



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Somaliland

Horn of Africa Endemics

18th September to 1st October 2019 (14 days)



Little Brown Bustard by Angela Pattison

If the words 'exploratory,' 'intrepid,' 'adventure' and 'discovery' get your blood flowing when it comes to birding, then Somaliland surely ranks high on your list of target destinations. For years this region has been marred by internal conflict; however, Somaliland (Northern Somalia) has recently become safe for travel, allowing access to a remarkable number of endemics that were, until recently, impossible to see. These tantalising endemics and near-endemics include the likes of Little Brown Bustard, Archer's Buzzard, little known Somali Pigeon, Somali & Collared Larks, Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Wheatear, Philippa's Crombec, Somali Thrush, Somali Starling, Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak and the endangered Warsangli Linnet. These endemic birds are complimented by a rich assemblage of other sought-after dry country and savanna species and include the likes of Heuglin's and Arabian Bustards, White-cheeked Tern, Somali Courser, Somali Crombec, Red-naped Bushshrike, localised Sombre Rock Chat, Blanford's, Somali Short-toed and Short-tailed Larks, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Nile Valley Sunbird, White-crowned, Shelley's and

Magpie Starlings, Somali Bee-eater, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Somali Sparrow and Northern Grosbeak-Canary.

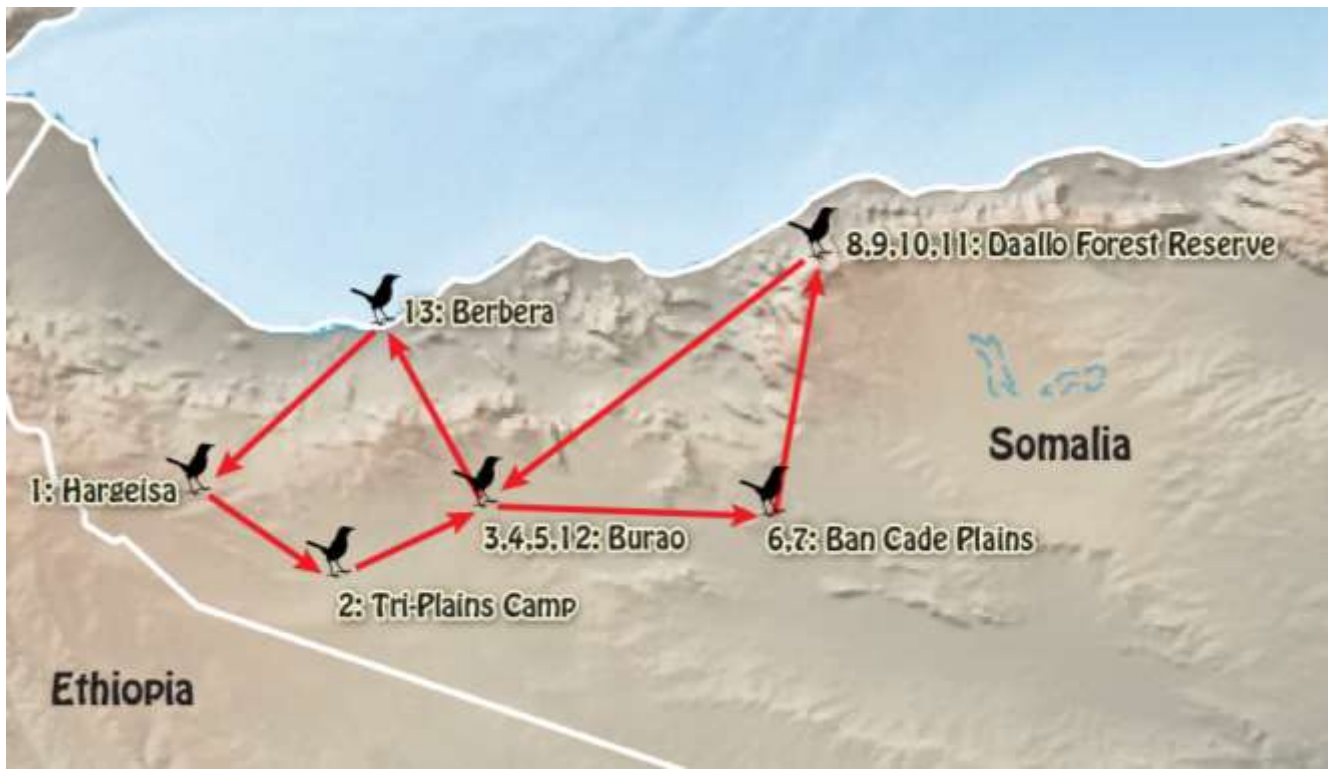
This is an area that has been little explored and every trip seems to produce something unusual, unexpected or new and reports of a possible unique species of cisticola and an interesting scops owl from the Daallo Forest show how much there is yet to still discover. This is pioneering birding at its very best and, when combined with the influx of Palaearctic migrants, should make for a superb bird-filled adventure!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Hargeisa
Day 2	Hargeisa to the Tri-Plains Camp
Day 3	Tri-Plains to Burco (Burao)
Days 4 & 5	Birding in the red sand country east of Burco
Days 6 & 7	Ban Cade Plains
Day 8	Ban Cade Plains to Ceerigaabo (Erigavo)
Days 9 to 11	Daallo Forest Reserve
Day 12	Daallo Forest Reserve to Burco City
Day 13	Burco City to Berbera
Day 14	Berbera to Hargeisa and depart

TOUR MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...



Somali Starling by Angela Pattison

Day 1: Arrival in Hargeisa. Today we arrive in Hargeisa where you will be met by your Rockjumper leader. Thereafter we will transfer to a fairly simple but comfortable hotel in town.

Day 2: Hargeisa to the Tri-Plains Camp. This morning we will make an early start out of Hargeisa and begin the drive east towards the Quoryale Plains and beyond. One of the highlights on our drive today will be a good chance at finding the rare and near-endemic Beira Antelope while other species that are also possible on the drive include Gerenuk, Speke's Gazelle and Desert Warthog. This area provides a perfect introduction into the Somaliland avifauna and whilst travelling from the Beira Hills down to Wadi Debis, we will look for the localized Somali Wheatear, Black-throated and Yellow-breasted Barbets, gaudy Golden-breasted and White-crowned Starlings, Grey Wren-Warbler and Grey-headed Batis. Whilst travelling through the rocky hillsides and whistling acacias, we'll also look for Red-bellied Parrot, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Banded Warbler, Acacia Tit,

Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit and White-bellied Canary.

We then head due south and out of Wadi Debis to the start of the Tri-Plains stretch for a great mix of bustards, larks and pipits. These may include the much wanted Little Brown Bustard plus the more widespread Buff-crested and huge Kori Bustards, Blanford's, Somali Short-toed, Short-tailed and Singing Bush Larks, and Plain-backed and Long-billed Pipits. The Tuuyo Plain, the last of the series of plains, is the westernmost site to see Somali Lark and Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, both endemic to Somaliland. In Tuuyo, we may also see Greater Kestrel and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark.

Day 3: Tri-Plains to Burco. Travelling further east to Burco, today we pass through areas of dry mixed woodland and stony hillocks where we could see Nubian Woodpecker, Magpie Starling, Little, Olive and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, Yellow-breasted Apalis (here of the distinctive *viridiceps* race, that is sometimes split as Brown-tailed Apalis), Shelley's Sparrow, Upcher's Warbler, White-browed Scrub Robin, Brubru, Somali Crow, Blue-capped and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleus, Somali, Cream-coloured and Double-banded Coursers, Somali Fiscal, Crested Francolin and Vulturine Guineafowl. Just outside Burco City are the Aroori Plains and here we will have further chances for Somali Lark and Little Brown Bustard. Other species we might see in the area include Mourning Collard Dove, Somali Bee-eater, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Steppe Grey Shrike and Blanford's Lark. On this plain there is also an



Collared Lark by Jonathan Rossouw





Nile Valley Sunbird by Markus Lilje

enigmatic remnant of Soemmering's Gazelle attempting a return after a near half-a-century absence, as well as Speke's Gazelle which seem to be doing a little better.

Days 4 & 5: Birding in the red sand country east of Burco. The first area we will visit this morning is in search of the tiny Philippa's Crombec, a very localized species. We may also see the more widespread Somali Crombec here as well. In addition, this is a good place for Yellow-vented Eremomela, another tricky and rather localized species, as well as Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Foxy Lark, Hunter's, Shining, Eastern Violet-backed

and Nile Valley Sunbirds, Three-streaked Tchagra and Somali Bunting. It is also excellent bustard terrain and we'll keep a watch for Heuglin's, White-bellied, Buff-crested and Little Brown. Travelling further east we then enter red sand country, where our key target is the extremely localized Collared Lark. As this might take a while to find, we have allocated sufficient time to search for this elusive species. Other birds we could see in the area include Lilac-breasted Roller (of the unique *loriti* subspecies, which is occasionally split off as a separate species), Pygmy Falcon, Alpine Swift, Ethiopian Swallow, Dodson's Bulbul, Blue-naped Mousebird, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Arabian Warbler, Pale Prinia, Grey Wren-Warbler, Pygmy Batis, Red-naped Bushshrike, Little Owl, Scaly Chatterer, Gillett's Lark, Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Red-fronted Warbler, Golden-breasted, Shelley's and Magpie Starlings, Purple Grenadier, Green-winged Pytilia, African Silverbill, Straw-tailed Whydah, Somali Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Red-billed and White-headed Buffalo Weavers, Chestnut Weaver, Northern Grosbeak-Canary and White-bellied Canary.

Days 6 & 7: Ban Cade Plains. We have two days to explore this interesting area. The Ban Cade Plains are vast, very scenic and quite different from the previous plains. This is serious lark, pipit, sandgrouse and bustard country. Specifically, we will look for Somali Lark (a different sub-species from the Tuuyo Plains), as well as Lesser Hoopoe-, Somali Short-toed, Desert and Short-tailed Larks. Other possible species include Egyptian and Lappet-faced Vultures, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Somali Courser, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Chestnut-bellied and Spotted Sandgrouse, Desert Wheatear and all the previously mentioned bustards.



Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar by Angela Pattison

Day 8: Ban Cade Plains to Ceerigaabo (Erigavo). This morning we depart early for the long drive to Ceerigaabo. This is primarily





Somali Pigeon by Angela Pattison

a travel day, but we'll nonetheless make several comfort stops en route and keep a watch for any species we might not yet have seen.

Days 9 to 11: Daallo Forest Reserve. We have three full days to explore this fabulous reserve. Whilst investigating the lovely Taba'a Escarpment and Daallo Mountain we'll search for a number of endemics, including the critically endangered Warsangli Linnets, which is thought to number no more than 1000 individuals. The other high priority species here include the near-threatened Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak, inexplicably scarce

Archer's Buzzard, Somali Thrush and little known Somali Pigeon. Of the near-endemics Somali Starling is thankfully common in this area and we will also keep our eyes and ears open for the shy and difficult *archeri* race of Orange River Francolin, which is often split as a separate species. During our explorations of the area we should also find a good number of other species and possibilities include Abyssinian Wheatear, Verreaux's Eagle, scarce Barbary Falcon, Bruce's Green and African Olive Pigeons, White-browed Coucal, Nyanza Swift of the unique and different looking *somalicus* race, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, Pale Crag Martin, Common Nightingale, White-throated Robin, Common Redstart, Little Rock Thrush, Brown Woodland Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye and Brown-rumped See-eater. Past trips to this largely unexplored area have produced some interesting sightings including an unidentified species of cisticola and an interesting scops owl that is either Arabian Scops Owl or a new species altogether!

If we have managed to find all the key birds, we should have time to embark on a pelagic seabird trip to Rabshie Island. Here we have chances for Masked and Brown Boobies, Red-billed Tropicbird and Bridled Tern while interesting past records include Wedge-tailed Shearwater and Wilson's Storm Petrel.

Day 12: Daallo Forest Reserve to Burco City. We leave early again this morning for a very long travel day back to Burco City. We'll have a little time to make some birding stops for any unusual sightings and target species we haven't yet seen or require better views of. Tonight we will spend the evening at a hotel in town.

Day 13: Burco City to Berbera. We make a very early start today and travel across the scenic Golis Range, passing an historic Sheik village along the way. We'll stop at the shoulder of the escarpment to look for the rare Sombre Rock Chat, and perhaps



Somali Bee-eater by Markus Lilje



Blackstart and Brown-tailed Rock Chat, at an old volcanic, rock-strewn site. Later on we should arrive at the Busti Massif, a seemingly lifeless coastal range about 20km above Berbera Town and the Gulf of Aden. This area has some canyons that hold Somali Pigeon, thereby allowing us further chances for this sought-after and very subtly attractive endemic. In the nearby caves and surrounds we might find Greyish Eagle-Owl, Common Kestrel and Striolated Bunting.

Day 14: Berbera to Hargeisa and depart. We should have a little time this morning to look around the old collapsing port of Berbera. This is Somaliland's second largest town but is sadly only a shadow of its glory days. We will bird a little along the coastline here and should be able to pick up White-cheeked, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested and Caspian Terns, Slender-billed and Heuglin's Gulls, Pink-backed Pelican, African Collared Dove and a large variety of waders. We then begin the drive back to Hargeisa where the tour will conclude. Those continuing on with the Djibouti Extension will fly into Djibouti to begin this rewarding extension.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings and camping during the tour;
- All ground transportation;
- All national park and other reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

This excludes:

- All international flights;
- Visa fees;
- Any beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share. Please note that even though you may elect to have single accommodation on this tour, there will be some occasions when this is impossible and you will be required to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**
- b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient participants, a small party supplement will have to be charged.**
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**



d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants, ship's captain and crew etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Please Note:

- The itinerary will remain flexible so that if we have seen the target species in a particular area, we can then move camp to the next area, thereby making the most of our time.
- It can be very hot in some areas, whilst the highlands can get cold especially at night. Rain may be experienced.
- On our visit to Daallo Mountain we get up to 3000m (9,843ft) above sea level.
- There are several long, all day drives on this Somaliland trip but we will take regular rest and birding stops to break the long journeys. Although they are lengthy, they are scenic and full of interesting waypoints!
- Armed tourist police will accompany us throughout the Somaliland trip for added security. A number of recent tours have visited the areas on this itinerary while using these security personnel, and have had no incidents.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is generally comfortable but can be very basic in some areas. We will be camping most nights.
- The food in Somaliland is generally fairly basic and consists of both western and local cuisine. We will also enjoy many "bush breakfasts and lunches" on the side of the road whilst in good birding areas.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will begin at Hargeisa Egal International Airport, Hargeisa (IATA: HGA), Somaliland on day 1 of the tour. This day has been set aside as an arrival day and the birding will commence in the early morning of day 2. The tour will conclude at the same airport on day 14 at around midday.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Hargeisa Egal International Airport, Hargeisa (IATA: HGA) is the recommended airport for all arrivals and departures into and out of Somaliland. **Please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

Rockjumper Birding Ltd

Labourdonnais Village

Mapou

Mauritius

Tel (USA & Canada) toll free: 1-888-990-5552

Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com

Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com

Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com

