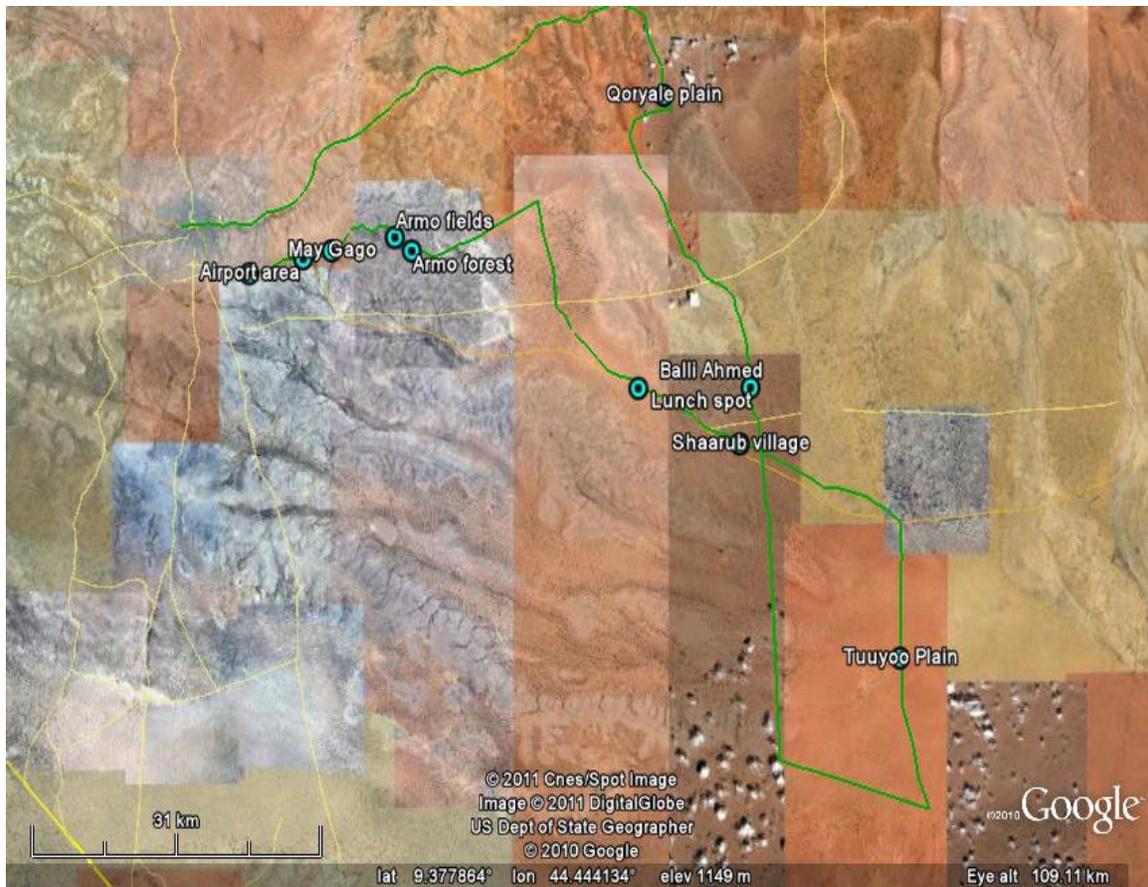


## **Birding in and around Hargeisa, Somaliland, December 2010**

by Bram Piot

From December 10 to 17 I stayed in Hargeisa for my work with PSI, a public health NGO that recently established an office in Somaliland. For Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> I had organised a day out birding with Abdi Jama from NatureSomaliland, who had also guided three groups earlier this year – the first commercial birding tours to visit Somaliland.

Our day trip took us east of Hargeisa through thorn bush, acacia woodland, rocky plains and wadis all the way to the vast Tuuyo plain (see map 1). Several very productive stops were made along the first 20 kilometers of the trip; Tuuyo plain was explored in the early afternoon so the birds there was not very active – e.g. none of the larks were singing, but this may also be because it is non-breeding season for most species. Our late lunch stop to the north of Shaarub village proved to be a good spot, but a long drive back to Hargeisa prevented us from fully exploring this area or the plains that we crossed further to the north (Qoryale for example looked pretty good). On hindsight, it probably would have been more efficient (less driving, more birding!) to drive back the way we came, rather than doing the long loop towards the Hargeisa-Berbera tarmac road. Total trip distance was about 280 km.



Nearly 100 species were recorded during this day trip, with personal highlights including 3 species of Bustard (Little Brown, Heuglin's, Buff-crested), several confiding Somali and Double-banded Coursers, a Greyish Eagle-Owl, 6 lark species including the endemic Lesser Hoopoe and Sharpe's Larks, an Arabian Warbler, several Golden-breasted Starlings, a Three-streaked Tchagra, Rosy-patched Bush-shrikes, Somali Wheatears, Somali Bee-eaters, a group of Scaly Chatterers, etc.

In addition to the records that were obtained during this unique day trip, the gardens of the Maan Soor hotel held a number of resident and migrant species, and a few opportunistic observations were made during a visit throughout town on the 16<sup>th</sup>. On the morning of Friday 17<sup>th</sup>, together with a couple of colleagues, I visited the area just north-east of Hargeisa (officially still within the city limits and thus not requiring an armed "SPU" police escort). There are two hills here (named Naasa Hablood), some farmland, dry riverbeds, as well as an incredibly smelly abattoir dump. Only a few hours were spent in this area because I had to head for the airport at midday, but a number of additional species and interesting records were obtained. These sites are shown on the second map.



**GPS coordinates** (in decimal degrees, WGS84) of main sites are the following:

- Hargeisa town, mostly on NW edge around N9.57° / E44.03°
- Naasa Hablood hills just east of Hargeisa and surroundings: N9.6° / E44.12°
- Airport area to Ina Qarboosh village: N9.52° / E44.12°
- May Gago village: N9.54° / E44.20°
- Armo area - fields: N9.55° / E44.26° - woodland: N9.54° / E44.28°
- Woodland near Shaarub village, referred as our lunch spot: N9.427° / E44.61°

- Tuuyo plain: N9.20° / E44.72°
- Qoryaale plain: N9.65° / E44.52°

The following **resources** were useful in preparing my trip:

- The Somalia page on the African Bird Club website:  
[www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somalia/introduction.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somalia/introduction.html)
- Report on the trip organised by H. Buck (Buckbird Tours) in February 2010, available on the ABC [www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somalia/visiting.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Somalia/visiting.html)
- Trip report from the Birdquest Sept. 2010 tour, for download on [www.birdquest.co.uk](http://www.birdquest.co.uk). Additional photos are on Nik Borrow's website: <http://web.mac.com/nikborrow>

As far as I'm aware, no report is available from the South African tour from May 2010 (by Birding Africa); there is just a short note and a few pictures on <http://birdingafricacapetownpelagics.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/callan-exploring-somaliland-with-michael-mills-and-others/> and related posts.

## **Annotated Species List**

Note: unless stated otherwise, the records in the species list refer to the trip on December 11<sup>th</sup>. The 23 species that are marked with a \* were new to me.

### SCOPIIDAE

1. Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*: two singles seen in the Armo area.

### CICONIIDAE

2. Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*: one at the abattoir dump just east of Hargeisa (17<sup>th</sup>).

### ACCIPITRIDAE

3. Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*: Just one seen in Hargeisa on the 10<sup>th</sup>.
4. Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*: one in bush country between Balli Ahmed and Shaarub villages.
5. Eastern Chanting Goshawk *Melierax poliopterus*: two at Tuuyo plains.
6. Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*: common at the abattoir dump, with probably some 40 to 50 birds hanging around there. There may have been Steppe Eagles among them as well, but lack of time (and a spotting scope) prevented me from verifying.
7. Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*: interesting record of a pale morph at one of the two "Naasa Hablood" hills, just east of Hargeisa: there are very few Somaliland records, despite it being a fairly frequent winter visitor in the Ethiopian Rift Valley (and Djibouti?).

### FALCONIDAE

8. Pygmy Falcon *Polihierax semitorquatus*: one was seen a few kilometers west of Harosheekh village (near Tuuyo plain).

### OTIDIDAE

9. Heuglin's Bustard\* *Neotis heuglini*: great views of a female with a fully grown juvenile near our lunch spot North of Shaarub – definitely one of the highlights of the trip.
10. Buff-crested Bustard *Lophotis gindiana*: one was in cultivated land a few kilometers east of Armo, and one or two were seen at dusk some 5km north of Qoryale.
11. Little Brown Bustard\* *Eupodotis humilis*: a total of 6 birds were seen, often at close range: 3+2 between airport and Ina Qarboosh, 1 near May Gago.

#### GLAREOLIDAE

12. Somali Courser\* *Cursorius somalensis*: said to be pretty common throughout the area visited on the 11<sup>th</sup>, though only 3 were seen between the airport and Ina Qarboosh, and two in fields at Armo “forest”.
13. Double-banded Courser\* *Rhinoptilus africanus*: seen on several occasions on the 11<sup>th</sup>, seemingly slightly more common than the previous species: one between May Gago and Armo, 3 or 4 on Tuuyo plain, two at Qoryale.

#### CHARADRIIDAE

14. Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*: a few were in the dry riverbed near the main bridge in Hargeisa town (at least 5 on 10<sup>th</sup> and 8 on 17<sup>th</sup>), and one at the abattoir on 17<sup>th</sup>.
15. Crowned Plover (Crowned Lapwing) *Vanellus coronatus*: frequently seen on the 11<sup>th</sup>, including two small groups one the Tuuyo plains; about 5 were near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Recording of calls: [XC66451](#)

#### PTEROCLIDAE

16. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*: a flock of 20 to 25 first seen in flight, landing amidst the camels and goats on Qoryale plain.

#### COLUMBIDAE

17. Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*: seen a couple of times at hotel, and a few birds near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>; several encounters on the 11<sup>th</sup> (airport area, Armo “forest”).
18. Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*: common in town.
19. Feral Pigeon *Columbia livia*: one in town and a few at the airport on 17<sup>th</sup>.
20. Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*: singles seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and on 16<sup>th</sup> near the hotel.
21. African Mourning Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*: At least two were near Hargeisa airport on the 11<sup>th</sup>.
22. Ring-necked Dove *Streptopelia capicola*: Seen daily in and around my Hargeisa hotel; frequently encountered during the day trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>; numerous near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.
23. Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*: common in and around Hargeisa.

#### PSITTACIDAE

24. African Orange-bellied Parrot *Poicephalus rufiventris*: a lonely female along the track, a few kilometers after the “Armo” woodland site.

#### MUSOPHAGIDAE

25. White-bellied Go-away Bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster*: commonly seen and heard on the 11<sup>th</sup>, especially in the more densely wooded areas. Also about 5 near the hills on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Recording of calls: [XC66958](#)

#### STRIGIDAE

26. Greyish Eagle-Owl *Bubo cinerascens*: one was seen at close range, sitting in an acacia tree, at Armo “forest”. This species was not recorded by the two British groups who visited Somaliland earlier this year, and was labeled the highlight of our day trip by Abdi!
27. Little Owl *Athene noctua*: One was heard in Hargeisa (NW of the city center, at a colleague’s house) on 15<sup>th</sup>. The call heard was very similar to one of the typical calls of European Little Owl that I’m used to hearing (a drawn-out, plaintive “whoooooop”).

#### APODIDAE

28. Little Swift *Apus affinis*: about 20 together flying around the northern hill where it may be breeding, 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### COLIIDAE

29. Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus*: a small flock was regularly seen on the hotel grounds and near the office; also in several other locations in town, near the airport and around the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>, but infrequently encountered on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### MEROPIDAE

30. Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*: one was at the Maan Soor hotel on the 10<sup>th</sup>; the next day, one was east of Armo and one was near our lunch spot. Three singles near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Local ssp. is *cyanostictus*
31. Somali Bee-eater\* *Merops revouillii*: appears to be relatively common: two in the May Gago area, at least one north-west of Balli Ahmed, one in the Tuuyo plain, one on the way back to Shaarub, and finally one at our lunch spot; 2 or 3 were near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### PHOENICULIDAE

32. Abyssinian Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus minor*: seen in scattered localities, always in well wooded areas: one near Ina Qarboosh, one near Shaarub, and 3 at our lunch spot.

#### UPUPIDAE

33. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: on the 11<sup>th</sup>, just one between Shaarub and Tuuyo and one at Qoryale; one near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. At least two were of ssp. *senegalensis*.

#### BUCEROTIDAE

34. Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill *Tockus flavirostris*: Seen near Ina Qarboosh (3 together) and at our lunch spot (two).

#### LYBIIDAE

35. Red-and-yellow Barbet *Trachyphonus erythrocephalus*: one at the lunch spot on the 11<sup>th</sup> and one near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### PICIDAE

36. Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*: a single was west of Armo on 11<sup>th</sup> and a pair was near the Hargeisa hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### ALAUDIDAE

37. Somali/Sharpe's Lark\* *Mirafra somalica/sharpaii*: Just one silent bird on the Tuuyo plains, roughly halfway between the two villages. It is currently not clear yet whether the birds here are "standard" Somali Lark or the *sharpaii* race of Rufous-naped (e.g. as per BHoA, HBW), though the latter is sometimes treated as a full species, Sharpe's Lark. To further complicate matters, certain authors (e.g. Sibley) refer to Somali Lark as *Mirafra sharpaii*... Based on what I have seen in the field, I would tend to follow Nik Borrow's suggestion, according to whom "the birds [...] on the Tuuyo plains are in fact what have been named as *sharpaii*. [...] I think that Rufous-naped Lark *M. africana sharpaii* is conspecific with *M. s. somalica* thus representing a third subspecies of Somali Lark *M. somalica sharpaii*. Thus *M. africana sharpaii* becomes a synonym of *M. somalica sharpaii*. The described bill lengths are possibly misleading but more westerly (and more easterly) birds seem to have shorter bills although nowhere as short as other populations of Rufous-naped Lark. It would explain why the two forms are supposed to overlap on the Tuuyo Plains and this feature has perhaps been wrongly stressed over and above other features". The bird that I saw seemed to most closely match the *sharpaii* illustration in HBW (where it is considered a ssp. of Rufous-naped, but listed as a potential split).
38. Lesser Hoopoe-lark\* *Alaemon hamertoni*: 3 or 4 on the Tuuyo plains, a km or so north of Abdi-Dheere village, on the SW edge of the plain. This Somali endemic only just extends into eastern Ethiopia. Subspecies in Somaliland is said to be *tertia*.
39. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*: frequently encountered on the 11<sup>th</sup>, including in fairly well wooded areas (e.g. the Acacia woodland at the lunch spot); one at the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Local ssp. presumably is *assabensis*, appearing very similar to birds I'd seen a few years earlier in Awash NP, Ethiopia. Some variation in plumage coloration was noted even within the restricted area that I visited, some birds being somewhat paler than others.

40. Blanford's Lark\* *Calandrella blanfordi*: a flock of 20 to 25 on the Tuuyo plains. Another poorly known lark species, restricted to the Horn of Africa and SW Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The local endemic ssp. is *daarodensis*. Recording of flight call: [XC66460](#).

41. Somali Short-toed Lark\* *Calandrella somalica*: Just one at Tuuyo.

42. Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*: common on the rocky soil near the airport and a few further East, incl. at Tuuyo, as well as on the Qoryale plain. Local ssp. is *elliotti*.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

43. Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*: one, presumably of the rather pale ssp. *arabica*, was at the northern hill on 17<sup>th</sup>.

44. Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*: regularly seen in small numbers in and around Hargeisa, also one at May Gago, a few on the way to Armo, and one near Balli Ahmed.

45. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: about 5 on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, near the PSI office.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

46. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: regularly seen and heard around the hotel, up to 8 together. Quite a few were near the Hargeisa dump on 17<sup>th</sup>.

47. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: at least two were seen daily around the hotel and office; one near the airport on 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, and one at the dump on 17<sup>th</sup>.

48. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: at least one at Tuuyo and another 2-3 while driving through the plains further North (up to Qoryaale). Recording of flight call: [XC66454](#).

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

49. Somali Bulbul *Pycnonotus somaliensis*: common in town (incl. one recently fledged on 14<sup>th</sup>); all birds that were well seen appeared to be pure *somaliensis*.

#### TURDIDAE

50. White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*: one at Armo woodland and another a little further East from there, and one at our lunch spot near Shaarub village; on the 17<sup>th</sup>, one was seen in a wadi just east of the hills. Local ssp. is the distinctive *leucoptera*, sometimes considered a separate species ("White-winged Scrub-Robin").

51. Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: seen twice at the hotel (10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>).

52. Somali Wheatear\* *Oenanthe phillipsi*: fairly common in areas with lots of stones, incl. fairly well wooded patches; seen mainly at the airport area, near our lunch spot, and around Qoryale (11<sup>th</sup>) as well as a 2 or 3 around the Hargeisa hills (17<sup>th</sup>).
53. Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: a few near the airport and one at Tuuyo; one at the hotel on 16<sup>th</sup>.
54. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*: 2 to 4 different birds were seen daily at the hotel, and at least one was frequently seen in the office gardens. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, just one near the airport and one N of Shaarub.
55. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*: two on the Tuuyo plains.
56. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: common throughout on the 11<sup>th</sup>, especially around the airport/Ina Qarboosh area; one near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.
57. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: two (at least one male) were near the top of the northern Hargeisa hill on 17<sup>th</sup>, presumably wintering here.

#### SYLVIIDAE

58. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*: one in the hotel gardens, 10<sup>th</sup>.
59. Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*: one was feeding near the settlement close to the hills, on 17<sup>th</sup>. Ssp. *griseoflava*.
60. Northern Crombec *Sylvietta brachyura*: singles on the hotel grounds, 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Ssp. in the region is *leucopsis*.
61. Arabian Warbler\* *Sylvia leucomelaena*: one was seen briefly at Armo Foret. Resident ssp. is *somaliensis*, which is also found in Djibouti.
62. Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*: a singing male (*rubsecens*) was seen NW of Shaarub.
63. Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: two or three were regularly seen on the hotel grounds (10<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>); one in woodland near Shaarub village, at our lunch spot.

64. Banded Parisoma *Parisoma boehmi*: singles or pairs were recorded at May Gago, Armo, and at our lunch spot; several were seen and heard around the hills on the 17<sup>th</sup> (ssp. *somalica*). Just like the other Parisomas, is sometimes placed in genus *Sylvia*. Recording of song: [XC66329](#).

#### CISTICOLIDAE

65. Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus*: a few birds (3 to 5 ind.) were seen on the Tuuyo plains. Ssp. in the Horn of Africa is *lavendulae*.
66. Pale Prinia\* *Prinia somalica*: two were well seen near the airport, and one was at May Gago; at least one heard near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Recording of call: [XC66317](#).
67. Red-fronted Warbler\* *Urorhipis (Spiloptila) rufifrons*: first seen at May Gago, followed by one at Armo, and one at Tuuyo (seen by Abdi); great views were obtained a week later, when a couple of small groups (2-5 together) were seen near the hills. Note that this unusual warbler is now often placed in its own, monotypic genus.
68. Brown-tailed Apalis\* *Apalis viridiceps*: heard at Armo and seen briefly near Shaarub (lunch spot). Often treated as a race of Yellow-breasted Apalis, *A. flavida*.
69. Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata*: one was heard at Armo on 11<sup>th</sup>. Local ssp. presumably is *abessinica*.
70. Grey Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes simplex*: singles were at May Gago and between this site and Armo; also one along a wadi near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

71. African Grey Flycatcher *Bradornis microrhynchus*: fairly common in wooded areas on 11<sup>th</sup>, and a few were in a wadi near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### PLATYSTEIRIDAE

72. Grey-headed Batis *Batis orientalis*: one was at Armo "forest" (11<sup>th</sup>) and one in a wooded patch near the Hargeisa hills (17<sup>th</sup>). Ssp. in the region is *bella*.

#### TIMALIIDAE

73. Scaly Chatterer (Bare-eyed Babbler)\* *Turdoides aylmeri*: about 10 birds together north of Shaarub, at our lunch spot.

#### PARIDAE

74. Northern Grey (Somali) Tit *Parus thruppi*: one was in the May Gago area. Recording of call on [XC66327](#).

#### NECTARINIIDAE

75. Eastern (Kenya) Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes orientalis*: a pair was seen near May Gago and a male was at our lunch spot; one near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.
76. Hunter's Sunbird\* *Chalcomitra hunteri*: a male at May Gago was the only sighting.
77. Nile Valley Sunbird *Hedydipna metallica*: just one (a young male) was seen, at our lunch spot on 11<sup>th</sup>.
78. Marico Sunbird *Cinnyris mariquensis*: one was seen several kms east of Armo woodland.
79. Shining Sunbird *Cinnyris habessinicus*: at least one on the hotel grounds, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, and one at the northern Naasa Hablood hill on 17<sup>th</sup>
80. Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*: one was between the May Gago and Armo areas, a male of the white-bellied *albiventris* race.

#### LANIIDAE

81. Somali Fiscal *Lanius somalicus*: Common throughout on the 11<sup>th</sup>, often several birds in the same area. Two or three near the hills on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Recording on [XC66326](#).
82. Steppe ("Southern") Grey Shrike *Lanius pallidirostris*: a 1<sup>st</sup> year was near the Naasa Hablood hills just east of Hargeisa, 17<sup>th</sup>. It was also recorded by the Birdquest group in September on the Aroori plains; there appear to be only a handful of records of this species in Somaliland.
83. Northern White-crowned Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli*: two singles were recorded along the road on the 11<sup>th</sup>, east of Armo and south of Shaarub.

#### MALACONOTIDAE

84. Rosy-patched Bush-shrike\* *Rhodophoneus cruentus*: pairs were seen and often heard in several of the locations that were visited on the 11<sup>th</sup> (Ina Qarboosh, Armo, Shaarub). Recordings of song: [XC66318](#) and [XC66321](#). The ssp. in the region is *hilgerti*.
85. Three-streaked Tchagra\* *Tchagra jamesi*: one was well seen, albeit briefly, at the lunch spot north of Shaarub village – here apparently at the northern edge of its range.
86. Slate-coloured Boubou *Laniarius funebris*: on 17<sup>th</sup>, two were near May Gago and one at Armo; one or two near the Hargeisa hills. Recording: [XC66941](#).

87. Brubru *Nilaus afer*: A noisy group of 4-5 birds and a single were between Ina Qarboosh and May Gago. Recording on [XC66325](#).

#### DICRURIDAE

88. Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*: several were seen in the more wooded areas on our trip on the 11<sup>th</sup> and one was on the eastern edge of Hargeisa town on 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### CORVIDAE

89. Dwarf Raven (Somali Crow)\* *Corvus edithae*: two were seen near the hotel grounds on a couple of occasions, and a few in other parts of town; also near the abattoir dump and in a couple of villages that we passed on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Recording of call: [XC66957](#).

#### STURNIDAE

90. Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*: seen on several occasions throughout town, in small numbers, but appears to be absent from bush country as none were recorded on our day trip on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

91. Golden-breasted Starling\* *Cosmopsarus regius*: this beautiful starlin seems to be fairly common, especially when going further east from Hargeisa: first seen in the May Gago area, followed by 3 at Balli Ahmed, 2 on the way to Shaarub, and a few along the road back from Tuuyo (west of Harosheekh village).

92. Superb Starling *Lamprotornis superbus*: common in and around Hargeisa, and throughout the bush country on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

93. White-crowned Starling\* *Spreo albicapillus*: first encountered near Armo (c. 10 together), followed by a few more small groups at Balli Ahmed, Shaarub, Harosheekh, and the "Haan Maded" plain (south of Qoryaale). About a dozen were along the main road to the airport on the 16<sup>th</sup> (in and around a tree that according to Abdi regularly harbours the species), and 3 or 4 were at the airport on 17<sup>th</sup>.

94. Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*: seen daily in varying numbers (max. around 50), usually flying west in the late afternoon, presumably en route to a nearby roosting site. Also several in town and near the airport on the 16<sup>th</sup> and around the hills the next day. Only a few breeding plumaged males were seen.

#### BUPHAGIDAE

95. Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*: singles seen twice between the airport and Ina Qarboosh areas, and two were on a donkey near Armo.

#### PASSERIDAE

96. Swainson's Sparrow *Passer swainsonii*: Common in Hargeisa city and its surroundings, up to Armo village at least.
97. Somali Sparrow\* *Passer castanopterus*: a flock of about 20 birds in the Armo fields (11<sup>th</sup>), and a few were present near a settlement close to the Hargeisa hills on 17<sup>th</sup>.
98. Yellow-spotted Petronia *Petronia pyrgita*: one was at our lunch spot on 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### PLOCEIDAE

99. White-headed Buffalo-weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli*: Frequently seen in small numbers along the tracks on the way to Tuuyo, and about 10 were at Qoryaale. Recording of call: [XC66328](#)
100. Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus*: breeding at the Maan Soor hotel, but not as numerous as the next species.
101. Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula*: common on the hotel grounds (where breeding), and nest-building in the office garden; also a few at the settlement near the hills on 17<sup>th</sup> and at least one near the airport on the same day.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

102. Black-cheeked Waxbill\* *Estrilda chamosyna*: brief views of two together near May Gago on 11<sup>th</sup>, and 2 or 3 well seen near a settlement close to the hills near Hargeisa, 17<sup>th</sup>. It is likely to be an uncommon species within its range in western Somaliland (the two British groups did not record it).
103. Green-winged Pytilia (Melba Finch) *Pytilia melba*: on 11<sup>th</sup>, a pair was in the airport area, and one was at the lunch spot N of Shaarub; singles seen twice near the Hargeisa hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Ssp. *soudanensis*.
104. Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*: Seen in small numbers on the hotel grounds and near the office; in males of the local race *somaliensis* (which only just extends into western Somaliland), the red is reduced to the forecrown only.
105. Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*: a pair was on the hotel grounds on 13<sup>th</sup>. Ssp. in the region is the darker *alexanderi*.

#### VIDUIDAE

106. Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*: a small flock was regularly feeding and drinking in the Maan Soor hotel gardens (all in non-breeding or juvenile plumage).

107. Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata*: at least one male (of the white-billed ssp. *ultramarina*) seen a few times (Dec 10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>) on the hotel grounds in company of Red-billed Firefinches, its host species, and the preceding species. This species so common elsewhere in the region appears to have a very restricted range in Somaliland (remarkably, it wasn't recorded by the two British groups).

#### FRINGILLIDAE

108. White-bellied Canary *Serinus dorsostriatus*: several were seen and heard on the 11<sup>th</sup>, usually in light woodland or in cultivated areas. A pair was on the hotel grounds on the 14<sup>th</sup> and one was near the office the next day; one was near the settlement south of the hills on 17<sup>th</sup>. Recording of song: [XC66324](#)

#### EMBERIZIDAE

109. Somali (Somali Golden-breasted) Bunting *Emberiza poliopleura*: just one sighting of a pair, near May Gago on 11<sup>th</sup>.