



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Budget Madagascar

20th November to 1st December 2012 (12 days)

Trip Report



Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher by Wayne Jones

Trip report compiled by tour leader: Wayne Jones

Top ten birds as voted for by participants:

1. Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher
2. Madagascar Flufftail
3. Schlegel's Asity
4. Long-tailed Ground Roller
5. White-breasted Mesite
6. Velvet Asity
7. Rufous-headed Ground Roller
8. Pitta-like Ground Roller
9. Blue Vanga
10. Red-fronted Coua

Tour Summary

We kicked off our 12-day tour to the world's fourth largest island with afternoon visits to various lakes and waterbodies around the capital, Antananarivo (Tana). It was a gentle introduction to birding in Madagascar, with endemics such as Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Kingfisher, Madagascar Manikin, Madagascar White-eye and Madagascar Wagtail mixed in with a variety of more widespread species, including Hottentot and Red-billed Teals, Olive Bee-eater and Black Heron. We then moved on to our comfortable hotel in the city for an early night in anticipation of our flight the following morning.



Oustalet's Chameleon by Wayne Jones

The next morning, as our Air Madagascar flight was about to leave, Tana Airport delivered the first of many surprises in the form of a male Madagascar Partridge alongside the runway. Barely an hour later, we found ourselves in the north-western coastal town of Mahajanga where we stopped for a sizeable Oustalet's Chameleon (one of the world's largest) that was crossing the exit road from the airport. Then it was on to Ankarafantsika National Park where we would be based for two nights. There we were greeted by a myriad species around the chalets/campsite, including Sickle-billed Vanga, Broad-billed Roller, Grey-headed Lovebird, Sakalava Weaver, Greater Vasa Parrot, Malagasy Turtle Dove and a pair of Madagascar Hoopoes, while numerous Cuvier's Iguanids scurried around. The area can get quite hot

and stuffy so birding was limited to early mornings and late afternoons, though the nearby Lac Ravelobe supported a wide selection of waterbirds throughout the day. We notched up some spectacular species in the surrounding woodland over the next three days including Madagascar Ibis, Madagascar Buttonquail, three confiding White-breasted Mesites, more Vangas (Blue, Hook-billed, Rufous, White-headed and Van Dam's), three Couas (Crested, Coquerel's and the nominate form of Red-capped), Madagascar Green Pigeon, Madagascar Buzzard, Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, Cuckoo Roller and the exquisite Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher. In addition we had saturation views of male and female Schlegel's Asity, both performing their upside-down display. Other highlights included very personable Coquerel's Sifakas, Common Brown and Mongoose Lemurs, Eastern Avahi and an impressive Giant Hog-nosed Snake.



Male Schlegel's Asity by Wayne Jones

Nocturnal walks are the best way to see the many chameleons, lemurs and other critters for which Madagascar is so famous, and the area around Ankarafantsika did not disappoint! Two night walks yielded Madagascar Nightjar, Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, Grey Mouse Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf



Lemur, Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur, Western Tufted Rat, and Rhinoceros and Oustalet's Chameleons.

Lac Ravelobe, the large waterbody alongside the campsite, was particularly productive with sightings of Malagasy Pond Heron, Humblot's Heron, Madagascar Jacana, numerous Allen's Gallinule, a pair of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle, two Greater Painted Snipes and a Bat Hawk that flew languidly over our heads in the early morning.

The birding at Ankarafantsika was phenomenal, but we eventually had to head back to Tana via Mahajanga. A quick stop at a wetland in Mahajanga yielded a pair of African Pygmy Geese, another TWELVE Greater Painted Snipes, Madagascar Jacana and a compact flock of about 100 Black Herons. That evening the Tana Airport delivered its next surprise in the form of a Marsh Owl which was sitting on the runway as we landed. As soon as we were off the plane our scope was set up and we had phenomenal views of this handsome bird, under the watchful eye of airport security.



Red-capped Coua by Wayne Jones

Our flight to Toliara (Tulear) the following day was delayed until the late evening, so we took the opportunity to visit one of Tana's more renowned birding spots, the privately-owned Lac Alarobia. This wetland sanctuary is home to a good diversity of waterbirds and we picked up Malagasy Pond Heron, Humblot's Heron, Knob-billed Duck, White-faced Whistling Duck, White-throated Rail, Black-crowned Night Heron, Malagasy Brush Warbler and Madagascar Swamp Warbler, in addition to the hundreds of Squacco Herons, Dimorphic Egrets and Cattle Egrets that were constantly swirling around.

That afternoon Tana Airport sealed its reputation as an unexpected birding hotspot when a splendid adult Sooty Falcon whizzed past a few times as we stood outside the departures entrance. Later that night we flew down to the south-west, landed in Toliara and quickly transferred to our vehicles for our late-night drive to the beach village of Ifaty where we'd visit the famed Spiny Forest.

The next morning we set off into the surreal landscape of the Spiny Forest, amid gangly Octopus Trees and towering Baobabs. Our early start, a necessity in the dry, hot south of the island, paid off as we nailed all our target species within a few hours. We had close-up views of the first of four ground rollers on the trip, the Long-tailed Ground Roller, male and female Subdesert Mesite, Banded Kestrel, Running and Red(Green)-capped Couas, Madagascar Cuckoo, Thamnornis Warbler, Subdesert Brush Warbler, Lafresnaye's Vanga and Archbold's Newtonia.



Madagascar Plover by Wayne Jones



After a mid-afternoon break we drove out to some nearby salt pans where we found two pairs of Madagascar Plover, one of which had two fluffball chicks. Moving on to a series of freshwater pans we had a lovely view of a Baillon's Crake in the afternoon light, and up to 30 Grey-headed Lovebirds feeding in the reeds. Madagascar Lark and Madagascar Cisticola were plentiful in the scrubby vegetation surrounding the pans, which held numerous waders including Common Greenshank, Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper. That evening Grey and Grey-brown Mouse Lemurs provided enchanting photo opportunities as they foraged in the trees around our cabins.

The following day we birded the mangrove shoreline *en route* to Toliara, picking up Common Ringed Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Sanderling and Greater Crested Tern, amongst others. Our clean sweep of the Spiny Forest the day before meant we could visit Zombitse Forest, a national park about three hours inland from Toliara. There we had Giant Coua, White-browed Hawk-Owl, Madagascar Spinetail and two Crested Ibis, but sadly dipped on the localised Appert's Tetraka. Other highlights included Standing's Day Gecko, Zombitse (Hubbard's) Sportive Lemur and a group of wonderfully engaging Verreaux's Sifakas.



Verreaux's Sifaka by Wayne Jones

On our last day down south we concentrated on a patch of coral rag scrub near La Tabla, just outside of Toliara. We enjoyed a phenomenal sighting of a male Red-shouldered Vanga early on, but had to work hard to find a Verreaux's Coua, which gave brief but satisfying views. With the last of our targets for the area safely in the bag, we returned to Tana for an overnight stay before the drive to our last destination, Andasibe.



Red-shouldered Vanga by Wayne Jones

After breakfast on Day 9 we headed east, gradually winding our way down the plateau amid rice paddies and granitic outcrops. At the bridge spanning the broad Mangoro River we got a double bonus in the form of four Madagascar Pratincoles and a pale-phase Eleonora's Falcon. Nearing our accommodation at Andasibe, the landscape took on a more natural appearance as the cultivated fields and valleys gave way to lush rainforest. Over the next three days we explored this exciting new habitat in the nearby Analamazaotra Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park., notching up a host of fantastic new birds, mammals and reptiles. These included a gorgeous little male Madagascar Flufftail, Tylas and Red-tailed Vangas, Dark Newtonia, a sonorous female

Crossley's Vanga (Babbler), Madagascar Grebe, Madagascar Starling, Velvet Asity (including a very dapper male), Madagascar Long-eared Owl, Red-breasted and Red-fronted Couas, Green and Stripe-



throated Jery's, two stunning Collared Nightjars, Rainforest Scops Owl, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, numerous representatives of the Malagasy Warblers (White-throated Oxylabes, Long-billed Berniera, Cryptic Warbler, Wedge-tailed Jery, Spectacled Tetraka and Rand's Warbler), a young Forest Rock Thrush, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Nelicourvi Weaver, Forest Fody and Malagasy Green Sunbird. Other noteworthy mentions were Common Tenrec, a day-glo Baron's Painted Mantella, four chameleon species including the diminutive Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon and three Madagascar Tree Boas with their unearthly flame-blue shimmer.



Tree Boa by Wayne Jones

In between visits to the two reserves, the hotel grounds provided much to keep us entertained; Red-tailed and Chabert's Vangas, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Blue Pigeon and Madagascar Wagtail, along with dazzling Lineated Day Geckos clinging to the sides of Traveller's Palms (Ravinalas) around the restaurant.

Of course, the focus of any visit to the eastern rainforests is ground rollers and lemurs. We put in the effort and it paid off as we had absolutely phenomenal sightings of the quirky Short-legged Ground Roller, the exquisite Pitta-like Ground Roller and the notoriously difficult-to-see Rufous-headed Ground Roller. Only the Scaly Ground Roller evaded us despite thorough searches. The lemurs did not disappoint either, with the beautiful salmon-tinged Diademed Sifaka, Eastern Avahi, Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur, Goodman's Mouse Lemur and Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur all showing well, the latter two on night walks. We were also treated to a group of Indri – the largest extant lemur species – wailing excitedly (and loudly!) just metres above us in the forest, an experience which surely contributed to its being voted the top mammal on tour.

All too soon it was time to return home and our tour concluded on Day Twelve with 161 bird species (including all endemic and near-endemic bird families and sub-families), 20 mammals (of which 18 were lemurs), 29 reptiles and four frogs. It was a fantastic conclusion to an intense, but rewarding time spent on this unique island.



Short-legged Ground Roller by Wayne Jones

Annotated List of Birds recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List of Please cite: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Total species recorded 161 (160 seen and 1 heard only):



Key to abbreviations:

E: an endemic species

NE: a near-endemic species (i.e. occurring in the Malagasy region only)

BE: a breeding endemic species

I: an introduced species

e: an endemic subspecies

ne: a near-endemic subspecies

be: a breeding endemic subspecies

CONSERVATION STATUS

C: critical **En:** endangered **V:** vulnerable **NT:** near-threatened

Guineafowl Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl (I)

Numida meleagris

A flock of seven were seen alongside the road en route to Ankarafantsika National Park.

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Common at Lac Ravelobe in Ankarafantsika and Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Knob-billed (Comb) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

We saw two birds at Lac Alarobia.

African Pygmy Goose

Nettapus auretus

A pair of these colourful little geese was seen on a pan in Mahajanga.

Meller's Duck (E)

Anas melleri

Two birds showed well in a small dam in Mantadia NP.

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

Seen well and in good numbers on Lake Alarobia and again near Ifaty.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

Recorded at Lac Alarobia and wetlands near Ifaty.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

A few birds were seen in a wetland near Ifaty.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelinii

Three birds in breeding plumage were seen on a small dam in Mantadia NP.

NOTE: Globally threatened and declining due to habitat loss, introduction of exotic fish, and competition (and possibly hybridization) with Little Grebe.

Flamingoes Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopterus roseus

Fourteen birds, mostly juveniles, were seen on the wetlands near Ifaty.

Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae



Black-crowned Night Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

This bird was plentiful at Lac Alarobia.

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

Small numbers encountered almost daily in wetlands and rice paddies across the country.

NOTE: Represented in Madagascar by the race B. s. rutenbergi, which tends to be darker than its African counterpart, with a reddish neck reminiscent of the American B. s. virens (Green Heron).

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

Numerous and widespread in wetlands and rice paddies.

Malagasy Pond Heron*Ardeola idae*

Four birds seen in total, all in faded breeding plumage, at Lac Ravelobe and Lac Alarobia.

[Western] Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Encountered in wetlands, lakes and rice paddies across the country, though never in large numbers.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Seen around Lac Ravelobe and the coastline between Ifaty and Toliara.

Humblot's Heron (E) (V)*Ardea humbloti*

Superb views of singletons at Lac Ravelobe and Lac Alarobia.

NOTE: A globally threatened species, essentially restricted to Madagascar but with vagrant records elsewhere.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

Seen daily on Lac Ravelobe, Ankarafantsika National Park.

[Western] Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Encountered often on wetlands and rice paddies around Tana and the north-west.

Black Heron*Egretta ardesiaca*

Plentiful at Lac Alarobia, Lac Ravelobe and on a small pan in Mahajanga.

Dimorphic (Western Reef) Egret*Egretta dimorpha*

Seen regularly on wetlands around the island, with both white and dark morphs recorded.

NOTE: This species is sometimes lumped by authorities as a distinct subspecies of the widespread Little Egret, Egretta garzetta. Clements treats it as a subspecies of Little Egret.

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

Surprisingly scarce, with only four birds in total seen in rice paddies between Tana and Andasibe.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Bat Hawk***Accipiter francesii*

Distant views were had of a perched adult bird before it flew toward and over us in the early morning at Lac Ravelobe.

Yellow-billed Kite*Milvus aegyptius*

Commonly recorded throughout the north- and south-west.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split into two, Yellow-billed and Black Kite. We observed the Yellow-billed form throughout Madagascar. This split is currently not recognized by Clements or the IOC.

Black Kite*Milvus migrans*

A single bird passed overhead between Ifaty and Toliara.

Madagascar Fish Eagle (E)*Haliaeetus vociferoides*

A pair of these critically endangered raptors was seen along the banks of Lac Ravelobe.



Madagascar Harrier-hawk (E) *Polyboroides radiatus*

Birds were seen at Ankarafantsika National Park and near Ifaty.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE) *Accipiter francesii*

Separate sightings were had of a male and female bird in/near Mantadia National Park.

Madagascar Buzzard (E) *Buteo brachypterus*

First seen circling above Zombitse Forest, The most frequently recorded raptor of the tour.

Falcons Falconidae**Malagasy (Madagascar) Kestrel (NE)** *Falco newtoni*

Seen on a number of occasions on the tour.

Banded Kestrel (E) *Falco zoniventris*

Initially restricted to bill-and-crown views of a bird in a nest, we were most fortunate to have the partner alight on a bare *Didierea* tree allowing unimpeded views.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*

A pale-phase bird briefly observed chasing pratincoles along the Mangoro River.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

A beautiful adult bird made a few swoops past us at Tana Airport.

Mesites Mesitornithidae**White-breasted Mesite** *Mesitornis variegatus*

We saw this lovely bird fantastically well on two occasions in Ankarafantsika NP.

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V) *Monias benschi*

We struck it lucky in the Spiny Forest with both a male and female seen in their unique downward pointing poses within minutes of each other.

Flufftails Sarothruridae**Madagascar Flufftail (E)** *Sarothrura insularis*

Heard often from trackside vegetation near Andasibe and Mantadia, with one male showing extremely well near our hotel.

Rails & Gallinules Rallidae**Madagascar Wood Rail (E)** *Canirallus kioloides*

After much effort we finally got stellar views of the forest skulker near Analamasaotra Special Reserve.

Madagascar Rail (E) *Rallus madagascariensis*

This bird proved tougher than expected, but eventually an individual poked out of the reeds for a short time near Mantadia NP.

White-throated Rail (E) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

Recorded at Lac Ravelobe, Lac Alarobia and Mantadia/Andasibe, including five chicks in total.

NOTE: Some authorities consider the nominate Madagascar race of this bird as distinctive from the near-flightless Aldabra Island race, making this another endemic rallid to Madagascar. This is accepted by the IOC.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

A highly responsive individual showed nicely at wetlands near Ifaty.



Allen's (Lesser) Gallinule

Porphyrio alleni

At least 8 birds seen really well on Lac Ravelobe, Ankarafantsika NP.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Common at Lacs Ravelobe and Alarobia.

Buttonquails Turnicidae

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

Seen a few times throughout the tour, including a male and four chicks at Ankarafantsika NP.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Recorded at Lac Amboromalandy (near Mahajanga) and the Ifaty Wetlands.

Plovers Charadriidae

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Separate sightings were had of a male and female bird in/near Mantadia National Park.

Common Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

A few birds were seen between Ifaty and Toliara.

Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)

Charadrius thoracicus

We had wonderful close-up views of a pair with two chicks, and later a second pair of adults near Ifaty.

Kittlitz's Plover

Charadrius pecuarius

Common to abundant around Ifaty and its wetlands.

Three-banded Plover

Charadrius tricollaris

A handful of birds between Ifaty and Toliara.

Greater Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii

We had up to 30 of these birds along the mangrove shoreline between Toliara and Ifaty.

Painted Snipes Rostratulidae

Greater Painted Snipe

Rostratula benghalensis

Two males showed well at Lac Ravelobe, Ankarafantsika NP. Six females and an equal number of males were seen later the same day at a pan in Toliara.

Jacanas Jacanidae

Madagascar Jacana (E)

Actophilornis albinucha

We saw three birds at Lac Ravelobe and a further two at a pan in Toliara.

Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

A few of these waders were found along the Ifaty shoreline.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Small numbers were recorded around Tana, Mahajanga and Ifaty.



Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>
Twelve of these attractive shorebirds were seen in the mangrove area south of Ifaty.	
Common Sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
Recorded at low densities at wetlands around the island.	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Quite a few individuals in the wetlands and mangroves near Ifaty.	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
A group of 25 birds was huddled together in the mangroves near Ifaty.	
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
A total of seven birds were seen at the wetlands and mangroves near Ifaty.	
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Large numbers were seen at Lac Amboromalandy, near Mahajanga, and at the wetlands and mangroves near Ifaty.	

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Greater Crested (Swift) Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>
A single fly-by was recorded along the mangrove stretch between Ifaty and Toliara.	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
A single seemingly heat-exhausted individual allowed close approach at Lac Amboromalandy near Mahajanga.	
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
We had about 80 of these beauties in full breeding plumage at Lac Amboromalandy.	

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Common (Rock) Pigeon (I)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Widespread and common around human habitation.	
Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NE)	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>
Observed in small numbers almost daily around the island.	
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>
This pretty little dove was common in the dry west and south-west.	
Madagascar Green Pigeon (E)	<i>Treron australis</i>
A pair was seen in Ankarafantsika NP.	
Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>
We had two sightings of 9 birds in total in Mantadia NP.	

Parrots Psittacidae

Grey-headed Lovebird (E)	<i>Agapornis canus</i>
Seen in small numbers around the campsite at Ankarafantsika NP, and later in flocks of 30 at the wetland between Ifaty and Toliara.	
[Greater] Vasa Parrot (NE)	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>
Numerous sightings of a few birds at Ankarafantsika NP and Mantadia NP.	



Lesser Vasa (Black) Parrot (NE) *Coracopsis nigra*
 Seen in small numbers at Ankarafantsika, Ifaty and Mantadia.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae

Malagasy (Madagascar) Coucal (NE) *Centropus toulou*
 Common; recorded on almost every day of the tour.

Crested Coua (E) *Coua cristata*

We encountered this arboreal coua a few times at both Ankarafantsika and the spiny forest in Ifaty.

Verreaux's Coua (E) (NT) *Coua verreauxi*

We really worked hard to find this species, finally being rewarded with brief but satisfying views of bird in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Blue Coua (E) *Coua caerulea*

We had great sightings of this turaco-like bird in Mantadia NP.

Red-capped Coua (E) *Coua ruficeps*

We had excellent sightings of the nominate subspecies in Ankarafantsika NP as well as the southern khaki-capped form ("Green-capped Coua" - *C.r. Olivaceiceps*) in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Red-fronted Coua *Coua reynaudii*

We had superb views of a singleton in Mantadia NP.

Coquerel's Coua *Coua coquerellii*

We came across this bird on a number of occasions in Ankarafantsika and Zombitse National Parks.

Running Coua (E) *Coua cursor*

Two singletons seen in the spiny forest at Ifaty and the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Giant Coua (E) *Coua gigas*

One of our targets for Zombitse, we eventually had extended views of a bird in the path in front of us.

Red-breasted Coua (E) *Coua serriana*

After much coaxing we managed to get decent views of this handsome but incredibly shy bird of the forest undergrowth in Analamazaotra SP.

Madagascar Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii*

The calling of this bird is one of the characteristic sounds of summertime in Madagascar. We managed to get good views of an individual in the spiny forest in Ifaty.

Typical Owls Strigidae

Rainforest (Malagasy) Scops Owl (NE) *Otus rutilus*

Two birds were seen on a night-walk in the Andasibe area.

White-browed [Hawk-]Owl (E) *Ninox superciliaris*

We were afforded cracking views of two of these owls at a daytime roost.

Madagascar (Long-eared) Owl (E) *Asio madagascariensis*

During a night walk near Andasibe we saw two downy juveniles with their characteristic black masks, one of which was about to feast on a mouse lemur.

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*

We were shocked to find a single bird at the side of the Tana Airport runway as our plane landed at around 9pm. The bird remained in the same spot as we and other birders on our flight had fantastic scope views.



Nightjars Caprimulgidae**Madagascar Nightjar (NE)***Caprimulgus madagascariensis*

Seen well in flight on a night walk near Ankarafantsika NP, and later three roosting birds were observed during the day in the spiny forest.

Collared Nightjar (E)*Caprimulgus enarratus*

Superb views were had of two birds roosting in Mantadia NP.

Swifts Apodidae**Madagascar (Malagasy) Spinetail (NE)***Zoonavena grandidieri*

First seen at Zombitse, then again in Mantadia NP.

African Palm Swift*Cypsiurus parvus*

Seen at Ankarafantsika, Zombitse and Mantadia.

Malagasy Swift (E)*Apus balstoni*

Seen often around Tana and once near Toliara.

Cuckoo Roller Leptosomidae**Cuckoo Roller (NE)***Leptosomus discolor*

We were fortunate to have wonderful views of a calling male perched within the Ankarafantsika NP campsite, as well as a perched female in Zombitse. The rest of our sightings were more typical of the species; distant flying birds at Ankarafantsika and Mantadia.

NOTE: some authorities such as Sinclair I. and Langrande O. consider the Comoros form of this bird to be a separate species from that occurring in Madagascar.

Rollers Coraciidae**Broad-billed Roller***Eurystomus glaucurus*

This gorgeous and vociferous bird was common at Ankarafantsika and Mantadia National Parks.

Ground Rollers Brachypteraciidae**Short-legged Ground Roller (E) (V)***Brachypteracias leptosomus*

After a tough climb we were finally rewarded with saturation views of a single bird perched a metre above ground and calling for at least five minutes... awesome!

Pitta-like Ground Roller (E) (V)*Atelornis pittoides*

Although the commonest of the ground rollers, the Pitta-like is arguably the most beautiful and seeing three birds at Mantadia NP was an absolute treat.

Rufous-headed Ground Roller (E) (NT)*Atelornis crossleyi*

Sightings of this species are usually limited to glimpses of reddish flashes in the undergrowth, but we managed to get splendid views of a relaxed individual in Mantadia NP.

Long-tailed Ground Roller (E) (V)*Uratelornis chimaera*

We had extended, close-up sightings of two birds in the spiny forest at Ifaty.



Kingfishers Alcedinidae**Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)** *Corythornis madagascariensis*

This little bird's beauty and the amount of work we put into trying to find it over two days at Ankarafantsika NP combined to make it the top bird of the tour.

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Seen at wetlands around Tana, Ankarafantsika and Ifaty.

Bee-eaters Meropidae**Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus*

We recorded this lovely bird nearly every day of the tour, and all over the island.

Hoopoes Upupidae**Madagascar Hoopoe (E)** *Upupa marginalis*

Encountered daily at Ankarafantsika and once at Ifaty.

NOTE: This form is usually considered distinct from the African Hoopoe, based on vocal and morphological differences.

Asities Philepittidae**Velvet Asity (E)** *Philepitta castanea*

A female and male in full breeding dress were seen well at Mantadia NP.

Schlegel's Asity (E) *Neodrepanis coruscans*

We had a superb sighting of a breeding-plumaged male hanging upside down. He was later joined by a female who then also proceeded to hang upside down for a few minutes.

Vangas Vangidae**Red-tailed Vanga (E)** *Calicalicus madagascariensis*

A pair seen briefly in the grounds of our hotel near Andasibe.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V) *Calicalicus rufocarpalis*

Following good views of a nesting female we had lengthy views of a singing male so close we could hardly focus our binoculars. A very localised species, we saw it in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Hook-billed Vanga (E) *Vanga curvirostris*

First seen well in Ankarafantsika and again in Ifaty and Zombitse.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E) *Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

A female bird was sighted just as we were leaving the spiny forest.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) *Xenopirostris damii*

This bird lived up to its reputation of being difficult to locate, but after much effort we got fantastic views of an adult male.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E) *Falcolea palliata*

This striking species was common in the campsite at Ankarafantsika and was also seen in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

White-headed Vanga (E) *Artamella viridis*

We had five individuals over various days at Ankarafantsika and Mantadia.



Chabert's Vanga (E)*Leptopterus chabert*

A commonly encountered species throughout the tour.

Blue Vanga (NE)*Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

This stunning electric-blue bird was encountered a number of times at Ankarafantsika and Mantadia.

NOTE: Sinclair I. and Langrande O., consider the Comoros race of this species to be distinct, resulting in the Madagascar Blue Vanga being another Madagascar endemic. This stance is not widely accepted.

Rufous Vanga (E)*Schetba rufa*

We saw this neatly-plumaged bird four times at Ankarafantsika and Zombitse.

Tylas Vanga (E)*Tylas eduardi*

We saw three birds very well at Mantadia.

NOTE: Recent DNA evidence suggests that this "vanga" is more closely related to the cuckoo-shrikes.

Nuthatch Vanga (E)*Hypositta corallirostris*

We were thrilled to get excellent views of this hyperactive little bird in Mantadia.

Dark Newtonia (E)*Newtonia amphichroa*

A single bird showed well in Mantadia.

Common Newtonia (E)*Newtonia brunneicauda*

Living up to its name this species was seen and heard in almost any wooded habitat.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)*Newtonia archboldi*

We had close-up views of a bird on the nest in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)*Pseudobias wardi*

Unfortunately, despite many calling individuals in Analamazaotra SP, we could not get a visual lock on this canopy bird.

Crossley's Babbler (E)*Mystacornis crossleyi*

A female treated us to extended views as she sang demurely from a moss-covered log in forest near Analamazaotra.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae**Madagascar (Ashy) Cuckooshrike (E)***Coracina cinerea*

We saw many of these lovely birds at Ankarafantsika, Analamazaotra and Mantadia.

Drongos Dicruridae**Crested Drongo (NE)***Dicrurus forficatus*

Seen almost daily in various habitats across the island.

Monarchs Monarchidae**Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE)***Terpsiphone mutata*

A commonly encountered species in Ankarafantsika and Mantadia/Analamazaotra .

Crows & Jays Corvidae**Pied Crow***Corvus albus*

Common in the west and south-west.

Larks Alaudidae

Madagascar Lark (E) *Mirafrha hova*
Plentiful in the grassy and scrubby areas around Toliara and Ifaty.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Malagasy (Madagascar) Bulbul (NE) *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*
Seen frequently during the tour.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin (BE) *Phedina borbonica*
A common bird seen all over the island.

Reed Warblers & Allies Megaluridae

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*
Commonly heard around Tana and the eastern rainforest areas, and seen well at Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*

We saw this bird well in the spiny forest at Ifaty and the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

NOTE: Formerly considered conspecific with Madagascar Brush Warbler but vocally distinct and sympatric with that species near Fort Dauphin.

Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E) *Acrocephalus newtoni*
Seen nicely at Lac Alarobia.

Malagasy Warblers Bernieridae

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*
One bird seen very well in Mantadia NP.

Long-billed Bernieria (Greenbul) (E) *Bernieria madagascariensis*
Small numbers seen in Ankarafantsika, Zombitse and Mantadia.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) *Hartertula flavoviridis*

Two birds showed incredibly well, calmly foraging within metres of us in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

Four individuals were seen well in the spiny forest at Ifaty, each sighting being better than the previous!

Spectacled Tetraka (Greenbul) (E) *Xanthomixis zosterops*

We saw good views of this pretty forest bird at Mantadia.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

Good views of a singleton calling from a treetop in Mantadia.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Common Jery (E) *Neomixis tenella*
Recorded at Ankarafantsika (on our night walks!), Ifaty and Zombitse.

Green Jery (E) *Neomixis viridis*

A calling bird seen well in Mantadia NP.



Stripe-throated Jery (E) *Neomixis striatigula*

Seen and heard frequently in Ifaty, Analamazaotra and Mantadia.

Madagascar Cisticola (NE) *Cisticola cherinus*

Seen and heard in grassy or reedy vegetation in Tana, near Ampijoroa, Ifaty and Andasibe.

White-eyes Zosteropidae**Madagascar White-eye (NE)** *Zosterops maderaspatana*

First seen in Tana, this bird was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Starlings Sturnidae**Common Myna (I)** *Acridotheres tristis tristis*

Recorded every day of the tour near human settlement.

Madagascar Starling (E) *Hartlaubius aurata*

We had two sightings of five birds in total in Mantadia NP.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscipidae**Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E)** *Copsychus albospecularis*

Seen very often throughout the tour.

[Madagascar] Stonechat (E) *Saxicola sibilla*

We had good views of this species in wetland areas near Andasibe and Mantadia NP.

Forest Rock Thrush (E) *Monticola sharpei*

We heard an adult singing, but only had views of a juvenile.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae**Souimanga Sunbird (NE)** *Cinnyris sovimanga*

Many birds seen almost every day.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Green Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris notatus*

After some sightings of females in Ankarafatsika we had superb views of a sunlit male in Analamazaotra.

Weavers Ploceidae**Nelicourvi Weaver (E)** *Ploceus nelicourvi*

A few birds were seen over three days in the rainforests of Analamazaotra and Mantadia.

Sakalava Weaver (E) *Ploceus sakalava*

We had good views of a colony en route from Mahajanga to Ankarafantsika, and more were seen well in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

(Madagascar) Red Fody (E) *Foudia madagascariensis*

Seen often throughout the tour, with a few good sightings of males in seemingly fluorescent breeding plumage.

Forest Fody (E) *Foudia omissa*

We had brief sightings of three males in Mantadia.



House Sparrow (I) *Falcula palliata*

We seven birds at their newly discovered location in Andasibe.

Waxbills, Munias & Allies Estrildidae**Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E)** *Lemuresthes nana*

First seen well in Tana, we recorded this species a few times throughout the tour, including a flock of 20 at Lac Amboromalandy.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**Madagascar Wagtail (E)** *Motacilla flaviventris*

A pretty wagtail which was seen in Tana, Ifaty and Mantadia-Andisibe.

Annotated List of Mammals recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the publication: Mammals of Madagascar - A Complete Guide (2007) by Nick Garbutt.

Total species recorded 20**Tenrecs & Otter Shrews Tenrecidae****Common Tenrec** *Tenrec eucadatus*

A single individual seen scurrying off into the undergrowth in Analamzaotra.

Old World Rats & Mice Muridae**Western Tufted Rat** *Eliurus myoxinus*

Two individuals seen on each of the two nightwalks near Ankarafantsika.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae**Golden-Brown Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus griseorufus*

This attractive species showed well on nightwalks near Ankarafantsika.

Grey Mouse Lemur *Microcebus murinus*

First seen near Ankarafantsika, we had fantastic sightings of this lemur in our hotel grounds in Ifaty.

Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

We also saw this lemur around our cabins in Ifaty.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus lehilahytsara*

We had excellent views of this highly range-restricted species on nightwalks near Andasibe.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*

We saw two of these critters up close on nightwalks near Andasibe.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*

We saw single individuals on two nightwalks near Ankarafantsika.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

- Petter's Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur petteri*
We found a lovely mother and baby roosting for the day in the spiny forest of Ifaty.
- Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur edwardsi*
We encountered three of these lemurs in day roosts on walks through Ankarafantsika NP.
- Hubbard's (Zombitse) Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur microdonta*
We saw one of these reddish, highly localised lemurs during our excursion to Zombitse.

"True" Lemurs Lemuridae

- Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur** *Haplemur griseus griseus*
We encountered a pair each of these adorable animals on two consecutive days in Mantadia NP.
- Mongoose Lemur** *Eulemur mongoz*
A male and female were seen well in Ankarafantsika as they became more active around dusk.
- Common Brown Lemur** *Eulemur fulvus*
Groups of eight seen very well at Ankarafantsika and Analamazaotra.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae

- Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)** *Avahi laniger*
Two seen on a night walk near Analamazaotra.
- Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur)** *Avahi occidentalis*
A single animal seen at Ankarafantsika.
- Diademed Sifaka** *Propithecus diadema diadema*
We saw this colourful species very well in Mantadia NP.
- Verreaux's Sifaka** *Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*
We had a lovely, intimate encounter with a group of five – one individual was especially curious and came down to eye-level to inspect us more closely.
- Coquerel's Sifaka** *Propithecus verreauxi coquereli*
This was the first lemur we saw on the island. We saw between four and seven each day at Ankarafantsika – lovely animals!
- Indri** *Indri indri*
One of the big drawcards of a visit to the Red Isle, the Indri's call could be heard throughout the day at Mantadia and Analamazaotra. We encountered them at both localities and even had brief views from the grounds of our accommodation near Andasibe.

Annotated List of Amphibians recorded

Total species recorded: 4

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the publication: A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar by Frank Glaw and Miguel Vences – Third edition (2007).

- Madagascar Leaf Litter Frog** *Aglyptodactylus madagascariensis*
A medium-sized frog seen on a night walk through VOIMMA Reserve near Andasibe.
- Morondova Bright-eyed Frog** *Boophis doulioti*



This rather bland-looking, but spritely named frog liked to hang out in one of the cabins at Ankarafantsika NP.

Madagascar Sand Frog *Guibemantis pulcher*

A few examples of this diminutive species were seen in a pandanus plant near Analamazaotra.

Baron's Painted Mantella *Mantella baroni*

A vivid little frog seen in Mantadia and distinguished from the Painted Mantella by its red under-thighs.

Annotated List of Reptiles recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the publication: A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar by Frank Glaw and Miguel Vences – Third edition (2007).

Total species recorded: 29

Land Tortoises Testudinidae

Spider Tortoise *Pxyis arachnoides*

This increasingly scarce tortoise was seen in the spiny forest in Ifaty.

Crocodiles Crocodylidae

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*

A few crocs were seen at Lac Ravelobe at Ankarafantsika, one of the few places they still occur in Madagascar.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon *Brookesia superciliaris*

This tiny chameleon was seen on a night walk in VOIMMA Reserve near Andasibe.

Short-horned Chameleon *Calumma brevicornis*

Seen on night walks in the Andasibe area.

Nose-horned Chameleon *Calumma nasuta*

Two individuals seen on a night walk in the Andasibe area.

Parson's Chameleon *Furcifer oustaleti*

This lovely green chameleon was seen on nightwalks near Andasibe.

Oustalet's Chameleon *Furcifer oustaleti*

A total of 6 of these massive chameleons were seen over various days in Tana, Mahajanga, Ifaty, Zombitse and Toliara.

Antimena Chameleon *Furcifer antimena*

We found a male of this species in the spiny forest in Ifaty.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Three-eyed Lizard *Chalarodon madagascariensis*

This attractive lizard was encountered frequently around Ifaty and Toliara.



Cuvier's Iguanid*Furcifer oustaleti*

This spiky-tailed lizard was very common in the park and around the campsite at Ankarafantsika.

Geckos Gekkonidae**Mocquard's Dwarf Gecko***Lygodactylus verticillatus*

We found a few of these small, brown Bark Geckos around our lodgings in Ifaty.

Grandidier's Dwarf Gecko*Lygodactylus tolampyae*

We saw one of these on a baobab in Zombitse forest.

Madagascar Day Gecko*Phelsuma madagascariensis*

A couple of these relatively dull-looking day geckos could be found in our cabins at Ankarafantsika.

Lineated Day Gecko*Phelsuma lineata*

This eye-poppingly dazzling gecko was common on Ravinala and Pandanus plants in the Andasibe area.

Modest Day Gecko*Phelsuma modesta*

The southern counterpart of the Lineated Day Gecko, this species was common around our hotel in Ifaty.

Standing's Day Gecko*Phelsuma standingi*

Fairly monstrous by gecko standards, this heavyweight was seen in Ifaty and Zombitse.

Antongil Velvet Gecko*Blaesodactylus antongilensis*

This speckled brown gecko was seen on a nightwalk near Ankarafantsika.

Common House Gecko*Hemidactylus mercatorius*

We observed a few of these geckos around the restaurant area in Ankarafantsika National Park.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae**Malagasy Keeled Plated Lizard***Tracheloptychus madagascariensis*

Many were seen in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Bronze Girdled Lizard*Zonosaurus aeneus*

A few were seen in the Andasibe area.

Western Girdled Lizard*Zonosaurus laticaudatus*

These plump, stripy lizards were common around the campsite area in Ankarafantsika.

Gravenhorst's Skink*Trachylepis gravenhorstii*

A single specimen was seen at Zombitse Forest.

Elegant Skink*Trachylepis elegans*

This attractive lizard was seen in the spiny forest in Ifaty.

Boas Boidae**Madagascar Tree Boa***Sanzinia madagascariensis*

We first encountered a lovely specimen during a nightwalk near Andasibe followed by two more over the following two days. What a stunner!

Typical Snakes Colubridae**Giant Hog-nosed Snake***Leioheterodon madagascariensis*

We were fortunate to come across one of these large snakes on a walk through Ankarafantsika NP.

Mahafaly Sand Snake *Mimophis mahfalensis*

We encountered this snake on four different occasions in Ankarafantsika, Ifaty and Zombitse, and observed three entirely distinct morphs.

Orange (Variable) Tree Snake *Stenophis variabilis (tulearensis)*

We had a great sighting of this uncommon orange-bodied, red-eyed tree snake on a night-walk near Ankarafantsika.

Perinet Night Snake *Ithycyphus perineti*

Another tree snake, this time seen during the day in Mantadia NP.

Forest Night Snake *Ithycyphus oursi*

We had great views of this individual peeping out of a tree trunk crevice at Zombitse Forest.

List of Notable Insects and other Invertebrates

Names were derived from various sources including Madagascar Wildlife: A visitors guide by Hilary Bradt, Derek Schuurman and Nick Garbutt (1996)

Class Insecta

Flatid Leaf Bug *Phromnia rosea*

We saw examples of both the otherworldly immatures and elegant adults in Ankarafantsika NP.

Giraffe-necked Weevil

We found a few of these intriguing long-necked beetles in Mantadia NP.

Class Arachnida, Family Nephilidae

Golden Orb-web Spider *Nephila madagascariensis*

A colourful arachnid famous for the gold-coloured webs it spins, it was seen at a number of localities during our tour.

Class Diplopoda

Emerald Pill Millipede *Sphaerotherium sp.*

A golfball-sized land crustacean (when rolled u) with beautiful deep green colouring. We saw 80 - 100 of these creatures along a stretch of road in Mantadia NP.

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