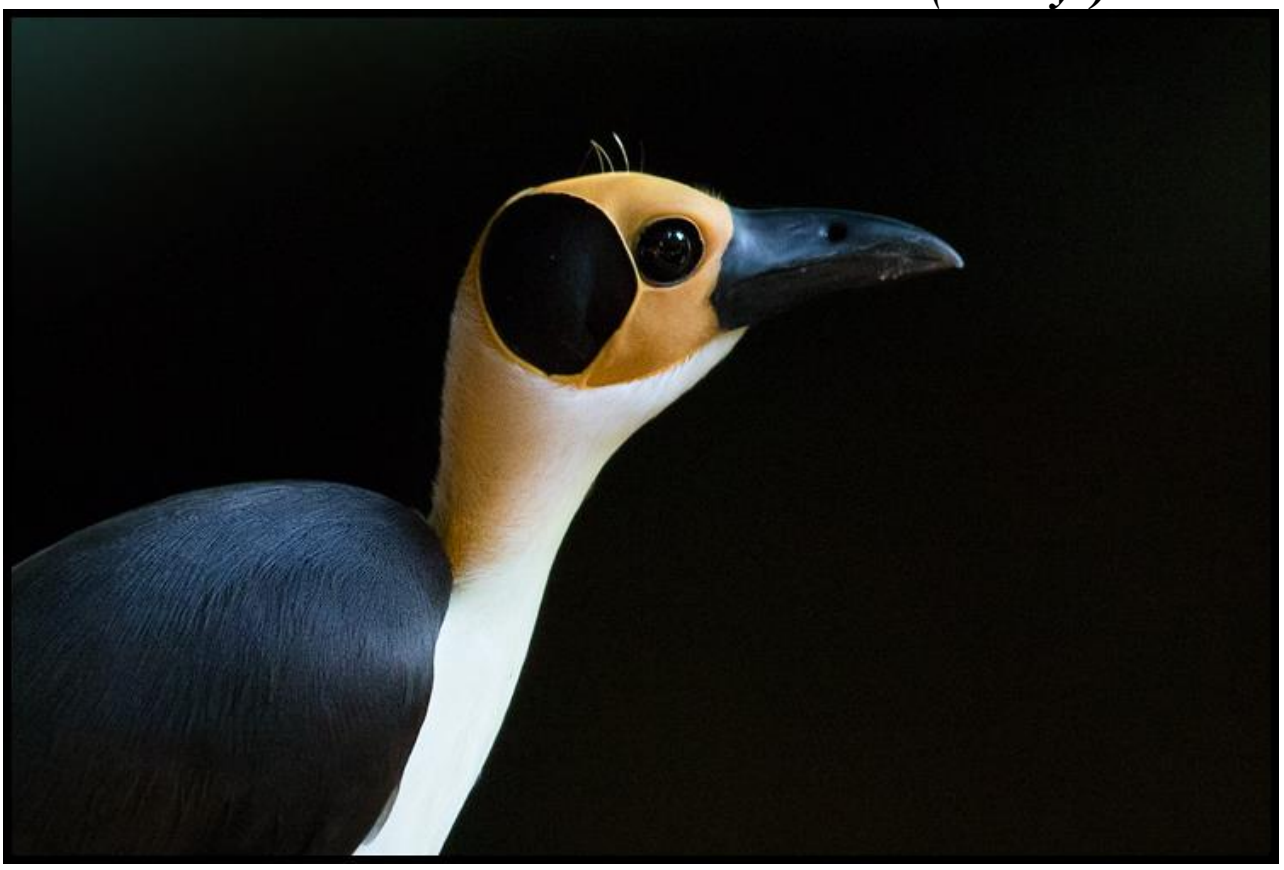
ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Ghana Mega

Rockfowl & Upper Guinea Specials II

28th November to 19th December 2023 (22 days)



White-necked Rockfowl by Dubi Shapiro

Ghana offers core West African rainforest and savanna birding as well as easily accessible White-necked Rockfowl colonies, which have rightfully established this as a 'must-visit' African birdwatching destination. Our Ghana Mega tour is specifically designed to cover the most crucial sites in the country, offering a fully comprehensive overview of Ghana's spectacular avifauna. Some of the sites visited on this exceptional adventure include the wonderful Kakum NP, home to Africa's only rainforest canopy walkway and a variety of Upper Guinea endemics and other African specials; the fantastic Ankasa and Atewa forests, where we will carefully work through the lower-story bird waves that are typically filled with greenbuls, flycatchers, warblers and many more; plus the remote Kalakpa forest, where the rare Capuchin Babbler and stunning Red-cheeked Wattle-eye may be found. Further north, Mole NP lies in a belt of broad-leaved Guinea woodlands where we will seek the beautiful Oriole Warbler, stunning Violet Turaco and numerous kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers,

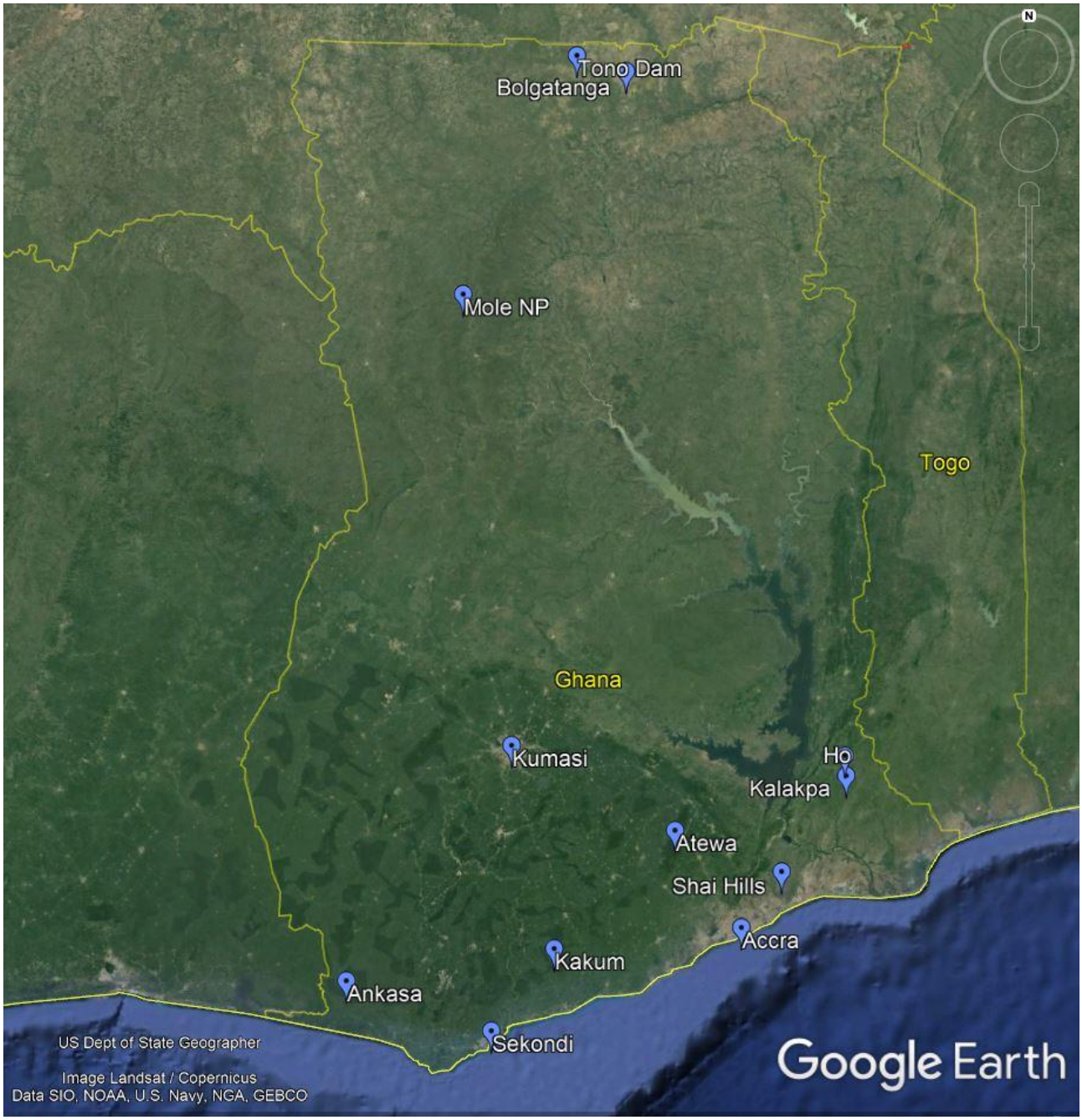
sunbirds and starlings; while in the dry Sahelian savanna of the seldom-visited far north of the country, we will look for some really special species, including the splendid Egyptian Plover and Standard-winged Nightjar, one of the world's most uniquely adorned birds!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Accra**
Day 2	**Volta region to Kalakpa and Ho**
Day 3	**Kalakpa to Accra and Shai Hills**
Day 4	**Accra to Kakum National Park**
Days 5 & 6	**Kakum National Park and surrounding areas**
Day 7	**Kakum to Shama (Sekondi)**
Day 8	**Nsuta Forest**
Day 9	**Shama (Sekondi) to Ankasa National Park**
Days 10 & 11	**Ankasa National Park**
Day 12	**Ankasa to Kakum**
Day 13	**Kakum to Bonkro Forest and Rockfowl colony**
Day 14	**Bonkro Forest to Mole National Park**
Days 15 & 16	**Mole National Park**
Day 17	**Mole National Park to Bolgatanga**
Day 18	**Tono Dam and surrounding areas**
Day 19	**Bolgatanga to Kumasi**
Day 20	**Kumasi to Atewa**
Day 21	**Atewa Range**
Day 22	**Atewa to Accra and departure**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Blue-bellied Roller by Ignacio Yufera

Day 1: Arrival in Accra. On arrival at Katoka International Airport in Accra, you will be met and transferred through to a comfortable hotel in the city.

Day 2: Volta region to Kalakpa and Ho. First thing this morning we head to the Volta Dam. This is one of the largest dams in Africa, and provides us with an excellent introduction to West African birding. Here we'll search for Guinea Turaco, Magpie Mannikin, Red-winged Prinia, Bar-breasted Firefinch, Mangrove Sunbird, African Pygmy Goose and the attractive, and rather localised White-bibbed Swallow.

Thereafter we will drive to the town of Ho, our base for the night. We should have time this afternoon for an initial exploration of the Kalakpa area and typical mixed woodland and grassland species such Red-winged Warbler, Copper and Green-headed Sunbirds, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Lesser Honeyguide, Black-winged Red Bishop, Compact Weaver and Yellow-mantled Widowbird are all possible. As we head back after dusk, we have a good chance at finding African Scops Owl and Black-shouldered and Long-tailed Nightjars, while Plain Nightjar is another quality species that occasionally gets found.

Day 3: Kalakpa to Accra and Shai Hills. This fabulous reserve protects some 320km^2 of savanna and gallery forest and we will have a full morning to explore the area. Amongst a myriad of species, some of the key birds we hope to find include the beautiful Guinea Turaco, Thick-billed Cuckoo, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Brown-necked Parrot, White-throated Greenbul, Grey-headed Bristlebill, Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat, the rare Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Puvel's Illadopsis, Spotted Honeyguide and the highly elusive Capuchin Babbler. Kalakpa also hosts several species of mammals, but we would be very fortunate to find any of the larger varieties such as Kob and African Buffalo.

After lunch, we'll spend the remainder of the day at Shai Hills Resources Reserve. This sanctuary, situated about an hour outside the capital, is an expanse of grassland and woodland dominated by the steeply rising Shai Hills. The birding here is very good and we are bound to turn up something interesting; this is the best site in Ghana for White-crowned Cliff Chat and an excellent spot for Stone Partridge, African Hobby, Blue-bellied and Purple Rollers, Vinaceous Dove, Double-toothed Barbet, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Violet



Long-tailed Nightjar by Werner Suter

and Guinea Turacos and Brown Babbler.



Violet Turaco by Adam Riley

In the early evening, we will return to our comfortable hotel in Accra.

Day 4: Accra to Kakum National Park. After an early breakfast, we will head west along the coastal highway, passing the organised chaos that so typifies West Africa. Tiny food stands (with hilariously grandiose names like 'Consuming Fire Fast Food'!), repair shops, traditional medicine stalls and taxis all compete for space in this entrepreneurial wonderland.

Further west we will bird a productive grassland reserve on the Winneba Plains. Here we will search for Black-bellied Bustard, Flappet Lark, Moustached Grass Warbler, Short-winged and Croaking Cisticolas, Black-necked Weaver, Northern Red Bishop, Orange-cheeked Waxbill and the Black-faced form of Quailfinch (sometimes considered a separate species). We will also look for the scarce Black-backed Cisticola, which is represented by a disjunct subspecies named after these Winneba Plains where it was discovered during Admiral Lynes' great cisticola expedition of the 1930s.

After lunch, we will then take time out to visit one of Ghana's most notorious edifices, the Cape Coast Castle. Originally built by the Swedish in 1653, it is now a World Heritage Site and a chilling reminder of the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In particular, a visit to the dank dungeons and the notorious 'Door of No Return' is a deep and sobering experience. During the height of this abhorrent trade, it is estimated that between 12 and 20 million West Africans were removed to the New World. We then continue on to our well-appointed accommodation close to the Kakum National Park Headquarters.

Days 5 & 6: Kakum National Park and surrounding areas. This 607 km² (234 mi²) National Park is the jewel in the crown of Ghana's protected reserve system. The park conserves a critically important block of primary and secondary Upper Guinea forest that is surrounded by a sea of humanity and its resultant deforestation. During our days in this area, we will explore several sections of this vast protected area, as well as a selection of nearby habitats.

Easily accessible from the park headquarters at Abrafo is the world famous Kakum canopy walkway, the only such structure of this size on the African continent. It is 350m long (over 1000ft), 40m (132ft) high and is suspended between 7 emergent forest trees, which support platforms stable enough to allow telescope use. We will make special arrangements for the early opening and late closure of the walkway, thereby allowing us patronage during these critical birding hours.



Blue Cuckooshrike by Adam Riley



Sharpe's Apalis by David Hoddinott

Amongst the many species we hope to see from the walkway are some of West Africa's most sought-after forest jewels. Species that regularly attend the multi-species canopy bird waves include the cotinga-like Blue Cuckooshrike, Violet-backed Hyliota, Sharpe's Apalis (an Upper Guinea endemic), Rufous-crowned Eremomela, African Shrike-flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Green Hylia, Yellow-mantled and the beautiful Preuss's Weavers, Cassin's Honeybird, Willcocks's and the extremely rare Yellow-footed Honeyguides, White-headed and Forest Wood Hoopoes, Tit-Hylia, Grey Longbill, Red-headed and Crested Malimbes and Grey-headed, White-breasted and Chestnut-breasted Nigritas. Other species we hope to see include the elusive canopy-dwelling Fernando Po Batis, Yellow-billed Turaco, the indescribably beautiful Black Bee-eater, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, family flocks of the striking Red-billed Helmetshrike, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, which also travels in small family groups, the strange-looking Naked-faced Barbet, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Sabine's Puffback and Maxwell's Black Weaver.

The tree platforms provide a fabulous vista over the forest and forest edge, thereby providing a unique opportunity for sighting passing birds. Raptor watching is particularly productive and previous trips have produced unbeatable views of the rarely seen Congo Serpent Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Palm-nut Vulture, African Harrier-Hawk, African Cuckoo-Hawk and African Hobby. Other birds that we might see include Piping, Black Casqued, Yellow-casqued and Brown-cheeked Hornbills, Grey and Red-fronted Parrots, Rosy Bee-eater and mixed flocks of swifts that often include Cassin's and Sabine's Spinetails and, if we are lucky, Black Spinetail. Velvet-mantled Drongo is in constant attendance, as are a wide variety of sunbirds including Fraser's, Little Green, Collared, Olive, the stunning Buff-throated, Olive-bellied, Superb and sought-after Johanna's.

We will also walk the forest trails, covering both deep interior forest and forest edge at Abrafo and Antwikwaa (various sections of Kakum.) This is the realm of greenbuls and there is certainly no shortage of these sociable birds. Species we hope to find include Little, Little Grey, Plain, Slender-billed, Yellow-whiskered, Golden, Honeyguide, Swamp Palm, Icterine, Red-tailed and Western Bearded Greenbuls, as well as Grey-headed and Red-tailed Bristlebills and Western Nicator. Further birds of the forest interior include Red-chested Goshawk, White-spotted Flufftail, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Olive Long-tailed



Red-billed Helmetshrike by David Hoddinott



Black Bee-eaters by David Hoddinott

Cuckoo, Black-throated Coucal, Red-billed Dwarf, Black Dwarf and the bizarre White-crested Hornbills, Rufous-sided Broadbill performing its incredible circular dance routine, Finsch's Rufous Thrush, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Western Oriole and Shining Drongo. Although the forest interior birding is challenging, hard work and perseverance should net us a good selection of these special species.

We will also be ever alert for Safari Ant activity, not only in order to avoid their painful bites, but also (and more importantly!) because they provide us with our best opportunity for viewing shy ant-attending birds such as the three species of bristlebill, White-tailed and rare Brown-chested Alethes, Forest Robin and White-tailed Ant Thrush. Rarities, which we will be on the constant lookout for, include Forest Francolin and Red-fronted Antpecker but, while these both occur in Kakum, we would be extremely fortunate to find them.

The forest edge is also extremely productive and supports a different cast of species including Ahanta Francolin, the seldom seen Yellow-throated Cuckoo, Yellow-billed Barbet, Yellow-rumped, Speckled and Yellow-throated Tinkerbirds, Buff-spotted, Brown-eared, Melancholy and Fire-bellied Woodpeckers, the rare Kemp's Longbill, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras, Green Crombec, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Black-winged Oriole, Splendid, Copper-tailed and Chestnut-winged Starlings and Blue-billed Malimbe

We will also undertake several nocturnal excursions in the hope of finding Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Red-chested Owlet and the very rare and aberrant Brown Nightjar. During the nocturnal excursions, we may well hear Nkulengu Rail, a near impossible rail to see. These large forest rallids roost high in trees and emit their loud "Congo-drum" duets after dusk and in the pre-dawn.

Rainforest mammals are not conspicuous but we should see several species of primates, which may include Lesser Spot-nosed and Mona Monkeys and Olive and White-thighed Colobus. A night walk will provide the opportunity of finding Potto, a slow moving and primitive primate that subsists largely on tree-gum, as well as several species of fast moving galagos. Many other mammals occur in Kakum but most are very seldom seen; these include Forest Elephant, Giant Forest Hog, Leopard, Water Chevrotain (a primitive antelope that is largely aquatic and often feeds on meat), five species of duiker, Bongo, three species of pangolin, and the arboreal Brush-tailed Porcupine. We can, however, count on



Red-fronted Antpecker by Adam Riley

seeing several species of squirrel, including African Giant Squirrel.



White-crested Tiger Heron by David Hoddinott

Day 7: Kakum to Shama (Sekondi). Today we leave early for the drive to Shama. On arrival, we will have the opportunity to check-in to our guest house and then venture out to bird in another patch of lowland rainforest at Nsuta Forest. This site is seldom visited as it has only been recently discovered by birders and is well off the beaten track. Rare species that have been recorded here in the past include the very rare Rufous Fishing Owl, Spot-breasted Ibis and White-crested Tiger Heron. Nsuta Forest will provide further opportunities to see many species that also occur in Kakum National Park in addition to being a good site for various others. These include Congo Serpent Eagle, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Bat Hawk, Long-tailed Hawk, scarce Black-collared Lovebird, Yellow-throated and Black Cuckoos, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Black Spinetail, Black Dwarf and Piping Hornbills, Western Nicator, Ussher's Flycatcher and Square-tailed Saw-wing. We will enjoy two days birding at this exciting new site and since so few birders have visited this area, there is good potential to find something unusual or rare.

Day 8: Nsuta Forest. We will have the opportunity of spending a full day in Nsuta Forest. Other possibilities here include Ahanta Francolin, Yellow-billed Barbet, African Piculet, Little Green and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, Forest Penduline Tit, Tiny Sunbird, Blue-throated Roller, Brown-cheeked and White-crested Hornbills, White-tailed Ant Thrush, Red-billed Helmetshrike, Spotted Greenbul, Western Bluebill, Tit Hylia, Sharpe's Apalis, Red-fronted Antpecker, Chocolate-backed, Blue-breasted and Shining-blue Kingfishers, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Red-chested Owlet, and Preuss's and Yellow-mantled Weavers. In the early evening, we have a chance for Akun Eagle-Owl and, if we get very lucky, Spot-breasted Ibis and/or Brown Nightjar.

Day 9: Shama (Sekondi) to Ankasa National Park. This morning we will begin our long journey towards the superb Ankasa Forest Reserve. We will make some comfort stops along the way and have time to enjoy some roadside birding en route.



Akun Eagle-Owl by David Hoddinott

Our first stop will be at a roadside wetland where we are likely to find Orange Weaver at a known nesting site, while the secretive and stunning Black-bellied Seedcracker is also found here from time to time. Later on, we will stop at an area of mangroves along a small estuary where we will search for the highly prized Reichenbach's and Mangrove Sunbirds as well as the rare White-browed Forest Flycatcher which has recently been discovered in this area. Eventually we will

arrive at our lodge. This evening we have the opportunity for some birding right around where we are based.



Nkulengu Rail by David Hoddinott

Day 10 & 11: Ankasa National Park. We will have two full days to enjoy the fabulous Ankasa Forest Reserve and here we will endeavour to seek out the many rare and elusive forest species that we have very little chance of seeing in Kakum National Park. Nkulengu Rail is one of the most prized species in West Africa and Ankasa is probably the best place on earth to try and find this fabulous forest rail. Plenty of time will be spent at some of the small forest pools in the heart of this national park where sought-after specials such as White-bellied and Shining-blue Kingfishers, African Finfoot, Hartlaub's Duck, Dwarf Bittern and White-crested Tiger Heron can all be found. In the late evening, we also stand a chance for Spot-breasted Ibis. The remainder of our time will be spent exploring the various trails through the primary forest and along the access road where the impressive Great Blue Turaco (now a scarce species in Ghana), Red-chested Owlet, Pale-breasted, Blackcap and Rufous-winged Illadopsises, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, White-breasted and Crested Guineafowl, Cassin's Flycatcher, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo and Red-fronted Antpecker may be found. Ankasa also gives us another opportunity to find some rare night birds like Akun Eagle-Owl should we have failed on our previous attempts, while African Wood and Fraser's Eagle Owls also occur.

Day 12: Ankasa to Kakum. Today we make the return journey to Kakum National Park after some final morning birding at Ankasa. Along the way, we will stop off at a coastal area of savanna grassland scrub. Species we hope to see here include Pruess's Cliff Swallow, Marsh Tchagra, Wilson's Indigobird, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Singing Cisticola, Guinea Turaco, Oriole Warbler, Compact and Slender-billed Weavers and, if we are very fortunate, Yellow-winged Pytilia. If unsuccessful earlier we will have a further opportunity to search for Mangrove Sunbird before checking into our hotel.



Yellow-crowned Gonolek by Ignacio Yufera

Day 13: Kakum to Bonkro Forest and Rockfowl colony. This morning we will more than likely spend a little time at Abrafo Forest searching for any species we may have not yet seen. Here potential targets include Red-vented Malimbe, Thick-billed Honeyguide, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Barbet, African Piculet (a very rare bird in West Africa), Black-capped Apalis and the elusive Long-tailed Hawk, amongst a multitude of more widespread forest species. In the late morning, we then



Blue-moustached Bee-eater by David Hoddinott

carry on towards a remote forest patch where we will wait patiently for the bizarre and prehistoric-looking White-necked Rockfowl to appear at its nesting colony in the late afternoon. Although the birds will not be nesting, they regularly roost at the nest site and, therefore, we stand an excellent chance of seeing this near-mythical species.

We'll then head back down the trail, to enjoy a celebratory meal at our lodge in this remote, local community. Up until recently, the nearest accommodation was in the city of Kumasi, which meant many hours of driving to reach the city late in the evening. This new lodge not only removed a lot of late-night travel time, but assists the local community in further protecting this priceless forest. This evening, we will venture out for a night walk to see what nocturnal species we may find.

Day 14: Bonkro Forest to Mole National Park. We have a rather long drive today, so will not spend too much time birding this morning before departing Bonkro and heading to Mole National Park situated in the Guinea Savanna belt. On the drive north we will keep a lookout for the beautiful Blue-bellied and Abyssinian Rollers, Dark Chanting Goshawk, attractive Grasshopper Buzzard and, if we are exceptionally fortunate, we may even encounter the scarce and localised White-throated Francolin. In the late afternoon, we will arrive at the Mole Park headquarters. The broad-leaved woodland zone here superficially resembles the Miombo woodlands of south-central Africa and is likewise inhabited by a wonderful assemblage of good-looking species, which in many cases represent northern sister-species of their south-central counterparts.

Days 15 & 16: Mole National Park. The 4,840 km² Mole National Park is Ghana's second most well-visited protected area after Kakum. Our hotel here is scenically situated on a 250m high escarpment within the National Park and overlooks a seemingly endless vista of broad-leaved woodlands and wetlands. Frolicking pachyderms sometimes populate an elephant-wallow at the base of the escarpment. The elephants of Mole are renowned for their tolerance and on foot it is possible to get very close to them. From the viewing platform at the lodge, we are also able to scan over the marsh and see Defassa Waterbuck, Common Bushbuck and handsome Kob.



Oriole Warbler by Ignacio Yufera

The woodland surrounding our lodge is a superb place to begin birding. Seedeaters abound and we should find mixed flocks of Lavender Waxbill, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Red-billed and Bar-breasted Firefinches, Pin-tailed and Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver, Northern Grey-headed



Bearded Barbet by David Hoddinott

Sparrow and Yellow-fronted Canary. We will also explore the rocky escarpment below the lodge and here we hope to find family groups of Stone Partridge and Double-spurred Francolin.

The moist woodland surrounding the swamp is home to some special birds and in particular, we will search for the highly desirable Oriole Warbler, one of West Africa's most beautiful birds. In fact, colourful birds are the rule here rather than the exception. Bruce's Green Pigeon, Violet Turaco, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Senegal Parrot, Blue-breasted and Grey-headed Kingfishers, Red-throated and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Abyssinian, Purple and Broad-billed Rollers, Bearded Barbet, Western Violet-backed, Green-headed, Pygmy, Beautiful and Splendid Sunbirds, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes and Lesser Blue-eared, Purple and Long-tailed Glossy Starlings are just some of the possible species on offer.

The woodlands in Mole offer up a wonderful assortment of targets and these include Black Scimitarbill, Fine-spotted and Brown-backed Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Dorst's and Rufous Cisticolas, mega Emin's Shrike, White-winged Black Tit, African Spotted Creeper, rare Gambaga Flycatcher, Black-faced and Black-bellied Firefinches, uncommon Togo Paradise Whydah and Brown-rumped and Cabanis's Buntings, while more widespread species include Green Wood Hoopoe, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Grey Woodpecker, African Thrush, Senegal Eremomela, Northern Crombec, Northern Black, African Blue and European Pied Flycatchers, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Senegal Batis, African Golden Oriole, Northern Puffback, Yellow-billed Shrike, Brubru, White-crested Helmetshrike (this race topped with an enormous, floppy crest), Red-headed Weaver and the ubiquitous Bush Petronia.

The more densely wooded regions of the park are often good areas to find Swamp Flycatcher, White-crowned and Snowy-crowned Robin-Chats, Blackcap and Brown Babblers, Yellow-throated Leaflove and Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike. Time will also be spent exploring the deeper reaches of Mole NP where superb broad-leaved woodland can be found. Here, natural openings in the woodland often get burnt at this time of year attracting some very interesting species such as Forbes's Plover and the scarce Rufous-rumped Lark. Other species associated with these burns include White-fronted Black Chat, Sun Lark, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark and Four-banded Sandgrouse.



Standard-winged Nightjar by David Shackelford

Raptors are particularly prolific in Mole and regularly encountered species include White-backed, White-headed and Hooded Vultures, Beaudouin's, Western Banded and Brown Snake Eagles, Bateleur, Lizard Buzzard, Wahlberg's, Booted and Martial Eagles, Ayres's and African Hawk-Eagles, Lanner Falcon and African Hobby. We will



Egyptian Plover by Ignacio Yufera

also venture out on a couple of nocturnal excursions to look for the likes of Greyish Eagle-Owl, Northern White-faced Owl, and Freckled, Long-tailed, Plain and spectacular Standard-winged Nightjars.

Day 17: Mole National Park to Bolgatanga. We will depart Mole after some final early morning birding. Our first stop will be the nearby village of Larabanga, famous for its traditional mud-and-stick mosque, claimed to be the oldest extant building in Ghana. This site can often be a good location for Red-chested Swallow.

On the drive up we will make a few stops at roadside wetlands. One, in particular, seems to produce fabulous species and viewing opportunities are generally very good. During the heat of the day a plethora of seedeaters come down to drink and we stand a good chance of seeing Quailfinch on the ground, Orange-breasted and Black-rumped Waxbills and African Silverbill, amongst the more regular seedeaters. Here we should also find Northern Red and Black-winged Red Bishops, Heuglin's Masked and Black-headed Weavers, and Red-billed Quelea, mostly in non-breeding plumage.

In the late afternoon, we will find ourselves in the seldom visited and remote frontiers of northern Ghana. The dry Sahelian Zone extends a finger down into this remote region on the Burkina Faso border, and we can, therefore, expect to find some birds that are seldom encountered elsewhere in Ghana. We should have time to visit the Tongo Hills where a number of sought-after species occur. Some of the star attractions include Fox Kestrel, Lavender Waxbill, White-crowned Cliff Chat, Gosling's Bunting and Rock-loving Cisticola.

Day 18: Tono Dam and surrounding areas. In the morning we will make our way east towards the Volta River where we stand an excellent chance of finding the incredible Egyptian Plover, one of the most desirable birds on the continent. We will make a concerted effort to track this beautiful species down while we are in this area. Other species that we may also encounter in the area include Black-headed Lapwing, Mourning Collared and Namaqua Doves, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, West African Swallow, Piapiac, White-billed Buffalo Weaver, Greater Blue-eared, Bronze-tailed and Chestnut-bellied Starlings, and African Silverbill. Of particular interest in this seldom-visited region are the fascinating mud homesteads of the local Farafara tribespeople.

Depending on the conditions, the large Tono Dam is sometimes home to a healthy population of waterbirds and is an important breeding site for a variety of ducks, herons and egrets, as well as an important wintering site for a large number of waders. In the afternoon we will spend time looking for the



Grasshopper Buzzard by Markus Lilje



Black-capped Apalis by David Hoddinott

avian inhabitants of the dry woodland that hems the dam. Our target species include Gabar Goshawk, Grasshopper Buzzard, White-bellied Bustard, Four-banded Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Swallow-tailed and Green Bee-eaters, Melodious Warbler, Pygmy Sunbird and Speckled-fronted Weaver.

A nocturnal excursion here will hopefully yield a sighting of the incredible Standard-winged Nightjar, while we also have a chance of finding Greyish Eagle-Owl, African Scops Owl, Northern White-faced Owl and Long-tailed Nightjar.

Day 19: Bolgatanga to Kumasi. Today we will depart early on the drive south to the town of Kumasi, to overnight at our now familiar hotel. This is a long drive but we will make occasional stops for meals and to stretch our legs.

Day 20: Kumasi to Atewa. This morning we will visit the Bobiri Butterfly and Forest Reserve, a small forest sanctuary close to town that is renowned for its diversity and abundance of butterflies. The bird community here is similar to that of Kakum and we, therefore, have a further opportunity to search for any species we may have missed. Interesting species that are possible include Congo Serpent Eagle, Forest Wood Hoopoe, Forest Francolin, the now rare Grey Parrot whose numbers have been decimated throughout Ghana, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Afep Pigeon, Red-billed and Black Dwarf Hornbills, White-crested Hornbill, Dusky Tit, Forest Penduline Tit Lemon-bellied Crombec, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Red-billed Helmetshrike, African Piculet and Magpie Mannikin. One of the factors that make lowland forest birding potentially frustrating is that although the species diversity is huge, many of the individual species occur at very low density and are therefore seldom encountered. Nonetheless, they can appear at any moment and the golden rule is, therefore, maximum time in the field for maximum species! In the afternoon we will transfer to our accommodation near the rich Atewa forest.

Day 21: Atewa Range. We have a full day to explore the infrequently visited forest that cloaks the Atewa Range, situated on the South Volta Scarp and one of the only higher-lying areas in Ghana. Atewa is managed as a logging reserve but is still covered in extensive forest and offers one a chance of encountering a range of seldom-seen and little-known species. The birding can be extremely productive here and we have our final opportunity of seeing some of the rarer forest species as well as giving us additional chances of locating more of the Upper Guinea specials.



Long-tailed Hawk by David Hoddinott



Buff-throated Sunbird by Keith Valentine

Please note that today is a long and fairly tiring day as we will be on our legs for a long time. We will begin early in the morning, taking a packed lunch with us. The total distance up and down is around 12 kilometres and we may also walk along the top of the Atewa Range, making for around 15 kilometres in total for the day. We will initially pass through the secondary farm bush habitat and then begin the gradual ascent up the mountain. On our way up we will keep an eye open for Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Little Green Woodpecker, Square-tailed Saw-wing, Black-capped Apalis, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Brown and Puvell's Illadopsises, Yellow-billed Barbet and the shy and secretive Black-throated Coucal.

The top of Atewa will be our main focus of the day and many very special and often difficult species will be searched for up here. These include both Blackcap and the endangered Rufous-winged Illadopsises, rare and localised Nimba and Little Grey Flycatchers, striking but elusive Many-colored Bushshrike, Brown-chested Alethe (a very localised bird in Ghana), Red-tailed, Grey-headed and most notably Green-tailed Bristlebills, Western Bearded and Red-tailed Greenbuls, secretive Forest Scrub Robin, seldom-recorded Red-fronted Antpecker, Fernando Po Batis, African Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Long-tailed Hawk and, if we are very lucky, we may even bump into the highly elusive Spot-breasted Ibis! Atewa is also the best site in Ghana for the dazzling Blue-moustached Bee-eater and we have a very good chance of seeing this spectacular bird during our day on the mountain.

In the mid-afternoon, we will begin our descent back down the mountain to meet up with our bus, which will then take us back to our nearby hotel to relax and freshen up before dinner.

Day 22: Atewa to Accra and depart. This morning we should have time to bird the farm bush at Atewa to look for any species that we may have missed. This uniquely West and Central African secondary habitat is usually extremely productive for forest-edge birds. Alternatively, we might also bird the lower parts of Atewa forest if there are any forest inhabitants that we still need.

In the late morning we will return to our hotel to freshen up before enjoying a final celebratory lunch together. In the afternoon we will head back to Accra to catch our international flights home.



Tit-Hylia by Markus Lilje

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.

The tour price includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 of the tour to lunch on day 22;
- Bottled water;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips for local guides and services.

The tour price excludes:

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any alcoholic beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and 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.

Single Accommodation is NOT available at Ankasa Forest or Bonkro Forest lodges at this time. All guests will have to share. All rooms have a pull a wooden pull-out divider for some privacy when sleeping if required.

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, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

PLEASE NOTE:

- A good deal of our time is spent in vehicles as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds. Some of the roads can be very bad and the going will be slow

and potentially frustrating. Traffic in certain urban areas can be terrible too. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for your comfort and that of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8 kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.

- In some areas, it may be very hot, especially in Mole. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have many early starts to avoid, as far as possible, birding in the middle of the day. Furthermore, in the rainforest areas in the south the humidity will be high and uncomfortable.
- This Ghana tour is designed to be a dedicated birding experience and we will attempt to get good views of as many bird species as possible.
- This tour does require a reasonable level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours (on mostly flat terrain) at a time. Should you have any physical or medical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Please note that for most of this tour we will be far away from modern medical facilities.
- Accommodations are generally of a good standard in Ghana. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. In the smaller towns, while we always opt for the best available accommodation, the accommodations are basic and below the standard of what you have come to expect from the developed world. Power failures at some locations are not uncommon.
- Please be aware that the hike up Atewa on the penultimate day of the trip is not a very strenuous walk as the gradient is rather gentle. However, since the total distance up and down the mountain is around 12 km (7.5 mi) and we will be on our feet birding for most of the day, you will need to be in reasonably good physical condition to be able to manage well on this day.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include any international airfares. The tour will depart from Katoka International in Accra on day 1, as this is an arrival day and you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude in the late afternoon on day 22 at Katoka International in Accra. We will spend a few hours birding around Atewa in the morning, returning to the hotel to freshen up and have lunch, after which we expect to arrive in Accra by 16h00. Please do not book your international departures before 19h00 this evening.

FLIGHTS:

Katoka International Airport, Accra (IATA: ACC) is the main port of entry for international flights in Ghana and is well serviced by several 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.**