

For our 2024 year-end vacation, we came back to Senegal as we didn't have many days available and because there are direct and cheap flights between Marseille where we leave and Dakar, which makes it very convenient to visit the country. This was primarily a birding trip but there were also a couple of key mammals that we missed during our first trip last year and that I really wanted to see like the Pale Fox and Giant Eland. We used a French speaking guide known among birders and who organized for us a very nice tour last year around Casamance, Niokolo Koba National Park and Northern Senegal. His name is Abdou Lo (aka Carlos, email: carlostoubacouta@yahoo.fr) and you can read our first wildlife trip experience in Senegal in the previous report I posted last year on Jon Hall's MammalWatching website.

For this year and since we wanted to focus on a few specific birds and mammals, we had a limited number of stops throughout our itinerary. We started first with Northern Senegal: Saint-Louis, Richard Toll and Podor. Then we drove south towards Kaolack and the Sine Saloum Delta and we finished the trip visiting the Fathala private reserve close to the Gambian boarder.

Abdou is really a great guide and with his driver Modou we also had last year, he was able to find us all of our target bird species (except one 😊) but also the few other mammals we really wanted to see. I highly recommend Abdou for any nature trip in Senegal due to his deep knowledge of all the interesting areas in the country, his good humor and dedication with long hours spent on the field seeking for the wildlife (both during the day but also at night).

Below is a short report of the various places we visited with a focus on mammals only.

Northern Senegal

We started the trip with Saint-Louis and since we stayed at Ranch de Bango, we took this opportunity to visit their small fenced private reserve. The reserve itself is very small and thus not really wild and interesting but they have **red-front gazelles** and **Scimitar oryxes** that belong to a breed program before releasing them in other parts of Senegal. They also have **roan antelopes**, **warthogs**, **waterbucks** and a couple of **Western African buffaloes**. We also saw several dens of pale foxes in the reserve. We then visited a place near Saint-Louis called Les Trois Marigots, famous for birding, where we observed several **patas monkeys** and a few **striped ground squirrels**.

After Saint-Louis, we drove to the Northern tip of the country at Richard Toll and Podor where we could spend nights for night drives in both locations. During such night drives we could observe several **common genets**. They seem to be in good numbers in the area. In Podor, we could observe two **pale foxes** with one being quite tame and who stayed close to the road long enough for pictures. On the other hand, we did not see any fox at the usual place described in past reports along the abandoned airstrip at Richard Toll. However, we saw there a couple of **African savanna hares** and unexpectedly a nice **African wildcat**. Given its shape and fur color, it wasn't for sure a domestic cat.

Sine Saloum Delta

Another good place for birding. We stayed at the very nice Keur Saloum hotel. They have a large and nice garden with many trees and a small beach area with a dock for boat tours in the Delta. We observed **green monkeys** late afternoon in their garden as well as a few **striped ground squirrels** and one **Gambian sun squirrel**. In the main lobby and restaurant area, they have several **Gambian epaulette fruit bats** roosting for the day under the tallest roof. We also had a glimpse of a Marsh mongoose running along the beach when we walked on the dock to take the boat tours we booked. The boat tours are nice, not only for birding, but also for the mangrove habitat and we were lucky enough to see very well two other **Marsh mongooses** who were hunting crabs. We also observed more **green monkeys** but no Guinean baboons that can be seen sometimes in this area.

Fathala reserve

We already stayed in this private reserve last year but for one night only. This reserve is large: 6000 hectares with a wealthy and pristine vegetation, and during the game drives organized there, you really feel like in wild nature. Of course, this reserve is fenced but it contains a rich wildlife with many local birds and mammal species, and this is not really different to some of the other fenced parks we could visit in other parts of Africa. This reserve is also one of the best places in Western Africa to see **Giant Eland** (besides Niokolo Koba of course but your chances to see them there is close to zero). We missed the Elands last year though so that is why we wanted to come back in Fathala and this time we spend 3 nights to maximize our chances. As a matter of fact, we saw this year the giant Elands very well during every game drive we took so 1 day/1night would have actually been enough 😊. We observed several groups with calves indicating that their breeding program is going well and there are planning to release many animals in the near future to Niokolo Koba. At the main lodge surrounding a small water hole, we could already observe many mammals like both **green** and **Patras monkeys**, a few **Gambian sun squirrels**, **warthogs**, **waterbucks** and **roan antelopes**. We could even observe a few **Western red colobus** in the large trees near the water hole and one **Giant Eland** who came to drink one day. During the game drives, we observed several antelope species in good numbers: **Giant Eland**, **Roan antelope** and **waterbuck** for the local species but also some

translocated species from South Africa like Burchell's zebras and a few giraffes. We could also observe many **warthogs**, **Western red colobus** that showed up in good numbers this year, a group of **Western African buffaloes** and their single male white rhino who also came from South Africa. We finally had a nice and unexpected observation of a large troop of **Gambian mongooses** running away in front of our vehicle one day.

To conclude on this short birding trip to Senegal, we were still able to observe 19 different species of mammals, including Pale Foxes I really wanted to see so we are happy about this trip.

Mammals with photos or well seen (lifers in green)				
Species	Espèces	Latin Name	Where seen	Pic
Patas monkey	Patas	Erythrocebus patas	Several seen near Saint-Louis and the Fathala reserve	X
Green monkey	Vervet vert	Chlorocebus sabaeus	Commonly observed in various places	X
Western red colobus	Colobe bai	Procolobus badius	Quite many observed in Fathala reserve	X
Striped ground squirrel	Écureuil fousseur	Xerus erythropus	A few observed near Saint-Louis and Fathala reserve	X
Gambian sun squirrel	Héliosciure de Gambie	Heliosciurus gambianus	3 observed in Fathala reserve	X
African savanna hare	Lièvre de savane	Lepus microtis	Most likely this species observed in Richard Toll at night	X
Gambian epaulette fruit bat	Épomophore de Gambie	Epomophorus gambianus	A group with babies observed in their roost place in our hotel in Sine Saloum	X
(Common or Hausa) genet	Genette commune	Genetta genetta	Several observed at night in Richard Toll and Podor. Most likely common genet species	X
Marsh mongoose	Mangouste des marais	Atilax paludinosus	2 observed very well during one boat tour in the Sine Saloum delta and another one quickly observed at our hotel.	X
Gambian mongoose	Mangouste de Gambie	Mungos gambianus	One nice and unexpected observation of a large group running in front of our car in Fathala reserve	X
Pale fox	Renard pâle	Vulpes pallida	Finally! Two observed during our night drive near Podor but none in the usual place near the Richard Toll airstrip	X
African wildcat	Chat sauvage africain	Felis lybica	Nice observation of one individual during our night drive near the Richard Toll airstrip	X
Common warthog	Phacochère commun	Phacochoerus africanus	Commonly observed throughout Senegal	X
Western African buffalo	Buffle d'Afrique de l'Ouest	Syncerus c. brachyceros	One group observed in Fathala reserve – native in Senegal	X
Red-fronted Gazelle	Gazelle à front roux	Eudorcas rufifrons	Several observed in the small Ranch de Bango private reserve. Breeding program here before their release somewhere else in Senegal	X
Roan antelope	Antilope rouanne	Hippotragus equinus	Nice groups observed well in Fathala reserve	X
Scimitar oryx	Oryx algazelle	Oryx dammah	Several observed in the small Ranch de Bango private reserve. Breeding program here before their release somewhere else in Senegal	X
Defassa Waterbuck	Cobe defassa	Kobus ellipsiprymnus	Common in Fathala reserve	X
Giant eland	Éland de Derby	Taurotragus derbianus	This year, several groups with calves observed very well in Fathala reserve. This looks like a successful breeding program there before their release in PNNK	X
		Total Species Recorded = 19		
Below some other species that I don't count given the observation circumstances				
White rhino	Rhinocéros blanc	Ceratotherium simum	1 male observed in Fathala reserve but translocated from South Africa	X
Giraffe	Girafe d'Afrique du Sud	Giraffa c. giraffa	Several observed in Fathala reserve and Ranch de Bango but translocated from South Africa	X
Burchell's zebra	Zèbre de Burchell	Equus quagga burchellii	Several observed in Fathala reserve and Ranch de Bango but translocated from South Africa	X

I'm adding to this report pictures of some of the species we observed during that trip, especially those new to me.



Western red colobus



Green monkey



Striped ground squirrel



Gambian sun squirrel



Patas monkey



Marsh mongoose



Gambian epauletted fruit bat



Pale Fox



Gambian mongoose



Common genet



African wildcat



Red-fronted gazelle



Defassa Waterbuck



Roan antelope



Scimitar oryx



Western African buffalo



Giant Eland