

10 DAY ANGOLA TAILOR MADE TOUR FOR INTERCONTACT FROM GERMANY AND AN EXTENSION OF 4 DAYS NAMIBIA.



Photo: Steve Braine - Palmnut Vulture at Kwanza River where they were very common

This tailor made tour to Angola on the request from Intercontact Germany, commenced in Luanda, Angola and ended in Windhoek Namibia. The start of the ten day tour in Angola began at Kwanza Lodge, situated at the mouth of the Kwanza river, thereafter a single day was spent in the Muxima area and then on to Kumbira Forest in the Gabela area for a further three days, from there it took us to Mount Moco for two nights and then via Benguela and along the coastal road towards Namibe and then eastwards to The Tundavala Plateaux for one night. After this we travelled back to the Namibia border at Ruacana and then southwards to the Hobatere campsite and eastwards through the Etosha National Park to Okaukeujo and then on to Windhoek.

The trip was very rushed and a lot of time was lost because of this, the distances were far too long and did not leave enough time for constructive birding except for Kumbira where we spent three nights.

However even due to the vast distances and short time available to do birding, the trip itself was good with no major hiccups and some very good birds. A total of 7000km was covered during this period and 319 species of birds recorded in Angola and a further 61 in Namibia giving a total of 380 species for the trip. A further 10 species were heard in Angola and not seen and in Namibia two species were heard and not seen. The following day to day account is given with the birds recorded daily, bird species seen on the consecutive days are not duplicated; new species are added daily.

Day 1:

The clients arrived in Luanda on the 28 August at 12:25 and were picked up by Sean and a driver. They were then transported to Kwanza River Lodge where they arrived around 15:30, here we spent the next two nights. They were briefed on the trip, taking care to reiterate that things may change depending on road blocks, pot-holed roads etc. (of which we had some but did not affect us much). While sitting at the lodge many Palmnut Vultures were seen flying by and in the gardens around the lodge, we recorded Purple-banded Sunbird, **Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush**, Red-headed Finch, Spectacled, Village and Slender-billed Weavers, Woodland, Malachite and Pied Kingfishers were also seen. Over the river Long-tailed Cormorants, African Spoonbill, Sacred Ibis, Wood Stork, Osprey, **Royal Tern**, Darter and Great White and Black Egrets were seen. At dinner the following days activities were discussed and we then had a much needed rest after driving for three and a half days from Swakopmund. Some of the group saw 20 or so Greater and 3 Lesser Flamingoes flying by.



Photo: Sean Braine - Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush

Day 2:

Before breakfast we had an early morning walk near the lodge and recorded **Bubbling Cisticola**, Common Waxbill, Common Fiscal, Green Crombec, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Dark-capped Bulbul, White-browed and Senegal Coucal also Black-necked Weavers which only some of the group had seen the previous day. We were offered a free boat ride to the mouth of the Kwanza after breakfast and saw a lot more Palmnut Vultures, a single Osprey, Caspian Tern, Long-tailed Cormorant, Common Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Malachite Kingfisher, Darter and near the mouth a few hundred Common Terns with a few Arctic Terns and a couple of Royal Terns flying overhead. Kelp (Cape) Gull

were also present in large numbers. After returning to the lodge we packed our lunch packets and drinks and set off to Kissama National Park, although we saw some fairly good birds, Kissama was disappointing, we were too late for the game drive and the people were totally unhelpful, we ended up at the main camp and had lunch. We then travelled back and spent the late afternoon at a wetland near the golf course which was very productive and nearby we found several breeding Mangrove Sunbirds and Brown-hooded Kingfisher we also heard Red-chested and Klaas's Cuckoos.



Photo: Steve Braine - Dark form of Samango Monkey near Kwanza



Photo: Mark Piazza - Red-necked Spurfowl

En-route through Kissama Park we recorded Helmeted Guineafowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, many Ring-necked (Cape Turtle) Doves and a few Laughing Doves as well as several Emerald-spotted Wood Doves. We encountered several **Rüppell's Parrots**, Grey Go-away birds and two Pearl-spotted Owlets. Swifts included Little, White-rumped and Fernando Po also Red-faced and **Red-backed Mousebirds** were seen in numbers. Crowned and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Green Woodhoopoe, Striped Kingfisher, **Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater**, Rufous-crowned (Purple) and Lilac-breasted Rollers, Cardinal Woodpecker, Acacia Pied Barbet, **Angola Batis**, Black-backed Puffback, Fork-tailed Drongo, Swamp (Gabon) Boubou, White-crowned Shrike, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, White-winged Tits, Green and Long-billed Crombecs, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Bubbling, Zitting and Desert Cisticolas, African Paradise Flycatcher, White-browed Robin Chat, Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush, Northern Grey-headed Sparrow, Cape Glossy Starling, Marico Sunbird, Yellow-fronted Canary, Red-billed Quelea, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Blue Waxbill and many Golden-backed Bishops out of breeding plumage. Brown Snake Eagle and Bateleur were also seen en route and at the camp we saw African Fish Eagle and swallows these included Lesser-striped, Mosque and Wire-tailed also many Pied Crows.

The Wetland proved highly productive and we recorded Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper, Sanderling, Kittlitz's Plover, Three-banded and White-fronted Plovers, African Jacana, Swamp (Gabon) Boubou, Eurasian Whimbrel and near the Mangroves Namaqua and Laughing Doves, Bronze Mannikin, Grey-rumped Swallow, Little Bee-eater, African Black-headed Oriole and a Banded Harrier Hawk (*Gymnogene*) on the lawns we had very good

views of several **Long-legged Pipits**. The wetlands produced a single juvenile Striated (Green-backed) Heron, Squacco Heron, Black, Little, Intermediate and Great White Egrets, Grey and Black-crowned Night Heron, African Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Stork, Sacred Ibis, Hadedah, Purple and Goliath Herons, Long-toed Lapwing and Woolly-necked Stork.

After returning to the lodge we completed our now comprehensive bird list, had dinner and our briefing for the next day.



Photo: Mark Piazzi - Mangrove Sunbird



Photo: Sean Braine – Gabela Helmetshrike

Day 3:

Today we had a not too long drive to Muxima arriving there fairly early and in time to drive to Muxima town to look for **Gabela Helmet Shrike**. Before leaving for Muxima we once again spent a couple of hours at the Wetland which we visited the previous day. Birds recorded en route to Muxima included Brown Snake Eagle, Bateleur, Black-shouldered Kite, African Harrier Hawk (Gymnogene), Red-necked Buzzard (Juvenile), African Cuckoo Hawk, Grey Kestrel, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilts, Hamerkop, Cattle Egrets, Blacksmith Lapwings, Klaas's Cuckoo, Holub's Golden Weaver and African Black-headed Oriole. On arrival north of Muxima town we managed to call in a group of Gabela Helmet Shrikes and had stunning views of Red-backed Mousebirds, also Black-headed Heron flying by Grey Kestrel and a couple of Black-shouldered Kites, African Fish Eagles and Palmnut Vultures were commonly seen and single Little Sparrowhawk was seen flying by. Fiery-necked Nightjar was heard and briefly seen at dusk near the camp. We returned to our campsite situated in a good woodland had our dinner and completed our bird list for the day before retiring for the night.

Day 4:

Before day break we were up and heard several **Grey-striped Spurfowl** calling from the nearby thickets. We returned for breakfast and afterwards had a walk around the area, we heard African Pitta and Narina Trogon calling but there was no response to playback and these two difficult species were not seen, we also heard Crested Guinea fowl but although they responded to playback did not show themselves and remained in dense thickets. Other species seen here were White Helmet Shrikes, Black and Petit's Cuckoo Shrikes, Pale Olive Bulbul, African Black Flycatcher, Blue-grey (Ashy) Flycatchers, Grey Tit Flycatcher, Collared Sunbird, Forest (Dark-backed) and Black-necked Weavers, Red-billed Firefinch, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, and after much searching bird of the day the beautiful **White-fronted Wattle-eye**.



Photo : Sean Braine – White Fronted Wattle-eye

We then returned to the camp and packed up and started our long journey to Kumbira Forest near Gabela. En route on the Queve River we recorded a group of White-faced Ducks, a Common Quail running across the road of the front vehicle and Lizard Buzzard. We arrived at our destination after sunset and after our daily list and dinner we retired for the night.

Day 5 , 6 & 7:

We woke up early with a cacophony of forest birds calling, the most prominent were that of the Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye and Red Crested Turaco.



Photo: Steve Braine - Euphaedra eleus in Kumbira Forest

The walks through the forest for the next two days produced Lizard and Red-necked Buzzards, Wattle-eyes included **Yellow-bellied**, Chestnut and Black-necked these with the previously seen White-fronted completed all the Wattle-eyes to be seen on the trip. Other species included African Goshawk, African Green Pigeon, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Crowned and Trumpeter Hornbills, Klaas's Cuckoo and the continual booming of Gabon Coucals, although we did a lot of playback the birds remained hidden for the entire period at Kumbira. Yellow-billed and Streaky-breasted Barbets, **Western** and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Lesser Honeyguide, **Red-crested Turaco**, Buff-spotted and African Grey Woodpeckers, African Broadbill, **Angola Batis**, Pink-footed Puffback, Perrin's Bush Shrike, Black-winged and Western Black-headed Orioles, Square-tailed and Velvet Mantled Drongos, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-necked (Falkenstein's), Cabanis's, Pale Olive and Yellow-whiskered Greenbuls, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Green Hylia, Masked Apalis, **Dusky Tit**, Grey Apalis, **Hartert's Camaroptera**, Brown Illadopsis, Brown-chested Alethe, Bates's Flycatcher, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Forest Scrub Robin, Red-capped Robin, **Gabela Akalat**, Rufous Flycatcher Thrush and sunbirds included Western Olive, Olive-bellied, Collared, Purple-banded and the spectacular Superb!



Photos: Sean Braine – African Broadbill and Streaky-throated Barbet

Other species included the common **Yellow-throated Nicator**, Grey-headed Nigrita, Veillot's Weaver, Red-headed Bluebill and Pin-tailed Whydah.



Photo: Steve Braine - Black-capped Yellow Warbler

The Forest camping at Kumbira delivered good birds and although we tried for Gabela Bush Shrike with playback, we never heard them or Monteiro's Bush Shrike, however all seemed to enjoy the birds and butterflies while at Kumbira. After the third night in the forest we had to move early for Mount Moco the following day.



Photo: Sean Braine – Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher



Photo : Sean Braine – Angola Slaty Flycatcher and Black-necked Wattle eye

Day 8 & 9:

An early morning start led us backtracking to the main coastal road and then via Lobito to Ussoque where we eventually turned off to Mount Moco once again arriving well after sunset. En route we added Booted and Wahlberg's Eagles, Southern Fiscal, White-fronted Bee-eater, Sooty Chat and Black-bellied Bustard.



Photo: Steve Braine - Brimstone Canary

The next morning after breakfast we all climbed to the first bit of remnant forest to search for the elusive Swierstra's Spurfowl and although we heard several birds we were unable to get them to show themselves, however we did see several other good species including good views of Bocage's Akalat, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, **Angola Slaty Flycatcher**, Thick-billed Seedeater, Brimstone Canary, Olive Woodpecker, Black-backed Barbet, Western Tinkerbird, very good views once again of Black-necked Wattle-eye, Black-backed Puffback, Southern Fiscal, Red-capped and **Angola Lark**, African and Buffy Pipit, Common House Martin, Black Saw-wing, **Angola**, Greater Striped, and Lesser Striped Swallows, Moustached Grass Warbler, Black-capped Yellow Warbler, Evergreen Forest Warbler, a walk up the mountain and playback has Finch's Francolin was heard, Short-winged (Siffling) Cisticola as well as Zitting, Desert, Rock-loving and Croaking Cisticolas, African Yellow White-eye, Spotted Flycatcher, White-browed Robin Chat, Capped Wheatear feeding young near the camp site, African Stonechat, Violet-backed Starling, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Sunbirds included Bronze, Variable, Oustalet's and Ludwig's Double-collared while seed eaters included Black-throated, Brimstone, Yellow-crowned and Black-faced Canaries. A pair of Black-chinned Weavers also made their appearance as well as Angola Sweet Waxbill, **Dusky Twinspot**, Fawn-breasted and Zebra Waxbills and the spectacular Black-collared Bulbul. Birds of prey included Augur Buzzard, Grey Kestrel, Banded Harrier Hawk, Brown Snake Eagle and African Marsh Harrier. Schalow's Turaco was seen by most and a single Ross's Turaco was seen by Hans in the neighbouring forest. Several **Fernando Po**, Little and Horus Swifts were seen.

A quick glimpse of a Crake was seen when searching for the Black-collared Bulbul and although we tried to flush it out again we were unsuccessful, here we also had Yellow-rumped Widow Birds in numbers and other Euplectes species out of breeding possibly those of Black-winged.

After a full day's birding we all returned to the camp completed our daily bird list and had dinner as once again we had to prepare for a long day's drive the following morning.



Photo: Mark Piazzì – Benguela Long-billed Lark

Day 10:

An early morning start had us backtracking towards Lobito, Benguela and then on the coastal road towards Tundavala en route we had observed the only Dark Chanting Goshawk for the trip. Soon after leaving Benguela we started encountering our first Namib specials including a single Double-banded Courser, Great Sparrows, Stark's Larks, Grey-backed Sparrow Larks, Sabota Larks, Mountain Wheatear and very good views of **Benguela Long-billed Lark**. Further along we recorded Yellow-bellied Eremomela, **White-tailed Shrike**, the western race of Common Fiscal with a distinct white supercilium, Chat Flycatchers, Violet-eared Waxbills, Rock Martins, Chestnut-vented Tit Babblers, Common Scimitarbill, Dusky Sunbirds, Cape Sparrows and at our camp site several Pirit Batis, Black-chested Prinia and a few displaying Red-crested Korhaans, raptors included Rock Kestrel, Verreaux's Eagles and Augur Buzzard.

Day 11.

We rose the next morning to dense coastal fog and after a short walk we then continued with our journey. The morning delivered good views of Familiar Chat, Scaly-feathered Finch (Weaver) **Bokmakierie**, White-browed Sparrow Weaver, Ashy Tit, **Rüppell's Korhaan**, Black-chested Snake Eagle and Verreaux's Eagles, we then stopped at a small dam and wetland for a while and had good views of many Little Grebes, a single Red-knobbed Coot, Common Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt, Little Stint, Common Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, several Red-billed Teal, Black-headed Heron, Water Thicknee, Three-banded Plovers, Blacksmith Lapwing, Grey-headed Gull, African Jacana, Red-faced Mousebird, Ruff and the only Marsh Sandpiper of the trip. Four male Painted Snipe stole the show while bird watching at this site!



Photo: Mark Piazzi – Peregrine Falcon

We then continued on to Tundavala and stopped for lunch at the top of the famous Leba pass although the 'gummy adler' (tough chicken) was not very good the spectacular vista made up for the food! We then travelled to Tundavala where camp was put up, a walk in the area delivered both Short-toed and Miombo Rock Thrush, many Wailing Cisticolas, a few Buffy Pipits and a brief view of a Striped Pipit flying by. On arrival we had a Lanner Falcon interacting with a pair of Peregrines and a first glimpse of Angola Cave Chat way below us.

We then set off to once again try for the **Swierstra's Spurfowl** without success although we had response from Schalow's Turaco, Bocage's Akalat, Grey Apalis, Perrin's Bush Shrike and better views of **Angola Cave Chat**.

Sean then said he would try the next valley for the elusive Swierstra's and most decided that the birds did not exist and opted not to go along, what a pity as Sean came back with a distant view and picture to prove that they do exist!

Swifts here included a few Little, a couple of Alpine and many Bradfield's, Sunbirds included those seen before Variable and Ludwig's Double-collared. Early the next morning we had Augur Buzzard, Banded Harrier Hawk, Lanner Falcon, Peregrine, Booted Eagle and Rock Kestrel near the cliffs, we had also heard Freckled Nightjar but it did not respond to playback. We heard a Rufous-naped Lark and after following the direction of the call were able to have a brief glimpse of the bird in bad light conditions, we then packed and headed off to the Angola/Namibia border to Ruacana where we spent the night.



Photo Sean Braine – Angola Cave Chat

Along the route to the border we recorded White-bellied, Marico and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, three Southern Ground Hornbills, African Openbill, **Monteiro's and Damara Hornbills**, Meve's Long-tailed Starling, Burchell's Starling, **Rüppell's Parrot**, and at our lunch stop before the border a small group of White-winged Serotine bats.

We arrived at the border around 14:00 and went through the border crossing at a record time arriving at our camp site just after 15:00! There was a leaking pipe at a water tank in the gardens and here we saw many Chestnut and Southern Masked Weavers all out of breeding plumage as well as Lesser Honeyguide, Cape Glossy Starlings, **Southern Grey-headed Sparrows**, African Grey Hornbill and many Rosy-faced Lovebirds. The following morning we had our first **Bare-cheeked Babblers** in the garden as well as **Carp's Tits**, Brubru and several of the same species of the day before. The following morning after breakfast we travelled to the Cunene River to search for some of the species found there. On the river we had Egyptian Geese, many Meve's Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, **Pale-winged Starlings**, Cape Glossy Starlings, Water Thicknee, Pied Kingfisher, a group of Spurwing Geese. The shy and rare Bat Hawk was seen perched on the Angolan side and was scoped for all to see! We then stopped at a small seep to wait for **Cinderella Waxbill** and were lucky to have them almost straight away, where a small group were preparing to drink and all had stunning views of this beautiful little waxbill, here we also recorded Golden-breasted, Cinnamon-breasted and Lark-like Buntings, Red-headed Finches and Southern Grey-headed Sparrows amongst other species previously seen.

We then returned to the camp for the list and dinner and appreciated a good warm shower.



Photo : Sean Braine – Cinderella Waxbill

Day 12:

After birding the Kunene River area we took a slow drive to the Hobatere camp site where we spent the night. Here shortly after arrival we had White-tailed Shrike in the camp as well as many Rock Hyraxes staring at us from the surrounding granite boulders! We then took a stroll to the look-out and saw some of our first larger game including Greater Kudu, Angolan Giraffe, Black-faced Impala, Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, and three Klipspringer the few that remained a little longer had a sighting of the Shadow Hunter a recently described species of mongoose *Galerella nigrita*. A short walk to a boulder strewn granite hillside gave very good views of a male Hartlaub's Spurfowl before returning for dinner and the daily checklist. Here we heard African Scops Owls calling early morning as well as **Hartlaub's Spurfowl** calling in the rocks where we had found a male the previous evening, no Rockrunner were heard here although they were expected to be seen.



Photo : Sean Braine – Hartlaub's Spurfowl



Photo : Sean Braine – Burchell's Courser

Day 13:

We packed up and drove a short distance to the western gate of the Etosha National Park and after the normal formalities we entered the park, along the route we had our first African Elephants and a lot of other game also **Namaqua** and **Burchell's Sandgrouse**, the rear vehicle saw a single Black Rhinoceros while others had to wait at the waterhole in the evening to see more, Bateleur, Tawny Eagles and White-backed Vultures were seen en route and the rear vehicle had sightings of Lappet-faced Vultures as well. We travelled towards Okaukuejo in the central portion of the park and en route had our first problems, first with a puncture and later with the whole wheel and brake drum coming off the vehicle, fortunately we were able to control the vehicle and after a while sent all back to Okaukuejo while Sean and I temporarily fixed it and limped back to the camp and found a mechanic who helped repair the damage. During this time several other game species were seen including African Elephant and many Burchell's Zebra and other larger game species. Once we had found our camp site amongst a menagerie of other people we set off for a late afternoon drive to Okondeka mainly to look for Larks, here we found **Pink-billed lark and Stark's Larks**, Spike-heeled Lark, **Eastern Clapper Lark**, Grey-backed Sparrow Lark, African Pipit, Double banded Courser one on a nest and a pair of **Burchell's Coursers** with a small chick, Namaqua Sandgrouse were also seen as well several **Northern Black Korhaan** and Kori Bustards, we also saw our first Black crows here and at Okondeka huge numbers of Ostrich , Brindled Gnus (Wildebeest), Burchell's Zebra, Springbok and Angolan Giraffe wandering across the plains, at the waterhole there was a pair of **South African Shelduck** and a pride of sleeping lions! Back in the Okaukuejo camp there were many Sociable Weavers having seen their huge nest s along the way, the camp also had **Dusky Sunbirds**, Southern Masked Weavers, Kalahari Scrub and White-browed Scrub Robins, Crimson-breasted Shrikes, Brubru, and at night Double-banded Sandgrouse drinking at the waterhole with two Rufous-cheeked Nightjars also seen around the floodlights at the waterhole.



Photo : Mark Piazza – Slender Mongoose

Day 14:

We had to get to the airport and did not have time to do any more game watching or birding and headed off to the Windhoek airport for the flight home, we arrived half an hour before our intended time which gave everyone the chance to book in and prepare for their flight home. Along the way we had views of a few Red-crested Korhaans, several Monteiro's , Damara and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills and a few Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters.

All in all we had a fairly good trouble free trip except for the tyre incident in Etosha, we can only be thankful that it did not happen in the middle of Angola where help is scarce!

Although we 'dipped' on several specials due to there being no response or calling we did however have really good sighting of Gabela Helmet Shrike and White-fronted Wattle-eye amongst others, everyone seemed to enjoy the tour and we hope that the experience was enjoyed by all.

