

## Naturalistic Report. “Ethiopia: Extended East Route” (including Rift Valley lakes)

Period: 8-23 July 2008

*With special attention to the Kuni Muktar Animal Sanctuary (July 13<sup>th</sup>) and Mount Kundudo (July 15<sup>th</sup> afternoon and 16<sup>th</sup> morning)*

### General outlook

Totally, over the whole itinerary (Addis, Debre Zeyt, Awash park, Kuni, Gursum (Kundudo), Rift Valley park, Wendo Guennet, Awasa, Irgalem) 165 bird species were counted, out of which 151 identified to the species (including 7 endemic), whilst for another 14 only the *genus* taxonomic level was defined, due to a rapid observation.

Taking into consideration the journey took place in a period well before any return migration (with all Palaearctic migratory birds still in Europe), of the theoretically less favourable country parts visited and that the journey was intended as a naturalistic, cultural and conservationist effort and not as a specific ornithological research with the necessary times and personnel, the fact that it was carried out by a single observer, makes the data significantly interesting.

#### Endemic species observed

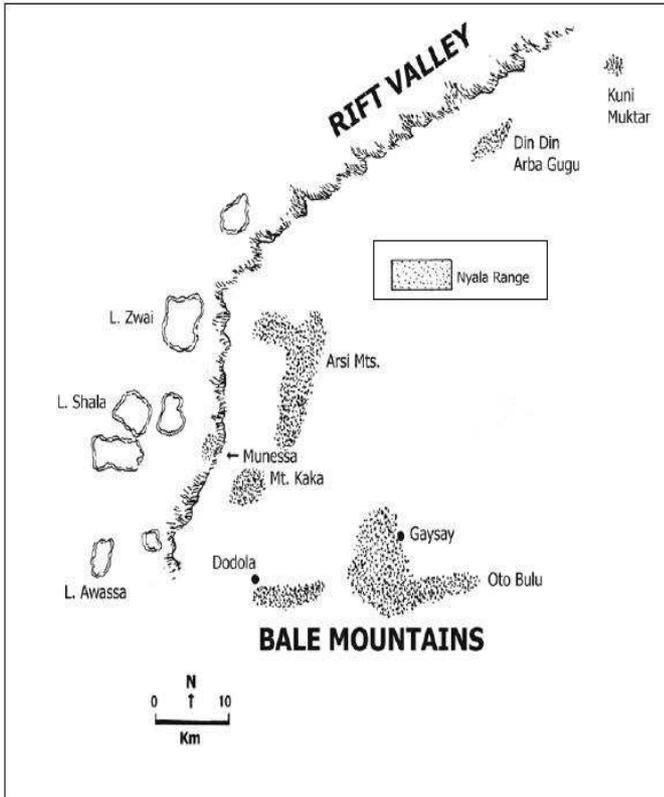
English name	Scientific name	localities	photo
Wattled Ibis (**)	<i>(Bostrichia carunculata)</i>	Kuni Muktar; Yirga Alem	X
Black-winged Lovebird (**)	<i>(Agapornis taranta)</i>	Kuni Muktar	
Yellow-fronted Parrot (*)	<i>(Poicephalus flavirostris)</i>	M.t Kundudo	
Abyssinian Woodpecker (*)	<i>(Dendropicos abyssinicus)</i>	Wendo Gennet	X
Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher (**)	<i>(Dioptrornis chocolatina)</i>	Yirga Alem	X
Black-headed Forest Oriole (**)	<i>(Oriolus monacha)</i>	Wendo Gennet; Yirga Alem	
Thick-billed Raven (**)	<i>(Corvus crassirostris)</i>	Addis Ababa; Hararghe	X

Legend: (\*) = endemic to Ethiopia; (\*\*) = endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea

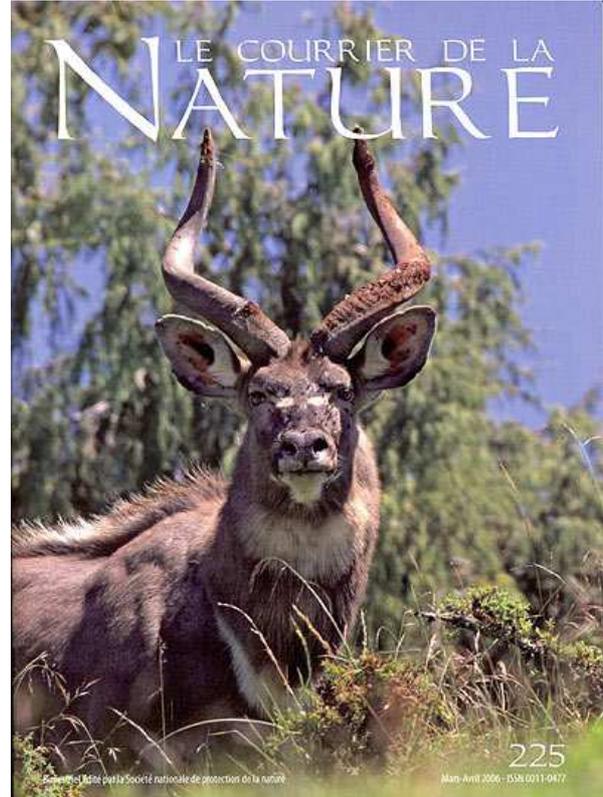
As to what regards mammals, 25 species were either directly observed or distinctive traces were found, whilst on others information were gathered from local sources. Also identified four reptile species and a number of amphibians.

### Kuni Muktar sanctuary

The visit has been focussed on the gathering of information on the Mountain Nyala (*Tragelaphus buxtoni*). Confirming its presence is, given its status, a very important feat. It is a great antelope endemic to Ethiopia considered **endangered** by IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. The most of the world population is in the Bale ranges, but small populations persist in isolated mountain areas still covered by forest. Isolation may have or be producing peculiar genotypes in the remnant packs. Thanks to the cooperation of local agriculture and natural resources personnel we ascertained the presence of the important endemic species, one of the symbols of Ethiopia, given extinct by East in the sanctuary due to encroachment and poaching (ref. 3) but as present in more recent studies (ref. 1).



Areas of Mountain Nyala diffusion, Ethiopia endemic, from Malcom & Evangelista (ref. 4).



Mountain Nyala bull near the bale park HQ, Dinsho, front page on the French SNPN magazine 225, 2006.

We did not make direct observations (the activity was concluded in one day) but traces and stool were repeatedly found and documented on photo. From the information from a May 2008 census by the mentioned personnel 23 individuals at least are present on mount Sororo near Kuni and another 28 on mount Muktar (2002 data). We would signal a worrying interest in the Sororo part of the reserve by a foreign professional hunter well known in the Country and with concessions in other areas for hunting safaris, sold to foreigners as a package that includes killing a Mountain Nyala, typically for around 50,000 USD.

The presence of the species is contrasted and effectively impeded on vast part of the summit by cows, contrary to a preceding report<sup>1</sup> that mentioned the practice of cutting grass rather than taking the animals to higher land pastures was a significant advantage for the antelopes as compared with other areas. We counted over twenty cows around a hut we were told is no dwelling, but rather a chapel on an area of the long summit ridge. The same report mentioned *Cypressus lusitanica* plantation by GTZ as a chance for the species. Unfortunately we observed plantations of both *Cypressus lusitanica* and *arizonica* proved inadapted to both reserve areas, were totally drying and being replaced with autochthonous *Podocarpus* and, less extensively, *Juniperus*, *Hagenia* and *Olea*. Forest area, we calculated on a 2004 Google Earth satellite photo as less than 400 Hectares in the Sanctuary, has reportedly increased to around a thousand three hundred, though around half of the new area is still just freshly planted. This to the obvious future advantage of both *T. buxtoni* and general local biodiversity. On the slope not frequented by man and cow the afro alpine vegetation appears very well preserved, like on the eastern slope and offers a good fauna refuge. The following table reports the mammal species found or on which significant presence information was gathered from local sources.

English name	Scientific name	Amharic name	Source
Mountain Nyala	<i>Tragelaphus buxtoni</i>	Iedega Agazen	T, S, LI

Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	IeMinilik Dukula	O
Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>	Kerkerro	T, S
Bushpig	<i>Potamochoerus larvatus</i>	Iechaka Asama	LI
Aardvark	<i>Orycteropus afer</i>		T, LI
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Nebir	T, LI
Serval	<i>Felis serval</i>	Aner	LI
Spotted hyaena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	Jib	LI
Striped hyaena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	Jib	LI ?
Aardwolf	<i>Proteles cri status</i>		LI, (O)
Side-striped jackal	<i>Canis adustus</i>	Kebero	O, LI
Bat-eared fox	<i>Otocyon megaliti</i>		O
Honey badger	<i>Mellivora capensis</i>		O, LI
Porcupine	<i>Hystrix africaeaustralis</i>	Jart	T, LI

Legend: T = traces (footprints, hair or other); S = stool; O = observed ; LI = local information

During the field study day in Kuni Muktar special attention was given to mammals, less on birds. As the area is widely forested, longer observation periods for birds and census methods based not only on observation, but on call recognition (point of hearing method) are required.

We can still report a minimum list of observed birds:

Hadada ibis	( <i>Bostrichia hagedash</i> )	
Wattled ibis	( <i>Bostrichia carunculata</i> )	endemic
Black-winged Lovebird	( <i>Agapornis taranta</i> )	endemic
Long crested eagle	( <i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i> )	
Augur buzzard	( <i>Buteo augur</i> )	
Hooded vulture	( <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> )	
Ruppell's griffin	( <i>Gyps rueppelii</i> )	
Speckled mousebird	( <i>Colius striatus</i> )	
Eastern yellow-billed hornbill	( <i>Tockus flavirostris</i> )	
Fan-tailed raven	( <i>Corvus rhipidurus</i> )	
Thick-billed Raven	( <i>Corvus crassirostris</i> )	endemic
Ruppell's Robin chat	( <i>Cossypha semirufa</i> )	
Tiny greenbul	( <i>Phyllastrephus debilis</i> )	
Black-bellied starling	( <i>Lamprotornis corruscus</i> )	
Variable sunbird	( <i>Nectarina venusta</i> )	
Baglafaecht weaver	( <i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i> )	

In a clearing used as feeding ground by *Tragelaphus scriptus* e *T. buxtoni* a pond was populated by amphibians (1-2 species' chant heard).

### **Mount Kundudo** (Gursum)

Mountain of high naturalistic and geologic interest, on a vast and potent basement complex made of strata of sedimentary rock. The sedimentary base has many cavities and sometimes stalactites on sight. Above it surges the summit basaltic mass, a few hundred metres thick, culminating in a green flat top (amba) with a permanent pond and small temporary bogs. On the oriental slopes the magmatic materials reach to lower areas. On those inclines it is easier to evaluate the marvel this

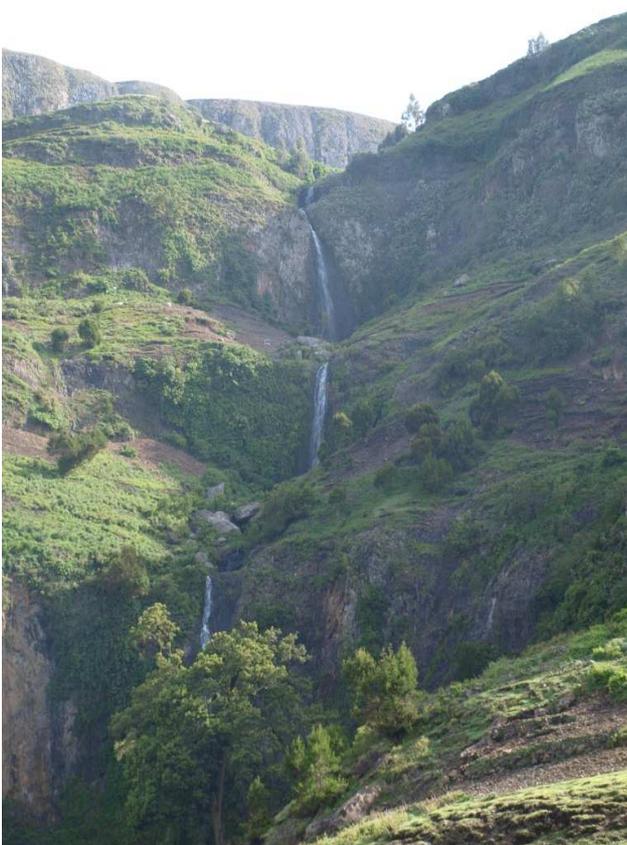
place was just about a decade ago: the original vegetation is found in tracts thanks to some imposing trees and a few relict wooded patches. This area was covered then by the now lost nearly 9,000 hectares of the Menderro State Forest.

From the fauna point of view the area's peculiarity is in the presence of a pack of feral horses, now frequently found in a semi-captive state in the hands of locals. During our visit, contrary to recent other missions, the animals were unfortunately absent, cows were found in their place.

Of high interest is the presence of Lammergeyers (*Gypaetus barbatus*) we observed for the whole afternoon, various individuals were lingering above the Immis falls and the whole flat top area.



**Water flows from the top into a cave, the source of the Immis stream, that immediately forms four falls in steps.**



**More views of the Immis falls, preferred access to the flat top, feeding area for the most amazing birds of prey**

I would like to stress the species was extinct in the European alps as a nesting bird. Only a long term international collaboration amongst in particular Italy, France and Austria permitted its successful reintroduction. There are only three couples of lammergeyer in Italy, the country with the longest extent of alp summits. Passionate birdwatchers travel hundred of miles to be able to observe this species.

The Kundudo vast rock walls offer nesting opportunities to other birds of prey like peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and his preys, like the Speckled pigeon (*Colomba guinea*). Amongst others observed the colourful Cliff chat (*Thamnolaea cinnamommeiventris*), fast flights of small groups of Slender-billed starling (*Onychognatus tenuirostris*) (in the local Oromo language 'Arejú') and couples of Rock martin (*Ptionoprogne fuligula*).

We observed Red-billed oxpecker (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) on domesticated animals (cows), that for them has obviously substituted the great wild mammals.

Follows here by *taxa* the full list of birds observed. It should be intended as just a first partial contribution to the naturalistic knowledge of the area.

Abdim's Stork	( <i>Ciconia abdimii</i> )	
Sacred ibis	( <i>Treskiornis aethiopicus</i> )	
Lammergeier	( <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i> )	
Augur buzzard	( <i>Buteo augur</i> )	
Peregrine falcon	( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> )	
Common kestrel	( <i>Falco tinnunculus rufescens</i> )	
Yellow-fronted Parrot	( <i>Poicephalus flavirostris</i> )	endemic
Speckled pigeon	( <i>Colomba guinea</i> )	
Blue-naped mousebird	( <i>Urocolius macrourus</i> )	
Speckled mousebird	( <i>Colius striatus</i> )	
Hoopoe	( <i>Upupa epops</i> )	
Plain-backed pipit	( <i>Anthus leucophrys</i> )	
Rock martin	( <i>Ptionoprogne fuligula</i> )	
Common bulbul	( <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> )	
Red-billed oxpecker	( <i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i> )	
Slender-billed starling	( <i>Onychognatus tenuirostris</i> )	
Fan-tailed raven	( <i>Corvus rhipidurus</i> )	
Cliff chat	( <i>Thamnolaea cinnamommeiventris</i> )	
African stonechat	( <i>Saxicola torquata</i> )	
Beautiful Sunbird	( <i>Nectarinia pulchella</i> )	
Variable Sunbird	( <i>Nectarinia venusta</i> )	
Black-headed weaver	( <i>Ploceus cucullatus</i> )	
Red-cheeked cordon -bleu	( <i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i> )	

As for mammals we report: Leopard, Spotted Hyaena, Hamadryas Baboon, Rock Hyrax, Porcupine. Amongst amphibians we signal stagnant water species, with at least two species in evening chant in the humid areas circling Bedada, the village at the north end of Kundudo, and of running water kinds. A small bullfrog was spotted on a torrent and many juvenile forms (photographed) were noted on another little seasonal stream on the oriental slopes towards Yaya Guda.

We strongly wish an in depth study of the naturalistic characteristics of the two areas could be performed. In particular:

**Kuni Muktar mountain Nyala Sanctuary  
Mount Kundudo**

**Flora and fauna  
Geology, flora and fauna**

Dr. Andrea Viganò  
Marnate, Italy, 26-29 luglio 2008

Translated, integrated by Prof. Marco Viganó. Debre Zeyt, Ethiopia, 30 July.

### **References**

1. Viganó, M. 2008. The first Italian mission to the Kundudo report; Provisional report of the second Italian mission to the Kundudo, *in* The Abesha in their environment, [www.gursum.com/menu/nsMay132008.pdf](http://www.gursum.com/menu/nsMay132008.pdf)
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3. East, R. 1999. African Antelope Database 1999, IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group. IUCN Gland Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.
4. Malcom, J., Evangelista, P.H. 2005. The range and status of the Mountain Nyala, [www.ethiopianwolf.org/publications/Malcolm%20&%20Evangelista%202005%20Mountain%20Nyala%20Report.pdf](http://www.ethiopianwolf.org/publications/Malcolm%20&%20Evangelista%202005%20Mountain%20Nyala%20Report.pdf), the most complete and updated reference available on the specific matter.

Photographic material on Kundudo at [www.gursum.com](http://www.gursum.com); [www.flickr.com/kundudo](http://www.flickr.com/kundudo)  
On the Kundudo and the feral horses: [www.wikipedia.en/kundudo](http://www.wikipedia.en/kundudo)