

THE GAMBIA

[26th Feb – 4th Mar 2016]



I travelled to The Gambia with **Limosa Birding Holidays** on an 8 day trip with 11 other participants from the UK, which was led by **Mike Crewe**, local guide **Dembo Sonko** and driver **Baba**. We took off on time at 1030hrs from Gatwick airport and after a smooth flight landed at Banjul Airport, Gambia at 1630hrs. After the airport scrum and booking into our hotel – **The Senegambia Beach Resort Hotel**, we still had about an hour's light left to walk around the garden complex. But surprisingly I was the only one to do so.

26th Feb 2016

We landed at Banjul in the peak heat of the day at 40c. As always everybody's faces were pinned to the windows looking for the first few and new species for the trip. The 20mins bus journey provided us with 20 Western Cattle Egret, 15 Yellow-billed Kite, 30 Hooded Vulture, 1 **African Wattled Lapwing ((✓))**, 10 Speckled Pigeon, 10 Feral Pigeon, 30 Laughing Dove, 1 African Grey Hornbill, 1 **Piapiac ((✓))**, 10 Pied Crow and 2 **Northern Grey-headed Sparrow ((✓))** dusting on the ground in front of one of the drop off hotels.

The gardens of the hotel has been cleared of the scrubby areas of days gone by, but there were still plenty of mature trees and secondary growth to hold numerous species. A pleasant late afternoon stroll in the gardens produced such species as 2 Hammerkop [nesting], 3 Vinaceous Dove, 3 **Senegal Coucal ((✓))**, 15 **Broad-billed Roller ((✓))**, 6 **Western Red-billed Hornbill ((✓))**, 3 **Yellow-billed Shrike ((✓))**, 4 **Blackcap Babbler ((✓))**, 12 **Brown Babbler ((✓))**, 6 **White-crowned Robin Chat ((✓))**, 2 Red-billed Firefinch and Bronze Mannikin. In the skies above were 15 African Palm Swift as well as many Pied Crow, Yellow-billed Kite and Hooded Vulture. The evening meal was an all you can eat buffet with multiple choices and of high quality. After pigging out and a few cheap beers I retired to bed ready for tomorrow's birding at 2300hrs. Finished on 23 species for the day and 10 new ticks.

27th Feb 2016

Another warm and sunny day as expected peaking at 36c. Breakfast and dawn was at 0700hrs and the bus was leaving for our first destination at 0745hrs. So had time for a quick walk around the denser areas of the garden and picked up a pair of **Yellow-crowned Gonolek ((✓))**. We left on time and briefly stopped at the first by the road wetland we came across while going to **Fajara Golf Course**. It was teeming with birds and these included 30 White-faced Whistling Duck, 11 Sacred Ibis, 3 African Spoonbill, 1 Squacco Heron, 50 Western Cattle Egret, 1 Grey Heron, 1 Black-headed Heron, 2 Great Egret, 4 Black Egret, 1 Western Reef Egret, 1 Shikra, 1 **Lizard Buzzard ((✓))**, 3 Black Crake, 1 African Jacana and 1 **Blue-bellied Roller ((✓))**.

We arrived at **Fajara Golf Course** at 0830hrs and spent the next 3hrs walking the fairway trees and scrub and creeks and amassed quite a large selection of birds including 20 Red-eyed Dove, 50 Speckled Pigeon, 6 African Mourning Dove, 10 Vinaceous Dove, 40 Laughing Dove, 1 **Black-billed Wood Dove ((✓))**, 6 **Senegal Parrot ((✓))**, 10 Rose-ringed Parakeet, 6 **Violet Turaco ((✓))**, 10 **Western Grey Plantain-eater ((✓))**, 3 Senegal Coucal, 2 **Pearl-spotted Owlet ((✓))**, 30 African Palm Swift, 5 Pallid Swift, 200 Little Swift, 2 Blue-bellied Roller, 10 Broad-billed Roller, 1 **Blue-breasted Kingfisher ((✓))**, 1 **Giant Kingfisher ((✓))**, 4 Pied Kingfisher, 1 **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater ((✓))**, 1 Eurasian Hoopoe, 4 **Green Wood-hoopoe ((✓))**, 3 African Grey Hornbill, 3 Western Red Hornbill, 4 **Bearded Barbet ((✓))**, 1 Lesser Honeyguide, 2 **Fine-spotted Woodpecker ((✓))**, 2 **African Grey Woodpecker ((✓))**, 1 Yellow-crowned Gonolek, 3 Yellow-billed Shrike, 10 Piapiac, 8 Common Bulbul, 8 Brown Babbler, 10 **Long-tailed Glossy Starling ((✓))**, 1 Northern Black Flycatcher, 10 Beautiful Sunbird, 10 **Splendid Sunbird ((✓))**, 20 **White-billed Buffalo Weaver ((✓))**, 60 **Village Weaver ((✓))**, 3 Yellow Wagtail and 1 Tree Pipit. With that area done and dusted and such a good list there is no need to repeat the common species in further reports.

We moved onto the sewage works only to find that major building work was ongoing there and the number of birds were well down on what we were expecting. Nevertheless there was a good number of birds on the quieter back pools and in the scrub around the path that leads to the **Kotu Creek Bridge** and included 12 Little Grebe, 20 Western Cattle Egret, 1 Little Egret, 2 Hammerkop, 2 Reed Cormorant, 1 Grey Kestrel, 1 Lanner, 1 **Palm-nut Vulture ((✓))**, 1 Shikra, 30 Black-winged Stilt, 18 Spur-winged Plover, 4 Wattled Lapwing, 4 Little Ringed Plover, 1 Whimbrel, 1 Common Redshank, 2 Common Greenshank, 1 Green Sandpiper, 6 Wood Sandpiper, 3 Common Sandpiper, 60 Grey-

headed Gull, 4 Caspian Tern, 2 Senegal Coucal, 1 Abyssinian Roller, 1 Striped Kingfisher, 6 Pied Kingfisher, 10 Little Bee-eater, 2 African Grey Hornbill, 2 Grey Woodpecker, 10 Piapiac, 15 Red-chested Swallow, 3 Wire-tailed Swallow, 1 Sedge Warbler, 1 Willow Warbler, 1 Chiffchaff and 2 Northern Crombec.

We then returned to the hotel for lunch, after which I had a quick walk around the gardens and saw the same birds as yesterday plus new species in 10 Common Bulbul, 10 **Purple Glossy Starling ((✓))** and 1 African Thrush.

Our afternoon trip was to the reserve at **Mandiana Woods**, which we arrived at 1600hrs. First we visited the tree of a roosting Greyish Eagle Owl which was seen well. We then visited the woods and sat down by some drinking bowls put out by the wardens. A good list of birds were seen here and the surrounding area and included 2 Shikra, 1 Lanner, 6 Vinaceous Dove, 4 Senegal Parrot, 2 Senegal Coucal, 1 Black-billed Wood Dove, 1 Blue-spotted Wood Dove, 2 Abyssinian Roller, 1 Blue-bellied Roller, 1 African Pygmy Kingfisher, 10 Little Bee-eater, 3 Green Wood-hoopoe, 1 Cardinal Woodpecker, 3 Yellow-billed Shrike, 1 Woodchat Shrike, 2 Yellow-crowned Gonolek, 1 Zitting Cisticola, 1 Tawny-flanked Prinia, 1 African Thrush, 2 White-crowned Robin Chat, 2 Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, 2 **Black-necked Weaver ((✓))**, 20 Black-winged Bishop, 2 Northern Red Bishop, 4 Red-billed Firefinch, 1 Village Indigobird, 1 **Lavender Waxbill ((✓))**, 4 **Black-rumped Waxbill ((✓))**, 15 Bronze Mannikin, 6 Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu and 1 Pin-tailed Whydah.

After that frenzy where we never walked more than 100yds from the bus, we returned to the hotel for evening meal and a well-earned rest from the heat of a day's birdwatching. The trip list had risen to 111 species with a total of 34 new species.

28th Feb 2016

Dry warm and sunny as expected, peaking at 38c. This morning we set off for the nearby **Brufut Woods** and picked up a local guide at the entrance. Firstly we walked around the woods and rice fields just outside the reserve and picked up 1 Shikra, 2 Senegal Thick-knee, 2 Black-billed Wood Dove, 2 Blue-spotted Wood Dove, 2 Senegal Parrot, 20 Western Grey Plantain-eater, 1 **Northern White-faced Owl ((✓))** at its roosting tree, 1 Pearl-spotted Owlet, 1 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, 6 Little Bee-eater, 6 African Grey Hornbill, 2 Western Red-billed Hornbill, 2 Tawny-flanked Prinia, 2 **Red-winged Warbler ((✓))**, 1 **Little Weaver ((✓))** and 6 Red-billed Firefinch. The dense woods itself held a good number of species supplemented by the water bowls put out by the rangers at the end of the trail near the drinks bar. The undoubted highlight of the morning were very close views of roosting **Long-tailed Nightjar ((✓))** and **Standard-winged Nightjar [female] ((✓))**. Other birds seen on the walk included 2 **African Green Pigeon ((✓))**, 2 Senegal Coucal, 4 Green Wood-hoopoe, 2 Fork-tailed Drongo, 1 Grey-headed Bush-shrike, 1 African Paradise Flycatcher, 1 **Fanti Saw-wing ((✓))**, 1 Grey-backed Camaroptera, 4 **African Yellow-eye ((✓))**, 2 African Thrush, 4 species of Sunbird – Beautiful, Splendid, Variable and Copper, 10 Village Weaver, 10 Black-winged Bishop, 2 Northern Red Bishop, 10 Lavender Waxbill, 4 **Orange-cheeked Waxbill ((✓))**, 6 Pin-tailed Whydah and 2 Yellow-fronted Canary.

Lunch was taken at **Tanji Bird Reserve centre** during the heat of the day, with the tables overlooking a drinking pool –highlights included 1 Black-billed Wood Dove, 1 Blue-spotted Wood Dove, 2 Yellow-crowned Gonolek, 1 male Blackcap, 2 Blackcap Babbler, 1 African Thrush, 2 Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, 4 Black-necked Weaver, 4 Red-billed Firefinch, 1 Village Indigobird, 8 Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu, 4 Lavender Waxbill, 15 Bronze Mannikin and 10 Pin-tailed Whydah. While everybody was relaxing in the heat of the day, I took the opportunity to do a little sea-watching from a high point and this proved a successful ploy as I saw 2 Great White Pelican, 2 White-breasted Cormorant, 3 Osprey, 1 Whimbrel, 2 Slender-billed Gull, 200 Grey-headed Gull, 1 Black-headed Gull, 100 Lesser Black-backed Gull, 1 Yellow-legged Gull, 2 Caspian Tern, 1 **Royal Tern ((✓))**, 6 Sandwich Tern and 3 Arctic Skua.

Our afternoon sortie was at the nearby **Tujerang fields**, this was a more open area with tall trees spread between scrub and dry cattle farmland. The list of birds was impressive and included 200 Western Cattle Egret, 1 African Harrier-hawk, 1 Shikra, 3 Temminck's Courser, 2 Senegal Thick-knee, 10 Spur-winged Lapwing, 5 **Black-headed Lapwing ((✓))**, 15 Wattled Lapwing, 1 Rufous-crowned Roller, 1 Blue-bellied Roller, 1 Broad-billed Roller, 1 Striped Kingfisher, 5 Little Bee-eater, 1 Northern Puffback, 1 Brubru, 2 Yellow-billed Shrike, 1 Woodchat Shrike, 6 Wire-tailed Swallow, 1 Chiffchaff, 2 Long-tailed Glossy Starling, 2 African Thrush, 1 Redstart, 1 Whinchat, 2 **White-fronted Black**

Chat ((✓)), 2 Scarlet-chested Sunbird, 2 Black-necked Weaver, 3 **Chestnut-crowned Sparrow Weaver ((✓))**, 6 Yellow Wagtail, 1 Tree Pipit and 2 Yellow-fronted Canary. Dusked was falling so we returned back to our hotel for more gluttony.

Day three over and the list has risen to 149 species of which 47 were new to me.

29th Feb 2016

Bit Hazy today but nevertheless sunny but much cooler at 33c. Today was our trip to **Abuko** Forest, a densely covered woods in the centre of an urban area, but still well managed by the locals. It has a reputation for having many difficult species to see. I was a little disappointed with the number of birds and all the Paradise Flycatchers seem to be Hybrids [African x Red-bellied]. Nevertheless some good birds were seen, the best being – 1 African Jacana, 1 Booted Eagle, 1 Black-billed Wood Dove, 1 African Green Pigeon, 3 Senegal Parrot, 2 Senegal Coucal, 5 Broad-billed Roller, 1 Bearded Barbet, 1 Malachite Kingfisher, 4 Giant Kingfisher, 4 Pied Kingfisher, 1 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, 2 **African Pied Hornbill ((✓))**, 10 African Grey Hornbill, 2 Violet Turaco, 1 Grey Woodpecker, 4 Yellow-billed Shrike, 6 Fanti Saw-wing, 1 Klaas's Cuckoo, 1 **Pied-winged Swallow ((✓))**, 6 **Little Greenbul ((✓))**, 2 Brown-throated Wattle-eye, 1 Yellow-breasted Apalis, 1 Chiffchaff, 2 Collared Sunbird ((✓)), 40 Beautiful Sunbird, 6 Splendid Sunbird, 6 Copper Sunbird, 20 Black-necked Weaver and 1 Lavender Waxbill.

Lunch was taken at **Lamin Lodge** overlooking the mangrove swamps and side creek. Usual terns, gulls, herons and waders were seen, although we did see our first Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, 1 **Red-billed Quelea ((✓))** amongst the finches in a rice field on the way out and 2 Great White Pelican.

The afternoon was spent at **Lamin Rice Fields**, a wet fertile area near the banks of the River Gambia. The place was full of Herons beside others and the list had some impressive totals in 6 Striated Heron, 4 Squacco Heron, 150 Western Cattle Egret, 10 Black-headed Heron, 1 Purple Heron, 1 Great Egret, 1 Intermediate Egret, 6 Black Egret, 20 Western Reef Egret and 4 Hammerkop. Other birds seen there included 1 African Darter, 2 Grey Kestrel, 1 Black-winged Kite, 3 Palm-nut Vulture, 2 African Harrier-hawk, 1 Shikra, 1 Lizard Buzzard, 16 Senegal Thick-knee, 10 Spur-winged Plover, 2 African Wattle Lapwing, 23 **Greater Painted-snipe ((✓))** in the back reed-beds, 5 African Jacana, 3 Black Crake, 2 Black-billed Wood Dove, 1 Blue-spotted Wood Dove, 2 Abyssinian Roller, 10 Broad-billed Roller, 2 Malachite Kingfisher, 10 Little Bee-eater, 5 Wire-tailed Swallow, 5 Long-tailed Glossy Starling, 3 African Thrush, 2 Pin-tailed Whydah and 1 Yellow-fronted Canary amongst the commoner finches.

Got back to the hotel before dark in time to find a flock of 6 Purple Glossy Starling on my veranda and later while returning from dinner a Northern White-faced Scops Owl was calling from within the hotel grounds. Only 5 ticks today giving me a total of 52 new and the trip lists had blossomed to 166.

1st Mar 2016

Another Hazy day with some sunny bursts, maximum temperature at 33c. Today we spent all day at **Marikissa**, habitat included woods, Sahel scrub, rice fields and wetlands so many birds were seen and I think this was my favourite site of the trip. Firstly we walked through the trees and scrub and saw 2 Grey Kestrel, 2 African Harrier-hawk, 1 Dark Chanting Goshawk, 1 Shikra, 2 Black-billed Wood Dove, 2 African Green Pigeon, 1 Bruce's Green Pigeon, 4 Rose-ringed Parakeet, 3 **Green Turaco ((✓))**, 10 Senegal Coucal, 1 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, 2 Little Bee-eater, 3 Fine-spotted Woodpecker, 3 Green Wood-hoopoe, 2 African Pied Hornbill, 10 each of African Grey and Western red-billed Hornbill, 2 Bearded Barbet, 1 Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike, 2 **African Oriole ((✓))**, 4 Fork-tailed Drongo, 1 African Paradise Flycatcher, 2 **Yellow-throated Leaflove ((✓))**, 1 Grey-backed Camaroptera, 2 Northern Crombec, 1 **Green Crombec ((✓))**, 15 African Yellow-eye, 1 **Western Violet-backed Sunbird ((✓))**, good numbers of Beautiful, Splendid, Variable and Copper Sunbird and 2 Pin-tailed Whydah. After a while we came out onto the rice and farm fields which was good for a different set of birds like 1 Blue-bellied Roller, 5 Broad-billed Roller, 3 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, 20 Red-chested Swallow, 2 Tawny-flanked Prinia, 3 **Yellow-billed Oxpecker ((✓))**, 3 African Thrush, a large flock of 300 Northern Red Bishop which included 10 Red-billed Firefinch, 10 Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu, 1 Orange-cheeked Waxbill, and 1 Yellow-fronted Canary.

Lunch was taken at **Marikissa River Camp**, where their reputation for the best chips in Gambia was fully endorsed by all of the group, the rest of the menu wasn't too bad either. We stayed here for quite some time as the camp had many drinking bowls for birds, a photography hide, a river and some excellent scrub and tree habitat. Birds seen in what was supposed to be a siesta included 3 **Double-spurred Francolin ((✓))**, 1 Hadada Ibis, 1 Shikra, 16 Senegal Thick-knee, 1 Wattled Lapwing, 2 Abyssinian Roller, 1 Grey Woodpecker, 2 **Spotted Honeyguide ((✓))**, 1 Greater Honeyguide, 1 **Bronze-tailed Starling ((✓))** amongst the Purple Glossy and Long-tailed Glossy Starling coming to the drinking bowls, 2 Black-necked Weaver, 2 Lavender Waxbill and 20 Bronze Mannikin. A short walk along the river to another roost brought African Scops Owl and 2 Northern Puffback.

Finally we pulled ourselves away from this idyllic place and travelled 500yds down the road to a bridge overlooking a marsh and wetlands, we stayed here for the rest of the day and amasses yet again a different set of birds in 7 Black-crowned Night Heron, 1 Striated Heron, 6 Squacco Heron, 100 Western Cattle Egret, 2 Black-headed Heron, 1 Purple Heron, 2 Great Egret, 1 Intermediate Egret, 1 Black Egret, 6 Hammerkop, 2 African Darter, 1 Grey Kestrel, 1 perched **Western Banded Snake Eagle ((✓))**, 1 African Harrier-hawk, 5 Black Crake, 1 Black-winged Stilt, 8 Spur-winged Lapwing, 2 Greater Painted Snipe, 20 African Jacana, 1 Green Sandpiper, 1 Blue-breasted Kingfisher, 1 Giant Kingfisher, 20 Pied Kingfisher, 20 Piapiac in one flock and 4 Wire-tailed Swallow.

All in all quite a productive day and we even had House Sparrow outside the hotel on return. Back up to double figures with 10 new species and the trip list now on 186.

2nd Mar 2016

Our coldest day of the trip, with cloud cover and some sunny intervals at 32c!!!. This morning we visited **Tanji** – an area of dunes and scrub either side of the main road to **Tanji Fishing Village**. We started on the inland side of road and walked around the scrub which held all the usual birds including 1 Grey Kestrel, 2 Palm-nut Vulture, 1 Shikra, 2 Black-billed Wood Dove, 2 Rose-ringed Parakeet, 8 Senegal Parrot, 1 Violet Turaco, 6 Senegal Coucal, 1 Rufous-crowned Roller, 2 Abyssinian Roller, 2 Blue-bellied Roller, 2 Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, 8 Little Bee-eater, 4 Green Wood-hoopoe, both Grey and Red-billed Hornbill, 4 **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird ((✓))**, 1 Grey Headed Bush-shrike, 2 Forked-tailed Drongo, 1 Black Scimitarbill, 2 Tawny-flanked Prinia, 1 Grey-backed Camaroptera, 4 **Senegal Eremomela ((✓))**, 1 **Mouse-brown Sunbird ((✓))**, 2 Willow Warbler, 1 Northern Black Flycatcher, 4 more species of sunbird in Beautiful, Splendid, Variable and Copper, 2 Black-necked Weaver and 2 Lavender Waxbill.

We then crossed the road in an attempt to flush Four-banded Sandgrouse in a day roosting area. After the guide told us to spread out and walk in a line through a grassy area in the hope of seeing one. I only walked 10yds before I flushed 2 **Four-banded Sandgrouse ((✓))** and these were the only ones encountered and not seen by the other end of the line. Other birds in the area included 8 Osprey, 3 Whitethroat and 2 Black-crowned Tchagra.

We then visited the beach at **Tanji Fishing Village** where we encountered 12 Pink-backed Pelican, 8 Osprey, 10 Bar-tailed Godwit, 8 Ruddy Turnstone, 20 Sanderling, 2 Arctic Skua, 50 Slender-billed Gull, 2 Black-headed Gull, 150 Grey-headed Gull, 50 Lesser Black-backed Gull [3 *ssp.* – *graellsii*, *fuscus* and *intermedius*], 6 Little Tern, 4 Gull-billed Tern, 80 Caspian Tern, 10 Sandwich Tern and 60 Royal Tern. There was also another 8 House Sparrow in the sheds where the bus was packed.

We returned to the hotel for lunch, which gave me a couple of hours to sit in the shade next to what looked like a good area with dripping taps for birds to drink. Birds not recorded at the hotel before included 1 Palm-nut Vulture and Shikra overhead, plus 2 Senegal Thick-knee, 1 Black-billed Wood Dove, 4 Little Bee-eater, 5 Piapiac, 2 Splendid Sunbird and 50 Northern Red Bishop. My hotel list finished on 51 species.

Our late afternoon jaunt took us to the **Old Bund Road, Banjul** overlooking the banks of the **River Gambia**, or more specifically a large lagoon on the inland side of the road. A number of scarce species were seen here and included Franklin's Gull, Mediterranean Gull and 2 Yellow-billed Stork. Other species amongst the common wader, herons and gulls included 1 Sacred Ibis, 1 Purple Swamphen, 2 Wattled Lapwing, 2 Grey Plover, 4 African Jacana, 1 Marsh Sandpiper, 1 Little Stint, 5 Dunlin, 4 Gull-billed Tern, 20 Caspian Tern, 30 Royal Tern, Sandwich Tern, 1 Yellow Wagtail and our only White Wagtail of the trip.

The trip list had increased to 206 by the end of the day, with 67 species new for me.

3rd Mar 2016

This was our last full day in **The Gambia** and temperatures had risen again in the clear sky sunshine to 38c. Today we visited **Kartong Reserve**, which was now the country's leading birding area with many types of habitat including pools, reed-beds, scrub, woods and beach areas. We achieved a day list of well over 100 species in the morning, with bird migration much in evidence. So unusually for a trip report I've included a full list of species in the hope that it stresses how important a site this is for Gambia. With [m] standing for migrant/passage/wintering birds.

Double-spurred Francolin	White-faced Whistling Duck	Spur-winged Goose [m]	Little Grebe
Gannet [m]	Sacred Ibis	African Spoonbill	Squacco Heron
Western Cattle Egret	Grey Heron	Black-headed Heron	Purple Heron
Great Egret	Intermediate Egret	Black Egret	Little Egret
Western Reef Egret	Hammerkop	Great White Pelican	Pink-backed Pelican
Long-tailed Cormorant	White-breasted Cormorant	African Darter	Lanner
Osprey	Black-winged Kite	Yellow-billed Kite	Palm-nut Vulture
Hooded Vulture	Marsh Harrier [m]	African Harrier-Hawk	Gabar Goshawk [m]
Shikra	Black Crake	Purple Swamphen	Common Moorhen
Senegal Thick-knee	Black-winged Stilt	Spur-winged Lapwing	African Wattle Lapwing
Grey Plover [m]	Ringed Plover [m]	White-fronted Plover ((✓))	Kentish Plover [m]
Greater Painted-snipe	African Jacana	Bar-tailed Godwit [m]	Whimbrel [m]
Hudsonian Whimbrel [m]	Common Redshank [m]	Marsh Sandpiper [m]	Greenshank [m]
Green Sandpiper [m]	Wood Sandpiper [m]	Common Sandpiper [m]	Ruddy Turnstone [m]
Sanderling [m]	Slender-billed Gull	Black-headed Gull [m]	Grey-headed Gull
Audouin's Gull [m]	Yellow-legged Gull [m]	Lesser Black-backed Gull [m]	Little Tern [m]
Gull-billed Tern [m]	Caspian Tern	Sandwich Tern [m]	Royal Tern
Lesser Crested Tern [m] ((✓))	Common Tern [m]	Speckled Pigeon	Turtle Dove [m]

African Collared Dove [m] ((✓))	African Mourning Dove	Red-eyed Dove	Vinaceous Dove
Laughing Dove	Black-billed Wood Dove	Blue-spotted Wood Dove	Namaqua Dove
Senegal Parrot	Violet Turaco	Western Grey Plantain-eater	Senegal Coucal
African Palm Swift	Pallid Swift [m]	Little Swift	Abyssinian Roller
Blue-bellied Roller	Broad-billed Roller	Grey-headed Kingfisher	Woodland Kingfisher
Malachite Kingfisher	Pied Kingfisher	Little Bee-eater	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater [m]
Northern Carmine Bee-eater [m]	African Grey Hornbill	Western Red-billed Hornbill	Fine-spotted Woodpecker
Grey Woodpecker	Black-crowned Tchagra	Northern Puffback	Yellow-crowned Gonolek
Yellow-billed Shrike	Piapiac	Pied Crow	Sand Martin [m]
Red-chested Swallow	Wire-tailed Swallow	House Martin [m]	Mosque Swallow [m]
Red-rumped Swallow [m] (<i>African ssp</i>)	Crested Lark	Common Bulbul	Yellow-throated Leaflove
Zitting Cisticola	Tawny-flanked Prinia	Sedge Warble [m]	Northern Crombec
Blackcap Babbler	Brown Babbler	Purple Glossy Starling	Long-tailed Glossy Starling
African Thrush	Beautiful Sunbird	White-billed Buffalo Weaver	Village Weaver
Black-winged Bishop	Northern Red Bishop	Red-billed Firefinch	Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu
Lavender Waxbill	Black-rumped Waxbill	Bronze Mannikin	Yellow Wagtail [m]
Tree Pipit [m]			

That's 137 species before 1300hrs, not bad going at all. We then adjourned for lunch at reserve centre, which was excellent served with a well-earned cold beer but I couldn't sit still while others rested and added Shikra to the site list, which was in a thermal with other birds of prey.

The afternoon session was going to be more relaxed with a boat trip up the **Allahein River**, which serves as the border between Senegal and Gambia. So all the birds on the Senegal side bank could go towards my new Senegal List. In the end I achieved 40 species for the list. But other than that good birds for the voyage included all the usual herons, gulls, terns plus 1 Lanner, 25 Osprey, 2 Marsh Harrier, 1 African Harrier-hawk, 15 Eurasian Oystercatcher *[our only ones of the trip]*, 2 Giant Kingfisher and 1 Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird.

At the end of the day the trip list had risen to 231 and my lifers stood at 70. We even got back to the hotel an hour early [1700hrs], so had time to relax before our “last supper”.

4th Mar 2016

Warm dry and sunny with temperatures hitting 36c. Our flight home was an early evening flight [1745hrs] so we had time to do some early morning birding before lunch, I was missing 1 obvious species [Snowy-crowned Robin Chat], so that was my target for the morning.

We arrived at **Brufut Woods** and veered off the main path this time, it was a good idea as we immediately picked up a pair of **Snowy-crowned Robin Chat ((✓))**, a species I was worried I might not get. We then went to a local rice field near Mandiana for some close up shots of many birds. Then finally we stopped at a dripping water tank near **Tanji** in the hope of seeing Oriole Warbler. They were calling all around us, but we couldn't entice one into view and we gave up as we had to return to the hotel for lunch and booking out formalities.

We left the hotel for the airport at 1445hrs. The last birds seen at the airport lounge windows were House Sparrow, Red-eyed Dove, Beautiful Sunbird and Long-tailed Glossy Starling. Our flight took off an hour late, but a strong tail wind meant that the flight was an hour less and we arrived in Gatwick more or less on time at midnight and the temperature was a mere 0c – brrrr!!!.

This was a great trip, the people was extremely friendly, more so than any of the other African countries I have visited. Food and beer was very cheap and of course the constant sunshine always helps. I finished on 232 species having missed 5 that others had briefly seen, of which 71 were lifers. The leaders Mike and Dembo and driver Baba were of the highest quality and did everything they could to please us. If you are thinking of going birding to the Gambia **Limosa Holidays** comes well recommended by all the participants.

Martyn Hnatiuk