

A wildlife, culture and traffic accident inspection tour of –

Ethiopia

20th October to 20th November 2007

Allan Richards and Steve Anyon-Smith

Ethiopia (n) – Anything but a large desert full of starving people



The Plan

The Simien Mountains in Ethiopia's north have gelada and Bale Mountains in the south have Ethiopian wolves. Both these animals are endemic and I had long wanted to see them. Further investigation revealed a country rich in biodiversity, with over 800 birds and a long list of see-able mammals, many of which are found only in Ethiopia or difficult to see elsewhere. Bare-chested women played no part in the plan.

Looking for wildlife was the focus of our holiday but we were to visit some significant historic sites and could not help becoming fascinated by Ethiopian culture, food and firearms. A popular

pursuit was Ethiopian Mythbusting, where the stereotypical views expounded by friends and the media at home were tested.

The wet season in Ethiopia ends at around the start of October so it is a time of green fields and happy critters. The 2007 wet season had been average or better, so our chances increased for seeing things where they are normally found.

We plotted an itinerary that took us to the far south as well as to the north of the country around Lake Tana and beyond. Thirty days was hardly enough but that is what we were told would be our visa limit. This turned out to be fanciful, just one item on a long list of fanciful things, but I guess that is why you have to go and find out for yourself.

I sent emails to about ten Ethiopian travel and tour companies to get quotes for tours based on our itinerary. Most of them replied with all but one trying to sell us expensive all-inclusive tour packages. We were surprised at the cost as food and accommodation are cheap, wages low and the distances we were to travel were hardly exceptional. The largest cost component is vehicle hire, with 4WDs being essential. Our choice of Ethio-Der was a good one (see “Ethio-Der Tour and Travel”, below).



traditional Lake Tana eucalyptus paddle (also known as a stick)

Four line summary

Ethiopia is one of those countries that will be “discovered” by mainstream western tourism. Wildlife enthusiasts are already increasing and an erosion of western misconceptions of the country will occur. Ethiopia is sufficiently delightful and “different” to appeal to all tourists. I recommend it wholeheartedly. They may need to sort the accommodation sector though.....

Itinerary (as executed)

D	Date	Activity	hotel name
1	21-Oct	Arrive Addis Ababa 0545, drive to Lake Langano	Bekele Mola Hotel
2	22-Oct	At Lake Langano, visit Abiata-Shala NP	Bekele Mola Hotel
3	23-Oct	Drive to Bale Mtns NP	camp
4	24-Oct	Birding at Dinsho and Gaysay	camp
5	25-Oct	Birding at Dinsho and Gaysay	camp
6	26-Oct	Drive to Sanetti Plateau - birding and game drive	camp
7	27-Oct	Drive to Harrena forest	camp
8	28-Oct	Drive to Negele Borena	Green Hotel
9	29-Oct	Birding around Negele Borena	Green Hotel
10	30-Oct	Drive to Yabello WS	camp
11	31-Oct	At Yabello WS	camp
12	1-Nov	At Yabello WS	camp
13	2-Nov	Drive to Arba Minch	Swayne's Hotel
14	3-Nov	At Nechisar NP	camp
15	4-Nov	At Nechisar NP	camp
16	5-Nov	Drive from Arba Minch to Wondo Genet	Wabishebelie Hotel
17	6-Nov	At Wondo Genet	Wabishebelie Hotel
18	7-Nov	Drive to Bishangari Lodge on Lake Langano	Bishangari Lodge
19	8-Nov	Drive along the Rift Valley to Awash NP	camp
20	9-Nov	At Awash NP	camp
21	10-Nov	At Awash NP	camp
22	11-Nov	Drive from Awash NP to AA	National Hotel
23	12-Nov	Drive to Debre Libanos - Debe Markos	local hotel
24	13-Nov	Drive to Bahir Dar, monasteries in Lake Tana in PM	Papyrus Hotel
25	14-Nov	Bahir Dar - Gonder with visit to Imperial Enclosure	Goha Hotel
26	15-Nov	Drive to Simien Mountains NP	Simien Lodge
27	16-Nov	Drive to Chenek	camp
28	17-Nov	Return to Simien Lodge	Simien Lodge
29	18-Nov	Around Simien Lodge and then drive to Gonder	local pension
30	19-Nov	Fly from Gonder to AA and home	
	20-Nov	Leave AA at 0010	



our travels.....

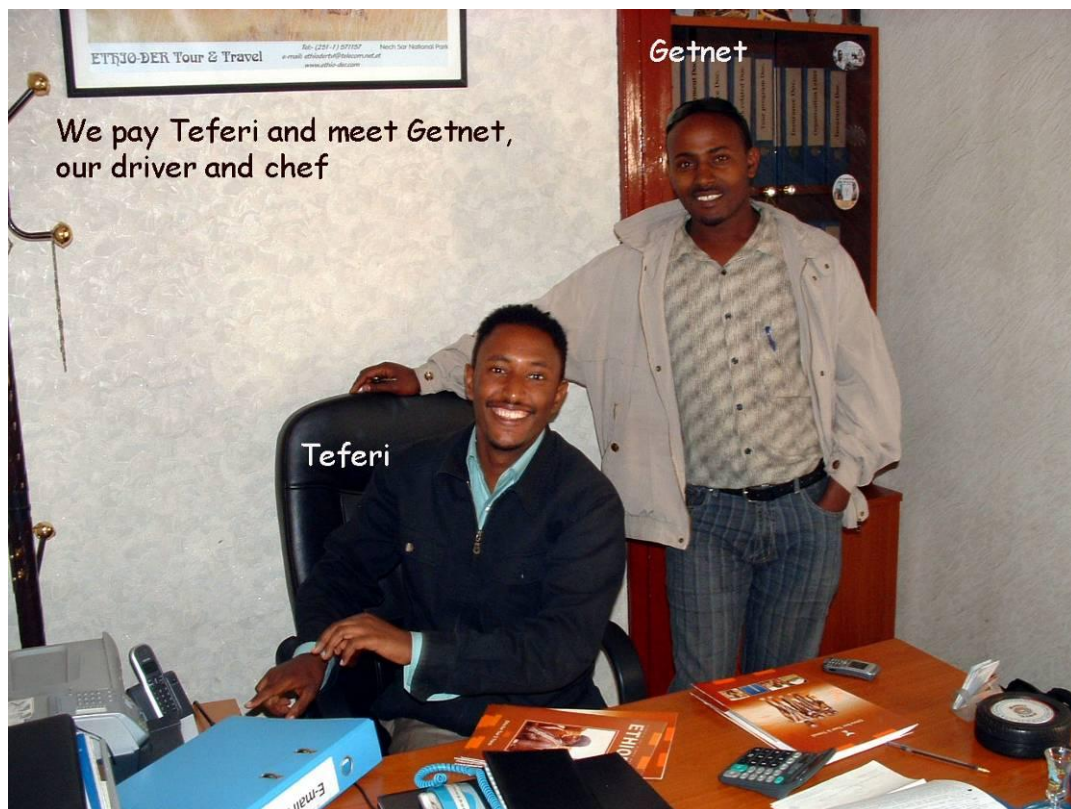


Ethio-Der Tour and Travel

If there is a country where using public transport would be impractical, unreliable, dangerous and downright terrifying, it is Ethiopia. It is not that there isn't any public transport, but much of it does not reach its destination – at least not on the day of departure anyway.

We hired a 1998 Toyota Landcruiser with driver from Ethio-Der. This cost \$US135 per day. Our contact was Dereje, the owner of the company, who was the only internet-sourced respondent who quoted us a rate that we could accept. We selected Ethio-Der on the basis that they suggested we rent vehicle and driver only, and pay for the rest as we went. This ended up being significantly cheaper for us and less stressful for the tour operator as we could hardly complain about accommodation or food that we selected ourselves.

Ethio-Der provided, at no charge, tent and mattresses and cooking and eating irons. Getnet Bikila, our driver, also cooked food (expertly!!) and ran errands in villages for us while we were in camp.



Some of our accommodation was pre-booked as our visit was in the “high” season. High season in Ethiopia means very little as the raw tourist numbers are very low. Nevertheless we were informed that there was not a single rental vehicle to be found in Addis Ababa during our visit.

We were very pleased with Ethio-Der. The vehicle was comfortable and had no major mechanical issues. We were particularly happy with Getnet. He never stopped being obliging. Aside from being a good and safe driver he was punctual, friendly, informative, totally unflappable and most importantly he was always happy to take us spotlighting!! He was happy to stop whenever we wished to look at wildlife and would often spot things we had missed. If I looked for more than a

few seconds at something while he was driving, he would be ready to stop. I would unreservedly recommend Getnet.

Ethio-Der can be contacted at - ethio_der@yahoo.com

Getnet Bikila can be found at – getnet_bikila@yahoo.com

Ethiopian people

The good news

You will feel very safe in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian adults are honest, friendly and mostly happy folk. Nomadic cattle herders of the Afar variety are the exceptions, being cold, cranky and armed to the teeth. It is generally a good idea to stay away from these guys. Thankfully they are rather rare and their habitat and movements can be fairly accurately predicted. Even the armed national park staff were scared of this lot. Fortunately it is legal to hunt them, and some of the neighbouring cattlemen actively do. This is reciprocated and it kind of goes downhill from there.

Otherwise even the meanest scruffiest looking dudes stuck in the remotest boonies nodded and smiled at us. To stop our vehicle in a remote village would invite an avalanche of locals wishing to shake hands and welcome us. If the women were topless, the likelihood of us mistakenly seeing birds right in the middle of their villages increased. Disappointingly, almost everyone not employed in tourism refused permission for their photos to be taken, even when small sums of money were offered, so I soon gave up on this. Pity.

I suspect that some of Ethiopia's border areas are less safe but there was no good reason for us to go anywhere near these.

There are myriad ethnic groups across the length and breadth of the country but we noticed no change in the attitude of the people as we traveled about. Our tour gave us the opportunity to meet Oromo, Somali, Gamo, Guji, Sidamo, Afar, Kereyu and Amhara people.

Although AK47s and other weapons were commonplace we never heard a gunshot and were never threatened by anyone.

We were generally referred to as “Forenge”, a catch-all reference to anyone with white skin. There was no intended slur in this, or at least as near as I could tell there wasn't, but my knowledge of precisely two Amharic words may have let me down here. Other forenge were uncommon except in the north of the country. I preferred the south.



these kids were exceptional.....

The bad news

Sadly, Ethiopian adults pass through a phase called childhood. Or at least most of them do. If I had my way some of the kids I met would have been fed to the reptilian occupants of the Rift Valley lakes or stuffed into aardvark burrows. To say that they could become nuisances is a gross understatement. By comparison, India's kids are angels. I understand the concept of begging, even moderately persistent begging. When threats of physical violence are needed to try to make it go away you know there is a problem. Almost every small boy and most of the small girls begged for something or other. Their rather blunt begging chants ranged from "you, you, you, you, you, you", "caramel, caramel", "forenge, forenge", "one birr", to the ever-popular "give me money". This rather stuffed any chance that non-beggars might actually get something from us. Some of the kids got a boot up the arse for their trouble, particularly those throwing stones at the wildlife or cracking whips behind us. Despite all of this, I felt sorry for the kids. Most would never really experience a childhood.

Ethiopia's kids are not a reason for staying away from Ethiopia, but they provide an incentive not to go back.

Wildlife

We identified 453 different birds and 52 mammals in Ethiopia. I spent the better part of a week in Thailand on the way home and although I kept no records of birds seen, the total count for the two countries would be well over 600. I added 15 mammals in Thailand for a combined total of 67.

We had copies of the *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara* (Sinclair and Ryan) and for mammals we relied on local knowledge and the *Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Africa* (Stuart and Stuart).

Despite the distressing state of most of the national parks, there is still much see-able wildlife in Ethiopia. The country is quite mountainous compared to many in Africa, so with the combination of Afro-alpine and other high altitude habitats, rift valley lakes, savannah, broadleaf and other woodland, rainforest, cropland and semi-desert the biodiversity is understandably very high.



Bird life is prolific with many large fat things like bustards in high numbers in optimal habitat. I suspect that overall hunting pressure of birds is relatively low. We were more than happy with our bird sightings, and although we missed a number of the theoretically possible endemics, the ones we saw more than compensated. Who cares about larks anyway?

My favourite sightings included multiple close views of Prince Ruspoli's and white-cheeked turacos, wattled and black-crowned cranes, Arabian bustards (I just like the name!), and the parrots.



Mammals were diverse but the overall numbers were low. Visiting a particular site would almost guarantee a small suite of resident mammals along with the chance of a rarity or two, but only in areas where wildlife protection was higher than average. Aside from areas of habitat destruction, particularly so north from Addis, mammals have to compete with domestic animals almost everywhere – even in the national parks. Larger animals are hunted for food or just killed if they harm stock (by eating it), and introduced diseases take their toll. On the positive side, much of the country is sparsely populated and the vegetation is unfriendly - thorny and difficult to travel through. Smaller mammals seem to be doing okay in most areas.

Some of the mammals we spotted are endangered like walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf or very difficult to see elsewhere such as African wildcat, striped hyaena and caracal. Others were just stunning to sit with. These included gelada and hamadryas baboon.

Spotlighting in Ethiopia is very rewarding. Twice we managed ten mammal species during short “post-drinks” drives in the national parks (see diary for details).



Reptiles – one rock python, several large land turtles, Nile crocodiles, various unidentified agamids and geckos and that was about it for Ethiopia. Sadly I saw a few old sweaty white human reptiles in the streets of Bangkok.

Insects (annoying) – very few mosquitoes except at Nechisar NP; no flies or leeches; and just 40 billion ticks. Fortunately for others, the ticks were all in the one place and at the one time and all on me.

Insects (not annoying) – a biblical plague of grasshoppers in Awash.

Vegetation. For a country reputed to be a vast desert, we saw none of this. Awash NP was the driest area we found. This park is east of Addis and consists mostly of tightly packed thorny savannah. South from the Bale Mountains is the remarkable Harenna Forest. The most unusual aspect of this forest is that it is there at all and not removed entirely. It is primary rainforest and we drove through it for 50 kilometres without seeing a soul, save for the bits that are up to a couple of hours walk from either end. South from the rainforest was a drive of 150 kilometres to Negele Borena, all through thick virtually uninhabited woodland. From Negele to Yabello was another all-day drive through forest with just small settlements seemingly randomly scattered along the way. This whole region has the largest contiguous forest I have seen outside of South America. *Take a look at Ethiopia on “Google Earth” if you think I am making this up.*



The plants above the tree line in Bale and Simien Mountains national parks are mostly herbs and shrubs, with the exception of the giant lobelia. A more unlikely plant is hard to imagine.

The region from Addis Ababa north to the Simien Mountains has next to no native vegetation left. It might be measured in a fraction of 1%. This was confirmed by flying over it.

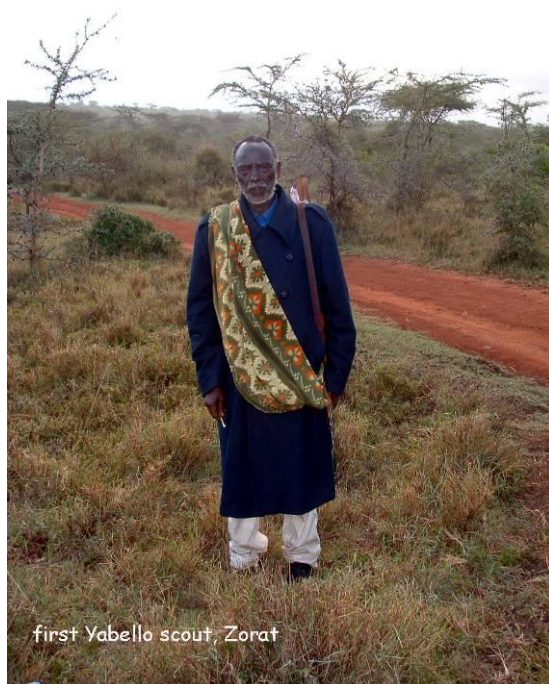
Guides and scouts

One of the local rules when within “national parks” is that you need to employ a guide. The guides we were assigned, with two notable exceptions, knew far less about the country’s wildlife than we did. Not only did we have to pay them (between 70 and 150 birr / day), they were conspicuous at meal times – with the predictable result that we had to feed them, and all the rest of the time they just got in the way.

The concept of having a guide is a very good one. It gives local people some employment and it should add value to a visitor’s experience. But these guys get little support in terms of equipment, or training in basic guiding skills. It could easily be turned around. I guess that just “being around” foreign tourists is the best education they are going to get. In Uganda, where the guides are supported by the system, they are skilled, motivated and deserve tips – they don’t just assume that being tipped is their right. In Madagascar, a country as poor as Ethiopia, the skill of the guides is astounding.

At Dinsho we had a fairly knowledgeable wildlife guide, Tilahun. Regrettably his name occurred in a past edition of the Lonely Planet guide so he thinks he is a celebrity. We started off being impressed by his help and knowledge but by the time we got rid of him and a growing army of unwanted and unnecessary support staff, we were starting to think of strangling him. I would not recommend him even though he is probably a good local bird guide.

At Wondo Genet we had Mekonnan, a real gentleman and the fount of all knowledge bird-wise in his local patch. His daily wage was very low, with the consequence of us tipping him well. Mekonnan is highly recommended. As you drive up to the only hotel in town he will see you and instantly know if you are a birdwatcher.



Most national parks required that you hire a scout. Scouts and guides were often indistinguishable in terms of their role or ability to carry it out. The only likely difference was the size of their guns. If guides were fairly useless, then scouts could be much worse. They were meant to guard the camp, but at least one of them ran the risk of being abandoned due to his attempts to try to prevent us from doing anything, like walking around, in case we hurt ourselves. He learnt to steer clear of me.

National Parks

The Ethiopian Government apparently does not much care about its national parks. This was not always the case as clearly much (now aged) infrastructure was put in place under earlier regimes. Nowadays the parks are awash with farm animals and firewood collectors. Both these activities are illegal. Parks sometimes come complete with substantial towns and villages. 12,000 people live within the alleged UNESCO World Heritage Simien Mountains National Park. There are hundreds of hectares under grain crops and locals move their stock anywhere they like. Perhaps the parks should be renamed “non-hunting areas” or “not too much hunting compared to everywhere else areas”. Now you may think I am being a little harsh. Ethiopia is a poor country. But other poor countries, e.g. Uganda, seem to be able to do a superb job with their parks.

A park guide in Awash NP told us that a ranger had recently been shot and killed by an illegal cattle herder. The herder was back with his cattle, still inside the park, within a week.

The oryx herd in Awash has fallen from 1200 to 600 in three years. We were advised that competition from domestic stock and poaching were the main contributors to this disappointing statistic. Unless the Ethiopian Government starts taking an interest in a hurry, the future of its country’s parks is bleak.

Despite my unfortunate writing style where I spell out the negatives a bit too much, the foundation for excellent national parks in Ethiopia is still evident. The habitats are not so degraded that wildlife numbers could not recover. All it takes is some political will and local support.



Food

Many believe that Ethiopia has no food. We heard of an Italian tourist who packed all his food with him from Italy in the belief that none might be found on his arrival. Ethiopia produces an enormous amount of food, with most of it being tastier than its equivalent in Australia. Eggs, tomatoes and bananas would lead the pack in the tastiness stakes. There are few chemicals or pesticides in use.

The local food speciality is called injera. Injera is generally served on a large stainless steel plate bigger than the largest pizza tray. It consists of an oversized fairly tasteless doughy pancake looking thing with masses of meat and / or vegetables piled on top. This is eaten communally with fingers only. This all sounds like a recipe for a number of disasters, with most requiring privacy and rolls of toilet paper. Significantly I managed only one out-of-stomach experience and it had nothing to do with injera. Personal hygiene levels in Ethiopia appear to be high.

Red meat and chicken is generally not as tender as that in the West. One look at the life of the donors would tell you why. No pampered beasts or chooks here. Meat dishes in restaurants were always accompanied by a forest of toothpicks.

The quality of the food and its ability to be assimilated in a pain-free way was a highlight of our trip.

Hotels and campsites

We camped most of the time but also stayed in a wide range of hotels, pensions and fancy lodges. Campsites in national parks cost about \$US2.50 per night. The cost for the rest varied enormously – from \$US6 to \$US110 per night. Price did not predict value, either in terms of the amenities offered, the quality thereof or the hotel location. The cheapest hotels were just as likely to have hot water, or for that matter any water at all, quaint things like electricity or candles, toilets that flushed or doors that could be opened. The most expensive places (Simien Lodge and Bishangari Lodge) were in the stupidest locations, whilst the cheapest were quieter and often cleaner. Good local hotels (the ones that foreigners don't stay in) were the best value.



Campsites within national parks were sited in scenic locations, they were generally near running water, but offered no other services. For our visit they were attractively abandoned. We only saw other campers twice. Camping is recommended.

Weather

The weather was perfect. In 30 days we did not produce a raincoat or umbrella once. Temperatures ranged from -5° on the Sanetti Plateau in Bale NP to the low thirties in Awash NP. Generally the conditions were such that it was rarely uncomfortable to be wandering about in the middle of the day. The air was much less smoky than in many African countries. October / November would seem to be an ideal time to visit.

Beer, Wine and Coffee

The good news is that beer is cheap, reasonably tasty and widely available. There is a fair selection of brews, although they taste quite similar. We preferred Dashen or Bedele, although neither would win an international award. The beer is always in bottles and these carry a deposit. We never found out how much the deposit was, but highly trained hotel staff would scrutinise each returned bottle for the slightest defect. The search was generally confined to the top of the bottle, but a poorly aligned label, general scruffiness or a bad vibe would see the bottle rejected. No amount of stonewalling could sway these skilled professionals once they had made a decision. I scanned one guy's skull for evidence that he had been sconed by bottles from frustrated customers.

There is local wine but some Europeans told us it was crappy and warned us off it. We took their advice, as they would know a good deal about crappy wine.

Coffee is making my trip report debut. Ethiopia invented the stuff. We can attest that it still grows wild in the Hareenna Forest. There is no doubt that the Ethiopians know a thing or two about brewing and drinking coffee. Not only is it rich, tasty and inexpensive, the people have their own version of the Chinese tea ceremony for their coffee. The ceremony is as rich as the coffee itself. *I am struggling through some instant stuff as I type this and it just doesn't cut it any more.*

Roads and traffic

Don't be scared of the people, don't worry about the food, fear not that somebody has drank the country's last beer or coffee, but be very concerned about going anywhere near a road.

Ethiopia takes the developing world's laissez-faire attitude to road safety to a level of its own. It is not the number of vehicles that is the problem – all of them could cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge in a day. (Although this assumes they could be made to operate, but that's not the issue here). Ethiopian people apparently utterly fail to understand that all the multicoloured splatter patterns on the road surface were left there by their relatives. They remind me of the childhood story of the kid putting his hand in the flames to see if it will hurt. They have no personal experience being squashed by a truck so they don't see a need to move when one comes rumbling along. We saw the horror and disbelief of the people after a schoolgirl died, squashed-by-truck style.

No pedestrian ever looks before crossing the road. They often have to be nudged to get out of the way. But pedestrians are only part of the problem. The moving traffic does not recognise the threats posed by the other moving traffic, farm animals or robust static roadside objects. The likelihood of seeing the remains of a truck accident on any given day is 100%, with our record being six in one morning. We reckon that at least three were fatalities. “Isuzu” is a popular choice for truck accidents. Locals call Isuzu “Al Qaeda”.



Our favourite truck accidents were:

- Truck versus six camels (don't try to imagine six dead camels on the road)
- Truck versus two other trucks (no winners here)
- Semi-trailer loaded with live cattle versus road (not pretty and it was a bit smelly when we arrived)
- Toyota Landcruiser versus bus (seven dead in the Toyota), and
- Truck versus dozens of dogs (this was assumed by the number of flat dogs seen in one morning on the road between Debre Markos and Bahir Dar).

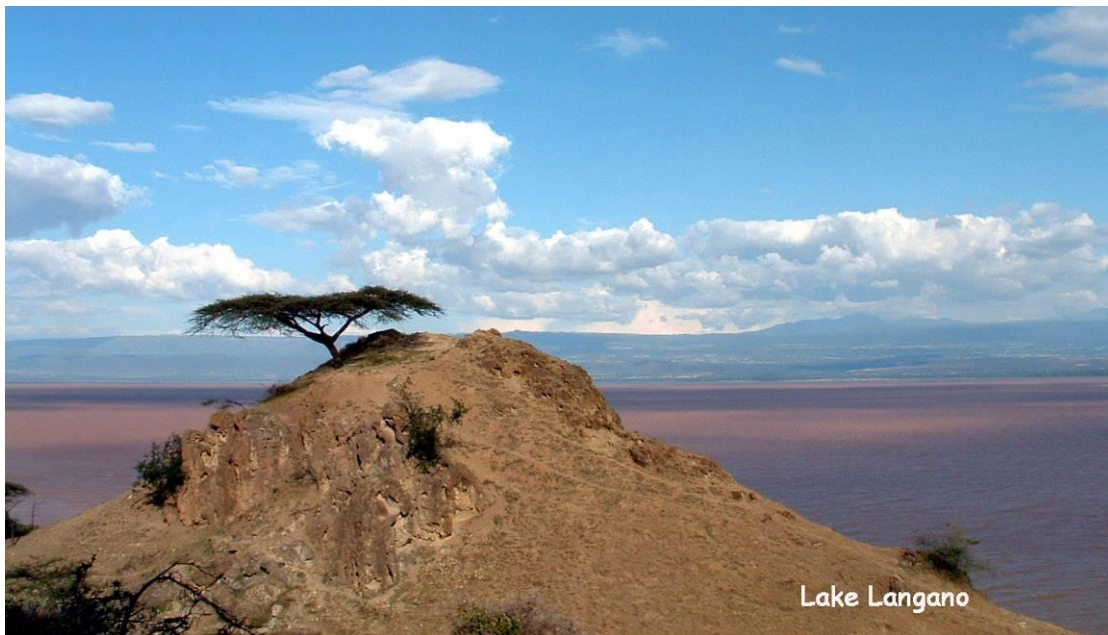
Paradoxically the safer roads were the unsealed ones. Travel speeds were lower and most accidents tended to be single vehicle ones. Our driver preferred to be on unsealed roads as the chances of re-acquainting himself with his living family were higher. Ex-pats we met would ask us which roads we were using as we set off in the morning. If we mentioned a sealed road, their eyes would roll around and they would become wobbly.

As for us, we killed nothing of consequence. We bumped a few farm animals and the odd local, and that was about it

Scenery

Ethiopia is blessed with stunning scenery. The combination of the volcanic Bale and Simien massifs, the Rift Valley lakes, the Blue Nile Gorge and Lake Tana and its history meant that we did not run short of photo opportunities.

One very positive aspect of travel in Ethiopia is the lack of fences and private land ownership. Not only does this mean that wandering about is easier, but the landscapes are not corrupted by wires running everywhere. There are no signs that say “keep out”. You are as free to roam as the local children allow (see “The bad news” under “Ethiopian people”, above).



Diary

Day 0 – Saturday 20th October 2007

Oddly and uniquely my friends and workmates gave me going-away cards and pre-birthday gifts. My take on this was that there was a high expectation that I wouldn't return. I can't ever remember so many people asking, "Why are you going there for?"

So after a nervous build-up I found myself at Sydney Airport feeling very excited about my holiday. Joining me was Allan Richards, a friend and recently retired workmate who understands what it means to travel with me....

We flew with Thai Airways at 1600 to Bangkok on a 747-400. The flight was full but the service was wonderful.

We arrived in Bangkok in the middle of the night and transferred to our Ethiopian Airways 767-300 to Addis Ababa. Or at least we would have if the plane had turned up. When it eventually arrived there were more people than seats with most seats having been filled from the plane's first sector originating in Hong Kong.

Ethiopian Airways has an excellent safety record and has the largest network in Africa. We paid \$A1400 + taxes for our tickets and thought there must have been some mistake – the tickets were so comparatively cheap.

The flight to Addis Ababa was entertaining. We represented 50% of the white monkeys on the plane. The food was good, the service fair and the in-flight entertainment included a lady who collapsed in the aisle and started screaming. There were a number of calls for "a doctor on board". I was praying that the lady either got on with it and expired or whatever it was that the screaming was leading up to, recovered completely or realised it was all a terrible dream and shut up. The last thing any of us wanted was an unscheduled stop. An arrogant off-duty Iraq-serving American presented himself as a medical person and had a look at the now barely conscious female. Or at her tits at least. I don't know what happened after that as my two sleeping pills took effect.

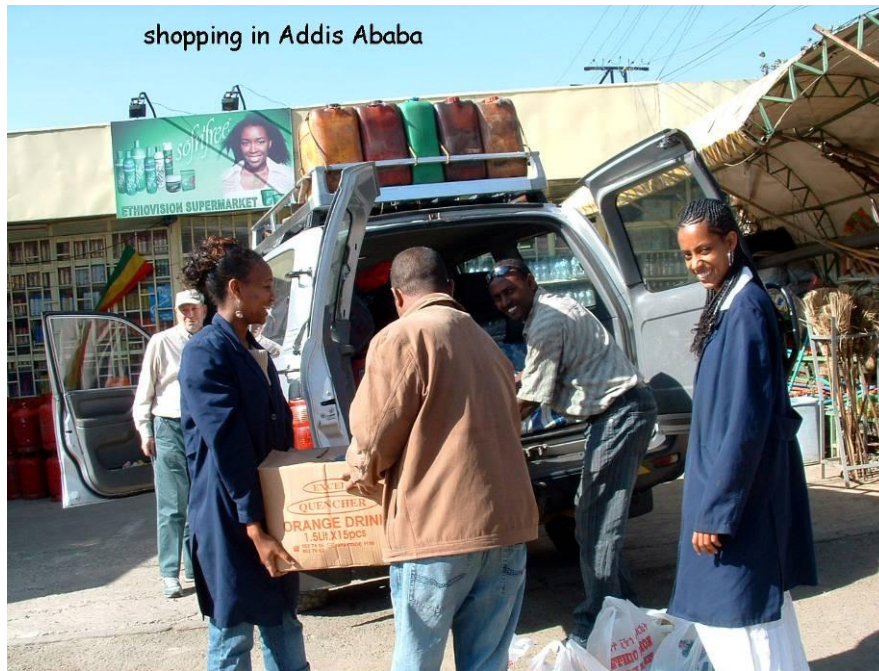
Day 1 – Sunday 21st October 2007

The expected horrors of Addis Ababa Airport were absent. Various websites and travel guides explained that getting a visa on arrival required all sorts of expensively acquired things, like yellow fever injections and certificates, multiple passport photos, wads of money and well-written travel itineraries. And a visa, if they deigned to give you one, would be for 30 days only.

When we got off the plane at 0545 we were almost alone. Everyone else was transferring to other destinations. We woke up the "visa on arrival" gentleman who took \$US20 from each of us (not the \$US100 the government website talked about), gave us a visa for 60 days and dismissed us without any further questioning. Presumably he then went back to sleep. It was too early in the day for any customs folk so we were soon out in the street.

Addis Ababa is unexceptional. There is a typical mix of architecture - old and new, tall and squat, rustic and rusty. The traffic is okay. There just isn't enough of it about to be a real hindrance. Traffic signals are uncommon.

Teferi from Ethio-Der took us to his office for a money extraction and chat. We then set some sort of buying record at a local supermarket. We stopped for diesel, changed some USD on the black market and were soon on our way south towards our first stop – Lake Langano.



The road to Lake Langano is paved. This also means it is dangerous to travel along. Most of the traffic consists of trucks, pedestrians and farm animals. We stopped a few times to look at a few birds and arrived at the Bekele Mola Hotel by mid-afternoon. Lonely Planet describes this facility as being noisy and crowded and hardly gives it a rap. Conversely it raves about Bishangari Lodge, also on the shores of Lake Langano. Trust me here – Bekele Mola is cheaper, better, has more scenery, forest, gardens, draught beer and much more bird life.



During the afternoon we furthered the “world lack of sleep record” keeping ourselves awake by trying to stay upright. There was good bird habitat to explore with a 60m high cliff running along one side of the hotel grounds and plenty of acacia woodland around them. Olive baboons and

yellow-spotted rock hryrax added to the grivet monkeys we had seen along the main road. So we had a start to our mammal list.

Dinner was fish – nearly always a mistake and no different on this occasion.

Day 2 – Monday 22nd October 2007

I was awake at 0400 and restless to see what the day would bring. I figured an hour's spotlighting on foot wouldn't hurt. It didn't hurt either but I didn't see a single thing. A pre-breakfast stroll around the hotel grounds was much more productive with eight "lifers" before our morning coffee and Spanish omelette.

We crossed the main road into Abiata-Shala National Park. Here we were treated with very close views of Grant's gazelles, African warthog, slender mongoose and some tame ostrich. The scenery was stunning. Our bird list ticked over with white-bellied go-away-birds, greater flamingos and various other waterfowl along with barbets, woodpeckers, weavers, wood-hoopoes and even a dreaded pipit or two. Side-effects of our anti-malarials guaranteed we were nicely sunburnt by the end of the day.

Fortunately a little known cure for sunburn was at hand at the hotel bar. It has been proven that moderate quantities of beer followed by single malt whisky remove all but one of the symptoms of sunburn, that of the burnt skin. Getnet joined us for a pint or two, having not grown sick of us after a day and a half. A lamb dinner was enjoyed, as much for its assimilative properties as for its tenderness or taste.



Day 3 – Tuesday 23rd October 2007

We decided not to camp in Abiata-Shala NP as originally planned, but to drive to Dinsho in Bale Mountains National Park. This meant that we had a spare day to add somewhere along the way.

It took eight hours to get to Dinsho Campsite as we stopped for birds and scenery many times. The drive was enjoyable with constantly changing vegetation and mountain scenery. As we gained altitude the endemic bird count grew. Rouget's rails walked along the road, black-winged lapwings stood about in groups and blue-winged geese hardly bothered to waddle off at our approach. But nothing was going to top the Ethiopian wolf that poked along toward our parked vehicle at Gaysay, stopping to stare at us from a dozen paces.



the endemic Ethiopian wolf

The short drive from Dinsho village to the camp is mammal spotter's nirvana. The endemic Mountain nyala were very common. Menelik's bushbuck and bohor reedbuck were easily seen along with common duiker, African warthog and guereza colobus monkeys.

The campsite at Dinsho sits at 3100m. It was abandoned and it looked like nobody had camped there for months. Aside from an embarrassment of wildlife, the camp has magnificent forest and valley views.

It was here that we were first exposed to the fluid nature of fees. We were advised that we had to have a guide, Tilahun (a.k.a. Attila the Hun), as well as a camp guard / helper. The latter person's job description involved chasing away warthogs (I have to admit, these were an issue), helping with the cooking (and eating) and stopping thieves (of which there would be none within 200 miles).

The guide was to show us birds and mammals and he turned out to be quite good at this, even though he could not convince us that a Verreaux's eagle-owl was an Abyssinian long-eared owl,

but I am getting ahead of myself here. Tilahun had more skill in the area of money extraction. His fee constantly changed and always in an upward direction. If I had the communal purse, Tilahun would not have pocketed as much as he did, although his education would have profited.

Day 4 – Wednesday 24th October 2007

The tent and mattress supplied by Ethio-Der were comfortable and a good night's sleep would have been achievable if not for amplified Islamic noise at regular intervals. The purpose of this discordant and repetitious ranting and wailing is beyond me. Surely those that take an interest in this superstitious garbage have heard it all before. Anyone else is more likely to run screaming in the other direction than think, “wow, that sounds really interesting and fulfilling, I should go along”. Earplugs.

Tilahun took us for an enjoyable and productive walk across the Gaysay moors and “plains”. The vegetation is a mix of rodent food. There is very little actual grass, and although I am not sure that grass is essential for a “plain”, I have always thought of it that way. Most of the resident birds and mammals are common so what started in a rush of new things finished lamely.



Getnet picked us up and we drove back to camp, spotting another wolf as it crossed the main road.

The afternoon saw an increase in our staff, with Abu, the alleged local owl expert joining our growing list of employees. Abu was on an incentive program, whereby the production of owls would see the production of money. Two golden jackals were seen, but no owls. Rufous-chested sparrowhawk made it onto our bird list.

Day 5 – Thursday 25th October 2007 – my 51st birthday

The day started slowly as we drove for miles up the main road looking for owls. We parked and then bounced about a tight rocky gorge surrounded by farmland. We found no owls but managed to piss off the locals big time. They were bellowing at us, or more accurately they were bellowing at our guides, saying that we had not sought their permission for being there. The arguments raged and I returned to the car. When the guides failed to return I found them sitting placidly while the locals scoured the cliffs – looking for our owls! They met with the same success we did.

Back to Dinsho and a poke about some partly wooded farmland. This was more productive than I expected with three different woodpeckers, including Abyssinian, in one tree!

Most of the local population had been pressed into a hunt for owls. We were instructed to sit and wait. Eventually a local boy signalled that he had hit pay-dirt. Off we galloped to a monster tree a kilometre or so away, but our anticipated Abyssinian long-eared owls had morphed into a pair of Verreaux's eagle-owls, despite the protestations of Tilahun. We walked back to camp from the owl tree, dodging mountain nyala and other furry monsters as we went.

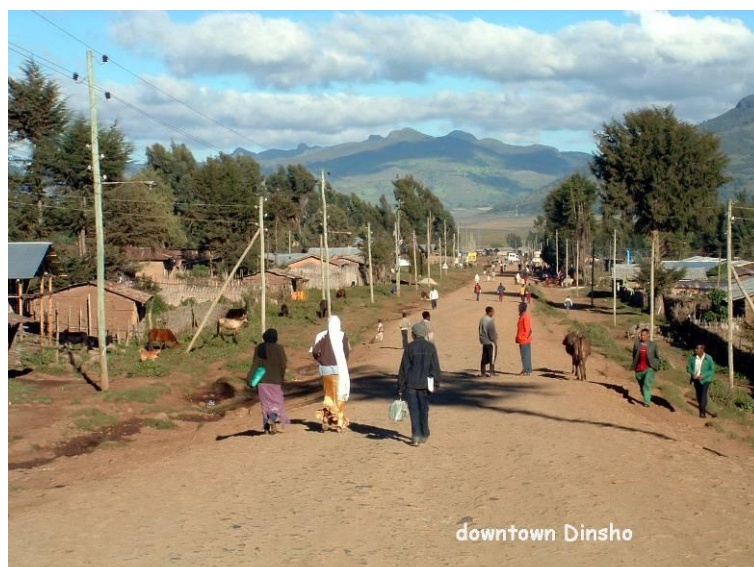
Lunch was followed by a shopping trip. Allan bought a chicken, a real warrior chicken by the look of it, for my birthday dinner. It took some hours before someone could be found to dispatch this ancient bird to chicken heaven. I have never eaten cormorant, but it could hardly have been stringier than our poor chook.

My fear that the day would be relatively boring was unfounded. We agreed that we would go spotlighting on the Gaysay plain at 1900. We picked up Tilahun along the way but his value was minimal in this exercise. I perched on the spare tyre on the roof wielding Allan's excellent spotlight, and we were off.

We cleared the remnants of urban Dinsho and turned on the spotlight. Immediately we had an African wildcat sitting at the base of a rocky hill licking its paws. Tilahun approached closely on foot and confirmed the identity as a wildcat and not a domestic one. I was ecstatic! But more was to come. Next was a nervous looking Ethiopian highland hare, quickly followed by a white-tailed mongoose, its identity being established after I accidentally trod on it while it was hiding in the grass on the roadside.

We tried our best to ignore the dozens of mountain nyala, common duikers and bohor reedbucks, but there was no ignoring a hunting serval. Even though the area around it was illuminated like the surface of the sun, it did the "spring and pounce" thing that they always seem to do on the documentaries. Greyish eagle-owl was next, another serval, and on our return six spotted hyaena ran across an open field. All of this took one hour. So two new cats and ten different mammals. Not a bad birthday present!

Day 6 - Friday 26th October 2007



We left the relatively low altitude of Dinsho for the heights of the Sanetti Plateau, at 4100m. Tilahun insisted that his knowledge of the area and his assistance were needed. He also brought along a helper, Idress, perhaps the most boring person on earth, whose function would be explained to us later. But before we went anywhere we gained a particularly good working knowledge of Dinsho as we went back and forth looking for a person of importance. We assumed this person was important for us but this was not the case. Tilahun was trying to arrange his next con, and wasting our time in the process.

We stopped at Goba to buy diesel and food. Here Idress really came into his own. While we were searching for fuel, Idress was given a wad of money and a shopping list to help speed things up a little. When we eventually found him he was proudly holding the biggest tin of tomato puree I have ever seen. If it was dropped out of a plane you would have been able to plant rice in the crater it would have formed when it hit the ground. Sadly we didn't need three hundredweight of tomato puree so some time was spent returning it. Poor Idress was crestfallen. So this all took 45 minutes and all we had achieved was some diesel.

The views from Robe (a town near Goba) to Sanetti are spectacular indeed. A transitional rainforest zone quickly grades into sub-alpine woody shrubs and then a treeless plateau. Here only the giant lobelia is obvious, except if you are one of the countless millions of rodents gnawing away at the herbs and grasses. We managed views of one or two wolves, squillions of Blick's grass rats, abundant Stark's hares and the occasional scrum of giant mole rats. Birding highlights were the endemic spot-breasted lapwings and a pair of wattled cranes.



Tilahun vanished like a fart in a fan factory after extorting money from Allan. He knew the gig was up. Now, how to get rid of Idress? He insisted on coming with me for a walk around the nearby rocky hills and lakes, but after expertly scaring things away and walking well ahead of me I told him to go back to camp. He was hesitant to do this but something about my manner convinced him that I wasn't likely to change my mind.

Even though I saw little in the way of exciting critter-life, the walk was fascinating. This was a habitat that I had never seen. The plants and the ever-munching and whistling rodents that were eating them, will never be forgotten. Was this really Ethiopia?

Idress surprised us by cooking a really tasty pasta dish to help us digest our beers.



Day 7 – Saturday 27th October 2007

The temperature crashed to -5° during the night and this, coupled with the altitude, meant a restless night's sleep.



I had flushed an owl off a nearby cliff-face yesterday so we went searching for it. As luck would have it we found the top half of a Cape eagle-owl peering over a rock. Allan was very happy as this was a bird he had been chasing for many years.

When I searched for our lively and talented guide Idress, he was in bed moaning something about altitude sickness. Yes! You beauty. Quick, lets go before he recovers. Yeah, yeah, give him these

pills and let's get out of here. We paid him for one day and then he had the shits because he wasn't getting paid for the day he was sick. Aaaaarrrrgh!

Allan and I crunched along the icy deserted road for an hour or so before joining Getnet and driving across the moonscape plateau and down the other side of the massif to what is known as the Harena Forest. We saw no further wolves and figured that they could easily be missed if time spent in the area was limited.

We made camp at the Katcha Darwin Campsite by late morning. It was clear that nobody had been to the site for a long time. It was extremely picturesque with views across to the mountains, a clear stream and good quality rainforest nearby.

A short pre-lunch walk was unproductive but we learnt one thing – we wouldn't be spotlighting on foot. All along the entrance track from the main road and on EVERY trail in the forest there had been leopards since the last rain. The last rain was earlier in the morning.

After lunch I took Getnet for a nature walk in the forest and managed to get us lost. This is never a good look but retracing our path was possible - the one trail that didn't have leopard tracks all over it. The paw prints were a constant reminder of our future should we fail to get out of the forest before dark.

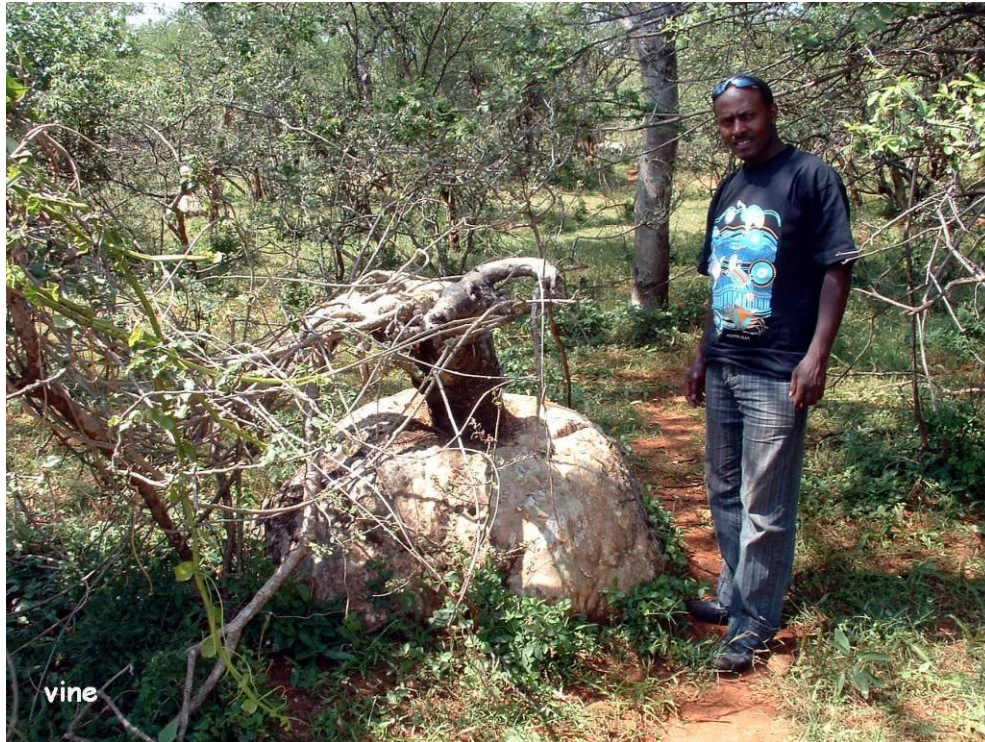
Wildlife was difficult to see and whilst the forest was inspiring in terms of its size, remoteness and lack of human interference, we really didn't see anything much that wasn't seen elsewhere. Spotting was poor with only the occasional nightjar or galago. In hindsight we drove in the wrong direction but rainforest spotlighting requires a lot of time and patience. We later learnt that others had recently seen African hunting dogs on the road through this forest.

Day 8 – Sunday 28th October 2007

After a relatively unproductive pre-breakfast walk we packed up and headed south. We expected the forest to quickly dwindle and be replaced by farms and people but we were happily surprised. Getnet spotted a huge male giant forest hog in the roadside shrubbery. We also stopped to look at some white-cheeked turacos and found wild coffee living happily in its ancestral home.

After about 50km we exited the forest and passed through the village of Dola Mena. From here it was about 150km to our next stop, Negele Borena. The forest was thickly wooded savannah or woodland and was continuous save for tiny semi-cleared patches around the occasional small village. The contiguous forest from Bale to Negele is perhaps the largest forest I have seen outside the Amazon. This was not what I expected in Ethiopia.

We passed just three vehicles in six hours. There aren't many people living in this region. Roadside wildlife highlights were continuous, with giant tortoises, huge bulbous vines, staggeringly tall termite mounds, grivet monkeys, myriad birds and amazing scenery. Our lunch stop was dripping with birds.



We had intended to stay for the night at Genalle but they had no hotels so we continued to Negele Borena, arriving a little after 1700. We checked into the Green Hotel for two nights.

One of the more curious aspects of “developing world” hotel room bathrooms is the plumbing. Now I struggle with plumbing at home – that’s what plumbers are for, but pipes carrying water is hardly rocket science. You would expect that if someone had the skill to install pipes carrying

water in the first place then this arrangement could be inspected and maintained every ten years or so. Given that underemployment is high in most of the world and the cost of plumbing bits and pieces is relatively low, then why does every bathroom in almost every hotel, cheap or not, have a combination of leaking pipes, taps, showerheads, cisterns, basins, ceilings (yes!) and toilet bowls? My room in the Green Hotel set a new standard in that it had every single one of these leaks. I thought there might be a problem when a mould (normally a thin slimy growth that is stuck to something) grabbed me by the ankle and started dragging me toward the far corner of the toilet swamp. The Green Hotel is recommended for this reason.

Dinner was beef injera and beer. This was enjoyed in the company of a couple of the local girls who dropped in for a Pepsi or two and to teach me a single word of Amharic – the word for “thank you” which is pronounced “ameuseugenallo”. I was quite drunk before I got that one.

Day 9 – Monday 29th October 2007

After a slow start we set forth with Prince Ruspoli’s turaco being the target critter for the day. We had read that Wadera, south of Negele, was the best place to search. Whether Wadera actually exists I will never know. Someone had written in a trip report that Wadera was 20km from Negele (or something like that). Every local we asked at a succession of villages kept pointing down the road. As we passed each village, Wadera became further and further away. Whilst still somewhere between 20 and 300km from Wadera, a Prince Ruspoli’s flew across the road. STOP!! A search of the forest gave glimpses of the bird. We had time on our hands so when we found a fruiting fig with orioles feeding in it we thought we had the right place. Eventually the turacos flew in and we had stunning views of this rare and localised bird.



Birding along the road back to Negele was very rewarding with literally a new bird in every bush or tree. We then drove to the Sidamo lark site, and although we had no luck with the lark we continued to pick up other birds so we didn't much care.

Another feature of the Green Hotel was the garden ambience. I am not much of a style junkie so I ignored the visual aspects of the beer garden. And my desire not to have hard or pointy things

repeatedly jabbing me in the arse when I sat on the chairs might be subjective, so I'll leave that alone as well. But it is very hard to imagine that anyone would like to listen to music provided live and amplified throughout the garden from a short wave radio station(s). This wouldn't have been so bad except that the reception would drift so far that we were listening to at least three stations at once!

The hotel provided beer and dinner after a great day in the field.



Day 10 – Tuesday 30th October 2007

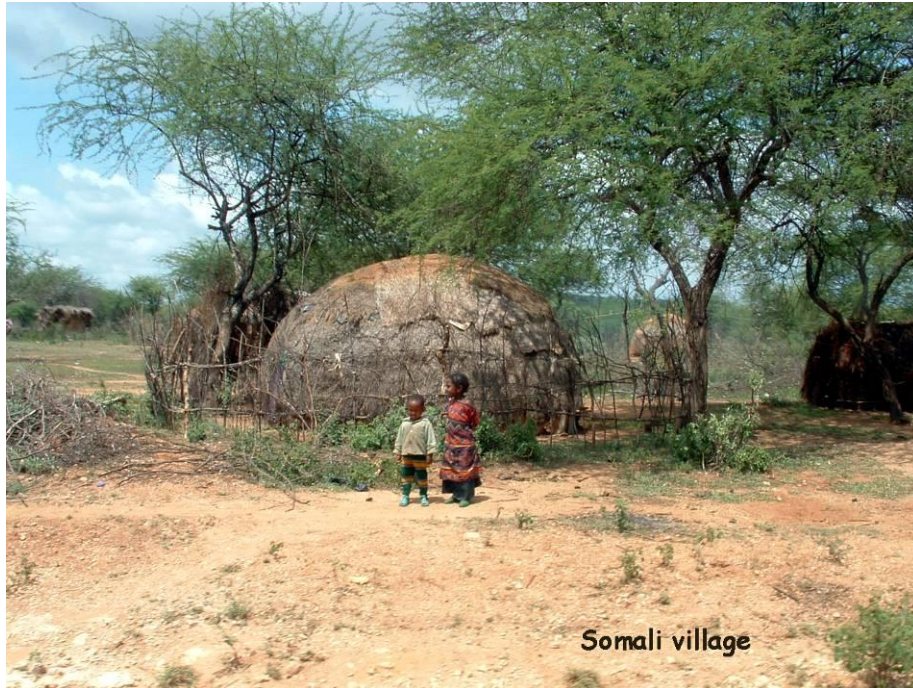
We left the plumbing and musical delights of the Green Hotel for someone else to enjoy. We crossed town to a small “hoteela” to have an injera breakfast complete with dead sheep. This was shared with about 50 soldiers. I am not sure whether we felt safer or more threatened by so many men with guns.

We headed west toward Yabello. Our first stop was less than three kilometres out of town where we spotted a dam with a few waterfowl around it. Whilst there were a range of ducks and other water lovers we were gobsmacked by the appearance of two Prince Ruspoli's turaco in the cattle-trashed savannah. They even posed to have their photos taken. Clearly this is a turaco that isn't too fussy about habitat, so why is it so rare?

The drive west was remarkable for a few things – low numbers of people, an abundance of birds and the number of helmeted or vulturine guineafowl that could flock together. Flocks of about a hundred of each were seen. Mammals were thinner on the ground but once Guenther's dikdik and striped ground squirrel started to appear they were seen frequently.

Our lunch stop was dictated by the presence of purple grenadiers (Mum, this is a bird). Once we stopped we found the most diverse mixed foraging flock I have seen outside of South America. I managed eight lifers in 20 minutes.

We saw three vehicles in nine hours. One of these was a sump-less truck. We kinda figured we might find something like that after spotting a trail of oil. I couldn't work out what would happen to all the truck's passengers in these situations, as there might be no public transport for days and nowhere for anyone to stay. Villages, such as they were, were widely separated, had no formal accommodation of any sort and populated almost entirely (we were told) of ethnic Somalis.



Confusion reigned at the office of the Yabello Wildlife Sanctuary. We were quickly told that we couldn't camp in Yabello but after some fancy talking from Getnet, the production of a few small gifts from Australia and showing more than a passing interest in everything that we could show an interest in, we were relieved of a small amount of money and assigned a lovely old chap with a very big gun to take us to the first of three campsites we would visit.

The sanctuary's boundaries are a complete mystery to me. I am not certain but I think that there are several unconnected areas that are meant to protect different things. After having visited national parks elsewhere in the country, I am of the view that the wildlife in the sanctuary may well have been better protected than that in the parks, despite, and possibly because of, the legal occupation of the sanctuary by local people.

We arrived and set up camp 17km from town just as the sun set. Getnet, after having been behind the wheel all day, suggested we go spotlighting. We didn't go very far and managed only a small-spotted genet and a few diurnal things but there was potential for something good.

Day 11 – Wednesday 31st October 2007

We poked about early but didn't see much and failed to find the endemic white-tailed swallow, although we later learned that we might have been looking in the wrong places. In any event they are not common, and apparently in some years they are less common than that.

We returned to Yabello town and swapped guides. We visited a site 40km from town back along the Negele Borena road. We turned off this road onto a cattle track and then trackless savannah

until we reached the top of a sparsely vegetated hill. We surprised three gerenuks on the way, so my day could not be ruined! Also seen were Grant's gazelle and Burchell's zebra. Our campsite was almost honeycombed with aardvark burrows and populated with a number of birds we were not to see again.



A long walk produced more gerenuks, kori bustards and the beautiful and slightly incongruous rosy-patched bushshrike. The guide offloaded his AK47 onto me, as it was getting heavy. I could hardly wait to find somebody to shoot but I was to be disappointed. I suppose I could have shot the guide.

For most of the rest of the day I saved myself for the evening's aardvark hunt. Allan decided that we would not be taking the vehicle on account of his fear of spiking the tyres. I was not asked for my opinion so didn't offer it (unusual for me). There were galagos, three-banded coursers, nightjars and a spotted thick-knee but despite a broad sweep that ranged so far from camp that I was convinced we were hopelessly lost, we failed in our quest for aardvark.

Day 12 – Thursday 1st November 2007

An early morning walk produced little and we left at 0900. The plan was to go to a site we were told was 70km away from Yabello town. It was said to be the habitat for Grevy's zebra and that we would have no trouble at all seeing them. Good. We left town at 1030 and after travelling for more than 70km along the road toward Arba Minch, our guide realised we had gone past the turnoff. As we drove up and down the road, regularly asking directions from the locals, it became clear that the guide had only the vaguest idea of where we were going.

The site was a further 50km from the main road. For much of this distance we drove across country with no discernable road at all. As each hour passed we ventured further and further into the boonies. Bare-chested ladies became more common and as we bounced through each successive village the natives became more and more friendly. The locals got tired of being asked directions

and for the last six kilometres or so one of them travelled with us to show the way. When we arrived at an enormous grassy field the guide simply disappeared.



The fabled zebra site was baking hot with few trees and lots of curious locals. Herds of Grant's gazelle grazed and there were literally dozens of ostriches marching slowly from one end of the field to the other. No zebras could be seen and the locals told us that it was the wrong time of the year to see them.

I discovered what thousands of ticks look like when they all decide to sit on your shoes and socks at the same time. Even our guide was impressed. This sounds unbelievable I know, but my socks were alive. Happily the ticks were very unimpressed at being drowned in Aerogard, and aside from the few dozen that had gained a foothold (sorry), the rest were simply swept away.

A late afternoon foray into one corner of the field discovered 14 kori and two Hartlaub's bustards, dozens of yellow-necked spurfowl and 35 ostriches. Also seen were a number of barely pubescent boys with automatic weapons. As dusk fell the boys gathered around our "camp" as our guide explained the virtues of his Russian 38 automatic as an alternative to lugging around an AK47 all day. Just on dark the locals vanished. I drank beer and tried not to trip over mounds of dead and dying ticks.

Day 13 – Friday 2nd November 2007

I didn't expect the day to rise to any great heights and I was right for a change. We stopped to shake hands with a few of the locals on the way back to the main road. I kept my eyes focussed from the shoulders and up. In hindsight I wish we had spent more time and had a look at their houses and such, but we always seemed to be living in a knowledge vacuum in terms of all sorts of

time and motion stuff so we thought to get going. We picked up a few birds and a large grey mongoose for our trouble.

Getnet dropped our guide back at a village toward Yabello, so Allan and I walked along the road rather than sit in the car. We didn't see much but it was fun in its own way. Well, the locals managed a few laughs at our expense anyway.



We made a place named Konso for lunch, and from there we were pretty much back in civilisation with more vehicles about and not near so many exposed breasts. By mid-afternoon we were in Arba Minch at Swayne's Hotel. The hotel room was almost luxurious except for one minor detail – the whole city had seen no water for three days. We hadn't showered for longer than that, so this was a detail that took on unusual importance. Never mind, the beer was almost cold, and the walk to the restaurant to get it was sufficiently complicated and challenging to instantly qualify any person undertaking it for a Duke of Edinburgh Award. The hotel "look" had the unlikely mix of simultaneous demolition and construction site. The Ethiopian Workcover Authority was nowhere to be seen.

Getnet joined us for a beer or two before we signed up for the restaurant's "curried veal challenge". This rather adventurous choice (it was either that or fish) passed the stomach test. Perhaps the single malt before bed killed all the animals in it.



Day 14 – Saturday 3rd November 2007

We paid an unusually large sum of money to visit Nechisar National Park. This is due to it being privatised and managed by an outfit called Parks Africa.

The road from Arba Minch to the Nechisar Plains (the part of the park with most of the see-able mammals) is one of the most challenging I have experienced. This 24km journey takes two hours along a rocky narrow and sometimes steep and winding road. It is a real vehicle wrecker. Our only problem was the failure of the car's steering, a minor detail that was quickly rectified.

Our arrival at the guard's outpost at the edge of the plain coincided with a meeting between the heavies of Parks Africa and the rascally local cattle herders who had settled the national park just five years earlier. Apparently all went well and some sort of deal was struck. I'm not sure whether some of the villagers were to lose a kidney each, or at least donate some of their children to a worthy cause. Parks Africa intends to reintroduce rhino, giraffe and other locally extinct game into the park if they can minimise the impact of the locals. Good luck.

The grassy valley that forms the park's wild animal showpiece was populated by large numbers of Burchell's zebra and Grant's gazelle, with smaller herds of Swayne's hartebeest and greater kudu. A dozen or so kori bustard were seen along with a pair of secretarybirds and a few Abyssinian ground-hornbills.

We camped at the guard's outpost and ventured out on a few short but fairly unproductive walks.



Spotlighting was eagerly anticipated with ideal conditions of overcast skies and no wind, but the result was disappointing. Ridiculous numbers of locals were wandering about the park during the

night. Some were carrying goods to the next village but many seemed to be just lurking with intent. Apparently much of the wildlife had been killed by locals because it ate their illegally introduced stock. We were told that lions were easy to see but we saw no evidence of them. We managed two African wildcats, one being a monster that hunted quite close to the road, a small-spotted genet, two African wood-owls and a scrum of nightjars.

Day 15 – Sunday 4th November 2007

Early birding was lame so we bailed for a rainforest mosquito campsite situated on a riverbank about five kilometres inside the park's entrance gate. The camp is under the shade of ancient and enormous fig trees that also shelter large numbers of Africa's most dangerous animal – the mosquito. Our initial thought was that we had found birding nirvana but that proved unfounded. The trails within the rainforest had plenty of birds, there was no doubt about that, but variety was lacking, with most of the population being hornbills and other fig gobblers. Olive baboons and colobus and grivet monkeys were abundant. The better birds included narina trogon and Abyssinian scimitarbill.



Our campsite was invaded by a tour group of 11 Swedish birders. They only just outnumbered their staff. Their guide was into mammals and was full of useful information for finding ibex in the Simien Mountains, so he became my newest best friend.

There were concerns that the wheels were about to fall off our holiday. The Swede's drivers confirmed that Arba Minch, the water-challenged "city" nearby, had also ran out of fuel. This is known to happen in Ethiopia when nobody comes up with the cash to pay for it at the seaport where it is unloaded. Panic buying sets in and then the black market becomes the only source of supply. Getnet came up with the very good idea that the black market should be consulted without further delay. Allan asked him to get cold beer seeing he was going into town anyway. I would never have made such a suggestion.

As luck had it a tanker arrived with some diesel and Getnet managed 100 litres of it. Calm was restored and cold beer determined it would stay that way. Forty minutes of spotlighting on foot failed to detect any eye shine.

Our campsite was also the place the baboons decided to roost for the night. At hourly intervals they would do a loud roll call – “Ralph”, “George”, “Jane”, “Greg”, “Harry”, “Bruce” etc, and always in the same sequence. I’m serious!

Day 16 – Monday 5th November 2007

We birded along a trail winding up a hill away from the river. It was quite productive with white-bellied cuckoo-shrike and white-fronted black chat being the best of them.

Our next destination was Wondo Genet. Lunch was taken at Sodo, before the journey continued along relatively boring pot-holed sealed roads. We bought some Ethiopian Birr at Shashemene. This took exactly the 45 minutes I predicted. I am given to ponder why it is so difficult to change money at a bank when a bloke on a street corner can achieve the same result in seconds.

The Wabi Shabelle Hotel at Wondo Genet is really the only place that you can stay there. The hotel is part way up a mountain and adjacent to hot thermal springs. The water in all the hotel’s plumbing is, therefore, hot. And so I had my first hot shower in Ethiopia.

As we arrived the only local wearing binoculars approached us. He could smell a birder through the window of our moving vehicle. Mekonnan proved to be the local expert and was patient and persistent in showing us birds.



A stroll toward the public swimming pool (also hot) produced many birds but nothing that was new. Irritating hordes of would-be guides lurked on every corner and hunted in packs. Even the smallest children would recite the names of the area’s most desirable birds. I am sure that the only English many of these urchins know is “half-collared kingfisher” and “yellow-fronted parrot”.

Day 17 – Tuesday 6th November 2007

At 0600 Mekonnan took me to the stream below the baths to see half-collared kingfishers. We noticed the endemic yellow-fronted parrots and various other goodies at the same time.

After breakfast we walked a trail that wound up into the mountains. The forest had been semi-logged for timber and firewood. There was little that was pristine, but this didn't seem to matter to the birds, which were prolific. Then at 1000 they all went to sleep. It was as if someone had turned off a switch.

We met Getnet for lunch. He was a very happy man. It had something to do with his previous night in Shashemene.

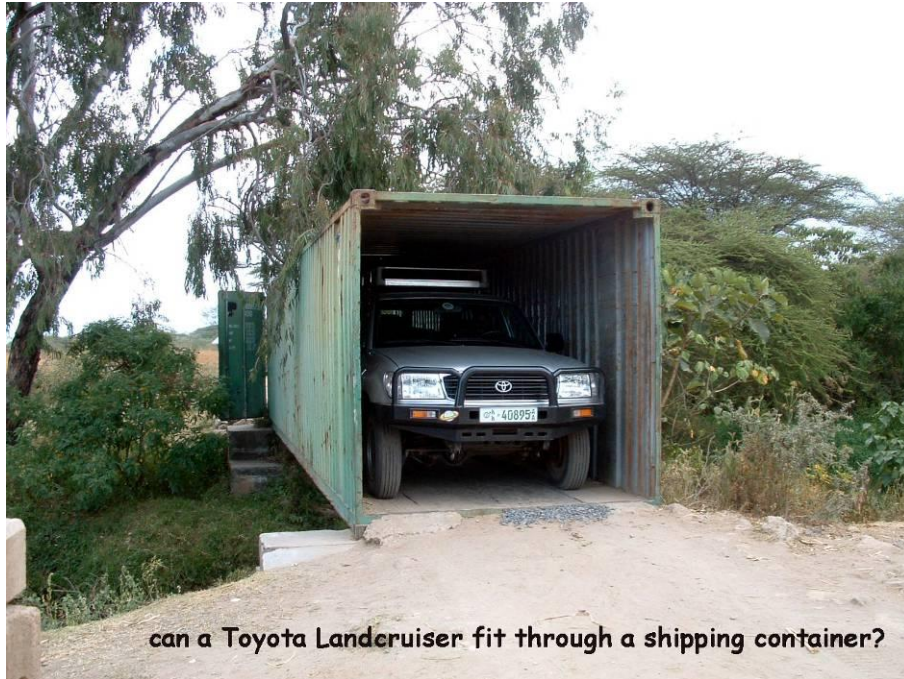
The afternoon was spent meandering up a different mountain. We passed many young women and girls with heavy loads of firewood. They were friendly and shook our hands. There were no men undertaking this chore. They must have all reported in sick or something. We spotted banded barbets, an African crowned eagle and a little rock-thrush.

Our guide seemed to attract undue attention from the local kids. I expect they thought him the town loony. He will have the last laugh on them, hopefully after establishing a significant income stream from visiting birdwatchers.

The grounds of the hotel were bright with flowering plants along with massive fig trees which became the night roost for a curious mix of vultures, hornbills and green pigeons. It was the perfect setting for the consumption of roast veal and beer.

Day 18 – Wednesday 7th November 2007

We fought with the local kids for the privilege of being left alone. I managed to see a bushbuck munching on someone's crop but everything else was seen just where it was the day before. We left for Bishangari Lodge, back on Lake Langano, at 0900 and arrived unharmed at 1200, with a few stops on the way. One such stop was for marvelling at a bridge. The bridge, over a small creek, consisted of a shipping container with one end cut off. And if you ever need to answer the trivia question "Does a Toyota Landcruiser fit through a shipping container?" the answer is "yes, but only just."



Bishangari Lodge was a disappointment. It is set out in a thoroughly irrational manner with the reception half a kilometre inside the entrance gate. The reception would have functioned better if there was any. By the time a guy ambled up, our baggage had been fetched from the car, just in time for it to be taken all the way back to the entrance gate to our accommodation.

The road accessing the lodge from the main drag is a shocker and its siting on a wind-blown overgrazed lakeshore is intriguing. The surrounding area is disappointing. Some acacia savannah is present but it is too small to have the diversity of the forest around the Bekele Mola Hotel further west on the lakeshore. Some good broadleaf forest and rainforest is nearby but was not very birdy and filled with annoying children. The “ecolodge” accommodation is expensive but has good food and drink (also expensive).

We stayed in a double tukul, the cheapest available option. The facilities were spartan but clean and tidy and with nearby solar showers and toilets. These featured the usual plumbing challenges.

Day 19 – Thursday 8th November 2007

A cool walk along the lakeshore to a patch of reeds produced a few birds but nothing to get too excited about. We had breakfast and then spent some time trying to pay for the previous night’s dinner. The “management” refused all earlier attempts by us to settle accounts and now there was nobody to pay. But we couldn’t escape, as we had to be issued with plastic exit cards for the gate! What a dysfunctional place. It just shows the power of its positive listing in Lonely Planet.



We made good time toward our much anticipated next destination of Awash National Park, until we reached Nazaret, where everything crashed to a halt. The first bit was grand – lunch at the Rift Valley Hotel – an awesome feed. But all attempts to do some simple grocery shopping brought us undone. The City of Nazaret has everything you don't need.

One of the most frustrating things about doing business in Ethiopia is the time it takes to buy anything. It takes 15 minutes to make the simplest purchase. This assumes that you have the correct money, the object you wish to buy is staring you in the face, the shopkeeper can be located and there is a container of some sort to put the purchase in. If any of these difficulties arise then you can add 15 minutes per difficulty. Purchasing multiple items may require an extension of time for your visa.

So two and a half hours after arriving in Nazaret we finally left it. If anyone wants to know the layout of the city's roads, ask me, I know. Awash NP was still there when we turned up at 1600. We then dealt with the highly fluid nature of the park's entry requirements and fees. It reminded me of the Bistromatic Drive from Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy in that the sum originally quoted for entry fees for assorted visitors, vehicles, tents, scouts (day), scouts (night), minders, watchers, wallies and wankers never amounted to the total paid. I was more ready for a drink than a walk. In the vain hope that some animals might be seen from the roof of the vehicle I climbed up for the drive to the Awash River Campsite. I saw a number of large animals with very good views of cow, donkey, camel and goat.

Never mind, the campsite, sited under shady figs and just upstream from the spectacular Awash River Falls, was almost perfect. There were no other people, no insects, plenty of grivet monkeys and just the occasional large campground Nile crocodile. Oh, and a few lions.



Day 20 – Friday 9th November 2007

It rained most of the night, so any large well-dentured creature that might not have been scared off by our night scout sleeping safely in the Landcruiser, would have been wet before it chewed through the wall of the tent.

The dawn was greeted by a beautiful sunrise and not the rainy day I expected.

We had told our day guide and day scout (and night scout, night guide and camp wally) that we wanted an early start. “Of course”, they said, “we will be up very early and waiting for you”. A few long pre-dawn blasts on the horn scattered the black-backed jackals from the ranger’s quarters and eventually produced the necessary guns and staff.

After a short drive we reached the grassy area of the park and soon had close views of lesser kudu, beisa oryx and Soemmering’s gazelles. What wonderful beasts. Although overall numbers had halved in the last three years due to the efforts of the local Afar and other tribesmen, the park is still a very good place to see large mammals, for now. Bustards were relatively common although we kept seeing the same ones that we had seen elsewhere. I was perched on top of the vehicle and focussed on mammals. In hindsight I probably missed a few good birds that may have deserved a stop.



The Awash River campsite is probably not near the best of the park's habitats, and after wandering off by myself I found it difficult to see much that was new. But I managed close views of the amazingly cryptic Lichtenstein's sandgrouse along with green-winged pytilia, both very attractive birds.

The vegetation at Awash is much denser than I imagined it would be, and wandering off the trails was a tad difficult. Almost all the bushes have hooks and barbs. These were originally designed to make animals leave them alone but they had exactly the reverse effect on me. I wanted to leave them alone but could not.



Most of the day was spent counting the hours until we could go spotlighting. Spotlighting is technically illegal in Awash but nothing was going to stop us. We left on dusk and before we had gone more than 100m we had a rock python crossing the road. Our scout (now day and night) sprinted away at great speed with knees raised high. The snake was far more spirited than the ones in Australia and reacted quickly to me pulling it by the tail. After it decided it wanted to live in the engine well of the car I grabbed it amidships and gently hurled it away. The park staff scattered.

Spotlighting was great although it was a little slow given the quality of the habitat and the 30km we covered. But I can't complain with two bat-eared foxes, a striped hyaena, 30 Cape hares, two unidentified gerbils, a Verreaux's eagle-owl and a galago. This all ensured that the Glenlivet received a good airing.

Day 21 – Saturday 10th November 2007

Camp was moved to the northern site in Awash, the Filoha Hot Springs. The area around the camp is not too secure from rascally cattlemen who illegally run their cattle to the springs for water. So it depends on just how rascally they have recently been and your tolerance for potential danger whether you should go there or not. It was a no-brainer for us because the habitat supports a large range of excellent wildlife.

The drive across the park from the Awash River to Filoha is along 42km of mostly bumpy road, but the route is very scenic and offers good chances for seeing birds, wildlife and cattle. We managed three black-backed jackals, many Salt's dikdik, warthog and a few lesser kudu. The hot springs are spectacular and amazing. The water gushes out of the hillside in torrents at a temperature that is barely tolerable for bathing. The palm-fringed lakes that have formed are a haven for wildlife, with ducks, African snipe, various herons and other waterfowl and a fair herd of crocodiles. Myriad forest birds come to drink in an area that is otherwise semi-arid. The low cliffs that fringe one side of the site are the night roost for a large number of hamadryas baboons. This is a place that is not to be missed on any trip to Ethiopia.



By the time we arrived at the springs it was too hot to go birding and besides, we had entered the part of the day when the Afar cattlemen might be about. These nutters all carry guns and are fond of using them. Allan and Getnet went to their village outside the park and reported that it was surreal with more weapons than people and pedestrians that scowled and growled when the vehicle approached. They weren't interested in getting off the road. It seems that they and the other madmen nearby, the Kereyu, steal each other's cattle and shoot each other on sight.

In the afternoon, while surrounded by my possessions, I tested the sleeping comfort of a slab of concrete. The Afar loonies were scattered about along with a few hundred head of their cattle, and those under our employ who had not gone to the local village with Allan and Getnet, were asleep. So I couldn't leave the camp as I had already been given a warning for doing so earlier.

I heard an enormous ruckus and fearing that I was about to be shot, eaten or used as a hostage I opened one eye and saw something I will never forget. Out of the savannah came a continuous stream of squabbling, screaming and shagging hamadryas baboons. I woke our guide, scout or whatever he preferred to be considered as, and informed him I was going to brave the unknown and join the hamadryas throng.

More than a hundred hamadryas had gathered at their rocky roost. I sat among them and they barely took any interest. They continued with their grooming, nitpicking and usual and unusual sexual behaviour.



In the late afternoon after the Afar rabble had departed, a number of waterbuck came to feed and drink. Also seen were a handsome pair of perched sooty falcons. What a site this would be without cattle!

After our dinner of rice, chips, tuna, tomato, onion, beer and watermelon, we went for 40 minutes of spotlighting along the road. We saw a few nightjars (that we ignored), some warthogs, lesser kudu, spotted hyaena, 30 waterbuck, three bat-eared fox, a small-spotted genet, some Cape hare and lying on the road we had driven on not five minutes earlier, a caracal. We approached to

within a few metres. It walked slowly off the road, turning a couple of times to stare at the spotlight. I was rapt!

My single malt whisky-induced sleep was interrupted only a few times by hyaenas screaming and circling my tent.

Day 22 – Sunday 11th November 2007

I tried unsuccessfully to get Allan interested in going for a walk. A scout and I walked along the road picking up some desirable birds along the way. These included grey-headed bushshrike, yellow-breasted barbet and black scrub-robin. Our car appeared, far too early for my liking, but I had no say in the matter and we were off. Sitting on the roof I managed to spot a pair of Arabian bustards and more Lichtenstein's sandgrouse. We left Awash after the usual short discussion with staff about their pay. I had lost interest in arguing by this stage.

Lunch was again at the Rift Valley Hotel and was delicious once more. From there it was a short two hours drive to Addis and our digs at the National Hotel. The rooms were clean and roomy and had a balcony useful for illegally hanging washing. As this was a Sunday the hotel internet service was closed (of course). We wandered the streets a bit but it failed to excite. We found an internet place that was open, but only on account of the owner doing some housekeeping. He let me use the machine after we lurked meekly but persistently in the doorway.

The hotel restaurant was the drinks and dinner venue. It was unremarkable save for the amazing mix of people dining in it. There were three enormous and most unhappy men from Cameroon, a Mali businessman returning from a business trip to China, two local Whoopi Goldberg impersonators who did not smile or speak once, and a well-dressed and elegant Addis couple who obviously didn't eat out much to be eating where they were.

Day 23 – Monday 12th November 2007

It felt odd to be spending our first night in the capital. Normally such nights are at the start or finish of a journey. I felt as though the holiday had ended and another was about to start.

The experience of travelling north from Addis was very different to that going south. In the north we saw no native forests until we reached the Simien Mountains, and even there the forests are small and full of goats.

Shortly after leaving Addis and after negotiating the crowd surrounding a fatal pedestrian accident, the traffic dwindled. The first decent birds we saw were just north of the capital with large flocks of common cranes. We had intended to reach Debre Markos after spending time around the Debre Libanos area searching for gelada. We didn't have to search at all as Getnet found the gelada within 50m of turning off the main road. We spent almost an hour looking at these, along with a few localised birds and the impressive mountain scenery.



A traffic policeman hitched a ride with us to the next town. He spoke good English. He asked us how we communicated with our driver, as Getnet had not said a word. We told him we just hit him when we wanted to attract his attention. I got the impression that Getnet doesn't like traffic cops.

We should have spent less time at Debre Libanos as when we arrived at the top of the precipice overlooking the Blue Nile Gorge the road was closed for five hours for roadwork. We missed the cut by 30 minutes. We parked at a local hotel and had lunch. We then poked about the ridge overlooking the gorge looking for birds and bashing local kids. Well Allan did anyway. I abhor violence in any form. Plus I couldn't catch the little bastards. I soon got tired of trying to throw off the gaggle of unwanted followers and retired to the Blue Nile Hotel to drink beer.

At exactly 1700 the local policeman re-checked his watch, slightly lowered his hand and the Blue Nile Gorge 4WD and truck slalom was on. I couldn't understand the rush. It was at the same time exciting and unnerving. All the faster 4WDs, including ours, were out in front and racing the gravel switchbacks. This continued for 40 minutes in the deepest gorge I have ever seen. 40 minutes is a long time to be speeding continuously downhill. When we reached the bottom we came to a dead stop. Before us was the bridge over the Blue Nile. It is illegal to take photos of it for security reasons – as it is the only sealed road between AA and Lake Tana. However the threat to national security that might be gained by a photo of the bridge is marginal indeed. It seems the bridge is stuffed and only one vehicle is allowed to cross at any one time to reduce the number of fatalities when it collapses. So now we knew why we were in such a hurry to get to the bottom of the hill.

We arrived at a local hotel in Debre Markos at 2000 and soon had a cheap and good room, a couple of reliable beers and a meal.

Day 24 – Tuesday 13th November 2007

The landscape stayed pretty trashy as we headed north to Bahir Dar, arriving there before lunch. We were soon on a small boat and visiting some monasteries in Lake Tana. The first of the monasteries was lame except for the setting on a small rainforest island. The next was a “men visitors only” c1330 structure that was all the more interesting in that the stonework had been transported across Lake Tana in papyrus boats. The monasteries were fine and although we paid to visit three of them we took the advice of our guide and ended our visit after the second one.

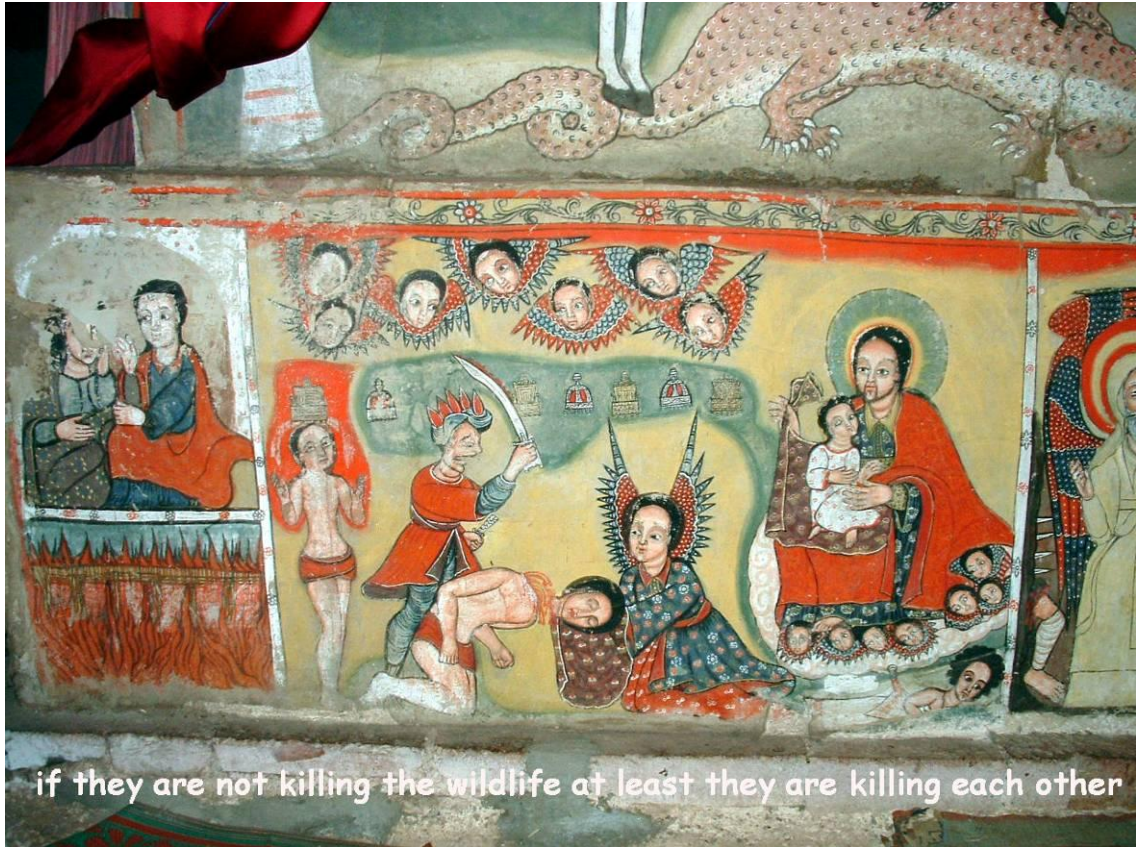


papyrus canoe, Lake Tana

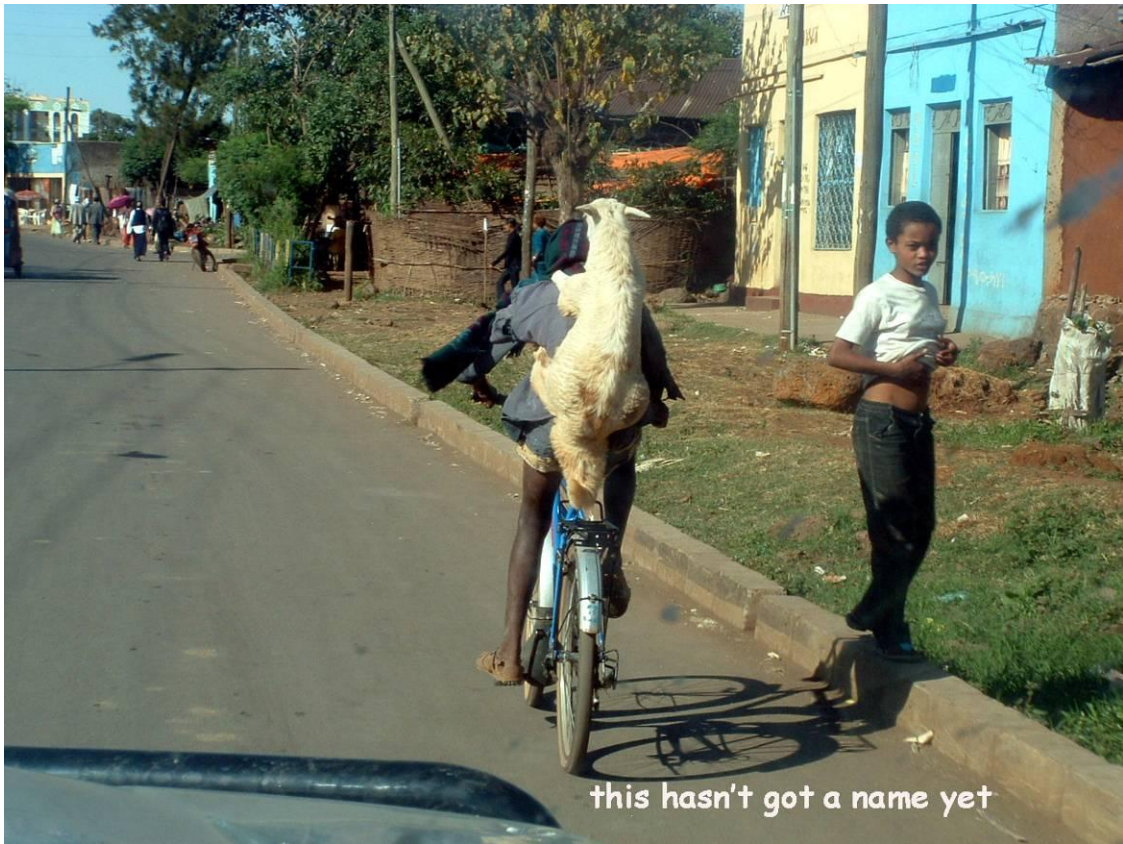
Of interest was the source of the Blue Nile and a local fisherman paddling his papyrus canoe there and catching a few fish. This completed the White Nile / Blue Nile “set” that started with our visit to the origin of the White Nile at Lake Victoria in Uganda a few years earlier.

Back in town we walked the streets and soon built up a thirst. After we attracted too many beggars at one outdoor bar we decamped to a cheaper and more modern facility that had the advantage of female staff.

Dinner at the Papyrus Hotel was delicious.



if they are not killing the wildlife at least they are killing each other



this hasn't got a name yet

Day 25 – Wednesday 14th November 2007

The fun never stopped. We had breakfast in the same place we drank the previous night. I gave a stuffed toy kangaroo to one of the cleaners / waitresses. She was overjoyed and the envy of the other girls.

We revisited a roadside duck pond at the southern edge of town and found quite a few new birds in addition to the largest concentration of ducks we were to see anywhere in the country.

On the road to Gonder we stopped several times at some excellent wetlands. Several hundred common cranes were seen, along with close view of half a dozen northern crowned cranes. This most desirable and spectacular crane had been the focus of our searching for a few days. We reckoned the whole area must be waterbird heaven in the wet season.

We checked into the Goha Hotel, an establishment that overlooks the town and gets almost all of the white monkey business. And just because the hotel charges \$US50 for a room, that doesn't mean that it has running water or electricity. The water issue has been a problem for so long that they have a notice in the room explaining the likeliest times that it might be available. The room television was entertaining. We amused ourselves for a good while trying to get a picture on the only channel available. We gave up.

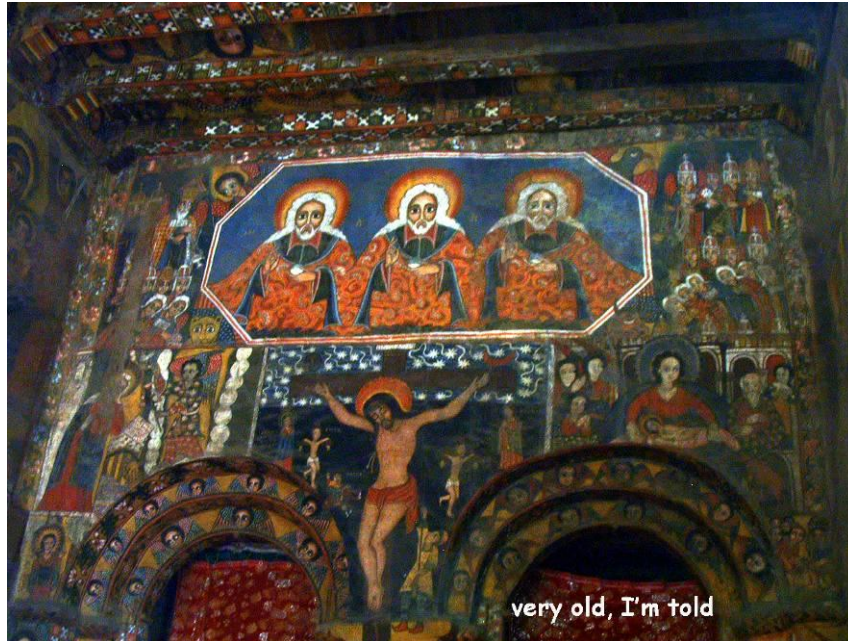
The afternoon's focus was a tour of the UNESCO World Heritage C17th Royal Enclosure, a.k.a. "Africa's Camelot", a seat of power for a hundred years or so. It is an impressive and interesting sight not to be missed if you find yourself in the vicinity of Gonder. It would have been even more interesting if the British hadn't deliberately dropped bombs on it during the war.

Horus swift and barn owl were added to our bird list.



C17th Royal Enclosure, Gonder

This was followed by a quick visit to the Debre Berhan Selassie Church. It has rendered internal walls that are covered in religious art, which is reputedly the best in the country and some of the finest examples to be found anywhere. A guide explained that the art predated the building. On rendered walls???



Next was Fasiladas' Bath. This site was undergoing restoration. Perhaps 200 locals with Norwegian supervisors were doing stuff in much the same inefficient way that I reckon the pyramids were built. Most were carrying something or other backwards and forwards for no apparent reason. I joined in the fun by replacing one half of an all-girl haulage team to the amusement of the 198 others.



The day ended like all the others

Day 26 – Thursday 15th November 2007

We left Gonder and quickly ascended the foothills of the Simien Mountains. We reached the last town, Debark, in good time, and parted with our cash for the bewildering range of entry charges that were really starting to piss me off. We inherited a guide (almost useless) and a scout (a real nuisance) and found ourselves at the well-appointed Simien Lodge before lunchtime. We checked in, dodged a hundred or so gelada, and drove a little way along the road to have lunch at the edge of a cliff.

I bailed from the car on the way back, intending to walk along a partly forested gully back to the lodge. But the scout (who of course carried a large gun) complained bitterly that I was in danger just about any time I wanted to go anywhere interesting. I got a healthy dose of the shits and headed straight back to the lodge.



The rest of the afternoon was spent chatting with the lodge's friendly and competent manager, Fekadu. This chap has a sense of humour. He explained that the scout's roles included making sure I didn't pluck a flower or some leaves from an indigenous plant. In a park with 12,000 resident people and all their goats, sheep, cattle and ploughed fields, I struggled to even find an indigenous plant. Finding one with a flower to pluck would have been an event.

We had some cool drinks in front of a eucalyptus fire whilst chatting to a well-travelled George Bush-hating German couple. Dinner was first class.



Day 27 – Friday 16th November 2007

We were to ascend to Chenek Camp for the night before returning to the Simien Lodge the following day. We passed through some much better places on which to build the lodge – more scenic, more wildlife and less local people.

Sankober Campsite looked to be interesting and we passed some truly wonderful lookouts and livestock corrupted forest before ascending to a treeless plateau. I was initially excited to get to this area as it could be seen in the far distance from the lodge. But alas, the plateau was ploughed cropland, people and cattle.

Chenek Camp is located on a small but pretty creek and near a seriously high cliff with views to the other side of the Sahara. Well there would be if the air wasn't so thick. When we arrived at the camp it was a shambolic mess of mules, porters, tourists and tents. We figured they would all go away soon so we drove up the road a kilometre or so. The plan was to search for the critically endangered walia ibex the following day, but I couldn't wait that long. Our guide asked a colleague if he had seen any ibex. He pointed and we walked.



At one point my guide indicated a vertical rock wall and asked if I could scale it. Given the chewing out the scout got yesterday I could hardly say no. With reservations aplenty up I went. Soon after we were looking down on a few young ibex. They moved out of sight and despite the dire predictions of ibex panic from the guide I crouched low and got to where I thought the animals would be. I counted 28 ibex, with three big males and plenty of kids. They were in the company of gelada and couldn't give a twopenny stuff about me as they slothed about 15 metres away. I clicked away and got some great pictures before they got bored and toddled off. I sent the guide to

get Allan and after we had both had our ibex fix we walked back down the hill to the camp well satisfied. The last of the “must see” mammals was well and truly in the bag.



walia ibex and gelada





After lunch I slipped away while the scout wasn't looking. I learnt that the guide followed my progress down one side of the valley with the help of Allan's binoculars. I swapped to the other side and out of sight. Occasional reports of my whereabouts filtered back to camp throughout the afternoon. I strangled a few of the local children (in my dreams) as I puffed up the other side of the valley to a point well above the camp. I enjoyed the antics of a troupe of gelada for a while before entering the camp from the opposite direction to the way I left it. The scout had been panicky and couldn't believe his eyes when I turned up.

We found another two groups of ibex in the late afternoon, making a daily total of 44 individuals.

I drowned our beers in the nearby icy cold creek. The sun set, the temperature crashed and so did we.

Day 28 – Saturday 17th November 2007

I located Ankober serin, a small and boring bird that is endangered for some reason that eludes me. The serins were busy fighting and building nests inside roadside rock cuttings just below Chenek Camp.

We had turned the last corner on our holiday and with no new sites to visit I lost interest in exploring. We poked about Sankober Camp for a while before returning to the Simien Lodge.

Early drinks were called and we spent our time chatting to locals and tourists. We gasbaggied about wildlife and the problems facing it in the park.

Dinner tasted good but that was about as far as it went with me. At around midnight I looked 10 months pregnant and thereafter became all too familiar with the Simien Lodge drainage system.

How could I get all the way to Day 29 before getting sick and at the most expensive lodge in the country?



Day 29 – Sunday 18th November 2007

I felt awful as we drove back to Gonder. What was always going to be a wasted day was now a chance to get over my stomach woes.

We said goodbye to Getnet, who had to leave by road to start his next job. While Allan roamed the town, I slept.

Day 30 – Monday 19th November 2007

The Fokker F50 flight from Gonder to Addis via Bahir Dar was good. It left 45 minutes early and its turnaround time in Gonder and Bahir Dar was less than ten minutes. The scenery from the plane was stunning. North of Lake Tana tens of thousands of grain fields stretched to the horizon – and not a single road to be seen anywhere. South of the lake we could see the start of the Nile and follow its course for a while. Unbelievably deep gorges popped out of nowhere. But no native vegetation anywhere except the odd scrap on very steep gorge sides.

When we arrived at Addis, 45 minutes early, there was nobody to pick us up. This didn't stress me too much. After all we were at the airport and we needed to be back there to fly out later in the evening anyway. Having no better plan, we loitered. Eventually Dereje, the manager of Ethio-Der arrived. Allan wanted to change his travel plans to skip the Thai cameo visit and see about his failing eyes so we went to the Ethiopian Airways office and changed his flight from Bangkok.

We grabbed a room at the hotel adjacent to Dereje's office for the purpose of having a last shower and wasting a little time. The hotel's name is the "Itegue Taita Hotel". Don't ever go there, not even for a bet. It is perhaps the most awful hotel there is, and given that it had hot water the rest must have been very bad indeed. Okay, the beds were dirty, but happily we weren't going to be sleeping in them. The walls were made from peeling salmon-coloured rendered concrete. The only window opened onto a concrete wall. The single 40 watt light globe failed to give enough light for reading. The toilet doesn't bear comment. The shower / bath was just that. The shower process turned into a bath as the water failed to drain from it. Apart from that it was pretty awful.

Dereje picked us up at 1930 and took us to a fancy traditional style restaurant of the song and dance variety. It was a great culinary and cultural experience although my recently deceased digestive system managed little joy from the tasty food. Dereje is a very pleasant and intelligent chap who has amazing and insightful knowledge of his country and his countrymen.

Addis Ababa Airport is modern, cheerful and efficient. The duty free shops were well stocked and with a one litre bottle of Glenmorangie a steal at \$US36. The flight was crowded but good and uneventful. I slept through most of it but made some good friends among the cabin crew.....

Thanks Ethiopia – and although my writing style might appear to be critical, this is style over substance. The truth is that it was a fabulous adventure. Thoroughly recommended!





THAILAND

Day 31 – Tuesday 20th November 2007

We arrived at Bangkok at 1315. I said goodbye to Allan and began my public transport journey to Kaeng Krachan National Park. I had been to this park three times before and always had a great time. Not only is the park filled with wildlife, I had made good friends with one of the rangers, Samrong Meekaew.

My first bus was the shuttle bus to the minibus stand at the airport. Minibus #556 then took me to the Southern Bus Terminal. I was a tad puzzled as we sped past what I thought might have been this terminal. Although my understanding of Thai script is not great, I am reasonably proficient at reading English. The large sign that read “Southern (Bangkok) Bus Terminal” was in the company of many buses. We didn’t stop there. We went to the other one....

After initially buying a ticket for the wrong bus I sat in the steamy Bangkok heat for 90 minutes until my bus arrived. Had I been a clearer thinker I would have sat inside in the air-conditioning but I don’t trust bus timetables. The bus arrived and left exactly on time and took me to Tha Yang, the highway turn-off to Kaeng Krachan, Samrong’s village. He had asked me to phone him from the highway so that he could pick me up, but I thought it better not to put him to the trouble. So in the dark and with my 19kg pack on my back I hopped onto the back of a small motorcycle taxi and off we sped for the 35km journey. The driver had never been to the village. I clutched the ever more clammy paperwork indicating Samrong’s address in one hand and bits of motorcycle in the other.

I pondered the likely demise of my shoulders and other body parts. My pleas to drive slowly had the unusual effect of seeing the rider test the mechanical limits of the motorcycle. Warning signs advising the possible presence or danger posed by cows took on heightened importance as I scraped insects, small bats and road debris from my eyes. We stopped a few times to ask directions, with the last such stop achieving an escort in the form of Samrong’s uncle. The last muddy few hundred metres saw me fall off the bike, body and dignity intact, to be welcomed by the Meekaew family once more.

I lost no time in opening the Glenmorangie.

Day 32 – Wednesday 21st November 2007

We farnarced around the village for a while as the Meekaew family sorted themselves to school, mum’s place or wherever they had to go. I filled Samrong’s car with diesel. This was a first, apparently. We bought food, beer and rice wine. Samrong had organised a free entry to the park for me. We arrived late morning. The park had changed enormously since my last visit in 2001. The regrowth forest on the way to Bankrang Camp had grown significantly and there were no longer any visible grasslands on which to search for mammals, making them much more difficult to see.

I was to spend four nights at Bankrang, the lower of the camps in the park, but the best area for large mammals. The trees around the kitchen were alive with dusky leaf-monkeys, grey-bellied squirrels, Malayan giant squirrels and Cambodian striped squirrels. I crossed the creek and walked a trail I remembered from previous visits. It had become overgrown through disuse and aside from a beautiful and obliging blue pitta, not much else was seen.



The afternoon saw me poking about this way and that but my interest lay with the evening's spotlighting.

We drank all the beer, wine and most of the food. This didn't surprise me as I had some experience with the communal approach to whatever was at hand. I made friends with a delightful Thai lass who became known as the "Black Leopard". She and her partner and anybody else that was around the camp came spotlighting with us.

Spotlighting back towards the entry gate was good. We scared a melanistic forest leopard off the road very near the camp. Then followed a succession of common palm civets, a slow loris, hog badger, brown hawk-owl and many nightjars.

Day 33 – Thursday 22nd November 2007

I spent most of the day on my feet, snooping around on remote trails in the hope of snaring a good mammal or some more pittas. I managed a troupe of noisy stump-tailed macaques and another hog badger but that was about it. "Jacky", the camp bird expert, Samrong and I spent the late afternoon in a fruitless search for partridges.

I bought another box of beer. This soon ran out and we made a run for the village outside the park to buy food. I drove the utility back to camp as I was less pissed than any of the others, including the car's owner. Everyone was giggling and telling each other how much they loved one another. Obviously some English words had been slightly misinterpreted. It was all rather funny but somewhat confusing.

Spotlighting was disappointing. The sky was clear and the moon bright. Aside from palm civets we failed to see anything interesting.



Day 34 - Friday 23rd November 2007

I spent the day birding with a guy named Tom, from Indiana. He was a pleasant and well-informed retired maths teacher with a similar view of the American Empire to my own. The birding was slow and the mammals even worse.

After dinner two enormous Malayan porcupines and a common palm civet visited the kitchen for scraps.

Day 35 – Saturday 24th November 2007

There are a confusing number of trails that wind up into the hills near the camp. They looked to be excellent for a whole range of things but were very quiet during my slow slog around them. Nobody ever walks off the road at Kaeng Krachan so it is easy to get away from people and there were certainly plenty of these to get away from. This was the weekend and the Bangkok Thais had discovered the park big time. Never go to the park on the weekends. The locals are not noisy or inconsiderate, far from it, but the sheer number of them will guarantee that any significant wildlife now knows which days are Friday through Sunday.

I hitched a ride up the mountain to the top camp and immediately started walking back down the road. At least 50 cars passed me.

It was sad to see that the huge fig tree that had so entertained Sum-Dave and I on our first visit in 1998 had vanished. This tree was monkey heaven and had so many mammals and birds in it that it had gained a place in my memory as the best tree in the world. The trudge down the mountain had enough wildlife to keep me entertained. I managed perfect views of mountain bamboo-partridges, Pallas's squirrels and a large troupe of black white-handed gibbons.

Very few cars came down the mountain and I hitched with one of these from the 23km marker back to the camp. Dinner was gang keow wan, fried fish and single malt.



Day 36 – Sunday 25th November 2007

Samrong gave me a lift to Phetchaburi where I jumped on the 0900 bus to Bangkok. There I hopped into a taxi for the Pranee Building at Siam Square. The hotel was exactly as I had left it in 2001 with the same rather severe owner, the same room and the same furniture. It is clean, cheap, quiet, well sited and recommended.

I went to the Pratu Nam Markets to buy some shirts. As it was a Sunday most of the stalls were closed but I managed to get what I wanted from some street stalls – good quality business shirts for less than \$A8 each.

I walked back to the hotel in a semi-daze. Here was a city that had continued to grow and yet it was exactly as I remembered it. I sat outside a small bar / restaurant and picked up my diary and pen. I was interrupted by Charnelle, a young lady in her late teens from Canberra. She was alone, on her first overseas trip and asked if she might sit with me for a while and chat. Unfortunately this tall shapely young lady, bought up on a farm in Shepparton, struck me while I was busy writing this, so I was unable to chat with her, offer any advice, stare at her breasts, or anything else. She apologised for disturbing me and left, no doubt disappointed.

Dinner was interrupted by the tree across the lane. In it was an Asian koel calling for a mate. All the local taxi drivers and I were doing our best to imitate it. Passers-by were fascinated by this interest in the local bird fauna. Then the champion bird-caller – a taxi driver – told me that the bird was worth 5000 baht if it could be caught.

Dinner was good although I gave much of it away to locals who were delighted with the windfall.

My pack was re-packed for the last time. This I did three times.

Day 37 – Monday 26th November 2007

I slept through to the 0400 alarm, which was lucky to out compete the air-conditioner. The 60 minutes estimate for the time it took to get to the airport was only 40 minutes too much.

My seat on the 747 was next to a pimple-faced brain-dead monster dressed in a beer-brand singlet and bamboo hat. I wasn't certain of his nationality because he chose to grunt rather than speak. He grunted his breakfast selection, which he slept at until it was taken away untouched. The be-turbaned Indian chap in front of me blocked any view I might have had of the video screen. The plane trash included a red-headed woman who screamed at the cabin crew and stamped her feet because her daughter had a broken leg and she was not allowed to sit with her. The daughter was in business class convalescing and the mother, who clearly believed broken legs were life threatening, demanded to be placed with her sprout, sans business class ticket. She then disappeared, maybe to business class or preferably to a recycling facility. Maybe the daughter broke her leg deliberately.

At Sydney Airport I went through the thoroughly worthwhile quarantine procedures. I pulled my pack apart when I got home to find a nest of Thai ants inside one of the shirts I bought in Bangkok. I was unsure of whether to let them go in the garden.....not.

Steve Anyon-Smith
67 Wattle Road
Jannali 2226
NSW Australia
steveas@tpg.com.au
7th December 2007
all enquiries welcome



		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
8	Yellow-billed Stork	18				13					
9	Fulvous Whistling-Duck									25	
9	White-faced Whist-Duck									24	
10	Comb (Knob-billed) Duck									25	
10	Egyptian Goose	1	3			13		21		24	
10	Ruddy Shelduck		6								
10	Spur-winged Goose	18								25	
10	E Blue-winged Goose		3						23		
11	Northern Pintail		6							24	
11	Northern Shoveler		6					21		25	
11	Yellow-billed Duck	19	3							25	
12	Cape Teal	2									
12	Common Teal									24	
12	Garganey			10							
12	Red-billed Teal (Duck)	1									
13	Southern Pochard									24	
14	Black Kite	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
14	Black-shouldered Kite	1	8					20			
14	Yellow-billed Kite					13					
15	African Fish-Eagle	1				13		20		24	
15	Lammergeier		5							25	
15	Osprey	1									
16	Egyptian Vulture	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
16	Hooded Vulture	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
16	Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
16	White-headed Vulture	2									
17	Rueppell's Griffon									25	
17	White-backed Vulture	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
19	African Harrier-Hawk	19						20			
19	Eurasian Marsh-Harrier		3	9		14					
19	Montagu's Harrier				12	14					
19	Pallid Harrier	1									
20	African Goshawk					16					
20	Dark Chanting-Goshawk	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
20	Eastern Chanting-Goshawk			9							
20	Gabar Goshawk		8								
20	Great Sparrowhawk		8								
21	Rufous-br Sparrowhawk		4				17				
21	Shikra										29
22	Bateleur			9		13					
22	Little Sparrowhawk				11	15		20			
23	Augur Buzzard	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
23	Long-crested Eagle					13	17			25	

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
23	Red-necked Buzzard				12*						
24	Common Buzzard					13		20			
24	Long-legged Buzzard										28
24	Mountain Buzzard		4				17				
25	Lesser Spotted Eagle										26
25	Steppe Eagle										28
25	Tawny-Eagle	2			11						
26	Golden Eagle		6								
27	African Crowned Eagle						17				
27	Booted Eagle	2									
28	Common Kestrel	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
28	Martial Eagle							20			
29	Lesser Kestrel							21	23		
29	Red-necked Falcon				12						
30	African Hobby					15					
30	Pygmy Falcon				12			22			
30	Sooty Falcon							21			
31	Lanner Falcon		3					21	23		27
32	Coqui Francolin				11						
32	Helmeted Guineafowl	2			13	15		20			
32	Scaly Spurfowl						17				
32	Vulturine Guineafowl			10	13						
33	Chestnut-naped Francolin		4								
33	Crested Francolin	18		9	11	14		20			
33	Erckell's Francolin										27
33	Moorland Francolin		4								
33	Yellow-necked Spurfowl			10	12	14		20			
34	Common Quail		4			15		20			
34	Harlequin Quail					14		20			
36	Black Crake	19									
36	Rouget's Rail		3								
37	Red-knobbed Coot		3	10							
38	Black Crowned-Crane									25	
38	Common Crane								23	25	
38	Wattled Crane		6								
39	Arabian Bustard							22			
39	Hartlaub's Bustard			10	12			20			
39	Kori Bustard			9	11	14		20			
40	Black-bellied Bustard							22			
40	Buff-crested Bustard			10	11			20			
41	African Jacana	1				13					
41	Lesser Jacana									25	
41	Senegal Thick-knee	2						21			

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
41	Spotted Thick-knee				11						
42	Collared Pratincole	19									
43	Three-banded Courser				11						
45	Common Ringed Plover	2		10							
45	Little Ringed Plover	1									
45	Three-banded Plover	19									
46	Black-winged Stilt	1		10				21		25	
46	Spur-winged Plover	1				13		21		24	
46	Wattled Lapwing			10							
47	Black-winged Lapwing		3	9							
47	Crowned Lapwing	1		9							
47	E Spot-breasted Lapwing		6								27
48	African Snipe	18						21			
49	Common Greenshank		6								
49	Marsh Sandpiper	2									
49	Ruff	2				13					
50	Bar-tailed Godwit		3								
50	Common Sandpiper	1	3	10			17	22	23	24	
50	Green Sandpiper		6								
50	Wood Sandpiper		3					21			
51	Little Stint	2				13		21			
52	Lesser Black-backed Gull									24	
53	Black-headed Gull	1									
53	Gray-headed Gull	18									
54	Gull-billed Tern	18									
54	White-winged Tern	18								24	
55	Chestnut-bellied Sandgr							20			
55	Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse							20			
56	Lemon Dove	18					17			24	
56	Olive Pigeon						17				
56	Speckled Pigeon	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
56	White-collared Pigeon		3							25	26
57	African Collared-Dove							21			
57	African Mourning Dove	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
57	Cape Turtle Dove	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
57	Laughing Dove	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
57	Red-eyed Dove	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
57	Vinaceous Dove									24	
58	Bruce's Green-Pigeon	3					17	21			
58	Dusky Turtle-Dove	<i>c</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>n</i>				
58	Blue Rock-Dove									24	
59	Black-billed Wood-Dove					13		21			
59	Blue-spotted Wood-Dove			8							

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
73	Striped Kingfisher	2		9				20			
73	Woodland Kingfisher	2						21			
74	Giant Kingfisher									24	
74	Pied Kingfisher	1								24	
75	Abyssinian Roller							19			
75	Broad-billed Roller	19				16					
75	Lilac-breasted Roller			9	10	14					
75	Purple (Ruf-crowned) Roller	1				13		21			
76	Blue-breasted Bee-eater	1				16	17		23		
76	Little Bee-eater	2						21		25	
76	North'n Carmine Bee-eater	18			12	14				24	
77	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater							20			
78	Abyssinian Gr-Hornbill	1		8		14		21			
78	Ostrich				12						
78	Secretary-bird					14					
79	Crowned Hornbill				11						
79	East'n Yellow-billed H'b							20			
79	Hemprich's Hornbill	3							23	24	
79	Red-billed Hornbill			8	10	14		20			
80	African Gray Hornbill					15					
80	Silvery-cheeked Hornbill		7			14	17				
80	Von der Decken's Hornbill	2		8				20			
81	Banded Barbet						17		23		
81	Black-billed Barbet	1				14		20		25	
81	Black-throated Barbet				10			22			
81	Red-fronted Barbet	18									
81	Red-fronted Tinkerbird	1		8		15	17	20			
82	D'Arnaud's Barbet				10			21			
82	Double-toothed Barbet	18				15	17				
82	Red-and-yellow Barbet			9	12	13					
82	Yellow-breasted Barbet							22			
83	Lesser Honeyguide	2					17				
83	Scaly-throated Honeyguide					15					
84	Rufous-br (Red-thr) Wryneck	19	5								
85	Abyssinian Woodpecker		5				17				
85	Bearded Woodpecker	2									
85	Cardinal Woodpecker	2	6					22			
85	Gray-headed Woodpecker	2					17				
85	Grey Woodpecker		5								
85	Nubian Woodpecker				10			20			
86	Chestnut-backed Sp-Lark	1								25	
86	Crested Lark		6								
86	Thekla Lark		3						23		

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
87	Singing Bushlark							20			
87	Somali Short-toed Lark			9							
88	Brown-throated Martin	c	o	m	m	o	n				
88	Sand Martin	c	o	m	m	o	n				
88	E Black (Brown) Sawwing		7				17				
89	Barn Swallow	c	o	m	m	o	n				
89	Red-chested Swallow									24	
89	Rock Martin	c	o	m	m	o	n				
90	Ethiopian Swallow				12						
90	Lesser Striped-Swallow									25	
90	Red-rumped Swallow			10							
90	Wire-tailed Swallow									25	
91	Gray-rumped Swallow								23		
92	African Pied Wagtail									24	
92	Gray Wagtail		6				17		23		
92	Mountain Wagtail					15	17				
92	White Wagtail							21			
92	Yellow Wagtail	18									
93	Golden Pipit	2						21			
93	Long-billed Pipit								23		
93	Plain-backed Pipit			9							
93	Tawny Pipit			9							
93	E Abyssinian Longclaw		4								
94	Fork-tailed Drongo	2		9	11	13		21			
94	Gray Cuckoo-shrike						17				
94	Red-should'd Cuckoo-shr	18		8							
94	Red-throated Pipit		6								
94	Tree Pipit		8	9						25	
94	White-br Cuckoo-shrike					16					
95	Black-headed Oriole	2			11	16					
95	Ethiopian (Dark-h'd) Oriole		7	9			17				
96	Cape Crow (Rook)		3								27
96	Red-billed Chough		3								27
96	E Stresemann's Bush-Crow				10						
97	Fan-tailed Raven	c	o	m	m	o	n				
97	Pied Crow	1			10						
97	Thick-billed Raven		3			14	17			25	27
98	Acacia (North'n Grey) Tit				10						
98	Mouse-col' Penduline-Tit							20			
98	Spotted Creeper						17				
98	White-backed Tit		4								27
98	White-winged Black-Tit	2		9							
99	African (Abys) Hill-Babbler						17				

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
99	Rufous Chatterer	1		8		16		21			
99	Scaly Chatterer							20			
99	White-rumped Babbler			9		15	17				
100	Common Bulbul	c	o	m	m	o	n				
100	Dark-capped Bul-bul		3	8	11						
101	Abyssinian Ground-Thrush	18	8				17				
101	Groundscraper Thrush		3						23	24	26
101	Little Rock-Thrush						17			25	
101	Rufous-tailed Rock-Thr			9							
102	African Thrush	1		8			17			24	
102	Mountain Thrush		4				17				
102	Rueppell's Robin-Chat	2	4				17				28
103	Common Nightingale	2									
104	Black Scrub-Robin							22			
104	Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin	2						20			
104	White-browed Scrub-Robin			9	12						
104	E Abyssinian Catbird		4								
105	Common Redstart	1						21			
105	Common Stonechat	3	3								
105	Whinchat								23*		
106	Blackstart							21			
106	Moorland (Alpine) Chat		4						23		27
106	Rueppell's Chat								23		
106	White-fronted Black Chat					16					
107	Isabelline Wheatear	c	o	m	m	o	n				
107	Northern Wheatear	3									
107	Pied Wheatear	c	o	m	m	o	n				
108	Abyssinian Black Wheatear	1									
108	Botta's Wheatear									25	
108	Mocking Cliff-Chat								23		
108	White-winged Cliff-Chat	1								25	
109	Cinnamon Bracken-Warbler		7								27
109	Savi's Warbler	19									
109	Sedge Warbler				13						
111	Brown Woodland-Warbler		4				17				
111	Common Chiffchaff										26
111	Icterine Warbler				10	14					
111	Willow Warbler				10						
111	Wood Warbler	2									
112	Blackcap	3				16	17			24	
112	Garden Warbler				12						
112	Greater (Com) Whitethroat					15		20			
112	Lesser Whitethroat				10			20			

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
113	Boran Cisticola	18									
113	Rattling Cisticola	2									
113	Tiny Cisticola			9							
114	Pectoral-patch Cisticola		4								
115	Croaking Cisticola			9							
115	Desert Cisticola			9							
115	Stout Cisticola			9							
116	Pale Prinia	2									
116	Red-fronted Warbler							20			
116	Tawny-flanked Prinia		5								26
116	Yellow-breasted Apalis			9	10						
117	Buff-bellied Warbler	1						22			
117	Gray Wren-Warbler				13			20			
117	Gray-backed Camaroptera	2		8	11	16	17				
117	Northern Crombec				12						
117	Red-faced Crombec	1		8		16		22			
117	Yellow-bellied Eremomela				11						
117	Yellow-vented Eremomela							20			
118	African Dusky Flycatcher	2		9							
118	African Gray Flycatcher	1		9							
118	Pale Flycatcher					16					
118	Spotted Flycatcher					14					
119	Abyssinian Slaty-Fly		4				17				26
119	African Paradise-Fly	1		8			17			24	
119	Grey (Lead-col) Tit-Fly					16					
119	Northern Black-Flycatcher	2		8							
120	Black-headed Batis	1		9				20			
120	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	18		8			17				
120	Gray-headed Batis	18						21			
120	Pygmy Batis				10						
121	Masked Shrike			9							
121	Red-backed Shrike				10					25	
121	Red-tailed (Isabelline) Shr							20			
122	Common Fiscal	1								24	26
122	Gray-backed Fiscal	1				13					
122	Taita Fiscal				12						
123	Northern Puffback	18		8			17				
123	North'n White-crowned Shr	18		8	10	13					
123	Pringle's Puffback				10						
123	Woodchat Shrike			9				20			
124	Black-crowned Tchagra	1				14					
124	Brubru	3	5	9	11			20		26	
124	Tropical Boubou						17				

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
125	Gray-headed Bushshrike							22			
125	Orange-breasted Bushshr			8		16					
125	Rosy-patched Bushshrike				11						
125	Slate-colored Boubou	1									
125	White Helmet-shrike			8		16		21			
126	Golden-breasted Starling			10	10						
126	Greater Blue-eared G-St	1		8	10	13				24	
126	Lesser Blue-eared G-St									25	
126	Rueppell's Long-tailed St	1				13		20			
126	Shelley's Starling			9	10						
126	Superb Starling	1		8	11	13					
127	Red-winged Starling		4								
127	Slender-billed Starling						17			25	27
127	Violet-backed Starling					16					
127	White-crowned Starling			9	10						
128	Red-billed Oxpecker	2			10						
128	Sharpe's Starling						17				
128	Wattled Starling			10							
128	White-billed Starling								23		
129	Abyssinian White-eye				10						
129	Eastern Violet-backed Sun					14					
129	Hunter's Sunbird				11						
129	Montane White-eye		4				17				28
129	Scarlet-chested Sunbird						17				
129	Tacazze Sunbird	18	4				17				27
130	Beautiful Sunbird	1					17				
130	Collared Sunbird					15		22			
130	Marico Sunbird			8				20			
130	Shining Sunbird	2									
130	Variable Sunbird		3				17				
131	Bush Petronia									25	
131	Chestnut Sparrow				11						
131	Nthn Gray-headed Sparrow									25	
131	Shelley's Rufous Sparrow				11						
131	Swainson's Sparrow	1	4	8		14			23	24	
132	Cut-throat Finch	1			13			20		25	
132	Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver			9							
132	Rueppell's Weaver	2									
132	White-headed Buffalo-W	2		9	12	15		20			
133	Black-capped Social-W				10						
133	Gray-capped Social-Weaver				11						
133	White-browed Sparrow-W	2			11	15		20			
134	Lesser Masked Weaver					14					

		Lks	Bale	NB	Yab	NS	WG	Aw	DL	LT	Sim
134	Northern Masked-Weaver				10			20			
135	Baglafaecht Weaver		4								
135	Black-headed Weaver	2									
135	Little Weaver		7								
135	Spectacled Weaver	18									
135	Speke's Weaver			8							
136	Chestnut Weaver				10	13					
136	Red-billed Quelea	1						20			
136	Red-headed Weaver			8		15	17				
137	Black Bishop					13					
137	Red-collared Widowbird		3								
137	White-winged Widowbird			10							
137	Yellow-crowned Bishop									25	
137	Yellow Bishop		3								
138	Green-winged Pytilia							20			
139	African Firefinch	18					17	20			
139	Red-billed Firefinch	1		8					23	24	
140	African Silverbill							21			
140	Black-and-white Mannikin			8							
140	Bronze Mannikin	1				16	17				
140	Purple Grenadier				10			20			
140	Red-cheeked Cordonbleu	1	5	8	10	13					
141	Black-cheeked Waxbill				11			20			
141	Yellow-bellied Waxbill		5				17				28
142	Common Waxbill	2	4								
142	Crimson-rumped Waxbill			13				21			
142	Eastern Paradise-Whydah			13				20			
142	Village Indigobird	1				13		21			24
143	Pin-tailed Whydah		3	9		15	17				
143	Straw-tailed Whydah				13						
144	Reichenow's Seedeater	18	5	9							
144	Yellow-crowned Canary		4								
144	E Ethiopian (Bl-hded) Siskin		4							24	27
145	African (Abyss) Citril	1					17			24	28
145	Streaky Seedeater		4				17			25	26
145	Yellow-rumped Seedeater								23		
146	Brown-rumped Seedeater		4						23		26
146	E Ankober Serin										28
147	Cinnamon-br Rock Bunt					14					
147	Somali Golden-br Bunt			9				20			



Mammals seen in Kaeng Krachan National Park, Thailand

Pallas's Squirrel
Malayan Giant Squirrel
Grey-bellied Squirrel
Cambodian Striped Squirrel
Dusky Leaf-Monkey
Stump-tailed Macaque
White-handed Gibbon
Northern Treeshrew
Barking Deer
Muntjac Deer
Hog Badger
Malayan Porcupine
Common Palm Civet
Slow Loris
Forest Leopard