ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Ethiopia

Endemics I

12th January to 28th January 2023 (17 days)

Lalibela Historical Extension I

28th January to 31st January 2023 (4 days)



Ruspoli's Turaco by David Hoddinott

Simply put, Ethiopia is hands-down one of Africa's most productive and rewarding birding destinations! The plethora of endemic birds to be found here, many of which are very tame and confiding, is further complimented by a rich assemblage of forest and savannah species, while the influx of Palaearctic migrants at the time of this tour all combine to make for a truly bird-filled adventure! To boot, you'll be exposed to the kaleidoscope of cultures that grace this ancient land, all of these factors combining to ensure a fascinating experience of not just the country's birds, but also its amazing mammals – including Ethiopian Wolf and troops of the incredible Gelada. The spectacular landscapes and scenery, fascinating history, good road infrastructure, diverse cultures

and astonishing wildlife make Ethiopia an essential expedition for both hard-core and casual birders alike, and for many of our guides this remains one of their top destinations on the African continent!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

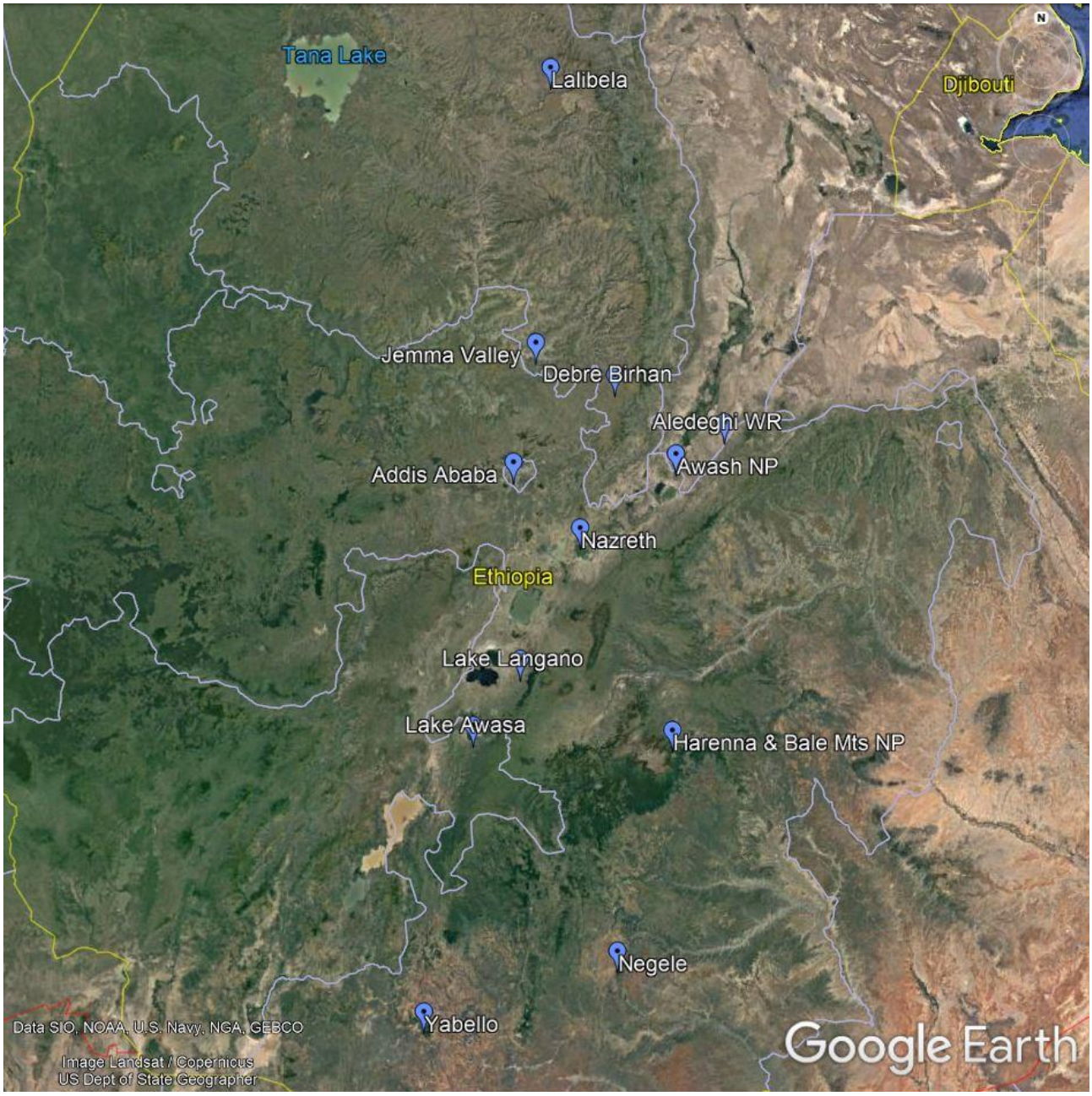
THE ETHIOPIA ENDEMICS ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Addis Ababa**
Day 2	**Addis Ababa to Lake Langano**
Day 3	**Lake Langano area**
Day 4	**Lake Langano to Harenna Forest**
Day 5	**Bale Mountain National Park**
Day 6	**Harenna Forest to Negele**
Day 7	**Negele area**
Day 8	**Negele to Yabello**
Day 9	**Yabello area**
Day 10	**Yabello to Lake Awassa**
Day 11	**Lake Awassa to Lake Ziway, via Lakes Shalla and Abijatta**
Day 12	**Lake Ziway to Nazreth**
Day 13	**Nazreth to Awash National Park**
Day 14	**Awash National Park**
Day 15	**Awash National Park to Aledeghi Wildlife Reserve**
Day 16	**Aledeghi Wildlife Reserve to Debre Bihran via Melka Gebdu & Gemasa Gedel**
Day 17	**Debre Birhan to Addis Ababa via the Jemma Valley and depart**

LALIBELA HISTORICAL EXTENSION

Day 1	**Arrival in Addis Ababa**
Day 2	**Addis Ababa to Lalibela**
Day 3	**Excursion to Asheton Mariam**
Day 4	**Lalibela to Addis Ababa**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



White-collared Pigeon by Greg de Klerk

Day 1: Arrival in Addis Ababa. Today is essentially an arrival day. For those who arrive during the day, it is possible to enjoy some birding within city parks. Noteworthy species that may be seen this include White-backed Black Tit, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Brown-rumped Seedeater, Tacazze Sunbird, White-collared Pigeon, Wattled Ibis and a host of raptors overhead, numbering both Egyptian and Hooded Vultures.

Day 2: Addis Ababa to Lake Langano. Our Ethiopian adventure commences with an early departure from Addis Ababa this morning, as we head south into the Great Rift Valley. Our first birding stop is at Lake Chelekcheka, an excellent site for migrant ducks and waders. Regular species encountered here include Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Garganey, Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck, Black-tailed Godwit and Temminck's Stint. Sorting through the rafts of ducks and other migrants can be very challenging due to the distraction caused by the sheer number of species moving through the scrubby vegetation near the lake edge! Common Crane often roost in staggering numbers on the far side of the water, and we may see them flying off to forage in huge, noisy flocks.

The well-wooded rim of the deep Lake Hora will be our second stop. The woodlands around the lake also teem with birds and again it may prove difficult to keep up with the seemingly endless flow of lifers! Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Black-billed Barbet, Common Redstart, Eurasian Blackcap, Red-throated Wryneck, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Rüppell's Robin-Chat, Western Black-headed Batis, Beautiful Sunbird, Rüppell's Weaver and a diverse variety of waterbirds, especially deep water diving ducks, can be seen here. Thereafter, the steep-sided Lake Bishoftu offers superb birding. Maccoa and Ferruginous Ducks, Southern Pochard, Singing Cisticola, gorgeous Tacazze Sunbird, Mocking Cliff Chat, Abyssinian Wheatear, Little Rock Thrush and flocks of Black-winged Lovebird are just some of our targets here!



Blue-breasted Bee-eater by Greg de Klerk

Further en route to Lake Langano, we will then visit Koka Dam and Lake Ziway, both classified as Important Bird Areas, supporting vast numbers of both resident and migrant waterbirds. Species we will search for include the spectacular Black Crowned Crane, Pink-backed Pelican, African Darter, Intermediate Egret, Goliath Heron, Hamerkop, Yellow-billed and Saddle-billed Storks, Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese, Knob-billed Duck, the elegant African Pygmy Goose, African Fish Eagle,

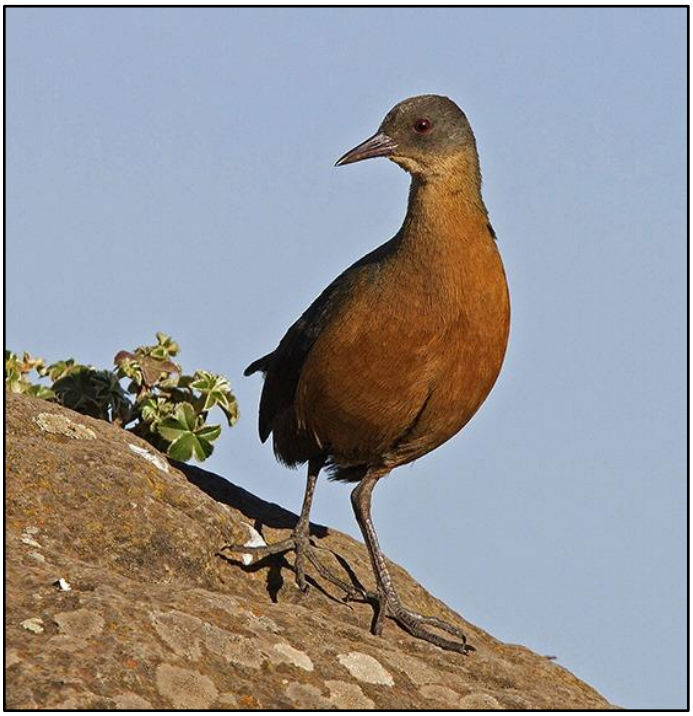


Spot-breasted Lapwing by Greg de Klerk

Western Marsh Harrier, African and Lesser Jacanas, Common Snipe, Senegal Thick-knee, Sedge Warbler, Spur-winged Lapwing, Gull-billed Tern, and Pied and Malachite Kingfishers. Strolling along the lakeshore at Lake Ziway will allow us excellent views of confiding Great White Pelican and the huge Marabou Stork, while dazzling Northern Carmine Bee-eater, migratory White and Western Yellow Wagtails (including some of the striking *feldeggi* race) and the less colourful Ethiopian Cisticola can be seen around the lake edge. This promises to be an action-packed day, after which we will check into comfortable lodge overlooking Lake Langano, with views of the 4,000m (13,200ft) Arsi Mountains in the background.

Day 3: Lake Langano area. Birding in the Langano area is especially good, and we will visit some beautiful fig forest and associated woodlands that teem with birds. Here we will look for Hemprich's and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Lemon Dove, Narina Trogon, Lesser and Scaly-throated Honeyguides, Green Malkoha, African Hill Babbler, Double-toothed Barbet, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Thick-billed Weaver, Crested and Scaly Francolins, endemic Yellow-fronted Parrot, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Green Twinspot, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike and Red-headed Weaver. Pods of lazing Common Hippopotamuses are sometimes seen in deeper water and mammoth Goliath Herons stalk the shallows. We will also visit nearby Lake Abijata, home to thousands of Lesser and Greater Flamingos.

Day 4: Lake Langano to Harenna Forest. Leaving the Rift Valley behind, we embark on the lengthy drive to the Harenna Forest in the Bale Mountain National Park. Roadside stops en route could produce several endemics and other species, including White-collared Pigeon, Moorland Chat, Groundscraper Thrush (of the distinctive, endemic race *simensis*), Blanford's Lark, Blue-winged Goose and the highly sought-after Spot-breasted Lapwing. At the park headquarters in Dinsho we may find the colourful Chestnut-naped Francolin, Abyssinian Owl, the secretive Abyssinian Ground Thrush, vocal Abyssinian Catbird and the endemic White-backed Black Tit. Mammals that we may encounter include Mountain Nyala, now entirely restricted to the Bale Mountain massif, Menelik's



Rouget's Rail by Adam Riley

Bushbuck and Warthog, unusual at this high altitude.



Ethiopian Wolves by Rich Lindie

Leaving Dinsho on our ascent to the Bale Mountain National Park, we enter a Tid or Juniper forest zone, and here we will search for African Goshawk, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, White-cheeked Turaco, the localized Abyssinian Woodpecker, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, African Hill Babbler, Montane White-eye and Yellow-bellied Waxbill. By the time we reach the Sanetti Plateau it will probably be fairly late in the day, particularly if we are fortunate enough to find and observe new species such as Moorland Francolin, Wattled Crane or even the highly sought-after Ethiopian Wolf. The day culminates in our arrival at our accommodation for the next two nights, Bale Mountain Lodge, a boutique forest lodge set within a stunning cloud forest at an elevation of 2,380masl.

Day 5: Bale Mountain National Park. This will be a day of great contrasts and amazing scenery and birding. We will depart early and ascend the Bale Mountain massif onto the Sanetti Plateau, which lies between 3,800m and 4,377m (12,540 and 14,444ft) above sea level.

Upon reaching this unique plateau, we will be driving on Africa's highest road - passing close to the summit of Ethiopia's second highest mountain. This habitat is termed 'Afro-alpine moorland' and is characterised by Giant Lobelias that tower like monolithic giants over the rich tussock grasslands and extensive cushions of yellow Everlasting flowers. This site is an Important Bird Area of immense significance, supporting seven globally threatened species and nearly all of Ethiopia's highland biome species. The plateau holds the only Afrotropical breeding populations of Ruddy Shelduck, Golden Eagle and Red-billed Chough. We will also search for Wattled Ibis, Chestnut-naped and Moorland Francolins, Rouget's Rail (particularly common and confiding here), Blue-winged Goose, Spot-breasted Lapwing, African Snipe, Wattled Crane, Thekla's Lark, Abyssinian Longclaw, Red-breasted Wheatear, Moorland Chat and flocks of endemic Ethiopian Siskins.



Blue-winged Goose by Rich Lindie

These grasslands are estimated to support an incredible biomass of 4,000kg (8,800lb) of rodents per hectare. This obviously attracts an array of raptors and



Abyssinian Ground Thrush by Rich Lindie

we should see Augur and Mountain Buzzards and, if we are lucky, the rare Golden Eagle. They share this abundant food source with the plateau's most celebrated resident, the Ethiopian or Simien Wolf, crowned with the unenviable title of "the world's rarest canid". Watching these vibrantly coloured animals, most closely related to the Grey Wolf exhibiting their hunting prowess whilst pouncing on Giant Mole Rats (another endemic to the Sanetti Plateau) is surely among Africa's greatest wildlife experiences. We should enjoy excellent photographic opportunities in this unique montane habitat.

This afternoon, we will return to our lodge and enjoy an opportunity to bird a part of the vast Harenna forest, the largest intact forest block in Ethiopia, and the largest protected Afro-alpine forest on the continent. It still supports populations of Lion, and the only surviving forest-dwelling African Wild Dogs. Although it's unlikely that we will see either of these species, the descent through this breathtakingly beautiful, moss-draped forest is inspirational. Here we will search for the uncommon Ayres's Hawk Eagle, African Olive Pigeon, Lemon and Tambourine Doves, African Emerald Cuckoo, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Narina Trogon, Brown Parisoma (represented by a subspecies endemic to this National Park), Abyssinian Crimsonwing, African Citril and Yellow-crowned Canary. Later in the day, we head back to Goba for the night.

Day 6: Harenna Forest to Negele. We have a long drive ahead of us today, and will make a relatively early start to our journey. Leaving Harenna Forest we will gradually lose altitude en route to Negele, a town in the Guji Zone of the Oromia Region. We will exit the forest zone and enter progressively drier thorn savanna in this remote, southern sector of Ethiopia. Along the dusty drive, we can expect to start adding a number of new species to our burgeoning list including Red-and-yellow Barbet, Golden-breasted, Shelley's and Superb Starlings, Northern Red-billed and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills and Lilac-breasted Roller.



Golden-breasted Starling by Rich Lindie

Finally, we will reach a dry wadi on the Genale River, home to Ethiopia's most sought-after endemic, Ruspoli's Turaco. The bird is named after an Italian Prince, its hapless discoverer, who was killed by an elephant soon after collecting the type specimen in the 1890s. It took another 50 years before explorers saw the turaco again, and only in the 1970s was anything



Vulturine Guineafowl by Marius Coetzee

revealed about this bird. We will search fruiting fig trees along the wadi and should enjoy excellent views of this very unusual and beautiful turaco. We will arrive in Negele in the early evening and check into our basic hotel.

Day 7: Negele area. East of Negele lies a unique open grassland, the Liben Plains, to which the little known Archer's Lark is restricted. This species belongs to the unusual genus *Heteromirafra*, which also includes South Africa's Rudd's Lark, and is considered one of the most endangered birds on Earth. We will walk through these plains in search of this special bird, which we hope to watch performing its parachute display flight. We should also find small parties of hovering Lesser Kestrel, giant Kori Bustard (the world's heaviest flying bird), White-bellied Bustard, Temminck's Courser, Black-winged Lapwing, the range restricted Somali Short-toed Lark, Plain-backed Pipit and Pectoral-patch Cisticola. If we're very lucky, we may see coveys of Coqui Francolin or flush a migratory Corn Crake.

Further east of Negele we will bird the increasingly dry woodland and thorn savanna towards the Somali border. This area supports a recently found population of the tricky endemic Salvadori's Seedeater, scarce Golden Pipit, elusive Red-naped Bushshrike, White-winged Black Tit, Pringle's Puffback, Three-streaked Tchagra, Foxy Lark, Somali Crombec, Taita Fiscal, Red-fronted Barbet, garish Golden-breasted Starling, attractive flocks of White-crowned Starlings, Somali Crow, African Silverbill, Shelley's Sparrow and Somali Bunting. Large troops of Olive Baboon may also be encountered here and we should see Guenther's Dik-dik and possibly Gerenuk.

Day 8: Negele to Yabello. Today's drive along another long and seldom-travelled road takes us near to the Kenya border and finally to the Yabello region, home to two of Ethiopia's most sought-after endemic birds, both listed as globally threatened: the enigmatic Stresemann's Bushcrow and glistening White-tailed Swallow. This area of Acacia savanna is characterised by giant red termite mounds (some towering 5m above the plains!) and both these birds seem to be associated in some way with these marvels of natural architecture. The social Bushcrow (or *Zavattariornis*) was only discovered in 1938 and its affinities have yet to be established with certainty. Although it appears starling-like, it is presumed to be most closely related to Crows.



Stresemann's Bushcrow by Rich Lindie

Several birding stops will break the journey, the most notable being a stop at the Dawa River in



Red-naped Bushshrike by David Hoddinott

search of Juba Weaver, White-winged Collared Dove and Black-bellied Sunbird. Other noteworthy birds we may encounter en route to Yabello include Somali Courser, Magpie Starling, Black-throated and D'Arnaud's Barbets, Pygmy Batis, Acacia Tit, Dodson's Bulbul, Red-fronted Warbler, Purple Grenadier, Black-capped Social Weaver, Steel-blue Whydah and its host, Black-cheeked Waxbill.

Day 9: Yabello area. We have the whole day to bird the Yabello area and get better acquainted with Stresemann's Bushcrow and White-tailed Swallow. Other birds we will be looking for are Gabar Goshawk, the shrike-sized African Pygmy Falcon, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, glamorous flocks of Vulturine Guineafowl, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Mottled Swift, Tree Pipit, the localised Bare-eyed Thrush, ventriloquial Spotted Palm Thrush, African Grey Flycatcher, Pale Prinia, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Banded Parisoma, Hunter's and Shining Sunbirds, Superb and Wattled Starlings, Chestnut Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Green-winged Pytilia, White-bellied Canary and White-winged Widowbird.

A night drive in this exciting area could produce Donaldson-Smith's and Slender-tailed Nightjars, Greyish Eagle-Owl, Northern White-faced Owl and Three-banded Courser. Nocturnal mammal sightings have included Striped and Spotted Hyenas, Serval, African Wild Cat and Ethiopian Genet.

Day 10: Yabello to Lake Awassa. Following breakfast, we will depart Yabello and make our way back north towards Addis Ababa on what is, essentially, a travel day. In the late afternoon we will reach our comfortable hotel, on the shores of Lake Awassa.

Day 11: Lake Awassa to Lake Ziway, via Lakes Shalla and Abijatta. Our pre-breakfast birding stroll should yield some special birds around our well-wooded hotel grounds. Amongst our targets we hope to see are African Spotted Creeper, Little Weaver, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Double-toothed Barbet, Woodland Kingfisher, huge Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, the attractive Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Western Black-headed Batis, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Mourning Collared Dove, Grey-backed Fiscal, Northern Puffback and Bronze Mannikin. Reedbeds in the vicinity support Greater Painted-snipe, Black Crake, African Swamphen, Blue-headed Coucal, Red-faced Cisticola, Lesser Swamp Warbler and Common Waxbill. The hotel grounds also support families of Grivet Monkey, though it is the regal Guereza (Black-and-white Colobus) that will certainly steal our attention as they leap through the



Black-winged Lovebird by Adam Riley

trees, their shaggy pelts and long tails trailing behind.



Sombre Rock Chat by Clayton Burne

After breakfast, we may then visit the remarkable Lake Awassa fish market. This large lake is particularly rich in fish, and the fishermen gut their catch and discard the waste around the market. This, in turn, attracts large numbers of grotesque Marabou Stork and other birds. Photographic opportunities are unrivalled. We should also see Great White Pelican, White-breasted and Reed Cormorants, Hamerkop, African Sacred Ibis, Black-headed, Grey-hooded and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and sometimes the massively-equipped Thick-billed Raven squabbling over the fish remains.

Further north, the three neighbouring water bodies of Lakes Shalla, Abijatta and Langano could not be more different from each other. Having already visited the medium-depth reddish-brown Lake Langano, today we will pay a visit to the other two - the shallow and brackish Abijatta, and the extremely deep, blue Shalla (once a volcanic crater and now home to several bubbling sulphuric hot springs).

We will spend part of today exploring these lake shores and their surrounding woodlands and forests, where Clapperton's Francolin, Little Rock Thrush, African Thrush, Buff-bellied Warbler, Red-faced Crombec, Beautiful Sunbird, Rüppell's Starling, Red-billed Oxpecker, Red-billed Firefinch, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Black-winged Lovebird, Abyssinian Wheatear, White-winged Black Tit, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Greyish Eagle-Owl, Northern White-faced Owl, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Bearded Woodpecker and Masked Shrike occur in dry Acacia woodland throughout the area, while Black-billed, Banded and Double-toothed Barbets, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, White-rumped Babbler and Ethiopian Boubou are resident in well-forested areas.



Eastern Plantain-eater by Greg de Klerk

At Lake Abijatta, in particular, we hope to find flocks of Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Northern Shoveler, Southern Pochard, Cape Teal, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Eastern Imperial and Long-crested Eagles, Grey Kestrel, Little Ringed, Common Ringed, Kittlitz's and occasionally Caspian Plovers, many species of Palaearctic waders, Pallas's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (amongst several other species of gulls and terns), Collared Pratincole, Little Bee-eater, family groups of the wonderful Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Sand Martin and African Pipit. Mammals we may see here include Grant's Gazelle, Oribi and Spotted Hyena. In the late afternoon we will check into a hotel near Lake Ziway.



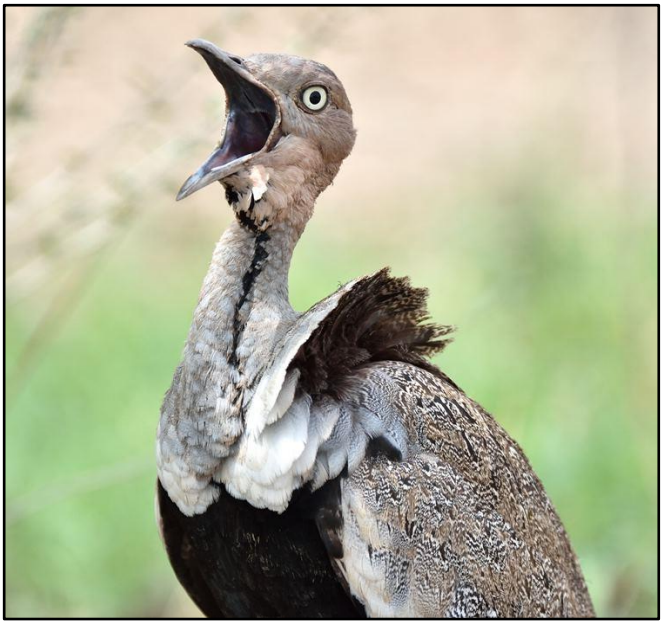
Soemmerring's Gazelle by Clayton Burne

Day 12: Lake Ziway to Nazreth. For one final occasion, we will spend our morning in the mighty Rift Valley south of Addis, where a second visit to some of the aforementioned lakes will hopefully yield some new species. The remainder of the day will be spent travelling to Nazreth, also known as Adama.

Day 13: Nazreth to Awash National Park. Today we drop down the immense western wall of the Great Rift Valley and travel across the wild Afar tribal territories. We will make a concerted effort to find the very rare and localised Sombre Rock Chat, Striolated Bunting and Blackstart near Lake Beseka, while we also have a decent chance of seeing Hamadryas Baboon sitting atop the edge of escarpments in large troops, soaking up the early morning sun.

We will then head to the magnificent Awash National Park where we will bird the Awash River and Kirayawa Gorge, exploring riverine forests, wetlands, Acacia woodlands, savannah grasslands, rocky hills, cliffs and escarpments. The park boasts a bird list of around 460 species and we will make an effort to find, amongst many others, Egyptian Vulture, Bateleur, Tawny and Greater Spotted Eagles, African Harrier-Hawk, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Scissor-tailed Kite, Shikra, Helmeted Guineafowl, Common Buttonquail, the nocturnal Three-banded Courser, mega Star-spotted Nightjar, Eastern Plantain-eater, the diminutive Pearl-spotted Owlet and giant Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Blue-naped Mousebird, gaudy Purple, Lilac-breasted and Abyssinian Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Eurasian Hoopoe, Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Greater Honeyguide, Wire-tailed Swallow, Red-winged, Gillett's and Singing Bush Larks, White-browed Scrub Robin, over-wintering Common Rock Thrush, localised Ashy Cisticola, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Grey Wren-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Grey-headed Batis, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Slate-colored Boubou, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Northern Puffback, Somali Fiscal, Nile Valley and Marico Sunbirds, Grey-headed, Orange-breasted and Rosy-patched Bushshrikes, Fan-tailed Raven and Red-billed Quelea. In the afternoon we will settle into our lodge overlooking Awash Falls.

Days 14: Awash National Park. Today we will spend a full day in this great national park. During our explorations we will be searching again for the aforementioned species as well as the dazzling Northern Carmine Bee-eater perched atop the backs of striding Kori Bustard, a seldom observed phenomenon. In fact, this is bustard kingdom deluxe and nowhere else on the planet can boast the chance of no less than six bustard species in one day (Kori, Arabian, Buff-crested, White-bellied, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's)!



Buff-crested Bustard by Clayton Burne

Mammals are also well represented and we may see Aardwolf, Leopard (unlikely), Beisa Oryx,



Arabian Bustard by Clayton Burne

Aardvark, Soemmering's Gazelle, elegant Gerenuk (the giraffe-proportioned relative of the widespread Impala), Abyssinian Hare, African Wild Cat, Black-backed Jackal, Spotted and Striped Hyenas, Greater and Lesser Kudus, Warthog and Salt's Dikdik.

Day 15: Awash National Park to Aledeghi Wildlife Reserve. Today we depart Awash National Park early and head further north to Aledeghi Plains. Here we will search for Somali Ostrich, Martial and Short-toed Snake Eagles, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, the rare Arabian Bustard (perhaps the best location on earth for this species), Black-headed Lapwing, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark. Occasionally highly nomadic species such as Pale Rock Finch or Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark move into the area as well. Depending on conditions, we may also see a number of mammals such as Golden Jackal, Beisa Oryx, Grevy's Zebra and Soemmering's Gazelle.

This land is inhabited by nomadic Afar tribesmen who we will see dressed in their fine white cotton tunics, bedecked with traditional jewellery, daggers and spears. The men sport a unique bushy hairstyle, while women and girls are also extravagantly attired and adorned. They adhere strictly to their ancestral ways of tending their camel and goat-herds and roaming throughout this inhospitable land.

As the day begins to heat up, we shall leave the Aledeghi Plains behind and head to our lodge. This increasingly arid landscape is a haven for dry country resident and migrant species. Watercourses and rocky outcrops harbour Eurasian Sparrowhawk, African Collared and European Turtle Doves, the range-restricted Yellow-breasted Barbet, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Common Nightingale, Blue Rock Thrush, Rufous-tailed and Black Scrub Robins, Boran Cisticola, skulking Upcher's and Menetries's Warblers, groups of Red-fronted Warbler, Ruppell's Starling, Black-crowned Tchagra, Southern Grey Shrike, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, and Chestnut-crowned and White-browed Sparrow-Weavers.

There is also the option to avail of the numerous hot springs around which the lodge was built. This evening, an optional night walk may reveal Greyish Eagle-Owl or Slender-tailed Nightjar.



Gelada Baboons by Greg de Klerk

Day 16: Aledeghi Wildlife Reserve to Debre Bihran via Melka Gebdu & Gemasa Gedel. Today we depart our lodge very early for the drive to north



Yellow-breasted Barbet by Rich Lindie

to Debre Birhan, skirting the majestic Ankober Escarpment for part of the way. Our route takes us through one of the least driven and most picturesque roads in the entire country, although major road improvements in this area are sure to change this. Our first stop of the day will be at the typically hot and dry Melka Gebdu track, where our primary focus will be on finding another scarce endemic, Yellow-throated Seedeater. This area is also excellent for Yellow-breasted Barbet, Bruce's Green Pigeon, Bare-faced Go-away-bird and a number of sunbirds. Red-billed Pytilia, a rare and tricky endemic has also been recorded here.

After reaching the escarpment, we may make the odd road side birding stop for Blue-winged Goose, Abyssinian Longclaw, Erlanger's Lark or Thick-billed Raven. This afternoon we shall reach Gemasa Gedel, an excellent site for the localised Ankober Serin, a rare and elusive Ethiopian endemic. Discovered only in 1976, they survive along a few kilometres of this wind blasted grand escarpment, as do Gelada Baboons, also known as Lion-headed Baboons. This densely-pelted, shaggy baboon is endemic to Ethiopia, and the males can often be seen flipping back their lips in a show of dominance. These animals have the closest vocal repertoire to humans of any mammal, pronouncing all consonants and four vowels! They forage on the grasslands above the escarpment and roost on ledges of inaccessible cliffs at night. Other possible species to be found her include Ethiopian Siskin, Streaky Seedeater, Moorland Chat, White-billed Starling, Bearded Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, the seldom recorded Somali Starling and Long-billed Pipit. In the afternoon we will then retire to our comfortable hotel in Debre Birhan.

Day 17: Debre Birhan to Addis Ababa via the Jemma Valley and depart. An early departure from Debre Birhan is essential in order to be at our chosen site when the endemic Harwood's Francolin is at its most vocal, thus providing our best opportunity for seeing this elusive species.

The Jemma River is one of the main tributaries of the Blue Nile and it cuts a 700m (2,300ft) deep gorge through the landscape. The habitat in the gorge is dominated by Acacia woodland, while the steep sides provide habitat for some excellent endemic birds. We will concentrate our search here for Rüppell's Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Augur Buzzard (dark morph birds are commonly seen here), Lanner and Peregrine Falcons, Erckel's Francolin, Nyanza Swift, Hemprich's Hornbill, Red-rumped Swallow, Abyssinian Wheatear, the endemic and localised Rüppell's Black Chat, endemic White-winged



Red-billed Pytilia by Clayton Burne

Cliff Chat and its more familiar cousin, Mocking Cliff Chat, endemic White-billed Starling, elusive Yellow-rumped Seedeater and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

We will have a picnic lunch at the river and bird the surrounding woodlands for Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Klaas's Cuckoo, Black-billed Barbet, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Foxy and Singing Cisticolas, African Paradise Flycatcher, Masked, Woodchat and Isabelline Shrikes, Swainson's Sparrow, Bush Petronia, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Red-collared Widowbird, Black-winged Red and Yellow Bishops, and both Crimson-rumped and Abyssinian Waxbills. With a good dose of luck, we may stumble upon the quiet and inconspicuous Red-billed Pytilia, one of the trickier endemics that is regularly found in the Jemma Valley. In the mid-afternoon, we will depart for the drive back to Addis Ababa.

This evening we will enjoy a farewell dinner, and those staying on for the Lalibela Extension will overnight in Addis, while those not participating in the Lalibela Extension will depart on their international flights home.

Lalibela Historical Extension



St. George's Chapel by Steve Davis

To do full justice to the cultural and historical aspects of this tour, we offer a short yet very worthwhile extension to the northern town of Lalibela, where we explore the unique 12th century monolithic churches, hewn out of solid rock and now appropriately considered one of the wonders of the world. These structures must be seen to be believed, and we encourage you to take advantage of this great opportunity to witness and investigate these marvels of human effort and ingenuity!

Day 1: Arrival in Addis Ababa. We will arrive in Addis Ababa in the late afternoon. Here we will overnight before our flight to Lalibela the following day, where our Historical Extension will begin in earnest.

Day 2: Addis Ababa to Lalibela. This morning we catch a flight to the historical village of Lalibela. At the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries, King Lalibela of the Zaghwe dynasty excavated a series of rock hewn churches, the New Jerusalem as he called it, now rightly acknowledged as one of the wonders of the world. There are eleven churches in this town named after him with others in the surrounding countryside, all of which are currently still in use. It is estimated that the churches took 25 years to construct, using an enormous labour force.



Mocking Cliff Chat by Clayton Burne



Old Nakuto Leab manuscript by Steve Davis

After checking into our accommodations we will start our tour of the first group of churches, returning to the hotel for lunch and then continuing our exploration of these unique and breath-taking constructions in the afternoon. Whilst our main focus here will certainly be the churches and their associated history, we will also find ourselves constantly distracted by the numerous White-collared Pigeons, White-winged Cliff Chats and White-billed Starlings that inhabit the area. Our comfortable hotel frequently arranges cultural music and dancing during dinner.

Day 3: Excursion to Asheton Mariam. After breakfast we set off on mules or on foot for the steep climb up to the church of Ashetun Mariam. Hewn out of the rock atop a 4,000m (13,200ft) high ridge to the east of Lalibela village, this church affords spectacular views of the surrounding rugged countryside. The well-vegetated slopes support a healthy avifauna typical of northern Ethiopia, and we may find Erckel's Francolin, the handsome Augur Buzzard, Egyptian Vulture, White-fronted Black Chat, Abyssinian Catbird, Little Rock Thrush, Thick-billed Raven and Yellow-bellied Waxbill. The Lalibela area also supports numerous endemics, with our tour in 2009 recording thirteen Ethiopian endemics here in a single day, including the stunning White-backed Black Tit.

In the afternoon we will visit the picturesque cave church of Neakuto Leab and spend some time birding in the area. The waterfall behind which the church is situated attracts large numbers of birds in the late afternoon and we hope to find Hemprich's Hornbill, the scarce endemic Banded Barbet, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe and large flocks of White-billed Starlings, amongst others.



Abyssinian Catbird by Clayton Burne

Day 4: Lalibela to Addis Ababa. After some final exploration of the Lalibela area, we will fly back to Addis Ababa where we may have time to explore some of the historical sites and museums in the city before departing.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to dinner on day 17, and from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 4 of the extension;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings during the tour, including the three nights of the extension for those doing the extension;
- All ground transportation;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

This excludes:

- **ANY** flights, (see above);
- Visa fees;
- Alcoholic beverages; and
- Special gratuities, telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leaders. Therefore, if you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Please Note:

- It can be very hot in some areas, especially in the extreme south, whilst the highland areas can get cold especially at night. Light rain may be experienced in the Bale Mountains.
- On our visits to the Bale Mountains ascend to 4,200m (13,780ft) above sea level, but very little walking is done at this altitude.

- There are several long, all day drives on this Ethiopia trip, but we will take regular rest stops and birding stops to break the long journeys. Although lengthy, these drives are scenic and full of interesting waypoints!
- Road conditions in Ethiopia are highly variable and dirt roads can be quite bumpy and very dusty, something that is simply not avoidable. It is advisable to bring a handkerchief/buff that can be tied around your face to cover your nose and mouth. Although an extreme case scenario, persons with back troubles should probably bring back-braces to ensure comfort on bumpy roads.
- Due to variable security issues, the extent to which we can travel east of Negele is not always known. We will assess the security situation at the time and plan accordingly.
- Accommodation is generally comfortable at most locations in and around the greater Rift Valley, but is very basic in the south (Negele and Yabello).
- The food in Ethiopia is quite basic and mostly consists of local cuisine only. We will be able to enjoy western cuisine at some hotels. We will have a number of 'bush breakfasts and lunches' on the side of the road whilst in good birding areas. This will occur mainly in the remote south and north of the country and will be prepared by our able drivers.
- Special dietary requirements (other than vegetarians) are for all intents and purposes impossible to cater for in Ethiopia.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include any airfares. Day 1 of the Main tour is set aside as an arrival day, and you may arrive at any time you wish. The tour will conclude at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport after a farewell dinner in the evening of day 17

The Lalibela Extension will depart from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in the morning of day 2 of the extension, and will conclude here in the late afternoon of day 4.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS

Addis Ababa Bole International Airport, Addis Ababa (IATA: ADD) is the main port of entry for international flights for this tour and is well serviced by most of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**