

Birds of south-east Senegal and Saloum

Senegal is one of West Africa's most stable countries with a heavy French influence dating back to colonial days. The first half of the tour concentrates on the little-visited far east of the country on the border with Guinea, including Wassadou and the almost unknown Dindéfelo region which stretches east towards the border with Mali. The former area is the most reliable in West Africa for the beautiful Egyptian Plover and the localised African Finfoot. Dindéfelo also holds significant numbers of mammals and over 220 species of birds, making it one of the premier wildlife areas of West Africa. Our final destination on this tour is Saloum National Park, an area of inter-tidal rivers, scrub and savannah. The range of bird species in Senegal is impressive and the many highlights include Arabian and Savile's Bustards, Goliath Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, Scissor-tailed Kite, Fox Kestrel, Adamawa Turtle Dove and Kulikoro Firefinch to name a few. ■ Birdwatching Breaks has operated in excess of 25 tours to Senegal since the 1990s and is pleased to offer these unique birding tours at a peak time for birdlife.

Day 1: Fly to the new airport south of Dakar. On arrival, we transfer to the seaside village of Popenguine for a two-night stay.

Day 2: Dawn visit to the coastal scrub reserve of Popenguine where we should find Blue Rock Thrush and European Crag Martin, which are rare visitors from Europe. To the south of Mbour is Lac Sarene, an area bordered by farmland and just inland from the Atlantic Ocean. This is an incredible place for waders, wildfowl, terns and gulls, with recent visits recording Greater Painted-snipe, Marsh and Curlew Sandpipers and high numbers of wintering Western Ospreys from Europe. These visits have also produced rarer species, notably Great Snipe and Citrine Wagtail. In the surrounding acacia woodland we should locate a wide range of wintering warblers and flycatchers. Later in the afternoon we visit Lac Somone for close views of waders and terns and the possibility of the scarce Brown Sunbird.

Day 3: After breakfast, we travel to Wassadou via Tambacounda, the largest city in eastern Senegal. En route we may encounter the beautiful Scissor-tailed Kite, Dark Chanting Goshawk and, in the dry acacia woodland, Black-bellied Bustard,

Dates

Wednesday January 13th – Tuesday
January 26th 2021
Leader: Mark Finn and Ass Ndiaye
Group Size: 8
Birds: 260-320

Black Scimitarbill and Piapiac. Seasonal pools adjacent to the road lure small birds to drink, including Cut-throat Finch, Exclamatory Paradise and Pin-tailed Whydahs, Sudan Golden Sparrow, Village Indigobird and hunting Shikra. Near Tambacounda we may locate Senegal Batis, Yellow Penduline Tit, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver and the uncommon and localised Brown-rumped Bunting. As dusk falls, we should encounter Four-banded Sandgrouse. We spend three nights at Wassadou.

Days 4-5: The area is home to over 300 hundred species of birds, with some of the more interesting species including Bateleur, Martial Eagle, Denham's Bustard, Egyptian Plover and Violet Turaco. The Gambia River meanders slowly through the region with extensive vegetation along the banks, sand-bars and banks attracting Saddle-billed and Woolly-necked Storks,



African Spoonbill Photo: Roger Ridley

African Finfoot, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, White-headed Lapwing and Oriole Warbler. In recent visits we have seen Pel's Fishing Owls at one of the few known sites in West Africa. During our stay within the park, we make several excursions to birding hot-spots. Savannah habitats offer us Helmeted Guineafowl, Stone Partridge, Black-headed Heron, Hadada Ibis, Palm-nut Vulture, Short-toed, Beadouin's, Brown and Western Banded Snake Eagles, Bateleur and Black Crowned Crane. Also present in the savannah in lower numbers are Sun Lark, Pied-winged Swallow and a wide range of estrilids – Black-bellied and Black-faced Firefinches and Black-faced and Black-rumped Waxbills. Wassadou also has patches of gallery forest holding Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Green Turaco, Spotted and Wahlberg's Honeyguides, Little Green and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Crombec and Crimson Seedcracker. Wassadou attracts many birds, with previous visits recording Red-throated, Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Greater Honeyguide, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Yellow-bellied and Senegal

Eremomelas, Swamp Flycatcher, White-crowned Robin-Chat, Blackcap and Brown Babblers, Lesser Blue-eared Starling, African Pied Wagtail, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah, Vitelline Masked Weaver and Pygmy Sunbird.

Day 6: This morning we continue our journey east towards the borders with Guinea and Mali. The habitat starts to change slowly as the border has cliffs, gallery forest and ravines. In the afternoon we visit the forest and bush area of Samecoute. This is an interesting place where we may find the rare Senegal Lapwing, Lanner Falcon, Violet Turaco and Black-rumped Waxbill. Our base for the next three nights is in the regional town of Kedougou.

Days 7-8: Our main interest is visiting the Dindéfelo Nature Reserve, which was formed thanks to a partnership between the Jane Goodall Institute and the Rural Community of Dindéfelo, in order to protect an isolated population of chimpanzees. It also protects areas of forests, cliffs and waterfalls which are rare habitats within Senegal. Rare species occurring include

Fox Kestrel, Narina's Trogon, Mocking Cliff Chat, Neumann's Starling, Dybowski's Twinspot and Kulikoro Firefinch. Several recent surveys have found species at the edge of their ranges or rare migrants from Europe. These have included Black Stork, Red-chested Goshawk, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Common Buttonquail, Forbes's Plover, Rock Martin, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Olive Sunbird and Wilson's Indigobird. In other areas we may encounter Guinea and Violet Turacos, African Cuckoo, Northern White-faced Owl, Fanti Saw-wing, Yellow-bellied Hylia, Singing, Short-winged and Rufous Cisticolas, Green-headed Sunbird and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. In the evenings the balcony viewing point of our hotel should give us views of Long-tailed and Standard-winged Nightjars and Pearl-spotted Owlet.

Day 9: A travel day back towards Kaolack and onto Keur Saloum where we have a four-night stay.

Days 10-12: Today we head to Saloum National Park, an extensive region of forests and mangrove swamps. As we approach our hotel, we expect to find Black Woodhoopoe, Fork-tailed Drongo, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, and African and Bruce's Green Pigeons. On one morning, depending on tide times, we take a boat trip through mangrove swamps and visit isolated sandbars. The hotel quay sometimes has Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Goliath Heron. Shorebirds are numerous and include White-fronted, Kentish, Common Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Common Greenshank. On previous visits, we have observed White-crested Bittern, White-backed Night Heron, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Shikra, Bronze Mannikin, Brown Babbler, Klaas's Cuckoo, Western Plantain-eater, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Lavender Waxbill and Brown Sunbird. An afternoon visit is planned to a forested area where birds of prey abound. We may find Grasshopper Buzzard, Brown, Beaudouin's and Short-toed Snake Eagles, Grey Kestrel, African Hobby and Palm-nut Vulture. Open areas

attract European, Blue-cheeked and occasionally Green and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters. On one evening, we visit a huge raptor roost site which holds hundreds of Scissor-tailed Kites, Lesser Kestrels and possibly three species of harriers – Western Marsh, Montagu's and Pallid.

Day 13: Today we return to Popenguine and visit a series of wetland lagoons adjacent to the coast where it is possible to find wintering Audouin's and Mediterranean Gulls and, in recent years, Franklin's Gull from across the Atlantic. Anything is possible here and recent rarities have included American Golden Plover. The dry acacia woodland holds many of Europe's warblers here on their wintering grounds.

Day 14: A morning visit to Technopole – a recently established reserve situated in the centre of Dakar. A habitat of sandy islands, reedbeds and exposed mud attracts a wide range of species in a relatively small area. Expect a wide range of wintering waders, gulls and terns plus resident African Swamphen. Technopole has a reputation for attracting unusual birds from Europe and North America, which on recent visits have included Laughing Gull, American Golden Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Later in the day we return to the airport for flights to Europe, with arrival early the next day.

Prices

Ground Price: £2,795
Single room: £250
Deposit: £250
*Air Fare: £700

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation, meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*