

## Trip to Southern Ghana – September 2016

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Ghana offers a unique opportunity to sample forest biodiversity west of the Dahomey Gap, the tract of savannah that separates the Upper and Lower Guinean Forest blocks. Ghana gives access to most of the bird species that are endemic to the Upper Guinea Forest block.

When preparing this trip, I could only find one birding trip report by independent travelers who visited Ghana without an expert guide (trip report by Jacob & Jacob 2012 on cloudbirder, a most recommended read). And even these guys did rent a car and driver. This report covers my independent trip using public transport and cheap accommodation. It is intended to increase the client base for the awesome ecotourism projects and national parks in Ghana. Although Ghana is not South East Asia, it is definitely possible and almost easy to visit the country on a moderate budget. Travelling alone for 3 weeks I spent just over \$700. The same logistics could easily be used by a couple, however larger group sizes would have trouble finding enough seats in trotros and enough motorbikes to carry them around.

My top five on this trip would be something like **1) white-necked picathartes; 2) white-breasted guineafowl; 3) yellow-footed honeyguide + thick-billed honeyguide; 4) yellow-casqued hornbill and 5) African piculet**. I suppose folks for which Ghana is the first taste of rainforest birding would put crowned-eagle, red-fronted antpecker, and maybe black dwarf-hornbill somewhere in that list.

Mammal sightings were also a major feature on this trip: long-tailed pangolin, bongo, bay duiker, tree hyrax (on the ground, and in the rare cream morph), royal antelope, common cusimanse, olive colobus, Lowe's monkey, lesser spot-nosed monkeys, Demidoff's galago, grasscutter and giant pouched rat. I also saw a particularly colorful (and scary) Gaboon viper.

### Upper Guinea Forest endemics whose distribution intersects Ghana

White-breasted Guineafowl (*Agelastes meleagrides*)  
Rufous Fishing-owl (*Scotopelia ussheri*)  
Brown-cheeked Hornbill (*Bycanistes cylindricus*)  
Western Wattled Cuckooshrike (*Campephaga lobata*)  
White-necked Picathartes (*Picathartes gymnocephalus*)  
Sharpe's Apalis (*Apalis sharpii*)  
West African wattle-eye (*Platysteira hormophora*)  
Green-tailed Bristlebill (*Bleda eximius*)  
Yellow-bearded Greenbul (*Criniger olivaceus*)  
Black-headed Rufous Warbler (*Bathmocercus cerviniventris*)  
Rufous-winged Illadopsis (*Illadopsis rufescens*)  
Copper-tailed Glossy-starling (*Lamprotornis cupreocauda*)  
Nimba Flycatcher (*Melaenornis annamarulae*)  
Red-fronted Antpecker (*Parmoptila rubrifrons*)

Note: the cuckooshrike and rufous-warbler have not been recorded recently in Ghana. If they still occur, they are very rare and localized. The fishing-owl is somewhat regularly reported from SW Ghana but should not be considered gettable on a normal birding trip. All other species were recorded on this trip.

### Near-endemics

These are species that occur both west and east of the Dahomey Gap, and probably survived in both the Liberia/Sierra Leone and Cameroon/Nigeria forest refugia. They do not occur much further east and south, although I have included in this list some species that currently go as far as Gabon. The sister species of these taxa can often be linked to the rift refugia in Uganda.

Blue-moustached Bee-eater (*Merops mentalis*)  
Yellow-footed Honeyguide (*Melignomon eisentrauti*)  
Fire-bellied Woodpecker (*Dendropicos pyrrhogaster*)  
Yellow-casqued Hornbill (*Ceratogymna elata*)  
Black Spinetail (*Telacanthura melanopygia*)  
Bates's Swift (*Apus batesi*)  
Red-cheeked Wattle-eye (*Dyaphorophya blissetti*)  
Red-billed Helmetshrike (*Prionops caniceps*)  
Grey-headed Bristlebill (*Bleda canicapillus*)  
Western Bearded Greenbul (*Criniger barbatus*)  
Baumann's greenbul (*Phyllastrephus baumanni*)  
Kemp's Longbill (*Macrosphenus kempii*)  
Finsch's Rufous Thrush (*Stizorhina finschii*)  
Ussher's Flycatcher (*Muscicapa ussheri*)  
Buff-throated Sunbird (*Chalcomitra adelberti*)

All of the above species were recorded on this trip.

Lastly, Ghana is definitely the best place to see widespread but challenging forest species, such as brown nightjar, red-chested owlet, Fraser's eagle-owl, Akun eagle-owl, white-crested tiger-heron, Nkulengu rail, white-spotted flufftail, Latham's francolin, African piculet, yellow-throated cuckoo, forest penduline-tit, a range of honeyguides, both dwarf-hornbills, etc., etc. Of these I only saw the flufftail, piculet, penduline-tit, black dwarf-hornbill, and thick-billed honeyguide on this trip. I have seen many of the others before, but not the cuckoo, heron, and owlet, which might be considered personal obsessions by now.

My timing in September was definitely not optimal. Lots of rain and as a result many species not calling and less territorial. However, I got to see the juvenile plumage of several familiar species. April seems best for independent travelers, since it is both reasonably dry, birds are apparently more territorial and large tour groups are mostly gone (they seem to mostly come in Dec-Feb). Also, I don't think my decision to spend 3 weeks in only the southern part of the country (i.e., not visiting the northern savannahs) is the wisest. Even if the Sudanese savannah is not really unique to Ghana and better-conserved tracts are available in e.g., Cameroon, I could easily have fitted a trip to Mole NP and lake Tana by just sparing a few days here and there and adding one or two days maybe.

Finally, a note about the "little green jobs" of African rainforest. I strongly encourage even experienced birders to familiarize themselves with the long list of small olive long-billed passerines: Fraser's sunbird, grey longbill, Bates' sunbird, little green sunbird, western olive sunbird, the females and juvs of many of the other sunbirds, olive-green camaroptera. These featureless birds can be very hard to identify especially when under the constant stimulus of other more exciting species. Bates' sunbird in

particular is definitely under-recorded and the distribution maps seem inaccurate. They basically show Bates' sunbird as endemic to where expert birding guides regularly go.

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Below I give information about access to the birding sites using public transport and cheap accommodation. Beware that using this accommodation typically meant eating local street food which was always easy to locate. "Pure water" in plastic sachet is always available even in remote villages. However when staying inside parks and reserves you need to bring enough food and water with you.

Regarding target lists, most of the forest sites share the same avifauna, so there is no real sense in making site-specific lists. However I found that some of the species were easier to get or more abundant at certain locations compared to others. I'm not sure about the extent to which this reflects a truth or just my experience, but I will highlight this variation below.

### Shaï Hills

Like many visitors, I started by paying a visit to the biogeographically important Dahomey Gap. Shaï Hills Ressource Reserve, located about 2 hours east of Accra, protects a relatively pristine tract of savannah with some biodiversity-rich forest patches located around the base of rocky outcrops.

**Access:** The access is well described in travel guide books. First go to Tema Station (south Accra) and get a trotro to Ashaiman. There, take a trotro to Doryum and ask to be dropped at Shaï Hills Forest. (pronounced "Shaïls"). Beware that the "Shaï Hills Main Gate" would be the entrance of a military compound about 1km south of the reserve entrance gate.

**Accomodation:** After paying my fees (c \$40 for a two night stay inclusive of full time ranger guiding if I remember well), I took a trotro with the ranger to Sayu camp, a small cement building where the ranger stays with his family. I was kindly suggested to pitch my tent there. It is theoretically possible to camp in the bush at Sayu Cave, the main birding area about 8km from Sayu Camp. But for obvious reasons the ranger did not want to. In the end it was a good idea because the worst rain of the whole stay poured down at 4pm, transforming the whole area into a swamp. I was glad to be able to retreat into one of the empty rooms of the compound.

**Targets:** In addition to excellent savannah birding (blue-bellied roller, violet turaco, piapiac, purple starling, black-faced quailfinch, African hobby, Senegal parrot ...), there is Sayu Cave forest where one territory each of African barred-owlet (of the Etchecopar's taxon) and oriole warbler are staked out. Playback is needed for both. On another inselberg to the west, stone partridge was easy even without playback. A little bit south of Sayu Cave (about 1h walk though) there is a tall grass area with African moustached-warbler, but I did not have the tape for it so I dipped. Continuing on the same track I found yellow-winged pytilia. For all these species but the pytilia the ranger would easily be able to guide you to the exact right spot where to play your tape. At night many plain nightjars were around. Going to Sayu cave or another inselberg at night would possibly yield freckled nightjar and greyish eagle-owl. There is also a stake-out for white-crowned cliff-chat, but too far from Sayu Camp to walk there. Also watch out for the *winneba* race of black-backed cisticola, which I lucked upon in a short grass area with some trees, does not seem to be recorded too often, and might be a separate species endemic to the Dahomey gap.

**Timing:** I would say that one morning is enough. I spent 2 days to be sure to get the owlet and warbler before moving on to forest-only birding.

### Atewa ridge

I rank Atewa as the best birding site I visited, despite its dire state of conservation. The forest has little official protection but the logging is “artisanal” and selective (no truck can go deep inside), which tends to at least temporarily increase the birding potential as canopy species become more visible.

**Access:** Back in Accra from Shai Hills, I dropped at “37 junction” and took a trotro to Nkrumah circle. There I found help to direct me to the Neoplan station to Kumasi, where I bought a ticket to Kibi. In my case this involved a wild change of vehicle in the middle because, contrary to what many maps say, Kibi is not on the main Accra-Kumasi highway but rather lies on a secondary road. From Kibi, the forest access lies a further 8 km along the road to Bunso junction, just before a small town that google calls Sagyimase. I chartered a taxi for 20 cedis, this was possible at 5:45am from the station in Kibi without any sort of prior arrangement. To get back to Kibi in the afternoon I waited for a trotro (never more than 10 minutes). To find the trail head, 8km from Kibi, before entering the small town that google calls Sagyimase, take a left on a rather large dirt road that eventually leads to a mining site. Before the mining site you’ll see a more or less obvious foot-trail on the right hand. This is the forest access. Although I easily found the correct dirt road using Jacob and Jacob’s info, I needed some help (found in the small town that google calls Sagyimase) to locate the somewhat overgrown trail head. You can also theoretically find help in Kibi at the forestry commission office. Once on the trail you just climb it up (about 1h30) to a ridge that starts with a recently burned area with open undergrowth. You follow that ridge to a junction where you take right; the trail continues until the morning ends.

**Accommodation:** The first hotel listed in the Bradt guide for Kibi was closed. I stayed at Adwoa Asantewaa Guesthouse, decent but no restaurant. For people on public transport note that this is about 5-10 minute walk from the trotro/taxi/food market station in Kibi.

**Targets:** Atewa gives access to relatively high elevations (by Ghanaian standard). Some species seem to prefer these mid-elevation forests, most notably Nimba flycatcher and Bates’ swift. I saw the former in the recently burned patch of forest at the start of the ridge (when the trail starts to level off). Beware that like the other black-flycatchers, this species is a drongo mimic, in this case a convincing impression of shining drongo with the dark red eye and bluish-slate plumage with darker parts. Other species reported from Atewa much more often than elsewhere are blue-moustached bee-eater (which I dipped), yellow-footed honeyguide, red-fronted antpecker and green-tailed bristlebill. Lagden’s, many-coloured, and fiery-breasted bush-shrike have been recorded there too but not by me, and illadopses were very much easy to spot. Exploring the disturbed areas between the trail head and the mining site was also very rewarding. A noisy flock of capuchin babblers was especially surprising since it is never recorded from this well-birded location! Blue-headed coucal and Western bluebill were also only seen there.

**Timing:** Two mornings is the bare minimum especially given the high risk of rain and the high likelihood of getting lost on your first foray in the area. In retrospect I wish I gave myself three mornings there.

### **Bobiri forest reserve**

This reserve is managed by the forestry commission and is currently being logged at an alarming rate. However it seems to continue being an excellent site for seeing canopy species, including night birds.

**Access:** From Kibi I took a trotro to Kumasi via Bunso junction. This again involved a change in vehicle near the junction. I asked to be dropped in Kubease (pronounced Koobaszee) at the well sign-posted junction for Bobiri forest, where I took a taxi for 20 cedi.

**Accommodation:** There is a former research center that doubles as a forestry commission field office and a guesthouse. This is a somewhat weird, noisy setup and rather overpriced (room is 60 cedi, very

simple dinner 20 cedi and breakfast 10 cedi), but if you are the only guest this can be really nice though. I heard Akun eagle-owl from my room after being woken up by the unearthly loud snoring of one of the staff.

**Target:** I dipped on all the nightbirds (heard the owlet once at c. 3pm and Akun at c. 22pm but they ignored my playback; the other species might not have been there for what I know). On one occasion I heard a Nkulengu rail close enough to be worth trying to find it, but I have already seen this species in broad daylight previously so did not take the risk of getting lost in the forest. Walking along the main track in the morning, I picked up many canopy species like black dwarf-hornbill, tit-hylia, Preuss' weaver, violet-backed hylia, three species of parrot, and Congo serpent-eagle. The site is also reputedly good for African piculet and Afep pigeon. The forest is very degraded after just 2km, but in this habitat I saw black-throated coucal and dusky-blue flycatcher. There are almost no large hornbills and turacos left in Bobiri due to hunting. Some crested guineafowl and Ahanta francolins still hang around though, likely because folks have already started to install forest chicken coops and thus stopped snaring (forest chicken coops are small wooden shacks where chickens are let loose to feed by themselves in the forest, after all potential predators including monkeys have been hunted to extinction).

**Timing:** Expecting good, easy nightbirding I gave myself three nights there to hedge my bets regarding the weather, but this was way too much. I would say one morning is enough.

## Bonkro

This small village near the town of New Edubiase is being developed into an ecotourism project by Ashanti Tours. The villagers were smart enough to manifest themselves when people from Ashanti Tours surveyed local folks for sites where the white-necked picathartes still occurred. Now the income from birding finances community programs. A visitor center and guesthouse are being built to increase revenue, and, given the steady cash flow making it possible to take care of infrastructures, the government may chip in to build a dispensary and better school.

**Access:** From the Kubease junction I hopped into a trotro for Kumasi. I was lucky that another passenger was heading the same way so the trotro left us near the Pampaso station in Kumasi. Otherwise I might have had to use a taxi. In Pampaso station I took a bus to New Edubiase. Note that the traffic situation in Kumasi is terrible, and that the Pampaso station is in a *very* active section of the market (think tidal waves made of people). To go to Bonkro from New Edubiase, I simply chartered a taxi for about 3 hours for 100 cedi (he looked happy enough with that wage). He had to ask for information from the "station master", an older guy who immediately knew what I was asking for and gave spot on directions. We left around 3pm and returned around 6pm. I would suggest leaving New Edubiase earlier than that. It rained a lot so I did not even think about birding the Bonkro forest, but it sure looks like a good general birding spot (no large canopy birds though). Apparently Western wattled-cuckooshrike has been seen there once.

**Accommodation:** I slept at Tina Holiday Inn, just decent enough to spend one night. No restaurant.

**Timing:** The recommendation is to present yourself in Bonkro at 3:00pm, so that you can be in position at 3:30pm. The first bird arrived around 4:30pm if I remember correctly, and they were still deciding whether to roost or not when I left 35 minutes later. I felt that my presence (in a pale sweater and umbrella, with two guides) was slightly perturbing them. The birds clearly noticed us and investigated us at length, getting to within 3 meters on several occasions. I think a blind like those in Papua could be useful to reduce disturbance.

### **Kakum NP: HQ area and Bekampa forest**

Kakum is the most accessible large tract of rainforest in Ghana. However, most birding sites (such as Antwikwaa, AboAbo) are near the NP but not inside of it, so that the habitat at those locations is basically farmland with a view of the forest edge. The two exceptions are the immediate surroundings of the HQ (including the famous canopy boardwalk), and the Bekampa forest (of which I'm not sure of the legal protection status but definitely gives access to some forest).

**Access:** In Cape Coast I went to the Mills X Aboom junction which acts as the station for Twifo Praso bound trotros. I asked to drop at Kakum HQ which is obviously sign-posted. At the HQ I organized my visit to the canopy boardwalk at 6am the following day. For Bekampa forest, I walked back 2 km to the village of Abrafo (the last village before the HQ). Near the end of the village when heading back towards Cape Coast, there is a dirt road on the right sign-posted "Natilla School Complex". I followed that road through farmland (singing cisticola, orange-cheeked waxbill, African pygmy-kingfisher, common leaflove) with the occasional view over distant forest patches (flyover long-tailed goshawk, brown-cheeked hornbill, chestnut-capped flycatcher-warbler, black-and-white shrike-flycatcher) for about 4 km. Eventually I reached the Bekampa forest. The fringes of it were being actively logged for firewood so the trail head was not obvious. As a result I lost my way and ended up in a marshy edge forest area (white-spotted flufftail, kemp's longbill, yellow-billed barbet, lowland sooty-boubou) before eventually finding the trail head (forest robin, many bulbuls and sunbirds) when it was getting late and hot.

**Accommodation:** The NP maintains cheap hostel-like accommodation at the "rainforest lodge" near the HQ. There is a tourist restaurant in the \$4-6 per plate range. They also have camping spots with cement floor and roof, and one tree-house where I would stay if I come back. Staying in either of these options means that after 4:30pm you can walk around freely without the compulsory tag-along ranger. The trail that leads to the camping area and then to a river, reached from an unobtrusive trail head between the visitor center and the toilet block, can be walked freely more or less anytime (just don't mention it). I saw forest scrub-robin, African piculet, grey-throated flycatcher and a few other good birds there but did not hear a single nightbird despite trying there and all over the place.

**Targets:** on the canopy boardwalk, keep your expectations low so that you end up satisfied with whatever comes up. I had half-good views of yellow-casqued hornbill, forest penduline-tit, and thick-billed honeyguide, so did quite good despite feeling underwhelmed on the moment. For Bekampa track I think my experience described above is representative of what can be hoped for. This spot is a good, easy to reach alternative to Antwikwaa for those on public transport. Around the park HQ people regularly turn up Akun eagle-owl and brown nightjar, but I don't know how they do it.

**Timing:** One morning for the canopy boardwalk and one morning for Bekampa seemed enough. Afternoons and nights can be spent effectively around the park HQ. There is the possibility for guided walks from the HQ as well.

### **Kakum NP: Antwikwaa**

Antwikwaa is a small village with a ranger's post about 20km north of the HQ on the western border of the park. Birders visit it to see white-spotted flufftail and kemp's longbill at the forest edge (I only had the former there). There is also the possibility to enter the NP on a walking trail which I did one morning (with two tag along rangers). There were many elephant tracks and it is the only place I saw black-casqued hornbill on this trip, otherwise extremely slow birding with best bird rufous-sided broadbill.

**Access:** Through the ranger I had for my visit to the canopy boardwalk, I arranged for another one (his brother), who was stationed in Antwikwaa, to come and fetch me with a motorbike. I pitched my tent near the Antwikwaa rangers' camp. I brought all my food and water in, bought in Abrafo on my way back from Bekampa. The ranger was also kind enough to cook an excellent meal for lunch before I left. The forest edge birding is free and is done simply by walking along the road until it ends. Accessing the forest attracts a fee, more or less negotiable depending on how aware the HQ people are of your visit and your activities. The two rangers were completely superfluous for the short foray I did. However, about 2 hours in, the trail was getting very tenuous. But it clearly does continue for kilometers, so that longer expeditions are possible and would in this case make the two ranger team very useful.

**Targets:** Same as Bekampa. The pristine forest (though clearly once logged) can yield exciting stuff with luck. For example I found a nest that looked like Latham's francolin's.

**Timing:** one afternoon is enough for the forest edge (although Kemp's longbill don't sing in the afternoon). For the forest it is either don't do it at all, or spend a week.

Another birding site is Aboabo in the northern section of the park (actually a forest reserve adjacent to the park). However, this site is similar to Antwikwaa in being hard to reach on public transport and mostly farmland with some forest at the end of the track. I decided to skip it. Yellow-throated cuckoo is said to be easier there than elsewhere (not sure it is true), otherwise it seems similar to Bobiri. Twifo Praso is the best base to organize transport there and that town also has a bridge over a river where there is rock pratincole.

## Ankasa NP

Ankasa is probably the best-conserved forest tract easily accessible for foreign birders. Being located in SW Ghana, it also hosts some species that don't occur elsewhere in Ghana, such as white-breasted guineafowl and lowland akalat. Its better than average conservation status makes it a good spot by Ghanaian standards for great-blue turaco, yellow-casqued hornbill, yellow-billed turaco, white-crested tiger-heron, African crowned-eagle, and the commoner monkey species (don't get your hopes too high for Roloway monkey). In addition, ultra-elusive species such as grey ground-thrush, rufous fishing-owl, sandy scops-owl and black-capped rufous-warbler may be found in this park with extreme luck if visiting out-of-the-beaten-track locations.

**Access:** From Cape Coast I took a Takoradi bound trotro at the appropriate station near Vec Hotel. In Takoradi I took a bus for Elubo. I dropped at the junction for Old Ankasa (which is about 3 km before New Ankasa, and 12 km before Elubo, so beware). At that junction, I attached myself the services of a lad with a motorbike who was to carry me around for the next three days. He went by the name of Emmanuel and was reliable (when he came late for an agreed-upon pick up, he always had an elaborate excuse and that was never in the morning). I gave him 140 cedi in the end. I would recommend against giving money upfront because clearly some of the lads at the same junction like to party and you'd likely end up with a drunk driver.

**Accommodation:** One can pitch a tent under a roof, or a mosquito net and mattress in one of the empty rooms of the ranger's compound near the entry gate. Overall for a three night stay without guiding I paid c. \$40 but was initially asked for twice that on the basis of an hourly birdwatching fee. I brought all food and water in and would advise against eating anything that comes out of the rangers' kitchen. It might be possible to buy take away in Old Ankasa, not far from the entrance gate.

**Targets:** In addition to top notch forest birding, the major target is white-breasted guineafowl, which is semi-regularly seen along the last 2 km of the track leading from the entrance gate to Nkwanta camp

(from the old “education trail” head onwards). Walking that stretch of track very slowly during a bout of sunshine after some light rain yielded a sighting, as well as a dyad of bongo, and a large mixed-flock with pretty much everything in it including red-fronted antpecker. Past Nkwanta camp, the track passes by three ponds, the first of which sometimes yields tiger-heron, the last of which had very wary Hartlaub’s duck and African finfoot, and sometimes also has kingfishers (during my visit there was a pair of Woodland KF breeding there in one of the snags but that was it). I also saw lowland akalat nearby (quite high up in a tree so took a little while to hone the ID). The track also crosses a powerline cut several times. This was good to watch starlings, casqued hornbills, great-blue turacos. One of the crossings always had black bee-eaters, and on one occasion I had one blue-moustached bee-eater, a relief from dipping it at Atewa and a highly unusual occurrence apparently. It was quickly chased away by the black bee-eaters and should not be expected as a typical species around there. The network of trails that starts beyond the river crossing in the bamboo cathedral (accessed from Nkwanta camp itself) is excellent for forest robin, white-tailed ant-thrush, and white-tailed alethe if you know their songs or luck into an ant swarm. Grey-headed and Green-tailed bristlebills are also common by song. Check the sky for soaring raptors, black spintail, Sabine’s spintail (common), and fly-by parrots and pigeons. For a second chance at tiger-heron, look for the trail that follows the river by the entrance gate (I did not know of this stake out and dipped on the heron).

### **Butre beach**

Butre is a small fishing village accessed by trotro or charter taxi from the town of Agona Nkwanta on the main Elubo-Takoradi highway. The beach has been developed for tourism at the “Hideout lodge”. I’m not sure what is the exact client base for this lodge. Maybe the expats’ kids. In any case, I stayed a couple of nights there and found it good enough for me. The birding was surprisingly good, with notably orange weaver (not seen elsewhere on this trip), brown sunbird, shining-blue kingfisher, no less than 4 species of tern, and a surprise two African openbills. The latter species is not usually recorded in SW Ghana and these were likely vagrants. A very distant humpback whale was also spotted and approximately two kilos of grilled tuna eaten.

### **Final comment**

Ghana is a very safe country where it is easy for a foreigner to travel cheaply. Unfortunately, following decades of remarkably fast economic and population growth, the environment in Ghana is in an appalling state of conservation. Most forest reserves are very small in size. For example, Bobiri forest reserve is only integrally protected over maybe 4 km<sup>2</sup>, the rest is actively logged under a clearly not sustainable program. However, I found that in these disturbed forests, birding is actually much easier than in pristine rainforest. You can see canopy species from the road that would be hard or impossible to see when walking on the floor of a closed canopy forest. For example, African emerald-cuckoo is very easy to see in Ghana. Bushmeat hunting is also clearly a problem everywhere. Before this trip, I’ve been lucky to visit places where great blue turacos, casqued hornbills, and duikers are common to the point that you don’t stop to look at them. In Ghana, a day with a close enough sighting of any of these species is a good day. Kakum and Ankasa reserves are also targeted for heavy tourist development: they have to pay for their existence. For example, in Ankasa, there is a plan to take “normal tourist” groups to stay at Nkwanta camp in the very heart of the reserve – with the associated traffic and noise, you can kiss goodbye to guineafowl and bongo sightings along the track, and hello to transforming the bamboo cathedral into a picnic spot complete with trash mine. There are, however, a few other large tracts of forest in Ghana, that seem to be rarely visited. The little info I found unfortunately suggests that hunting and logging are rampant in these reserves, perhaps even more so than in the more



exposed ones. Bottom line is that the awesome and cheap birdwatching in Ghana right now is most probably a silver lining phenomenon, when displaced rainforest species crowd the remaining patches of forest before slowly returning to their normal, low population density (and therefore low, unsustainable total population size). Anyway, it is better than no forest at all.