ETHIOPIA BIRDING TOUR REPORT

24th October to 8th November 2026 (16 days)



Trip Report Compiled by: Mohammed Fentalle

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Tour in Detail

Our journey began with an early morning drive south through Ethiopia's Great Rift Valley. Our first stop was Lake Cheleleka, where we enjoyed excellent views of a variety of waterbirds and wetland species. Highlights included Fulvous Whistling Duck, Knob-billed Duck, Greater Flamingo, Great White Pelican, Goliath Heron and the much-sought-after Black-crowned Crane. We also encountered several waders and smaller wetland birds, including Black-tailed Godwit, Common Snipe and Quailfinch.

Continuing south, we stopped at Lake Bishoftu for coffee and some additional birding, adding Black-crowned Night Heron, Ethiopian Boubou and Little Rock Thrush to our growing list. At Lake Koka, we enjoyed further sightings, including Yellow-billed Egret, Black-billed Barbet and Wattled Starling. We then continued to Lake Ziway for lunch, followed by birding along its reed-fringed shores. Here, we encountered a good selection of waterbirds, including African Openbill, African Darter, Black Crake, Hamerkop and several kingfisher species, alongside numerous African Fish Eagles.



We arrived at Lake Langano for a two-night stay, allowing us plenty of time to explore its beautiful surrounding acacia woodland and lakeshore habitats. The birding was particularly rewarding, with excellent sightings of several regional specialities and forest species. Highlights included White-cheeked Turaco, Bare-

faced Go-away-bird, Green Malkoha, Narina Trogon, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Yellow-fronted Parrot, Ethiopian Oriole and the Brown-throated Wattle-eye. We also enjoyed good views of several colourful pigeons, barbets, woodpeckers and starling species. It was a wonderful introduction to the diversity of Ethiopia's Rift Valley birdlife.

After spending two nights in the area, we travelled up into Bale Mountains National Park, one of the highlights of the tour. The region offered some of our most memorable birding experiences, particularly with its impressive selection of Ethiopian highland endemics and near-endemics. Highlights included Blue-winged Goose, Spot-breasted Lapwing, Rouget's Rail, Moorland Francolin, Abyssinian Owl, Abyssinian Catbird, Ethiopian Thrush, Abyssinian Longclaw and Ethiopian Siskin. We also enjoyed sightings of Wattled Crane, Thick-billed Raven, Red-billed Chough, African Wood Owl and Cape Eagle-Owl. Beyond the excellent birding and spectacular mountain scenery, we were fortunate to encounter the rare Ethiopian Wolf on the Sanetti Plateau, as well as Mountain Nyala and other highland mammals. These special wildlife encounters made our time in Bale particularly rewarding and memorable.

Leaving the Bale Mountains behind, we descended towards the Rift Valley and continued to the lush forests of Wondo Genet. The forest offered excellent birding, with rewarding sightings of several woodland specialities, including Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Banded Barbet, Abyssinian Woodpecker, African Spotted Creeper, African Paradise Flycatcher, Abyssinian Ground Thrush and the elusive Green Twinspot. We also encountered White-headed Vulture and Booted Eagle, adding further variety to our growing list of raptors. The rich forest habitats and diversity of birdlife made Wondo Genet another rewarding stop on our journey.



Our journey continued west towards Konso, with several productive birding stops along the way. Among the highlights were Red-and-yellow Barbet, Boran Cisticola, White-fronted Black Chat and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. After a pleasant lunch break in Arba Minch, we made a brief stop to search for the localized Northern Masked Weaver, before continuing to Konso, where we spent the night.

The following morning, we were fortunate to find the rare Stripe-breasted Seedeater, accompanied by Yellow-rumped Seedeaters, before setting off early for the Sarite Block of Borana National Park, one of the most exciting birding areas of the tour. The open plains and surrounding woodlands proved exceptionally productive, offering a remarkable variety of dry-country species. Highlights included Somali Ostrich, Vulturine Guineafowl, Kori and Hartlaub's Bustard, Bateleur and Black-chested Snake Eagle. We also enjoyed excellent views of Von der Decken's Hornbill, Pygmy Falcon, Red-bellied Parrot, Masked Lark, Golden-breasted Starling and Purple Grenadier. The outstanding diversity of birds and rewarding sightings made this one of the most memorable days of the tour.



The following morning, we continued our journey to Arero Forest. Along the way, we were delighted to encounter the endemic Ethiopian Bushcrow before reaching the forest. Once there, we focused our search on one of Ethiopia's most iconic and highly localized species, Ruspoli's Turaco. After some patience, we were rewarded with excellent views of this magnificent bird. Other notable sightings in the area included Salvadori's Seedeater, Somali Crombec, Pringle's Puffback and Red-headed Weaver, adding further highlights to an already rewarding day of birding.

In the afternoon, we continued birding in the woodlands and grasslands around Yabello, where we located the much-sought-after Red-naped Bushshrike, along with Northern Grosbeak Canary, Scaly Chatterer, Bristle-crowned Starling and Coqui Francolin. These productive habitats offered another excellent selection of southern Ethiopian specialities.



Leaving Yabello behind, we continued to Lake Hawassa, where we enjoyed further rewarding birding and added several new species to our list. Highlights included Blue-headed Coucal, Lesser Jacana, Little Bittern, Purple Heron and African Swamphen. The following morning, we explored Lakes Abiata and Shalla, both offering excellent opportunities to observe a variety of waterbirds and waders. At Lake Abiata, we recorded Common Ringed Plover, Crowned Lapwing and Kittlitz's Plover, among other species. We then continued to Lake Shalla, where notable sightings included Cape Teal, Lesser Flamingo, Eurasian Whimbrel and Black-necked Grebe. The contrasting habitats of the two lakes provided a rewarding morning of birding and added further diversity to our growing species list.

We returned to Lake Langano for lunch before spending the afternoon birding in the surrounding area. One of the highlights was finding a pair of Three-banded Coursers, followed by several roosting nightjars and owls, including Slender-tailed Nightjar, Western Barn Owl, Greyish Eagle-Owl and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl. Later in

the afternoon, we continued to Adama for an overnight stay. En route, we were treated to an unexpected flyover of more than ten Black-crowned Cranes, providing a memorable end to the day's birding.



We then spent three nights exploring the Awash region, including Lake Beseka, Awash National Park, the Aledeghi Plains and Bilen area. This section of the tour offered a wonderful contrast to the highland and forest habitats visited earlier. The open plains and semi-arid landscapes produced an impressive range of dry-country species. Highlights included Arabian, White-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards, Chestnut-bellied and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Temminck's Courser, Collared Pratincole, Saddle-billed Stork and the spectacular Scissor-tailed Kite. We also enjoyed excellent sightings of Egyptian Vulture, Martial Eagle, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Abyssinian and European Roller, Somali Fiscal, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Black Scrub Robin and several sunbird species.

Leaving Awash behind, we followed the well-known Melka Ghebdu route towards Debre Berhan, enjoying another productive day of birding along the way. Highlights included excellent sightings of the elusive Little Crake and Allen's Gallinule. We were also delighted to find the highly localized endemic Yellow-throated Seedeater, alongside Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and Half-collared

Kingfisher. These rewarding encounters added further highlights to this section of the journey.



The high-altitude grasslands and dramatic escarpments around Debre Berhan offered further memorable birding experiences. Alongside the excellent variety of birdlife, we enjoyed a wonderful encounter with a troop of Geladas in their natural habitat. Notable birding highlights included Ankober Serin, Erckel's Spurfowl, Verreaux's Eagle, White-billed Starling, Ortolan Bunting and the recently described Ethiopian Martin, adding a fitting highlight to our time in the area.

On our final day of birding, we explored the Sululta Plains, where we encountered a variety of migratory and wetland species, including Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Spotted Redshank and Common Crane. Following a rewarding 16-day journey across Ethiopia's diverse habitats, we returned to Addis Ababa, bringing the tour to a successful and memorable conclusion.

Overall, the tour offered an excellent combination of highland, forest, wetland and dry-country birding, with memorable encounters with many of Ethiopia's endemic and range-restricted species. From the spectacular Ruspoli's Turaco and Stripe-breasted Seedeater in the south to the highland endemics of Bale and the remarkable birdlife of Awash, it was a truly rewarding journey through one of Africa's most diverse birding destinations.

Our sincere thanks go to all the participants for their enthusiasm and company throughout the journey, as well as to the Rockjumper tour leader, Mr. David

Hoddinott, for his knowledge and guidance. We are also grateful to our dedicated drivers, Anbessa Travel for the opportunity to be part of this tour, and everyone who contributed to the planning, coordination and smooth operation of the trip. Their combined efforts played an important role in making this journey a success. See you next time, hopefully.



List of bird species recorded:

Species Name	Species Name
Somali Ostrich	Garganey
White-faced Whistling Duck	Blue-billed Teal
Fulvous Whistling Duck	Northern Shoveler
African Pygmy Goose	Eurasian Wigeon
Spur-winged Goose	African Black Duck
Egyptian Goose	Yellow-billed Duck

Ruddy Shelduck	Cape Teal
Knob-billed Duck	Red-billed Teal
Blue-winged Goose	Northern Pintail
Southern Pochard	Helmeted Guineafowl
Vulturine Guineafowl	Arabian Bustard
Coqui Francolin	Kori Bustard
Moorland Francolin	White-bellied Bustard
Crested Francolin	Buff-crested Bustard
Common Quail	Hartlaub's Bustard
Chestnut-naped Spurfowl	Blue-headed Coucal
Erckel's Spurfowl	White-browed Coucal
Clapperton's Spurfowl	Green Malkoha
Yellow-necked Spurfowl	Great Spotted Cuckoo
Greater Flamingo	Levaillant's Cuckoo
Little Grebe	Klaas's Cuckoo
Black-necked Grebe	African Emerald Cuckoo
Bare-faced Go-away-bird	Black Cuckoo
White-bellied Go-away-bird	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse
Eastern Plantain-eater	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse
Ruspoli's Turaco	Laughing Dove
White-cheeked Turaco	Lemon Dove
African Olive Pigeon	Dusky Turtle Dove
Speckled Pigeon	Ring-necked Dove
White-collared Pigeon	Red-eyed Dove
Rock Dove	Mourning Collared Dove
Namaqua Dove	Black Crowned Crane

Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Wattled Crane
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Common Crane
Bruce's Green Pigeon	Rouget's Rail
Glossy Ibis	Kittlitz's Plover
Hadada Ibis	Lesser Jacana
Wattled Ibis	African Jacana
African Sacred Ibis	Eurasian Whimbrel
Common Moorhen	Black-tailed Godwit
Red-knobbed Coot	African Snipe
Allen's Gallinule	Common Snipe
Purple Swamphen	Common Sandpiper
Black Crake	Green Sandpiper
Little Crake	Marsh Sandpiper
Spotted Thick-knee	Wood Sandpiper
Senegal Thick-knee	Spotted Redshank
Pied Avocet	Common Greenshank
Black-winged Stilt	Curlew Sandpiper
Common Ringed Plover	Collared Pratincole
Three-banded Plover	Gull-billed Tern
Little Ringed Plover	Whiskered Tern
Spur-winged Lapwing	White-winged Tern
Black-headed Lapwing	Black-headed Gull
Crowned Lapwing	Grey-headed Gull
Spot-breasted Lapwing	African Openbill
Temminck's Stint	Marabou Stork
Little Stint	Yellow-billed Stork

Three-banded Courser	Saddle-billed Stork
Temminck's Courser	Black Stork
White Stork	African Spoonbill
Abdim's Stork	Hamerkop
African Woolly-necked Stork	Slender-tailed Nightjar
African Darter	Palm Swift
Reed Cormorant	Mottled Swift
Great Cormorant	White-rumped
Great White Pelican	Horus Swift
Pink-backed Pelican	Western Barn Owl
Little Bittern	Pearl-spotted Owlet
Black Heron	Abyssinian Owl
Western Reef Heron	Cape Eagle-Owl
Little Egret	Greyish Eagle-Owl
Black-crowned Night Heron	Verreaux's Eagle-Owl
Little Heron	African Wood Owl
Squacco Heron	Osprey
Great Egret	Scissor-tailed Kite
Yellow-billed Egret	Black-winged Kite
Western Cattle Egret	African Harrier-Hawk
Purple Heron	Bearded Vulture
Black-headed Heron	Egyptian Vulture
Grey Heron	White-headed Vulture
Bateleur	Lappet-faced Vulture
Western Banded Snake Eagle	Hooded Vulture
Black-chested Snake Eagle	White-backed Vulture

Short-toed Snake Eagle	Rüppell's Vulture
Martial Eagle	Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk
Long-crested Eagle	Black Sparrowhawk
Greater Spotted Eagle	Pallid Harrier
Wahlberg's Eagle	Montagu's Harrier
Ayres's Hawk-Eagle	Western Marsh Harrier
Booted Eagle	Black Kite
Steppe Eagle	African Fish Eagle
Tawny Eagle	Augur Buzzard
Golden Eagle	Mountain Buzzard
Verreaux's Eagle	Common Buzzard
African Hawk-Eagle	Blue-naped Mousebird
Gabar Goshawk	Speckled Mousebird
Dark Chanting Goshawk	Narina Trogon
Eastern Chanting Goshawk	Common Hoopoe
African Goshawk	Black Scimitarbill
Little Sparrowhawk	Abyssinian Scimitarbill
Lilac-breasted Roller	Black-billed Wood Hoopoe
Abyssinian Roller	Abyssinian Ground Hornbill
European Roller	Hemprich's Hornbill
Little Bee-eater	African Grey Hornbill
Ethiopian Bee-eater	Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Northern Carmine Bee-eater	Von der Decken's Hornbill
European Bee-eater	Northern Red-billed Hornbill
Olive Bee-eater	Silvery-cheeked Hornbill
African Pygmy Kingfisher	Purple Roller

Malachite Kingfisher	Common Kestrel
Half-collared Kingfisher	Grey Kestrel
Pied Kingfisher	Eurasian Hobby
Woodland Kingfisher	Peregrine Falcon
Striped Kingfisher	Lanner Falcon
Grey-headed Kingfisher	Red-bellied Parrot
Red-and-yellow Barbet	Yellow-fronted Parrot
Yellow-breasted Barbet	Black-winged Lovebird
D'Arnaud's Barbet	Black Cuckooshrike
Northern Red-fronted Tinkerbird	Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	Brubru
Red-fronted Barbet	Black-crowned Tchagra
Black-throated Barbet	Three-streaked Tchagra
Double-toothed Barbet	Grey-headed Bushshrike
Banded Barbet	Northern Puffback
Black-billed Barbet	Pringle's Puffback
Lesser Honeyguide	Rosy-patched Bushshrike
Scaly-throated Honeyguide	Orange-breasted Bushshrike
Greater Honeyguide	Red-naped Bushshrike
Red-throated Wryneck	Ethiopian Boubou
Nubian Woodpecker	Slate-colored Boubou
Eastern Grey Woodpecker	Brown-throated Wattle-eye
Abyssinian Woodpecker	Grey-headed Batis
Cardinal Woodpecker	Western Black-headed Batis
Pygmy Falcon	Pygmy Batis
Ethiopian Oriole	Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark

Black-headed Oriole	Gillett's Lark
Eurasian Golden Oriole	Fawn-colored Lark
Fork-tailed Drongo	Singing Bush Lark
African Paradise Flycatcher	Masked Lark
Grey-backed Fiscal	Thekla's Lark
Taita Fiscal	Blanford's Lark
Somali Fiscal	Greater Short-toed Lark
Great Grey Shrike	Northern Crombec
Woodchat Shrike	Red-faced Crombec
Northern Fiscal	Somali Crombec
Red-backed Shrike	Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Red-tailed Shrike	Green-backed Eremomela
Northern White-crowned Shrike	Grey Wren-Warbler
Red-billed Chough	Bleating Camaroptera
Ethiopian Bushcrow	Buff-bellied Warbler
Cape Crow	Yellow-breasted Apalis
Thick-billed Raven	Tawny-flanked Prinia
Pied Crow	Pale Prinia
Somali Crow	Red-fronted Prinia
Fan-tailed Raven	Red-faced Cisticola
Mouse-colored Penduline Tit	Boran Cisticola
White-winged Black Tit	Rattling Cisticola
Acacia Tit	Ashy Cisticola
White-backed Black Tit	Ethiopian Cisticola
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	Tiny Cisticola
African Yellow Warbler	Zitting Cisticola

Sedge Warbler	Desert Cisticola
Common Reed Warbler	Pectoral-patch Cisticola
Lesser Swamp Warbler	Northern Brownbul
Cinnamon Bracken Warbler	Common Bulbul
Black Saw-wing	Eurasian Blackcap
Sand Martin	Abyssinian Catbird
Brown-throated Martin	African Hill Babbler
Ethiopian Martin	Banded Parisoma
Eurasian Crag Martin	Lesser Whitethroat
Red-throated Rock Martin	Brown Parisoma
White-tailed Swallow	Common Whitethroat
Wire-tailed Swallow	Abyssinian White-eye
Barn Swallow	Ethiopian White-eye
Ethiopian Swallow	Rufous Chatterer
Red-chested Swallow	Scaly Chatterer
Western House Martin	White-rumped Babbler
Lesser Striped Swallow	African Spotted Creeper
Mosque Swallow	Red-billed Oxpecker
European Red-rumped Swallow	Wattled Starling
Wood Warbler	Violet-backed Starling
Willow Warbler	Slender-billed Starling
Common Chiffchaff	Red-winged Starling
Brown Woodland Warbler	White-billed Starling
Bristle-crowned Starling	Common Redstart
Shelley's Starling	Little Rock Thrush
Rüppell's Starling	Common Rock Thrush

Greater Blue-eared Starling	Blue Rock Thrush
Golden-breasted Starling	White-winged Cliff Chat
Superb Starling	Whinchat
White-crowned Starling	African Stonechat
Abyssinian Ground Thrush	Moorland Chat
Ethiopian Thrush	Mocking Cliff Chat
African Thrush	Rüppell's Black Chat
Abyssinian Thrush	Pied Wheatear
Bare-eyed Thrush	Northern Wheatear
Black Scrub Robin	Rusty-breasted Wheatear
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	Isabelline Wheatear
White-browed Scrub Robin	White-fronted Black Chat
Northern Black Flycatcher	Blackstart
Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher	Sombre Rock Chat
African Grey Flycatcher	Abyssinian Wheatear
African Dusky Flycatcher	Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird
Spotted Flycatcher	Nile Valley Sunbird
Rüppell's Robin-Chat	Olive Sunbird
White-browed Robin-Chat	Tacazze Sunbird
Red-capped Robin-Chat	Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Spotted Palm Thrush	Hunter's Sunbird
Common Nightingale	Beautiful Sunbird
Marico Sunbird	Swainson's Sparrow
Abyssinian Sunbird	Parrot-billed Sparrow
Variable Sunbird	Chestnut Sparrow
Thick-billed Weaver	Shelley's Sparrow

Black-capped Social Weaver	Mountain Wagtail
Grey-capped Social Weaver	Western Yellow Wagtail
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	African Pied Wagtail
Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver	White Wagtail
White-headed Buffalo Weaver	Abyssinian Longclaw
Red-billed Buffalo Weaver	Tawny Pipit
Baglafecht Weaver	Long-billed Pipit
Little Weaver	African Pipit
Spectacled Weaver	Red-throated Pipit
Northern Masked Weaver	African Citril
Lesser Masked Weaver	Reichenow's Seedeater
Vitelline Masked Weaver	Yellow-rumped Seedeater
Rüppell's Weaver	White-bellied Canary
Village Weaver	Yellow-throated Seedeater
Chestnut Weaver	Salvadori's Seedeater
Red-billed Quelea	Northern Grosbeak-Canary
Northern Red Bishop	Streaky Seedeater
Black-winged Red Bishop	Stripe-breasted Seedeater
Yellow Bishop	Brown-rumped Seedeater
Fan-tailed Widowbird	Ankober Serin
Red-headed Weaver	Ethiopian Siskin
Pin-tailed Whydah	Green-winged Pytilia
Village Indigobird	Red-billed Firefinch
Bronze Mannikin	Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow
Black-and-white Mannikin	Yellow-crowned Canary

African Silverbill	Somali Bunting
Yellow-bellied Waxbill	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting
Green Twinspot	Ortolan Bunting
Common Waxbill	
Crimson-rumped Waxbill	
Quailfinch	
Cut-throat Finch	
Purple Grenadier	
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	

Mammals recorded:

1. Spotted Hyena
2. Striped Hyena
3. African Golden Wolf
4. Ethiopian Wolf
5. Bat-eared Fox
6. Grevy's Zebra
7. Common Warthog
8. Gerenuk
9. Salt's Dik-dik
10. Grant's Gazelle
11. Soemmerring's Gazelle
12. Beisa Oryx
13. Bohor Reedbuck
14. Mountain Nyala (Gedemsa)
15. Common Hippopotamus
16. Yellow-winged Bat
17. Grivet Monkey
18. Guereza
19. Olive Baboon
20. Hamadryas Baboon
21. Gelada
22. Abyssinian Hare
23. Gambian Sun Squirrel
24. Striped Ground Squirrel

25. Giant Root Rat
26. Blick's Grass Rat

Reptiles

27. Blue-headed Tree Agama
28. Nile Monitor