

# Taï Trip Report

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Pygmy Hippo

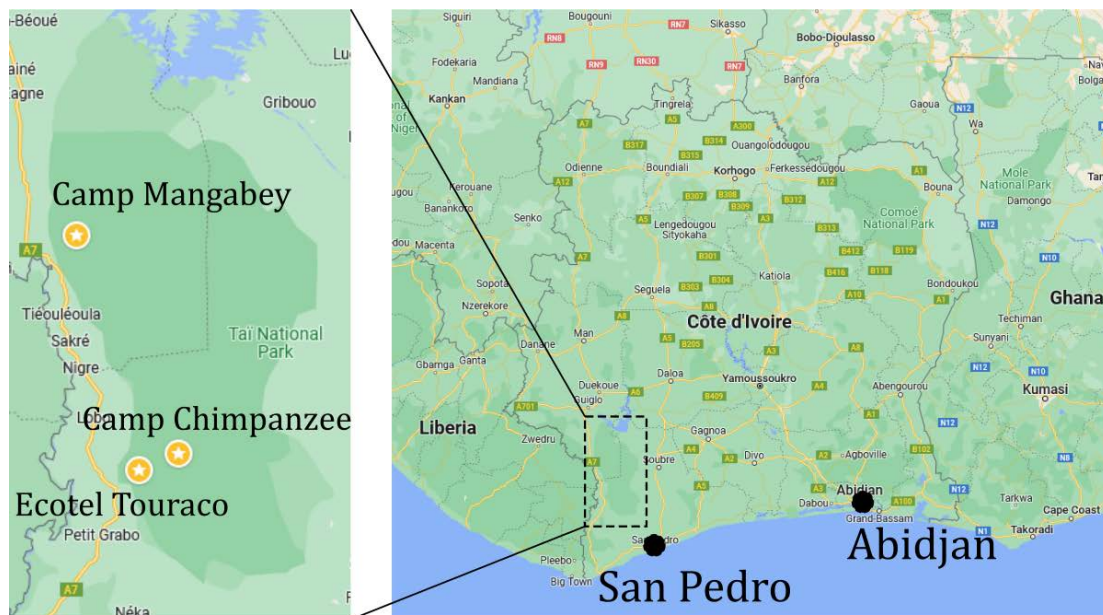


Shelley's Eagle-Owl

This report covers two trips to Taï National Park, Cote d'Ivoire with David Karesh. We visited two sites: Camp Chimpanzee (and the nearby Ecotel Touraco) in the Djouroutou Sector in the southwest of the park, and Camp Mangebey which is located near Taï City in the northwestern part of the park. Both of our visits were in the rainy season, to maximize chances of seeing reptiles and amphibians. Both David and I spent most of our time searching for animals on foot at night (David almost exclusively so). We usually walked separately. I concentrated on mammals and herps and walked quickly, whereas David focused on herps and insects and explored the forest more slowly.

I include details about how to arrange an independent visit to these sites. If you'd prefer an organized trip, please contact Tom Clode at [contact@pictus-safaris.com](mailto:contact@pictus-safaris.com). He has put in a great deal of work to make Taï accessible to wildlife enthusiasts.

My photos are available on my website, iNaturalist, flickr, and Instagram.



Adapted from Google Maps

## 1 Miscellaneous Information

The dry season is from November – April and the wet season spans May–October, though there are (on average) two distinct peaks in rainfall in early June and in late September/early October. Our visits were in August 2022 and June 2023. We experienced two dry periods with more than five days of little-to-no rainfall, one at the beginning of our first trip and one at the end of our second. Reptile and amphibian observations were notably lower at these times. Otherwise, weather conditions were variable with periods of light-to-medium rain every day or two. There were two episodes of torrential rainfall at the beginning of the second trip, which sparked frenzied anuran activity. I think my next visit will be in the dry season; Kevin (my guide at Camp Chimpanzee) indicated that some mammals are easier to find then and that is backed up by a couple studies (see Helen Newing’s PhD thesis [12]). Unlike other sites in Africa, the rains don’t seem to pose serious logistical problems though Camp Chimpanzee can close later in the rainy season (towards late August, I think).

The currency of Cote d’Ivoire is the West-African Franc (XOF), not to be confused with the Central-African Franc (CFA). You can withdraw it from ATMs in the airport. We made most of our payments by wire transfer before arrival. XE had the best combination of exchange rate and fees of the services I checked.

We found it useful to get a local Orange SIM card (though Google Fi also worked). There is a stall in the airport after the baggage claim.

We flew via Air France on our first flight, and Brussels Airlines on the second.



Johnston's Genet

We do not recommend the latter airline, as they have given us trouble with our heavy camera-filled carry-ons on two different trips. Our local flights were purchased from Air Cote d'Ivoire. The flights occur at different times on different days, and can be unexpectedly rescheduled at the last minute. It is possible to reach Ecotel Touraco in one day from Abidjan, if you fly to San Pedro in the morning. I recommend purchasing local flights early as they can sell out.

We arranged road transfers through the management of Camp Chimpanzee/Ecotel Touraco (see Section 2.2 for contact information), except for the return trip from Camp Mangabey to Abidjan. It was approximately six hours by car from San Pedro to Ecotel Touraco, five hours from Ecotel Touraco to Camp Mangabey, and ten hours from Camp Mangabey to Abidjan. Of course, driving times depend on weather and road conditions. Taï is close to the border with Liberia and there were multiple road checkpoints manned by security officials. They seemed to know the driver and we were waved through without delay.

We stayed at two different hotels in Abidjan. In 2022, we spent a night at Hotel Blawa a short distance from the airport. It was comfortable and the manager (owner?) was very helpful. On our second trip, we decided to pay more and stay at the Radisson Blu hotel even closer to the airport.

## 2 Ecotel Touraco and Camp Chimpanzee

Ecotel Touraco is located across the Hana River from Taï National Park. It is surrounded by secondary forest, which can be productive for herps and smaller mammals. Nearby plantations also hold interesting reptiles and amphibians. However, the main highlight of the Ecotel is the Hana River. One can explore it



Green Bush Viper

by motorboat or canoe, at either day or night. Navigability depends on the water level. When it's too low, access to the park upstream is limited by treefalls which are left intact to allow Chimpanzees to cross the river. On the other hand, after heavy rains, the current can be too strong for canoes. On the river, we observed many critically endangered West African Slender-snouted Crocodiles (mostly immatures) and had good avian sightings (e.g. African Finfoot and White-crested Bittern). We saw many species of arboreal mammals spotlighting by boat, but none were seen exclusively in this manner and views were better on foot. Conditions may be more favorable for mammal-watching during the dry season, when the banks are visible and terrestrial mammals may be found more easily. It is also possible to access the river by boat from Camp Chimpanzee, after a short hike.

On a couple occasions, I took the boat far down the river and disembarked at different points to walk in the forest. The base of Mount Niénokoué (a large inselberg) is of particular interest. There are no man-made trails in this area, but there are many fresh elephant paths. I regrettably did not spend much time exploring this area — the water level was too low on my first visit, and there were poachers in the vicinity during my second. A nesting colony of White-necked Picathartes is near the base of the inselberg. Even if you are not a birder, I recommend taking the time to see these remarkable creatures if you have not done so elsewhere. The guides recommend arriving to the nesting site at dawn, but I'd guess that it is also possible to view them in the evening based on my experiences at other sites.

The eight-kilometer long entrance trail begins across the river from Ecotel Touraco. It is mostly flat and even, and goes through a variety of habitats. The beginning is close to the Hana River, and it is the only place I found Black Duiker. The





Water Chevrotain

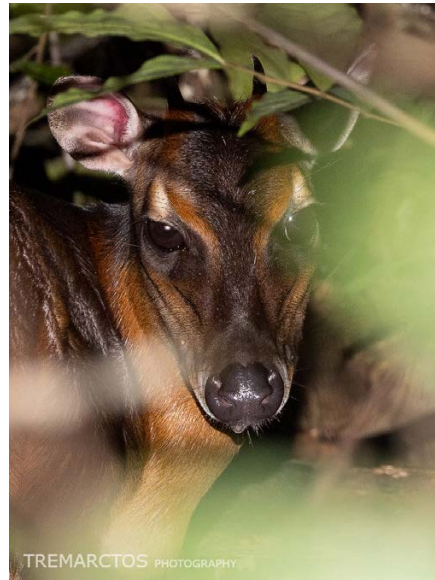
stretch closer to Camp Chimpanzee was quite productive; I observed several species diurnal primates, a few genets, a Maned Owl, and (on my last day...) tracks of African Golden Cat. Sandy sections of the trail are reputed to be good places to find the two species of social mongooses during the daytime, but I did not have any luck with them.

Camp Chimpanzee is situated in primary forest, about eight kilometers by foot from Ecotel Touraco and about two kilometers from the river. The camp is surrounded by a large trail network that goes through diverse habitats. The terrain is uneven; many trails traverse the tops of ridges (I found these to be less productive) and others go up-and-down between them, providing access to swamps and streams in lower areas.

The trails around Camp Chimpanzee appear to be the best location to find the rarer mammals of the region. The highlight was a Pygmy Hippo, which was found at night resting just to the side of a trail. After about an hour, it got up and moved around slowly. I was able to watch it from a short distance for quite some time. It was one of my best all-time mammal observations. While I only had one observation, there was plenty of hippo sign throughout the area. My other top mammalian targets were Jentink's Duiker, Zebra Duiker, and Liberian Mongoose. All of these are present around Camp Chimpanzee, and we flushed a couple animals that Kevin told me were the first two species. I also spent a few afternoons searching for Liberian Mongoose in sandy areas along the entrance trail, without success. Kevin advised me that that the dry season might be better for all three species, and recommended daytime searches for all of them, even the Duikers. April Conway's PhD thesis supports this, indicating that Duikers moved away from the deep forest and towards plantations during the wet season, as there are few fruit available. There were noticeable fluctua-



Maned Owl



Bay Duiker

tions in Duiker numbers during my second visit. At the beginning of the trip, I saw several Maxwell's Duikers and a Bay Duiker on most nights, but they almost vanished and towards the end of the trip, when I would only see a couple Maxwell's per night.

Chimp tracking is one of the main highlights of a visit to Tai. Generally, one leaves very early in the morning to reach the place they slept the previous night. After a wait, the Chimpanzees descend to the forest floor. You can then follow them from a close distance as they move rapidly through the forest, exhibiting a variety of interesting behaviors. I observed one Chimpanzee crack nuts with a rock anvil, and another build a nest! On our first visit, the Chimps were feeding in a fig tree visible from camp and I was able to track them in the afternoon instead of the morning. The other diurnal primates are easily findable - I observed all of them along the entrance trail.

## 2.1 Accommodations

At Ecotel Touraco, one sleeps in comfortable chalets that remain cool during the daytime. They include private bathrooms with running water. A spacious common area is used for meals and lounging. Electricity is available for charging batteries, and there is sporadic cellphone service.

The accommodation at Camp Chimpanzee consists of rubber tents on raised platforms. After a recent blowdown, they get very hot in the sunlight. I expect the management will do something to address this, but you may want to bring a camping hammock or your own tent to sleep in the forest. There is a flush



Hayman's Tear-drop Fruit Bat



Pohle's Fruit Bat

toilet and a shower with running water. A larger platform is used for meals, and there are limited facilities to charge batteries. It is sometimes possible to obtain cellphone service a short walk away from camp.

Meals at Ecotel Touraco and Camp Chimpanzee were excellent, and we could eat at times of our choosing. Only a couple other groups visited the area during our stay. It may be busier in the dry season.

## 2.2 Logistics

To arrange a visit to Ecotel Touraco and Camp Chimpanzee, contact Karl Diakite at [karl.livingthewild@gmail.com](mailto:karl.livingthewild@gmail.com). After arriving in Abidjan, it's a short plane ride to San Pedro followed by an five-to-six hour drive to Ecotel Touraco. We arranged ground transportation with Karl, but booked our own flights from Air Cote d'Ivoire. The flights occur at different times on different days, and can be rescheduled at the last minute.

A guide is required at Camp Chimpanzee. Mine was Kevin. While I normally prefer to walk on my own, I enjoyed working with him. He was extremely knowledgeable about the forest and the mammals, having spent many months tracking Chimpanzees. He's had some amazing experiences (e.g. witnessing Chimpanzees reacting to a Leopard at night when he was camping underneath their nests) and knows the best times of year and areas of the forest to search for the rarer large mammals. I highly recommend asking for Kevin as your guide. He has been working on his English, and should be able to communicate with non-French speakers (though I know a bit of French, and we switched back



Western Tree Frog



Lamotte's Running Frog

and forth between languages). Sylvain (the camp manager) was also extremely helpful and assisted with translation.

Camp Chimpanzee and Ecotel Touraco are quite expensive to visit. The approximate rate is 170,00 XOF per person per day as of 2023, though the exact amount depends on the number of people and nights. Transfer to/from San Pedro was an additional 180,000 XOF each way. If you'd like to spend extended hours in the forest at night, please say so when booking.

### 3 Camp Mangabey

Camp Mangabey is located several miles east of Taï City within Taï National Park. The camp is surrounded by a mix of primary forest, secondary forest, and old plantations. This site had significantly more visitors than Camp Chimpanzee and multiple tourist groups visited to see the Mangabeys while we were there.

The trail system in the area was extensive and gave access to a variety of habitats, including primary forests, secondary forests, old plantations, and swamps. The entrance trail was approximately 8 km long and went through many sunny areas that looked like they would be good places to find basking snakes. Some trails passed through old coco farms, which we were told were the best places to find basking forest cobras during the day. There were also several large muddy wetland areas within a couple km of the camp which were very good places to find herps (particularly during or after rain) — David found many frog species, snakes, crocodiles, sleeping lizards, and a caecilian in these muddy areas. Many of the longer trails were poorly maintained, and were difficult to traverse quietly.

There are rare sightings of Pygmy Hippo and Jentink's Duiker has shown up on camera traps, but it appears that the larger mammals are generally more abundant at Camp Chimpanzee. The diversity and abundance of smaller species





Underwood's Nocturnal Tree Snake

seemed about equivalent.

Camp Mangabey has habituated groups of Sooty Mangabey and Western Red Colubus. I didn't find them to be noticeably tamer than the ones near Camp Chimpanzee, though if you're just visiting for a night and need to see these species they are more reliable.

### **3.1 Accommodations**

The camp's accommodations were fairly basic. There were tents for sleeping and storing equipment, along with some roofed areas for eating, etc. They also had flushing toilets and running showers. Electricity was very limited (we brought portable power banks to keep our gear charged and sent them back to Tai City to be recharged as needed). The camp management was fairly strict with several rules such as always staying with a guide and having separate forest/camp shoes. Meals were basic, and were at set times with other tourist groups. There was no cell signal near camp, though there is a place about 500 meters away with limited connectivity.

### **3.2 Logistics**

To arrange a visit, contact the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation at [reservation@wildchimps.org](mailto:reservation@wildchimps.org). If you have difficulty arranging something other than a standard tourist visit, it may be helpful to ask Carole Colin (though she is very busy and I'd recommend trying the email address listed first). Guides are required in Camp Mangabey. If you plan to go out at night make sure to arrange for a guide who is comfortable with this and be prepared to pay extra if you want to go out long hours most nights. Our guides at this site were not particularly knowledgeable about the forest. When booking I'd recommend



African Pitta ssp. pulih



White-breasted Guineafowl

emphasizing that it is more important to have a guide that knows how to walk quietly and search for animals, rather than one that speaks English.

The drive to Taï City from Djouroutou was approximately five hours for us. And before setting out for the camp, we stopped by the main office in Taï to fill out paperwork, take a rapid covid test, and explain how to charge our power banks. From there, we were dropped off at the start of the entrance trail along with our guides and arrived in Camp in time for dinner. Porters were available to take most of our gear to the camp ahead of our arrival.

The cost was much lower than Camp Chimpanzee. In 2022, we paid 160,000 XOF per person for the first two nights and 57,500 XOF per person for each additional night.

## 4 Resources

Several mammal-watching reports are available at [mammalwatching.com](http://mammalwatching.com) and a herping trip report by Matthieu Berroneau can be found at <http://www.matthieu-berroneau.fr>.

Useful books included The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals; the six volume Mammals of Africa by Kingdon; Frogs and Other Amphibians of Africa by Channing and Rödel; A Provisional Field Guide to the Squirrels of Western Africa by Daan Drucker; Snakes of Central and Western Africa by Chippaux and Jackson; Lézards, Crocodiles, et Tortues d'Afrique Occidentale et du Sahara by Trape, Trape, and Chirio; and Birds of Western Africa by Bor-



Brown-cheeked Hornbill

row and Demey. Please see the references at the end of this report for a list of relevant papers.

## 5 Acknowledgements

We're especially grateful to Tom Clode for providing detailed information on Tai, and for putting us in touch with the right people to organize a trip. In addition, we'd like to thank Carole Colin, Karl Ditake, Jakob Fahr, Justin Philbois, Mark-Oliver Rödel, Maxime Schmitt, Kevin Tanguy, and Ian Thompson for their help and/or advice. Finally, we thank Daan Drukker, Venkat Sankar, and Philippe Gaubert for their opinions on matters of identification.

## 6 Species Lists

I've included lists of mammals, reptiles and amphibians observed below. Sightings due only to David are marked with a \*. Note that we spent most of our time searching at night; our species lists would probably be quite different if we had dedicated more effort to diurnal species.

### 6.1 Mammals

1. African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*): heard three times close by and seen once from a safe distance through the thermal scope. Two observations were close to Ecotel Touraco, and one was north of Camp Chimpanzee.



Demidoff's Galago

2. West African Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*): on our first trip, the Chimpanzees were feeding in a fig tree visible from Camp Chimpanzee! You can also get up very early in the morning to track them. I highly recommend doing so if they aren't nearby, as you can observe many interesting behaviors.
3. King Colobus (*Colobus polykomos*): common.
4. Olive Colobus (*Procolobus verus*): seen once near Camp Chimpanzee, in a mixed group with Diana Monkeys.
5. Western Red Colobus (*Piliocolobus badius*): seen at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey. There is a habituated group at the latter.
6. Smoky Mangabey (*Cercocebus atys*): seen at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey. There is a habituated group at Camp Mangabey.
7. Diana Guenon (*Cercopithecus diana*): common.
8. Campbell's Monkey (*Cercopithecus campbelli*): near Ecotel Touraco.
9. Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey (*Cercopithecus petaurista*): common.
10. West African Potto (*Perodicticus potto*): common.
11. Demidoff's Dwarf Galago (*Galagoides demidovii*): common.
12. Thomas's Dwarf Galago (*Galagoides thomasi*): common by ear.
13. Slender-tailed Squirrel (*Protoxerus aubinnii*): a few sightings near Camp Chimpanzee.





*Nudaurelia petiveri*

14. Forest Giant Squirrel (*Protoxerus stangeri*): several sightings at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey.
15. Fire-footed Rope Squirrel (*Funisciurus pyrropus*): seen a couple times at Camp Chimpanzee.
16. Red-legged Sun Squirrel (*Heliosciurus rufobrachium*): seen a few times.
17. African Dormouse (*Graphiurus* sp): several sightings. *G. nagtglasii* and perhaps one other species.
18. Forest Giant Pouched Rat (*Cricetomys emini*): quite common, and seen frequently when using a red light.
19. Big-eared Swamp Rat (*Malacomys* sp): one photographed on the first trip. Abundant on the second trip.
20. *Typomys* sp
21. Various rodents (probably including *Typomys* and *Hylomyscus*). See my photos on inaturalist.
22. African Brush-tailed Porcupine (*Atherurus africanus*): several sightings.
23. Beecroft's Anomalure (*Anomalurus beecrofti*): several sightings, mostly near water or the camp sites.
24. Pel's Anomalure (*Anomalurus pelii auzembergeri*): one seen at Camp Chimpanzee. The subspecies here is jet black, with no white on the dorsum. Be careful, as the Derby's Anomalures present in Tai are very dark silvery gray, can sometimes appear almost black, and there is a record of a melanistic individual. See Daan Drukker's guide.

25. Derby's Anomalure (*Anomalurus derbianus*): the most common anomalure in forest.
26. Lesser Anomalure (*Anomalurus pusillus*): not uncommon near Camp Chimpanzee.
27. White Toothed-Shrew (*Crocidura* sp): two stopped long enough for me to photograph.
28. Büttikofer's Epauletted Fruit Bat (*Epomops buettikoferi*): a couple seen near Camp Chimpanzee, more heard at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey.
29. Hammer-headed Fruit Bat (*Hypsignathus monstrosus*): seen flying over the Hana River, and heard lekking near Camp Mangabey.
30. Pohle's Fruit Bat (*Casinycteris ophiodon*): I saw one perched near Camp Mangabey, and David found another in the vicinity of Camp Chimpanzee. One of the world's most beautiful bats.
31. Hayman's Tear-drop Fruit Bat (*Scotonycteris occidentalis*): two sightings near Camp Chimpanzee, and one at Camp Mangabey.
32. Cyclops Roundleaf Bat (*Doryrhina cyclops*): common.
33. Slit-faced Bats (*Nycteris* sp): seen once in a large hollow log in a plantation near Ecotel Touraco, and once perched below eye level in a tree
34. Benito Roundleaf Bat (*Hipposideros beatus*): found in a large hollow log near Camp Chimpanzee.
35. African Palm-civet (*Nandinia binotata*): common.
36. Johnston's Genet (*Genetta johnstoni*): a couple sightings on the first trip, but seen almost daily on the second one. Most common near Camp Chimpanzee.
37. Pardine Genet? (*Genetta pardina*?): a couple of our photos were tentatively identified as this species by an expert. Others think they look more like *G. bournoni*. See the end of the report.
38. African Civet (*Civettictis civetta*): a couple sightings at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey.
39. Marsh Mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*): a few sightings at all locations.
40. Tree Pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*): two seen. Contact me for details.
41. Pygmy Hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*): one amazing encounter! See the text for details.

42. Water Chevrotain (*Hyemoschus aquaticus*): common in the streams near Camp Chimpanzee.
43. Maxwell's Duiker (*Philantomba maxwellii*): very common, with up to 16 in a single night. However, they seem to move in and out of the area and I had very few sightings towards the end of the second trip.
44. Ogilby's [Brooke's] Duiker (*Cephalophorus [brookei] ogilbyi*): the third most common Duiker. A few sightings at both Camp Chimpanzee and Camp Mangabey, but it seemed to be more common near Camp Mangabey.
45. Black Duiker (*Cephalophorus niger*): one seen close to the beginning of the trail from Ecotel Touraco to Camp Chimpanzee. I was told that it is also seen along the entrance road to Camp Mangabey.
46. Bay Duiker (*Cephalophus dorsalis*): the second most common duiker, with several observations. The form here is strikingly marked.

#### 6.1.1 Species Not Seen

- Western Tree Hyrax (*Dendrohyrax dorsalis*): frustratingly common by voice.
- Pygmy Anomalure (*Idiurus* sp): should be common in the forest, but difficult to observe. A researcher at Camp Mangabey told me he had seen two on one occasion. Venkat Sankar has had luck staking out feeding trees in central Africa, but I didn't try as I had other priorities.
- Ratel (*Mellivora capensis*): researchers at Camp Mangabey told me they had seen melanistic individuals on a few occasions.
- Liberian Mongoose (*Liberiictis kuhni*): the guides at Camp Chimpanzee reported seeing mongooses in sandy areas that could be this species. I spent several afternoons searching in promising areas without luck.
- Common Cusimanse (*Crossarchus obscurus*): follows monkeys, at least in the dry season. Kevin told me that mongooses were easier to locate then, as they make noise in dry leaf litter.
- African Golden Cat (*Caracal aurata*): I found a pawprint of one just outside of Camp Chimpanzee on my last afternoon there.
- Leopard (*Panthera pardus*):
- Long-tailed Pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*).
- Giant Pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*): I didn't see any sign, but they should be in the area.

- Red River Hog (*Potamochoerus porcus*): lots of sign, but no sightings.
- Giant Forest Hog (*Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*): present, but very difficult.
- Royal Antelope (*Neotragus pygmaeus*): I heard an alarm whistle under a group of Diana Monkeys and Red Colobuses that Kevin said was this species.
- Zebra Duiker (*Cephalophula zebra*): Kevin told me that this is the most difficult Duiker.
- Jentink's Duiker (*Cephalophorus jentinki*): Kevin indicated that it was not rare, but difficult to observe. He told me that a Duiker we flushed in the daytime was this species, but I didn't get a sufficiently good view.
- Bongo (*Tragelaphus eurycerus*): we saw tracks close to Mount Niénokoué.

## 6.2 Reptiles

1. Spotted Blind Snake *Afrotyphlops punctatus*: one next to David's tent in Camp Chimpanzee on the first trip.
2. African Rock Python (*Python sebae*): one seen in a small stream near Camp Chimpanzee. Kevin said that at six meters it was not that big for this species.
3. Green Bush Viper (*Atheris chlorechis*): common after rains.
4. West African Gaboon Viper (*Bitis rhinoceros*): one beautiful individual seen. Contact me for details.
5. Green Mamba (*Diendroaspis viridis*): one seen in plantations near Ecotel Touraco.
6. Yellow Forest Snake (*Homonotus modestus*): several seen near Camp Chimpanzee on the second trip.
7. Kling's File Snake (*Gonionotophis klingi*)\*: one seen by David.
8. African Brown Water Snake (*Afronatrix anoscopus*): several seen near Camp Mangabey after heavy rain
9. Short-snouted Tree Snake (*Dipsadoboa brevirostris*): I saw one near Camp Chimpanzee, and David found another.
10. Underwood's Tree Snake (*Dipsadoboa underwoodi*): one on the trail from Ecotel Touraco to Camp Chimpanzee.



11. Gunther's Tree Snake/Green Tree Snake (*Dipsadoboa unicolor/viridis*): the most commonly found snake in the forest. I'm not sure which species we observed.
12. Bush Snakes (*Philothamnus* sp): a few seen.
13. Black-lined Emerald Snake (*Hapsidophrys lineatus*): I found one sleeping, and David located another.
14. Forest Vine Snake (*Thelotornis kirtlandii*): seen a few times.
15. Orange Tree Snake (*Toxicodryas pulverulenta*): I saw one, and David found two.
16. Smith's African Water Snake (*Grayia smithii*): seen three times.
17. Peters's Rock Agama (*Agama picticauda*): extremely common near human habitation.
18. Mystery Agama (*Agama* sp): a smaller agamid near Ecotel Touraco???
19. Banded Leaf-toed Gecko (*Hemidactylus fasciatus*): common.
20. Tropical House Gecko (*Hemidactylus mabouia*): common at buildings.
21. Prickly Half-toed Gecko (*Hemidactylus muriceus*): I tentatively identified a few geckos I observed in the forest as this species.
22. Cameroon Dwarf Gecko (*Lygodactylus conraui*): a couple sightings.
23. Nile Monitor (*Varanus niloticus*): one seen swimming across the Hana. Note that *V. ornatus* has been lumped into this taxon.
24. Forest Hinged Terrapin (*Pelusios cupulatta*): one seen.
25. Home's Hingeback Tortoise (*Kinixys homeana*): David and I each saw one.

### 6.3 Amphibians

This list follows the taxonomy in Channing and Rodel. Amphibians were much far common and diverse on our second trip, when conditions were substantially wetter.

1. Caecilian (*Geotrypetes* cf. *seraphini*): I saw two individuals, and David observed two more. I've long wanted to see a caecilian, and they may be easier to find here than in the neotropics (where I've never found one). They were moving aboveground after rain.

2. Tropical Clawed Frog (*Xenopus tropicalis*): several found, in pools and stagnant areas of water. There was an apparent breeding aggregation in a pit below Camp Chimpanzee.
3. Togo Toad (*Sclerophrys togoensis*): very common in the forest.
4. Lamotte's Running Frog (*Kassina lamottei*): a very cool frog, which usually conceals itself in a burrow. Easiest to find by following the call (a rather loud high pitched whistle).
5. Striped Spiny Reed Frog (*Afrixalus dorsalis*): in plantations near Ecotel Touraco.
6. Nigerian Spiny Reed Frog (*Afrixalus nigeriensis*): in primary forest.
7. Uniform Reed Frog (*Hyperolius concolor*)
8. Spotted Reed Frog (*Hyperolius guttulatus*)
9. Western Foam-Nest Frog (*Chiromantis rufescens*): two seen, near Camp Mangabey after a heavy rain.
10. Western Tree Frog (*Leptopelis occidentalis*): the least common *Leptopelis*.
11. Ghostly Tree Frog (*Leptopelis spiritusnoctis*): the most common *Leptopelis* inside the forest.
12. Large-eared Tree Frog (*Leptopelis macrotis*): commonly found adjacent to the Hana River and larger streams.
13. Western Night Frog (*Astylosternus occidentalis*): common after rainfall.
14. Western Long-Fingered Frog (*Cardioglossa occidentalis*): a few seen.
15. Mottled Squeaker (*Arthroleptis* cf. *poecilonotus*): very common. Apparently, there are multiple morphologically indistinguishable species present.
16. Puddle Frogs (*Phrynobatrachus* sp): in addition to the species listed below, we saw a few that we were not able to identify to species level.
17. Allen's Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus alleni*)
18. Peter's Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus calcaratus*): common near Ecotel Touraco after rains.
19. Guinea Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus guineensis*): one seen above a small water-filled hole in a tree root.
20. Guttural Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus gutturosus*): common on the banks of the Hana River, and also in the vicinity of Ecotel Touraco.
21. Liberian Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus liberiensis*)

22. Ridged Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus plicatus*): seen in camp a couple times, as well as in the forest.
23. Villiers' Puddle Frog (*Phrynobatrachus villiersi*): one seen near Camp Chimpanzee.
24. Limbé Grass Frog (*Ptychadena cf. aequiplicata*): the most common ridged frog in the forest.
25. Bibron's Grass Frog (*Ptychadena bibroni*)
26. Snouted Grass Frog (*Ptychadena longirostris*): common in the campsites.
27. Mascarene Grass Frog (*Ptychadena mascareniensis*): found in plantations near Ecotel Touraco.
28. Allen's Giant Frog (*Conraua alleni*): I found one in a small sandy stream. David located another.
29. African Tiger Frog (*Hoplobatrachus occipitalis*): common along larger streams.
30. Brown Fishing Frog (*Aubria subsigillata*): along slow-moving streams.
31. West African White-lipped Frog (*Amnirana parva*): very common. A split from *Amnirana albolabris*. Also keep an eye open for *Amnirana occidentalis*, which should be present.

## 6.4 Birds Identified

I did not make much of an effort to find birds during the daytime, especially passerines. While I did learn most of the bird vocalizations on my trip to Sierra Leone in 2016 (one of my last trips as a "birder"), my memory of most of them has faded. As such, birders should not take the brevity of this list at face value, nor the lack of sightings of most of the endemics. I believe most of them should be present in the area (see ebird). There is a *Picathartes* colony accessible from Camp Chimpanzee (near Mount Niénokoué), but as I had already had spectacular observations of this taxa in Sierra Leone, I decided not to make a specific trip to see them.

1. White-faced Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*): a few seen along the Hana River.
2. Hartlaub's Duck (*Pteronetta hartlaubii*) : seen on (almost) every boat trip along the Hana.
3. White-breasted Guineafowl (*Agelastes meleagrides*): not uncommon near Camp Chimpanzee. I observed a group once during the day and twice

- roosting at night (plus one observation at Camp Mangabey). Birders visiting Taï should have an excellent chance to find this globally rare species.
4. Western Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera verreauxi*): a couple sightings, once at day and once at night.
  5. Latham's Francolin (*Peliperdix lathamii*): common by voice at night. Seen a few times on the night roost.
  6. Pigeon - check which one
  7. Blue-headed Wood-Dove (*Turtur brehmeri*): common by voice during the daytime. I observed this beautiful dove a few times, including excellent views of one roosting at night.
  8. African Green-Pigeon (*Treron calvus*): common by voice.
  9. Great Blue Turaco (*Corythaeola cristata*): common.
  10. Yellow-billed Turaco (*Tauraco macrorhynchus*): common.
  11. Western Plantain-eater (*Crinifer piscator*): seen in transit.
  12. Black-throated Coucal (*Centropus leucogaster*): commonly heard near dusk.
  13. African Emerald Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx cupreus*): common by voice.
  14. Red-chested Cuckoo (*Cuculus solitarius*): common by voice.
  15. Brown Nightjar (*Veles binotatus*): heard frequently, but difficult to see. I observed one perched along the Hana River.
  16. African Finfoot (*Podica senegalensis*): seen several times along the river.
  17. Buff-spotted Flufftail (*Sarothrura elegans*): heard a few times calling at night. I tried to find it a couple times, without success.
  18. Nkulengu Rail (*Himantornis haematopus*): heard a few times, always distantly.
  19. Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*): one seen along the Hana River, close to town.
  20. White-crested Bittern (*Tigriornis leucolopha*): seen a few times at night along the Hana River.
  21. Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*): very common along the Hana.
  22. Hadada Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*): common along the Hana.
  23. Palm-nut Vulture (*Gypohierax angolensis*): often seen from Ecotel Touraco, and along the Hana.



24. Congo Serpent-Eagle (*Dryotriorchis spectabilis*) : heard once or twice.
25. Crowned Eagle (*Stephanoaetus coronatus*): heard a couple times. I made an effort to see it, without success.
26. Red-thighed Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter erythropus*): seen once at the Camp Chimpanzee clearing.
27. Long-tailed Hawk (*Urotriorchis macrourus*): often calling near Camp Chimpanzee. I saw it twice, once perched and once flying over.
28. Sandy Scops-Owl (*Otus icterorhynchus*): heard several times. I (finally) observed one calling from the canopy after playback.
29. Maned Owl (*Jubula lettii*): I saw one perched above a small treefall gap near Camp Chimpanzee. Sadly, I did not see the face: only the belly and the back of the head! One of my most frustrating sightings.
30. Fraser's Eagle-Owl (*Ketupa poensis*): common and vocal. My best sighting was when one perched on top of a chalet at Ecotel Touraco.
31. Shelley's Eagle-Owl (*Ketupa shelleyi*): I had one observation of this impressive owl near Camp Chimpanzee, in the daytime. I also heard one the following night.
32. Red-chested Owlet (*Glaucidium tephronotum*): common by voice.
33. African Wood-Owl (*Strix woodfordii*): many observations.
34. Narina Trogon (*Apaloderma narina*): I heard one calling most days from Camp Chimpanzee on the second trip.
35. Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill (*Lophoceros camurus*): common.
36. African Pied Hornbill (*Lophoceros fasciatus*): common.
37. White-crested Hornbill (*Horizocerus albocristatus*): seen a few times.
38. Black Dwarf Hornbill (*Horizocerus hartlaubi*): seen a couple times.
39. Yellow-casqued Hornbill (*Ceratogymna elata*): common.
40. Brown-cheeked Hornbill (*Bycanistes cylindricus*): uncommon.
41. Piping Hornbill (*Bycanistes fistulator*): common.
42. White-bellied Kingfisher (*Corythornis leucogaster*): I often found them roosting at night.
43. Chocolate-backed Kingfisher (*Halcyon badia*): common by voice, seen a few times both at day and roosting at night.
44. Woodland Kingfisher (*Halcyon senegalensis*): common along the Hana.

45. Blue-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon malimbica*): common along the Hana.
46. Giant Kingfisher (*Megaceryle maxima*): uncommon along the Hana.
47. Speckled Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus scolopaceus*): one sighting.
48. Red-rumped Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus atroflavus*): seen once, low to the ground. Displaying?
49. Spotted Honeyguide (*Indicator maculatus*): heard near Camp Chimpanzee. I'm not sure why this vocalization stuck in my memory?
50. Gray Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*): often heard and seen flying overhead at dusk.
51. Rufous-sided Broadbill (*Smithornis rufolateralis*): seen a couple times.
52. African Pitta (*Pitta angolensis pulih*): seen once roosting at night. May be conspecific with Green-breasted Pitta (*Pitta reichenowi*) rather than the migratory taxon it is currently grouped with.
53. Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye (*Platysteira concreta*): found roosting at night a couple times. A beautiful bird!
54. Red-billed Helmetshrike (*Prionops caniceps*): seen a couple times.
55. Drongo: which one?
56. Black-headed Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone rufiventer*)
57. White-throated Blue Swallow (*Hirundo nigrita*): abundant along the Hana.
58. Green-tailed Bristlebill (*Bleda eximius*): seen roosting at night.
59. Yellow-whiskered Greenbul (*Eurillas latirostris*): seen roosting at night.
60. Copper-tailed Starling (*Hylopsar cupreocauda*): seen near Camp Chimpanzee and Ecotel Touraco.
61. White-browed Forest-Flycatcher (*Fraseria cinerascens*):
62. White-tailed Alethe (*Alethe diademata*)
63. Forest Scrub-Robin (*Cercotrichas leucosticta*): found roosting a couple times, and seen during the day at an antswarm.
64. Orange-breasted Forest Robin (*Stiphornis erythrothorax*): often found roosting at night.
65. Red-vented Malimbe (*Malimbus scutatus*): seen along the Hana.



Pel's Anomalure



Derby's Anomalure



Beecroft's Anomalure



Lesser Anomalure

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Pardine (?) Genet, Individual 1



Pardine (?) Genet, Individual 1



Pardine (?) Genet, Individual 2



Mystery Genet, Individual 3



Mystery Genet, Individual 3