



Pictus Safaris Trip Report – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire, Feb-Mar 2022

Abstract

Tai NP, situated in the south-west of Cote d'Ivoire, must surely rank as one of the most bafflingly overlooked wilderness areas in Africa. Not only is it the single largest tract of primary rainforest left anywhere in West Africa, it has, until recently, been a far more robust refuge for many charismatic species than Liberia, Sierra Leone or any other country home to Upper Guinean rainforest. In particular, Tai is home to over half of the world's remaining pygmy hippos, the world-famous chimpanzees that were the first recorded using tools, in addition to some of the healthiest pockets of duiker and primate populations anywhere in the region. This being said, visitors should be aware that a visit should not be taken lightly – to do Tai justice, one is best advised to walk serious distances (often over 20km a day) over hilly terrain and through dense undergrowth. For those looking for pygmy hippos, stake-outs deep into the night and lengthy boat trips are the norm. Videography and photography are also a challenge, with most wildlife being skittish or found in the very densest areas of the park. But for those willing to put in the effort, the rewards in Tai can be great. We recorded 52 mammal species in total, which is a real result in a tough forest like Tai, and some very special species were seen, including Jentink's duiker, zebra duiker and Liberian mongoose.

With all of this in mind, Pictus Safaris were delighted to host two consecutive groups totalling four clients in Tai from February 10th to March 9th, 2022. The second group will produce their own trip report, which this report will not pre-empt, but a full cumulative mammal-list for both tours is included.

At a Glance

Dates	February 10 th – March 9 th , 2022
Number of Clients	4 (2 groups of 2)
Countries Visited	Cote d'Ivoire
Key Target(s)	Pygmy Hippopotamus
Total Mammal Species Recorded	52



Itinerary

Day	Destination	Accommodation
February 10 th , 2022	Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire	Hotel Blawa
February 11 th , 2022	Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire	Hotel Blawa
February 12 th , 2022	San-Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire	Enotel Beach Hotel
February 13 th – March 5 th , 2022	Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire	Ecotel Touraco/Camp Chimpanzee/ Hana Camp
March 6 th – March 9 th , 2022	Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire	Hotel Blawa



Daily Report

Day 1 – Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Our tour leader and first guest arrived into Abidjan today, with the day set aside for rest in our hotel.

Day 2 – Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Our second client arrived into Abidjan this evening. Some very relaxed birding from the hotel recorded only species typical of most major West African conurbations, with the tour set to start in earnest on day 3.

Day 3 – San-Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire

At 10am this morning, the group transferred the short distance from the hotel to the international airport in Abidjan. From here, it was a 40-minute flight to San-Pedro (livened up by a proposal and subsequent free-flowing champagne on departure) in the south-west of the country. San-Pedro is primarily a beach resort and, after arguably the longest wait for food endured by anyone in the 21st century, the group were able to compete (with mixed success) with the local musicians for some sleep.

Day 4 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Leaving our hotel at dawn, an entertaining and arduous eight-hour journey by car took us first west, in parallel with the Atlantic coast, and then north, following the Liberian border to the southern reaches of Tai NP. Early on on this drive, our first mammal, a dark **common slender mongoose**, was spotted near the town of Grand-Bereby. En route, the driver became frustrated that a rock he had lodged between the engine and chassis was either not large enough, or firmly enough in place. The bemusing solution was to stop regularly to both bash the rock as hard as possible, and regularly lobby passers-by for replacement rocks. After multiple false-starts and a few stalls, we limped into the town of Djouroutou by mid-afternoon.

After a warm welcome from our hosts at Ecotel Touraco, we headed out on a short walk into the forest nearby before dark. The birding continued to impress, with yellow-casqued hornbill being particularly conspicuous, and good views were had of red-headed malimbe. Old tracks of bongo were found in a swampy area not far from the Ecotel, and our first mammal in the national park was spotted – a **fire-footed rope squirrel**.

We settled in for our first night in the Ecotel ahead of a busy programme to come.

Day 5 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

A 5am start saw us take to the Hana River by boat before sunrise this morning, with the plan being to base ourselves deep in the park in an area where significant hippo activity had been recorded. Before even departing the Ecotel, there was much excitement as an eagle-owl was seen perched above the kitchen. Fervent debate ensued as to whether this might be the enigmatic Shelley's eagle-owl, or the more common Fraser's eagle-owl. The size was not right for the former, but the pelage very much was. We ultimately decided this was more likely to be an aberrant or juvenile Fraser's, although we are seeking some expert input currently.

Once on the river, we quickly located several slender-snouted crocodiles, a **long-eared flying mouse** and an obliging **West African potto**. Good views of the potto were afforded as it hung upside-down from an



exposed branch high above. As dawn broke, the birding was spectacular, with great views of white-crested tiger heron, five species of kingfisher and a multitude of hornbills. Most encouragingly, there was significant fresh sign of hippo east of 'Point 16', where the Hana winds east to bisect the park. The only mammal seen beyond Point 16 from the boat was a well-marked fire-footed rope squirrel, but we were kept busy with several disembarkations as Stephane, our hard-working boatman, pushed the boat through various obstructions. On one such occasion, disaster struck – a client's camera fell into the waters of the Hana below as he scrambled onto a log. After a second or two of stunned silence, three of the team went in after the camera and, after several minutes, Stephane emerged with a (very wet) camera. A small consolation was a quick view of a group of **sooty mangabey** as they crossed the river.

Slightly damper than expected, the team arrived at our access point to Hana Camp and the camera was shuttled to Camp Chimpanzee to be placed in rice for a few days. Instructions were sent back to Ecotel Touraco for a replacement camera to be brought to Hana Camp, and we began our two-hour hike to the camp itself. After only fifteen minutes or so of walking, our local guide Kevin flushed a large animal of some nearby dense undergrowth. 'Hippo!' went the cry, which sadly was not the case – but the truth was nearly as good. A brief flash of black and white was the only glimpse afforded of a **Jentink's duiker** as it crashed away through the forest – the Jentink's is, along with the zebra duiker, the duiker least often seen in Tai, and so even this very brief sighting was a real delight. A few hundred metres on, we came across a large group of white-breasted guineafowl, a highly-localised species, and we also recorded a pair of **Maxwell's duiker** racing away from us, and a skittish troop of **king colobus** not far from camp.

After lunch at the remote and basic Hana Camp, we headed to an area that had been scouted out ahead of our arrival, and where a blind had been placed. A fairly extensive search of this oxbow lake revealed that the hippo activity here had ceased, although a walk down the northern bank of the Hana produced several sets of hippo tracks.

Our evening walk was hard going, with the path on the southern bank being overgrown in an effort to deter poaching activity. This meant that walking quietly was almost impossible, and it soon became apparent that any hippo in the area would certainly know we were there. Nonetheless, the walk did produce great views of a **Beecroft's anomalure** and the attractive chocolate-backed kingfisher. Eventually we made it to a swamp near the iconic Mt Nienokoue where several fresh sets of hippo tracks were in evidence, but a brief stake-out resulted more in power-naps than in sightings – no surprise given the long day! We returned to camp for some rest with a plan in mind to stake out a spot on the Hana tomorrow morning.

Day 6 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

As planned, we headed to a spot on the Hana overlooking a beach with fresh tracks before first light this morning. Regrettably, our local guide continued beyond us to use the bathroom and called out that he could see 'hippo eyes' in the river. On arrival, no hippo was present and it was clear the commotion meant the area was unlikely to produce this morning. We gave it some time nonetheless, but no activity was forthcoming.

After a chat before lunch about our plan going forwards, it was agreed to spend some time focussed on exploring the Hana by boat, as this afforded us not with the best chance of a hippo sighting, but with the best chance of clear photographs should we encounter one. This afternoon, one client headed out to a known *picathartes* nest and, although the bird eluded him, sightings were enjoyed of **Diana monkey**,



Campbell's monkey, king colobus and black tree cobra. The rest of the group targeted primates, with brief views gained of king colobus, diana monkey and **spot-nosed monkey**, as well as views at close-quarters of a Smith's African Water Snake.

Our evening walk offered excellent views of **Lord Derby's anomalure** (in its confusingly Pel's-esque pelage), giant snail and both **Thomas's dwarf galago** and **Demidoff's dwarf galago**. Back in camp, excellent views of a hugely obliging **Johnston's genet** were a highlight of the day.

Day 7 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Choosing now to focus on the Hana, we left camp in darkness this morning to return to the boat. A brief view of an unidentifiable anomalure aside, little was seen en route. Once back on the river, skittish spot-nosed and diana monkeys were seen, as well as **Western palm squirrel**, four tiger-herons and an eclectic mix of hornbills and kingfishers.

Once back at the Ecotel, a walk to the access point to the hotel from the road revealed **putty-nosed monkey**. An evening boat trip revealed no hippo activity, but diana monkey, spot-nosed monkey, both galagos and a potto were seen.

Day 8 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Today was very much focussed on the Hana, with a total of fifteen hours spent in the boat. Fresh hippo tracks were recorded at several spots, and at various points throughout the day spot-nosed monkey, diana monkey, king colobus, both galagos and potto were seen. A highlight was our first, distant, view of the beautiful **Western red colobus**.

Day 9 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Having spent such a chunk of time on the Hana recently, this morning we gave the river a rest and walked the two hours or so into the park to Camp Chimpanzee. One key reason for spending time here is the fact that the presence of researchers has led to several primate species becoming near-habituated, and this was in evidence as we approach the camp, with views gained of king colobus, putty-nosed monkey and sooty mangabey.

Shortly after arriving at camp, a primate-focussed walk delivered sightings of sooty mangabey, diana monkey, spot-nosed monkey, western red colobus and our first **olive colobus**. The king colobus, the most commonly-encountered primate here, frustratingly just wouldn't sit still for pictures or video!

After a chance for some rest in camp, we headed out again this evening, and were richly rewarded. In addition to sooty mangabey, olive colobus and diana monkey, the two clients first got views of a **common cusimanse**, and then a group of three **Liberian mongoose** that had been foraging together on the banks of one of the many deep channels around camp. A truly great sighting of one of the most enigmatic carnivores on the continent. The walk was capped with a sighting of a **Brooke's duiker**, and the team decided to rest up this evening after several busy days on the trot and a bout of illness in camp.

Day 10 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

This morning, the two clients left early for the chance to track Tai's most famous residents, the **chimpanzee**. Famed for their tool use, this habituated group of chimps can often be seen cracking nuts with stone 'hammers', which is a remarkable sight. The tracking is exhausting, though, with the chimps



constantly on the move across hilly terrain and thick forest. Whilst habituated, there is no doubt that these primates also know the threat of poaching, and photography (especially with a large lens) proved challenging.

Back in camp, a troop of king colobus provided some entertainment, as did the arrival of an extremely talkative visitor (the wife of the first manager of the Ecotel some 25 years ago). An afternoon walk was a good way to escape our unexpected camp-mate, and we quickly caught up with both diana monkey and king colobus. The highlight, though, was a close encounter with a pygmy hippo, that thundered through the forest and into one of the nearby channels as we walked through a swamp close to camp. Despite a high-octane chase and a meticulous comb through the tract of swamp the audio came from, we frustratingly could not get a visual on the animal, although we found a litany of tracks, fresh dung and the marks on a small beach where the hippo had been laying up. Alas, we had to return to camp empty-handed, but encouraged that the numerous hippo sightings reported around camp were being backed up by solid evidence in-situ.

This evening, a night walk revealed further sign near camp, with fresh (read: liquid and warm) hippo dung located. Bycatch during the hippo search included Thomas's dwarf galago, Maxwell's duiker, Beecroft's anomalure and three Johnston's genet.

Day 11 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

This morning the team set out to identify an area to stake-out this evening, eventually settling on one of the channels criss-crossed by game trails, with a nearby area of open grazing. Back in camp, diana monkey came through and offered great views of what is surely one of the most attractive primates in Africa.

One client retrieved a nearby camera-trap, seeing Maxwell's duiker, king colobus, diana monkey and bongo tracks en route. Unfortunately, there was nothing of note recorded on the camera trap, but an entertaining stake-out did follow. Excellent views of two Johnston's genet were had, but the highlight was undoubtedly an **African brush-tailed porcupine** nearly stumbling into one of our clients – we're not sure who was more surprised!

Day 12 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Buoyed by continued, plentiful evidence of hippos using several swamps within walking distance of Camp Chimpanzee, a morning walk delivered some superb sightings. Primary amongst these was a good look at a Jentink's duiker crossing the path in front of a client, as well as a bucketload of primates including olive colobus, sooty mangabey, western red colobus, diana monkey and king colobus. One client remained close to camp for some birding, but also picked up a confiding **water chevrotain** within just a few minutes of our tents. An afternoon walk focussed on the sooty mangabeys was unsuccessful.

An evening hippo stake-out followed, and significant excitement ensued with a putative hippo sighting in the thermal, which unfortunately transpired to be the heat signature of a Brooke's duiker instead. However, good views of **bay duiker**, **Emin's pouched rat** and water chevrotain softened the blow.

Day 13 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

Our morning walk delivered plenty of primates again today, with western red colobus and diana monkey seen well. Maxwell's duiker were seen again, and **green bush squirrel** was also recorded. Our afternoon walk was quiet, with only white-breasted guineafowl and a **slender-tailed squirrel** seen.



Our night walk took us to a location known, after past research, to be used by a giant pangolin. Fresh tracks leading into the hole gave us cause for optimism, but alas nobody was home. En route back to camp, Maxwell's duiker, spot-nosed monkey and Thomas's dwarf galago were found. One client, who again stayed near camp, recorded Johnston's genet and Emin's pouched rat.

Day 14 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

The group split today, with the tour leader heading back to the Ecotel to arrange logistics for the remainder of the stay, and one client heading out onto the Hana by kayak – a silent approach to stalking the hippos that we reckoned would increase the chances of an encounter. Despite multiple reports of hippo being seen on the river whilst we were in the forest, there was no luck today. A night walk did, though, produce seven Maxwell's duikers, water chevrotain and Johnston's genet, and a stake-out also produced **African palm civet** for one of the group.

Day 15 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

This morning the group headed out to track chimpanzees once more, with superb views of communal nut-cracking the reward for several hours following the group across rough terrain. This afternoon, we re-visited the giant pangolin hole, but there was no sign of fresh activity.

Day 16 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

This morning we walked several hours to the banks of the Hana River. Here, a large mixed troop of spot-nosed monkey, diana monkey, western red colobus and olive colobus was seen well, with fresh sign of hippo recorded at the confluence of the Hana and one the larger channels near Camp Chimpanzee.

At midday, we returned to the Ecotel, planning to stake-out the 'Stairs' swamp after it emerged a hippo had crossed the main path (used by porters, guides etc) at around 11am today. Little did we know it, but this was to be a hive of activity going forwards.

We chose to stake out the swamp from the top of an old set of concrete steps, offering at least some elevation, removing our scent somewhat and allowing for use of a thermal over a slightly more open area. We picked up **forest soft-furred mouse, flat-nosed wood mouse, western tree hyrax** and Johnston's genet on the thermals and, at around 20.30 recorded audio of a large animal or animals in the swamp below. The audio was loud, and we could clearly hear the animal feeding in the swamp. Given the multiple directions the audio was coming from, and the snorts we were periodically hearing, I determined this was likely to be a small group of red river hogs – which tallied with a large number of hog 'diggings' in the swamp itself. This, it would transpire, was a mistaken assumption, as a camera trap in the swamp would tomorrow reveal a pygmy hippo had passed just under 100 metres from us along the main path in the swamp at 20.36. Ultimately, we would not have been able to gain a visual without spooking the hippo as we made our way down the stairs in the dark, but it remains hugely frustrating to be so close and not finally get our eyes on the animal!

Day 17 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

A morning boat trip from the Ecotel delivered western red colobus and fire-footed rope squirrel. Our final night was spent in its entirety in the middle of the Stairs swamp but, alas, the night was very quiet indeed, with only rodents recorded. Our slow trudge back to the Ecotel to meet the transfer back to San-Pedro delivered potto, Demidoff's dwarf galago and, finally, a **black duiker**.



Days 18-24 – Tai NP, Cote d'Ivoire

The second group will produce their own tour report, but numerous new species were recorded, including **zebra duiker, marsh mongoose, Lowe's monkey, white-naped mangabey** and a varied assortment of bats and rodents.

Days 25-28 – Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

The PCR testing went smoothly in Abidjan, and all transfers ran to schedule – plans are already made for several return trips, both privately and with groups, to Tai in 2023.

Mammal List – 52 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Carnivora – 6 species		
Marsh Mongoose	<i>Atilax paludinosus</i>	CC
Common Cusimanse	<i>Crossarchus obscurus</i>	CC
Johnston's Genet	<i>Genetta johnstoni</i>	HC, CC
Pardine Genet	<i>Genetta pardina</i>	CC
Common Slender Mongoose	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>	SP
Liberian Mongoose	<i>Liberiictus kuhni</i>	SP, CC
African Palm Civet	<i>Nandinia binotata</i>	CC
Cetartiodactyla – 7 species		
Brooke's Duiker	<i>Cephalophus brookei</i>	ET, CC
Bay Duiker	<i>Cephalophus dorsalis</i>	CC
Jentink's Duiker	<i>Cephalophus jentinki</i>	HC, CC
Black Duiker	<i>Cephalophus niger</i>	ET, CC
Zebra Duiker	<i>Cephalophus zebra</i>	CC
Water Chevrotain	<i>Hyemoschus aquaticus</i>	CC
Maxwell's Duiker	<i>Philantomba maxwellii</i>	CC
Chiroptera – 9 species		
Little Free-Tailed Bat	<i>Chaerephon pumilus</i>	ET
African Straw-Coloured Fruit Bat	<i>Eidolon helvum</i>	A, ET
Buettikofer's Epauletted Fruit Bat	<i>Epomops buettikoferi</i>	CC, HC
Cyclops Roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros cyclops</i>	ET
Hammer-Headed Fruit Bat	<i>Hypsignathus monstrosus</i>	ET
Dark-Brown Serotine	<i>Neoromicia brunnea</i>	ET
Banana Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Neoromicia nana</i>	ET
Halcyon Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus alcyone</i>	CC
Nut-Coloured Yellow Bat	<i>Scotophilus nux</i>	ET
Hyracoidea – 1 species		
Western Tree Hyrax	<i>Dendrohyrax dorsalis</i>	CC
Primates – 14 species		
Sooty Mangabey	<i>Cercocebus atys</i>	CC, HC
White-Naped Mangabey	<i>Cercocebus lunulatus</i>	BNP
Campbell's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus campbelli</i>	ET, CC, HC
Diana Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus diana</i>	CC, HC, ET



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Lowe's Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus lowei</i>	BNP
Putty-Nosed Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus nictitans</i>	ET, CC
Spot-Nosed Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus petaurista</i>	ET, CC, HC
King Colobus	<i>Colobus polykomos</i>	CC, HC
Demidoff's Dwarf Galago	<i>Galagoides demidoffi</i>	ET, CC, HC
Thomas's Dwarf Galago	<i>Galagoides thomasi</i>	ET, CC, HC
Chimpanzee	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	CC
West African Potto	<i>Perodicticus potto</i>	ET, CC, HC
Western Red Colobus	<i>Piliocolobus badius</i>	CC
Olive Colobus	<i>Procolobus verus</i>	ET, CC
Rodentia – 14 species		
Beecroft's Anomalure	<i>Anomalurus beecrofti</i>	HC
Lord Derby's Anomalure	<i>Anomalurus derbianus</i>	HC, ET
African Brush-Tailed Porcupine	<i>Atherurus africanus</i>	CC
Emin's Pouched Rat	<i>Cricetomys emini</i>	CC
Western Palm Squirrel	<i>Epixerus ebii</i>	ET, HC
Fire-Footed Rope Squirrel	<i>Funisciurus pyrropus</i>	ET, HC, CC
Small Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus punctatus</i>	ET
Flat-Nosed Wood Mouse	<i>Hylomyscus simus</i>	CC
Long-Eared Flying Mouse	<i>Idiurus macrotis</i>	ET
Edward's Swamp Rat	<i>Malacomys edwardsi</i>	CC
Green Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus poensis</i>	HC, CC
Forest Soft-Furred Mouse	<i>Praomys rostratus</i>	ET, CC
Slender-Tailed Squirrel	<i>Protoxerus aubinnii</i>	ET, CC
Forest Giant Squirrel	<i>Protoxerus stangeri</i>	ET, HC

*NDJ – N'Djamena, M – Mongo, ZNP – Zakouma NP

Bird List – 96 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Accipitriformes – 11 species		
Red-Legged Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter erythropus</i>	SP
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>	ET
Cassin's Hawk-Eagle	<i>Aquila africana</i>	CC
Congo Serpent Eagle	<i>Dryotriorchis spectabilis</i>	CC
Palm-Nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	ET, HC, CC
Bat Hawk	<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>	ET
Yellow-Billed Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	A, SP
European Honey-Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	ET
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	ET, CC
Crowned Eagle	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	ET
Long-Tailed Hawk	<i>Urotriorchis macrourus</i>	CC
Anseriformes – 2 species		
White-Faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	ET
Hartlaub's Duck	<i>Pteronetta hartlaubii</i>	ET
Bucerotiformes – 7 species		
Brown-Cheeked Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i>	ET
Western Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>	ET



Black-and-White Casqued Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes subcylindricus</i>	ET
Black-Casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>	ET, HC
Yellow-Casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna elata</i>	ET, HC, CC
White-Crested Hornbill	<i>Horizocerus albocristatus</i>	ET, HC, CC
West African Pied Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros semifasciatus</i>	ET, HC, CC
Caprimulgiformes – 4 species		
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	ET
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	ET
African Palm-Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	SP
Cassin's Spinetail	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>	SP
Charadriiformes – 3 species		
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	ET
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	BNP
Forbes' Plover	<i>Charadrius forbesi</i>	ET
Ciconiiformes – 1 species		
African Woollyneck	<i>Ciconia microscelis</i>	ET
Columbiformes – 1 species		
Blue-Spotted Wood-Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>	ET
Coraciiformes – 14 species		
Shining-Blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo quadibrachys</i>	ET
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	SP
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	ET
White-Bellied Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis leucogaster</i>	ET
Blue-Throated Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	ET
Chocolate-Backed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon badia</i>	ET
Blue-Breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	ET
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	ET
African Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina lecontei</i>	ET
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>	ET
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	ET
White-Throated Bee-Eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>	ET, BNP
Black Bee-Eater	<i>Merops gularis</i>	ET
Little Bee-Eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	SP
Cuculiformes – 5 species		
Black-Throated Coucal	<i>Centropus leucogaster</i>	ET
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	ET, BNP
Chattering Yellowbill	<i>Ceuthmochares aureus</i>	HC, CC
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	ET
Red-Chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>	ET, HC, CC
Falconiformes – 2 species		
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	SP
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	SP
Galliformes – 3 species		
White-Breasted Guineafowl	<i>Agelastes meleagrides</i>	CC, HC
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	SP
Forest Francolin	<i>Peliperdix lathamii</i>	CC
Gruiformes – 3 species		
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	BNP
Nkulengu Rail	<i>Himantornis haematopus</i>	ET
African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>	ET
Musophagiformes – 3 species		



Great Blue Turaco	<i>Corythaeola cristata</i>	ET, HC, CC
Yellow-Billed Turaco	<i>Tauraco macrorhynchus</i>	HC
Green Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa</i>	ET
<i>Passeriformes – 17 species</i>		
White-Tailed Alethe	<i>Alethe diademata</i>	HC, CC
Mouse-Brown Sunbird	<i>Anthreptes gabonicus</i>	SP, ET
Black-Headed Rufous Warbler	<i>Bathmocercus cerviniventris</i>	HC, ET
Brown-Chested Alethe	<i>Chamaetylas poliocephala</i>	HC, CC
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	A, SP
Northern House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	A
Shining Drongo	<i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>	ET
White-Bibbed Swallow	<i>Hirundo nigrita</i>	ET
Red-Headed Malimbe	<i>Malimbus rubricollis</i>	ET
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	SP
Cassin's Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa cassini</i>	ET
Northern Grey-Headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	A, SP
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	SP
Red-Billed Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops caniceps</i>	ET
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>	SP
Red-Bellied Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	ET, CC
Swamp Palm Bulbul	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>	ET
<i>Pelecaniiformes – 12 species</i>		
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	SP
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	SP
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	ET
Olive Ibis	<i>Bostrychia olivacea</i>	ET
Spot-Breasted Ibis	<i>Bostrychia rara</i>	HC
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	A, SP, ET
Green-Backed Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	ET
White-Backed Night Heron	<i>Caltherodius leuconotus</i>	ET
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	A, SP
Dwarf Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sturmii</i>	BNP
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	ET
White-Crested Tiger-Heron	<i>Tigriornis leucolopha</i>	ET
<i>Piciformes – 3 species</i>		
Brown-Eared Woodpecker	<i>Campethera caroli</i>	CC
Speckled Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i>	CC
Hairy-Breasted Barbet	<i>Tricholaema hirsuta</i>	CC
<i>Psittaciformes – 1 species</i>		
Timneh Parrot	<i>Psittacus timneh</i>	ET
<i>Strigiformes – 3 species</i>		
Fraser's Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo poensis</i>	ET
Pel's Fishing Owl	<i>Scotopelia peli</i>	HC
Rufous Fishing Owl	<i>Scotopelia ussheri</i>	ET
<i>Suliformes – 1 species</i>		
Long-Tailed Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo africanus</i>	SP

*ET – Ecotel Touraco, CC – Camp Chimpanzee, HC – Hana Camp, SP – San-Pedro, BNP – Banco NP, A - Abidjan



Reptile List – 8 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
<i>Crocodylia – 1 species</i>		
Slender-Snouted Crocodile	<i>Mecistops cataphractus</i>	CC, HC
<i>Squamata – 7 species</i>		
African Brown Water Snake	<i>Afronatrix anthoscopus</i>	HC
West African Rainbow Lizard	<i>Agama africana</i>	A, SP
Guenther's Green Tree Snake	<i>Dipsadaboa unicolor</i>	HC
Smith's African Water Snake	<i>Grayia smithii</i>	HC
House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus angulatus</i>	ET
Black Tree Cobra	<i>Pseudohaje nigra</i>	CC
Nile Monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>	ET, CC, HC

* ET – Ecotel Touraco, CC – Camp Chimpanzee, HC – Hana Camp, SP – San-Pedro, A – Abidjan

Amphibian List – 4 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
<i>Anura – 4 species</i>		
African Foam-Nest Tree Frog	<i>Chiromantis rufescens</i>	CC
Allen's Slippery Frog	<i>Conraua alleni</i>	HC
Big-Eyed Forest Tree Frog	<i>Leptopelis macrotis</i>	ET
Pygmy Grass Frog	<i>Ptychadena pumilio</i>	ET, CC, HC

* ET – Ecotel Touraco, CC – Camp Chimpanzee, HC – Hana Camp, SP – San-Pedro, A – Abidjan

Misses

The obvious miss is the most painful one – pygmy hippo. There is no doubt in my mind that Tai is the only place where pygmy hippo might realistically be seen in a reasonable timeframe, particularly given the demise of Gola and Sapo, and the continued inaccessibility of Grebo. Fresh sign is encountered on nearly every walk near Camp Chimpanzee and the Hana River, and a series of narrow misses corroborates the numerous local reports of hippo being encountered infrequently (but more often than anywhere else) both in the forest and on the river.

Outside of this, most misses were expected. Only one duiker evaded us, the yellow-backed, which was not a huge disappointment given the unexpected appearance of both Jentink's and zebra. Sign of bongo, red river hog, forest elephant and buffalo is easily found, but this typically dates back to the wet season, when these animals move out of the inaccessible core of the park. Leopard scat was recorded, and no sign of golden cat was recorded, although they doubtless are found here.

When it comes to birding, we were again very pleased with what we saw, especially as very little time was dedicated to ticking off species. The only real disappointment was yellow-headed picathartes, for



which there is a known site in Tai. The nest had been showing signs of fresh work in January, but this activity dissipated in advance of our arrival – we will try again when we visit in January 2023.

Contact Details

Pictus Safaris can be contacted by email at contact@pictus-safaris.com or via our website at www.pictus-safaris.com. We are a tour operator specialising in small-group and private departures across Africa, with 2022 destinations including Zakouma NP, Chad, Lomako FR, DRC and the Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea-Bissau.

We will be running multiple private and small-group departures to Tai in 2023 – spaces are limited.