

Senegal



November
2017

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For the last decade or so Senegal has been high on our list of "countries-to-visit", the main reason for that being the impressive number of birds of prey gathering at Ile de Kousmar during the winter months. Thousands of Lesser Kestrels and African Scissor-tailed Kites can be counted at their night roost here, and it's an amazing spectacle seeing the birds flying in to the island late in the afternoon. However, the raptors were by no means the only avian highlight of our trip, and a much more detailed report covering those can be found on Cloudbirders: <https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/show/20842/31115>

While Senegal is a very interesting destination for birdwatchers, the number of mammals doesn't really compare well to what you can see in many East and South African countries. In much of West Africa heavy hunting pressure and a loss of habitat has wiped out populations of many of the big mammals, though some can still be found in a few places. South-east Senegal is one such place where mega-fauna like Leopards, Lions, Wild Dogs and Elephants probably still hold on with the skin of their teeth, and **Niokolo-Koba NP** is therefore an extremely important area if the westernmost population of a number of species are to be saved. There's absolutely no doubt that this national park is the prime mammal watching area in Senegal. Further south around Dindéfelo there's even still a chance of seeing Chimpanzees, and immediately to the East, the little-known reserve RNC Boundou is probably also still home to some of the big mammals, and certainly to Serval which was seen here recently. However, even if the road leading to the national park from the coast is excellent, the infrastructure once here is lacking, which is somewhat discouraging from a tourist perspective. That being said, the main road leading from Tambacounda to Kedougou goes straight through the national park, and there are a few driveable tracks (though not during our stay, so shortly after the rainy season, we were told) inside the park, as well as some rather basic, but adequate, accommodation around. All in all, we recorded 8 mammal species (and some unidentified bats) around Niokolo-Koba NP and bearing in mind that we did neither any night drives/walks nor any game drives, except for a single run on the highway in the middle of the day, and that we were not here at the optimal time for mammal watching, we feel that we barely scratched the surface of this large area.



Striped Ground Squirrel - Toubakouta & African Giant Shrew - Dakar.

Apart from Niokolo-Koba NP all localities visited on our trip were situated in the western part of the country. Starting from the South, the **Saloum Delta NP** is probably also a fairly decent place to look for mammals. African Manatee is seen from time to time by the local fishermen, Marsh Mongoose is easily seen on the mangrove mudflats and we saw a Common Genet - and what was probably a Senegal Galago - on a short spotlighting session immediately east of Toubakouta. Spotted Hyaena is also seen in this part of the country. We saw lots of tracks at Ile de Kousmar and there's been observations on the north-western side of the delta as well. Further north around Saint-Louis the adjacent areas of **Les Trois Marigots** and **Djoudj NBS**

also seems to be the home of African Manatee, though it's apparently even harder to find here than at the Saloum Delta NP. Warthog, Red Patas Monkey and Golden Jackal are much easier to find and they were all both numerous and conspicuous in places. Common Genet was also found here on a brief evening drive, and we found a couple of colonies of some unidentified slit-faced bats. They were found in good numbers in both some abandoned buildings in Djoudj NBS, and at the Hotel Djoudj where Straw-coloured Fruit Bats were also quite common. Finally, the area around Richard Toll in the far North gave us African Savanna Hare, Pale Fox and Gambian Sun Squirrel. Even here there should be an outside chance of seeing African Manatee in the River Senegal, and in dry areas between Richard Toll and Podor, along the Mauritanian border, Wild Cat, Senegal Gerbil and Lesser Egyptian Jerboa were all seen by Birdquest on trip in 2017.

Apart from the places already mentioned, it's certainly worth noting that African Manatee is apparently rather easily seen in the southern Casamance province - check out Cheryl Antonucci's report on Mammalwatching for more information on that.

In addition to the truly wild animals, there are a few reserves where reintroduction plans are carried out. We didn't visit any of them, however, since we ultimately consider them to be Zoos, though with a noble aim, and therefore preferred spending our time elsewhere.



Slit-faced bat sp. - Djoudj NBS & Guinea Baboon - Niokolo-Koba NP.

Judging by the number of reports on Mammalwatching.com, not many dedicated mammal watchers are tempted by Senegal, and we really think that's a shame. Any information gathered on such a trip - especially from the Southeast - would surely be very useful and we definitely think that a decent list of mammals could be accumulated on a two or three weeks tour. Despite our otherwise excellent guide, Carlos, not being into mammals much, we managed to see 21 species during our two weeks and bearing in mind that we were there at the very beginning of the dry season, thus not at the prime time for mammals, and that our main focus was on birds, we feel certain that much more can be seen on a holiday specifically aimed at mammal watching.



Warthogs - Djoudj NBS.

African Savanna Hare (*Lepus victoriae*)

11/11 1 Sanit-Louis - Djoudj

12/11 1 Djoudj NBS

14+15/11 3+5 Richard Toll

16/11 1 Les Trois Marigots

By some included in the Scrub Hare (*Lepus saxatilis*) complex. Cape Hare (*Lepus capensis*) should be around in the northern part of the country as well, but we didn't see any.

Striped Ground Squirrel (*Xerus erythropus*)

11/11 1 Dakar - Saint-Louis

15+16/11 3+5 Les Trois Marigots

17/11 5 Saint-Louis - Kaolack

22/11 12 Toubakouta

Probably even more common than the numbers suggest.

Gambian Sun Squirrel (*Heliosciurus gambianus*)

14+15/11 1+2 Richard Toll

19+20/11 1+1 Wassadou

22/11 3 Toubakouta

[Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*)]

14/11 1 Richard Toll

A non-native species which, according to the IUCN distribution map, is a little out of range here

Common Genet (*Genetta genetta*)

15/11 1 Les Trois Marigots

24/11 1 Toubakouta

Both seen really well on a couple of our spotlighting sessions, something we would have loved to do more of.

We had hoped to see Hausa Genet (*Genetta thierryi*) as well, but sadly we missed out on that.

Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*)

11/11 2 Dakar - Saint-Louis

Seen briefly crossing the road in front of the car in a semi urban area on our drive north.

Marsh Mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*)

23+24/11 1+3 Saloum Delta NP

Only seen on boat trips in the mangrove and, though easy to spot, unfortunately quite shy.

Gambian Mongoose (*Mungos gambianus*)

19/11 11 Wassadou

All seen together in one big group by the river. Unfortunately, at the same time that we saw our first obliging Egyptian Plovers, and thus not offered enough attention.

[Spotted Hyaena (*Crocuta crocuta*)]

Sadly, not seen by us, but there were plenty of tracks around the mudflats facing Ile de Kousmar.

Pale Fox (*Vulpes pallida*)

13/11 2 Richard Toll

Seen really well in the evening, while driving the open area around the airstrip. Their presence here would suggest that there are a few rodents around as well, we imagine.

Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)

12/11 8 Djoudj NBS

21/11 1 Ile de Kousmar

22/11 1 Kaolack - Toubakouta

Apparently recent DNA studies show that the African Golden Jackals are more closely related to Grey Wolves (*Canis lupus*) than Eurasian Golden Jackals, and some now treat them as a separate species - African Golden Wolf (*Canis anthus*).

African Giant Shrew (*Crocidura olivieri*)

11/11 1 Hotel Calao, Dakar

Found swimming in the pool of the Hotel Calao in Dakar. We had a good look at it, during the rescue operation, and are pretty sure we got the identification right, in spite of not being familiar with the species.

Straw-coloured Fruit Bat (*Eidolon helvum*)

11-13/11 60 Djoudj NBS

17/11 5000+ Touba

Seen roosting in the palm trees surrounding the swimming pool at the Hotel Djoudj. The numbers seen in Touba were truly impressive! They were seen in and above the compound immediately south of the Great Mosque.

Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat (*Epomophorus gambianus*)

22+23+24/11 6+7+2 Toubakouta

Seen roosting in a tree in the village and also hanging from the thatched roof of the dining hall of the Hotel Keur de Saloum.

Yellow-winged Bat (*Lavia frons*)

18/11 1 Wassadou

Only seen on arrival at the carpark of the camp, first hanging from a small tree, and later flying around us before taking off.

Slit-faced Bat (*Nycteris sp.*)

11/11 20 Hotel Djoudj

12/11 90 Djoudj NBS

15/11 3 Les Trois Marigots

Even though we saw them well, and took good photos, identifying them with certainty afterwards just proved too difficult. Hairy Slit-faced Bat (*Nycteris hispida*) has been suggested, and looking at IUCN distribution maps, this is the only species supposed to be here. However, maps are probably not absolutely reliable, and some other *Nycteris* species are found not too far away.

Western Red Colobus (*Procolobus badius*)

19+20/11 2+1 Wassadou

In big trees along the River Gambia.

Guinea Baboon (*Papio papio*)

18/11 50 Kaolack - Wassadou

19/11 65 Wassadou

20/11 160 gui-Koba NP

21/11 50+ Wassadou - Kaolack

Green Monkey (*Chlorocebus sabaeus*)

Common in the South.

Like the two species above, the jury is still seems to be out on the taxonomy.

Patas Monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*)

Common in the North, and a few around Toubakouta.

Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*)

12/11 35 Djoudj NBS

Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)

18/11 1 Wassadou

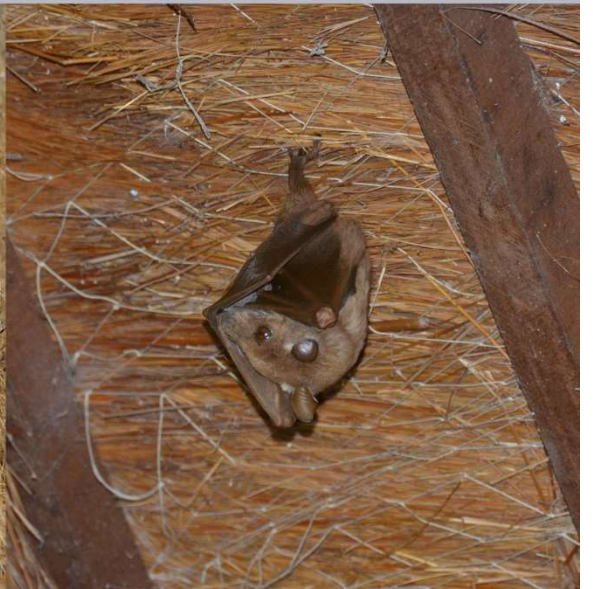
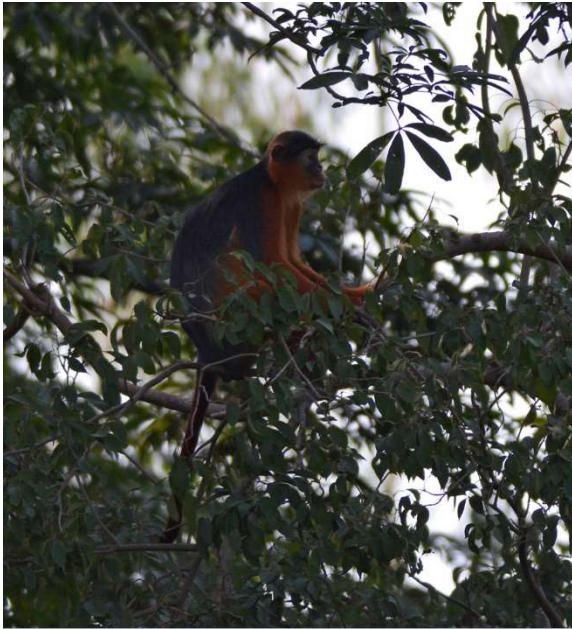
Surprisingly secretive and only seen once (from the camp) during our stay. We found tracks on the river banks in several places as well.

Red-flanked Duiker (*Cephalophus rufilatus*)

21/11 2 Wassadou

Seen on the entrance road to the camp. Would have been almost impossible to see otherwise, since the groundcover was both high and dense.

Questions and enquiries concerning our trip, or this report, are welcome. Please feel free to contact Stig on: sej@primoris.dk, Morten on morten.heegaard@gmail.com or Jon on: jon.lehmberg@gmail.com



Western Red Colobus, Green Monkeys, Straw-coloured Fruit Bat, Red Patas Monkey & Gambian Epauletted Fruit Bat.