Day 1 - 25 Nov

This trip across Ethiopia’s Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region was led by Lee Gutteridge, a guide from South Africa, and the co-founder, with Adam Riley, of Tau Anthropological Safaris. Dr Tim Forssman, an archaeologist and author co-guided this group with Lee.

Our guests were Frankie and W.O. Crain from the USA and Graeme and Carol Gardiner from New Zealand (and Australia).

Our objective with Tau is to find a balance between the Human history and the environment we live in, exploring living and past cultures and also infusing this with wild birds, plants and animals. An especial focus on many of our trips is the primate groups, so where there are monkeys, we also tend to be found too!
Today we began our adventures with some Addis Ababa tours to several landmark places in the Ethiopian capital. We were collected by Henok, our local guide, a fun young man with great knowledge and enthusiasm for his homeland, of whom we were going to grow very fond. We were driven around in a mini bus in the manic, utterly nonsensical traffic of Addis Ababa. The rule of the road here is quite simply that the bigger your vehicle, the more rights you have in terms of access, lane choice and the need to stop! A bus has many privileges it seems, based upon its size! This worked for us!

The name of the city, Addis Ababa, means a 'new flower'. Menelik the seconds wife selected the site, based upon the location of some hot springs where she used to bathe. An interesting and unusual reason for the location of an African city! Our first stop was the beautiful and amazing Holy Trinity Cathedral, where some of the emperors of Ethiopia were crowned. The Ethiopian Patriarchs of their Orthodox Church are also appointed here. The tall, beautiful windows of stained glass, made by the late artisan Afework Tekle, were amazing to see, depicting various scenes of the bible, and of the 12 apostle’s lives. St. George was also very prominently featured in an unusual, un-mounted pose, just after slaying a dragon. He is surprisingly well represented in Ethiopian churches. Statues of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John are featured outside the front entrance, with the emblems of child, lion, cow and eagle carved on the sides of the statues. These emblems appear in most religious art in Ethiopia, and can often be seen in old paintings, representing these four Apostles. We removed our shoes as we entered, according to Ethiopian Orthodox custom. In the church itself there were the usual pews, those on the right (when facing the alter) for women and on the left for men. We looked at the musical instruments of the priests, drum, staff and a small type of metal rattle or shaker. We visited the tomb of Emperor Haile Selassie and his wife, Menene and also saw the throne where he sat when attending mass during his life. It was amazing to see these aspects of the life and death of this well-known Emperor. There is also a separate room at the front of the church for visiting Egyptian Orthodox ministers. There is also a museum within the grounds, full of donated items belonging to the Emperors and their families, such as wonderful crowns, necklaces and ancient books.

Afterwards we headed up to Mt. Entoto which is well over 3000m high, at the edge of the city to enjoy the views over the metropolis of Addis. On the way we saw the many Eucalyptus trees, which were introduced as a species during the time of Menelik II, by his adviser, who is believed to have been Swiss. Ladies carrying huge bundles of this firewood walked down the hills past us, under their back-breakingly heavy loads, to sell their burdens at the market. This high part of the city makes Addis the 4th highest capital in the world I believe.

Then after this we headed to the National Museum, where we looked at the ancient Hominid fossils of the many different Ethiopian finds. A large part of our species historical fossil record has been found in this country, and is well represented in the museum. Not least of these is 'Lucy' or Dinknesh (left) as she is known here. She was found in 1974 by Donald Johansson and Yves Coppen, amongst others, and is a fairly complete fossil dating back more than 3,2 million years. The real fossil is apparently heavily protected, from further decay, somewhere in the underground vaults of the museum, but an amazing replica, and many other originals, were to be seen in the displays. Tim spent quite a lot of
time with us at the Archaeological section of the displays and shared his vast knowledge of pottery and stone tools with us. It was really interesting to hear his perspectives and the technical details behind making these types of finds.

We had our Lunch at 'Lucy's', a lovely restaurant near the museum, which was excellent. Pizzas and dishes of sizzling lamb were most popular with our group.

Then to round off the day we visited the amazing Merkato market, (left) reputed to be the largest open air market of its kind in Africa. I can certainly believe this. City block after city block teem with life, dirt, noise and bustle. Sellers shouting, men and women carrying huge loads on their heads, trucks manoeuvring, cars hooting, children and buying adults, meandering through. Every colour of cloth, odour of spice and smoke-smelling incense is represented here. Traditional goods, cutlery, fresh vegetables, cooking equipment, car parts, shoes, spices, electrical appliances, tools...you name it...and it can be found here.

After this cultural overload we headed back to our lodgings at the Nexus Hotel for a rest before supper.

We saw a few birds in the city too, including:
Black kite
Brown-rumped seedeater

Day 2 - 26 Nov

This AM we visited the ethnographical museum in Addis, which is situated at the University. This was a chance to preview some of the Omotic cultural highlights we were headed out to see. The building itself was the former palace of the Emperor Haile Selassie.

Birds around the city included:
White collared pigeon
Black crow
Speckled pigeon

The museum is situated in the former Palace of Ras Tafari Makonen, and was donated as a university after a threat on his life by an unsuccessful coup, in December 1960. By 1961 the university was established. We then headed off for our flight from Addis on an Air Ethiopia Bombardier, which took about 50 minutes to Arba Minch (40 springs).

Our first port of call is a Dorze village way up in the mountains, at around 2900m ASL. It was cold at this height, and a gentle rain fell. We saw the huts, which make these people famous. When they are first made they can stand 60 feet high. They have a characteristic shape, like a huge grey elephant head.

We sampled some of the local food and drink, such as Arake,
a clear alcohol, like some kind of Schnapps. It is pretty hot going down! We also ate Kotcho, (left) fermented false banana bread. This is left to mature for 2 to 3 months underground as a pulp before it is flattened and cooked on a wok-like pan. Then it is served with hot paste, much like Moroccan Harissa. We were also shown some local woven cloth. Amazing colours and variety are available at reasonable prices. Bartering is necessary though, or you will be dramatically overcharged!

These huts are subject to termite attacks, and the height is part of the defense mechanism, because if termites attack, they simply cut the hut away from its foundation and move the rest to a new site. This obviously works well as the hut we sat down in was 37 years old! The cattle and calves, goats and other livestock live inside hut too. There is a small, separate kitchen area, where a calf had taken up residence amongst the clay pots.

After this visit we headed toward our hotel, the cunningly named Paradise Lodge. The Gamo Goffa tribe lives in the town of Arba Minch, just one of the many tribal names we were to hear over the coming weeks! On the way we saw a troop of Olive baboons up on a hillside. Birds we saw on the way included:

Black (Cape) crow  Long-crested eagle
Fan-tailed raven  Silvery-cheeked hornbill
Northern carmine bee-eater  Black kite
Fork-tailed drongo  Grey-headed kingfisher
Northern black flycatcher

We arrived after dark at Paradise lodge and headed to dinner, a nice buffet, with ghostly cool mist coming in over the cliffs from the Lake Chamo and the Nechasar National Park, hundreds of metres below us. A very nice way to eat a meal.

Day 3 - 27 Nov

During breakfast I scanned the forest below with my binoculars, and could see a small group of Black and white colobus moving in the forest canopy. We all had a little view of them before continuing with our meal. Breakfast was had on a huge veranda overlooking the park and lakes, and is a great time for birding too! We headed off, packed and ready toward the Lake Chamo, which we would visit on our journey this morning. Interesting plants lined the muddy roads, such as *Cissus cactiformis*. The vehicle in front of us got stuck repeatedly, so we had time to look around!
Birding in the forest, along the muddy road (left) and on the lake was superb:

- Silvery-cheeked hornbill
- Black crow
- Black kite
- Lanner falcon
- Auger buzzard
- Greenshanks
- Wood sandpiper
- Great white pelican
- Great reed warbler
- Goliath heron
- White-fronted plover
- Spur wing lapwing
- Yellow billed stork
- Marabou stork
- Little egret
- Great white egret
- Black-winged stilt

A huge crocodile rests on the mud flats, and a fisherman heads out on his home made craft

We boarded our boat and headed out toward the Crocodile market with its huge 6m Nile crocodiles and pods of hippos. The boat trip was very pleasant, with lots of pelican zooming in all around us. Lake Chamo is around 600km square, with at least seven rivers feeding into it. It is said to be 13m at its deepest point. When we got back to shore there was a troop of Grivet monkeys, also known by the locals as the Abyssinian vervet (below left). We had a long journey to the Konzo village of 86km, which takes at least 1.5 hours drive if you factor in all of the cattle, goats, sheep and children you are obliged to dodge en route! We passed many Moringa trees, whose leaves are eaten by the local people as a type of spinach. They are very tasty, but have a slightly bitter aftertaste. Some of the plant and flower species we saw along the way included:

- Barleria spp.
- Cissus cactiformis
- Cissus rotundifolia (Elephant pudding)
- Alternathera spp. (Devils horsewhip)

Next we had to cross the narrow bridge over the Derashé River from Derasheland to Konzo. Derashe men with short hafted, narrowly conically pointed spears were walking the roads.
On the way we saw:
Namaqua dove

Along the route we passed, literally thousands of cattle and goats and sheep, herded by men or children. Everyone you see is carrying a knife, sickle, machete, stick or short pointed spear, irrespective of gender or age. We stopped at Kanta lodge in Konzo town, which has a nice view over the terraced farmland.

Birds at lunch included:
African Paradise flycatcher (red and white)
Beautiful sunbird (eclipse)

We then headed to the World Heritage Site Konzo Village. This walled town is built up of ring after ring of dry stone walls, with narrow muddy pathways between them. Each house entrance is barred with logs, making it a highly defensible position. As the village expands due to population increase the outer ring has new walls added to it, new perimeter walls for defence against enemies! So effectively regarding the walls around city, they have the oldest circle in centre (many hundreds of years old), and grow younger going outwards, to the very youngest on the outer perimeter.

Fortified walkways and log entrances provide protection, and the typical clay pot roof cap can be seen here

The local food stuff eaten by the Konzo is called Dama or Kurkuwa and it is a ball of Sorghum or maize, garnished with leaves of Moringa. The roof of each hut is decorated with a clay pot, which holds together the thatch to prevent leaks. The handle of the pot usually indicates the position of the doorway of the hut. Most huts have a single layer of thatch, implying single a generation occupation, but some huts have a second ‘tier’ or step of thatch, which shows that a father and son and their respective families live in a single hut. I was told during this visit that the Konzo people originate from the Oromo tribe, and speak a Cushitic language. Then we set out again, passing through Banna tribal lands into the Erbore tribal region. It was our intention to visit an Erbore village, but we had to turn back as the river between us and the town of Turmi was in flood, so we postponed our visit for now.

We saw some birdlife along the way:
Dark chanting goshawk (juv)
Fantailed raven
Bruce's green pigeon
African grey hornbill
Our new route took us into the heart of Banna country, through the town of Alduba. We had not planned on visiting this tribal group because they are very similar in many respects to the Hamar. However along the way we found a few friendly folk, dressed in their tribal attire, and managed to get some images of them. The men sometimes wear beaded headdresses, often in green and red. They also carry axes (left) and traditional carved wooden pillows. Women wear heavy cloths, decorated with cowrie shells (left). Went through fever tree forests along the way, with their yellow trunks almost glowing. These trees are typically found in swampy ground, indicating seasonal inundation. We arrived at Buska lodge in the dark, and headed straight for a buffet dinner. The area is very remote and the camp runs on generators, with electricity from 06:00 in the morning for a few hours and then in the evening until 10:30. Hot water in the taps happens quite often, but is kind of sporadic! All part of the fun!

Day 4 - 28 Nov

We got up early for a 06:00 buffet breakfast. Today we were headed west toward the Omo River and the Kara tribe. This is very dry country for the most part, with the plant life largely reflecting this phenomenon. Species such as:

- *Cissus rotundifolia* (Elephant pudding)
- *Sansevieria* spp. (Mother in laws tongue)
- *Commiphora* spp. (Corkwood)
- *Acacia nilotica* (Scented thorn)
- *Adenium* spp. (Desert rose)
- *Sterculia* spp. (Star chestnut)
- *Boscia* spp. (Shepherds tree)
- *Sarcostemma viminale* (Wolf’s milk)
- *Euphorbia tirucalli* (Rubber hedge)
- *Stapelia* spp. (carrion flower)

Birds along the way included:

- Northern red-billed hornbill
- Northern (eastern) yellow-billed hornbill
- Common bulbul (white vented)
- Emerald-spotted wood-dove
- White-browed coucal
- Purple (Rufous-crowned) roller
- White-bellied go-away bird
- Bare-faced go-away
- Vulturine guineafowl
- Crested francolin
- Red and yellow barbet
- Buff-crested korhaan
- Bateleur
- Lappet faced vulture
- Rüppell's starling
- Blue-naped mousebird

Buff crested korhaan, Vulturine guineafowl and a Günther’s dikdik
Mammals we saw included:
Günther’s dikdik
Olive baboon
Banded mongoose

The village of the Kara is situated on a wide bend in the Omo, overlooking lots of farmed lands. Last year on my visit there was an estimated 2100 Kara, but now, a year later I found that they are down to 1500 people (divided into 10 clans in 3 main villages). This is attributable to conflict with other tribes, urbanization, assimilation of young women into other tribes, relocation of people for employment opportunities and many other social issues. It would appear that, at this rate, in no time the Kara will disappear, a sad thing indeed.

A Kara warrior poses on a lookout point near the village

They are an Omotic language speaking group, sharing many cultural links with the Hamar and Banna. They eat a dry sorghum bread, washed down with shoforo, a coffee made from the husks of coffee beans. Some members of the tribe can be seen below.
Kara in the Kara language actually means ‘fish’ and this is the main diet of the young boys of the tribe! They wear white body paint and women may cover their hair in ochre and butter like the Hamar. Beaded necklaces are also worn. Many of the men carry modern rifles for self-defence.

On the way back we stopped for tea and biscuits in the bush and saw some birdlife too:
- Northern white-crowned shrike
- White-headed buffalo-weaver
- Black-billed wood-hoopoe
- African paradise flycatcher (white form)
- Dark chanting goshawk (juv)
- Abyssinian roller
- Rüppell’s griffon vulture
- Shelley’s starling

In the trees around us were beautiful *Tapinanthus* mistletoes (Burnt matches) and the ground was covered with Dikdik scat in small middens.

Little flowers were all over, hidden in the grass:
- *Blepharis* spp.
- *Dichoma* spp.
- *Portulaca* spp.
- *Sanseveria* spp. (Gemsbok horn like variety)

We also saw an interesting new mammal species near Turmi, the Unstriped ground squirrel. There were three of them chasing each other around!

Then it was time for lunch at the lodge. We took a short break and then headed out at 4:30 to a nearby Hamar Village. The traditional dress of these people is well documented, particularly in the case of the women with their ochre and butter hairstyles and their goatskin aprons decorated with cowrie shells. Necklaces denoting a woman’s (or girl-child’s) status can be seen, with a pillared neck ring for a 1st wife, plain rings for a second or a small grass-like ball at the throat for a betrothed girl.

Foods such as shoforo and balasha (dry sorghum bread, possibly eaten with butter and honey) and a dry sorghum porridge are staples. Men farm, defend the herds and raise bee hives into the *Vachellia* (Acacia) trees. Women raise the children, collect water and cook. They also gather firewood and carry goods to market to sell.

In the village we saw:
- Black-headed lapwing
- Shelley’s starling

On the way home Henok and I had arranged some sundowners in bush, with nice cold beers for our guests, (left) whilst we watched a beautiful
sunset over Hamarland. Then we returned for supper at our lodge.

**Day 5 - 29 Nov**

We got up at 3:30AM to go search for nightjars...specifically the Donaldson-Smiths nightjar, which has a tiny spot of its range over the Omo near Turmi! We found one on a cleared patch near the river crossing to Turmi, and walked a little closer to see it better.

We also saw:
- Ethiopian genet
- Abyssinian hare
- Lesser bushbaby
- Black and white colobus
- Olive baboon

Then we headed back in to our lodge from our drive planning a breakfast at 8:30 and some birding in camp:
- African orange-bellied parrot
- Red-fronted tinkerbird
- Grey-backed camaroptera
- Red-headed weaver
- African paradise flycatcher (red and white form)
- African mourning dove
- Red-eyed dove
- Speckled pigeon
- Hooded vulture
- Northern black flycatcher
- Pale flycatcher
- Superb starling
- Black-billed wood-hoopoe
- Northern wheatear
- Northern white-crowned shrike
- Ring-necked dove
We then headed to the town of Demeka, to the local market. There is a variety of goods for sale such as Moringa, coffee husks, onions, spinach, olive wood (for smoking pots to flavour water), chewing tobacco, jewellery, wooden pillows, beadwork, shields, weapons, ochre, butter, shukas (cloth to wear around the body) and much more.

Some members of the Hamar tribe

We went for a cool Coke at the National tourist hotel (left) and then decided to stay for lunch too. We ordered Injera and tibs (meat pieces) with a sauce.

We had heard that there may be a traditional bull jump today, so we awaited further news on this. At around 14:00 we heard that the jump was on, and we linked up with a local Hamar man who would show us where it was. We headed back towards Turmi, and then turned off into the sticks. At one point the road was missing, so the drivers set to with spades and dug a new crossing for our cruisers.

The whipping of the women was fully underway when we arrived, Maza (warriors) sat in a row under a shade tree, drinking shoforo coffee. Women would come to them, blowing trumpets, offering them whips, goading them into getting up and whipping them. A bizarre spectacle, which results in bleeding backs, (left) and the women do not so much as flinch. Tough as nails.

The men and young warriors moved off to dance away from the group, leaping high into the air, as if on a pogo stick. Women adorned themselves with various plants, such as this Cissus (left).

Then a storm began to move in, but a weather diviner appeared amongst the group. He wore a red and brown cloth over his head and back and had a small stick. He waved this methodically at the solid wall of cloud for a while, as it rushed and rolled toward us, with its load of lightning and rain traveling on rumbles of thunder. But then it slowed. It
stopped. And then began to move away from us. Not so much as a drop reached us. When it began to move away the diviner simply walked away. I did not see him afterwards. It was a fascinating thing to witness and it is easy, after seeing that, to see how these people believe in the control of the weather so strongly (left).

The jump was a great success, about 10 feisty cows and bulls were lined up, side by side, and the young man made about seven passes over all of their backs. Other men had to physically restrain him as he did not seem to want to stop running. We were very fortunate to see this, as it is not an everyday occurrence. We headed home before it got too dark. Some birds were seen on the way:

Lilac-breasted roller
Rüppell's starling

Maza, or warriors, a woman in the firesmoke and shoforo being served

The bull jumper in action, painted legs and tribal attire contrast with the automatic rifles
Day 6 - 30 Nov

At this morning’s breakfast buffet Graeme finally discovered what the orange items were that he had been eating for the last few days...fortunately not too sinister, a type of fried bread! At breakfast we also had an African orange-bellied parrot in a dead tree in the middle of camp.

Then we crossed Kaske River toward the east, which slightly in flood last night but dropped sufficiently for us to cross today. We were heading for the Erbore (Arbore) village which we were unable to visit earlier due to the swollen rivers. On the way we saw:

- Eastern long-tailed paradise-whydah
- Eastern chanting goshawk
- Blue-naped mousebird

The road to Erbore country, and W.O. creeps up on some feeding vultures near a village
We also saw a dead White-tailed mongoose by the roadside, with mating cotton stainers on the carcass. Lots of desert roses were in full bloom this time of year, all along the route, splashing pink into the dramatic, dry landscapes.

Beautiful desert roses after the rain, and a Black-headed lapwing

*Vachellia* (*Acacia*) and *Euphorbia abyssinica* were prominent along the route, crossing dry bush, cut with empty riverbeds, and then passing into deep mountainous valleys, with massive deep gorges. Pebble and boulder strewn river beds cut through former roads. An interesting, harsh and unforgiving landscape indeed. Robel, our driver is from the Amhara tribe, a dominant group of people in the country, who are found to the north. We are known as Faranji, the name given to foreigners, (possibly derived from the word 'French').

The dusty landscape is very inhospitable, and a Fox kestrel watches us carefully

As we approached the Erbore lands, it got really dry. It is like the land that water forgot. Desert-like, with nothing green at all. A difficult and dusty place to live.

Birds we saw in this dry area included:

- Namaqua dove
- Lappet faced vulture
- Hooded vulture
- White-backed vulture
- Black crow
- Yellow wagtail

It is estimated that there are around 6800 Erbore people. They speak a Cushitic language. They are very poor, and this opportunity to earn some money led to a well-known chant...People flocked around the car, "photo, photo, photo...5 Birr, 5 Birr". Omotic super models on their desert ramp I guess. 5 Birr is around 25c. We took plenty of pictures. This certainly helped the little micro-economies around us!
After a short look around their village we headed off on our journey towards Jinka, the home of the Ari people and our base for the next few days at Eco-Omo Lodge.

Birds we saw included:
- Little bee-eater
- African grey flycatcher
- Dark chanting goshawk
- Fox kestrel

We stopped and at a packed lunch enroute at Weyto lodge. This is a series of metal shelters with tables where cold drinks can be purchased. There is also a television!

Birds flocked around us:
- Black kite (Yellow billed form)
- Hooded vulture
- Fan-tailed raven
- Greater blue-eared glossy starling
- Cattle egrets
- Dark chanting goshawk (in profusion)
- Northern carmine bee-eater
- Abyssinian roller
- Pied crow
- Long-crested eagle
- Wattled starling
- Thick-billed raven

We went through Key Afer, a Banna town, which has a weekly market on Thursday. It is about 40km from Weyto Lodge, and then it’s the same to Jinka. On the way we stopped to photograph a Banna tribeswoman, who was standing with a baby at the side of the road. The baby was covered in cloth,
and the leather front cloth was adorned with cowrie shells. Banna men dress similarly to the Hamar, but the young boys seem to prefer western underpants! With the occasional red cloth on their shoulders these lads looked like little Omotic Supermen! We went through the town of Birrbirr, and saw an Orthodox priest blessing the local people. The habitat becomes much more lush and green as you climb the winding hills to Birrbirr, and gives an almost tropical impression compared to the dry desert-like area of the valley floor in the land of the Erbore. Dust blowing across the plains is replaced by lush valleys and crops. We also encountered a very busy soccer game along the route, with many youngsters in Ethiopian soccer kit. An interesting house before Jinka had a large cross painted on its walls in brown and white.

![The little house with the cross as you enter Jinka, and a Hooded vulture](image1.jpg)

Interestingly the wheel is little in evidence. Even bicycles. A reason for the lack of carts may be linked to the lack of water for livestock in many areas.

The Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) has 56 ethnic groups. Ari are officially the largest Omo Valley Tribal Group, as the Konso (300 000 people) actually live (technically) outside the valley. Crossing a river in Jinka I heard a Red-faced cisticola call. We also encountered a truck, minibus and motorcycle wash area in the river! Every child you pass calls "Youyouyouyouyou" almost without fail (or breath).

We arrived at Eco-Omo and settled in. Hot water is available to shower from 18:00 to 21:30. Wifi is (sort of) available from 17:30 to 19:30. However, electricity is on 24 hours!

![White-rumped babbler, the Omo subspecies, and a Grey-backed camaroptera](image2.jpg)

Birds in the garden:
Common fiscal
White rumped babbler (subsp. *omoensis*)
Grey wagtail

We had a good dinner then settled in for the night.
Day 7 - 1 Dec

Well, as is usual in Jinka, there was a huge noise all evening. The music stopped at around 2AM. Then the roosters began at around 3. A veritable army of them. Then at around 5AM the Moslem call to prayer was put out by loudspeaker. This seems to be the party town of the Omo. It was the same last year. Ear plugs are useful here if you wish to sleep.

A new bird in town:
Hadeda ibis

Morning coffee with a view

We rose early and left before sunrise to Mago National Park. We stopped for a coffee break, and there was a light rain all morning.

Birds in Mago included:
Dark chanting goshawk
Rüppell’s starling
White-browed coucal
White-backed vulture
Northern masked weaver
Black-headed gonolek
Emerald spotted wood-dove
Von der Decken’s hornbill
Northern red-billed hornbill
Helmeted guineafowl
Bateleur

We had a nice picnic next to Mago River under a large tree. When we departed we saw Mursi folk carrying goods along roads, in bags on their heads. Un-plated lips were in evidence amongst women, dangling below their chins, gums and teeth exposed. Others wore light weight wooden plates which are more functional than the heavy clay ones.

Some travelling Mursi folk, (note the light wooden plate in the lip of the woman), and Henok
Then, a surprise! A truck had slid backwards down a steep road, and jack-knifed. The path to the more regularly visited of the Mursi villages was now effectively blocked. A team of truck drivers began a promising project (Plan A) to widen the road with rocks and gravel...but this would take some time. So. Plan B. We turned around and decided to head to 'Maki Village', near the Mago.

![The truck which jack-knifed, our new road around and Carol and Graeme walking in the rain](image)

However, when we began to head that way we met a local guide who advised us not to go there. Unfriendly aggressive Mursi! Plan C. Photograph random pedestrian Mursi along the roads. This worked quite well, as we found a group of young people walking to their village and we all took some images of them. Then we ventured back to the road building (Plan A) and found significant enough progress had been made for us to squeeze by. All of us hopped out, as it was wet, dangerous and quite precipitous, and none of us felt inclined to roll down the hill. This was probably true of the drivers also! Graeme and Carol dressed for the occasion!

![Smoke pours through the hut’s roof, and Tim gets into the thick of it with the Mursi villagers](image)

The village of Mursi we visited was amazing, in the rain the smoke poured through the thatched roofs. The rain did not dampen the spirits of the tribes-women, who poured rain-like from their bee-hive huts. We had a great time at the village.

Frankie and W.O. seemed to really get involved, chatting away, irrespective of the language barrier, to the people here. Carol took a huge amount of pictures it seemed! Graeme chose this moment to produce a full on wet suit for his camera. He could have taken his Canon diving by the looks of it, not just into a rain storm! Super prepared is all I can say! Anyway, the rain really began to come down, and so we decided to move on home. Birds en route included:

- Auger buzzard
- Little sparrowhawk
- Helmeted guineafowl
- Silvery cheeked hornbill
- African harrier-hawk
- Yellow-billed form of the black kite
Some of the Mursi tribes-folk we met, with their interesting lip-plates and headdresses

We also saw:
Olive baboon
Common bushbuck

A woman in her hut, adult and juvenile guineafowl and a wet-looking olive baboon

On the way out we stopped at the park entrance, in order to pay and we watched a harrier-hawk searching the tall dead trees for avian prey. We had some lunch at Eco-Omo, which was great, with wonderful soups and pasta dishes! Then we headed off to the Omo Valley Ethnological Museum. This museum is interesting and provides insight into the cultures and beliefs of the local tribes, as well as informative literature and examples of art and utilitarian tools and even weaponry. Estimated (current) numbers of people in some of the better known tribes are as follows:
Ari 112 000
Maale 90 000
Hamar 59 160
Dassenech 48 067
Nyangatom 25 252
Mursi 7500
Bodi 6994
Arbore 6840
Kara 1500

Mammals we saw included:
Striped ground squirrel

Well, back for dinner at the lodge before our departure the next day.
Day 8 - 2 Dec

We departed at 07:30 from Eco-Omo and drove back via Key Afer and then Weyto. It is a sad thing to be leaving this region, with so many interesting people to meet and cultures to explore. Just watching how these folks live their daily lives is like a window into the past. These cultures are rapidly disappearing; the number of folks who actually lead authentic agro-pastoralist lifestyles diminishes with every passing day.

I suspect that unchecked, this modernisation process will overtake these people in the next few years. In a single year I have noticed dramatic differences, and much reduced numbers of people, more western style clothing and certainly a different mind-set toward tourism. The people are more accepting, and realise their tribal way of life can be an income. Perhaps this will help preserve this culture for a little while. It will certainly be better from this perspective than the cotton and sugar plantations which are already in place. The Chinese investors are here, building their roads, making their factories, prospecting and mining, removing wood and other resources. Highways are being constructed through the Mago National park, right through the ancestral land of the Mursi. The Kara are surrounded by Turkish-owned cotton farms, and many other investors are at the door step. This is a battle-ground on the forefront of changing humanity, a rapid modernisation of people which time literally forgot. And now the wave of technology is breaking over them, and I am curious to see how they emerge once these breakers have passed over their heads. One thing is for sure. They will be a changed group of people. And if you wish to see them, as they are, the final representatives of one of the last truly wildly tribal areas on Earth...you will need to do it soon.

Livestock is very important to the Omotic tribes, it is their equivalent of a bank

Birds included:
Hooded vulture
Dark chanting goshawk
Hamerkop
Black kite
Fork tailed drongo  Olive thrush
Common bulbul Variable sunbird
Emerald spotted wood-dove Red-cheeked cordonbleu
African fish-eagle Pied crow
Willow warbler Goliath heron
Marabou stork Northern carmine bee-eater
Fan-tailed raven White-browed sparrow-weaver
Specked pigeon

*Intensively farmed terraced slopes are common in Konzo country, bee hives can be seen in most tall trees, and the ubiquitous colobus monkey*

We stopped for a cup of coffee at Kanta lodge enroute, in the Konso town. Today in total we have travelled through Ari, Banna, Tsamai (Weyto), Konso, Derashe and Gamo Goffa lands. Then to Arba Minch Tourist Hotel for lunch...and their very special mixed grills all round!! Our drivers then dropped off at airport in Arba Minch, so we could fly back to Addis, and the start of the next part of our adventure...searching for Ethiopia’s Endemic Mammals!

*The guide team for this trip, Henok, Lee (and a friend) and Tim*
Species lists

Birds
1. Abyssinian roller
2. African fish-eagle
3. African grey flycatcher
4. African grey hornbill
5. African harrier-hawk
6. African jacana
7. African marsh harrier
8. African mourning dove
9. African orange-bellied parrot
10. African paradise flycatcher (all white form)
11. African paradise flycatcher (red and white form)
12. Auger buzzard
13. Bare-faced go-away
14. Bateleur
15. Beautiful sunbird (eclipse)
16. Black (Cape) crow
17. Black crake (H)
18. Black kite
19. Black kite (Yellow-billed form)
20. Black-billed wood-hoopoe
21. Black-headed gonolek
22. Black-headed lapwing
23. Black-winged stilt
24. Blue-naped mousebird
25. Brown-rumped seedeater
26. Bruce's green pigeon
27. Buff-crested korhaan
28. Cattle egrets
29. Common bulbul (white vented)
30. Common bulbul (yellow vented)
31. Common fiscal
32. Crested francolin
33. Dark chanting goshawk
34. Eastern chanting goshawk
35. Eastern long-tailed paradise-whydah
36. Egyptian goose
37. Emerald spotted wood-dove
38. Fan-tailed raven
39. Fork-tailed drongo
40. Fox kestrel
41. Goliath heron
42. Great reed warbler
43. Great white egret
44. Great white pelican
45. Greater blue-eared glossy starling
46. Greenshanks
47. Grey heron
48. Grey-backed camaroptera
49. Grey-headed kingfisher
50. Grey wagtail
51. Hadeda ibis
52. Hamerkop
53. Helmeted guineafowl
54. Hooded vulture
55. Lanner falcon
56. Lappet faced vulture
57. Lilac-breasted roller
58. Little bee-eater
59. Little egret
60. Little sparrowhawk
61. Long-crested eagle
62. Marabou stork
63. Namaqua dove
64. Northern (eastern) yellow-billed hornbill
65. Northern black flycatcher
66. Northern carmine bee-eater
67. Northern masked weaver
68. Northern red-billed hornbill
69. Northern wheatear
70. Northern white-crowned shrike
71. Olive thrush
72. Pale flycatcher
73. Pied crow
74. Pied kingfisher
75. Purple (Rufous-crowned) roller
76. Purple heron
77. Red and yellow barbet
78. Red-cheeked cordonbleu
79. Red-eyed dove
80. Red-faced cisticola (H)
81. Red-fronted tinkerbird
82. Red-headed weaver
83. Ring-necked dove
84. Rüppell’s griffon vulture
85. Rüppell’s starling
86. Shelley's starling
87. Silvery-cheeked hornbill
88. Specked pigeon
89. Spur wing lapwing
90. Squacco heron
91. Superb starling
92. Thick-billed raven
93. Variable sunbird
94. Von der Decken’s hornbill
95. Vulturine guineafowl
96. Wattled starling
97. Whiskered tern
98. White collared pigeon
99. White rumped babbler (subsp. omoensis)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100.</td>
<td>White-backed vulture</td>
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<tr>
<td>101.</td>
<td>White-bellied go-away bird</td>
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<tr>
<td>102.</td>
<td>White-browed coucal</td>
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<tr>
<td>103.</td>
<td>White-browed sparrow-weaver</td>
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<td>104.</td>
<td>White-fronted plover</td>
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<td>105.</td>
<td>White-headed buffalo-weaver</td>
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<td>106.</td>
<td>Willow warbler</td>
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<td>107.</td>
<td>Wood sandpiper</td>
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<tr>
<td>108.</td>
<td>Yellow billed stork</td>
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<tr>
<td>109.</td>
<td>Yellow wagtail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mammals**

1. Abyssinian hare
2. Banded mongoose
3. Black and white colobus (Guereza)
4. Common bushbuck
5. Ethiopian genet
6. Grivet monkeys (Abyssinian vervet)
7. Lesser bushbaby
8. Olive baboon
9. Günther’s dikdik
10. Striped ground squirrel
11. Unstriped ground squirrel
12. White-tailed mongoose (dead)

**Plants**

1. *Acacia nilotica* (Scented thorn)
2. *Adenium* spp. (Desert rose)
3. *Alternathera* spp. (Devils horsewhip)
5. *Blepharis* spp.
7. *Cissus cactiformis*
8. *Cissus rotundifolia* (Elephant pudding)
11. *Euphorbia abyssinica*
12. *Euphorbia tirucalli* (Rubber hedge)
14. *Sanseveria* spp. (Gemsbok horn like variety)
15. *Sanseveria* spp. (Mother in laws tongue)
16. *Sarcostemma viminale* (Wolfs milk)
17. *Stapelia* spp.
19. *Tapinanthus* mistletoes (Burnt matches)
20. *Vachellia* (Acacia)