

THE GAMBIA

20th- 30th January 2004

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DAILY ITINERARY

1. Senegambia area & Bijilo Forest
2. Abuko rice fields & Abuko Forest Reserve
3. Casino Cycle Track, Kotu Sewage Ponds, Kotu Creek and Kotu Golf Course
4. Yundum Woods
5. Abuko rice fields & Abuko Forest Reserve
6. Pirang & Faraba Banta track
7. Brufut Woods, Kartong & Tanji
8. Bijilo Forest & Kotu sewage ponds
9. Marakissa

SITES

Senegambia Hotel area

The extensive gardens of the Senegambia are an excellent place to get to grips with a good range of birds at close quarters. The lawns are watered daily with sprinklers and this attracts large numbers to drink. Generally unobtrusive species such as **Yellow-crowned Gonolek** and **White-crowned Robin-Chat** were easy to see here, as well as those more often found in denser forest habitats such as **Oriole Warbler** and **African Thrush**.



Bearded Barbet



Long-Tailed Glossy Starling



Yellow-crowned Gonolekq



Red-billed Hornbill

Several birds were not seen outside the hotel grounds, including **Blackcap Babbler**, **Lesser Honeyguide** and **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird**. A bare tree in the rubbish-strewn area at the northern edge of the gardens was very good for photographing birds in the evenings, and the bushes close to the beach entrance were a reliable place to see **Bearded Barbets** coming in to roost. The wetter area to the north of the hotel held egrets and **Spur-winged Plover** and once two **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers**, feeding on the horses used for beach rides.



Beautiful Sunbird



African Harrier Hawk

Bijilo Forest

This is ten minutes walk from the Senegambia and is worth a visit, although we found it quiet in the evening. It was the only place where we saw **Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat**, and we also had very close views of **Stone Partridge** on the track, as well as **White-throated Bee-eater**.



White-throated Bee-eater



Black-winged Stilt

Kotu area

This includes the casino cycle track, golf course, Kotu creek and Kotu sewage ponds, and is several kilometers north of the Senegambia. Although still in the hotel district, a surprisingly good range of birds can be found. The cycle track has a small lily covered pond which held many wading birds including our only **Sacred Ibises**, and the surrounding area of palms was good for raptors and **Blue-Bellied Roller**. Kotu Creek and the Golf course were fairly quiet, and would have repaid another visit, although this was the only place where we saw **Black-Headed Plover**. The sewage ponds were excellent for photographing waders at close range, and a few **Marsh Sandpipers** were present as well as numerous **Wood Sandpipers** and **Black-Winged Stilts**, as well as several **Black Crakes** and a flock of **White-faced Whistling Ducks**.



Blue-bellied Roller



Black-headed Plover

Abuko rice fields & Abuko Forest Reserve

We made two visits to these areas, one with Modou and one by ourselves. The rice fields are accessible via a track about 200 yards before the reserve's main entrance, on the other side of



Painted Snipe



Giant Kingfisher



Green Turaco



Violet Turaco

the road. This site was full of wetland birds, and an early morning visit gives you the best chance of seeing secretive species such as **Painted Snipe**. We saw two on our first visit, as well as numerous herons and waders, **Black Crake** and **Giant Kingfisher**. This was a very good place to photograph herons, in particular **Black Egrets** umbrella feeding. Bird activity at Abuko Forest continues throughout the morning and the best strategy is to walk the trail slowly until you encounter groups of birds moving through. One such hotspot produced **African Paradise** and **Black-headed Flycatcher** (as well as hybrids), **Common Wattle-Eye**, **Buff Spotted Woodpecker**, **Little Greenbul**, **Grey-headed Bristlebill**, **Yellow-breasted Apalis** and many **Black-necked Weavers**. The main pool was excellent for viewing birds coming down to drink, including both **Green** and **Violet Turaco**, **Blue-spotted Wood Dove**, **Yellow-throated Leaflove**, as well as **Fanti Saw-wings** hawking insects overhead. Good views of **Giant Kingfisher** were had on both occasions and the enormous **Hamerkop** nests were not difficult to miss! The photography hide near the animal orphanage overlooks a small drinking pool, and was well worth

a visit, producing stunning views of a pair of **Western Bluebills**. This must be booked in advance at the main entrance and costs 50D.



Western Bluebill



Black Egret umbrella feeding

Yundum Woods

This is an area of savannah around Yundum airport, about 10 km south of the coastal tourist strip. This was perhaps our best trip of all, although the importance of a guide who knows the area and it's birds cannot be stressed enough. A great selection of species were seen, including **Pygmy Sunbird**, **Striped Kingfisher**, **Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Senegal Batis**, **Northern Crombec**, **African Golden Oriole**, **Brown-backed Woodpecker**, **Pin-tailed Wydah**, **Namaqua Dove**, a group of **White-crested Helmetshrikes** and perhaps the highlight, a pair of **Cut-throat Finches**. The area is also good for palearctic migrants such as warblers, and we had superb views of a **Lanner**. Unfortunately the site is now experiencing housing development, which may limit access in the future.



White-crested Helmet Shrike



Striped Kingfisher

Brufut Woods

The savannah here is more open than at Yundum and we saw many different species. Sunbirds were particularly good, with **Western Violet-backed**, **Scarlet-chested** and **Splendid** all seen well. Other notable birds included **Black-crowned Tchagra**, **Mottled Spinetail**, **Cardinal Woodpecker**, **Black-winged Red Bishop** and **Bush Petronia**.

Faraba Banta track

The area around the village of Faraba Banta is renowned for birds of prey and we made a very productive visit to the 'raptor track'. After delivering **Grasshopper Buzzard** and **White-backed Vulture**, Modou proceeded to find no less than eight species of eagle, including **African Hawk**, **Martial**, **Brown Snake** and finally **Bateleur**. Passerines were no less impressive with **Greater Honeyguide**, **Yellow Penduline Tit**, and **Scarlet-chested Sunbird** taking pride of place around a huge red-flowered cotton silk tree, and **Veillot's Barbet**, **Rufous-crowned Roller** and **Abyssinian Roller** were added further along the trail.



Abyssinian Roller



Senegal Parrot

Pirang

Pirang is a disused shrimp farm, and is a wide open area of pools, many of which are now filled in. As a result it attracts both wetland birds and passerines associated with wide open habitats, such as a variety of larks and pipits. We only saw **Crested Lark**, but did pick up several **Quailfinches** which flushed from the track in front of us. The **Black-crowned Cranes** are the major crowdpuller here and we had views of a group of four, although they were rather distant. Other species included a large flock of **Pink-backed Pelican**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, **Fan-tailed Warbler**, **African Green Pigeon** and several **Gull-billed Terns**.

Tanji

We made this trip with Modou, following the morning visit to Brufut Woods. The Landrover allowed us to drive the entire stretch of beach from Paradise Beach north to Tanji, which was fantastic, allowing close views of many birds. Seabirds included several flocks of **Royal, Caspian, Sandwich** and **Little Terns**, receiving the attentions of a marauding **Arctic Skua**. Several **Ospreys** were also seen and waders included large numbers of **Sanderling** and several other palearctic species.

Marakissa

We were very keen to visit this area and managed to arrange a trip on our last day with the guide from Bijilo forest. We picked up some excellent birds at the River Lodge and surrounding savannah, including **Goliath Heron, Blue-breasted Kingfisher, African Pied Hornbill, Black Woodhoopoe, Northern Puffback**, and three **Grey-headed Bush Shrikes**, but the **Red-shouldered** and **White-breasted Cuckoo-shrikes** were the undoubted stars for me.



Goliath Heron



African Pied Hornbill



White-breasted Cuckoo Shrike



Red-shouldered Cuckoo Shrike

BIRD CHECKLIST

(species in bold seen around the Senegambia Hotel)

Little Grebe	up to 20 at Koto Sewage Ponds
Pink-backed Pelican	large flock at Pirang
Long-tailed Cormorant	Abuko rice fields, also over Senegambia
African Darter	Abuko rice fields & Marakissa
Grey Heron	several wetland sites
Black-headed Heron	several wetland sites
Goliath Heron	1 at Marakissa
Great Egret	singles at Abuko rice fields and Abuko reserve
Black Heron	Abuko rice fields
Intermediate Egret	1 at Abuko rice fields
Western Reef-Heron	several wetland sites
Little Egret	several wetland sites
Squacco Heron	several wetland sites
Cattle Egret	abundant
Striated Heron	Abuko rice fields & Abuko reserve
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Abuko reserve
Hamerkop	several wetland sites
Sacred Ibis	3 at Casino Cycle Track pond
African Spoonbill	2 at Pirang
White-faced Whistling-Duck	c80 at Koto Sewage Ponds
Osprey	Brufut & Tanji
Black-shouldered Kite	several sites
Black Kite	abundant
Palm-nut Vulture	Casino Cycle Track, Abuko, Pirang & Marakissa
Hooded Vulture	abundant
White-backed Vulture	2 at Faraba Banta
Short-toed Eagle	1 at Faraba Banta
Brown Snake-Eagle	1 at Faraba Banta
Bateleur	1 at Faraba Banta
Western Marsh-Harrier	Kartong & Pirang
Montagu's Harrier	1 at Kartong
African Harrier-Hawk	abundant
Lizard Buzzard	abundant
Dark Chanting-Goshawk	Faraba Banta, Yundum Woods & Marakissa
Shikra	abundant
Grasshopper Buzzard	2 at Faraba Banta
Wahlberg's Eagle	Faraba Banta & Brufut Woods
African Hawk-Eagle	Faraba Banta & Marakissa
Booted Eagle	1 at Faraba Banta
Martial Eagle	1 at Faraba Banta
Long-crested Eagle	1 at Faraba Banta
Grey Kestrel	several sites
Red-necked Falcon	several sites
Lanner Falcon	1 at Yundum Woods
Double-spurred Francolin	common, heard frequently
Stone Partridge	3 at Bijilo Forest
Black Crowned-Crane	4 at Pirang
Black Crake	Abuko rice fields & Kotu Sewage Ponds
African Jacana	several wetland sites
Greater Painted-snipe	2 males at Abuko rice fields
Eurasian Oystercatcher	Pirang & Tanji
Black-winged Stilt	Kotu sewage and casino cycle track ponds
Senegal Thick-knee	Abuko rice fields, Kartong & Kotu creek
Spur-winged Plover	abundant
Black-headed Plover	Kotu Golf course

Wattled Plover	abundant
Grey Plover	Tanji & Kartong
Common Ringed Plover	Pirang & Tanji
Black-tailed Godwit	Casino cycle track
Bar-tailed Godwit	Tanji
Whimbrel	several wetland sites, also Senegambia
Common Redshank	Kotu Sewage Ponds & Kartong
Marsh Sandpiper	at least 3 at Kotu Sewage Ponds
Common Greenshank	several wetland sites
Green Sandpiper	Abuko rice fields
Wood Sandpiper	several wetland sites
Common Sandpiper	several wetland sites
Ruddy Turnstone	Pirang & Tanji
Sanderling	Tanji
Arctic Skua	1 at Tanji
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Tanji and Senegambia
Grey-headed Gull	Tanji & Kotu Sewage Ponds
Gull-billed Tern	2 at Pirang
Caspian Tern	Pirang & Tanji
Sandwich Tern	Tanji
Royal Tern	Tanji
Little Tern	c5 at Tanji
Speckled Pigeon	abundant
African Mourning Dove	several sites
Red-eyed Dove	abundant
Vinaceous Dove	abundant
Laughing Dove	abundant
Black-billed Wood-Dove	several sites
Blue-spotted Wood-Dove	Abuko reserve, Yundum Woods & Marakissa
Namaqua Dove	2 at Yundum Woods
African Green-Pigeon	1 at Pirang
Rose-ringed Parakeet	several sites
Senegal Parrot	several sites
Green Turaco	seen twice at Abuko reserve
Violet Turaco	Abuko reserve at 5 at Brufut Woods
Western Plantain-eater	several sites
Senegal Coucal	Abundant
Barn Owl	adult with 3 young at Marakissa
Pearl-spotted Owlet	Senegambia & Kotu Golf Course
Mottled Spinetail	several at Brufut Woods
African Palm-Swift	Abundant
Little Swift	Pirang & Kotu Sewage Ponds
Malachite Kingfisher	1 at Pirang
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	1 at Marakissa
Striped Kingfisher	Yundum Woods & Faraba Banta
Giant Kingfisher	Abuko rice fields & reserve, Tanji & Kotu Creek
Pied Kingfisher	several wetland sites
Little Bee-eater	several sites
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	1 at Yundum Woods & Marakissa
White-throated Bee-eater	3 at Bijilo Forest
Abyssinian Roller	Faraba Banta
Rufous-crowned Roller	Faraba Banta & Brufut Woods
Blue-bellied Roller	several sites
Broad-billed Roller	Senegambia and Bijilo Forest
Green Woodhoopoe	several sites
Black Woodhoopoe	1 at Marakissa
Red-billed Hornbill	Abundant
African Pied Hornbill	2 at Marakissa

African Grey Hornbill	several sites
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	Senegambia
Vieillot's Barbet	1 at Faraba Banta
Bearded Barbet	Senegambia
Greater Honeyguide	1 at Faraba Banta
Lesser Honeyguide	1 at Senegambia
Fine-spotted Woodpecker	Yundum Woods
Buff-spotted Woodpecker	2 at Abuko Reserve
Cardinal Woodpecker	Brufut Woods
Grey Woodpecker	several sites
Brown-backed Woodpecker	Yundum Woods
Crested Lark	Pirang
Red-chested Swallow	several sites
Wire-tailed Swallow	Pirang
Pied-winged Swallow	several sites
Mosque Swallow	Senegambia & Pirang
Common House-Martin	Senegambia
Fanti Sawwing	Abuko Reserve
Yellow Wagtail	Pirang & Yundum Woods
White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike	1 at Marakissa
Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike	2 at Marakissa
Common Bulbul	Abundant
Little Greenbul	Abuko Reserve & Marakissa
Yellow-throated Leaf-love	Abuko Reserve
Grey-headed Bristlebill	Abuko Reserve
African Thrush	Senegambia & Bijilo Forest
Fan-Tailed Warbler	Pirang
Tawny-flanked Prinia	Common in dry grassland
Red-winged Warbler	Yundum Woods, Brufut Woods & Marakissa
Yellow-breasted Apalis	2 at Abuko Reserve
Oriole Warbler	Senegambia
Grey-backed Camaroptera	Senegambia & Casino cycle track
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	Yundum Woods
Melodious Warbler	Casino cycle track & Marakissa
Green-backed Eremomela	Yundum Woods & Brufut Woods
Northern Crombec	Yundum Woods & Brufut Woods
Common Chiffchaff	Yundum Woods
Northern Black-Flycatcher	Senegambia & Brufut Woods
Common Nightingale	Brufut Woods
Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat	Bijilo Forest
White-crowned Robin-Chat	Senegambia & Marakissa
Common Redstart	Yundum Woods
Common Wattle-eye	Abuko Reserve
Senegal Batis	Yundum Woods
Black-headed Paradise-Flycatcher	Abuko Reserve
African Paradise-Flycatcher	Abuko Reserve
Blackcap Babbler	Senegambia
Brown Babbler	Senegambia
White-winged Black-Tit	Faraba Banta
Yellow Penduline-Tit	Faraba Banta
Western Violet-backed Sunbird	Brufut woods
Pygmy Sunbird	Yundum woods
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Faraba Banta & Brufut
Beautiful Sunbird	Senegambia and many other sites
Splendid Sunbird	Faraba Banta & Brufut
Variable Sunbird	Brufut woods & Casino Cycle Track
African Golden Oriole	males at Faraba Banta & Yundum Woods
Yellow-billed Shrike	several sites
Northern Puffback	Marakissa
Black-crowned Tchagra	Yundum Woods & Brufut Woods

Yellow-crowned Gonolek	Senegambia
Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike	Yundum Woods & Marakissa
Grey-headed Bushshrike	3 at Marakissa
White-crested Helmetshrike	6 at Yundum Woods
Fork-tailed Drongo	several sites
Piapiac	several sites
Pied Crow	abundant
Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling	Senegambia & Kotu Golf course
Lesser Blue-eared Glossy-Starling	Faraba Banta
Purple Glossy-Starling	Senegambia
Long-tailed Glossy-Starling	abundant
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	Senegambia & Pirang
White-billed Buffalo-Weaver	Casino Cycle Track
Little Weaver	Yundum Woods
Black-necked Weaver	Bijilo Forest, Abuko Reserve & Marakissa
Village Weaver	abundant
Black-winged Red Bishop	Brufut Woods
Northern Red Bishop	Yundum Woods
Western Bluebill	male and female at Abuko Reserve
Red-billed Firefinch	abundant
Red-cheeked Cordonbleu	abundant
Lavender Waxbill	several sites
African Quailfinch	Pirang
Bronze Mannikin	Senegambia
Cut-throat Finch	male and female at Yundum Woods
Village Indigobird	Yundum Woods
Pin-tailed Whydah	Yundum Woods
Yellow-fronted Canary	several sites
House Sparrow	Senegambia
Grey-headed Sparrow	Senegambia
Bush Petronia	Brufut Woods