

Birding trip to Ghana

20 November – 12 December 2004

Paola Ricceri & Marco Salvioni - Switzerland

Introduction

We already visited quite a few other Eastern and Southern African countries and so were familiar with some of the species seen, but Ghana has been our first introduction to West African birds.

In the superb Africa Birds&Birding magazine from South Africa (www.africa-geographic.com) we read John Deppman's article about birding in Ghana (August/September 2002, Vol 7, No 4) and that was what made us curious about the country. Deppman suggested David T. Daramani as a local birding guide, so we contacted him when planning our visit and ended up travelling round Ghana for 13 days with him. David works for the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS - BirdLife partner) and is a very experienced birder himself, knowing his birds, the places where to find them, as well as the local people owning some of the places. Through GWS (wildsoc@ighmail.com) we organised a 4x4 vehicle (with Patrick as very good driver) and roughly planned an open itinerary that we actually modified as we liked along the way. We would like to add that when travelling, we are not interested in luxury and high standard hotels, but rather prefer to adjust to clean-but-moderate simple rooms so that we can visit remote areas as well. So told, our suggested hotels are for the easy-going birders and mostly will not fit the more exigent travellers. We carried our own light sheets and made good use of them a couple of times! We found Ghanaian to be extremely friendly and welcoming people and never had any problem during our three week stay.

Practical informations

During our visit the rate was: 1US\$ = 9'000 cedis, and Ghana was 1 hour behind Swiss time. Just a few mosquito encountered along the way; dry weather, hot temperature and quite high humidity especially along the coast (above 75%!).

Through Ghana Wildlife Society getting organised was very easy and practical, via e-mail. The original suggested programme had high standard hotels planned, for an all-inclusive estimated cost of 3'400\$ for 13 days and 2 people. Preferring to keep our itinerary open, and feel free to change it as we liked along the way, we only paid for the Toyota Rava 4x4 with driver (100\$/days) and David's fee (50\$/day) in advance, and kept all the other costs at our own expenses (accommodation for the two of us and for David and Patrick/food/park fees and rangers/fuel). By doing so and by selecting simpler hotels and restaurants the final cost has been reduced a lot. Travelling with GWS was just perfect, and we can really recommend other birders to use this great opportunity for privately organising your own bird tour in Ghana!

We only took binoculars along, leaving our scope at home to avoid extra weight, but David fortunately had his own scope and we really made good use of it! Not being twitchers we never tape-lured the birds, and our bird list only includes the species we could really see. Of course more species have been mentioned and heard by our guide and so these are marked with an "x" in the complete bird list. In the itinerary section, following every interesting place visited, we include a short list of species seen or *heard* only in that place (bold character for special species).

Books used

Travel Guide

GHANA, The Bradt travel guide, 2001, by Philip Briggs. Although a new edition has been published, with more detailed information, we used the older 2001 version we already had for having first planned to visit the country in 2003, and Philip Briggs kindly e-mailed us some updated notes. Most of the places visited and hotels selected were mentioned in this travel guide.

Field guide

BIRDS OF WESTERN AFRICA, Nik Borrow & Ron Demey, Helm Identification Guides, 2001. Although this is a very useful bird book, it definitely IS NOT a field guide to carry around considering how heavy it is! There was a pocket edition due to be published in November 2004 but not yet available when we left.

BIRDS OF WESTERN & CENTRAL AFRICA, Ber Van Perlo, Collins illustrated checklist, 2002. We had this much lighter field guide with us as well but honestly, a part from easy and familiar species, we found the illustrations completely useless in the field, being too tiny and poorly detailed.

Other useful trip reports that we used

Ghana and Central Mali, February 2nd – April 4th 2004. By Johannes Vermehren / Germany – www.birdtours.co.uk

Birding Ghana 18th-30th October 2003. By Jos Wanten & Roland Holz/Germany / The Netherlands - www.birdtours.co.uk

Itinerary

November 21st: Switzerland - Accra

Our trip began with an afternoon Alitalia flight from Milan/Malpensa to Accra/Kotoka airport, via a stop over in Lagos, Nigeria. GWS booked us a room at Sam's Cottage Hotel (high standard, B&B for 74US\$) and we had a very welcomed hotel car waiting for us at the airport, when we arrived late that evening. Temperature: +28°C!

November 22nd: Accra – Hans Cottage Hotel, Kakum

The following morning our driver from GWS came to pick us up and brought us to their office, where we met our birding guide David and Erasmus, the Director of Conservation Programmes. We did some final arrangements, paid what we had to, and in a very short time we were ready to begin our Ghana adventure in the hands of, as we soon discovered, very friendly people indeed! Nice hot temperature and strong sunshine.

First stop, as soon as we managed to leave Accra's famous traffic behind us, was at Pambrus salt works - Densu River RAMSAR site for water birds.

David's scope turned out already very useful: plenty of terns and waders in there.

From there we continued towards Cape Coast and to Hans Cottage Hotel (www.hanshotel.com), where we took two rooms. Very nice place, the large pond plenty of birds and crocs on offer while just sitting there in the open bar-restaurant enjoying a cool drink! We then drove to Kakum NPk to book an early start for the next morning (the gate only opens at 8:30, when other visitors will be around too making any stop to watch birds along the canopy walk frustrating). Being too late to pay a visit to Kakum now, we took a walk along the road bordering the park forest: many bird & frog calls but not much seen.

Back to the Hotel we had the surprise of some 400-500 Cattle egrets coming to roost in the trees on the pond's little islands, same trees already hosting a good number of nesting Village weavers, and having dinner just a couple of meters from the closer branch packed of preening & sleeping birds, was quite an experience!

Species only found at Pambrus

Winding cisticola, Ashy flycatcher

November 23th: Kakum

Kakum NPk is about 30 minutes drive from Hans cottage Hotel, and the canopy walk starts some 15 minutes walk gently uphill from the park entrance. We managed to be up there at 6:00 by leaving the hotel just before 5:00 am and getting straight to collect the key from the guy in charge. Considering how tall the rain forest trees are and how many birds only occur up the canopy, the canopy walk is certainly a must to watch forest birds in Kakum! It consists of a 350 m loop walk suspended as up as 35-40 m, and even up there some birds will remain still above you! It definitely is an experience recommended, although for tourists without an interest in birds or butterflies it can be disappointing.

Having David with us made a great difference, we would have missed most of the “difficult” species without his help! Being there before the gate opens to the public allowed us to spend as long as we liked up each single section of the walk, and very easily 3-4 hours were gone... Kakum’s entrance fee was 10\$ pp including the first hour, + 1.5\$ pp each additional hour.

After that we went back to the hotel, bird watching the pond while having a welcomed breakfast and a rest in the heat of the day. In the afternoon we birded a cultivated private property, again somewhere towards Kakum, with a Palm (for oil) plantation and a new hotel on the way to be built. Not much seen there but some good sunbirds.

Later we drove the opposite direction to a place David knew to be good for roosting Preuss’s cliff swallows. We arrived there at about 17:30 and there were none around, only many Little greenbuls calling. Just before 18:00 David heard the swallows calling, and soon we spotted a good number of them high up in the clouds, appeared from nobody-knows-where. We watched the 200-300 swallows circling and calling up there for some 10-15 minutes and then, all of a sudden, they all dropped down with a powerful “swoooooosh” sound, flew very fast around some bushes to make sure that everything was ok and then they were all gone, silently and quickly underneath a tiny small bridge over a little creek. The sort of experience one will never forget!!! SUPER!

Long-tailed nightjars along the darkening way back and dinner at Hans Cottage Botel.

Species only found at Kakum: Grey parrot, Yellow-billed turaco, Cassin’s spinetail, Common swift, Forest woodhoopoe, Piping hornbill, *Red-rumped tinkerbird*, Bristle-nosed barbet, *Vieillot’s* & *Yellow-billed barbets*, *Cassin’s honeyguide*, Buff-spotted woodpecker, *Rufous-sided broadbill*, Lesser-striped swallow, Grey-backed camaroptera, *Sharpe’s apalis*, Ashy & Chestnut-capped flycatchers, African yellow white-eye, Copper & Little green & Superb sunbirds, Large-billed/Sabine’s puffback, Western black-headed oriole, Plum-coloured starling

November 24th: Kakum – Bobiri Forest Reserve

Early morning start again to be up the Kakum canopy walk at sunrise. Today we had a nearly completely different selection of good birds and plenty of butterflies in some blooming trees. The suspended walk isn’t any less impressive once you know it! Breakfast back at the hotel before leaving for Bobiri Forest Reserve, which made us stupidly missing the popular Black bee-eater place David told us about... but that would have added 2 extra hours to our already long 6 hour drive scheduled trip. We do regret it now because had no other chances for such bird!

Bobiri Forest Reserve is situated some 30 km east of Kumasi (another very trafficated town where you can easily change US\$ or Travellers Cheques in a Bank), along the Kumasi-Koforidua/Accra road. Certainly a great place for forest birds, and the Forestry Resthouse is a peaceful and lovely little place where to spend the night, right inside the reserve. All rooms (11-16\$) have walls so nicely painted with butterflies and forest subjects, while the open terrace offered us a comfortable view of a pair of Black-and-white mannikin breeding in a papaw tree. Bear in mind that, by asking in advance or by bringing yourself the food (no shops round the place), the people in Bobiri can cook excellent simple meals for you!

Following David we explored the dirt road crossing the forest, some openings along it gave us good views of the otherwise frustrating forest birds.

Species only found at Bobiri: Crowned eagle, *Latham’s forest francolin*, Afep pigeon, Red-chested cuckoo, Narina trogon, Blue-throated roller, White-headed woodhoopoe, Fire-bellied woodpecker, Slender-billed greenbul, Common/Red-tailed bristlebill, Forest flycatcher, Olive-bellied & Western olive sunbirds, Black-winged oriole, Chestnut-breasted negrofinch, Black-and-white mannikin

November 25th: Bobiri Forest Reserve – Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary

The many insect and tree frog sounds from the forest made our night at Bobiri extremely relaxing, so at 6:00 we were out ready for another birding day. A 3 hours walk along the dirt road brought plenty of exciting new species, including good views of Blue-throated rollers.

After breakfast we drove across the crazy traffic of Kumasi again and west to Owabi Wildlife Sanctuary, where unfortunately we arrived round noon: too hot to see any bird but Little egret, Squacco heron, African Jacana and African pied wagtail. African finfoot was nowhere to be seen, certainly hiding somewhere in the shade also because there were local people near the water. We then drove the Sunyani - Techiman road, the vegetation changing with first Borasso palm trees appearing, and finally got to Boabeng-Fiema MS, at the end of a 50 km dirt road not in too good shape. We spent the night in the sanctuary’s basic but comfortable enough rooms and bucket shower. The forests has Campbell’s Mona & Black and white colobus monkeys to look for, as well as some other interesting birds. We had good views of our only African little sparrowhawk of the trip in here.

Species only found at Boabeng Fiema Monkey Sanctuary: Little sparrowhawk, *White-spotted flufftail*, *Klaas’s cuckoo*

November 26th: Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary – Mole National Park

An early morning walk through the forest brought African little Sparrowhawk again but not much else, Black and white colobus monkeys howling like the howler monkeys in South America!

After breakfast we headed towards Mole NPK. Along the road the landscape changing again, getting drier and dustier. A stop along the way produced our first Blue-bellied and Abyssinian rollers, African hobby and Lizard buzzard. The road to Mole being fine, with only a not too good last section. In Mole it was hot, the Mole Hotel was a nice (and only) place to stay with a nice swimming pool to cool down before the evening elephant comes to drink from it! Watch out for the many Baboons and Pata’s monkeys patrolling the place, they are so fast and clever in stealing whatever left half-a-second unattended and can easily jump in your car through the half-open windows to get to your supply of fresh bread!

November 26th-28th : Mole NPK

Mole National Park is a fairly large protected area, but unfortunately one can only explore a small portion of it, where the hotel is. There are more roads covering the park, but many portions of them are in such a bad shape that even in a 4x4 you won’t be able to go far. When we discovered this we were somehow disappointed, so we tried to see as much as possible by walking only.

We took early morning and late afternoon hikes with David and an armed ranger every day of our stay, exploring east, west and north from the hotel.

Elephant, Baboon, Pata’s monkey, Warthog, Kob, Waterbuck and Busbuck antelopes are the mammals likely to be seen there, but many bird species are on offer by covering the different habitats. We found the most rewarding section to be the wet areas in front of the hotel. While looking for secretive owls we couldn’t find along a small river, David managed to show us a Palm vulture nesting on top of a Borasso palm tree and an incredibly camouflaged male Greater painted snipe.

A night drive to and inside the signposted airstrip, not far outside the park entrance, produced Standard-winged (non breeding M or F unfortunately!) and Red-necked nightjars, a Hare and a Grasscutter. Before the park’s gate an owl took off from the road in front of us, but was too fast to identify it. The eastern part of the park we walked through had taller and drier grass, Abyssinian ground hornbills and loads of annoying Tse-tse flies! But we also got to a great spot with plenty of Red-throated bee-eaters and their nests and a large tree packed with African green and Bruce’s green pigeons together.

Being already there we also visited the mud and stick mosque in Larabanga, the pretty and interesting building in the poor village, where people got aware of the tourism business and ask now to pay 10’000 cedis/pp to a local guide taking you there with a bit of background history, what we considered a fair enough price to support the community, but you are not allowed to enter the mosque.

Species only found at Mole National Park: Black-headed heron, Hamerkop, Saddle-billed & Woolly-necked storks, Spur-winged goose, Bateleur, Palm-nut & White-backed vultures, Pallid harrier, Grasshopper buzzard, Martial eagle, African hawk-eagle, Helmeted guineafowl, Black crane, Greater painted-snipe, Rock pigeon, Ring-necked parakeet, Freckled & Red-necked & Standard-winged nightjars, Grey-headed kingfisher, Northern carmine & Red-throated bee-eaters, Abyssinian roller, Red-billed hornbill, Abyssinian ground hornbill, Bearded barbet, Greater honeyguide, Cardinal woodpecker, Familiar chat, Blackcap, African blue & Northern black & European pied & African paradise flycatchers, Senegal batis, Beautiful & Pygmy & Scarlet-cheated sunbirds, *Orange-breasted bush-shrike*, African golden oriole, Long-tailed & Purple glossy starlings, Bush petronia, Chestnut-crowned sparrow-weaver, Lavender waxbill, Red-cheeked cordonbleu, Red-billed firefinch, Yellow-fronted canary, Cinnamon-breasted bunting

November 28th: Mole NPK – Bobiri FR

After our last early morning walk in Mole we headed back towards Bobiri FR again, where we arrived at dusk after a 7 hour dusty drive. We brought some food along and so again they cooked a nice meal for us. We really liked Bobiri, and being back today made us feel at home.

November 29th: Bobiri FR – Atewa Range Forest Reserve

The usual early morning birding walk produced again a good number of new birds, including the elusive and very shy Narina trogon. David heard a calling male somewhere up the canopy, and after a short search for it we finally got the singing bird in full view just above us. Blue-throated rollers again and loads of butterflies of so many different species.

Our trip continued to Atewa Range Forest Reserve where we arrived early enough for a late afternoon walk. We stayed in Kibi at Ankobea Guest House, close to the reserve but very basic and not welcoming at all with a bad-tempered receptionist. Not much available for dinner in that village.

November 30th: Atewa Range Forest Reserve – Shai Hills Resource Reserve

As usual early morning start, today in the thick fog that fortunately opened as we drove the short distance to the entrance road. Actually, Atewa Range Forest Reserve certainly is an interesting patch of pristine hilly forest with many birds to be found and species we only saw in here. But the forest is sadly and quickly disappearing because of illegal logging and lack of real protection. We hiked some 5 hours up and down the forest and met a good number of illegal loggers carrying timber on their heads, while a working chainsaw was always there as a sad background sound. The dirt road to the blue gate is in very bad condition, and the gate has been placed there to prevent illegal loggers to drive their trucks inside the forest. Some 1,30 hour hike uphill from the gate and the real pristine forest begins, beautiful and thick, but it gets difficult to spot any single bird in there. Plenty of butterflies all over the place.

Species only found at Atewa Forest: *Black-throated coucal*, Speckled & Yellow-throated tinkerbird, Purple-throated cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-whiskered greenbul, *Grey-headed bristlebill*, **Finsch's flycatcher thrush**, Wood warbler, Green hylia

The drive to Shai Hills via Larteh was quite nice and scenic, uphill from a green slope and down the other side where it soon turns to a dryer kind of savannah-like habitat and Borasso palm trees. Luckily the Shai Hills Hotel was fully booked (although we saw nobody there!) so we continued along the road until we found a superb place called Stone Lodge, just some 15 km from the Shai Hills Resource Reserve's main gate and well signposted along the Akosombo road. That was the best and most welcoming hotel we've ever been in Ghana! The Lodge (quite high standard) is situated in an open landscape and has a lovely view all-round. It is a small and fairly new place, with 3 chalet-like houses and an open stone-restaurant where we had excellent food. Half chalet, for two people (double bed, bathroom, kitchen and open veranda), was 250'000 cedis. The full chalet, for 6 people (3 double beds, two bathrooms, two kitchens and two separate open verandas), was 450'000 cedis. The lodge can host a maximum of 9 guests at once (www.stonelodge.biz). Very friendly people, highly recommended!

This afternoon we walked the lodge's peaceful surrounding area with grazing cows, Double-spurred francolin, Brown and Blackcap babblers, many Yellow-crowned gonoleks, Piapiac.

December 1st: Shai Hills Resource Reserve - Woe

Full morning birding the western slope of the Shai Hills Resource Reserve, where we hiked from the main gate towards the second gate at Sayu Camp. Bushbock, Baboons, Green monkeys, Civet cat's paw prints and lots of birds. After some 6-7 km Patrick came to pick us up and we drove back to the main gate and to Adwuku Dam, too hot to see anything else than an African Jacana. Very bad road to get there. There used to be a road making a loop round the reserve, but the southern section got so bad even for 4x4 vehicles that now you cannot drive it anymore.

Tired and sweaty we got back to the Stone Lodge for a good breakfast and a cooling shower before heading towards Keta lagoon.

Species only found at Shai Hills: Wahlberg's eagle, Green turaco, Striped kingfisher, Rock martin, Cliff chat, Croakin g cisticola, Black-capped & Brown babblers, White helmet-shrike, Piapiac, Yellow-faced/Red-winged pytilia

It got drier and more open with scattered Baobab trees along the way, while the narrow stretch of land between the sea and Keta lagoon looked very fertile and cultivated. Following P. Briggs' suggestion in his Bradt Travel Guide we took a room at the Abutia Guest House, in Woe, some 2 hour drive from Shai Hills RR. Nice and peaceful small place we liked straight way and stayed two nights. We relaxed a bit, booked for dinner and explored the nearby Keta lagoon behind the hotel with our only two Tawny pipits of the trip.

Before it got too dark we drove to Keta and discovered that a brand new road has been built to connect Keta to Azizanze again, after the sea swallowed the previous one. Dinner at Abutia Guest House was not too exciting.

December 2nd: Woe/Keta lagoon/Volta river /Songow lagoon

We begun the day visiting the Volta River at Anyanui, no birds around but look for funny-looking Mud skippers in the muddy shores if you get there! We visited our first beach in Ghana, with plenty of fishermen pulling their nets from the beach and literally not a single bird. Before getting back to Woe we drove and walked a good dirt road to the left-hand side (look for the large boxer statue), taking us in the Keta lagoon's wetland area with many herons, egrets and waders.

Afternoon visit to the lagoon watching tower in Tegbi, not signposted but look for the Kapota Road sign and a liquore store called "Self Control Post – Community Center". The path took us through a local school party, so plenty of kids all over, then through some cultivated fields and finally to the watching tower. Good birds seen along the path through the salty wetland area. Late visit at sunset to the Cape St. Paul light house, and good dinner at the well signposted Happy Corner restaurant, on the main road where the lighthouse's dirt road begins.

Species only found at Keta lagoon: Peregrine falcon, Purple swamphen, Kittlitz's plover, Black-tailed godwit, Plain-backed & Tawny pipits, Yellow-throated longclaw, Melodious & Sedge warblers

December 3rd: Woe – Accra

This was the end of our 13 day trip with David, but we still had some places to bird on the way back to Accra. Firstly we visited Ada Foah and the nearby Songow lagoon, in Pute. The latter a good place for terns (Royal, Sandwich, Common, Black) and waders (Curlew sandpiper, Little stint, Sanderling, Greenshank) but incredibly and sadly dirty all over. Next stop at Dawhenya Irrigation Project (roughly 1 hour before Accra), a dirt road we would have never found without David. We birded a small wet area with herons, egrets and waders; while along the electric wires we found our only Mosque and Red-rumped swallows of the trip. The road ended at an old irrigation dam, with some rice fields and a new Italian project working tomatoe fields. Our very last birding stop was at Sakumo lagoon, along the main road entering Accra. Good birds in there as well, including a large population of Collared pratin coles.

At this stage, 3'000 km loop trip and 240 species seen!

We paid a visit to GWS headquarter where we ended our trip with David and Patrick. We really had a great time and can definitely recommend other birders to visit Ghana with GWS.

For our night in Accra we ended up at Beverly Hills Hotel. Very friendly people and well positioned, but the rooms could be cleaner for 25\$.

Species only found at Songow lagoon: Sanderling, Curlew sandpiper

Species only found at Dawhenya irrigation system: Green & Marsh sandpipers, Common redshank, Mosque & Red-rumped swallows

Species only found at Sakumo lagoon: Collared pratincole

December 4th: Accra – Akatsi/Xavi

We still had a full week in Ghana by ourselves, so we decided to visit Xavi, an eco-tourism community project we heard about, and then spend some days enjoying the seaside in Ada Foah.

We reduced our luggage to a comfortable backpack and left an extra luggage at the Beverly Hills' storage room. At Tudu Lorry station we took a Tro Tro to Akatsi (about 3,30 hours). Akatsi was a very small village where we stayed at the Black Cat Hotel, well signposted along the main road (no meals available there). From Akatsi to Xavi there is a 12 km dirt road to travel by local taxis.

A Peace Corp's eco-tourism project is helping Xavi community, offering a canoe trip along the Lotor River with some very good birds to look for. The river is about 20 minutes walk from the village, so bring plenty of water along!

At our first visit a young boy took us on a short canoe trip in the heat of the afternoon with not many birds around, so we asked for a longer birding trip for next morning and went back to Akatsi, to have a good dinner at Magava Hotel's restaurant.

December 5th: Akatsi/Xavi

We managed to start the canoe trip round 8:00 and went as far as the size of the river permitted, had a very good time and saw many special birds, although the many local fishermen prevented the shier species to show up. Dinner as yesterday at Magava Hotel where again we were the only guests, as well as the only white tourists in Akatsi.

Species only found at Akatsi / Xavi : Little bittern, Blue-spotted wood dove, Levaillant's cuckoo, Blue-breasted kingfisher, **Rosy bee-eater**, Northern crombec, Red-faced cisticola, Black-winged red bishop

December 6th: Akatsi – Ada Foah

In about 2 hours a Tro Tro bus took us to Ada Kesseh, from where another Tro Tro covered the 15 km to Ada Foah. It felt hotter and more humid in there.

We paid a visit to the very basic Cocoloco Rest Camp, some 30 min walk from Ada village, but decided to stay at the more comfortable and closer to the village Garden Club. Actually, the seaside in Ada was very disappointing, the current being too strong to swim and the beaches, as clearly mentioned in the Bradt Travel Guide, have got a different rule in the Ghanaian culture and are used as open toilet and rubbish dump...

December 7th: Ada Foah/Volta River

It was election day today in Ghana. This morning saw us on a boring and overpriced canoe trip along the wide Volta River. In 3 hours we only had a few birds: Slender-billed weavers and Oriole warbler the only special ones. Funny-looking Mud skippers again, some crabs and a goanna-like large lizard locally called Alligator. An afternoon visit to the fishing village of Aizenya added nothing but rubbish and public toilet, but at least our dinner at Manet Paradise Hotel was good.

December 8th: Ada Foah/Songow Lagoon

Early morning taxi to Pute for our second visit to Songow Lagoon. The low tide kept the birds even farther away, but apparently there were the same species seen here with David days ago. After the unexciting day of yesterday the very dirty Songow Lagoon and surrounding village didn't look too attractive, so to fill the morning up we walked the 8-10 km back to Ada Foah along the beach and had 1 Common sandpiper and 1 Sanderling only. It felt so sad to see these little and remote villages fully packed with rubbish and we wondered what sort of better future this people can hope for. Dinner at Manet Paradise Hotel again.

December 9th: Ada Foah - Accra

There wasn't much else to do and see in here, so we headed back to Accra by direct Tro Tro bus from Ada Foah. In about 2 hours we arrived at Tema station and back to our Beverly Hills Hotel. Although the traffic jam in Accra produces a lot of smog, we found the town quite easy to walk around, safe and pretty clean.

December 10th: Accra/Shai Hills/Aburi Botanical Garden

We left Accra, as soon as our privately organised taxi driver arrived, towards Shai Hills (about 1 hour/60 km). This morning we explored the northern and eastern part of the reserve by driving to the Sacred Bat Cave (many "Incense bats" there) first, and from there by walking with a local scout to the viewpoint of Hionweyu hilltop, 290m/asl. Very nice view from up there and Lesser spot-nosed monkeys.

Next we drove to Aburi Botanical Garden, via the hilly Larteh road again. Aburi is itself on top of a hill and was a very nice place to spend some time in, cool and peaceful with a lovely restaurant. A visit to the handicraft market just as we left Aburi towards Accra was a funny experience. Dinner at the White Bell restaurant, with the nice and cool breeze P. Briggs mentioned.

Species only found at Aburi botanical garden: Chestnut-winged forest starling

December 11th: Accra – Milan/Malpensa

Last morning exploring Accra by foot, some shopping and late flight back to Milan round midnight. The Landing Restaurant, just outside the airport, served very good meals under a starry sky. Bye-bye Ghana!

December 12th: Milan/Malpensa

Arrival at Malpensa airport at 6:30 am, -2°C!

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| This list roughly follows the species order of: Helm Identification Guides, Birds of Western Africa, Nik Borrow and Ron Demey, 2001. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| species seen | GHANA 20.11-11.12.2004 | Paola Ricceri & Marco Salvioni - Switzerland | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Pambrus-Densu river delta 21.11 | Hans Cottage Botel & Kakum 12-23.11 | Bobiri FR 23-24 & 29.11 | Boabeng Fiema MS 24-25.11 | Mole NPK 25-28.11 | Atewa forest 29-30.11 | Shai Hills 30.11 & 10.12 | Woe & Keta lagoon 1-3.12 | Pute & Songow lagoon 3.12 | Dawhenya irrigation 3.12 | Sakumo lagoon - Accra 3.12 | Akatsi - Xavi/Lotor river 4-5.12 | Ada Foah & Volta river 6-9.12 | Aburi botanical garden 10.12 |
| 1 | Cormorant, Long-tailed or Reed | <i>Phalacrocorax africanus africanus</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | |
| 1 | Heron, Black-headed | <i>Ardea melanocephala</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Heron, Grey | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 1 | Heron, Purple | <i>Ardea purpurea</i> | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Heron, Squacco | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | | |
| 1 | Heron, Striated or Greenbacked | <i>Butorides striatus</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Night-Heron, Black-crowned | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Egret, Cattle | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | Egret, Great | <i>Egretta alba</i> | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 1 | Egret, Intermediate or Yellow-billed | <i>Ardea intermedia</i> | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Egret, Little | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | Egret, Western Reef (<i>black morpho</i>) | <i>Egretta gularis</i> | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | |
| 1 | Hamerkop | <i>Scopus umbretta minor</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Bittern, Little | <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i> | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Stork, Saddle-billed | <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Stork, Woolly-necked | <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Ibis, Hadada | <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i> | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Whistling-Duck, White-faced | <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i> | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Goose, Spur-winged | <i>Plectropterus gambensis gambensis</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Gymnogene | <i>Polyboroides typus pectoralis</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Bateleur | <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Vulture, Hooded | <i>Necrosyrtes monachus monachus</i> | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| 1 | Vulture, Palm-nut | <i>Gypohierax angolensis</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Vulture, White-backed | <i>Gyps africanus</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Kite, Black | <i>Milvus migrans migrans</i> | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | |
| 1 | Kite, Black-shouldered | <i>Elanus caeruleus caeruleus</i> | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| 1 | Kite, Yellow-billed | <i>Milvus parasitus</i> | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | Harrier, Eurasian Marsh | <i>Circus aeruginosus aeruginosus</i> | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Harrier, Pallid | <i>Circus macrourus</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Shikra, or Little Banded Goshawk | <i>Accipiter badius sphenurus</i> | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Sparrowhawk, Little | <i>Accipiter minullus</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Buzzard, Grasshopper | <i>Butastur rufipennis</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Buzzard, Lizard | <i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus monogrammicus</i> | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Buzzard, Red-necked | <i>Buteo auguralis</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Eagle, Crowned | <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i> | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Eagle, Martial | <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Eagle, Wahlberg's | <i>Aquila wahlbergi</i> | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Hawk-Eagle, African | <i>Aquila spilogaster</i> | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Kestrel, Grey | <i>Falco ardosiaceus</i> | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Falcon, Peregrine | <i>Falco peregrinus calidus; F.p.minor</i> | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Hobby, African | <i>Falco cuvierii</i> | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Francolin, Double-spurred | <i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | |
| | Button-Quail, Black-rumped | <i>Turnix nana</i> | | | | | | ? | | | | | | | |
| | Button-Quail, Small or Common | <i>Turnix sylvatica</i> | | | | | | ? | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Partridge, Stone | <i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i> | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Guineafowl, Helmeted | <i>Numida meleagris galeata</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Crake, Black | <i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Swamphen, Purple | <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Jacana, African | <i>Actophilornis africanus</i> | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Thick-knee, Senegal | <i>Burhinus senegalensis senegalensis</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Stilt, Black-winged | <i>Himantopus himantopus himantopus</i> | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| 1 | Painted-Snipe, Greater | <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Pratincole, Collared/Redwinged | <i>Glareola pratincola fuelleborni</i> | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Lapwing, Spur-winged | <i>Vanellus spinosus</i> | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| 1 | Lapwing, Wattled | <i>Vanellus senegallus senegallus</i> | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Turnstone, Ruddy | <i>Arenaria interpres interpres</i> | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 1 | Plover, Common Ringed | <i>Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula; C.h.tundrae</i> | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| 1 | Plover, Grey or Black-bellied | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | |
| 1 | Plover, Kittlitz's | <i>Charadrius pecuarius</i> | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 1 | Plover, European Golden | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> | | | | | | | ? | | | | | | |

