



ONE DAY KENYAN ENDEMIC TRIP REPORT March 2009
by Adrian Binns

Deb, Barb and Peter arrived a day early to do this specialized trip based out of Nairobi

March 8 - Endemic Trip to Wajee Nature Park and Aberdare Mts, in search of Hinde's Babbler, Aberdare Cisticola and Sharpe's Longclaw



Today we made a loop through the southern Central Highlands, 100 km north of Nairobi, targeting three Kenyan endemics, and finding much more.

Our first stop, the small, 22-acre Wajee Nature Park has been preserved for the sole purpose of providing habitat to the highly localized Hinde's Babbler (*below*), our first target endemic. Threatened by the surrounding cut-and-burn agriculture, the park provides an island oasis for this endangered species. We enjoyed good looks of the birds as they moved through the lower, more open section of the sanctuary.

Above, Ben, our expert Kenyan guide, confident that we would find Hinde's Babbler.





Walking up a narrow trail in the woods, we were suddenly crossing a massive ant trail, causing us to hop and jump, trying to avoid ants biting our feet! As we were trying to flee, numerous birds were coming in, attracted to the ant food source. We stayed and watched, entranced by myriad species - Ruppell's and Cape Robin Chat, White-starred Robin, Slender-billed Greenbul and Mountain Thrushes - all actively feeding on ants. At the end of the trail we found a pair of African Wood Owls (left) being mobbed by Kikuyu (Montane) White-eyes and Green-headed Sunbirds. Back in the entrance gardens we had Garden Warbler, Streaky Seedeater, Thick-billed Seedeater, White-bellied Tit, and both Northern and Eastern Double-collared Sunbirds.

At the next stop, one of the entrances to the Aberdare's National Park, we enjoyed a couple of Jackson's Widowbirds and Red-naped Widowbirds displaying along the roadside fields, while Common Waxbills fed amongst the grasses. Yellow-throated Longclaws were singing from higher vantage points and a few Speke's Weavers inspected their nests in a nearby acacia tree.



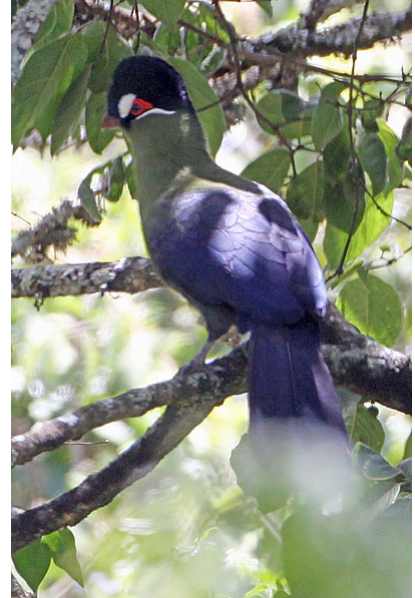
The scenic Aberdare's National Park (*above*) traverses a number of habitats during the climb to about 10,500 feet. It took almost 6 hours to cover the long and winding road, including stops, with rarely a dull moment. Our drive through began with a lone bull

Forest Elephant who was busy stripping a small tree he had brought down. Three monkey species cavorted in front of us - White-throated Guenon's in the open short grass, Black-and-white Colobus across the road, and Olive Baboons on the hill side.



Ascending through the park, we passed successively through tall forests, distinct bamboo thickets, *Hagenia* glades of dangling moss, giant heather and finally broad swathes of moorland tussock grass (*above*) at the top of the Aberdares pass. Along these stretches we saw our first family group of Warthogs (*below*) having a drink from a mountain stream.





Once we reached the more open areas we came across Scaly Francolin and Jackson's Francolins (*top left*) with chicks, walking besides the road. One of the ubiquitous Moorland Chats (*lower left*) was so busy concentrating on catching a moth that it did not realize it was doing so at our feet! We watched a Kikuyu (Montane) White-eye (*top right*) work its way through a hedgerow and the beautiful Hartlaub's Turaco (*lower right*) land in a tree and work its way along the open branches. Our second endemic, Aberdare Cisticola, was located on the Highland moors when a begging youngest drew the attention of its parent.

As the sun set on our final stop of the day, our third target endemic, the Sharpe's Longclaw, flew obligingly over a short grassy field. This pipit-like bird gave us good looks when it landed on top of a gully and walked along the ridge. We all thoroughly enjoyed this one-day endemic tour, the first day of birding ever in Africa, for all the group participants.

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