

DJIBOUTI

7 – 12 december 2007



At the end of 2007, we were a group of Swedes visiting Ethiopia and Djibouti. It was a private trip led by Eric Renman, a very keen mammal watcher, and because the main focus of this trip was mammals, and Eric knew that I am a mammal freak, I was offered to join.

Because there is no report from this trip online and Djibouti is quite unknown as a mammal destination, I decided to make a short report on the Djibouti part of the trip. As I write this 2020 (during corona restrictions) I can't remember everything and my camera equipment wasn't very good either. Probably the situation in the country has changed a lot too. So not very up-to-date!

It didn't start very well. When it was my turn to check in for the flight to Djibouti in Addis Abeba, they just told me the plane was full. Most of the group, except for two more of us, went through. It was incredible hot and stressful and we start to plan to take a taxi to the border but suddenly we were allowed to board.

After a late arrival we took a taxi to the pre-booked hotel in Djibouti Ville, just to find it was full . When our tour leader solved this problem the rest of us waited outside, and was offered by a man to buy lighters that could emit light with either Saddam Hussein or Usama Bin Laden as the motive.

December 8

We got our two Land Rover Defenders in the morning, without contracts or payments, and started bird watching around the city.

On our way from Djibouti Ville to Ali Sabieh we had our first **Soemmerring's Gazelles** and **Dorcas Gazelles** at the salt pans Petit Bara and Grand Bara.

Night in Ali Sabieh at Hotel Palmeraie d'Ali Sabieh, our base in the search for the exclusive antelope Beira. There were a lot of **Hamadryas Baboons** in the area.



Soemmerring's Gazelle. Saltpans Petit Bara and Grand Bara



Hamadryas Baboon. Ali Sabieh

December 9

We left early for Assamo and further to a small settlement to meet Mr Daher Obysyie, "Beira King", who had worked with Beira for 4 years. At this place we saw **Speke's Pectinator** for the first time.

Beira King took us on a walk to a good area and up a mountain where we scanned for a while, then to a new ridge and on the slope on the other side were four beautiful **Beiras!!!** We could enjoy them in just 300 meters in half an hour.

The afternoon was spent bird watching at Grand Bara. On the plain we saw a single donkey that looked different from the usual donkeys used by people for work. We tried to go closer but the donkey was very attentive and kept a safety distance of 400 meters all the time. Light was good and we managed to get some pictures. According to our leader this seemed to be a real **African Wild Ass!**

Night in Ali Sabieh.



Tour leader Eric Renman and Mr Daher Obysyie alias Beira King



Speke's Pectinator. Assamo



Beira. Assamo



African Wild Ass. Grand Bara



Dorcas Gazelle.

December 10

This day we drove from Ali Sabieh to Forêt du Day with a lot of stops. Along the way we saw **Soemmerring's Gazelles**, **Dorcas Gazelles** and **Gerenuks**. Just after the village Sagallou we found some **Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins**.

In Tadjoura we tried to find a boat for Whale Shark watching without result. But when the people in the first car tried this in bad French, one hero waiting in the second car took a closer look at an ibis that just landed and was first taken for a Glossy Ibis. It was a young **Northern Bald Ibis!!!** This was a sensational find of a migrating bird from the critically endangered eastern population rediscovered in Syria 2002. Back in Sweden we reported it to Birdlife International.

In the afternoon, after the last 14 km on an incredible bad "road", we arrived at a nice camp in Forêt du Day. As I was the only female in this group, I had my own rondavel at the edge, and was not able to hear what was going on near the restaurant. That meant I missed the **Crested Rat** that revealed itself at the restaurant half an hour before dinner...

A nightwalk in the area together with some of the others gave a **Common Genet**. But I didn't want to give up the rat so I went out several times during the night. No rat but I was rewarded with a **White-tailed Mongoose** licking a saucepan in the kitchen.

Our tour leader had put out a few traps and one was just outside my hut. At night, I woke up from a noise and discovered a cat striking the trap with a scared little mouse in it. The mouse had to spend the night in my room, and in the morning it was identified as a **Cairo Spiny Mouse**.



Northern Bald Ibis. Tadjourah



Common Genet. Forêt du Day



Cairo Spiny Mouse. Forêt du Day

December 11

In the morning we looked for the only endemic bird in Djibouti, **Djibouti Frankolin**. Around the camp there were a lot of **Grivets**.

Transport to Djibouti Ville with a stop in Tadjoura in search for the ibis again. No one to find.

Night in Djibouti Ville.



Grivet. Forêt du Day

December 12

We took a boat trip to Île Maskali et Moucha. A big school of **Spinner Dolphins** around the boat. Close to the harbour there were a few **Long-beaked Common Dolphins**. When we got back from the boat trip there was a big argument about the price. I think it had to do with the parking of the cars but it was very uncomfortable as they were quite aggressive.

In the afternoon we left a messy airport two hours late due to an out-of-order aircraft which had blocked the runway for six hours.

Mammal list

1. **Common Rock Hyrax** *Procavia capensis*
En route Ali Sabieh – Lac Assal
2. **Grivet** *Chlorocebus aethiops*
Camp Touristique, Forêt du Day
3. **Hamadryas Baboon** *Papio hamadryas*
Ali Sabieh and Forêt du Day
4. **Abyssinian Hare** *Lepus habessinicus*
2 ex en route Djibouti Ville – Somalia border
5. **Speke's Pectinator** *Pectinator spekei*
Assamo, en route Ali Sabieh – Tadjoura and Forêt du Day
6. **Crested Rat** *Lophiomys imhausi*
1 seen by some (not me ☹️) Forêt du Day
7. **Cairo Spiny Mouse** *Acomys cahirinus*
1 trapped Forêt du Day
8. **Unstriped Ground Squirrel** *Xerus rutilus*
En route Ali Sabieh – Lac Assal
9. **Slender Mongoose** *Herpestes sanguineus*
1 Ali Sabieh
10. **White-tailed Mongoose** *Ichneumia albicauda*
1 Forêt du Day
11. **Common Genet** *Genetta genetta*
1 Forêt du Day
12. **African Golden Wolf** *Canis lupaster*
1 Assamo, 1 Djibouti Ville
13. **African Wild Ass** *Equus africanus*
1 on the plain at Grand Bara. Would not have been seen in Djibouti for decades. Comments welcome!
14. **Beira** *Dorcatragus megalotis*
4 outside Assamo. This was the main reason for going to Djibouti

15. **Dorcas Gazelle** *Gazella dorcas*
Many individuals seen during three days in Ali Sabieh and south of Tadjoura
16. **Gerenuk** *Litocranius walleri*
Around 20 en route Ali Sabieh – Lac Assal
17. **Salt's Dikdik** *Madoqua saltiana*
Assamo, Forêt du Day, along the road
18. **Soemmerring's Gazelle** *Nanger soemmerringii*
At the salt pans Petit Bara and Grand Bara
19. **Long-beaked Common Dolphin** *Delphinus capensis*
3 – 4 Port of Djibouti
20. **Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphin** *Sousa chinensis*
10 east of Sagallou (nw Golfe de Tadjoura)
21. **Spinner Dolphin** *Stenella longirostris*
A large school at île Moucha during the boat trip

This report is by no means complete, especially when it comes to logistics and other practical things. I lost my notebook during the trip so I have used my list, my pictures and the trip report on paper we got afterwards, as well as some of my memories.

It was long time ago and I suppose the country has changed a lot, but hopefully it is still an interesting and exciting destination to discover for mammal watchers.

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