



Pangolins & Other Mammals of Ghana

February 2024 Trip Report

In early 2024 Royle Safaris conducted a scouting trip to Ghana to see if we could get a specialist mammalwatching trip to this awesome country and see some of West Africa's rarest species and of course focus on not one but two species of pangolin which can be seen with relative ease in the forests of Ghana. Royle Safaris director and tour leader Martin Royle went on the trip along with his wife, Becky. We hired Robert Naktor and his brother Isaac for the trip as these two are pangolin finding experts and also the best mammalwatching guides in the country.

The trip would visit some of the best places in Ghana for mammals but we were packing in places in a relatively short amount of time, and deliberately left out some places which are pretty well established or have good success rates in seeing certain species. We would incorporate these places into a longer mammalwatching itinerary in the future, but this trip would start in Accra and the nearby savanna park of Shai Hills followed by the degraded but surprisingly productive forest of Atewa (productive mostly due to the long access road through the forested ridge line and the ability to walk through the night) and then we went north and into central Ghana to Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary (which was not as productive as usual) and Boabeng Fiema Monkey Sanctuary before coming back south and visiting the small reserve aptly named Picathartes Forest (but could be better called Pangolin Forest for mammalwatchers) and then to finish in Kakum National Park. We ended up not spending the full time originally planned in Kakum as Martin promised Becky that if we had seen one of the two pangolin species by then we would do 1.5 days in Kakum and then spend the rest of the time in a nice beach resort to end the trip relaxing and taking in the sun, sea and seafood.

Overall the trip was very successful with nearly all targets seen and some nice extras. We have included a sightings table below and some pictures but also a short summary of each species seen at each location below.

We didn't see much in Accra other than some common African city birds and a couple of tropical house geckos in the hotel, but it wasn't until we left there and visited Shai Hills National Park that we found our first mammals. Here we had **green monkeys** or some hybrid of tantalus/green monkey which were common along with **olive baboons**. We also found some **red-legged sun squirrels** here around an area which was very good for elusive and recently split white-crowned cliff chats. It took us much longer than anticipated to find some **Buffon's kob** but in the end we did see several either on their own or in small groups before we visited a well known bat cave to see the colony of **Egyptian tomb bats** (we couldn't see any other species) and on the way up to the cave we flushed a **Maxwell's duiker**. Some other nice birds we found here included western marsh harrier, double-spurred francolin, black-billed wood-dove, rufous-crowned roller, violet turaco, red-shouldered cuckooshrike and green woodhoopoes.

Following here we went back to Accra, showered and packed up and then left to head to the next forest, this is the large forest of Atewa. The forest is heavily exploited, both in terms of logging and poaching and it was not uncommon to see poachers walking the trail and entering the forest whilst we were there. However the access is good and the road which follows the ridge is surprisingly productive. Robert has seen many pangolins there and whilst we didn't we did see enough to keep this location in the overall itinerary. What we did see here were some excellent **western tree hyraxes**, **Thomas' dwarf galago** and a nice variety and abundance of squirrel species including **small sun squirrel**, **Gambian sun squirrel** and **African forest squirrel**. The other nice mammal we had was an unexpected **West African long-tailed shrew** which was hunting among a huge plague like number of nymphs which seem to have all emerged at the same time and filled the air and sprawled on the ground. To say the shrew was hunting is a misnomer, it was more running around picking off the thousands of insects as they struggled to get into the air. Whilst here we had some nice birds, including red-headed malimbe, Purell's illapodsis, African hobby, western nictator, Finch's flycatcher-thrush, velvet-mantled drongo, speckled tinkerbird and green hylia.

Bobiri has been a decent place to see pangolins in the past, the reason being that some were released here and were hanging around the guest house, but they seem to have moved further into the forest and the sightings have become fewer. But we did have a good time walking around the forest here, including finding 2 stunning **Pel's anomalures**, **Gambian pouched rat**, **Gambian sun squirrel**, **small sun squirrel**, **African straw-coloured fruit bat** and in a fallen tree trunk we found a couple of **large slit-faced bats**.

We then went to the small protected forest of Boabeng Fiema, a small forest which has been protected by a family (and now the local villages as a whole) since the 1970's to keep a small population of white-thighed colobus safe. As a result of the forest being protected for this long the area is home to the largest trees in the area and a growing population of various species. It is also (as a result of the work of the local people here) very easy to see the **white-thighed colobus** as well as another species of primate here, **Lowe's mona monkeys**. These cheeky monkeys can be hand fed bananas and it is interesting that some of the troops are all over you (literally) getting the bananas whilst just a few meters away in another troops territory the monkeys are shier and don't jump on you. We just spent a short morning here as we had a long way to travel today, but did have time to explore a little more of the forest and found a greyish eagle-owl and a surprise group of **common cusimanse**.

Our next and final stop in central Ghana is the newly named Picarthes Forest, a site where the yellow-headed picathartes (a very special bird) was discovered and then re-discovered and now is the focus of small sustainable eco-tourism for the local villagers. We walked around the forest in the late afternoon to get to the picathartes roosting site for dusk, when the birds would be coming back to their roost and along the way we found **red-legged sun squirrel** and a beautiful **fire-footed rope squirrel**. After we watched the picathartes coming back to the roost and hopping around we left and went back to the village along the way out we found a **striped ground squirrel** and then waited until around 30 minutes after dark before going back into the forest with a couple of local expert pangolin trackers and managed to find and have great views of a wonderful **white-bellied pangolin**! What an afternoon / evening – picathartes and pangolin, it doesn't get much better than that in an African forest.

We then headed back towards the coast and the most famous park in the country and certainly the most popular, we would only have 1.5 days here as we did see one of the two pangolin targets and so the beach and fresh seafood was calling us. The park is full of bird life and we racked up many species including black-casqued hornbills, buff-throated sunbird, little grey greenbul, wood warbler, black-winged oriole, golden-backed weaver, white-chested negrofinch, western bearded greenbul, blue-headed wood-dove, yellow-billed turaco and many others. Mammal wise we did not do very well with primates in particular hard to come back, which was a surprise and not for lack of effort, but we did try and focus our time on trying to find a black-bellied pangolin. We didn't give ourselves very long in fairness and only saw **Demidoff's dwarf galago, green bush squirrel** and **Gambian pouched rat**. Another highlight was a very green bush viper just off the path and a large forest scorpion in the middle of the trail. Whilst we were at the beach resort we had a phone call from Isaac, Robert had taken some other mammalwatching clients (and clients of Royle Safaris – Samuel Marlin and Maire-Peirre) into Kakum and they had found a black-bellied pangolin. We decided to leave the ice cold beers and cocktails and poolside and hastily head to them in the forest. Alas by the time we got there the pangolin had retreated into the thick vegetation for the night. We did have Samuel's amazing pictures to look at. But the proof of concept that if we had not decided to call the wildlife watching part of the trip early it would have been a two-pangolin trip!

Because of the great success we had on this trip and the promise for more, Royle Safaris has launched our first dedicated mammalwatching trip to Ghana which will be run in March 2025. We have filled this trip first trip but will be repeating this in future years. So if you would like to know more about the itinerary we have chosen (which includes all of these places visited here as well as Mole National Park (for Gambian mongoose, red-flanked duiker and Kintambo rope squirrel) and we also go over the Volta to see some east Volta species including Benin tree hyrax and mona monkey); please contact and we can send the brochure and answer any further questions. Our 2025 trip will be lead by Charles Foley and Martin Royle along with Robert Naktor so we hope for a very successful trip in due course.

Species List

Mammals

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Pel's Anomalure	<i>Anomalurus pelii</i>
2	Lowe's Mona Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus lowei</i>
3	Green monkey	<i>Chlorocebus sabaeus</i>
4	White-thighed Colobus	<i>Colobus vellerosus</i>
5	Gambian Pouched Rat	<i>Cricetomys gambianus</i>
6	West African Long-tailed Shrew	<i>Crocidura muricauda</i>
7	Common Cusimanse	<i>Crossarchus obscurus</i>
8	Western Tree Hyrax	<i>Dendrohyrax dorsalis</i>
9	African Straw-coloured Fruit Bat	<i>Eidolon helvum</i>
10	African Striped Ground Squirrel	<i>Euxerus erythropus</i>
11	Fire-footed Rope Squirrel	<i>Funisciurus pyrropus</i>
12	Demidoff's Dwarf Galago	<i>Galagoides demidovii</i>
13	Thoma's Dwarf Galago	<i>Galagoides thomasi</i>
14	Gambian Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus gambianus</i>
15	Small Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus punctatus</i>
16	Red-legged Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus rufobrachium</i>
17	Buffon's Kob	<i>Kobus kob</i>
18	White-bellied Pangolin	<i>Manis tricuspis</i>
19	Large Slit-faced Bat	<i>Nycteris grandis</i>
20	Olive Baboon	<i>Papio anubis</i>
21	Green Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus poensis</i>
22	Maxwell's Duiker	<i>Philantomba maxwellii</i>
23	African Forest Squirrel	<i>Protoxerus stangeri</i>
24	Lake Chad Buffalo	<i>Syncerus brachyceros</i>
25	Egyptian Tomb Bat	<i>Taphozous perforatus</i>

Key – ACC (Accra) / SHI (Shia Hills) / ATE (Atewa) / BOB (Bobiri) / BOA (Boabeng Fiema) / PIC (Picarthes Forest) / KAK (Kakum) / CAP (Cape Coast)							
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Note: Some bats identified 100% at roosts or with good views. Others identified with spectrograms in combination with sightings (no spectrograms without visual confirmation are recorded as a sighting), behaviour and habitat – so not 100% but best educated guesses. For more information please email me.

Birds

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Ovambo Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter ovampensis</i>
2	Red-chested Goshawk	<i>Accipiter toussenelii</i>
3	Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>
4	Grosbeak Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>
5	Little Green Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes seimundi</i>
6	Great Egreat	<i>Ardea alba</i>
7	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
8	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
9	African Batis	<i>Batis occulta</i>
10	Greyish Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo cinerascens</i>
11	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
12	Yellow-spotted Barbet	<i>Buccanodon duchaillui</i>
13	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
14	Brown-cheeked Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i>
15	Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>
16	Red-shouldered cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>
17	Plain Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus inornatus</i>
18	Mosque Swallow	<i>Cecropis senegalensis</i>
19	Black-throated Coucal	<i>Centropus leucogaster</i>
20	Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>
21	Black-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>
22	African Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
23	Blue Malkoha	<i>Ceuthmochares aereus</i>
24	Copper Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>
25	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
26	Red-faced Cisticola	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>
27	Croaking Cisticola	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>
28	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
29	Rufous-crowned Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>
30	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
31	Western Plantain Eater	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>

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32	Western Bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger barbatus</i>
33	Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>
34	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
35	Velvet-mantled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus modestus</i>
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
37	Western Reef Heron	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
38	Little Grey Greenbul	<i>Eurillas gracilis</i>
39	Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>
40	Blue-throated Roller	<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>
41	Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>
42	African Hobby	<i>Falco cuvierii</i>
43	Palm Nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>
44	Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
45	Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i>
46	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
47	Western Long-tailed Hornbill	<i>Horizocerus albocristatus</i>
48	Green Hylia	<i>Hylia prasina</i>
49	Oriole Warbler	<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>
50	Puvell's Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis puveli</i>
51	Fraser's Eagle Owl	<i>Ketupa poensis</i>
52	Northern Fiscal	<i>Lanius humeralis</i>
53	Black-bellied Bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>
54	African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>
55	West African Pied Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros semifasciatus</i>
56	Red-headed Malimbe	<i>Malimbus rubricollis</i>
57	White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>
58	Black Bee-eater	<i>Merops gularis</i>
59	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>
60	Rosy Bee-eater	<i>Merops malimbicus</i>
61	Long-tailed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>
62	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>
63	African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
64	Violet Turaco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>
65	Cassin's Swift	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>
66	Buff-throated Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia adalberti</i>
67	Western Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>
68	Grey-headed Negrofinch	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>
69	White-breasted Negrofinch	<i>Nigrita fusconotus</i>

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70	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
71	Chestnut-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus fulgidus</i>
72	Western Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus brachyrynchus</i>
73	Black-winged Oriole	<i>Oriolus nigripennis</i>
74	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
75	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>
76	Preuss's Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon preussi</i>
77	Green Woodhoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
78	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
79	Yellow-headed Picathartes	<i>Picathartes gymnocephalus</i>
80	Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
81	Golden-backed Weaver	<i>Ploceus jacksoni</i>
82	Yellow-mantled Weaver	<i>Ploceus tricolor</i>
83	Narrow-tailed Starling	<i>Poeoptera lugubris</i>
84	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>
85	Speckled Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i>
86	Bearded Barbet	<i>Pogonornis dubius</i>
87	Seneral Parrot	<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>
88	African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
89	African Grey Parrot	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>
90	Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>
91	Piapiac	<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>
92	Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
93	Hammerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
94	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
95	Finch's Flycatcher Thrush	<i>Stizorhina finschi</i>
96	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
97	Vinaceous Dove	<i>Streptopelia vinacea</i>
98	Black-headed Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>
99	White-crowned Cliff Chat	<i>Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris</i>
100	African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>
101	African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>
102	Black-billed wood-dove	<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>
103	Blue-headed Wood-dove	<i>Turtur brehmeri</i>
104	Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>
105	African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
106	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>

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Reptiles

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	West African Rainbow Lizard	<i>Agama africana</i>
2	Rainbow Agama	<i>Agama agama</i>
3	Peter's Rock Agama	<i>Agama picticauda</i>
4	Green Bush Viper	<i>Atheris chlorechis</i>
5	West African House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus angulatus</i>
6	Tropical House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mabouia</i>
7	West African Wall Gecko	<i>Tarentola ehippiata</i>
8	Senegal Skink	<i>Trachylepis affinis</i>
9	Fire-sided Skink	<i>Trachylepis perrotetii</i>
10	African Five-lined Skink	<i>Trachylepis quinquetaeniata</i>
11	Savanna Monitor	<i>Varanus exanthematicus</i>

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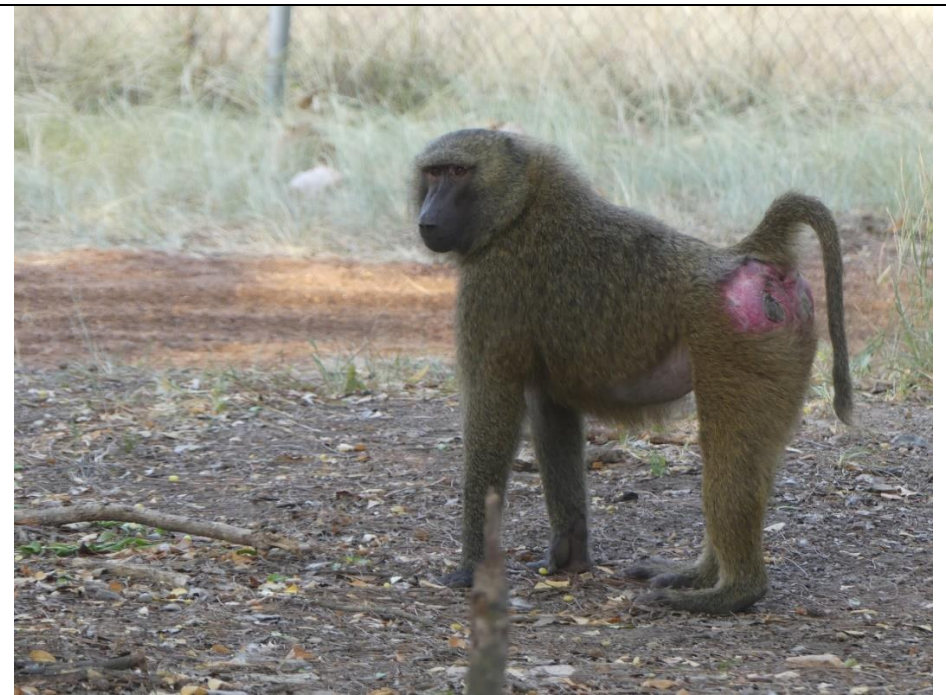
Amphibians

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	African Common Toad	<i>Sclerophrys regularis</i>

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Green Monkey (Green/Vervet Monkey hybrid)



Olive Baboon



Campbell's Mona Monkey



White-thighed Colobus



Pel's Anomalure



Lord Derby's Anomalure



Gambian Sun Squirrel



Small Sun Squirrel



Forest Giant Squirrel



Gambian Pouched Rat



African Straw-coloured Fruit Bat



Large Slit-faced Bat



Egyptian Tomb Bat



Buffon's Kob



Common Cusimanse



West African Tree Hyrax



White-bellied Pangolin



Yellow-headed Picathartes



Fraser's Eagle Owl



Long-crested Eagle



Black-bellied Bustard



West African Pied Hornbill



Bearded Babet



Green Woodhoopoe



White-throated Bee-eater



Red-eyed Dove



Blue-throated Roller



White-crowned Cliff Chat



Croaking Cisticola



Olive Sunbird



Fire-sided Skink



West African Wall Gecko



Peter's Rock Agama



Green Bush Viper



African Common Toad



Common Emperor Scorpion



