



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Sierra Leone

Rockfowl and Upper Guinea Specials

21st February to 7th March 2022 (15 days)



White-necked Rockfowl by Adam Riley

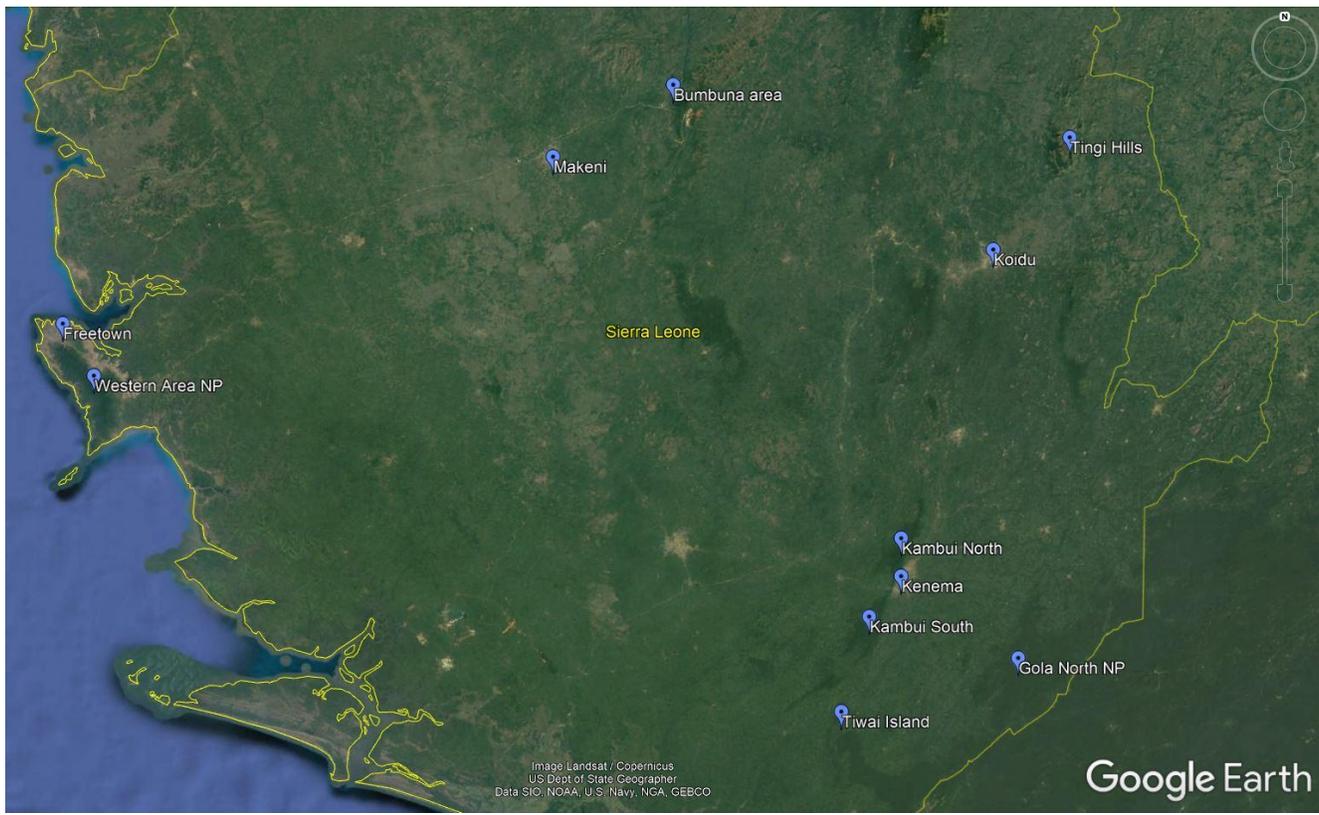
Sierra Leone is a core West African destination, offering visitors a diverse range of exciting Upper Guinea forest birds and mammals. Rockjumper pioneered this tour during reconnaissance trips in 2005 and then led three successful tours in the course of 2006; these being the first-ever birding tours to the country. Sierra Leone's biologically rich rainforests support no less than 15 of the 16 Upper Guinea endemic bird species, including the fabled White-necked Rockfowl that will form the basis of our tour. Forest specialties abound and we will focus on finding the rare Gola Malimbe, Sierra Leone Prinia, Black-headed Rufous Warbler, Hartlaub's Duck, Brown-cheeked Hornbill, Sharpe's Apalis, Kemp's Longbill, White-breasted Guineafowl and Red-cheeked Wattle-eye; while the wooded savannas are home to the stunning Emerald Starling, Crimson Seedcracker and Turati's Boubou, to name but a few.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Freetown
Day 2	Freetown and Western Peninsula Forest Reserve
Day 3	Regent Forest and transfer to Tiwai Island
Day 4	Tiwai Island
Day 5	Tiwai Island to Kenema
Day 6	Kenema to Lalehun and walk in to Gola North (Tourist Camp)
Day 7	Gola North (Tourist Camp)
Day 8	Gola North to Lalehun and transfer to Kenema
Day 9	Kenema to Koidu
Day 10	Koidu to Loma Mountains and walk to camp 1
Day 11	Loma Mountains – camp 1
Day 12	Loma Mountains – camp 1 to Koidu
Day 13	Koidu to Makeni via Bumbuna area
Day 14	Bumbuna area
Day 15	Makeni to Lungi International airport and departure



TOUR MAP...**THE TOUR IN DETAIL...**

Day 1: Arrival in Freetown. On arrival at Lungi International Airport, we will transfer to a water taxi for the transfer to Freetown, the bustling capital city of Sierra Leone. On arrival, your Rockjumper guide will meet you and we will settle into our comfortable hotel. Depending on the time of arrival, we may visit the Freetown Golf Course. This is a good area to search for the tricky Crimson Seedcracker and sought-after Oriole Warbler. Other species we may see here include Pied-winged Swallow, Black-and-white Shrike-Flycatcher, Simple Greenbul, Northern Puffback and Bar-breasted Firefinch.

Day 2: Freetown and Western Peninsula Forest Reserve. Today we will bird in the fabulous Western Peninsula Forest. The reserve conserves a critically important block of primary and secondary Upper Guinea forest, which is surrounded by a sea of humanity and its resultant deforestation. This forest is extremely important, as it is home to



Oriole Warbler by Ignacio Yufera





Sharpe's Apalis by David Hoddinott

many special and localized bird species, including an important breeding population of the scarce and highly localized White-necked Rockfowl.

Quality birds that we may see here include Sharpe's Apalis, Blue-billed Malimbe, Melancholy Woodpecker (an Upper Guinea endemic, recently split from Gabon Woodpecker), Fire-bellied and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Grey Longbill, Green Hylia, White-tailed Ant Thrush, the huge Yellow-casqued Hornbill, a wide variety of sunbirds including Johanna's, Little Green and Blue-throated Brown, and Little and Yellow-whiskered Greenbuls.

After lunch at River No.2, we will undertake an exciting boat trip through dense mangrove swamps, and here we may find the elusive White-backed Night Heron, Shining-blue and Blue-breasted Kingfishers and Mangrove Sunbird.

Our main target at this reserve is the remarkable and highly sought-after White-necked Rockfowl. This elusive and very primitive forest passerine is placed with its Lower Guinea sister-species into their own family; *Picathartidae*. We will visit a rockfowl breeding colony, where we will have a good chance of finding this mythical species. The nests consist of mud cups (like large versions of a House Martin's nest) placed on the underside of huge granite boulders. One of the highlights of the trip is sure to be the sight of these birds bounding around their traditional nesting sites. In the early evening, we will return to our hotel.

Day 3: Regent Forest and transfer to Tiwai Island. We will depart our hotel early this morning for the Freetown Golf Course. A patch of gallery forest on the course gives us further chances for specials, including the beautiful Crimson Seedcracker and Oriole Warbler. Other species seen here include Shikra, Blue-breasted and African Pygmy Kingfishers, African Grey Woodpecker, Northern Puffback, African Thrush and occasionally Turati's Boubou. Thereafter, we will transfer to Regent Forest. Amongst the many species we hope to find here are some of West Africa's most sought-after forest jewels. Targets include Sharpe's Apalis (an Upper Guinea endemic), Cassin's Honeybird, the



Crimson Seedcracker by David Hoddinott



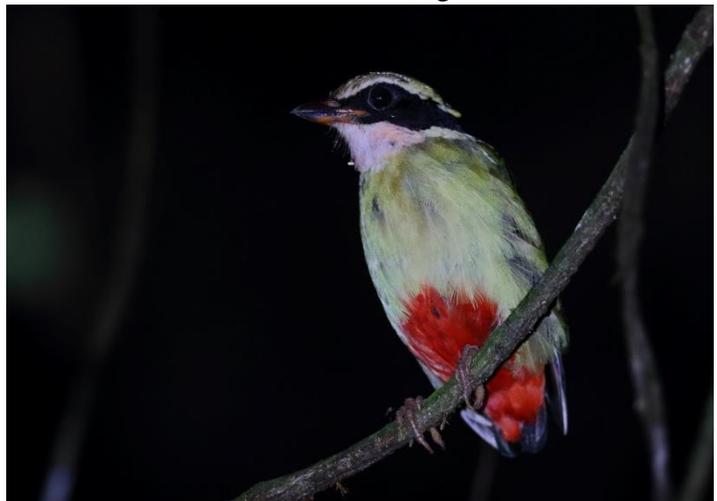


Forest Scrub Robin by David Hoddinott

for Fanti Saw-wing, Pied-winged and Red-chested Swallows, Levallant's Cuckoo and Blue-bellied Roller. We will be camping for two nights on Tiwai Island.

Day 4: Tiwai Island. Tiwai Island is an incredible birding spot, and we will spend the entire day birding this vast inland island on the Moa River. The pristine forest here supports a wealth of forest gems, including Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, seldom seen Long-tailed Hawk, African Finfoot, a number of hornbills including Yellow-casqued, Black Dwarf and Piping, Black Bee-eater, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Fanti Drongo, the spectacular Yellow-billed and Great Blue Turaco, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, Blue Malkoha, Forest Robin, Yellow-mantled and Maxwell's Black Weavers, White-browed Forest Flycatcher and White-bibbed Swallow.

This forest is noted for rare species, and the highly sought-after White-breasted Guineafowl (an Upper Guinea endemic) occurs here; while the very rare Western Wattled Cuckooshrike (an Upper Guinea endemic) has also been recently found. African Pitta was seen well here by everyone on our 2019 tour, as well as the very secretive Latham's Francolin. If the water levels are low enough, we should see the magical Egyptian Plover and White-crowned Lapwing on exposed sandbars and, on the rocky islets, Rock Pratincole. In the evening, we will search for nocturnal birds including the fabulous Pel's and Rufous Fishing Owls (the latter an Upper Guinea endemic), but we would be very lucky to observe this rarity. We also have a chance of seeing the lovely Hartlaub's Duck and Olive Ibis, as well as some great mammals including the rare Pygmy Hippopotamus and seven species of monkey, some of them highly threatened.



African Pitta by David Hoddinott

Day 5: Tiwai Island to Kenema We will spend until mid-day birding Tiwai Island,





Egyptian Plover by David Hoddinott

searching for any species we may have missed the previous day. These may include Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill, Fire-bellied and Little Green Woodpeckers, Spotted Honeyguide, Swamp Palm Bulbul and White-throated Greenbul, Finsch's Rufous Thrush, Buff-throated Sunbird and Red-billed Helmetshrike.

Day 6: Kenema to Lalehun and walk to Gola North (Tourist Camp). A very early start will see us leaving on the drive to Lalehun. This is a real adventure to one of the remotest parts of Gola Forest. After reaching Lalehun, we will walk the 12km to the tourist campsite at Lalehun. The walk is not strenuous, and we will be walking slowly, birding en route and arriving at our

campsite in the late afternoon. There will be porters to carry in all our provisions.

The birding in this forest is truly superb, and some of the species we hope to see on the walk to our campsite include Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Puvel's Illadopsis, Grey-throated Rail (a near-mythical species, but we were fortunate to find a pair during our 2007 tour), Timney Parrot, Blue-throated Roller, Brown-cheeked and Yellow-casqued Hornbills, Willcock's Honeyguide, Little Green Woodpecker, Square-tailed Saw-wing, Western Bearded Greenbul, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras, Ussher's Flycatcher, Blackcap Illadopsis, Little Green and Tiny Sunbirds, Black-winged Oriole, Many-colored and Lagden's Bushshrikes, Copper-tailed Starling, Red-vented and Crested Malimbés and Western Bluebill. We will have two nights camping in Gola North.

Day 7: Gola North. The forest bloc at Gola North is the largest section of the three zones, and consists of a 45,800ha forested area. The northern part of Gola also differs from the other sections in that it is slightly higher above sea level and is fairly hilly.

We will spend two full days birding the forest of Gola North. One of our prime targets is Gola Malimbe, only rediscovered here in 2006 after an absence of forty years. Specials we may find here include Forest Francolin, a further chance to see the shy and extremely elusive White-breasted Guineafowl, Yellow-billed Turaco, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, White-bellied Kingfisher, Narina Trogon, Buff-spotted and Brown-eared Woodpeckers, Rufous-sided Broadbill performing its incredible circular dance routine,



Red-cheeked Wattle-eye by Markus Lilje





Gola Malimbe by David Hoddinott

Icterine and Yellow-bearded Greenbuls, Green-tailed Bristlebill, Brown-chested and White-tailed Alethes, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Fraser's Sunbird, Sabine's Puffback, Shining Drongo and Olivaceous Flycatcher.

Time will be spent walking forest trails covering deep interior forest, and we will slowly work through the mixed-species flocks in search of the rare denizens of this primary forest.

Day 8: Gola North to Lalehun and transfer to Kenema.

Today will be spent birding our way out of the forest back to Kenema. Some of the species that may be seen along the forest edge include Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Sabine's Spinetail, stunning Blue-moustached Bee-eater, Yellow-spotted Barbet, migrant Wood Warbler, Violet-backed Hyliota, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Red-billed Helmetshrike and Black-casqued Hornbill (the only site for this species in Sierra Leone). This afternoon, we will spend some time birding nearby wetlands. Here we hope to find Greater Painted-snipe, Great, Common and, if very fortunate, Jack Snipe, Little Ringed and the seldom-seen Forbes's Plovers and Western Yellow Wagtail. In the past, we have also been fortunate to find Red-throated Pipit, African Crake and American Golden Plover at this site. It is an exciting area and could produce a number of unexpected species. Thereafter, we will make our way to our comfortable guest house.

Day 9: Kenema to Koidu. This morning, we will depart early for the drive to Koidu. We will bird forest patches along the way in search of Long-tailed Hawk, African Emerald Cuckoo and numerous forest species which may include African Pied, Piping and Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills, Blue-throated Roller, Naked-faced Barbet, West African Wattle-eye, Fanti Drongo, Little Grey and Spotted Greenbuls, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Green and Tit Hylias, Sharpe's Apalis, Yellow-browed and Olive-green Camaropteras, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Violet-backed Hyliota, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Red-vented and Blue-billed Malimbés and Chestnut-breasted Nigrita.

In the afternoon, we will bird some savanna where we may see Red-headed Lovebird, Marsh Tchagra, Tropical Boubou and Vieillot's Barbet.

Day 10: Koidu to the Loma Mountains and walk to camp 1. We depart early today for the long and bumpy drive to the Loma Mountains.



Long-tailed Hawk by David Hoddinott





Sierra Leone Prinia by David Hoddinott

Prinia and Black-headed Rufous Warbler. Apart from these two specials, there are a host of good forest birds to search for, and we will keep a look out for Ahanta Francolin, Western Square-tailed Drongo, Yellow-billed Turaco, Blue-moustached Bee-eater, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Brown-crowned Tchagra, Lowland Sooty Boubou, Dusky Crested Flycatcher, Black-capped Apalis, Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Lowland Akalat, Grey-winged Robin-Chat, Brown-chested Alethe and Blue-billed and Red-headed Malimbés.

Day 12: Loma Mountains to Koidu. This will mostly be a travel day; however, during the early morning, we have further opportunity for some birding in this superb forest before walking down to the village, where we will then drive back to Koidu.

Day 13: Koidu to Makeni via Bumbuna. This morning we depart early, leaving the forest zone. The drive takes us through a new habitat, Upper Guinea Savanna. In the mixture of broad-leafed woodland, gallery forest and grasslands, species we will be on the lookout for include Black-winged Kite, Black Sparrowhawk, Double-spurred Francolin, Vinaceous Dove, Western Plantain-eater, Grey-headed Kingfisher, African Grey Hornbill, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, gorgeous Double-toothed Barbet, Red-breasted and Preuss's Cliff Swallows, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Plain-backed Pipit, Yellow-throated Leaflove, Red-faced and Whistling Cisticolas, Moustached Grass and Melodious Warblers, Whinchat, Senegal Batis, Blackcap Babbler, Copper Sunbird, Northern Puffback, Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Glossy-backed Drongo, Red-



Black-headed Rufous Warbler by David Hoddinott



collared Widowbird, African Firefinch and localized Jambandu and Cameroon Indigobirds.



Emerald Starling by Paul Ellis

Day 14: Bumbuna area. We will spend a full day in the Bumbuna area. This area supports a wonderful mixture of woodland and forest species, including Black Scimitarbill, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Spotted Honeyguide, Guinea Turaco, Red-shouldered and Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes, Fine-spotted Woodpecker, Red-winged Warbler, Oriole Warbler, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, African Blue and Cassin's Flycatchers, White-winged Black-Tit, Western Violet-backed, Green-headed and Splendid Sunbirds, the localized Turati's and Lowland Sooty Boubous (the former an Upper Guinea endemic), the rare and incredibly beautiful Emerald Starling (an Upper Guinea endemic), Compact Weaver, the lovely Crimson Seedcracker (an Upper Guinea endemic), Dybowski's Twinspot, Togo Paradise Whydah and Cabanis's Bunting.

During a night drive in the area, we may be fortunate to see the incredible Standard-winged Nightjar, certainly one of the most spectacular nightjars in the world!

Day 15: Makeni area to Lungi International airport and departure. We will spend the morning birding in the superb Upper Guinea woodlands of the area. This will give us a further chance to seek out the specials of the area. If time allows we can bird at a wetland near the airport, where we have a chance to see Western Marsh Harrier, Purple Heron, Allen's Gallinule, Little Bittern, African Jacana, Great Reed Warbler and Yellow-crowned Bishop. After lunch, the tour will draw to a close and we will transfer to Lungi International Airport, where we will depart on our international flights.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 15;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- A boat trip on the Moa River
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).



The tour fee does not include:

- Any international flights;
- Visa costs
- Any drinks;
- Any additional activities not mentioned above;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**

b) **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**

c) **Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**

d) **Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Please Note:

- In most areas, it will be hot and humid. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have a lot of early starts to avoid, as far as possible, birding in the middle of the day. Furthermore, in the rainforest areas, the humidity will be high and potentially uncomfortable.
- This Sierra Leone tour is designed to be an intensive birding experience for the dedicated birder and we will make every attempt to get good views of as many bird species as possible with special emphasis placed on the Upper Guinea Endemics. We must emphasize that birding in these forests is tough and bird densities are sometimes frustratingly low. Some days involve long drives on very bad roads.
- This tour **DOES** require a good level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. The trail to camp 1 in the Loma Mountains is fairly strenuous.



- Accommodation varies greatly in Sierra Leone, from good in the main centres like Freetown to basic in the smaller towns and national parks. Often electricity is down even in places where it does exist. Some places simply do not have electricity. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. In the smaller towns, we always opt for the best available accommodation; however, this is often well below the standard of what you have come to expect from the developed world. We will stay either in hotels or guesthouses, but at Tiwai Island, Gola North and Loma Mountains we will be camping in tents with limited facilities. Please note that on Tiwai Island the camping is slightly more 'luxurious' as there is running water, a toilet and shower, however, none of these facilities are available at Gola North and the Loma Mountains.
- The food on this tour is fairly basic with couscous, spaghetti, French fries and chicken forming the basis of most meals while camping and, where possible, fruit will also form part of the meals. Dinners at restaurants are reasonable with chicken and pasta dishes dominating.
- West Africa is always a challenging place to visit, and the likelihood for things to go awry is higher than elsewhere in the world, so please do expect some hassles along the way - we will, however, do our utmost to make this as smooth as possible.
- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kgs for check-in luggage and 8kg's for hand luggage.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. day 1 of the tour is allocated as an arrival day. For those participants arriving early, there is optional birding at the nearby Freetown Golf Course. The tour will conclude by late afternoon on day 15.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Lungi International Airport, Freetown (IATA: FNA) is the main port of entry for international flights into Sierra Leone. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

