

*A Sharp Eye on*

**wildlife**  
**photography**

ISSUE SIX December 2021



São Tomé and Príncipe



# In this issue

6		São Tomé Água Grande District	22		Santo António do Príncipe
8		Bom Sucesso Mé-Zóchi District	24		Sundy Príncipe
12		Monte Belo Cantagalo District	26		Sundy Praia Príncipe
14		Porto Alegre Caué District	30		Belo Monte Príncipe
18		Monte Forte Lembá District	32		Bom Bom Príncipe
20		The northern savannah Lobata District	34		Pedra da Galé Príncipe



The Gulf of Guinea off the west coast of Africa

## Front and back cover

Príncipe malachite kingfisher (*Corythornis cristatus nais*)

A subspecies endemic to the island of Príncipe

## Animal Magic

The front set of legs of some centipedes have evolved into venom-injecting pincers. This particular centipede kills prey with its venom and also uses it to temporarily stun rivals during fights for dominance.



Their venom contains a peptide called spooky toxin and when they attack another centipede, a self-protecting chemical reaction means that it is only temporarily immobilised.

Centipedes can bite humans and the bites can cause acute hypertension, myocardial ischemia (blocked coronary artery) and may have once killed a seven-year-old girl.



Centipede (*Scolopendra subspinipes*)

Canon EOS R6, 400mm, 1/400 sec, F6.3, ISO 400 with flash

Centipedes always have an odd number of pairs of legs. Although there are around 8000 different species on the planet, with one having 354 legs, this means that there is no species with exactly 100 legs.

## A Sharp Eye on WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

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Most full resolution images are on  
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# Somewhere a little different...

São Tomé and Príncipe is the second smallest country in Africa. It is an island nation in the Gulf of Guinea, to the west of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and a former Portuguese colony.

Come here to find endemic species once you have done more than a dozen countries in mainland Africa and have explored Madagascar.

We visited for ten days in October 2021, spending five days on São Tomé island and five on Príncipe.

It rains in these islands. A lot. We had about three days' worth of rain. Mornings on the coast are better, but don't expect a tropical downpour in the early afternoon that disappears revealing clear blue skies. When the rain comes, it stays – sometimes a downpour, sometimes rain and, if you are lucky, a period of drizzle. For the best weather, head out on a boat. For the worst, head inland into the mountains where cloud and rain are almost guaranteed.

The wildlife is high in endemics, but the populations are very low compared with mainland Africa. Many are out of range of travellers like us who do not want hardcore hiking or camping. As is often the case, knowing when and where to go is vital, but information from the country itself, travel guides and tour operators is sketchy. I couldn't tell you when to go.

Our tour was booked through Alistair Walls at Far & Wild Travel. Our accommodation was in hotels run by HBD Group. Filipa Pereira, from Portugal, was our excellent guide in Príncipe. Laudino Tavares, a São Toméan from the Navetur agency, was our equally excellent guide in São Tomé.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of finding enthusiastic and knowledgeable English-speaking private guides in these islands. Unless you speak Portuguese. A big thank you to Filipa, Laudino and their drivers.

*Charles Sharp*



Príncipe speirops (*Zosterops leucophaeus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe

# São Tomé, Água Grande District

The city of São Tomé is the smallest capital city in Africa and it is where you spend the first night of your tour. The Air Portugal plane from Accra in Ghana arrives in the late afternoon.

You will soon encounter the 'léve léve' (gentle or slow) pace of life on the islands and the daily power cuts. Back-up generators quickly restore power and WiFi works well in the leading hotels.

Our first animal was a large land crab who ventured out at night in the grounds of the Omali Hotel. She is carrying a huge mass of eggs, held between her abdomen and body. There are likely more than 500,000 eggs, but only one or two will survive.

The following morning, a tiny female endemic São Tomé sunbird was outside our room and waxbills flew from ground to tree and back again. We saw the male São Tomé sunbird later that day near the botanic gardens of Bom Sucesso. The gardens have many exotic orchids and other endemic plants.



Common waxbill (*Estrilda astrild jagoensis*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F8,  
ISO 2000 with infill flash



Rainbow crab (*Cardisoma armatum*) mature female with eggs  
Canon EOS R6, 100mm, 1/500 sec, F9, ISO 500 with ring flash



Laudino Tavares



São Tomé sunbird (*Anabathmis newtonii*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F10, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé



São Tomé sunbird (*Anabathmis newtonii*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé

# Bom Sucesso, Mé-Zóchi District

**B**om Sucesso (meaning Good Luck) is in the centre of the island of São Tomé, some 800m above sea level. The trek to Lagoa Amélia in Obô National Park is a well-trodden path, but it is not a well-maintained one. We made two trips. Both times, it rained too hard for us to make it into the National Park proper. Banana leaves kept some of the rain off as we sheltered.

Obô is the home of the endemic Obô giant snail, one of the largest snails in Africa, much larger than a human fist. These snails are the core of a breeding programme run by the Forest Giants Project. A very small (unidentified) snail was living nearby in the wild.

Laudino unearthed unlikely creatures from the leaf litter. The endemic leaf-litter skink and São Tomé Caecilian both dived back underground as soon as they could.

The caecilian is actually an amphibian, not a worm or a snake. The adult rhinoceros beetle (the photo shows a larva) is a pest. It bores its way into the soft tissue of young palm trees.



Photograph: Laudino Tavares



Obô giant snail (*Archachatina bicarinata*)  
Canon EOS R6, 254mm, 1/250 sec, F5, ISO1600 with flash  
Thank you to the Forest Giants Project





São Tomé leaf-litter skink (*Panaspis thomensis*)  
Canon R6, 428mm, 1/250 sec, F6.3 ISO 1600 with flash  
A species endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe



São Tomé Caecilian (*Schistometopum thomense*)  
Canon EOS R6, 270mm, 1/500 sec, F5.6, ISO 800 with flash  
A species endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe



Rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes latecavatus*) larva  
Canon R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with flash  
A species endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe



Shield bug (*Pentatomoidea*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1 ISO 320 with flash



Short-horned grasshopper (*Heteracris guineensis*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 640 with flash

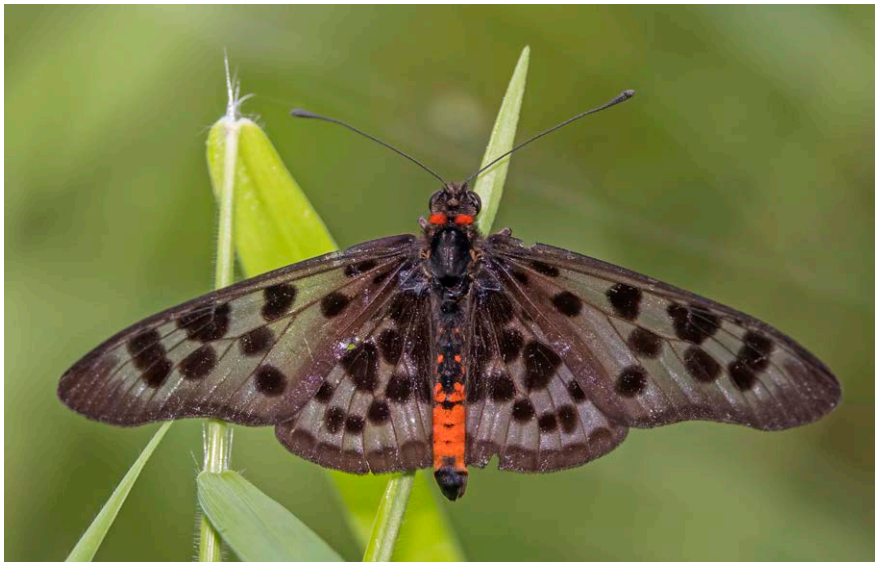
Butterfly diversity is typical of a small island. There is a limited number of species, but a significant number of endemics; not that we saw many. With the amount of rain around, they must stay indoors most of the time and who can blame them?

It is evident that most butterfly species avoid the coast. Perhaps the salty conditions offset the higher sunshine hours. We were not able to establish the peak months for sightings, nor any possible hotspots.

We didn't see many moths, but did not set up lamps and sheets or traps. The yellow tiger moth is very similar to *Alytarchia amanda* - wouldn't it be amazing if it was an undiscovered species!



Immaculate wood white (*Leptosia nupta*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec,  
F20, ISO 1600 with flash



*Acraea niobe* male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with flash  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé



Tiger moth (*Alytarchia cf amanda*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec,  
F7.1, ISO 800 with flash



Jodutta acraea (*Acraea jodutta*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F8, ISO 1600 with flash



Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 640 with flash

Spiders are more tolerant of the rain than the birds and the butterflies. When you are walking through mist and rain, with your camera hidden underneath your rain jacket, a spider by the side of the path is a welcome sight.

The genus *Argiope* contains about 90 species spread around the world. The web decoration is called the

stabilimentum. There are a range of different patterns. It seems that juveniles tend to produce discoid patterns and adults the zig-zag patterns. Some patterns may serve to hide the spider, others may attract victims. The stabilimenta make the web more visible. This may warn larger animals who might blunder into the web to keep out of the way.



*Argiope* spider

Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 500 with flash



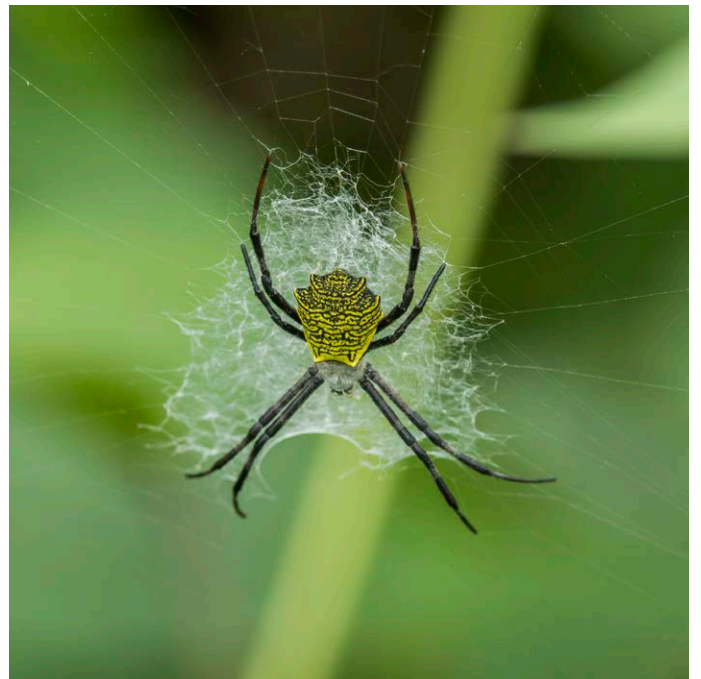
*Argiope* spider

Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 with flash



*Argiope* spider

Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 with flash



*Argiope* spider

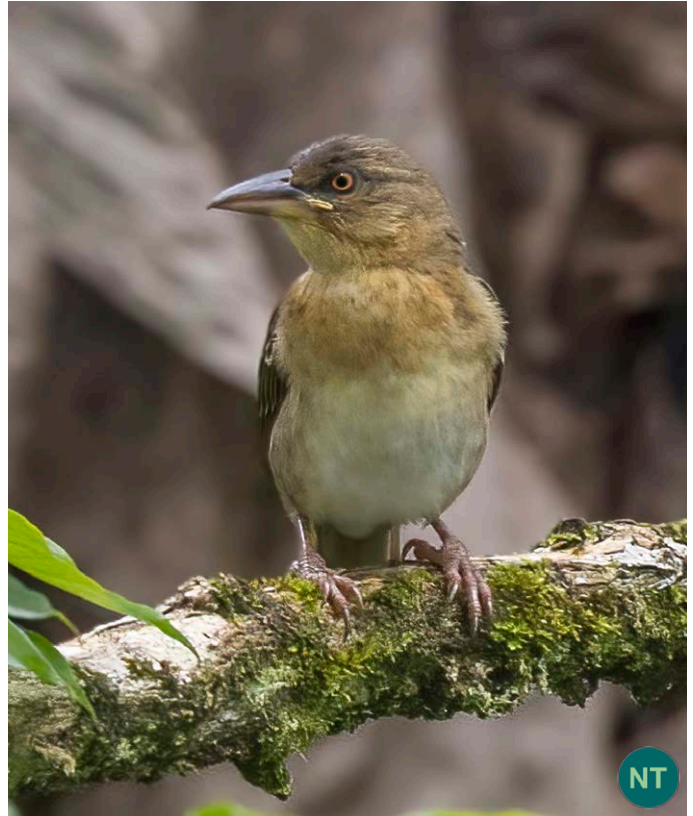
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F11, ISO 1600 with flash

# Monte Belo, Cantagalo District

We were driven up to Monte Belo on the east coast of São Tomé. It is one of many plantations abandoned after independence in 1975. The plantations were nationalised but the government could not afford to invest and they were handed back in the 1990s to the people in small holdings.

We trekked downhill on a treacherous (seemingly endemic) muddy path to be picked up at a lower elevation. There were long periods of seeing nothing, but our guide Laudino has mastered a very convincing imitation of the call of the beautiful emerald cuckoo. Suddenly he strode off the slippery path into the forest. I followed close behind. He had found us a male among the foliage.

This bird is not a full endemic, but an endemic subspecies. The giant weaver, which we spotted half an hour later, is an endemic. It is classified as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The giant weaver is about 30% larger than the other weavers on the island. This may be an example of island or insular gigantism, a phenomenon in which an animal species isolated on an island increases in size compared to its mainland relatives.



Giant weaver (*Ploceus grandis*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/400 sec, F8, ISO 3200 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to the island of São Tomé



Laudino was kind enough to carry my camera on the worst of the descent while I used the monopod as a stick



Emerald cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx cupreus insularum*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F8, ISO 5000 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe

# Porto Alegre, Caué District

A two-hour drive to the south of São Tomé takes you to the village of Porto Alegre. The road starts off well, but eventually deteriorates into poorly-maintained gravel. The nice sandy beaches are pretty and deserted, but swimming at Praia Piscina was ruined by the biting sand flies.

The tiny malachite kingfisher is arguably Africa's prettiest kingfisher. It is about 13cm tall. There are five subspecies in Africa and a very close relation lives in Madagascar. It is never a good idea to have a 'must-photograph' list but a visit to São Tomé and Príncipe offered the opportunity to complete my set.

Each island has its own subspecies. Both were treated as separate species until recently. There are photos of the Príncipe kingfisher on the front and back covers.



ssp. *galerita*  
The Gambia



ssp. *cristatus*  
Kenya



ssp. *stuartkeithi*  
Ethiopia



Praia Piscina (above) and Praia Jalé (below)  
Photographs: Valerie Goodchild, iPhone XR



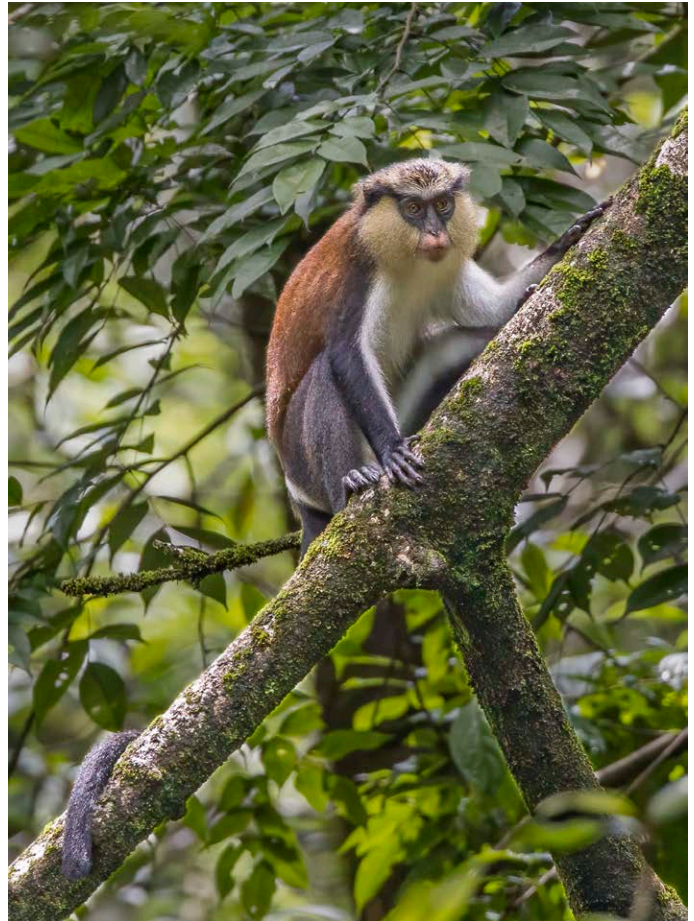


São Tomé malachite kingfisher  
(*Corythornis cristatus thomensis*)  
Canon EOS R6 , 500mm, 1/180 sec,  
F7.1, ISO 800 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to the  
island of São Tomé

You can take a hand-paddled tour up the estuary of the Malanza river in a traditional canoe. This is the largest area of mangrove forest on the islands. Wildlife is sparse, though we saw a São Tomé malachite kingfisher, a couple of reed cormorants and a skink sunning itself near the jetty.

Most of the animals on São Tomé and Príncipe are native. A few have been introduced. One of these is the mona monkey. They were introduced from the West African mainland sometime in the last 200-500 years. Most of the workers on the Portuguese-run plantations were ‘contract workers’ or slaves brought to the islands from the Congo basin, Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique. There is a thriving population of mona monkeys on Grenada in the Caribbean, thought to have started with a pregnant female who was transported with African slaves sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth century from São Tomé.

Although they are forest dwellers, the monas are adaptable and can be seen foraging around the kitchens of the hotels. They are less easy to spot in the jungle. They live in the mangroves, though do not seem to venture out into the open. One wonders if the lack of tourists in the last couple of years has made them less accustomed to us?



Mona monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



São Tomé skink (*Trachylepis thomensis*)  
Canon EOS R6, 400mm, 1/800 sec, F6.3, ISO 1000  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé





Eurasian whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus islandicus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F13, ISO 100



Rainbow crab (*Cardisoma armatum*) juvenile  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 2500 with infill flash

## Animal Magic

The male pin-tailed whydah has an elaborate courtship display. He hovers above the female to show off his impressive tail feathers and sings loudly. He maintains more than one partner and after the breeding season is over he sheds his long black tail feathers. The female is a brood parasite and lays her eggs in the nests of the common waxbill and bronze mannikin.

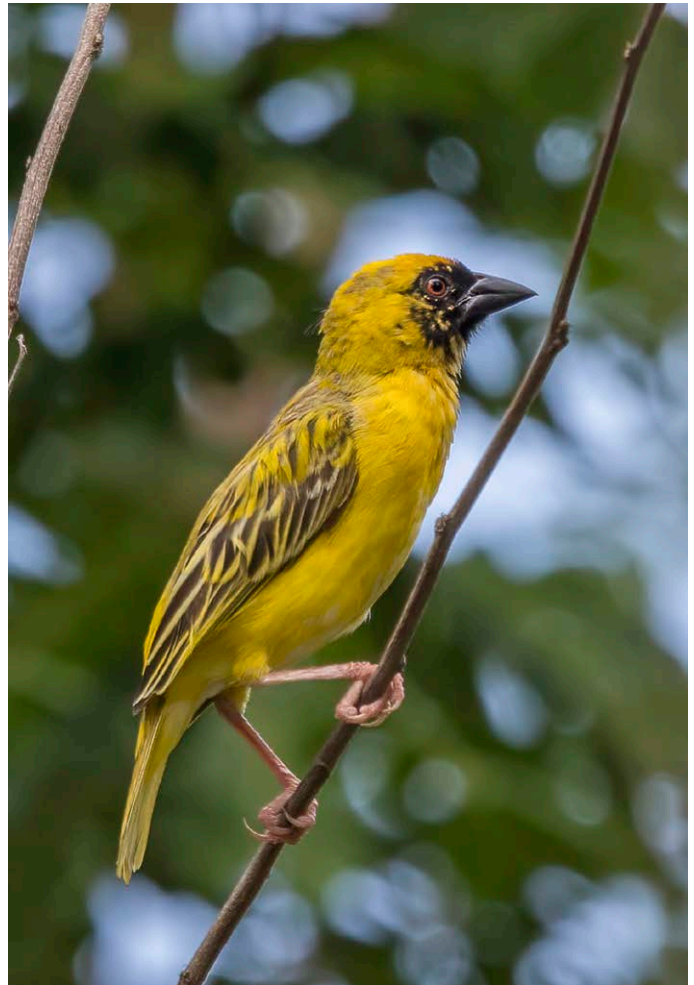


Pin-tailed whydah (*Vidua macroura*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1,  
ISO 800 with infill flash

## Monte Forte, Lembá District

Rocha Monte Forte is a former plantation near Neves on the North Coast of São Tomé. It has some rooms and a restaurant which is on the tour group itinerary.

Pin-tailed whydahs court in the garden and, a few hundred metres east along the coast road, dozens of vitelline weavers compete in nest-building. The weaver is an endemic subspecies, but experts are divided on whether it is a subspecies of the vitelline weaver (*Ploceus vitellinus*) or the southern masked weaver (*Ploceus velatus*). They live in colonies and the males build several nests every year. The best-woven nests will attract a female. She is the interior decorator and fits out the nest with feathers and other soft furnishings. We do not believe the male has any choice in the matter.



Vitelline masked weaver (*Ploceus vitellinus peixotoi*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F11, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to the island of São Tomé



São Tomé bronze-naped pigeon (*Columba malherbii*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 3200 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé



Laughing dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis senegalensis*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with infill flash



Vitelline masked weaver (*Ploceus vitellinus peixotoi*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 451mm, 1/1000 sec, F10, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to the island of São Tomé



Lucia widow (*Palpopleura lucia*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F10,  
ISO 1250



Long-tailed blue (*Lampides boeticus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1,  
ISO 800 with infill flash

## The northern savannah, Lobata District

The north east of the island of São Tomé is in a rain shadow. The low-lying landscape is protected by mountains from the prevailing southwesterly winds. This savannah receives around 60cm of rain a year. Some inland areas, as we soon found out, receive 6m. Here you will find many

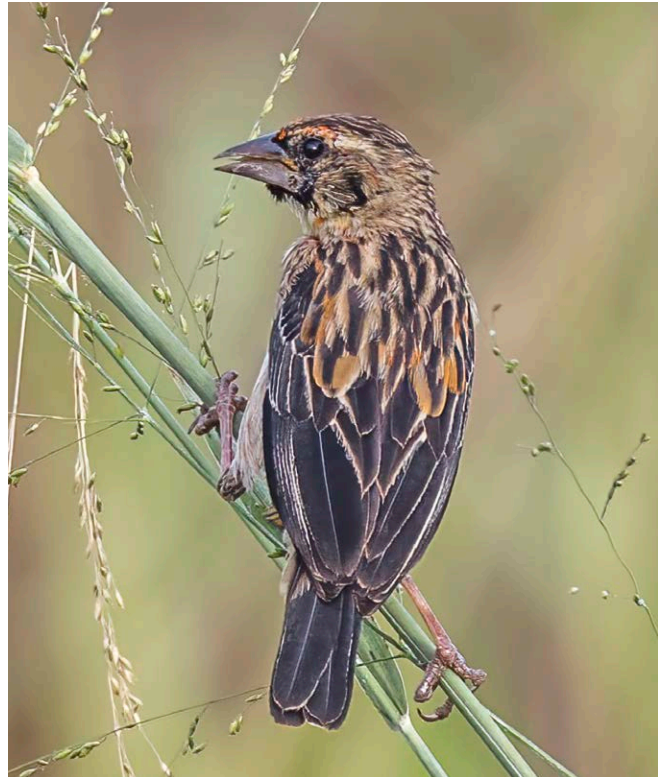
introduced songbirds as well as some endemics that can thrive outside the forest. Numbers of the endemic São Tomé paradise flycatcher are increasing and the females are common. The blue-black males with their long tails are more difficult to find in the open and do not stay still for long.



São Tomé paradise flycatcher (*Terpsiphone atrochalybeia*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé



Yellow-fronted canary (*Crithagra mozambica tando*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600



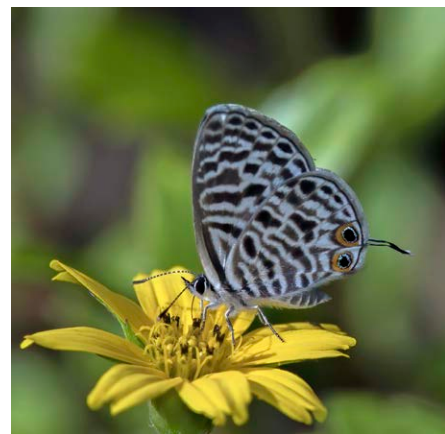
Black-winged red bishop (*Euplectes hordeaceus*) non-breeding male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



São Tomé prinia (*Prinia mollerii*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 1600  
A species endemic to the island of São Tomé



Large spotted acraea (*Acraea zetes anobonna*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1,  
ISO 800 with flash



Lang's short-tailed blue (*Leptotes pirithous*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1,  
ISO 400 with flash

## Animal Magic

Príncipe is a friendly place, but you can still be a fish out of water. Mudskippers are gill-breathing amphibious fish. They take some water with them in their gill pockets when they come out of the water. This water enriches the air with oxygen. They also absorb oxygen through the skin and oral mucous membranes.



Atlantic mudskipper (*Periophthalmus barbarus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 with flash

The sturdy fins of the Atlantic mudskipper act as primitive legs and allow it to forage for insects and small crabs on the mud. When disturbed it can skip across mud. It can also skip across water like a skimming stone for several metres.

These mudskippers were resting in Santo António and there were larger numbers in pools behind the Praia Jalé beach in São Tomé.



## Santo António, Príncipe

Príncipe is a thirty-five minute flight from São Tomé on STP's 31-year-old turboprop. Any hold baggage over 15kg is charged at 5€/kg, a high cost for us photographers who cannot travel light. The city of Santo António has less than 3000 inhabitants.

Atlantic mudskippers skip along the mud banks of the estuary and the ubiquitous yellow-billed kite hunts overhead.

Estrilda Matilde is Executive Director of Fundação Príncipe, a conservation organisation. Estrilda has built a simple pond in her Santo António garden and it has attracted two of the three endemic frog species on the island. She was kind enough to welcome us to her house one evening, the photo-opportunity having been set up by Filipa.



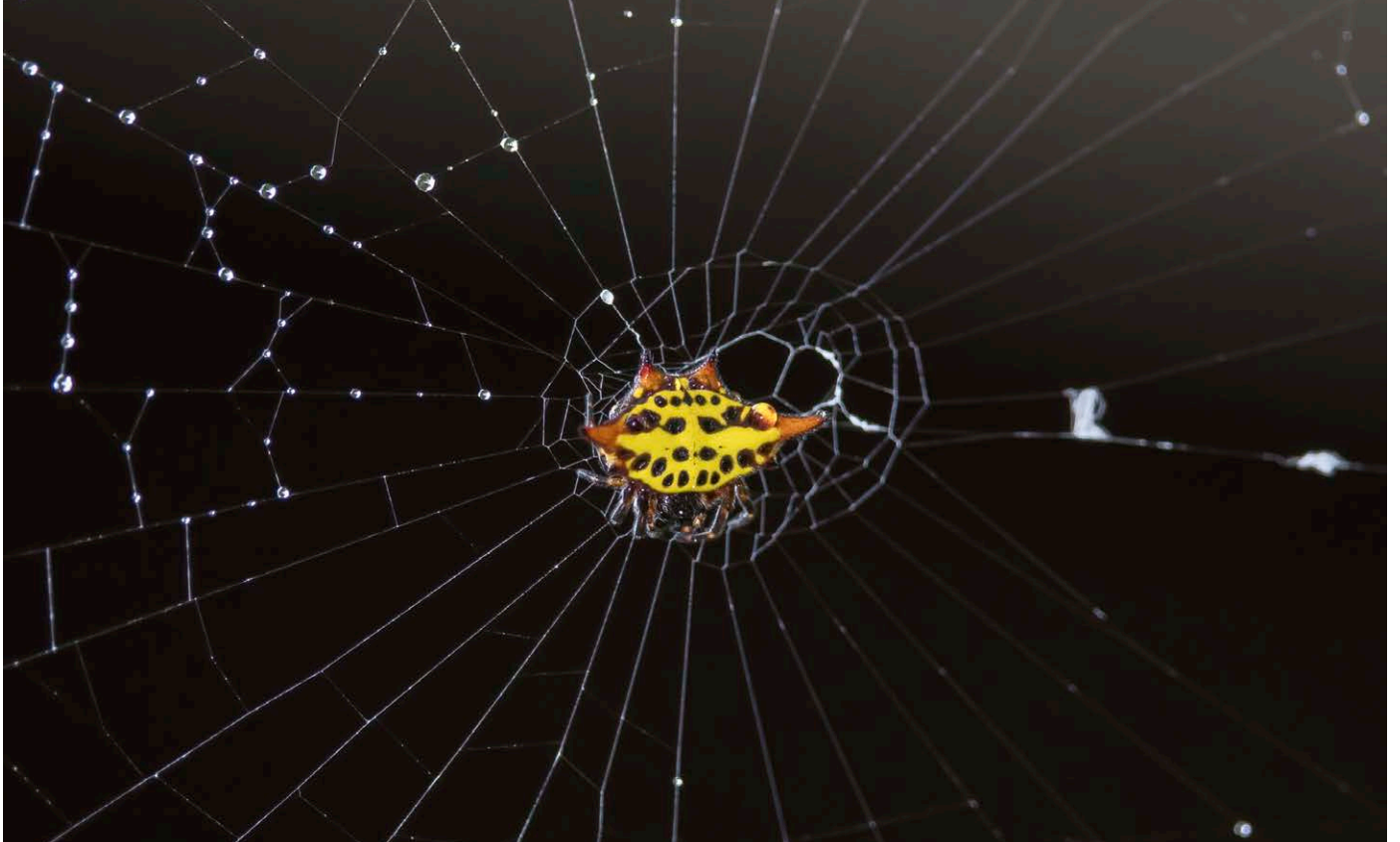
Oceanic tree frog (*Hyperolius drewesi*)  
Canon EOS R6, 100mm, 1/200sec, F16, ISO 800 with ring flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe



Príncipe puddle frog (*Phrynobatrachus dispar*)  
Canon EOS R6, 100mm, 1/200 sec, F16, ISO 800 with ring flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe



Yellow-billed kite (*Milvus aegyptius parasitus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F11, ISO 800



Spiny-backed orb-weaver (*Gasteracantha sanguinolenta*) female, yellow form  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1250 sec, F16, ISO 6400 with flash

## Animal Magic

The *Gasteracantha* genus of spiny-backed orb-weaver spiders are quite common. The females are three times as large as the males. They have six abdominal spines and are sometimes called crab spiders because of their hard 'shells'. Most are red, but there are yellow forms - see the same species on the previous page.



Spiny-backed orb-weaver (*Gasteracantha sanguinolenta*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 100mm, 1/250 sec, F16, ISO 3200 with ring flash

*Gasteracantha* are usually photographed from the upper (dorsal) side. The underside (ventral side) of the same spider is equally bizarre.



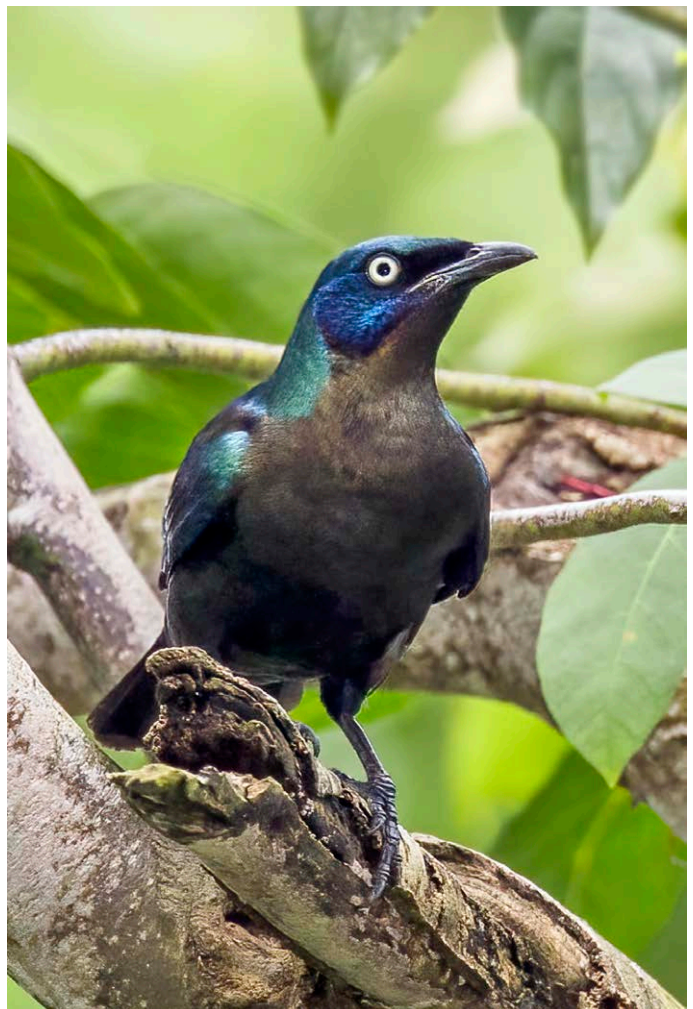
Spiny-backed orb-weaver (*Gasteracantha sanguinolenta*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 100mm, 1/250 sec, F16, ISO 3200 with ring flash

## Sundy, Príncipe

The north of the island of Príncipe gets less rain than the interior, but still expect to get wet. Do not be fooled by Valerie's photos of glorious sunshine.

The South African/British entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth has invested more than \$100m through his HBD group. HBD promotes sustainable social and economic development in Príncipe and the conservation of the island's UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. As he told the Financial Times in 2019, 'Wouldn't it be amazing if we could set a standard for what's possible in the balance between nature and humanity, and culture and tourism.'

Roça Sundy, a colonial plantation house, has been restored and turned into a hotel. The photo of the endemic starling was taken from the lunch table.



Príncipe glossy starling (*Lamprotornis ornatus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 1000  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe





Photograph: Valerie Goodchild, iPhone XR



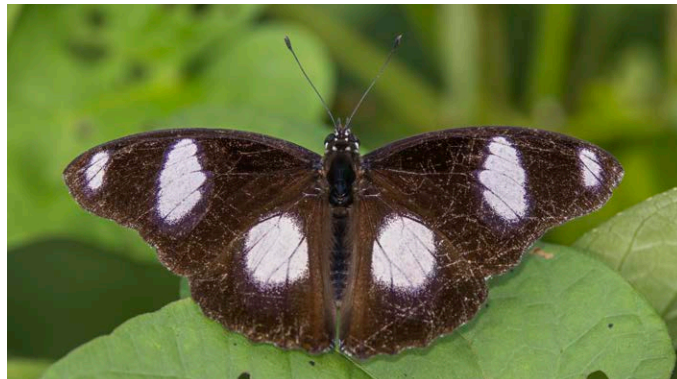
Fashion commodore (*Precis pelarga*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F11, ISO 1600 with infill flash



Soldier commodore (*Junonia terea*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F10, ISO 1000 with infill flash



African grass blue  
(*Zizeeria knysna*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 3200, infill flash



Danaid eggfly (*Hypolimnas misippus*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 500 with infill flash



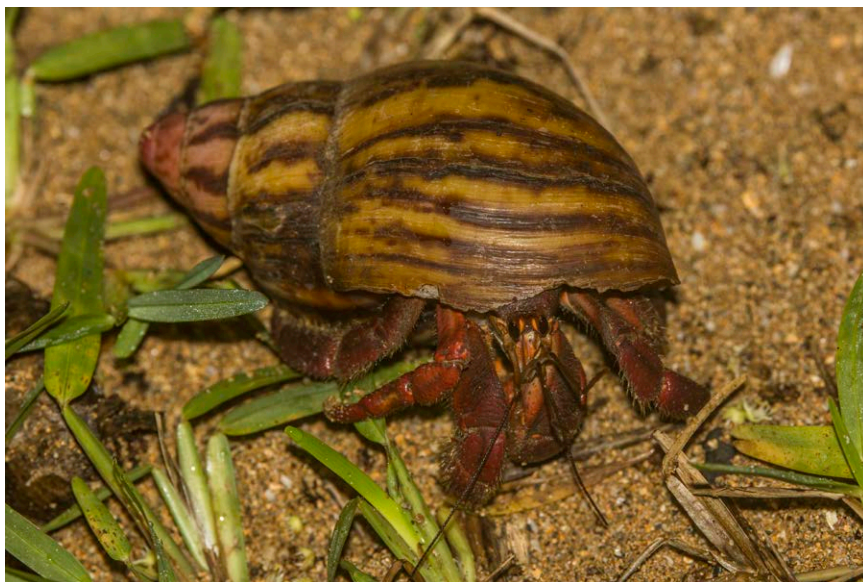
African grass blue  
(*Zizeeria knysna*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F10, ISO 3200, infill flash

# Sundy Praia, Príncipe



**S**undy Praia is the flagship hotel run by HBD Príncipe. The very well-appointed villas have tented roofs which quickly let you know when it is raining. The villas are hidden in the forest and some

have short paths to the beach, which slopes gently into the sea and is sandy all the way out. At night, the crabs come out. There are a few flowers at the front of the hotel and the hibiscus attracts swallowtail butterflies.



Hermit crab (*Coenobita rubescens*) [shell Giant East African snail (*Archachatina marginata*)]  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/640 sec, F11, ISO 800 with flash



A pair of citrus swallowtails (*Papilio demodocus*) on hibiscus flower  
Canon EOS 6R, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Land crab (*Johngarthia weileri*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/250 sec, F8, ISO 1250 with flash



Príncipe golden weaver  
(*Ploceus princeps*) female  
eating from ripe cocoa pod  
Canon EOS R6 , 500mm, 1/500 sec,  
F7.1, ISO 3200 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe



## Animal Magic

Why do volcanic islands like Príncipe have white sand? Shouldn't the beaches be black from the volcanic rock. Are they made of shells?

Parrotfish are responsible. These colourful fish are grazers. They bite and scrape algae off rocks and dead corals. Their teeth are unusual in that they are fused together for extra strength. Parrotfish also have a special set of toothplates in their throat called a pharyngeal mill. This assists in grinding up the hard coral which is made of inedible calcium carbonate.

They then excrete it as fine-grained sand. Some adult parrotfish can excrete 400kg of sand a year. Around 70% of the sand around Hawaii and the Caribbean islands has been created by parrotfish.

We love walking barefoot though parrotfish poo. Do you?



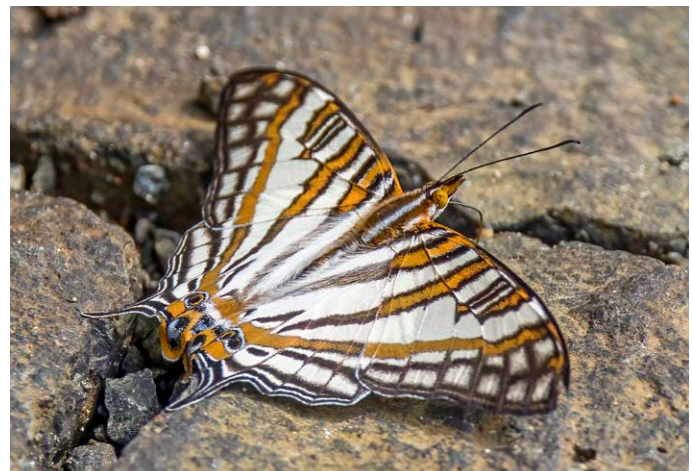
## Belo Monte, Príncipe

Rocha Belo Monte is another colonial plantation house which has been turned into a hotel. The hotel hosts a well-designed little museum with informative display boards. It is run by Africa's Eden who support a range of conservation programmes.

Nearby, below a steep cliff, is Praia Banana which was used for a 1991 Bacardi advert. Another beach, Praia Grande, is where you can see turtles nesting or their babies hatching if you come at the right time of year.



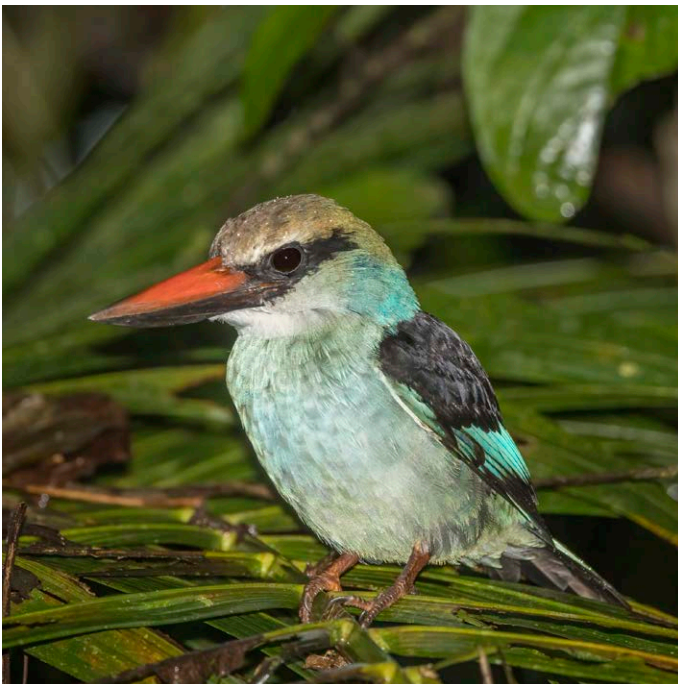
Photograph: Valerie Goodchild, iPhone XR



African map (*Cyrestis camillus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800



Praia Banana. Photograph: Valerie Goodchild, iPhone XR



Blue-breasted kingfisher (*Halcyon malimbica dryas*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A subspecies endemic to the island of Príncipe



Príncipe speirops (*Zosterops leucophaeus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F8, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe

## Bom Bom, Príncipe

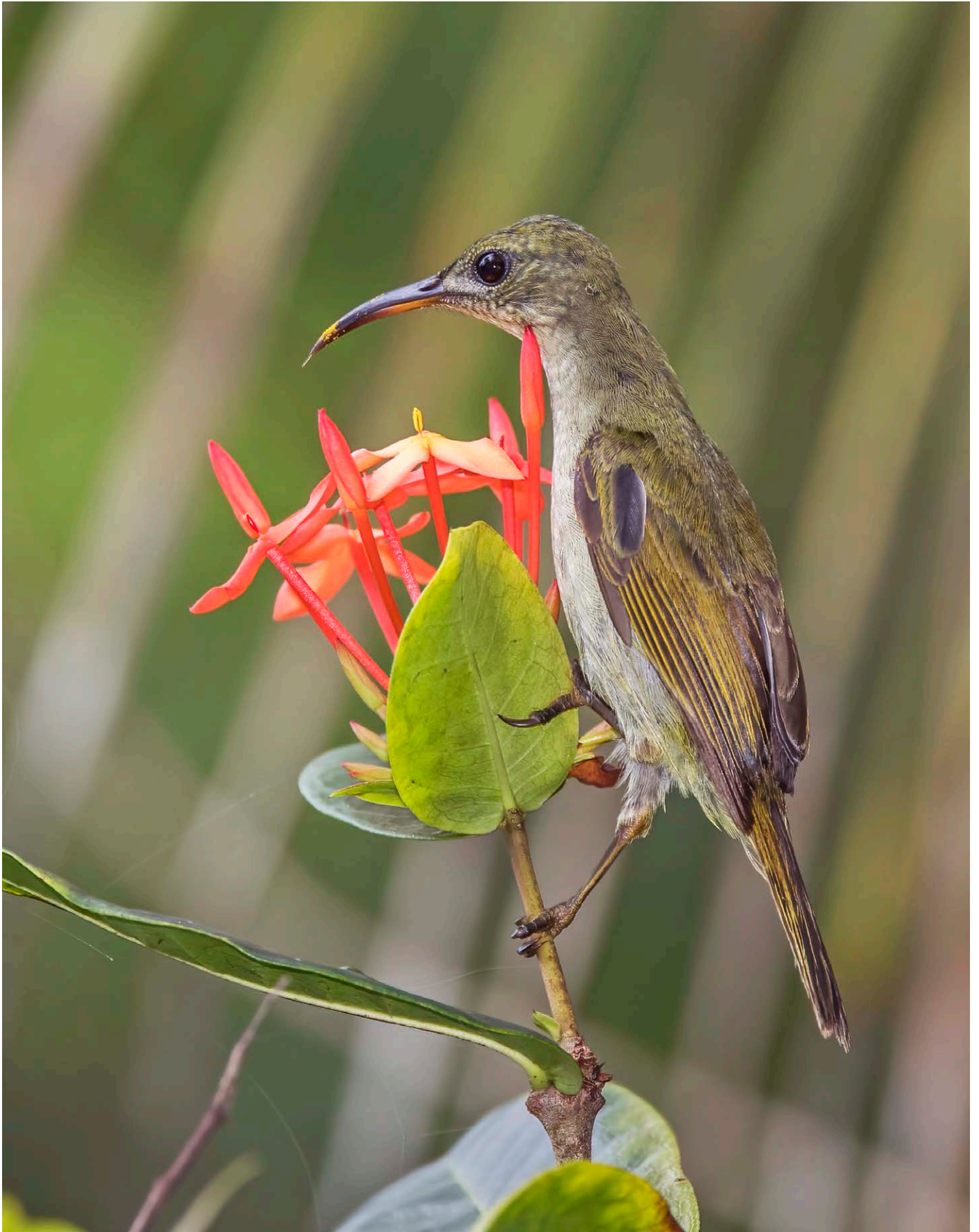
**B**om Bom Resort is closed for renovations. It is scheduled to open in October 2022. Bom Bom has an enviable location and an excellent beach which was, like all the beaches on the island, completely deserted. It is under the flightpath, but with one flight a day this is not a problem on Príncipe. The flowers planted in the grounds attract the Príncipe sunbird.

There are no hummingbirds outside of the Americas, but the nectar-feeding sunbirds are the nearest family we have. They are only distantly related to the hummingbirds but are often as colourful. They have emerged as a result of convergent evolution, as have the honeyeaters of Australasia.



Príncipe sunbird (*Anabathmis hartlaubii*) male  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1000 sec, F7.1, ISO 800 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe





Príncipe sunbird (*Anabathmis hartlaubii*) female  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/800 sec, F7.1, ISO 1600 with infill flash  
A species endemic to the island of Príncipe

## Guide books

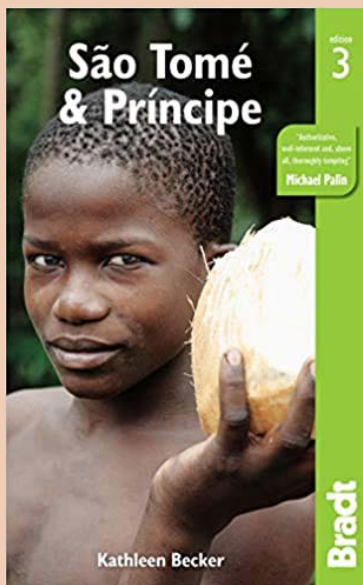
As few tourists visit the islands, there is little demand for the sort of detailed field guides you can find for the regions of mainland Africa and for Madagascar.

The *Birds of São Tomé and Príncipe - a Photoguide* is very useful, even though the photos are not always the finest quality.



Many thanks to Dr Szabolcs Sáfíán for confirming the butterfly identifications.

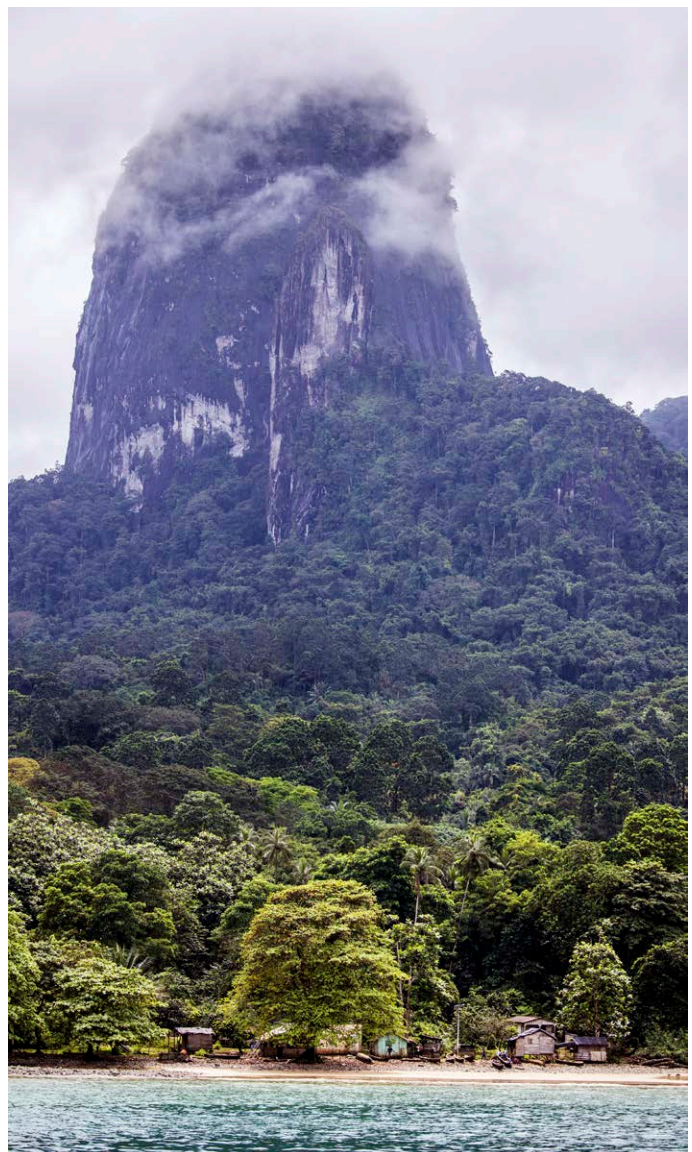
For general background, the *Bradt travel guide* is worth a read. We had Edition 2 which is quite out of date. A new edition was published in 2021.



## Pedra da Galé, Príncipe

The standard HBD boat excursions potter along the north coast of Príncipe to Baía das Agulhas (Bay of Spires), offering snorkelling. They have abandoned whale-watching trips. There is little to see above or below the water, except to admire the stunning 'Jurassic Park' scenery and impressive phonolite towers peaking out from behind the cloud.

As the sea was calm on the day we went out, our skipper took us to Pedra da Galé, a small rocky islet less than 200m long some 4km north of the main island. The rock is inhabited by a sizeable population of brown boobies and brown noddies. We also saw a dark morph western reef heron showing off its distinctive white carpal area.





Western reef heron (*Egretta gularis gularis*)  
Canon EOS R6, 254mm, 1/1600 sec, F14, ISO 800



Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster leucogaster*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F16, ISO 800



Brown noddy (*Anous stolidus stolidus*)  
Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/1600 sec, F10, ISO 800

A Sharp Eye on **wildlife**  
**photography**

Príncipe malachite kingfisher (*Corythornis cristatus nais*)

*Front cover*

Canon EOS R6, 472mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400 with infill flash

*Back cover*

Canon EOS R6, 500mm, 1/500 sec, F7.1, ISO 6400 with infill flash

The same bird photographed from the back of a car  
on the island of Príncipe, October 2021

