

ITINERARY

ETHIOPIA: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf

May 5-25, 2017

Churches of Lalibela Extension

May 25-28, 2017



A dazzling Tacazze Sunbird shows off its bronzy-purple highlights for a recent Field Guides tour. While these birds are not endemic to Ethiopia, they are found only in Ethiopia and a few neighboring countries in East Africa. These beauties and many others await participants on our tour. Photo by participant Becky Hansen.

We include here information for those interested in the 2017 Field Guides *Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf* tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

*A fully revised tour through a remarkable land; from the Rift Valley lakes and escarpments to the Bale Mountains, Awash National Park, Yabello, and the remote Negele region. Rich in endemics, with Blue-winged Goose, Rouget's Rail, and Abyssinian Woodpecker, to the "must-see" Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, Stresemann's Bush-Crow, and the enigmatic Ethiopian Wolf. After careful re-scouting in 2010 and 2014 we are now able to visit this spectacular country while based mostly in good quality accommodations (see **Special Note on Accommodations** below).*

Set against a backdrop of some of the most stunning scenery in all Africa, Ethiopia's remote mountains are home to creatures seemingly forgotten by time. These include animals like the bizarre Giant Root-Rat and enigmatic Ethiopian Wolf, while the country's unique birdlife includes more than 30 species found almost nowhere else—and most of which we should see on this captivating adventure.

It's a tour that begins in fine style, as we seek our first endemics—including Wattled Ibis—before we have barely left the capital, Addis Ababa. It's also from Addis that we'll visit the Ankober Escarpment—home to troops of Gelada Baboons and an array of specialties including White-collared Pigeon, White-billed Starling, Red-billed Pytilia, Yellow-throated Seedeater, and the little known Ankober Serin. We'll also visit the spectacular Jemma Valley (and a tributary of the Blue Nile) where among the scrub and boulders are secretive Harwood's Francolins and striking White-winged Cliff-Chats.



*Spot-breasted Lapwings are endemic to the highlands of Ethiopia.
Photo by guide Richard Webster.*

We'll then head east to bird-rich Awash National Park where in the grasslands and acacia country we should encounter numerous birds of prey, bustards, and bee-eaters, the gorgeous Abyssinian Roller, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Nile Valley Sunbird, and Somali Fiscal. Beisa Oryx and Sommering's Gazelle occur here, too. Traveling south through Africa's Great Rift Valley, we'll then visit a string of varied lakes including Langano, Abiata, and Awassa, and then head further east to the magnificent Bale Mountains as we search out Rouget's Rail, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Abyssinian Longclaw, White-backed Tit, and the mysterious Abyssinian Catbird. Emerging from the juniper and *Hagenia* forests, we'll cross the weird, tundra-like landscape of the Sanetti Plateau, the otherworldly domain of Ethiopian Wolves and Spot-breasted Lapwings—at more than 13,200 feet/4000 meters above sea level, it's the literal high point of our tour.

Continuing south we'll visit the remote Negele area, where we'll walk the dry river beds in search of

the little known and beautiful Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, and then to Yabello, the home of Ethiopia's most sought-after endemic—the curious Stresemann's Bush-Crow, along with White-tailed Swallow. And finally, as we return towards Addis Ababa, we'll make a stop at a different lodge on the back side of Lake Langano, one of the very best areas for the localized and declining Yellow-fronted Parrot.

*** Special Note on Accommodations:** Without doubt, Ethiopia is one of Africa's most attractive countries. With spectacular scenery and a host of endemic and near-endemic birds, it's a place that all serious birders wish to visit. However, in the past the very poor quality of hotels at almost all the birding spots has made many people think twice about visiting this country, and many simply stayed away.

In January 2010, Terry Stevenson made a special trip to Ethiopia in order to search out better accommodations for our tour. We're pleased to report that at Debre Birhan, Awash NP, Yabello, Negelle (since 2012), and lakes Langano and Awassa, we have found far, far, better places to stay than were ever possible before. And, two new additional lodges at the Bale Mountains and on the south-east shore of Lake Langano not only put us in great birding areas, but are an absolute pleasure to stay at. In Addis Ababa we stay at a new, first class hotel—so never before has there been a tour visiting all these areas while based in perfectly reasonable lodges and hotels. You can't expect a/c, flat screen televisions, massages, and wireless internet at most places, but for a birding tour the accommodations are perfectly acceptable. For those taking the Lalibela extension, we stay at the new and very nice Mountain View Hotel, only ten minutes from the churches and with truly spectacular views from all the rooms. Of course all these upgrades cost quite a bit more than the very basic accommodation that many other operators still use; however, we feel these new standards will be appreciated by many of you and hope you'll join us in May 2017.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: Ethiopia is a vast country of which we will cover the central and southern regions. The tour maximizes the overall number of birds possible (within three weeks) and gives us a chance of seeing almost all of Ethiopia's endemic birds. To many visitors the many miles of paved roads come as a pleasant surprise, and

we'll travel these in a large and comfortable bus (Toyota Coaster). Although some of the drives are quite long, we'll have frequent stops for birding and bathroom breaks (bathrooms are often bushes). We'll also have some early departures in order to reach birding areas at a time of day when the specialties will be most active and visible, planning to return to our hotel in time for a rest in the hotter part of the day or continuing with our travels.

There are no very long or strenuous walks planned, but this tour will involve birding at high altitude (to around 14,000 feet/4200 meters elevation) on the Bale Plateau (for one-and-a-half days), but we'll sleep at the Goba Wabe Shebelle Hotel at a comparatively low 9000 feet/2700metres. All other hikes will be short walks (mostly within a few hundred yards of the bus, but up to a maximum of 2 miles) mostly over easy to moderate terrain, but perhaps on a quite steep slope in the Jemma Valley.



*Although travel in Ethiopia may be demanding, it is worth it for views of rarities such as this majestic Mountain Nyala. We will also see Ethiopian Wolves, Gelada Baboons, and many wonderful birds during this tour.
Photo by guide Richard Webster.*

Elsewhere on the tour, we'll be spending our time in the highlands at about 7500 feet/2300 metres around Addis Ababa to about 9850 feet/3000 metres around Ankober. At Awash National Park and in the south around Yabello we'll be mostly between 2600 feet/700 metres and 5200 feet/1600 metres.

As noted above, we have done everything possible to improve the comfort level of this tour while still going to the best birding places. And the accommodations are vastly better than what was available even a few years ago. However, a number of our hotels are still "simple," and you should expect the minimum—beds, a nightstand, a couple of chairs, a small table, fewer bright lights than you would like, and a shower that may get some of the rest of the bathroom wet. Figuring out the hot water tank may take trial and error. At some point you will undoubtedly have a room in which something does not work quite right. But having a bed and a bathroom should get you through to the next comfortable stop and be enough to allow you to enjoy Ethiopia.

Other realities of travel in Ethiopia are long drives and limited choice of food. There are long drives and a number of "travel days" with limited birding. Many of the drives are through heavily settled landscapes, and

while there is usually something going on out the window, the somethings are often cultural rather than natural. Internal flights are simply not practical apart from the extension, so we drive. As for the food, away from our three best hotels, which have extensive buffets, expect limited choices or no choice (a fixed menu). Breakfasts are typically: omlette or scrambled eggs (perhaps a choice of porridge), bread, and tea or coffee (perhaps also juice) (and the tea and coffee are often served last!). Picnic lunches from hotels are very basic; more popular at times are very simple peanut-butter-and-jam-make-your-own sandwiches (we supply the ingredients!). Restaurant lunches and dinners usually involve a handful of choices at most: a western-style meat choice like chicken or beef; spaghetti; and a couple of local dishes, most commonly tibs (or tibs, small pieces of cooked beef or lamb) or spiro (a savory chickpea sauce), both served with injera, a local bread that is like a soft tortilla that tastes like a sourdough pancake. The most common vegetarian choice is spaghetti with a tomato sauce, at other times a plate of cooked vegetables (but cooked vegetables are not abundant). Ethiopians like spicy food; the food we are served is almost always toned down for the tourists, but may still have a little more kick than you expect; if you want more kick, chili powder will be supplied! Beverages are also limited: No diet soft drinks away from Addis Ababa. The most common types of beverage are soft drinks, beer, a popular bottled sparkling water ("ambo"), and regular bottled drinking water.

In summary, Ethiopia has only recently resumed hosting numbers of tourists, and that number is still rather small; the tourist infrastructure is just beginning to develop. Ethiopia is a wonderful experience right now, and certainly, in the view of the guides, within the norm of bird tours, but please be aware that some simple accommodations and limited food choice will be 'order of the day' for about half the tour.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.

About the Birding Areas



Addis Ababa and the Highland Escarpments—Addis (as it is locally known) is a very birdy city with endemics right on the grounds of several of the larger hotels. In addition to the more widespread Hooded Vultures, Speckled Mousebirds, and Baglafaecht Weavers, keep an eye open for Wattled Ibis, White-collared Pigeon, Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher, Brown-rumped Seedeater, and the gigantic Thick-billed Raven. We'll have three days in the highlands to the north, visiting spectacular escarpments at Ankober and then at the Jemma Valley. Both these sites have troops of striking Gelada Baboons, Lammergeiers cross the open skies, White-billed Starlings feed along the cliff tops, and, at Ankober, we'll spend time looking for the little known endemic, Ankober Serin, while Red-billed

Pytilia and Yellow-throated Seedeater can be found on the lower slopes. In the Jemma Valley, the secretive Harwood's Francolin will be our main target species, but we should also see Rueppell's Chat and White-winged Cliff-Chat, while the highland grasslands and marshes along the way are home to Blue-winged Goose, Erlanger's Lark, Abyssinian Longclaw, Red-breasted Wheatear, and Abyssinian (Black-headed) Siskin.

Awash National Park—Over 450 species of birds have been recorded in this park—as well as some great mammals including Beisa Oryx, Soemmering's Gazelle, Lesser Kudu, Salt's Dikdik, Warthog, and both Olive and Hamadryas (scarce) baboons. The habitats consist of mixed acacia bush and grasslands, the Awash River, and open lava fields. During three days in this area we'll visit all these habitats as we search out Somali Ostrich, a variety of raptors including kites, vultures, Dark Chanting-Goshawk, Tawny Eagle, and the tiny Pygmy Falcon. Arabian (rare), White-bellied, and Buff-crested bustards occur on the open plains, while Sombre Chat and Blackstart prefer the lava fields. But it is the bush country and riverine forest that hold most species with Helmeted Guineafowl, Bruce's Green-Pigeon, White-bellied Go-away Bird, Blue-naped Mousebird, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Abyssinian Roller, Black-billed Woodhoopoe, Red-billed Hornbill, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Gray-headed Batis, White Helmetshrike, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Gillett's Lark, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Nile Valley and Shining sunbirds, Somali Bunting, Rueppell's Weaver, and Eastern Paradise-Whydah being just a sampling of what we could see. Nearby Awash Falls Lodge, which we visit first, is in a slightly lower and more arid area than the Park, and improves our chances for several species, such as Arabian Bustard, sandgrouse, and the batis and sunbirds.

The Rift Valley Lakes—During the course of our tour we'll visit several of Ethiopia's famous lakes, including Ziway and Awassa, where dozens of pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, ibis, Hamerkops, and Yellow-billed and Marabou storks preen, feed, and walk within just a few feet of the local fisherman—it's spectacular for photography. Lake Langano has more open deep water, and apart from a few White-winged Terns and Gray-headed Gulls, is often very quiet compared to the other nearby lakes. It is, however, the surrounding woodlands that are the main attraction here, and we'll have a full day to enjoy this very birdy area. We'll also visit Lake Abiata, a shallow alkaline lake that sometimes attracts large numbers of both Greater and Lesser flamingos.



A view of Awash Falls from the balcony of our hotel. Photo by participant John Geale.

Bale Mountains—For many visitors to Ethiopia, the Bale Mountains are the major highlight of the tour. And from our lodge near Goba town, it's just a short drive to the lower (but still montane) grasslands, where many of the highland endemics are found. Any marshy pool could provide us with flocks of Wattled Ibis and Blue-winged Goose, or an inquisitive Rouget's Rail. In the mixed grassland and wooded areas around the park headquarters or higher above the town are yet more local specialties, including Chestnut-naped and Moorland francolins, White-cheeked Turaco, Abyssinian Woodpecker, Abyssinian Longclaw, Brown Woodland-Warbler, Brown (Bale) Warbler, Abyssinian Catbird, and White-backed Black-Tit. Menelik's Bushbuck (a distinctive race) and the endemic Mountain Nyala are also found here.

Continuing still higher (on the highest all-weather road in Africa), we'll leave the juniper and *Hagenia* forests behind and emerge on the Sanetti Plateau, a spectacular open area of Afro-alpine moorland with a variety of everlasting flowers and magnificent Giant Lobelias. Birds are few here except for Moorland Chats and hopefully Wattled Crane and Spot-breasted Lapwing; this is, however, the domain of Ethiopian Wolf, and we have a very good chance of seeing this beautiful, endangered mammal.

Haremma Forest and other montane forest patches—The Haremma Forest to the south of the high peaks of the Bale Mountains is one of Ethiopia's largest remaining forests. Together with several much smaller remnant patches at places like Agere Maryam, we'll spend time looking for Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Yellow-fronted Parrot, White-cheeked Turaco, Banded Barbet, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Ethiopian Black-headed Oriole, Broad-ringed (Montane) White-eye, and Abyssinian Crimson-wing. So rich is this forest, that we have now added an extra night at the Bale Mountain Lodge. We think the change will add greatly to the overall enjoyment of the tour, giving us an extra full day in this superb montane forest—rich in cuckoos, thrushes, and warblers, and perhaps also our first Bale Monkeys.

Negelle and Yabello—In southern Ethiopia lie two areas where some of the country's most-wanted birds occur. First, we'll visit some of the tributaries of the Genale River where we'll search in fruiting fig trees for the enigmatic Prince Ruspoli's Turaco—a little known species found only in this area. We'll then head to a nearby area of arid grassland for the equally obscure Sidamo Lark (with a world population perhaps as low as 250 individuals) and then to Yabello where yet more localized endemics are found. Our main target species here are Stresemann's Bush-Crow and White-tailed Swallow, which only occur in this semi-arid bushland of spiky acacias and termite hills. It's also a fabulous area for other more widespread birds like Bateleur, Vulturine Guineafowl, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Red-bellied Parrot, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Somali Tit, Pringle's Puffback, Rufous-naped Bush-Shrike, White-crowned and Shelley's starlings, and if lucky Northern Grosbeak-Canary.

Lalibela—This very arid area is not a birding mecca, and we visit it to see the churches. But there are birds, with two endemics more likely here than on the main tour: Erckel's Francolin and Yellow-rumped (White-throated) Seedeater, and the former is a skulker (but we are five for five) and the latter is difficult (we are four for five). However, many other endemics occur, and we have had our best views of species such as Abyssinian Nightjar, Banded Barbet, White-billed Starling, and Abyssinian Wheatear here, along with other interesting taxa such as *hararensis* Long-billed Pipit and *septemstriata* Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Plus, there are some other fine shows, such as soaring birds, with Lammergeiers regular right by our hotel, soaring like albatrosses, followed by Fan-tailed Ravens.

Itinerary for Ethiopia: Endemic Birds & Ethiopian Wolf

Day 1, Fri, 5 May. Departure from US. Participants joining the tour from the US will need to leave today in order to arrive in Addis Ababa on Day 2 (May 6).

Day 2, Sat, 6 May. Arrival in Addis Ababa. Please plan your flights so as to arrive in Addis (as it is locally known) sometime today. For those who provide flight information, we will arrange a transfer from the airport to the hotel; note, however, that since 2012 depending on security policy, transfer agents are not always allowed into the terminal, and one needs to exit the terminal and go down to the edge of the parking area (short distance) to find the transfer agent (look for your name on a sign). Many choose to come a day early—you may wish to visit the Ethnographic Museum (formerly the home of Emperor Haile Selassie), perhaps see one of the famous local churches, or simply rest after your long flight. There are no birding activities planned for today. With advance notice, our ground agent has been happy to arrange a tour of major features of Addis, including the National Museum, Holy Trinity Cathedral, and the Merkato (open-air market) (not included in the tour fee). Night at the Saro Maria Hotel, Addis Ababa.



The marvelous Thick-billed Raven can be found across much of Ethiopia. This enormous corvid is one of the largest passerines in the world. This portrait highlights the unusual size and shape of the bill.
Photo by guide Richard Webster.

Day 3, Sun, 7 May. To Debre Birhan. After breakfast this morning we'll leave in our Toyota bus and head northeast to Debre Birhan, arriving in time for lunch. Along the way we'll make stops as we see our first Wattled Ibis, Augur Buzzard, Cape Crow, or even the gigantic Thick-billed Raven, which feeds around the villages and among the fields of cattle, sheep, and horses. As we climb higher (to around 9900 feet/3000 metres), we'll see the first moorlands, with Moorland Chats, Brown-rumped Seedeaters, and if the aloes are flowering, gleaming Malachite Sunbirds.

In the afternoon we'll drive to the edge of the Ankober Escarpment where we'll begin our search for the little known Ankober Serin. Troops of the strange Gelada Baboon, Lammergeier, Dusky Turtle Dove, White-collared Pigeon, Groundscraper Thrush, Red-breasted Wheatear, White-billed Starling, Abyssinian (Black-headed) Siskin, and Fan-tailed Raven are all far easier to find. Night at the Getva Hotel, Debre Birhan.

Day 4, Mon, 8 May. The Ankober Escarpment. We'll be out early today, perhaps visiting a different part of the Ankober Escarpment—especially if the serin eluded us yesterday. We'll also descend to the lower slopes in the hope of finding Red-billed Pytilia and Yellow-throated Seedeater among a host of more widespread bush country birds. In the afternoon we'll return to Addis Ababa. Night at the Saro Maria Hotel.

Day 5, Tue, 9 May. Gemma Valley. We'll visit this scenically spectacular area as a day trip from Addis and therefore need a very early start, arriving if possible shortly after dawn. The main reason to arrive here early is to find the secretive Harwood's Francolin (and perhaps also Erckel's Francolin), which hides among the boulders on the scrubby slopes. Other species should include Erlanger's Lark, Red-breasted Wheatear, Rueppell's Chat, White-winged Cliff-Chat, Little

Rock-Thrush, Abyssinian Longclaw, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu. Night at the Saro Maria Hotel.

Day 6, Wed, 10 May. To Awash National Park. Leaving Addis we'll descend into the Great Rift Valley bound for the savannas of Awash National Park. The drive will take us most of the day, but we should have time for a stop at Lake Cheleleka (if it has water), a shallow freshwater lake favored by Maccoa Duck, and perhaps (if we're lucky), the strange White-backed Duck as well. Or we will try the reeds and trees along the shore of Lake Hora for Rueppell's Weaver and Blue-breasted Bee-eater.

Continuing on, the road winds through more farm country and then through black lava outcrops and onto the dry savanna of the Awash area—home of the Afar people, many of whom still live a wandering traditional way of life. Widespread birds to look for along the way include Dark Chanting-Goshawk, Helmeted Guineafowl, Crowned Lapwing, Namaqua Dove, Rufous-crowned Roller, Ethiopian Swallow, and Pin-tailed Whydah. We'll also have a chance for more localized species like Yellow-breasted Barbet, and, on a lava flow, Blackstart and Sombre Chat. We should arrive at our hotel (outside Awash National Park but with similar birds) in the late afternoon. Night at Awash Falls Lodge near Awash NP.

Days 7-8, Thu-Fri, 11-12 May. Awash National Park. After a morning birding in the Bilen area where numerous new birds will be found—hopefully including the uncommon Arabian Bustard—we'll then head into the park itself, a fabulous area of acacia bush, grasslands, and wooded areas that grow along the Awash River; the birdlife is rich and varied, with over 450 species recorded. Just some of the more widespread possibilities are White-backed, Rueppell's, and Lappet-faced vultures, Pygmy Falcon, Yellow-necked Francolin, Senegal Thick-knee, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Buff-crested and White-bellied bustards, White-bellied Go-away Bird, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Abyssinian Roller, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, White-rumped Babbler, Gray-headed Batis, Nile Valley Sunbird, Somali Fiscal, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, White-Helmetsrike, Rueppell's Weaver, Green-winged Pytilia, Bristle-crowned Starling, and Eastern Paradise-Whydah. Less common species include Sissor-tailed Kite and Gillett's Lark; Beisa Oryx, Soemmering's Gazelle, Lesser Kudu, Salt's Dikdik, and Warthog could all be added to our mammal list. Nights at Awash Falls Lodge.



*We will find Bruce's Green-Pigeon near Lake Lagano.
Photo by participant Becky Hansen.*

Day 9, Sat, 13 May. To Lake Langano. We'll partially retrace our steps today before turning south toward some of the Rift Valley's most spectacular lakes, including Lake Ziway where numerous herons, egrets, Sacred Ibis, Hamerkops, and Marabou Storks parade around and between the local fishermen as they try to snatch a tasty meal. White-winged Terns and Gray-headed Gulls can also be common, with smaller numbers of both Great White and Pink-backed pelicans; the surrounding trees provide views of the ever-watchful African Fish-Eagles—photographic opportunities are numerous!

We'll finish the day a little further south at Lake Langano, where Sabana Lodge will be our base for the next two nights. Watch for Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill in the more open areas along the road! Night at Sabana Lodge

Day 10, Sun, 14 May. Lakes Langano and Abiata. We'll spend today visiting lakes Langano and Abiata,

so near to each other and yet so different in character. Alkaline Abiata is frequently the feeding ground of thousands of both Greater and Lesser flamingos. Freshwater Langano is one of the deeper and quieter lakes but, surrounded by fabulous woodlands, the area can be literally full of birds; Bruce's Green-Pigeon, Grayish Eagle-Owl, Black-billed Woodhoopoe, African Gray and Hemprich's hornbills, Nubian and Cardinal woodpeckers, Black-headed Batis, White-winged Black-Tit, Buff-bellied Warbler, Red-faced Crombec, Abyssinian Wheatear, Little Rock-Thrush, Mocking Cliff-Chat, Rufous Chatterer, Eastern Violet-backed and Beautiful sunbirds, and White-headed Buffalo-Weaver are just a sampling of what we may see. Night at Sabana Lodge.

Day 11, Mon, 15 May. To the Bale Mountains. Climbing through the cultivated fields, we'll start to come across more natural grasslands crossed here and there with highland streams. Although the area is still quite populated by the horse riding Oromo people, this is good habitat for Abyssinian Longclaw and perhaps our first Rouget's Rail. By mid-afternoon we'll see the Bale Mountains ahead of us and stop at some small pools. Wattled Ibis are usually common here, as are

Blue-winged Goose, Rouget's Rail, and sometimes Spot-breasted Lapwing. It will also be our first chance for Chestnut-naped Francolin and perhaps Red-billed Cough, which feed in the sparse cultivated areas and damp grasslands. We'll also visit the forest and glades around the park headquarters where Mountain Nyala and (Menelik's) Bushbuck are usually seen. And if really lucky, perhaps a roosting African Wood, or African Long-eared owl. Night at Goba Wabe Shebelle Hotel.



*Finding the beautiful Ethiopian Wolf will be one of the highlights of this tour.
Photo by participants David and Judy Smith.*

Day 12, Tue, 16 May. Bale Mountains. Today we will spend a full day climbing high into the mountains (on the highest all-weather road in Africa) in search of many of the montane endemics that occur there.

Leaving our hotel behind, it's not far to the first area of forest where Mountain Buzzard, Abyssinian Woodpecker, White-backed Black-Tit, Abyssinian Catbird, Brown (Bale) Warbler, Abyssinian Ground-Thrush, Rueppell's Robin-Chat, and Yellow-crowned Canary occur. It's hard to ignore this alluring forest, and we'll return here for birding in the afternoon, but for now we'll keep moving as the main prize awaits us on beautiful open moorlands of the Sanetti Plateau. Only known from here (and a few other remote Ethiopian mountain blocks), the Ethiopian Wolf can be found as it wanders the

sparsely vegetated plains searching for its primary food source—the Giant Root-Rat. We have an excellent chance to find this rare Canid, which for many visitors is a major highlight of the tour. Moorland Francolin, Ruddy Shelduck, Wattled Crane (we need some luck), and Spot-breasted Lapwing are some of the more localized birds to watch for here as well. Night at Goba Wabe Shebelle Hotel.

Day 13, Wed, 17 May. Bale Mountains. Today we repeat yesterday's drive, climbing over the Bale Mountains plateau with another chance for any of the highland specialties we may have missed. We then descend through the life zones of the Haremma Forest, passing through Giant Heather and *Hygenia* forests before arriving at the delightful Bale Mountain Lodge. In time for lunch. We'll join a local guide as we walk through these forests looking for: Rameron Pigeon, White-cheeked Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Silvery-cheeked Hornbill, Gray Cuckoo-shrike, Ethiopian Black-headed Oriole,, Abyssinian Slaty-Flycatcher, African Dusky Flycatcher, Abyssinian (Mountain) Thrush, African Hill Babbler, Broad-ringed White-eye, Slender-billed Starling, and Yellow-bellied Waxbill. Night at Bale Mountain Lodge.

Day 14, Thu, 18 May. To Negelle. Even with our new midpoint of Bale Mountain Lodge, it's a long drive today. However, we will have some of the early part of the day to search for some of the more difficult species, such as Abyssinian Ground-Thrush, Gray Cuckooshrike, Sharpe's Starling or Abyssinian Crimsonwing..We'll then leave the forest behind as we head through more open and drier country, cut here and there by dry riverbeds and the Genale River. We'll make stops at several of our favorite spots, perhaps walking in a dry river bed and looking for fruiting fig trees—for this is the habitat of Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. We'll have part of this afternoon and much of tomorrow to find this little known, gorgeous endemic! And late in the afternoon we'll arrive at our simple hotel in Negelle town for a two-night stay.

Day 15, Fri, 19 May. Negelle area. We'll spend today in the semi-arid bush country around Negelle and also in the grasslands of the Liben Plain, the only known habitat for yet another little known endemic—Liben (Sidamo) Lark. With a population of no more than a few hundred, finding the lark is hardly expected, but we will give it a good try. In addition to hopefully having further encounters with Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, we should also find a large number of new species, perhaps including Gray Kestrel, Temminck's Courser, Lilac-breasted Roller, Black-billed and Double-toothed barbets, Greater Honeyguide, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Northern Puffback, Taita Fiscal, Somali Short-toed Lark, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Golden-breasted Starling, Collared Sunbird, and Gray-headed Social-Weaver. Night in Negelle.

Day 16, Sat, 20 May. To Yabello. After breakfast we'll leave the Negele area and make a long scenic drive on a recently-improved road across a vast swatch of bush country. Our time will be limited, but we will manage a few stops, particularly at the Dawa River, hoping for African White-winged Dove, Salvadori's (Juba) Weaver, and Black-bellied Sunbirds. We may have a chance encounter with Vulturine Guineafowl, various raptors, and perhaps a bustard. In the late afternoon we will enter the range of Stresemann's Bush-Crow and White-tailed Swallow and may well encounter them, but we will have time tomorrow to backtrack into the last quarter of today's route in pursuit of them and a variety of larks, starlings, barbets, and more. Night at Yabello Motel .

Day 17, Sun, 21 May. Yabello. At about 5000 feet (1500m), Yabello is in an area of red soils, dry acacia woodland, and chimney-like termite mounds that are the hallmark of this part of Ethiopia. The strange Stresemann's Bush-Crow (which has been thought of as a crow, a starling, and even put in its own family) moves around in small parties and can be encountered anywhere within its tiny range. The poorly known White-tailed Swallow (which is equally range restricted) is less common and thought to nest within the termite chimneys here.

We'll devote the whole of Day 17 to birding this area and hope for many of the following species: Bateleur, Eastern Chanting-Goshawk, Martial Eagle, Three-banded Courser (luck required), Orange-bellied (Red-bellied) Parrot, Black-billed Woodhoopoe, Red-fronted, d'Arnaud's, and Red-and-yellow barbets, Pringle's Puffback, Gray-headed Bushshrike, White-rumped Shrike, African Paradise-Flycatcher, Northern Brownbul, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Mouse-colored Penduline-Tit, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Pale Prinia, Banded Warbler, Somali Crombec, White-browed Scrub-Robin, Shelley's and White-crowned starlings, Somali Bunting, White-bellied Canary, Shelley's Rufous Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Chestnut Weaver, and Purple Grenadier. Night at Yabello Motel.

Day 18, Mon, 22 May. Yabello We will leave Yabello after any early-morning birding we wish to do near there, and we will pass through the rolling hills of farmland and countless villages as we head north, potentially making a stop in a nice area of forest near Agere Maryam if any montane species have eluded us. Our destination is Lake Awassa (increasingly spelled Hawassa). Although many of the waterbirds that we see here we will have seen previously on the tour, in a good year just the sheer numbers of birds can be impressive, and we're certain to add some new ones, too, perhaps including White-backed Duck and African Pygmy-Goose along the lakefront promenade outside the hotel, or a Goliath Heron or a lucky-find Black Crowned-Crane farther along the shoreline. A walk in the woodland around our hotel will also certainly increase our list, with Little Sparrowhawk, Banded Snake-Eagle (scarce), Blue-spotted Wood-Dove, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Black-winged Lovebird, Gray-headed Woodpecker, Banded Barbet, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Gray-backed Fiscal, African Thrush, White-browed Robin-Chat, Spotted Creeper, African Black-headed Oriole, Rueppell's Glossy-Starling, and Fawn-breasted (Abyssinian) Waxbill being just some of the possibilities. Night at Wabe Shebelle Hotel, Hawassa.

Day 19, Tue, 23 May. To Lake Langano's Forested South-East Shore After an early morning bird walk around the hotel grounds (another chance for the landbirds listed above), we continue northward today and travel back to Lake Langano (but now to the south-east side and Bishangari Lodge). New to our itinerary in 2016, this area proved great for the uncommon endemic Yellow-fronted Parrot, while other possibilities include Scaly Francolin, African Crowned Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Lemon Dove, Narina Trogon, Half-collared Kingfisher, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, and Mountain Wagtail. Night at Bishangari Lodge.

Day 20, Wed, 24 May. Return to Addis Ababa. After breakfast and more birding around Lake Langano, we'll head back to Addis Ababa, where day rooms will be available before our international departure this evening. For those taking the Churches of Lalibela Extension, we'll overnight at the Saro Maria Hotel.

Day 21, Thu, 25 May. Arrival home. If you're returning to the US, you should arrive today in time for your onward connections home.

Churches of Lalibela Extension



The Church of Beit Georgis, or St. George, is one of the most famous of the rock-hewn churches at Lalibela. These churches were carved down into the bedrock; some of them house colorful icons and other artifacts. Photo by guide Phil Gregory.

Days 1-2, Thu-Fri, 25-26 May. To Lalibela. For those taking this extension, we'll transfer to the airport this morning (May 25) and then fly to Lalibela. Luggage allowances change frequently depending on the type of plane flying that day (and other not so obvious reasons). We suggest that you have a small overnight bag in your main luggage that you can use for this two-night extension.

On arrival we'll transfer to our hotel and then begin our exploration of this fascinating area. There are no less than 1000 churches in the "Lasta Region of Lalibella," some hidden in enormous caves, but it's exceptional to find 11 churches of such master craftsmanship as those found at Lalibela. These brilliant feats of engineering and architecture are a World Heritage Site and (are one of many wonderful places) often referred to as the "Eighth Wonder of the World." We'll have the afternoon of Day 1 and the whole of Day 2 to visit some of the most special monuments. This is an excellent way to wind down after the main tour, see some fabulous sights, and see a few nice birds as well. Although the countryside around Lalibela is home to many interesting birds, we will have seen virtually all of them during the main tour; however, we will certainly go birding on the morning of Day 2 and new species may include Erckel's Francolin, which lives on the escarpment below our lodge, and Yellow-rumped Serin. Our hotel is great for watching for raptors, and we will meet regularly on the deck to watch them and a variety of landbirds that occur in the dry scrub. Nights at Mountain View Hotel, Lalibela.

Day 3, Sat, 27 May. Return to Addis Ababa. We'll take the flight back to Addis, where day rooms will be available before your international departure later tonight. For those wishing to stay overnight, please make these special arrangements through the Field Guides office.

Day 4, Sun, 28 May. Arrival home. If you're returning to the US, you should arrive today in time for your onward connections home.

About Your Guide

Richard Webster and Rose Ann Rowlett live between tours in a refurbished home in Portal, Arizona, where they reside at the sufferance of the true masters of the place, the Acorn Woodpeckers. Richard claims that his heart is in the American tropics, oscillating rapidly between the Andes and Amazonia, but his increasingly frequent and enthusiastic journeys to other continents betray his love for birds and birding everywhere. A much-neglected manuscript on southern California's birds is receiving more attention as he reduces his tour schedule. He looks forward to returning for another trip to Africa, where he has guided Field Guides birding tours to Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Cameroon, and made additional forays to Uganda, Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.

Tour participants comment frequently on Richard's wide-ranging knowledge of birds (toward which end he has burdened his sagging shelves with many more books, journals, and papers than he could ever read), and they appreciate his eager willingness to share that knowledge. He stays in shape by chasing away the cows, which are the cost of preferring open range that allows the deer and peccaries to roam freely in the absence of fences. Current preoccupations are still a re-re-recurring drought and playing with the trail camera that reveals the Gray Foxes, Black Bears, Bobcats, and Mountain Lions that traverse the yard as they sleep.

Visit <http://fieldguides.com/guides> for Richard's complete schedule; just click on his photo.

*"This was a fantastic tour. **Richard Webster** is a superb leader—took everything in stride with a great sense of humor and fun. Incredible eyes and ears too! Best leader I have ever had." L.H., Santa Marta Escape*

Financial Information

FEE: \$6375 from Addis Ababa

FEE FOR THE EXTENSION: \$1375 from Addis Ababa (includes round trip flight Addis Ababa/Lalibela)

DEPOSIT: \$650 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: January 5, 2017

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$650; \$100 for extension

LIMIT: 10

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: We have made every effort to make the standards of accommodation on this tour better than what any other birding tour company offers. This includes all our nights in Addis Ababa at the Saro Maria Hotel, Sabana Lodge at Lake Langano and the Wabe Shebelle Hotel at Hawassa. The newly built Getva Hotel at Debre Birhan, and new small lodges at Bilen and in Awash National Park are basic but adequate. We also plan to stay at one of the better government owned Wabe Shabelle hotels at Goba (Bale Mountains). And at Yabello, the previously poor quality Yabello Motel now has completely new rooms and was enjoyed by everyone during our recent tours. All the above accommodations have private bathrooms. The bad hotel in Negelle was supplanted in 2012 by a new, simple place, and yet better hotels are slated for completion before the 2017 tour. We also now include new Bale Mountain Lodge and Bishangari Lodge which all our group in 2016 voted the best accommodations of the tour.

DOCUMENTS: US citizens will need a **passport** valid for six months beyond the date of their return and a **visa** to enter Ethiopia. We will provide you with the necessary visa application form and instructions at the appropriate time. No vaccinations are currently required unless you are arriving from a yellow fever-infected area.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$6375 for one person in double occupancy from Addis Ababa. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 19 (and day rooms on Day 20), all meals from breakfast on Day 3 through dinner on Day 20, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Addis Ababa, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$650. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

The fee for the **Churches of Lalibela Extension** is \$1375 for one person in double occupancy from Addis Ababa. It includes all lodging from Day 1 of the extension through Day 2 (and day rooms on Day 3), all meals from breakfast on Day 1 through dinner on Day 3, flights from Addis Ababa to Lalibela and return, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from the Addis Ababa, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement for the extension** is \$100.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$650** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by January 5, 2017. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at www.fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.htm and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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