROWN OVERALL COLORATION.

241. *Oenanthe oenanthe* – Northern Wheatear: commonly encountered primarily in the north; ~2 Toubacouta; ~7 around Touba; ~10 Saint Louis; ~15 Djoudj; ~80 greater Richard Toll area; ~8 north of Louga; 1 Popenguine. I am very shaky in judging size in the field, so I did not attempt identification of any of the three subspecies that are known to winter here sympatrically, even though I now realize that locally resident birders such as Bram Piot have done an excellent job in putting a subspecies name to some obvious individuals, especially when identifying outsized rusty-colored individuals as Greenlandic *leucorhoa*.

242. *Oenanthe isabellina* – Isabelline Wheatear: I may have overlooked a number of these along the northern leg, but started to pay attention to tricky

wheatear plumages for real once I became aware of the possibility of Seebohm's Wheatear near Richard Toll. One individual that stuck out among the Northern's in Forêt de Bokhol (east of Richard Toll) later turned out to be an Isabelline Wheatear (thanks to Bram Piot for first pointing this out to me). My photos of this individual, taken over two days at the same spot, show a bird that fulfils identification criteria in every respect: (1) upright stance with short tail and pot belly, (2) thick beak, (3) clown face with white margins above and below dark lores, (4) the white supercilium being especially strong in front of and above eye, (5) ear coverts perhaps only slightly darker than crown; (6) overall pale sandy-colored; (7) background color of wing pale sandy, identical to mantle, with a distinct pale tertial panel; (8) contrasting black alula. The centers of the median coverts formed an unusually strong "string of pearls", more reminiscent of Northern Wheatear, but this trait does show in some online photos of Isabelline, leaving this identification relatively uncontroversial.



FOUR PHOTOS OF THE SAME ISABELLINE WHEATEAR AT FORÊT DE BOKHOL EAST OF RICHARD TOLL (FAR-RIGHT PHOTO TAKEN ON THE NEXT MORNING). THE BIRD PROBABLY HAD A TICK OR SOME OTHER OBJECT DISTURBING THE ORIGINAL POSITION OF FEATHERS ON THE LEFT OF ITS THROAT, CREATING THE IMPRESSION OF A LITTLE BLACK SPOT.

243. *Oenanthe seebohmi* – Seebohm's Wheatear: Unfamiliar with the latest ID literature on Seebohm's Wheatear (an awesome article written by Bram Piot here: <https://senegalwildlife.wordpress.com/2019/02/17/identification-of-seebohms-wheatear-in-senegal>), I spent the first few days in the north assuming that only adult males would be identifiable – and not finding any. After Bram had made me aware of his article, I luckily still had ~24 hours of scrutinizing all the wheatears in the greater Richard Toll surroundings. I eventually chanced upon two individuals in close vicinity of each other at exactly 4km east of the town of Bokhol in a red-sand area that I was checking for Kordofan Lark. One individual was likely a first-winter male, safely attributable to this species because of its clear black extension below the eye combined with a relatively small size, pale sandy back and almost fully white underparts. The second individual was likely a female first-winter Seebohm's, similar in stature to the male and extremely white underneath (bar a buff breast flush in bright light), but can probably not be tied down 100% on the basis of my photos alone. I am happy with accepting the male to the list, though.



TWO PHOTOS OF A POTENTIAL FEMALE FIRST-WINTER INDIVIDUAL OF SEEBOHM'S WHEATEAR 4KM EAST OF BOKHOL VILLAGE (NEAR RICHARD TOLL): SMALL SIZE AND EXTREMELY PALE ON UNDERPARTS, WHILE THE WING PATTERN CLEARLY RULES OUT A SMALL ISABELLINE WHEATEAR.



THREE PHOTOS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL SEEBOHM'S WHEATEAR 4KM EAST OF BOKHOL VILLAGE (NEAR RICHARD TOLL), LIKELY A FIRST-WINTER MALE: THE BLACK TEAR-DROP GIVES IT AWAY, BUT THE BIRD ALSO CONFORMED TO SEEBOHM'S IN OTHER RESPECTS, SUCH AS THE CRISP WHITE UNDERPARTS. ALL PHOTOS WERE TAKEN BY MOBILE PHONE THROUGH THE SCOPE.

244. *Oenanthe [hispanica] hispanica* – Western Black-eared Wheatear: 1 photographed near Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll); also 1 photographed north of Louga; both seen in red-sand country during futile searches for Kordofan Lark



TWO PHOTOS OF THE SAME INDIVIDUAL OF WESTERN BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR NEAR GAMADJI SARÉ EAST OF RICHARD TOLL; THE OVERALL WARM-BUFF COLORATION, THE NARROW MASK AND THE JET-BLACK WING PATTERNING (ESPECIALLY THE MEDIAN COVERT CENTRES) SEEM TO CONFIRM THIS IDENTIFICATION.



A FIRST-WINTER WESTERN BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR IN RED-SAND COUNTRY NORTH OF LOUGA: THE OVERALL WARM-BUFF COLORATION ALONG WITH THE DISTINCT JET-BLACK MEDIAN COVERT CENTRES SHOULD CONFIRM IDENTIFICATION.

245. *Oenanthe heuglinii* – Heuglin’s Wheatear: After extensive searches in the heat, one pair was observed at length and photographed on the Dandé Plateau near Dindefelo amidst a mushroom termite mound field



THREE PHOTOS DEPICTING BOTH MEMBERS OF A PAIR OF HEUGLIN’S WHEATEAR PERCHING ATOP MUSHROOM TERMITE MOUNDS ON THE DANDÉ PLATEAU NEAR DINDEFELO

246. *Saxicola rubetra* – Whinchat: ~4 in savannah at Dindefelo
247. *Saxicola torquatus moptanus* – African Stonechat: only 1 male seen in Djoudj; this subspecies seems to be rare and localized
248. *Oenanthe albifrons frontalis* – White-fronted Black Chat: ~5 in savannah at Dindefelo
249. *Myrmecocichla aethiops aethiops* – Northern Anteater Chat: total of ~7 Toubacouta; ~5 Saint Louis; ~12 greater Richard Toll area; ~3 north of Louga
250. *Oenanthe familiaris falkensteini* – Familiar Chat: total of ~10 around rocky areas near Dindefelo
251. *Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris bambarae* – Mocking Cliff Chat – 1 apparent female (rather dusky overall, not jet-black, and lacking white markings on shoulder) at rocky precipice near Dandé village close to Dindefelo
252. *Melocichla mentalis mentalis* – Moustached Warbler: 1 Dindefelo
253. *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* – Sedge Warbler: 2 Saint Louis; ~5 Djoudj
254. *Acrocephalus rufescens senegalensis* – Greater Swamp Warbler: 2-4 were seen after playback at one riverside location north of Saint Louis
255. *Acrocephalus scirpaceus minor* – Common Reed Warbler: Shy during my stay; all individuals were quite uncooperative; 1-3 seen along river north of Saint Louis, and 1 called in at Djoudj after it was heard singing, but coming in silently... The subspecific attribution of birds in Senegal (especially in the winter) is a great mess. Olsson *et al.* (2016, Mol. Phylogenet. Evol.) present mtDNA data showing that all “Eurasian” and “African” Reed Warblers are quite poorly differentiated, although this conclusion is somewhat hidden in their data. Courtship vocalizations across Africa and Europe exhibit great variation but are virtually identical in the big scheme of things (at least to my ear), so it’s not a big stretch to lump them all into one species: *A. scirpaceus*. Unfortunately, some of the leading checklists have decided to go down the unglamorous route of maintaining the African-Eurasian split, and were thereby forced to re-assign

- Iberian-Maghreb birds (ssp *ambiguus*) to the African Reed Warbler, something they'll doubtless regret and rectify in the future. What's more, Olsson *et al.* (2016) showed there is practically no mtDNA differentiation among all the widespread forms named from the Sahel, including *minor* (type locality: Darfur), *hopsoni* (type locality: Lake Chad) and *guiersi* (type locality: St Louis, Senegal). The original description of *guiersi* by Colston & Morel (1984) maintains that *guiersi* is a bit colder on the crown than *hopsoni*, but I'm not impressed, and I follow Olsson *et al.* (2016) in merging all three Sahel names into the senior name *minor*. Birds seen around St Louis / Djoudj in December can possibly belong to one of three taxa then: migrant nominate *scirpaceus* from Europe, migrant *ambiguus* from Iberia-Maghreb, and local *minor*. The latter should be identifiable in the hand through its shorter primary projection and overall colder coloration (especially crown, mantle and flanks), but I am not sure how reliable these rough ID markers are in the field, given seasonal variation and a low sample size of sightings of shy individuals. The notes for my Djoudj bird (which was presumably singing unsolicited, but came in silently) say: "...appeared quite whitish on underparts with only little rufous suffusion, and not overly warm-colored on upperparts, with seemingly short wings...". For my St Louis birds, I didn't take such notes, but assumed they'd be local breeders purely based on the fact that the birds were singing in the plain afternoon without solicitation. I know such deductions can be dangerous (e.g. migrant Subalpine Warblers seem to be singing all day long in Senegal), but I still decided to put my observations down as local *minor* based on the morphological characters seen on the Djoudj bird – however tendential they may be. This is perhaps a bit borderline, but then again – European *scirpaceus* and local *minor* are not that deeply differentiated and form part of one species anyway...
256. *Iduna opaca* – Western Olivaceous Warbler: quite regular on the trip route, especially once its calls and habits were learnt; I generally looked out for its massive bill and the lack of a tertial wing panel to check for the rarer Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, but all individuals seemed to be good Westerns; 2 seen around Popenguine; 1 Wassadou; ~3 Toubacouta; 1 Ziguinchor; ~6 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1+1 Djoudj; ~4 greater Richard Toll area; 1 north of Louga
257. *Hippolais polyglotta* – Melodious Warbler: only 1 at Toubacouta and 1 at Ziguinchor, but there were others along the route – poorly seen – that I decided to omit from the trip list...
258. *Sylvia atricapilla atricapilla* – European Blackcap: only 1 male at Djoudj
259. *Sylvia communis communis* – Common Whitethroat: 1 female near Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll); 1 female north of Louga; there were others along the route – less well seen – that I decided to omit from the trip list...
260. *Sylvia hortensis hortensis* – Western Orphean Warbler: 1 at Tip (near Touba; during Quail Plover search); 2-3 near Saint Louis; ~9 greater Richard Toll area
261. *Sylvia inornata iberiae* – Western Subalpine Warbler: ~5 Popenguine; ~2 Tip (near Touba); ~10 Saint Louis, ~6 Djoudj, ~23 greater Richard Toll area... I

- paid a lot of attention to calls to check for potential Moltoni's Warblers *S. subalpina*, but all my individuals uttered a single-syllable *teck* call (sometimes in quick succession) that rules out Moltoni's. Many modern treatments follow the additional split into a Western (*S. inornata*) and Eastern Subalpine Warbler (*S. cantillans*), as I do here with some hesitation: The mtDNA divergence between Eastern and Western is impressive (Brambilla *et al.* 2008), but their plumages only appear tendentially identifiable (based on amount of white on belly, relative width of moustache, and details of the coloration of the penultimate rectrix that are only visible in the hand), and songs and calls seem identical – at least I haven't been able to verify some of the claimed differences across Xeno-Canto submissions. I'm accepting my Senegal sightings as "Western Subalpine" purely on the basis of geography. I have not seen any serious exercise to assess whether Eastern Subalpine is possible in Senegal, but I note that some Xeno-Canto songs from Senegal are lodged as "subspecies *cantillans*" (although uploaded before the split was published), and HBW specifies the wintering range of nominate Eastern Subalpine *cantillans* as "West Sahel" (although the source of this information remains dubious). On the face of it, southern Italy appears a bit too far east to be the origin of Senegal winterers in a species that should have a north-south migratory route. Using the same rationale, I assume that Senegal sightings of Moltoni's Warbler probably don't refer to Italian breeders but to those from much further west (e.g. Ibiza). In hindsight, I wish I had taken a photo to be able to assess belly color, but given the circumstances, I'm happy to count them as Western Subalpine Warblers. And while being liberal, I'm putting them down as subspecies *iberiae* purely on the basis that nominate *inornata* from the Maghreb is supposed to be a short-distance migrant at most. At any rate, the two subspecies (*iberiae* and *inornata*) only differ in average hue and would not be safely identifiable away from the breeding grounds (Svensson 2013, BBOC).
262. *Phylloscopus bonelli* – Western Bonelli's Warbler: 1 Toubacouta; 1 Djoudj; ~30 greater Richard Toll area... This species was a lot easier to identify visually than I had remembered. In the acacia groves of the greater Richard Toll area, it became virtually the only *Phylloscopus*. It called frequently – in stark opposition to the other two wintering Phylloscops encountered.
263. *Phylloscopus trochilus trochilus* – Willow Warbler: Both Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs were completely silent on this trip, and I was initially rusty on their ID, especially as leg color seemed to be invariably dark (even on confirmed Willow Warblers). At Popenguine, among many Phylloscops, there were at least 2 confirmed Willow Warblers (based on primary projection, facial impression and yellow-green overall hue lacking buffy tones); based on the same ID criteria, I saw 2 near Ziguinchor and 1 at Djoudj. Bram Piot flagged the latter location as quite unusual for a late December sighting, but it referred to a bird (first called out by local guide Vieux) with a visibly long primary projection, so I'm happy to retain it on the list.
264. *Phylloscopus collybita* – Eurasian Chiffchaff: at least 2-3 at Popenguine; min 1 Toubacouta; ~15 Djoudj... This species was probably encountered in much

higher numbers at these locations and others, but their ID from Willow Warbler is time-intensive and was not always a priority when birds provide fleeting glimpses only. Subspecies assignment was not attempted.

- a. *Hylia prasina prasina* – Green Hylia: annoyingly only heard – not seen – at Ziguinchor, where I was keen to follow up on it visually but did not seem to have enough time at the right locations...
265. *Eremomela pusilla* – Senegal Eremomela: ~32 Dindéfelo; ~5 Niokolo Koba; ~3 Toubacouta; ~6 greater Richard Toll area
266. *Eremomela icteropygialis alexanderi* – Yellow-bellied Eremomela: 1 Tip (near Touba); ~3 greater Richard Toll area; it was interesting to see that the two eremomelas overlapped in range, and were even syntopic (=on the same trees) in the greater Richard Toll area.
267. *Sylvietta virens flaviventris* – Green Crombec: 2 seen well near Ziguinchor
268. *Sylvietta brachyura brachyura* – Northern Crombec: ~6 Dindéfelo; 1 Kousmar Island near Kaolack; ~4 Saint Louis; 1 Djoudj; ~6 greater Richard Toll area
269. *Hylia flavigaster flavigaster* – Yellow-bellied Hylia: ~5 Dindéfelo
270. *Camaroptera brachyura brevicaudata* – Bleating Camaroptera: 1 Popenguine, 1 Wassadou, ~9 Dindéfelo; 1 Niokolo Koba; 1 Ziguinchor; ~2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 2 Toubacouta; min 1 Dakar area; 1 Tip (near Touba); 1 Djoudj; 1 greater Richard Toll area
271. *Prinia fluviatilis* – River Prinia: I expected this species to be uncontroversially easy. However, its ID was not trivial at all (see photo caption below), which was exacerbated by the occurrence of Tawny-flanked Prinia side-by-side (see species account below). In the end, my first positively counted individuals were 2-3 along the river north of Saint Louis (after solicitation with playback), whose songs were recorded and confirmed with sonograms, and one of which was photographed (see below). Later at Djoudj, this became the standard prinia, with a total of perhaps ~8 seen.



THIS WAS OUR TRIP'S FIRST RIVER PRINIA, SEEN AND SOUND-RECORDED NORTH OF ST LOUIS AND CONFIRMED VOCALLY. THERE WAS NOT MUCH PLUMAGE DIFFERENCE TO SET THE TWO SPECIES APART (PERHAPS A BROWNER MANTLE ON RIVER PRINIA, WHICH WOULD MORE OFTEN BE GREY ON TAWNY-FLANKED), MAKING SONG THE PRIMARY MODE OF ID. THE RIVER PRINIA'S SONG SERIES IS A FAINT, MELODIOUS, FROG-LIKE SUCCESSION OF NOTES, NEVER EXHIBITING ANY CLICKS OR CHURRS THAT TAWNY-FLANKED USUALLY INCORPORATES. HOWEVER, WHILE MANY TAWNY-FLANKED PRINIAS' SONGS ARE OBVIOUSLY DIFFERENT (INCLUDING THE ONES I SOUND-RECORDED SOUTH OF ST LOUIS), XENO-CANTO RECORDINGS FROM THIÈS (SENEGAL) AND MALI CONFIRM THAT SOME TAWNY-FLANKEDS ONLY HAVE SUBTLE ACCOMPANYING CLICKS/CHURRS, NECESSITATING CLOSE LISTENING.

272. *Prinia subflava subflava* – Tawny-flanked Prinia: ~5 Popenguine; ~20 Dindefelo; ~3 Niokolo Koba; ~5 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~2 north of Louga; also ~2 at sewage fields south of Saint Louis (after solicitation with River Prinia playback, and therefore causing great confusion, but the birds were sound-recorded and unequivocally identified)
273. *Spiloptila clamans* – Cricket Warbler: 1 at Tip (near Touba; during Quail Plover search); total of ~6 in greater Richard Toll area (in broom-bush country east of Forêt de Bokhol and around Gamadji Saré)
274. *Apalis flavida caniceps* – Yellow-breasted Apalis: ~7 around Dindefelo
275. *Cisticola cantans swanzii* – Singing Cisticola: I was shamefully underprepared for cisticolas, and it was a bad time of year for them, with hardly any vocalizations during the entire trip. During my Vinaceous Firefinch search in savannah ~2km northeast of Dindefelo, I stumbled upon ~4 silent cisticolas of a similar appearance (two of which were photographed; see below), but initially fumbled the ID, and later even talked myself into the possibility of Dorst's Cisticola when I belatedly found out that this rare species has been reported at the same savannah spot by multiple people. I never considered Singing Cisticola at first, probably because my West African memories of them are of summer individuals with a strongly black beak and lores and a pronounced red-and-grey upperparts contrast. A post-trip photo review of internet material taught me that the winter appearance of Singing subspecies *swanzii* is actually identical to my photos, and that Dorst's Cisticolas in December should probably be in their streaky winter plumage with much less of a reddish wing contrast. In retrospect, Dorst's slipped under my radar as I was never aware of its presence while birding in Dindefelo. Otherwise, I would have surely put extra effort into seeing this species again after so many years.



TWO SILENT SINGING CISTICOLA INDIVIDUALS ~2KM NORTHEAST OF DINDEFELO; ONE INDIVIDUAL DEPICTED ON THE TWO LEFT-HAND PHOTOS, THE OTHER ONE ON THE TWO RIGHT-HAND PHOTOS... THE TWO INDIVIDUALS WERE PERHAPS 150M FROM EACH OTHER AND WERE PHOTOGRAPHED WITHIN 25MIN OF EACH OTHER. THE LEFT INDIVIDUAL APPEARS MUCH BRIGHTER-CROWNED AND MORE RUFIOUS OVERALL, BUT I ASSUME THIS IS A LIGHTING ARTIFACT.

276. *Cisticola juncidis uropygialis* – Zitting Cisticola: ~2 Popenguine; ~3 Dakar area; I saw this species at additional sites but didn't put it down as firmly identified because individuals would not provide vocal confirmation
277. *Cisticola marginatus amphilectus* – Winding Cisticola: ~3 Djoudj; 2 around Saint Louis
278. *Cisticola lateralis lateralis* – Whistling Cisticola: a family group of 3-4 (incl. min 1 imm. with a yellowish throat) at Forêt de Djibélor outside Ziguinchor

279. *Melaenornis edolioides edolioides* – Northern Black Flycatcher: 1 Wassadou; ~4 Dindéfelo; 2 Niokolo Koba; ~2 Ziguinchor
280. *Agricola pallidus pallidus* – Pale Flycatcher: total of ~8 in savannah around Dindéfelo
281. *Ficedula hypoleuca* – European Pied Flycatcher: ~8 following savannah mixed flocks around Dindéfelo; subspecific identity could not be confirmed
282. *Terpsiphone viridis viridis* – African Paradise Flycatcher: 1 Wassadou; ~16 Dindéfelo
283. *Terpsiphone rufiventer rufiventer* – Red-bellied Paradise-Flycatcher: total of ~6 around Ziguinchor
284. *Elminia longicauda longicauda* – African Blue Flycatcher: 1 Wassadou; ~4 Dindéfelo
285. *Batis senegalensis* – Senegal Batis: ~8 Dindéfelo; ~4 Saint Louis; 1 Forêt de Bokhol (east of Richard Toll)
286. *Platysteira cyanea cyanea* – Brown-throated Wattle-eye: 1 adult female feeding immature in Wassadou; ~7 around Dindéfelo
- a. *Illadopsis fulvescens gularis* – Brown Illadopsis: One of the aims of my Ziguinchor side-trip was to catch up with a number of forest skulkers that may become taxonomically interesting in the future. The Brown Illadopsis was one of the major such items. Tracking it down was doubtless one of the more challenging experiences of the trip, as a pair came in closely to playback in a degraded patch of forest within an impenetrable plantation-woodland mosaic, but I was only able to obtain brief and suggestive ~2sec glimpses through the binoculars. I would have liked to pursue these further, as the opportunity was still there, but I respected the guidelines of my host at Ziguinchor, who seemed concerned that we're stressing them out too much. So in the end, I did not obtain any fully confirmed views.
287. *Phyllanthus atripennis* – Grey-hooded Capuchin Babbler: I am following the HBW split of capuchin babblers into three. After intense searching during one morning, Bruno and I finally found a loose group of ~12 in a forest patch near Ziguinchor and watched them for a few minutes.
288. *Turdoides reinwardtii reinwardtii* – Blackcap Babbler: ~20 Wassadou; ~4 Dindéfelo
289. *Turdoides plebejus platycirca* – Brown Babbler: ~20 Dindéfelo; ~5 Niokolo Koba; ~8 Toubacouta; ~15 Ziguinchor
290. *Argya fulva buchmanani* – Fulvous Babbler: ~3+3 near Gamadji Saré (east of Richard Toll); ~6 north of Louga; both areas where the species was sighted were in red-sand country
291. *Melaniparus guineensis* – White-shouldered Black Tit: ~5 around Dindéfelo
292. *Anthoscopus punctifrons* – Sennar Penduline Tit: After some searching, a group of 3-4 was finally seen and poorly photographed in the greater acacia grove around the village of Keur Mbaye approximately 9km east of Richard Toll



TWO SENNAR PENDULINE-TITS NEAR RICHARD TOLL

293. *Zosterops senegalensis senegalensis* – Yellow White-eye: ~4 Wassadou; ~8 Dindéfelo
294. *Anthreptes longuemarei longuemarei* – Western Violet-backed Sunbird: a pair and a male in savannah mixed flocks around Dindéfelo
295. *Anthreptes gabonicus* – Mouse-brown Sunbird: 1+1+1+1 in mangroves at Toubacouta (one on almost every boat trip), including good views...
296. *Cyanomitra olivacea guineensis* – Olive Sunbird: 1 briefly seen in forest patch near Ziguinchor
297. *Hedydipna platura* – Pygmy Sunbird: Tiny beak! I saw a total of ~14 around Dindéfelo (both sexes, with males in breeding plumage), 1 male in Niokolo Koba, and 1 pair in Toubacouta town.
298. *Hedydipna collaris subcollaris* – Collared Sunbird: one pair near Ziguinchor
299. *Cyanomitra verticalis verticalis* – Green-headed Sunbird: ~8 Dindéfelo; one pair Ziguinchor
300. *Chalcomitra senegalensis senegalensis* – Scarlet-chested Sunbird: 2 males Wassadou; ~12 Dindéfelo; ~7 Niokolo Koba; ~2 Toubacouta; 2 Saint Louis
301. *Cinnyris venustus venustus* – Variable Sunbird: ~4 Dindéfelo; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~5 Dakar area
302. *Cinnyris coccinigastrus* – Splendid Sunbird: ~2 in Forêt de Djibélor outside Ziguinchor
303. *Cinnyris pulchellus* – Beautiful Sunbird: the most widespread sunbird of the trip; ~4 males Wassadou; ~15 Dindéfelo; ~10 Toubacouta; ~5 Ziguinchor; ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~3 Dakar area; ~2 Tip (near Touba); ~7 greater Richard Toll area
304. *Lanius senator* – Woodchat Shrike: ~5 around Touba; ~5 around Saint Louis; ~8 Djoudj; ~17 greater Richard Toll area; ~5 north of Louga... Although I was not able to determine the subspecies, I was at least able to rule out subspecies *badius* at the latter three sites, where I consciously confirmed the presence of white on the primaries.
305. *Lanius elegans leucopygus* – Saharan Grey Shrike: ~7 Djoudj; ~6 greater Richard Toll area; ~3 north of Louga... I follow Olsson *et al.* (2010; Mol. Phylogenet. Evol.) in dividing North African populations as *Lanius elegans* – although somewhat reluctantly, as I believe this to be one of the species complexes where mitochondrial DNA will be mistaken and artifactual (it's certainly not believable that Iberian *meridionalis* should be united with North American populations). None of the regular global sources cite Senegal as being

part of the range of subspecies *leucopygus*, but given that adjacent southern Mauritania is always cited, this must be the subspecies that occurs here.



TWO DIFFERENT SAHARAN GREY SHRIKES IN DJOUDI ON DIFFERENT DAYS

306. *Corvinella corvina corvina* – Yellow-billed Shrike: 1+1+4 Niokolo Koba; 1 Dindéfelo; 2 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); 1 Toubacouta
307. *Prionops plumatus plumatus* – White-crested Helmetshrike: total of ~18 Dindéfelo
308. *Malaconotus blanchoti blanchoti* – Grey-headed Bush Shrike: 1 in Vallée de Ségou near Dindéfelo
309. *Dryoscopus gambensis gambensis* – Northern Puffback: 1 Wassadou; ~5 Dindéfelo; ~2 Niokolo Koba
310. *Laniarius turatii* – Turati's Boubou: One pair was tracked down in an agricultural wooded savannah mix at Forêt de Djibélor just west outside of Ziguinchor with my local host Bruno Bargain. This is one of only a handful of known pairs in Senegal, very close to the border with Guinea-Bissau, discovered by Bruno. Only the male was visible, but we inferred from the sounds there was a female nearby. The bird stayed mostly low and hidden, but – upon my whistling imitation of its single, level, melodious, ventriloquial note – occasionally ventured high above us and perched while singing, allowing me to take photos through the scope. Its underparts were very subtly tinged rosé, and it lacked any white wingbar. I would have liked to spend more time with it to enjoy better views from the side but my host appeared concerned that we'd stress it too much, so I respected that.



TURATI'S BOUBOU OUTSIDE ZIGUINCHOR (MOBILE PHONE PHOTO THROUGH SCOPE): THE PHOTO DOES NOT SUFFICIENTLY SHOW A ROSÉ TINGE ON UNDERPARTS THAT WAS VISIBLE IN NATURE

311. *Laniarius barbarus barbarus* – Yellow-crowned Gonolek: 1 Popenguine; ~16 Wassadou; ~3 Niokolo Koba; ~3 Toubacouta, 1 Ziguinchor; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~2 Dakar area; ~3 greater Richard Toll area
312. *Nilaus afer afer* – Brubru: 1 Dindéfelo; ~10 greater Richard Toll area

313. *Tchagra senegalus senegalus* – Black-crowned Tchagra: total of ~3 around Dindefelo; ~3 in dunes northeast of Lac Rose near Dakar
314. *Oriolus auratus auratus* – African Golden Oriole: 1+1 Dindefelo
315. *Dicrurus adsimilis divaricatus* – Fork-tailed Drongo: ~2 en route near Tambacounda; ~4 Dindefelo; ~2 Niokolo Koba; ~3 Ziguinchor; ~10 greater Richard Toll area... Fuchs et al. (2018; Zoologica Scripta) elevate *divaricatus* to species level (Glossy-backed Drongo) based on clearly different mtDNA, but I feel more comfortable holding off on that split as it bears the hallmarks of mtDNA introgression from other West African drongos which have pulled the mtDNA of *divaricatus* out, while the nuclear DNA of *divaricatus* is still fully embedded within *D. adsimilis* (see their figure 2).
316. *Dicrurus occidentalis* – Western Square-tailed Drongo: min 1 seen at Forêt de Djibélor outside Ziguinchor; I'm following the new split by Fuchs et al. (2018; Zootaxa).
317. *Ptilostomus afer* – Piapiac: ~7 near Kaolack; ~8 Dindefelo; ~10 Ziguinchor
318. *Corvus albus* – Pied Crow: ~8 Popenguine; ~6 near Kaolack; ~2 Niokolo Koba; ~12 Toubacouta; ~28 Ziguinchor; ~10 Dakar area; ~25 around Touba; ~17 Saint Louis; 1 greater Richard Toll area; ~2 north of Louga; generally regular en route
319. *Onychognathus neumanni modicus* – Neumann's Starling: Only ~5 were seen in the peak morning hour, perching with hundreds of *Lamprotornis* starlings in savannah near the top end of the escarpment at Dandé above Dindefelo.
320. *Lamprotornis splendidus chrysonotis* – Splendid Glossy Starling: ~5 at margin of wetlands outside Ziguinchor
321. *Lamprotornis pulcher* – Chestnut-bellied Starling: locally common in the north, where some sightings en route were not noted down according to locality... 1 Popenguine; ~10 around Kaolack; ~20 Tip (near Touba); 2 Saint Louis; ~45 greater Richard Toll area; ~30 north of Louga
322. *Lamprotornis purpureus* – Purple Glossy Starling: This was the standard glossy-starling (disregarding Long-tailed Glossy) throughout much of the south of the trip, and became the species against which to compare some of the more difficult ones; ~45 Wassadou; ~25 Dindefelo; ~200 Niokolo Koba; ~16 Toubacouta; ~20 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~30 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia).
323. *Lamprotornis chalcurus* – Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling: I initially struggled with this species, but after familiarizing myself with Purple Glossy, I was able to pin down ~4 Bronze-taileds after long study views at Toubacouta; later I also saw 1-2 around drying savannah waterholes near Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side).
324. *Lamprotornis chalybaeus chalybaeus* – Greater Blue-eared Starling: This species was occasionally vocal in northern and central Senegal, so all the following sightings were additionally confirmed by its distinctive voice: ~4 Popenguine; ~2 Toubacouta; ~30 Kaolack; 1 Saint Louis; ~10 Djoudj; ~25 greater Richard Toll area... In the south of Senegal and the Gambia, "blue-eared glossy

- starlings” were generally silent, despite much vocal prodding to get them to call, thereby rendering identification much more difficult and making me discard many observations. For instance, a total of ~60-70 “blue-eared glossy starlings” were seen perching in silent flocks during the golden morning hour in savannah at the upper end of the escarpment above Dindéfelo, but I struggled with visual ID and was only able to pin down a few singletons as Greater Blue-eared based on their call, while virtually all other individuals constantly remained silent – I would have been very curious to find out whether two species were present but not visible to my eye, or whether these were perhaps all Greater Blue-eared.
325. *Lamprotornis chloropterus* – Lesser Blue-eared Starling: This target species proved highly problematic to ID with absolute confidence given they were mostly silent during this time of year. After some closer familiarization (following my ID debacle at Dindéfelo – see under Greater Blue-eared), I would often start to have a general idea based on dimensions whether I was dealing with Lesser or Greater Blue-eared Starling, but in the absence of absolute plumage marks, one never knows whether to trust one’s own feeling or not. After Dindéfelo, I started to put a lot of time into roadside flocks of glossy starlings, especially in Niokolo Koba and adjoining areas en route, where I encountered numerous unidentifiable blue-eared starlings joining the Purple Glossies, one of which was giving a call very reminiscent of Lesser Blue-eared at the cusp of countability for me... Later at Toubacouta, Carlos confidently identified a smaller silent individual as Lesser Blue-eared purely on dimensions, but lacking his experience, I wasn’t comfortable counting this. Also at Toubacouta, I saw one small individual in direct comparison with a vocally confirmed pair of Greater Blue-eared, which I’ll count in retrospect, although they didn’t give me the full good feeling at the time. The first and only individuals I felt fully confident to count on-site were ~3 birds along the road at Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side) in the late afternoon, partly seen in direct comparison with Purple and Bronze-tailed Glossies, and once seen perched on a tree vocalizing, giving the clear ringing note as well as the succession of notes compatible with my pre-recordings. I wonder if a slightly different month would have bestowed me with more vocal individuals that wouldn’t have led to such an ID headache.
326. *Lamprotornis caudatus* – Long-tailed Glossy Starling: common and straightforward to identify; ~18 Popenguine; ~10 around Kaolack; ~30 Wassadou; ~30 Dindéfelo; ~20 Niokolo Koba; ~80 Toubacouta; ~10 Ziguinchor; ~5 Tankon (Casamance-Gambia border on Senegal side); ~40 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 1 Tip (near Touba); 1 Saint Louis; 1+1 Djoudj; ~20 greater Richard Toll area; generally regular en route...
327. *Buphagus africanus africanus* – Yellow-billed Oxpecker: always with domestic cattle; ~2 Dindéfelo; min 1 Ziguinchor; 2 north of Saint Louis; 4 at Forêt de Bokhol east of Richard Toll
328. *Passer domesticus* – House Sparrow: generally around human habitations; ~12 Popenguine; ~10 Kaolack; ~5 Toubacouta; ~25 Saint Louis; ~5

Djoudj; ~35 greater Richard Toll area; ~10 Dakar area... According to Frédéric Bacuez, Senegal's House Sparrows are said to be descended from a tanker arriving from South Africa, and would therefore be subspecies *indicus*, but admixture from other sources cannot be ruled out. I did not look into subspecies ID and keep it open.

329. *Passer griseus griseus* – Northern Grey-headed Sparrow: ~6 Popenguine; ~10 Kaolack; ~25 Wassadou; ~12 Dindéfelo; ~65 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~5 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Dakar; ~7 around Touba; ~2 Saint Louis; ~30 greater Richard Toll area; also regular en route...
330. *Passer luteus* – Sudan Golden Sparrow: generally occurred in large flocks in the north; ~200 around Touba; ~40 Saint Louis; ~150 Djoudj; ~370 greater Richard Toll area; ~30 north of Louga
331. *Gymnoris dentata dentata* – Sahel Bush Sparrow: quite common in savannah in the southeastern part of the trip route, and a wonderful ID challenge under suboptimal viewing conditions; total of ~50 Dindéfelo; ~10 Niokolo Koba; ~8 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia)
332. *Plocepasser superciliosus* – Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver: ~5 around Dindéfelo
333. *Sporopipes frontalis frontalis* – Speckle-fronted Weaver: I expected to see this species throughout the trip, but only saw a group of ~4 in open red-sand country north of Louga at the very end of the trip.
334. *Ploceus luteolus* – Little Weaver: 3 Toubacouta; min 2 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~4 Dakar area; ~6 greater Richard Toll area; 1 Popenguine... Virtually all individuals were in non-breeding plumage. Although supposedly easy to identify on size alone, I caught myself struggling with proportions on these non-breeding weavers and frequently relied on size comparisons with other nearby birds (e.g., Grey-headed Sparrow etc.) to make sure that these were really small enough.
335. *Ploceus vitellinus* – Vitelline Masked Weaver: This is perhaps the weaver species I struggled most with. Virtually all weavers were in non-breeding plumage but eye colors of some species seemed unreliable (e.g. Black-headed Weavers frequently showing dark eyes), making the identification of dark-eyed Vitelline Masked Weavers particularly troublesome. I always tried to make sure to judge size correctly by comparing to adjacent birds of other species. I checked for a thick pale-pinkish bill (clinching it from Little Weaver), a streaked back, and almost wholly white underparts except for a yellow breast flush. I sometimes relied on a mixture of impressions based on habitat, behavior and jizz. At some point I wondered whether I should just delete the species from the list altogether, but on balance, I think that a number of sightings were solid and reliable: ~2 at a savannah waterhole near Wassadou; total of ~8 around Dindéfelo in dry savannah (sometimes observed eating along branches in a peculiar behavior); and ~10 in dunes northeast of Lac Rose close to Dakar (in direct size comparison with larger Grey-headed Sparrows and Village Weavers as well as slightly smaller Red-billed Queleas).

336. *Ploceus cucullatus cucullatus* – Village Weaver: Among non-breeding weavers on this trip, this species was often the most straightforward to identify; ~10 Popenguine; ~20 Toubacouta (here including the only breeding-plumage male of the trip); ~80 Ziguinchor; ~20 Dakar; ~3 Saint Louis.

337. *Ploceus melanocephalus melanocephalus* – Black-headed Weaver: the dominant weaver in the north, but all in non-breeding plumage, and with challenging variation in eye color; ~170 Saint Louis; ~200 Djoudj; ~110 greater Richard Toll area



BLACK-HEADED WEAVER AT FEEDER IN PODOR (EAST OF RICHARD TOLL)

338. *Ploceus [nigricollis] brachypterus* – Olive-naped Weaver: I expected a lot more individuals throughout the trip, but only ended up with ~3 individuals inside deep forest in the Vallée de Ségou near Dindéfelo

339. *Bubalornis albirostris* – White-billed Buffalo-Weaver: ~30 Popenguine; ~20 Farafenni-Njau Road (Gambia); ~15 Kaolack; ~15 Dakar; ~30 near Touba; ~60 greater Richard Toll area; ~30 north of Louga

340. *Quelea quelea quelea* – Red-billed Quelea: Generally common, especially in the north... However, in the south and in the Gambia, I soon learnt that I can only trust those non-breeding individuals as Red-billed Queleas which showed an exaggerated red beak color, prompting me to count only small proportions of bigger flocks that may have additionally contained bishops and other queleas. I noted ~5 for Popenguine, ~5 at a savannah waterhole near Wassadou, ~10 near Toubacouta, 1 near Ziguinchor, ~100 along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia), ~10 in the Dakar area, ~600 at Tip and elsewhere near Touba, ~100 around Saint Louis, ~300 in Djoudj, and ~20 in the greater Richard Toll area.

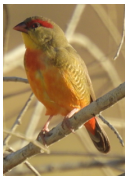


ONE OF A BUNCH OF UNIDENTIFIED QUELEA-TYPE INDIVIDUALS ALONG FARAFENNI-NJAU ROAD (GAMBIA) IN NON-BREEDING PLUMAGE. I GENERALLY ONLY COUNTED INDIVIDUALS WITH A MUCH MORE INTENSELY RED BILL COLOR AS TRUE RED-BILLED QUELEAS IN THESE MIXED FLOCKS, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY WELL STILL BE A RED-BILLED QUELEA IN THE END. GIVEN THE LACK OF ANY GOOD ID LITERATURE ON THESE NON-BREEDING PLUMAGES, DEALING WITH THESE NON-BREEDERS WAS NO FUN THROUGHOUT THE TRIP.

- a. prob. *Euplectes franciscanus* – Northern Red Bishop: Frustrating! This was probably the trip's most common bird that I kept as unidentified until the end. Consciously, I saw a total of ~25 individuals at multiple sites around Dindéfelo and ~130 individuals along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia) – in

addition to many other individuals that must have been seen in mixed quelea-bishop flocks subconsciously – but I did not dare identify them from Black-winged Red Bishop *E. hordeaceus* and perhaps even Yellow-crowned Bishop *E. afer* in the absence of good ID literature on non-breeding plumages. One late male with some remaining red patches of plumage was glimpsed twice in massive roadside flocks along Farafenni-Njau Road, but not in sufficient detail to allow for identification. This male would not show again despite protracted searching.

341. *Euplectes macroura macroura* – Yellow-mantled Widowbird: The only positively identified ones were ~5 at Dindefelo in non-breeding plumage within a flock in an abandoned agricultural field that additionally contained a smaller bishop species. The yellow-tinged shoulder feathers in some but not all individuals (males?) and the large size as compared to the smaller bishops gave them away.
342. *Pytilia phoenicoptera phoenicoptera* – Red-winged Pytilia: only one pair on this trip, deep in good forest in the Vallée de Ségou at Dindefelo
343. *Estrilda melpoda* – Orange-cheeked Waxbill: occasionally in the far south of the trip route; ~8 at Wassadou; ~20 Dindefelo; ~10 Ziguinchor
344. *Estrilda caerulescens* – Lavender Waxbill: A main target that turned out to be quite common in savannah around Dindefelo (total of ~30), and not uncommon in bushland around the hotel at Toubacouta (total of ~26)
345. *Estrilda troglodytes* – Black-rumped Waxbill: ~22 Wassadou; ~10 Kaolack (at southern city entrance); one pair in Niokolo Koba; ~50 along Farafenni-Njau Road (Gambia)
346. *Uraeginthus bengalus bengalus* – Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu: ~5 Popenguine; ~20 near Wassadou; ~60 Dindefelo; ~5 Niokolo Koba; ~25 Toubacouta; ~3 Ziguinchor; ~10 Farafenni-Njau Road (Gambia); ~15 Dakar area; ~15 around Touba; ~5 around Saint Louis; ~55 greater Richard Toll area
347. *Ortygospiza atricollis atricollis* – Black-faced Quailfinch: ~15 observed well while perched in agricultural fields just south of the village of Keur Mama Lamine ~10km east of Toubacouta; also 2-3 seen around remnant pools and savannah ~10km outside Saint Louis, although mostly just in flight views accompanied by their distinct vocalizations... Subspecies boundaries are particularly artificial here: if I had seen my Toubacouta birds ~20km further south at the Gambian border, most books would have them as subspecies *ansorgei*.
348. *Amandava subflava subflava* – Zebra Waxbill: A total of ~70 was seen in certain areas at Djoudj with seeding grasses



ONE IN A FLOCK OF ZEBRA WAXBILLS AT DJOUDJ (PHOTO TAKEN BY WEI)

349. *Lagonosticta senegala senegala* – Red-billed Firefinch: The standard firefinch on this trip, and the one to compare others to... ~15 Popenguine; ~2 around Kaolack; ~20 Wassadou; ~45 Dindefelo; ~5 Niokolo Koba; ~50 Toubacouta; ~4 Ziguinchor; ~20 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~20 Dakar area; ~16 around Saint Louis; ~3 Djoudj; ~10 greater Richard Toll area
350. *Lagonosticta virata* – Mali Firefinch: A major target, and doubtless one of the top-5 birds of the trip. I tracked down a total of ~5 individuals (mostly singletons except for one doublet) in the forest-rocky slope interface at Dindefelo, both at the margin of the lush forest towards the waterfall and in the more distant Vallée de Ségou. All individuals seen were males; they were shy, but good views were eventually had: red rump, brownish-grey upperparts to hindcrown, but forecrown red as the face, underparts all red with a few white sprinkles on the flanks, bill blue and quite long compared to other firefinches. The birds responded to my playback with a subdued version of the “space invaders’ fire-shot call” from my sound collection, and also gave a hoarse, subdued and lower-pitched version of the long, level melodious note, identical to recordings I have of Mali Firefinch, and quite unlike any recordings I have of African Firefinch *L. rubricata*.
- a. prob. *Lagonosticta rara forbesi* – Black bellied Firefinch: one female in a big mixed flock of savannah birds at Dindefelo was almost certainly this species but seen too briefly, making me uncomfortable to count it...
351. *Lagonosticta vinacea* – Vinaceous Firefinch: Another sub-regional endemic and major firefinch target of this trip, but in comparison to Mali Firefinch, this one took much more extensive searching to find... After a cumulative full day of pretty much only searching for this species at savannah spots around Dindefelo, one pair was observed for a good 5 minutes at only ~3-4 meters distance, but extremely hidden inside bush, rendering full views challenging. The pair was poorly photographed (using mobile phone through scope). The male was immature with no full black face but had a strong black loreal area (against a blue eye ring) and a single distinct black spot on lower throat, otherwise looking like an adult...



TWO PHOTOS OF THE SAME IMMATURE MALE VINACEOUS FIREFINCH (ACCOMPANIED BY A FEMALE NOT DEPICTED) IN SAVANNAH ~2KM NORTHEAST OF DINDEFELO (ALONG ROAD TO SÉGOU). NOTE HOW THE ANGLE IN THE RIGHT-HAND PHOTO ALLOWS TO SEE THE EXTENSIVE BLACK LORAL AREA THAT IS HIDDEN BY THE GRASS STALK IN LEFT-HAND PHOTO. LEFT-HAND PHOTO SHOWS FAINT WHITE SPECKLES ON PINKISH FLANKS.

352. *Amadina fasciata fasciata* – Cut-throat Finch: ~6 Popenguine; ~2 Wassadou; ~3 Toubacouta; 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~5 Saint Louis
353. *Spermestes cucullata cucullata* – Bronze Mannikin: ~30 Dindéfelo; ~15 Ziguinchor
354. *Euodice cantans cantans* – African Silverbill: ~20 Popenguine; ~8 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); min 1 Dakar; ~15 around Touba; 1+1 Djoudj; total of ~100 in greater Richard Toll area; ~8 north of Louga
355. *Vidua macroura* – Pin-tailed Whydah: total of ~20 in agricultural fields just south of the village of Keur Mama Lamine ~10km east of Toubacouta (some males still partly in breeding plumage though lacking long tail feathers); also 2 along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia) amidst indigobirds, with vividly red upper and lower mandible but greyish-black legs and a brownish central crown stripe
356. *Vidua orientalis aucupum* – Sahel Paradise-Whydah: I learnt that the identification of males is not trivial. A post-trip review of online photos reveals that the internet must be riddled with misidentifications. Identification should ideally be confirmed by checking accompanying females. I saw a total of ~6+5 at a well-known spot for this species at Popenguine over two visits, always coming in to the drinking spot at the lagoon, including breeding-gear males and definitely black-billed females, but I didn't manage to take any confirmatory photos here. Wei and I also saw one pair at a waterhole north of Touba at a latitude where no Exclamatory Paradise-Whydah should occur, although our photos of these two birds (see below) clearly illustrate the trickiness of paradise-whydah ID.



THREE PHOTOS OF WHAT SHOULD BE ONE INDIVIDUAL SAHEL PARADISE-WHYDAH AT A WATERHOLE ~20-30KM NORTH OF TOUBA. NOTE HOW TAIL WIDTH AND LENGTH CAN APPEAR EXTREMELY DIFFERENT ACROSS PHOTOS. THE ID LITERATURE SUGGESTS THAT THE WEST AFRICAN SUBSPECIES AUCUPUM SHOULD HAVE A BRIGHT CHESTNUT (NOT STRAW-BUFF) NAPE, BUT MANY ONLINE PHOTOS OF FAIRLY NORTHERLY INDIVIDUALS (WHERE OTHER CONFUSION SPECIES CAN BE RULED OUT) SEEM TO CORROBORATE OUR PHOTOS IN THAT AUCUPUM CAN EXHIBIT A FAIRLY STRAW-HEADED NAPE UNDER CERTAIN LIGHT CONDITIONS. TAIL LENGTH IN SAHEL PARADISE-WHYDAH SHOULD ALWAYS BE LESS THAN THREE TIMES THE WING LENGTH, AND INDEED SEEMS TO COME PRETTY CLOSE TO THIS RATIO IN THE RIGHTMOST PHOTO, INDICATING THAT THIS SHOULD BE A PARTICULARLY LONG-TAILED SAHEL PARADISE-WHYDAH.



TWO PHOTOS OF THE ACCOMPANYING FEMALE SAHEL PARADISE-WHYDAH AT THE WATERHOLE ~20-30KM NORTH OF TOUBA. LEGS AND BEAK SEEM TO APPEAR PALE OR DULL PINKISH ON THESE PHOTOS, BUT I STRONGLY BELIEVE THIS TO BE AN ARTIFACT OF AGGRESSIVE BACK-LIGHTING. IN NATURE, THESE BARE PARTS APPEARED DULL HORN-COLORED. AT ANY RATE, AN EXTRALIMITAL FEMALE EXCLAMATORY PARADISE-WHYDAH WOULD HAVE TO SHOW INTENSELY RED-COLORED LEGS (SEE PHOTOS BELOW).

357. *Vidua interjecta* – Exclamatory Paradise-Whydah: This target species turned out to be quite complicated to track down. Most people on a guided Senegal circuit seem to see it along roadside waterholes in the Wassadou-Tambacounda area, where I am sure Carlos has his stake-outs. Despite investing some time there, I did not find it, and later learnt from Carlos that Exclamatory males in breeding gear are not as common in mid-/late December than a few weeks earlier, making a search for female-colored birds more urgent. As my trip wore on, I saw the last opportunity in the Gambia when driving back from Casamance, so I invested a whole morning and early afternoon along Farafenni-Njau Road pretty much with the single-minded aim of seeing this species (although this road was amazing for other birds too). At the little wetland outside Njau village, extensive stalking efforts of foraging and drinking indigobird flocks paid off with the sighting of a female-colored Exclamatory with a pale-pink bill and vividly red legs (see photo). Later at this site, a male in breeding plumage but without tail streamers was glimpsed at the drinking hole, and amazingly another male – still in full breeding gear – came in to perch atop a tree for quick iPhone photographs through the scope. For discussion on the ID of this male, see the photo caption below.



TWO PHOTOS OF THE SAME FEMALE EXCLAMATORY PARADISE-WHYDAH DRINKING IN THE WETLAND AREA JUST OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE OF NJAU (GAMBIA). THE LEFT PHOTO SHOWS THE EXCLAMATORY (FAR LOWER RIGHT) IN COMPARISON TO ONE OF THE MANY FEMALE-COLORED VILLAGE INDIGOBIRDS (FAR UPPER LEFT), ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENCES IN BARE-PART COLORS: THE EXCLAMATORY HAVING VIVID RED LEGS AND A PALE PINKISH BEAK (UPPER AND LOWER MANDIBLE), WHILE THE MUCH DRABBER INDIGOBIRD HAS PALE-PINKISH LEGS AND A BICOLORED BEAK (PALE PINK LOWER AND HORN-COLORED UPPER MANDIBLE). NOTE HOW THE LEGS IN THE RIGHT-HAND PHOTO (UNDER MORE AGGRESSIVE LIGHTING) APPEAR MUCH LESS VIVIDLY RED THAN THEY APPEARED IN NATURE. I'M HAPPY ABOUT THIS FEMALE SIGHTING BECAUSE IT GIVES ME FULL PEACE OF MIND REGARDING ID (SEE THE MALE PHOTOS FOR COMPLICATIONS).



TWO PHOTOS OF WHAT SHOULD BE A MALE EXCLAMATORY PARADISE-WHYDAH IN A TREE JUST ABOVE THE DRINKING AREA WHERE THE FEMALE WAS SIGHTED EARLIER (SEE PHOTOS ABOVE) AT THE NJAU WETLANDS (GAMBIA). DURING POST-TRIP ID REVIEWS, I NOTICED THAT THE NJAU WETLANDS SEEM TO HAVE PRODUCED A LOT MORE RECORDS OF SAHEL THAN EXCLAMATORY PARADISE-WHYDAHs OVER THE YEARS (IN BOTH eBIRD AND IBC). WHETHER ONLINE PHOTOS ARE PARTLY MISIDENTIFIED OR NOT, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS AREA IS IN THE NARROW ZONE OF OVERLAP BETWEEN BOTH SPECIES. AN EVEN DEEPER LITERATURE REVIEW REVEALED CONFUSION OVER HOW THE MALES OF THESE TWO SPECIES CAN BE IDENTIFIED. THERE SEEMS TO BE AGREEMENT THAT MALE EXCLAMATORIES EXHIBIT TAILS MORE THAN THREE TIMES LONGER THAN WING LENGTH (LESS THAN THREE TIMES IN SAHEL), AND THIS RATIO SEEMS TO BE JUST ABOUT A LITTLE ABOVE ~3 ON ALL MY PHOTOS WITH STRETCHED TAILS. THE BRIGHT CHESTNUT NAPE CONCOLOROUS WITH THE UPPER BREAST ALSO SEEMS TO CONFORM WITH MOST UNEQUIVOCAL ONLINE PHOTOS OF EXCLAMATORY (I.E., FROM SOUTH OF THE GAMBIA RIVER), BUT THERE IS WIDE CONFUSION AND PROBABLY VARIABILITY IN WHAT THE NAPE OF SAHEL'S AUCUPUM SUBSPECIES SHOULD LOOK LIKE. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, I DO THINK THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ACCOMPANYING MALE TO THE FEMALE EXCLAMATORY DEPICTED ABOVE, BUT I AM HAPPY ABOUT THE CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF THE FEMALE TO PROVIDE CERTAINTY.

358. *Vidua chalybeata chalybeata* – Village Indigobird: one pair and two additional males at Wassadou, foraging right next to their host species Red-billed Firefinch; ~5 around Dindéfelo (often near villages); 1 bright male Niokolo Koba; ~25 Toubacouta (including one weird male in transition plumage); ~3 Ziguinchor; ~30 foraging and drinking around water hole along Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia), mostly female-colored; ~6 Dakar area; ~2 around Saint Louis; ~4 in greater Richard Toll area
- a. *Vidua* spec.: at least 1 male indigobird near Dindéfelo was unlikely to be Village Indigobird *V. chalybeata* because it had pale skin-colored legs, but remained unidentified
359. *Crithagra mozambica caniceps* – Yellow-fronted Canary: ~5 en route near Tambacounda; ~20 Dindéfelo; ~10 Niokolo Koba; ~8 Wassadou; ~4 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); ~10 Dakar area
360. *Crithagra leucopygia riggenbachi* – White-rumped Seedeater: not as common as I had expected; ~3 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia); 2 Toubacouta (inside town); ~5 in dunes near Lac Rose close to Dakar; 3 near Saint Louis
361. *Emberiza affinis nigeriae* – Brown-rumped Bunting: 1-2 at Dindéfelo heard during dawn chorus along roadside savannah and called in for good views
362. *Emberiza goslingi* – Gosling's Bunting: ~3-5 Popenguine (both at drinking spot around lagoon and along coastal cliff face); total of ~6 Dindéfelo (mostly in savannah near top end of escarpment); 1 Farafenni–Njau Road (Gambia) seen at drinking hole