

Ghana – 2010.

27th January – 13th February.

This was a privately arranged tour focussing on birds and mammals, using Ashanti African Tours as our guides and ground agents. (www.ashantiafricantours.com) They came highly recommended by Jon amongst others, and we were delighted with the whole package that they produced – Robert Nkator (our lead guide) was extremely proficient with both birds and mammals, and all the guides and our driver were a delight to travel with !

Note : Robert is very busy with a seemingly endless list of tours, so if you want him personally to guide for you, it would be sensible to plan well ahead.....

Flights.

We opted to fly with KLM from London to Accra via Amsterdam, which worked very well. It is worth noting that it was not possible to book flights online using a credit card, due to high instances of fraud (apparently !), so I was required to visit Heathrow to book directly at the KLM desk. Presumably there are other offices around the country that could be visited for this purpose, but it was a surprising issue in these days of rapid internet booking !

Visa.

Visas are required for UK citizens, which have to be purchased in advance from the Ghana consulate in London. The cost was £ 40 per person. As far as I am aware, it was not possible to buy the visas at Accra airport, unlike some other countries...

Weather.

It was hot all the time, with humidity being noticeable at the coastal forest sites, but less so as you travel north into the drier savannah habitats. Temperatures were typically 30 – 44 degrees C. We experienced no rain, although there had been a heavy downpour on the coast the day before our arrival, which made some of the paths and tracks muddy.

Guides.

Our main guide was Robert Nkator who was excellent, ably assisted by his brother Francis. We were also joined by trainee guide Ezekiel Banyemanyae. Our driver throughout the tour was Kawawa. All were helpful, kind and proficient – having two assistant guides meant carrying tripods and telescopes in hot and humid conditions was never a problem !

Itinerary.

We adapted the 16 day birding tour itinerary by adding a couple of days to allow for more time to search for mammals.

27th: Arrive in the evening at Accra airport, and transfer to a nearby hotel.

28th: Shai Hills reserve in the morning for savannah and woodland birds and mammals. Afternoon at Sukumona lagoon then drive to Kakum N.P. staying at the Hans Cottage Botel.

29th & 30th: Two full days around Kakum N.P making use of the canopy walkway and various sites in the park and on the fringes.

31st: Early visit to areas around Kakum. Early lunch, then leave for Ankasa forest in western Ghana Evening and after dark walking and spotlighting.

1st & 2nd: Two days in Ankasa including another after dark spotlighting walk.

3rd: Morning in Ankasa, then drive back towards Kakum N.P. checking back into the Hans Cottage Botel. Evening session for Potto & Owls.

4th: Early morning at Aboabo on the border of Kakum N.P. then drive to a remote village to visit the stake-out for Yellow-headed Picathartes.

5th: Longish drive North to Mole N.P. (about 9 hours) Check into the Mole hotel in the park.

6th, 7th & 8th: Three full days in and around Mole N.P.

9th: Brief visit to Larabanga mosque nearby, then head North-east toward Bolgatanga. Late afternoon birding at the Tongo Hills.

10th: Morning at Tono Dam and surrounding farmland. Afternoon searching for Egyptian Plover – successfully !

11th: Early am checking out a local site supposedly for more Egyptian Plovers without success... Long drive back south to Kumasi. (10+ hours).

12th: Morning visit to Bobiri Butterfly Reserve. Afternoon at the ‘farm bush’ near to Atewa.

13th: Morning in forest near Atewa. After lunch, transfer to the airport for flight back to the UK via Amsterdam on the morning of 14th.

Birds.

Ghana has a reputation for producing a substantial selection of forest and savannah species, including some rare and difficult to find. We found a total of 425 species including such gems as Egyptian Plover, Standard-winged Nightjar, Hartlaub’s Duck, Blue-headed & Black Bee-eaters, White-spotted Flufftail, African Piculet, African Finfoot, Long-tailed Hawk & Fraser’s Eagle Owl. A fabulous birding destination !

Mammals.

Apart from Jon’s visit, few people seem to have made much effort to look for mammals according to Robert. We recorded 35 species plus several additional unidentified bats and mice.

Olive Baboon - Seen on 5 days, most commonly around Mole N.P.

Olive Colobus - 10+ from the canopy walkway at Kakum N.P. on the evening of 29th.

Geoffroy’s Pied Colobus - 4 seen from the canopy walkway at Kakum N.P. on the evening of 29th.

Lowe’s Monkey - 4+ on the evening of 29th from the Kakum canopy walkway.

Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey - c 50 on the 29th from the canopy walkway. Most of the monkeys were terrified by the sudden arrival of a pair of Cassin’s Hawk-Eagles – causing them to throw themselves out of the canopy – one of the most impressive sights of the trip !

Callithrix Monkey - 4 seen at Shai Hills on the first day were surprisingly the only ones we encountered.

Patas Monkey - Seen on 3 days at Mole N.P. with a maximum of 6 on the 7th Feb.

Straw-coloured Fruit-Bat - 1 photographed during a night walk at Ankasa on the 31st.

Mauritian Tomb Bat - 200+ seen at the bat cave in the Shai Hills reserve.

Yellow-winged Bat - Seen and photographed on two days at Mole N.P. around small pools.



Yellow-winged Bat

Hammer-headed Fruit Bat - seen twice at Ankasa on night walks including a female photographed on the 31st...

Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat - 5 roosting in the trees above our table at lunchtime in Tamale on the 11th Feb gave great views.... We hadn't seen them on our visit to the same place on the 5th !

Scrub Hare - One on the 6th and one on the 8th were our only encounters.

Striped Ground Squirrel - 2 in Mole N.P on the 8th.

Green Bush Squirrel - Seen on three days totalling 5 individuals.

Gambian Sun Squirrel - Two on the 29th at Kakum N.P.

Red-legged Sun Squirrel - One at Kakum on the 29th and one seen well at dusk on the 3rd.

Slender-tailed Squirrel - 2 on the 31st and one on the 3rd.

Forest (African) Giant Squirrel - 1+ at Ankasa on the 2nd.

Fire-footed Rope Squirrel - The group saw a total of 7 different individuals, mostly very briefly. The best views were of 2 individuals at Atewa on the 13th.

Kintampo Rope Squirrel - 2 on the 7th gave prolonged views.

Lord Derby's Anomalure - One on the 1st and one on the 2nd both at Ankasa gave great views.

Rusty-spotted Genet - One at dusk in Mole N.P on the 8th gave excellent views.

African Palm Civet - One gave prolonged views in the spotlight at Ankasa on the 2nd.

Slender Mongoose - One seen briefly by two of the group and Robert on the 10th.

Common Cusimanse - Seen by Robert and me in Ankasa on the 2nd. I had good views of one individual, Robert at the front saw at least three.

Senegal Gelago - One on the airstrip at Mole after dark on the 7th was our only sighting.

Potto - 3 individuals seen (29th, 31st and 2nd) the best and most prolonged being at Ankasa on the 2nd.

African Savannah Elephant - Seen every day in Mole N.P.

Warthog - Seen on 4 days with a maximum of 20+ on the 7th .

Bushbuck - Seen daily at Mole N.P.

Kob - Common at Mole N.P.

Waterbuck - About 20 seen in total; all at Mole N.P.

Roan - 10 seen on the 6th and a fine male on the 8th .

Red-flanked Duiker - 1 very smartly spotted by our park guide at Mole on the 8th .

Western Tree Hyrax - heard only at Ankasa.

Meadow Rat sp. – *Myomys* sp. - 1 seen well on the 12th has been narrowed down to one of two species, but not further !



Lord Derby's Anomalure.

