

Sierra Leone Birding Trip

(PART I)

Records of Interest



(Forest Robin Stiphromis erythrothorax - photo D Monticelli)

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Introduction

Trigger of it all: Jon Hornbuckle's 2007 trip report. He wrote: "Sierra Leone is a rewarding but challenging country for birding. It can be done on the cheap by masochists experienced in tough conditions and own bird-finding".

That's what we did with a two wheel drive hired van and some basic logistical support.

The result of it is a particularly good list of **348 species**. Possibly the best up to now although we inevitably dipped some much sought after species (end of this document).

Here's a first annotated list of the most interesting species we've got

Whatever the way you choose for birding Sierra Leone, it has to be said that, a lot is still to be done there. If Sierra Leone is no terra incognita, for some tricky species, it seems *there still is no really reliable site* in Sierra Leone.

For species like the Sierra Leone Prinia (*Schistolais leontica*) for example, further surveys in the remote Loma Mountain region and in the Tingi Hills should give good chances to find new sites. And these places (a.o. !) might definitely bring other good surprises...!

We hope this first of his kind independent bird trip in this - magnificent and safe (!) - country of Sierra Leone will motivate others to do so!

Full final reports (in French as well as in English) with Excell global list will follow asap.

Some good information is already available - unfortunately in French - on Ornithomedia web magazine and blog (cf. www.ornithomedia.com and www.blog-ornithomedia.com).

Best regards,

*Robert Langhendries
& Benoît Forget*

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From left to right :Robert Langhendries, Benoît Forget, Modu (blue t-shirt) Ibrahim, our excellent driver (showing Malimbe nest) and some rangers of Sileti (Gola East).The Olivon telescope was offered by Top Optics to the African Bird Club (ABC) local branch of Sierra leone.

ANNOTATED BIRDLIST

Abbreviations

Freetown Western Peninsula : FWP.
Outamba - Kilimi.National Park : OKNP.
Mamunta Mayosso Wildlife Sanctuary : MMWS.
Gola North : GN.
Gola East : GE.

E = Upper Guinea Endemic, **NE** = Upper Guinea Near Endemic.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Two at Regent's Forest Dam.

Pink-Backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

A group of 7 at Yawri Bay.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*

Two birds near Kenema on the Moa River. Two others on a river along the road from Koidu to Makeni.

African Pygmy-goose *Nettapus auritus*

A couple sighted at Roneita lake (MMWS).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One was seen on a palm tree at OKNP.

Black crowned night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

One at the ex "ferry" on Monga river (Little Scarcies) on the way to OKNP.

African Open Billed Stork *Anastomus lamelligerus*

Rare species in Sierra Leone. 2 were seen at lake Roneita (MMWS);

Sacred Ibis *threskiornis aethiopica*

Four were seen at Yawri bay.

African White-Backed Vulture *Gyps Africanus*

A single bird above Kamakwyie (Outamba region)

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*

A single bird was sighted at Roneita Lake (Mamunta Mayosso Wildlife Sanctuary).

Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini*

A Single bird was sighted on our drive from Kono to Makeni.

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

One excellent sighting at Gola North. Uncommon species in Sierra Leone.

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus*

One bird seen along the road Kamakwyie 5outamba region) – Freetown.

Red Thighed Sparrow hawk *Accipiter erythropus*

One at the forest side of Waterloo (FWP). Uncommon species.

Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*

A single bird was seen well in flight at Western Peninsula. Another seen near Lalehun (Gola North)

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

One at Guma valley (FWP) & one at lake Roneita (MMWS).

Red-necked Buzzard *Buteo auguralis*

One sighted at Peacock Farm (FWP) and one along Kabala road (Bumbuna area).

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*

1 juvenile presenting the characteristics of the species along Kabala road (Bumbuna area). The species is normally absent in that region.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*

One bird on the way to Lalehun (GN)

Ayre's Eagle *Hierraetus ayeresii*

One in Bumbuna region.

Cassin's Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus africanus*

One at Regent's forest - Western Peninsula Forest Reserve.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus*

A couple at OKNP. According to the field guide "Birds of Western Africa", the place is the very limit of its breeding zone.

White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra*

Heard at Tiwai.

African Finfoot *Podica senegalensis*

On the way from Kono to Makeni a single bird was seen from the bridge crossing Sewa River. A female with a chick at OKNP.

Forbes' Plover *Charadrius forbesi*

Five birds at Roneita lake (MMWS).

Egyptian Plover *Pluvianus aegyptius*

Three birds that at Tiwai, along the Moea River.

Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*

Good numbers at Tiwai on the Moa River. Singles near Kenema. The West African race has very distinctive chestnut markings on the head which is lacking in the race found further south.

Bronze-naped Pigeon *Columba iriditorques*

Seemingly common in all rain forest and not difficult to see.

Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata*

Frequently heard and quite often seen with 10 visiting a fruiting tree at OKNP

Guinea Turaco *Tauraco persa*

Only 1 seen, in a forest patch Bumbuna – Makeni road.

Yellow-billed Turaco *Tauraco macrorhynchus*

Fairly common in tropical forest except at Tiwai.

Levaillant's cuckoo *Oxylophus levaillanti*

One at Katumbu (Bumbuna region). One juvenile at Gola North (!).

African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis*

One male at OKNP.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One at Gola North;

Olive Long Tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus*

Heard and seen briefly at Gola North.

Thicket Billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti*

Excellent sighting of two birds at OKNP following a group of white Helmet Shrikes (which they parasitize according to N. Borrow & R. Demey).

Yellowbill *Ceuthmochares aereu*

Singles at the Golf (Freetown), Regent's forest, River n^o2, Bumbuna and on the way to Gola North.

Black-throated Coucal *Centropus leucogaster*

Heard on Tiwai Island.

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*

One at OKNP.

Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*

Singles on the road near Bumbuna and MMWS.

Standard-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*

Two females in Bumbuna region. One beautiful male while crossing Monga river (Little Scarcies) – OKNP.

Sabine's Spinetail *Rhaphidura sabini*

Eight over River n°2. A few over at Gola North.

Cassin's Spinetail *Neafrapus cassini*

Two at Gola North.

African black swift *Apus barbatus*

Four near Lalehun (Gola North).

Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*

Two at Gola North, one at Tiwai Island and one at Sileti.

Shining blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadibrachys*

One at the pool at the Black-capped Rufous-Warbler site.

African pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus*

One at the Golf (Freetown), one at Gola North.

Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia*

Heard at Gola North and Tiwai Island.

Black Bee-Eater *Merops Gularis*

A couple at Sileti (Gola East).

Blue-Headed Bee-Eater *Merops muelleri*

A couple at Gola North..

Swallow tailed Bee-Eater *Merpos Hirundineus*

A group of eight at OKNP.

Green Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*

Two at OKNP.

Black Wood-Hoopoe *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

Two at Kabumbu (Bumbuna region).

Forest Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus castaneiceps*

One bird presenting the characteristic of the species in a big bird party at a Gola Malimbe nest site – Gola North. The species is officially not part of the Sierra Leone bird list.

White-crested Hornbill *Tockus albocristatus*

Heard at Gola North and Sileti (Gola East).

Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*

2 seen at Sileti - Gola East.

African Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus*

The commonest hornbill, seen throughout.

Piping Hornbill *Ceratogymna fistulator*

Fairly common in forest.

Brown-cheeked Hornbill (E) *Ceratogymna cylindricus*

Three at Gola North.

Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*

Fairly common in forest. Also present at OKNP. One in a tree along the shore at Yawri bay(!).

Black-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna atrata*

Three at Sileti – Gola East.

Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*

One at Regent's forest.

Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieilloti*

One along the road Koidu/Makeni.

Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchailloi*

One on the way to Lalehun (Gola North).

Hairy Breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hisuta*

Two at Gola North.

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator*

One at OKNP.

Little Green Woodpecker (NE) *Campethera maculosa*

One at Regent's Forest; one at OKNP.

Buff-spotted Woodpecker *Campethera nivosa*

Two at Regent's forest.

Brown-eared Woodpecker *Campethera caroli*

One at Regent's Forest; three at Gola North.

Melancholy Woodpecker (Gabon Woodpecker) *Dendropicos lugubris*

Singles at Gola North.

Fire-bellied Woodpecker (NE) *Dendropicos pyrrhogaster*

Three at Gola North.

African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*

1ex at Katumbu (Bumbuna region). Heard at OKNP.

Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis*

One displaying in Gola North.

White-throated Blue Swallow *Hirundo nigrita*

Sighted on all main rivers : Moa, Sewa, Rockel & Little Scarcies among others.

Preuss's Swallow *Petrochelidon preussi*

A group of 400 by a pool along the road Koidu – Makeni. A colony of about 1000 bird at the Sewa river bridge – same road.

Grey rumped swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*

Two at on the river Mango (Little Scarcies) – OKNP.

Pied winged swallow *Hirundo leucosoma*

One at OKNP. Four down the golfe course – Freetown.

Square-tailed Sawwing *Psalidoprocne nitens*

Fairly common near forest.

Fanti Sawwing *Psalidoprocne obscura*

Singles at Peacock farm, Regent's Forest and River N°2 among others. Scarcer than *nitens* but often with it.

Tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*

One at OKNP.

White breasted cuckoo-shrike *Coracina pectoralis*

Two at OKNP.

Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga phoenicea*

Only females. Four at Bumbuna, two at MMWS. One at OKNP.

Purple Throated cuckoo shrike *Campephaga quiscalina*

One male at Gola North. One female at OKNP.

Little Grey Greenbul *Andropadus gracilis*

Small numbers at Gola.

Ansorge's Greenbul *Andropadus ansorgei*

Singles at Regent's forest and Gola.

Slender-billed Greenbul *Andropadus gracilirostris*

Singles at Regent's forest and Gola.

Yellow-whiskered Bulbul *Andropadus latirostris*

Singles at Regent's forest and Gola North.

Golden Greenbul *Calyptocichla serina*

Two at Gola North.

Honeyguide Greenbul *Baeopogon indicator*

Singles at Regent's forest and at Gola East and North.

Simple Leaflove *Chlorocichla simplex*

Singles at Yawri bay and Gola;

Yellow throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla falkensteinii*

Two at OKNP.

Swamp Greenbul *Thescelocichla leucopleura*

MMWS, Gola East and North

Leaf-love *Pyrrhurus scandens*

One at OKNP.

Icterine Greenbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*

One at lalehun; one at Gola North;

Red tailed greenbul *Criniger Calurus*

Four at Gola North.

Yellow bearded greenbul (E) *Criniger Olivaceus*

Two at Gola North

Western bearded greenbul (NE) *Criniger Barbatus*

Eight at Gola North and Sileti (Gola East).

Red-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda syndactyla*

One at Sileti - Gola East.

Green-tailed Bristlebill (E) *Bleda eximia*

One at Regent's forest. One at Gola North where quite frequently heard.

Grey-headed Bristlebill *Bleda canicapilla*

Western Peninsula and Gola East.

White tailed ant thrush *Neocossyphus poensis*

One at Guma valley (FWP); one at Bumbuna.

Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush (NE) *Stizorhina finschii*

Singles in Gola forests.

White-tailed Alethe *Alethe diademata*

One at Guma Valley and one Gola North.

Sharpe's Apalis (E) *Apalis sharpii*

Two at Regent's forest. Heard at Gola.

Kemp's Longbill (E) *Macrosphenus kempii*

One in Gola North.

Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea*

One at Gola North.

Yellow bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*

One at OKNP.

African Forest-Flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata*

Two at Gola North.

Ussher's Flycatcher (E) *Muscicapa ussheri*

One at Bumbuna and two at Sileti – Gola East.

Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*

Two at Bumbuna.

White browed forest flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*

Two at River N°2, One at OKNP.

African blue flycatcher *Elminia laugicauda*

One at OKNP.

Chestnut capped flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccalli*.

One at Gola North.

Forest Robin *Stiphrornis erythrothorax*

Heard daily in forest. Good sightings at Regent's forest and Gola North.

White-Fronted Black Chat *Myrmecocichla albifrons*

One at OKNP.

Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher *Bias musicus*

A pair at the Golfe (Freetown), another at Bumbuna, at Peacock farm, one male at Yawri bay; a pair at MMWS.

African Shrike-flycatcher *Megabyas flammulaus*

One male at Sileti – Gola East.

Red-cheeked Wattle-eye (NE) *Platysteira blissetti*

A pair before Lalehun - Gola North.

Chestnut Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia castanea*

A pair at River N°2; another at Sileti – Gola North.

Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Platysteira concreta*

Two in Gola North.

Senegal Batis *Batis senegalensis*

A pair at OKNP.

Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*

One at Gola North; one at Sileti p Gola East.

Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri*

One excellent sighting before Lalehun. One at Gola North Heard daily in that forest.

Rufous-winged Illadopsis (E) *Illadopsis rufescens*

One at Regent's Forest. Heard fairly commonly in Gola.

Brown Illadopsis *Illadopsis fulvescens*

One seen at Regent's Forest. Haerd in Gola.

Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*

Three at Peacock farm.

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus*

One at Bumbuna.

White-necked Picathartes (E) *Picathartes gymnocephalus*

Two briefly at the nest site near the Guma valley road (FWP). Four at Kambui north's famous breeding site.

White-shouldered Black Tit *Parus Guineensis*

Three at OKNP.

Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*

One at OKNP.

Western violet backed sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*

A pair along Kabala road – Bumbuna area.

Brown Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus*

Two at the Golf (Freetown).

Little Green sunbird *Anthreptes seimundi*

Five in different bird parties – Gola North.

Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*

One at Gola North and two at OKNP.

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird *Cyanomitra cyanolaema*

One at Gola North.

Carmelyte sunbird *Chalcomitra fuliginosa*

One at River N°2 (FWP).

Copper sunbird *Cinnyris cuprea*

One at the Golf (Freetown);

Splendid sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigaster*

Singles seen in the Bumbuna area. One at OKNP.

Johanna's Sunbird *Cinnyris johannae*

One at River N°2 p Freetown, Western Peninsula. One at Gola North.

Superb Sunbird *Cinnyris superbus*

One at Regent's Forest – Freetown Western Peninsula.

White Helmet-Shrike *Prionops Plumatus*

Parties of five to Twelve birds in the Bumbuna area, MMWS and OKNP.

Red billed Helmet-Shrike (NE) *Prionops caniceps*

Two after Lalehun on the way to Gola North camp site. Three others in Gola North.

Sabine's Puffback *Dryoscopus sabini*

Singles at Regent Forest, Freetown Western Peninsula.

Turati's Boubou (E) *Laniarius turatii*

Two sighted at Peacock Farm (FWP). Heard in Bumbuna area. One at MMWS.

Sooty Boubou *Laniarius leucorhynchus*

Singles in bird parties at Gola North.

Many Coloured Bush-shrike *Malaconotus multicolour*

Five in different bird parties at Gola North. Commonly heard in Gola forest.

Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus*

One at Regent's Forest, Two at Peacock Farm (FWP).

Emerald Starling (NE) *Lamprotornis iris*

Quite common in the savanna around Katumbu - Bumbuna area A Group of about thirty in a tree there gathering for the night. Good numbers in OKNP.

Copper-tailed Glossy-Starling (E) *Lamprotornis cupreocauda*

Two at Tiwai.

Maxwell's Black Weaver *Ploceus albinucha*

Good numbers in some bird parties – Gola North.

Red-vented Malimbe *Malimbus scutatus*

Singles and a pair near Katumbu village (Bumbuna area). Singles also seen near Lalehun – Gola north.

Crested Malimbe *Malimbus malimbicus*

Singles at Gola North.

Red-headed Malimbe *Malimbus rubricollis*

Three on the way to Lalehun - Gola North.

Gola Malimbe (E) *Malimbus Ballmanni*

Five in a big bird parties passing over one of the Gola Malimbe nests – deep in Gola North forest. Three together and singles the next day in other bird parties;

Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*

Two males of the typical west african black subspecies along Kabala Road –Bumbuna area.

Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii*

Good views of two birds at Peacock Farm, one at MMWS and two at OKNP.

Yellow winged Pytilia *Pytilia hypogrammica*

One male along Kabala road – Bumbuna area.

Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch *Nigrita bicolor*

Two near Katumbu (Bumbuna area), one at OKNP.

Gray-headed Nigrita *Nigrita canicapilla*

One at the Freetown Golf Course, one at Yawri bay and one at Peacock Farm (FWP).

Grey-Headed Oliveback *Nesocharis capistrata*

One pair with two juveniles; one at OKNP.

Crimson Seedcracker (E) *Pyrenestes sanguineus*

One female and one male at Peacock Farm (FWP).

Western Bluebill *Spermophaga haematina*

Four at MMWS.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda*

Common in the Bumbuna area and OKNP. A little group of four near Lalehun – Gola North.

Zebra-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

One female was sighted in Katumbu savanna - Bumbuna area.

Blue-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*

We had good views of two near Peacock Farm (FWP).

Magpie Mannikin *Lonchura fringilloides*

Three birds near the village of Lalehun, Gola North area.

Jambandu Indigobird *Vidua raricola*

Good of single males in breeding plumage in the Bumbuna area. One at OKNP.

Cameroon Indigobird *Vidua camerunensis*

Good view of a male in full breeding plumage in the Bumbuna area.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

Two males in uncomplete breeding plumage in Bumbuna area.

Togo Paradise Whydah *Vidua togoensis*

A single male in full breeding dress perched on top of a tree along Kabala road - Bumbuna area.

West African/Streaky-headed Seedeater *Serinus gularis*

One at Bumbuna (JH).

Missed species

White-crested Bittern, *Tigriornis leucolophus*

It seems there isn't any reliable site for the species yet in Sierra Leone apart maybe with one recent spot found after our departure near Regent's forest (Freetown).

White breasted guineafowl *Agelastes meleagrides* :

One full day searching in gola North with no success, apart with evidence of its recent presence (large patches of tossed dead leaves). Our friends Aladji Siaka and David Monticelli got the species a few days after our departure in Gola east.

Rufous fishing owl : *Scotopelia Usscheri*.

It seems there isn't any really reliable site for the species yet in Sierra Leone apart with the GPS data given by Dowsett in 2007.

Brown Nightjar, *Caprimulgus binotatus*.

Our friends Aladji Siaka and David Monticelli got the species a few days after our departure in Gola east.

Sierra Leone Prinia *Schistolais leontica*.

The famous Bumbuna spot near the new dam that already didn't give the assurance to see the species is now a forbidden military zone. Further surveys in the Loma Mountain region and in the Tingi Hills should give good chances to find new sites for the species.

Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike, *Campephaga lobata*

It seems there still isn't any really reliable site for the species yet in Sierra Leone (?). One potentially reliable good site has been found for this species near Lalehun a few months after our departure.

Black-capped Rufous-Warbler, *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*

Our friends Alhadji Siaka and David Monticelli have done a search for that species in one of the few reliable known sites. Without success. Further surveys in the Loma Mountain region and in the Tingi Hills should give good chances to find new sites for the species.

Nimba Flycatcher, *Melaenornis annamarulae*. Seems very rare in Sierra Leone. Maybe further surveys in the Loma Mountain region and in the Tingi Hills should give some chances to contact the species on a more regular base?

Tessmann's Flycatcher, *Muscicapa tessmanni*

There has been a claim for that species near Lalehun a few months after our departure (Alhadji Siaka).

Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*

Lagden's Bushshrike, *Malaconotus lagdeni* : We taped it many times in Gola North with no success. One potentially reliable good site has been found for this species a few months after our departure.