

Ethiopia

birding on a budget

Ankober, Melka Ghebdu, Gambela, Metu, Gibe Gorge, Awash and Lake Ziway.

27 October – 9 November 2012

by

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In March 2011 I birded some of the more traditional birding sites in Ethiopia for 3 weeks, but went home with a desire to return, and visit some areas that didn't make it on my itinerary the first time. As last time, I travelled around the country relying on public transport, staying in budget hotels and finding my own birds, without the use of guides.

For questions and further information feel free to contact me on : jethalund-at-yahoo.dk

General tripdescription.

Travelling around Ethiopia on your own is rather straight forward, and birds are plentiful. Accommodation can be found in just about any town or village, though often rather basic, and finding someone speaking at least some English isn't a big problem. The weather was mostly sunny and warm, with just a few afternoon showers at Gambela.

Late October/early November is in the early dry season, and many birds had just finished breeding, meaning that song activity was low for Cisticolas, and forest birds, and no Owls or Nightjars were heard, whereas Indigobirds, Finches and some Weavers seemed to be more active than on my previous visit in March.

Litterature.

A few essential publications for the trip were the following:

- *Birds of the Horn of Africa* by Redman, Stevenson and Fanshawe, **THE** field guide to Ethiopia.
- *Where to watch birds in Ethiopia* by Spottiswoode, Gabremichael and Francis,
- *Ethiopia, the Bradt Travel Guide* by Philip Briggs, far better than Lonely Planet and written by an author with a keen interest in birds!

With the demise of Tavellingbirder.com not many interesting trip reports are available, but on surfbirds.com I found a very useful and recent [report](#) by Sander Bot, covering Gambela and a few other western sites.

Transport and accommodation.

Except for a visit to Bilen Plains near Awash, I only used public transportation, which was cheap, though sometimes time consuming. Buses and minibuses don't drive at night, and the first transportation usually gets going around sunrise (6 am), but to get a seat on the first bus, it is a good idea to be at the bus station at least half an hour early. Buses are rather slow but less cramped than some of the minibuses, which on the other hand are more frequent, faster and a little more expensive. Despite what is written in some travel guides, I didn't feel that driving in Ethiopia was any more (or less) dangerous than in most other African countries.

I flew between Addis Ababa and Gambela with Ethiopian Airlines (1h20m/110USD), booked on their website, but apparently it is possible to get a hefty discount, if buying the ticket in Ethiopia.

In larger towns like Debre Birhan, Gambela and Awash there is a broad range of hotels, to suit most budgets, but in smaller places like Ankober and Aliyu Amba there are often just one or two basic places, but despite this, I didn't encounter any bedbugs, but the long-drop toilets did require a deep breath before entering!

Money and costs.

At the time of my visit the exchange rate was 1 Euro ~ 23 Birr and 1 USD ~ 18 Birr.

ATMs can be found in most large towns, but I used one in the baggage hall at the Bole airport on my arrival and exchanged some Euros as well, to last my trip.

Relying almost exclusively on public transport, staying in budget/shoestring hotels and eating local food (*injera*) meant that I got by on a budget of less than 20 Euros/day, excluding domestic flight from Addis Ababa to Gambela.

Food.

Bottled water was available throughout, and fruit, bread and biscuits could usually be found at local markets or small stores. On this trip I also got used to the taste of the national dish *injera*, a large, slightly sour pancake served with *wat*, a stew with vegetables/meat, which is very filling, especially washed down with a cold *Bedele* beer. I didn't experience any stomach problems.

Miscellaneous.

Visa can be obtained on arrival at Bole Airport (20 USD).

Gambela is a high risk area for malaria, so it's wise to bring malaria tablets, and sleep under a mosquito-net. This was provided at hotels at all relevant sites, except Welkite, but I only encountered very few mozzies during my trip in general.

Sunrise was around 6am and sunset around 6.30pm, approximately half an hour later in Gambela.

Site information.

I relied mostly on the information in *Where to Watch Birds in Ethiopia*, which still seemed up-to-date. For sites around Gambela and Metu I used the trip report by Sander Bot, and finally I looked over the sites on GoogleEarth. Additional site-information not mentioned in either of these two references are listed below.

At **Debre Birhan** a stream crosses the main road towards Addis Ababa on the western outskirts of town (GoogleEarth). I found my way there, by taking a dirt road in a southern direction off the main road, where I could make out the flat expanse of the plateau in the background. The stream cuts across the plateau, and it should be possible to follow the stream north, to the point where it crosses the dirt road to Ankober, with enough time. A good place to spend a few hours or more.

Gambela is a fairly spread out town, and to visit sites either to the north (towards Dembidolo) or southeast (towards Metu) it would be best to take a *bajaj* (tuk-tuk) the 3km to the roped barrier at the city limits, to save time (10-15B).

The northern bank of the Baro river can easily be followed westwards/downriver from the bridge, along trails passing through forest fragments of large fig trees, patches of cultivation and areas of marsh/reedbeds, but it is somewhat reminiscent of a drawn out village, as there are families living every few hundred meters. Good place to see **Red-headed Quelea**, **West African Swallow**, **Moustached Grass Warbler** and **Wilson's Indigobird**.

To follow the river eastwards, along the northern bank, a footpath begins at the pumping station, reached by following the road past the Baro Gambella Hotel and around the northern fence of the hotel grounds. Not as populated as the downriver section, with fewer cultivated areas and larger marshes. Best birds were **Egyptian Plover** and **Red-throated Bee-eater**.



Baro river west of Gambela and Dembidolo road north of Gambela.

The Dembidolo road leads north towards two obvious rocky hills, after which it turns west, and at approximately 8km from Gambela, there is a turn-off for Itang. Just before the start of the dirtroad to Dembidolo a new, tarred road heads west, which is presumably a new road to Itang.

Close to Gambela there are several large, cleared areas, where Indigobirds and Whydahs were not uncommon, but further on the wooded savanna becomes denser.

Best birds found were **Fox Kestrel, Little Green** and **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Brown-backed Woodpecker, Foxy Cisticola, Red-billed Pytilia, Magpie Mannikin, Exclamatory Paradise Whydah** and **Barka Indigobird**.

Birding along the Metu road, heading east on the south side of the river, was good, once beyond the city limits, with only very light traffic. Fairly open, wooded savanna held **Red-necked Buzzard, Green Wood-Hoopoe, Green-backed Eremomela** and **Red-pate Cisticola**. Some 3km from town a dirtroad on the northern side leads down to an abandoned military camp and a large clearing with some gallery forest at the far side.

Looking at Gambela on GoogleEarth, an obvious dirt road heads west and then southwest into Gambela NP from the airport road south of the bridge. The first 3km were rather poor, with large clearings with pits, but further on the wooded bushland got denser. Good birds along this road were **Little Green** and **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Green Woodhoopoe, Foxy Cisticola, Red-billed Pytilia** and probable **Wilson's Indigobirds**.

Itinerary.

27 Oct. - morning arrival Bole Airport, Addis Ababa, airport taxi to northern ringroad (350B – rip-off!), minibus to Debre Birhan (2h/40B), bus to Ankober (2h/16B), room at Getachew Tekle Selassie Hotel (20B), afternoon walk north along escarpment.

28 Oct. - left Ankober at dawn, and hiked/birded nearly all the way down to Aliyu Amba (15km/5h), getting a lift with a truck the final couple of km, room at hotel a little above the central square (30-50B), afternoon walk down to Melka Ghebdu.

29 Oct. - dawn until early afternoon, walked along the road from Aliyu Amba to Melka Ghebdu and a couple of km beyond, late afternoon birded around the base of the village.

30 Oct. - morning spent birding around the outskirts of Aliyu Amba, late morning wait at market square and subsequent hassle for a seat on the bus to Debre Birhan (3h/30B), in Debre Birhan got a room at Hotel Akula (80B) and spent the afternoon around fields and wetland on southeastern outskirts of town.

31 Oct. - morning minibus to Addis Ababa (2h/50B), taxi from ringroad to Bole Airport (80B), mid-afternoon flight to Gambela (1h20m/110USD), minibus to Gambela (20m/50B) where I got a room at Hotel No 43 (150B) near bus station, and just managed an hours birding near Baro River before dark.

1 Nov. - dawn until midday birded along the northern bank of Baro River west of Gambela, mid afternoon until sunset walked the Metu road eastwards for 5 km.

2 Nov. - took *bajaj* (tuk-tuk) to northern end of town (10B) and birded the gravel road northwards (Dembidolo road) from dawn until mid afternoon, turning around after 8 km at the old turn off for Ithang. Late afternoon visited the marsh just west of Gambela.

3 Nov. - at dawn headed across the river, and walked 5+km along the dirt road to the SW, beginning at the barrier along the airport road, returning early afternoon. In the afternoon I followed a trail along the northern bank of the Baro river 2.5km to the east.

4 Nov. - 6 am-ish bus to Metu (3.5h/80B), found a rather new hotel across the road from the post office (170B), spent the afternoon birding the forest patch west of the river approx. 2 km north of town.

5 Nov. - 6 am bus from Metu to Jimma (5.5h/97B) with a tea break halfway in Bedele, then bus from Jimma to Welkite (4.5h/80B) where I took a room at a basic hotel on main street (40B).

6 Nov. - flagged down a minibus bound for Jimma at dawn, and got off in Gibe Gorge at KM180 (20m/50B), birded down to the bridge over Gibe river (KM186) and went north up a dirt road parallel to the river a little west of the bridge, from where several tracks gave access to the river and the riverine forest. Not much traffic late afternoon, but easily managed to get a lift with a truck back to Welkite.

7 Nov. - quickly found a minibus going to Addis Ababa in the morning (4h/70B), of which at least one hour was spent in slow moving traffic in the capital, then a *higer*-minibus ('express' bus) from Mercato to the **new** southern bus station in Kaliti (45m/10B), from there a minibus along the congested main road to Nazret/Adama (1.5h/27B) and finally a last bus to Awash (2h/45B). Found a room at Park Hotel (60B) and just had time to descend into the Awash Gorge and bird for a couple of hours.

8 Nov. - the previous evening I hired a car with the help of the manager at Park Hotel (half day/1300B), to be able to get to the turn off for Bilen Lodge as early in the day as possible, so from 6.30 am I birded along the dirt road to Bilen Lodge concentrating on the plains 2 km from the main road, drove back to Awash late morning and caught a bus to Nazret/Adama (2h/45B), and from there a minibus to Ziway (3h/35B), where I got a room at Tourist Hotel (150B).

9 Nov. - walked down to Lake Ziway at dawn and birded until late morning along the shore, before catching a bus back to Addis Ababa (3.5h/60B), where I got off at ring road, to save me from ending up in traffic jams closer to the centre, instead took a couple of local busses to the airport turn off with the help of an Ethiopian couple (4B).

Annotated list of birds.

I've followed the sequence and names used in Birds of the Horn of Africa (BotHoA), except in a few instances where splits have occurred since the publication.

Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) – apart from one soaring bird at Gibe gorge, only seen at Lake Ziway, where it was common (200+) and confiding.

Pink-backed Pelican (*Pelecanus rufescens*) – one soaring bird seen east of Jimma, and one bird spotted from the bus at Lake Besekas en route to Awash.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – 1-3 seen at Debre Birhan, Gambela and Lake Ziway.

White-breasted Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax lucidus*) – one bird at Lake Ziway.

Long-tailed Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax africanus*) – fairly common at Lake Ziway.

Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – two single birds were flushed along the Baro river at Gambela, which is far outside the mapped range in BotHoA, but not really unexpected.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – seen regularly throughout.

Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) – three birds at Lake Ziway.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) – a few found around Gambela, and common at Lake Ziway.

Black Heron (*Egretta ardesiaca*) – a single, feeding bird seen at Lake Ziway.

Great Egret (*Egretta alba*) – singles seen around Gambela, and 4 at Lake Ziway.

Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) – one bird along the Baro river at Gambela.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) – a few seen around Gambela

Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*) – 3-4 birds seen daily around Gambela.

Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) – a few seen around Debre Birhan and Gambela, but common and confiding at Lake Ziway.

Yellow-billed Stork (*Mycteria ibis*) – up to 12 birds were seen roosting on a gravel bank at Gambela, with 35 birds flying west on one day. Also one bird at Lake Besekas.

Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) - one bird was feeding in a roadside pond between Debre Birhan and Ankober.

Saddle-billed Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*) – one immature flew upriver at Gambela, and a juvenile was found near the causeway at Lake Ziway.

Marabou Stork (*Leptoptilos crumeniferus*) – a few seen at Gambela and Gibe river, but more numerous at Awash and common at Lake Ziway.

Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) – 23 birds were near Debre Birhan, one at Gibe river and 50+ at Lake Ziway.

Hadada Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) – not numerous, but noisy, around Gambela, Metu, Gibe river and Lake Ziway.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – four birds at Lake Ziway.

Wattled Ibis (*Bostrychia carunculata*) – 9 birds in fields below Ankober and 8 birds around wetland at Debre Birhan.

African Spoonbill (*Platalea alba*) – two birds in flight at Lake Ziway.

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) – a few were found at most wetlands, but numerous at Lake Ziway.

Blue-winged Goose (*Cyanochen cyanoptera*) – 8 birds at the Debre Birhan wetland.

White-faced Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) – 7 birds at Lake Ziway.

African Pygmy-goose (*Nettapus auritus*) – a pair with 6 pullus at Lake Ziway.

Yellow-billed Duck (*Anas undulata*) – 15 at wetland near Debre Birhan.

African Black Duck (*Anas sparsa*) – two birds at the wetland south of Debre Birhan.

Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) – a few birds noted around Awash and Lake Ziway.

Yellow-billed Kite (*Milvus aegyptius*) – common to abundant at most sites, with a spectacular night roost at the telecom building in Awash, where 250 birds gathered at dusk.

African Fish Eagle (*Haliaeetus vocifer*) – seen at Gambela, Gibe river and Lake Ziway (10+).

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) – at least two different birds feeding along the Baro river at Gambela.

Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – 1-2 adults seen at Ankober, Aliyu Amba and Debre Birhan.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) – one imm. at Lake Beseka, and one adult and 1st cal. at Bilen Plains.

Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*) – common throughout, with up to 75 at Gambela and 50 at Awash.

Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*) – two soaring birds observed at Bilen Plains.

White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) – a few could regularly be found amongst the much more numerous Hooded Vultures at Gambela, Gibe river, Awash and Lake Ziway

Rüppell's Vulture (*Gyps rueppellii*) – two birds seen at Gambela and one at Gibe river.

Black-chested Snake-Eagle (*Circaetus pectoralis*) – one seen from the bus north of Ziway.

Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) – one 1st cal at Gambela and one ♂ and 1st cal at Gibe river.

Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) – a single adult ♂ was seen at Bilen Plains in almost direct comparison to ♂ Pallid Harrier – stunning!

Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) – two soaring 1st cal. birds at Gibe river, 1 ♂ and 2 1st cal. at Bilen Plains and one 1st cal. at Lake Ziway.

Dark Chanting Goshawk (*Melierax metabates*) – a few could be seen daily around Gambela

Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) – a few singles seen around Gambela and at Gibe Gorge.

Shikra has been proposed split into three different species, with the birds in northeast Africa becoming **Eritrean Shikra** (*Accipiter sphenurus*).

Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter rufiventris*) – a single bird seen in flight along the escarpment at Ankober.

Great Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) – one bird near Ankober Palace Lodge, between Ankober and Aliyu Amba..

African Harrier-Hawk (*Polyboroides typus*) – in Gambela 3 birds were seen leaving their night-roost in the large fig trees near the bridge.

Red-necked Buzzard (*Buteo auguralis*) – at Gambela singles were seen both along the Dembidolo road and along the Metu Road. The latter bird was initially confused with Augur Buzzard (see left picture below), as, although it did show a dark breast-band, otherwise it was plain white on body and underwing with a striking rufous tail. As this would be outside and below the normal range of Augur Buzzard, I was quite puzzled until it began calling with a drawn out call, very reminiscent to Common Buzzard, which quickly excluded Augur Buzzard.

According to BotHoA they usually occur in Ethiopia Dec-May, but these observations seem to expand this by at least a month.



Red-necked Buzzards, Gambela

Augur Buzzard (*Buteo augur*) – seen commonly in the highlands.

Steppe Buzzard (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) – a single dark morph bird seen soaring at Gambela.

Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*) – two birds at Melka Ghebdu, Gibe Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) – one immature at both Gibe river and Awash Gorge

Wahlberg's Eagle (*Aquila wahlbergi*) – singles seen along the SW Road at Gambela, and at Gibe river

African Hawk-Eagle (*Hieraaetus spilogaster*) – an older immature bird was seen at Melka Ghebdu.



African Hawk-Eagle, Melka Ghebdu.

Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – one dark morph bird at Aliyu Amba, Gibe Gorge and Bilen Plains, with a single pale morph at the latter site as well.

Bateleur (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) – one ♂♀ were seen together along the Dembidolo road at Gambela, and one ♀ was found at Gibe Gorge.

Long-crested Eagle (*Lophaetus occipitalis*) – one bird on the Metu road near Gambela, and a pair at Gibe river.

Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) – a distant adult bird was soaring above the escarpment at Aliyu Amba.

African Crowned Eagle (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*) - a pair in display was seen distantly from the forest patch at Metu.

Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) – a pair seen at Melka Ghebdu of the somewhat darker ssp. *rufescens*.

Fox Kestrel (*Falco alopex*) – at Gambela, 2-3 birds were seen around both of the large rocky hills along the Dembidolo road just north of town. Strikingly long-winged and long-tailed in flight.

Grey Kestrel (*Falco ardosiaceus*) – a single bird found in a large tree on the lakefront at Lake Ziway.

Pygmy Falcon (*Polihierax semitorquatus*) – one delightful male was found perched at Bilen Plains.

Red-necked Falcon (*Falco chiquera*) – an adult flew across the river west of Gambela.

Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) – one juvenile was hunting at the wetland at Debre Birhan, where an adult was also found perched on the large transmitter tower.. A couple of adult birds were seen at Gibe Gorge, and one adult flew around the gorge at Awash at sunset.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) – one adult seen briefly twice, zooming along the escarpment above Ankober.

Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*) – heard at Melka Ghebdu, two seen near Gambela, several flocks seen and heard at Gibe river including small young,

Crested Francolin (*Dendroperdix sephaena*) – heard calling at Aliyu Amba, Melka Ghebdu and Bilen Plains.

Erckel's Francolin (*Pternistis erckelii*) – at least 4 calling birds were heard below Ankober in the morning, especially near Ankober Palace Lodge.

Clapperton's Francolin (*Pternistis clappertoni*) – heard calling commonly (4-5 birds) in areas of light cultivation at Gibe Gorge.

Black Crake (*Amaurornis flavirostra*) – a few birds were heard calling from marshes around Gambela..

Black Crowned Crane (*Balearica pavonina*) – at least two birds in the marshes around Gambela.

Arabian Bustard (*Ardeotis arabs*) – at Bilen Plains three birds were seen in flight, as they were flushed by a large herd of Camels.

African Jacana (*Actophilornis africanus*) – one pair with two pullus at Gambela, and common at Lake Ziway.

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) – 20 birds at Lake Ziway.

Senegal Thick-knee (*Burhinus senegalensis*) – east of Gambela 8 rather vocal birds were found roosting on rocks and islands in the river, and 2+ were seen at Gibe river.

Egyptian Plover (*Pluvianus aegyptius*) – after quite a bit of searching along the Baro river at Gambela, 5 birds were finally found approx. 2 km upriver from the bridge. As the water level in the river was still quite high, they were found feeding in a newly ploughed field on a large cultivated island in the river. Later on two of the birds roosted briefly on a rock in the river before flying further downstream, so the birds might have been migrants.

Three-banded Plover (*Charadrius tricollaris*) – three birds at Lake Ziway.

Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – seven birds at Lake Ziway.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) – six birds at Lake Ziway.

Spur-winged Plover (*Vanellus spinosus*) – a few around Gambela and 10+ at Lake Ziway.

African Wattled Plover (*Vanellus senegallus*) – a few birds at both Gambela and Gibe river.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) – two birds at Lake Ziway.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – a few seen around most wetlands.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) – two birds at Debre Birhan and Gambela, 8 birds at Lake Ziway.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) – one bird at Gambela.

Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) – a single bird at Lake Ziway.

Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – three birds at Lake Ziway.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) – two birds at Lake Ziway.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) – three birds at Lake Ziway.

Grey-headed Gull (*Larus cirrocephalus*) – 30 birds at Lake Ziway.

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) – 4 birds at Lake Ziway.

Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*) – a couple of birds seen from the bus at Lake Beseka, and a single was also found at Lake Ziway.

White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) – 45 birds feeding at Lake Ziway.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*) – in the morning at least 31 birds were seen and more heard, in flight at Bilen Plains.

Four-banded Sandgrouse (*Pterocles quadricinctus*) – one bird was flushed from the escarpment approaching Bilen Plains.

Bruce's Green Pigeon (*Treron waalia*) – up to 6 birds seen around the large fig-trees along the Baro river at Gambela, and two in Gibe Gorge.

Speckled Pigeon (*Columba guinea*) – common, especially around towns, with large roosts found in Awash (50) and at the turn-off for Bilen Plains (200).

White-collared Pigeon (*Columba albitorques*) – seen commonly in the highlands around Ankober and Debre Birhan.

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove (*Turtur chalcospilos*) – common in the more dry lowlands of the Great Rift Valley.

Blue-spotted Wood Dove (*Turtur afer*) – two birds were seen in riverine forest at Gibe river.

Black-billed Wood Dove (*Turtur abyssinicus*) – fairly common at Gambela, especially in more lush habitat near the Baro river.

Tambourine Dove (*Turtur tympanistria*) – one bird heard and one seen in forest near Metu.

Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) – seen fairly commonly at sites away from the highlands.

Ring-necked Dove (*Streptopelia capicola*) – a few at Bilen Plains and Awash

African Collared Dove (*Streptopelia roseogrisea*) – one bird heard and seen at Bilen Plains.

Red-eyed Dove (*Streptopelia semitorquata*) – fairly common to common at most sites.

African Mourning Dove (*Streptopelia decipiens*) – common at Gambela and Lake Ziway, a few in Gibe Gorge and Awash

Vinaceous Dove (*Streptopelia vinacea*) – common to abundant around Gambela and Gibe Gorge.

Laughing Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) – often very common, except around Gambela and at highland sites.

Dusky Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia lugens*) – fairly common in the highlands, with a few seen around Ankober and Debre Birhan.

Lemon Dove (*Aplopelia larvata*) – one bird seen perched very briefly in the forest near Metu.

White-cheeked Turaco (*Tauraco leucotis*) – two birds were seen and heard somewhat unexpectedly at Aliyu Amba, which seems rather cut off from any larger expanse of forest.

White-bellied Go-away-bird (*Corythaixoides leucogaster*) – three birds seen at Bilen Plains.

Bare-faced Go-away-bird (*Corythaixoides personatus*) - a single bird was found on consecutive days between Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu (9°34.177'N, 39°48.620'E).

Eastern Grey Plantain-eater (*Crinifer zonurus*) – two birds were found in riverine forest at Gibe river.

Diederik Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx caprius*) – 2-3 birds were found in the marshy area along the Baro river west of Gambela.

Klaas's Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx klaas*) – heard at Aliyu Amba, Gambela, Metu (5+),

White-browed Coucal (*Centropus superciliosus*) – heard at Aliyu Amba and north of Gambela

Senegal Coucal (*Centropus senegalensis*) – one probable bird heard along the Dembidolo road north of Gambela.

Blue-headed Coucal (*Centropus monachus*) – a few were seen/heard along the Baro river at Gambela.

African Palm Swift (*Cypsiurus parvus*) – a few were seen around Gambela.



Remnant forest at Metu with Klaas's Cuckoo

Speckled Mousebird (*Colius striatus*) – fairly common away from the highlands. Compared to Blue-naped Mousebird a rather poor flyer, often found climbing around inside bushes and canopies.

Blue-naped Mousebird (*Urocolius macrourus*) – up to 8 seen around Gambela and 3 at Bilen Plains. A much stronger flyer than Speckled Mousebird.

Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) – found at rivers and lakes, with 1-4 birds found at Melka Ghebdu, Gambela and Gibe river, more numerous at Lake Ziway (8).

Grey-headed Kingfisher (*Halcyon leucocephala*) – one bird seen at Gambela, and two birds at Gibe river.

Giant Kingfisher (*Megaceryle maxima*) – one bird seen a couple of times near the bridge in Gambela.

Woodland Kingfisher (*Halcyon senegalensis*) – common at Gambela, and a few also seen at Lake Ziway.

Striped Kingfisher (*Halcyon chelicuti*) – common around Gambela, especially along the Dembidolo road (11+), and another two birds were found in Gibe Gorge

Half-collared Kingfisher (*Alcedo semitorquata*) – one bird was feeding from an exposed perch at the stream at Melka Ghebdu.

Malachite Kingfisher (*Alcedo cristata*) – a few singles seen around Gambela, common at Lake Ziway.

African Pygmy Kingfisher (*Ceyx pictus*) – fairly common around Gambela, Metu and at Gibe river, and mostly seen away from water.

Little Bee-eater (*Merops pusillus*) – seen regularly in small numbers (2-6) around Gambela

Blue-breasted Bee-eater (*Merops variegatus lafresnayii*) – up to 3 seen around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu, and another 2 were seen at Metu.

Little Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*) – the most numerous Bee-eater around Gambela, with 20+ along the Itang Road, and 3 along the SW Road. According to BotHoA it is a non-breeding visitor to Western Ethiopia Dec-Apr, but these observations show, that they are already present here from late October.

White-throated Bee-eater (*Merops albicollis*) – 4 birds found in the wooded bushland north of Gambela, and 8 birds were feeding over the forest at Metu.

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops hirundineus*) – at Gambela two birds were seen along the Itang Road, and another three on the SW-road.

According to BotHoA there are no records Aug-Nov, but this is probably due to lack of birders in the western lowlands of Ethiopia.

European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) – flocks seen regularly, with 30 at Aliyu Amba, 15+ at Melka Ghebdu, 8 at Gambela and 50 at Metu.

Red-throated Bee-eater (*Merops bulocki*) – 12 birds flew upriver at Gambela in the late afternoon.

According to BotHoA the species has not been recorded Sep-Nov in Ethiopia, though expected to be resident, which this observation might well indicate.

Northern Carmine Bee-eater (*Merops nubicus*) – just one bird seen, an overflying bird at Lake Ziway.

Rufous-crowned Roller (*Coracias naevius*) – a single bird was noted at Melka Ghebdu

Abyssinian Roller (*Coracias abyssinicus*) – seen in low numbers at Melka Ghebdu, Gambela, Gibe Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Green Wood-hoopoe (*Phoeniculus purpureus*) – at Gambela one bird was found along the Metu Road, and 3 along the SW Road

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) – 1-3 birds seen at a few sites (Aliyu Amba, Gibe Gorge, Bilen Plains) and at least 3 singing birds at Lake Ziway.

Abyssinian Scimitarbill (*Rhinopomastus minor*) – three birds at Bilen Plains.

Black Scimitarbill (*Rhinopomastus aterrimus*) – one bird found near Gibe river.

Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill (*Tockus flavirostris*) – 5+ birds were found at Bilen Plains.

Hemprich's Hornbill (*Tockus hemprichii*) – seen and heard regularly in and around Aliyu Amba, with at least 5-6 birds involved.

African Grey Hornbill (*Tockus nasutus*) – a few birds seen/heard daily around Gambela, but more numerous at Gibe Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill (*Bycanistes brevis*) – 6+ birds were seen/heard around Metu and a single bird was found at Lake Ziway.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus chrysoconus*) – a few seen around Gambela and near Metu, but heard more regularly.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus pusillus*) – at Aliyu Amba only one bird was seen, but more could be heard calling.

Black-billed Barbet (*Lybius guifsobalito*) – fairly common at Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu, Gambela.

Double-toothed Barbet (*Lybius bidentatus*) – singles and pairs seen and heard regularly around Gambela, mostly seen near large dead trees at nest holes.

Banded Barbet (*Lybius undatus*) – 2-3 pairs seen/heard regularly in and around Aliyu Amba.

Yellow-breasted Barbet (*Trachyphonus margaritatus*) – a few were seen at both Melka Ghebdu and Bilen Plains.

Greater Honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*) – one adult and one juvenile were seen at Gibe river, and another/same (?) was heard.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide (*Indicator variegatus*) – two singing birds were heard along the Dembidolo road at Gambela.

Lesser Honeyguide (*Indicator minor*) – one bird called continually in the forest at Metu, but could not be tracked down.

Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*) – a single bird, perched in the open, was found at Lake Ziway.

Nubian Woodpecker (*Campepthera nubica*) – two birds were found along the Dembidolo road at Gambela, and one was also present in the forest at Metu.

Bearded Woodpecker (*Dendropicos namaquus*) – one female was found in Gibe Gorge.

Cardinal Woodpecker (*Dendropicos fuscescens*) – a few seen at Aliyu Amba, Metu, Gibe Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Brown-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides obsoletus*) – the commonest woodpecker along the Dembidolo road north of Gambela, with at least 7 birds recorded.

Eastern Grey Woodpecker (*Dendropicos spodocephalus*) – two birds found at Gambela and one seen in forest near Metu.

Flappet Lark (*Mirafra rufocinnamomea*) – one bird seen once in display-flight along the Dembidolo road at Gambela.

Thekla Lark (*Galerida theklae*) – two birds seen between Ankober and Aliyu Amba.



Chestnut Sparrow and Red-headed Quelea, Gambela

Rock Martin (*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*) – 1-2 birds seen at Aliyu Amba, Gambela (Dembidolo road) and Awash gorge.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) – singles seen at scattered sites throughout, but 25+ seemed to be leaving a roost near Bilen Plains with Barn Swallows.

Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*) – 4 birds at Debre Birhan, 10 at Gambela and common (50+) at Lake Ziway.

Banded Martin (*Riparia cincta*) – one bird seen at the wetland near Debre Birhan.

Common House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) – small flocks seen regularly above Aliyu Amba.

Red-rumped Swallow (*Cecropsis daurica*) – one bird (ssp *melanocrissus*) was seen at Debre Birhan.

West African Swallow (*Cecropsis domicella*) – two birds were feeding over the Baro River west of Gambela. A recent split from the above species.

Mosque Swallow (*Cecropsis senegalensis*) – two birds were observed along the Dembidolo road north of Gambela feeding with Lessser Striped Swallows.

Lesser Striped Swallow (*Cecropsis abyssinica*) – 8 birds were feeding around one of the rocky hills north of Gambela.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) – common throughout.

Wire-tailed Swallow (*Hirundo smithii*) – fairly common around Gambela, especially near the river, but a few also seen at the river at Metu and at Gibe river.

Black Saw-wing (*Psalidoprocne pristoptera*) – at least 23 birds were feeding low above the forest at Metu as a thunder shower approached.

Birds of ssp. *oleaginea* in SW Ethiopia are sometimes split as **Ethiopian Saw-wing**.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) – a few seen at scattered sites throughout, and only found to be more numerous at Lake Ziway (20).

African Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla aguimp*) – two birds found at Metu and one bird seen at Gibe river.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*) – one bird by the river in Awash Gorge and 3 birds seen at Lake Ziway.

Mountain Wagtail (*Motacilla clara*) – one bird was heard at Metu.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) – 3 birds around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu, and one bird by the river in Awash Gorge.

Long-billed Pipit (*Anthus similis hararensis*) – one adult seen between Ankober and Aliyu Amba, and one juvenile seen below Aliyu Amba.

Plain-backed Pipit (*Anthus leucophrys*) – one bird seen in fallow fields near Gibe river.

Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) – a few were noted around Ankober, Gambela and Lake Ziway.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) – fairly common to common at most wooded sites.

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike (*Campephaga phoenicea*) – 1-3 birds seen a few times around Gambela, and a pair at the forest near Metu.

Common Bulbul (*Pycnonotus barbatus schoanus*) – common at most sites away from the drier regions around Awash occupied by Somali Bulbul.

Somali Bulbul (*Pycnonotus somaliensis*) – two birds seen at both Awash Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Northern Brownbul (*Phyllastrephus strepitans*) – one bird was seen at Gibe river, where it was initially mistaken for a large *Acrocephalus* warbler, though a very shortwinged one.

Rüppell's Robin Chat (*Cossypha semirufa*) – one bird was seen at the forest near Metu.

White-browed Robin-Chat (*Cossypha heuglini*) – one bird was seen and heard along the Dembidolo road at Gambela.

Red-capped Robin Chat (*Cossypha natalensis*) – two birds in the forest at Metu. One was 'whistled in', by imitating the constantly repeated call.

Snowy-headed Robin Chat (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) – one bird along the Baro river at Gambela, and two in riverine forest at Gibe river.

In BotHoA the range map doesn't show the species as occurring as far east as Gibe Gorge, but it is mentioned from here in Where to watch Birds in Ethiopia.

Common Nigthingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) – apparently fairly common around Gambela, as all seen birds (3 out of 15+ recorded) were of this species. The dry rattle-call was commonly heard in the morning, and some birds were also heard sub-singing.

Thrush Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*) – one possible bird was heard sub-singing at Lake Ziway.

Common Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) – a few at Melka Ghebdu, and 10+ at Gibe River, of which the majority of those seen were of ssp. *samamasicus*.

Siberian Stonechat (*Saxicola maura*) – one ♂ seen briefly at Debre Birhan.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*) – singles seen around Gambela

Red-breasted Wheatear (*Oenanthe bottae*) – observed fairly often as a roadside bird in the highlands.

Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) – less common than Pied Wheatear, with singles seen at Debre Birhan, Dembidolo road at Gambela and Lake Ziway, but at least 8 were found at Bilen Plains.

Pied Wheatear (*Oenanthe pleschanka*) – one of the most widespread migrants, with a few birds found at nearly all sites visited.

Desert Wheatear (*Oenanthe deserti*) – two birds were found at the turn off for Bilen Plains.

Abyssinian Black Wheatear (*Oenanthe lugubris*) – fairly common in the area around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu, with up to 6 birds seen daily.

Moorland Chat (*Cercomela sordida*) – fairly common at Ankober and Debre Birhan.

Blackstart (*Cercomela melanura*) – two birds were found at Awash Gorge.

Mocking Cliff Chat (*Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris*) – two birds observed at Aliyu Amba, Metu and Gibe river, were all found around human habitation.

White-winged Cliff Chat (*Thamnolaea semirufa*) – at least 9 birds were encountered along the road between Ankober and Aliyu Amba.

Rüppell's Black Chat (*Myrmecocichla melaena*) – two birds were found in a rock-strewn field between Ankober and Aliyu Amba.

Groundscraper Thrush (*Psophocichla litsitsirupa*) – one bird seen between Ankober and Aliyu Amba.

Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) – one ♂ and ♀ at Ankober, and one ♂ at Awash Gorge.

Little Rock Thrush (*Monticola rufocinereus*) – one ♂ seen below Ankober.

Mountain Thrush (*Turdus abyssinicus*) – one bird below Ankober, and four birds at Metu.

African Thrush (*Turdus pelios*) – a few were seen around Gambela and Gibe river.

Moustached Grass Warbler (*Melocichla mentalis*) – 2-3 birds seen in the marsh to the west of Gambela.

Great Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*) – a single bird gave good views in the marsh west of Gambela.

Eurasian Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) – a few birds seen, but mostly heard at Gambela and Gibe Gorge.

Marsh Warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*) – 2-3 birds were recorded around Gambela, mostly based on birds giving short bursts of song. Also several unidentified Reed/Marsh Warblers.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) – one bird at the river near Metu, and 5+ at Lake Ziway.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (*Hippolais pallida*) – a few were found around Gambela, Gibe Gorge and Lake Ziway.

Grey-backed Camaroptera (*Camaroptera brachyura*) – fairly common and widespread.

Green-backed Eremomela (*Eremomela canescens*) – at Gambela 3 birds were seen along the Metu road, and another 4 were seen on the Dembidolo road.

Yellow-bellied Eremomela (*Eremomela icteropygialis*) – one bird observed at Aliyu Amba and two at Bilen Plains.

Northern Crombec (*Sylvietta brachyura*) – fairly common around Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu and Gibe Gorge. Singles also seen twice around Gambela, despite the map in BotHoA showing that no Crombecs should occur in the wetsern lowlands (omission?).

Buff-bellied Warbler (*Phyllolais pulchella*) – 4 birds were seen along the Metu road near Gambela.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – found at several sites, but most numerous at Gibe Gorge and Lake Ziway.

Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) – one bird was found feeding in a large fig-tree at Aliyu Amba. A rare bird in Ethiopia with less than 10 records.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) – widespread in low numbers, except at Gambela,

Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) – a few seen around Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu and Gibe Gorge.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) – a few birds were found around Aliyu Amba and Metu, but common at Gibe Gorge.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*) – 2-3 birds seen daily around Gambela.

Yellow-bellied Hylia (*Hylia flavigaster*) – at least 9 birds were encountered along the Dembidolo road, Gambela, including juveniles.



Awash Gorge and Pallid Harrier, Gibe Gorge.

Red-pate Cisticola (*Cisticola ruficeps*) – at Gambela one bird was found along the Metu Road, about 2km east of town, and another two were singing along the Dembidolo road.

Croaking Cisticola (*Cisticola natalensis*) – a single bird was seen along the Dembidolo road, Gambela.

Foxy Cisticola (*Cisticola troglodytes*) – as birds were apparently not singing this time of year, only a few were found by chance around Gambela, along the Dembidolo and SW-roads, and in the *acacia*-scrub at Gibe Gorge.

Winding Cisticola (*Cisticola marginatus*) – in contrast to other Cisticolas, several could be heard singing from marshy areas along the Baro river at Gambela.

Rattling Cisticola (*Cisticola chiniana*) – fairly common around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu, and a few were also seen at Lake Ziway, including fresh juveniles..

Red-faced Cisticola (*Cisticola erythropus*) – fairly common in second growth around Gambela and Metu

Tawny-flanked Prinia (*Prinia subflava*) – common at many sites.

Red-winged Warbler (*Heliolais erythropterus*) – 4 birds, including juveniles, were observed in a large bush along the Dembidolo road at Gambela.

Red-fronted Warbler (*Urorhipis rufifrons*) – a family group of 4 were seen in Awash Gorge, and another two were observed at Bilen Plains.

Yellow-breasted Apalis (*Apalis flavida*) – two birds in the forest patch at Metu.

Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher (*Melaenornis chocolatinus*) – 3 birds were found in the forest at Metu.

Northern Black Flycatcher (*Melaenornis edolioides*) – 3 birds, incl. one juvenile, seen at Metu.

Pale Flycatcher (*Bradornis pallidus*) – fairly common at Gibe river and a few also seen at Bilen Plains.

African Dusky Flycatcher (*Muscicapa adusta*) – a few observed around Ankober and Metu.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) – singles found at several sites.

African Paradise Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone viridis*) – seen regularly at several sites, but most common around Gambela and in Gibe Gorge.

Grey-headed Batis (*Batis orientalis*) – three birds at Bilen Plains.

Western Black-headed Batis (*Batis erlangeri*) – a couple of singles seen around Gambela, and a pair in Gibe Gorge.

Brown-throated Wattle-eye (*Platysteira cyanea*) – one ♂ in forest at Metu, and ♂♀ at Gibe river.

White-rumped Babbler (*Turdoides leucopygia*) – commonly heard at Aliyu Amba in the morning, and one bird at Gibe river.

Rufous Chatterer (*Turdoides rubiginosa*) – six birds seen below Aliyu Amba.

White-shouldered Black Tit (*Parus guineensis*) – two birds seen along the Dembidolo road north of Gambela.

Montane White-eye (*Zosterops polioastrus*) – a few seen at both Ankober and Metu.

Yellow-White-eye (*Zosterops senegalensis*) – fairly common around Gambela.

Abyssinian White-eye (*Zosterops abyssinicus*) – fairly common around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu and also in Gibe Gorge.

Tacazze Sunbird (*Nectarina tacazze*) – a few recorded at Ankober.

Copper Sunbird (*Cinnyris cupreus*) – fairly common around Gambela.

Scarlet-chested Sunbird (*Chalcomitra senegalensis*) – up to three birds around Melka Ghebdu and fairly common at Gambela.

Beautiful Sunbird (*Cinnyris pulchellus*) – a couple of birds seen at both Gambela and Lake Ziway.

Shining Sunbird (*Cinnyris habessinicus*) – 2♂♂ seen at both Awash Gorge and Bilen Plains.

Marico Sunbird (*Cinnyris mariquensis*) – ♂♀ seen at Melka Ghebdu.

Western Olive Sunbird (*Cyanomitra obscura*) – 3 birds in the forest near Metu.

Variable Sunbird (*Cinnyris venustus*) – often the most numerous Sunbird encountered at the sites visited, except around Gambela and Awash.

Nile Valley Sunbird (*Hedydipna metallica*) – fairly common at Bilen Plains.

Northern Fiscal (*Lanius humeralis*) – 1-2 were seen at Aliyu Amba, Debre Birhan and Metu. This is a recent split from **Common Fiscal** (*Lanius collaris*).

Grey-backed Fiscal (*Lanius excubitorius*) – six birds at Gibe river and one bird at the airport in Addis Ababa.

Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*) – a single adult bird of ssp. *aucheri* seen at Bilen Plains.

Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*) – one immature bird seen in Awash Gorge.

Masked Shrike (*Lanius nubicus*) – at least 11 birds seen in Gibe Gorge, with the majority in the *acacia* woodlands.

Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) – a few seen regularly at several sites, with one grey-backed ♂ ssp. *kobylini* found at Aliyu Amba.

Isabelline Shrike (*Lanius isabellinus*) – one adult ♂ was found along the Baro river east of Gambela, a ♀ was seen near the forest at Metu and one immature was seen in Gibe Gorge.

Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) – singles were identified at Aliyu Amba, Melka Ghebdu and Bilen Plains. A few un-identified Isabelline/Red-tailed Shrikes were also seen at Debre Birhan and Gambela.



Isabelline Shrike, Gambela and Masked Shrike, Gibe Gorge.

Black-headed Gonolek (*Laniarius erythrogaster*) – around Gambela a fairly common bird, but usually heard more often than seen.

Ethiopian Boubou (*Laniarius aethiopicus*) – a fairly common species around Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu, Metu and Gibe Gorge, mostly heard.

Northern Puffback (*Dryoscopus gambensis*) – singles seen at Gambela, Metu and in Gibe Gorge.

Black-crowned Tchagra (*Tchagra senegalus*) – 1-4 seen/heard regularly around Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu, Gambela and Gibe Gorge.

Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike (*Telophorus sulfureopectus*) – a single bird seen in gallery forest at Gibe river.

Northern White-crowned Shrike (*Eurocephalus rueppelli*) – 2-3 family groups with newly fledged young seen at Bilen Plains.

Fork-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus adsimilis*) – seen regularly at most sites in the lowlands.

Pied Crow (*Corvus albus*) – fairly common, often around towns and villages.

Cape Rook (*Corvus capensis*) – a few birds seen at scattered sites around the highlands.

Fan-tailed Raven (*Corvus rhipidurus*) – fairly common and widespread in the highlands, with up to 25 at Ankober and Metu, but a few were also found at Gibe and Awash Gorge.

Thick-billed Raven (*Corvus crassirostris*) – often seen in the highlands, usually in and around towns and villages, with most (22) in Metu.

Red-billed Oxpecker (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) – at Aliyu Amba 9 birds were seen in flight high overhead in the morning, as they flew out to feed.

Red-winged Starling (*Onychognathus morio*) – six birds were feeding around the bridge at Gibe river.

Lesser Blue-eared Starling (*Lamprotornis chloropterus*) – fairly common around Gambela.

Greater Blue-eared Starling (*Lamprotornis chalybaetus*) – seen fairly commonly at most sites except in the far west around Gambela.

Rüppell's Starling (*Lamprotornis purpuroptera*) – up to 10 birds were found around Gambela and at Lake Ziway.

Superb Starling (*Lamprotornis superbus*) – seen fairly commonly at Bilen Plains.

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer griseus*) – fairly common around Gambela, but only seen away from towns in more natural settings than Swainson's Sparrow.

Swainson's Sparrow (*Passer swainsonii*) – seen at all sites visited, except the far west around Gambela, often playing the role of House Sparrows in town and villages.
House Sparrow has only recently spread into southern Ethiopia from Kenya, so there has been little competition from this species so far.

Chestnut Sparrow (*Passer eminibey*) – a small breeding colony with at least 3♂♂ and 1♀ was found at the road barrier on the Metu road, at the eastern city limit of Gambela.
This would be quite a range extension, as the nearest breeding areas are in the Rift Valley, according to the map in BotHoA, but the species is known to be nomadic.

Yellow-spotted Petronia (*Petronia pyrgita*) – several seen at Bilen Plains.

Bush Petronia (*Petronia dentata*) – a few were observed at Melka Ghebdu and around Gambela, but fairly common in Gibe Gorge.

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (*Plocepasser mahali*) – common at Lake Ziway.

Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver (*Plocepasser superciliosus*) – 2-3 birds were found nest-building halfway between Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu (9°34.349'N, 39°48.994'E), and a single bird was also seen just outside Aliyu Amba. Around Gambela a few were found along the Dembidolo road and the SW road, including a recently fledged juvenile.

White-headed Buffalo-Weaver (*Dinemellia dinemelli*) – fairly common at Bilen Plains.

Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver (*Bubalornis niger*) – 6 birds seen in *acacia* woodland near Bilen Plains.

Village Weaver (*Ploceus cucullatus*) – fairly common to abundant at many sites.

Lesser Masked Weaver (*Ploceus intermedius*) – two birds seen at Bilen Plains.

Vitelline Masked Weaver (*Ploceus vitellinus*) – 3 birds seen at Lake Ziway.

Northern Masked Weaver (*Ploceus taeniopterus*) – common at Gambela, especially near the Baro river.

Black-necked Weaver (*Ploceus nigricollis*) – one ♀ seen in forest near Metu.

Rüppell's Weaver (*Ploceus galbula*) – seen commonly at Melka Ghebdu, Awash, Bilen Plains and Lake Ziway.

Little Weaver (*Ploceus luteolus*) – scattered singles and pairs were seen regularly in wooded savanna around Gambela.

Baglafecht Weaver (*Ploceus baglafecht*) – fairly common at highland sites, with a single bird at Gibe river as well.

Grosbeak Weaver (*Amblyospiza albifrons*) – one ♀ was observed at Metu.

Red-billed Quelea (*Quelea quelea*) – up to 25 birds seen at Gibe river, Awash Gorge and Bilen Plains, often in mixed flocks with Rüppell's Weavers.

Red-headed Quelea (*Quelea erythrops*) – unexpectedly common at Gambela, being one of the most numerous passerines (250+), especially along the Baro river west of town, but small groups were also seen away from the river in open bushland.

Red-headed Weaver (*Anaplectes rubriceps*) – one ♂ at Aliyu Amba, and 3 birds at Metu.

Black-winged Red Bishop (*Euplectes hordeaceus*) – common at Gambela and Gibe Gorge.

Northern Red Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*) – fairly common around Aliyu Amba and Gambela.

Yellow Bishop (*Euplectes capensis*) – a single ♂ seen at the wetland near Debre Birhan.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird (*Euplectes macroura*) – a ♂ in display flight was seen from the bus north of Jimma.

Red-billed Pytilia (*Pytilia lineata*) – at Gambela two singles were seen along the Dembidolo road and another along the SW-road, all being very restless and only seen briefly.

Red-cheeked Cordonbleu (*Uraeginthus bengalus*) – a common to abundant bird at most sites, except Ankober.

Red-billed Firefinch (*Lagonosticta senegala*) – fairly common at Aliyu Amba, Metu, Gibe Gorge and Lake Ziway.

African Firefinch (*Lagonosticta rubricata*) – just one male found at Aliyu Amba.

Bar-breasted Firefinch (*Lagonosticta rufopicta*) – 2-4 birds found daily around Gambela, and also 4 birds at Gibe river.

Black-faced Firefinch (*Lagonosticta larvata*) – scattered pairs were found at several sites around Gambela, and a single male was seen in *acacia*-woodland in Gibe Gorge. Usually rather unobtrusive.

Yellow-bellied Waxbill (*Coccyzygia quartinia*) – small numbers at Ankober and Metu.

Crimson-rumped Waxbill (*Estrilda rhodopyga*) – a few seen around Aliyu Amba and Melka Ghebdu.

Black-rumped Waxbill (*Estrilda troglodytes*) – 10-15 birds encountered daily around Gambela.

Abyssinian Waxbill (*Estrilda ochrogaster*) – only seen in the west, with scattered observations of up to 15 birds around Gambela, primarily along the Dembidolo Road, and the same numbers also encountered at Gibe river.

Zebra Waxbill (*Sporaeeginthus subflavus*) – four birds came down to drink at Gibe river.

African Silverbill (*Euodice cantans*) – a single bird was found in the gorge at Awash.

Bronze Mannikin (*Spermestes cucullata*) – seen regularly in small flocks.

Black-and-white Mannikin (*Spermestes bicolor*) – two birds seen in forest patch at Metu.

Magpie Mannikin (*Spermestes fringilloides*) – a very unexpected record of a single bird in a recently cleared field west of the Dembidolo road north of Gambela (8°17.670'N, 34°34.750'E).

Initially the bird was facing away from me, and the combination of the birds size, black head and brown back made me think of Black-capped Social Weaver, but as the bird turned and showed rather heavy, triangular grey bill and black markings on the flanks, it proved to be a Magpie Mannikin.

In Ethiopia Magpie Mannikin is apparently only known from two other sites, with less than 5 records.

Cut-throat Finch (*Amadina fasciata*) – singles were found at Melka Ghebdu and Gibe Gorge, but at Lake Ziway at least 9 birds were feeding near the causeway.

Eastern Paradise Whydah (*Vidua paradisaea*) – single males were observed at Gibe river and near Awash NP.

Exclamatory Paradise Whydah (*Vidua interjecta*) – at least 6♂♂ and 2♀♀ were found north of Gambela, along the Dembidolo road, primarily around a large cultivated area to the east of the road, between the two rocky outcrops. The males would often fly long distances in display flight, and sometimes gather 2-3 birds together in the same tree.

Pin-tailed Whydah (*Vidua macroura*) – one ♂ at Aliyu Amba and 4 birds at Gibe Gorge.

Village Indigobird (*Vidua chalybeata*) – a few were seen at several sites, but most numerous at Aliyu Amba/Melka Ghebdu and Gibe Gorge (10-15). At Gambela this was the least common Indigobird (!), with only a single ♂ seen. Compared to my visit to Ethiopia in March 2011, where I only managed to see a single bird in three weeks, in late October/early November males were very active, both singing and chasing other males around.

Barka Indigobird (*Vidua larvaticola*) – along the Dembidolo road north of Gambela, this species turned out to be fairly common, with at least 3 ♂♂ seen **and heard**, as well as a few accompanying ♀♀ and seen-only ♂♂. They were primarily found around the same area as Exclamatory Paradise Whydahs, to the east of the road, between the two rocky hills.

Compared to Wilson's Indigobird, the male Barka showed an obvious bluish gloss, even noticeably when overcast, but the song was much the same typical, chattering Indigobird-song, though with the whistled song of Black-faced Firefinch intermixed every now and then.



Barka Indigobird and Wilson's Indigobird.

Wilson's Indigobird (*Vidua wilsoni*) – at Gambela a pair was found feeding in a small field on the northern bank of the Baro river, some 2 km west of town (8°14.855'N, 34°34.107'E). The male would often sing for brief intervals, and this song, without any elements of Black-faced Firefinch mimicry, as well as a subtle difference in plumage gloss, made me suspect these birds to be Wilson's. Barka showed an obvious bluish gloss, whereas Wilson's appeared more purple-bluish. Males thought to be this species were also seen along the Metu road east of town and along the dirt road to the southwest.

Jambandu Indigobird (*Vidua raricola*) – a pair, possibly of this species, were observed briefly in riverine scrub at the Gibe river, approx. 2 km north of the bridge (8°14.327'N, 37°33.526'E). The male showed a green gloss, pale feet and brownish wings and tail, but was unfortunately not heard singing.

In January 2010 Thomas Varto Nielsen photographed a **bird** near here, fitting this description, but this bird was unfortunately not heard singing either.

Yellow-fronted Canary (*Serinus mozambicus*) – common (25+) at Gambela and Gibe Gorge.

Yellow-crowned Canary (*Serinus flavivertex*) – a few were noted around Aliyu Amba

African Citril (*Serinus citrinelloides*) – a few were found at scattered sites (except around Gambela), commonest at Lake Ziway (15+).

Black-headed Siskin (*Serinus nigriceps*) – a few were seen around Ankober and Debre Birhan.

Reichenow's Seedeater (*Serinus reichenowi*) – up to 6 seen at Melka Ghebdu.

Yellow-throated Seedeater (*Serinus flavigula*) – two birds were found at the classic site of Melka Ghebdu, in trees along the stream, but another 2-3 birds were seen in roadside scrub only 1.5 km below Aliyu Amba (9°34.177'N, 39°48.620'E).

White-rumped Seedeater (*Serinus leucopygius*) – at Gambela only two birds were found, along the Metu road east of town. In February hundreds were seen around town!

Brown-rumped Seedeater (*Serinus tristriatus*) – common at most sites in the highlands.

Streaky Seedeater (*Serinus striolatus*) – seen at most of the same sites as Brown-rumped Seedeater, but a little less common.

Ortolan Bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*) – a few seen at Aliyu Amba and Gibe river, and 10+ in a fallow field at Debre Birhan.

Somali Bunting (*Emberiza poliopleura*) – three birds in *acacia*-shrub at Bilen Plains.



Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, ♀ and ♂ Black-faced Firefinch and Abyssinian Waxbill, Gambela.