



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Highlights

Trip Report

10th to 24th October 2009



Trip report compiled by tour leader Cuan Rush

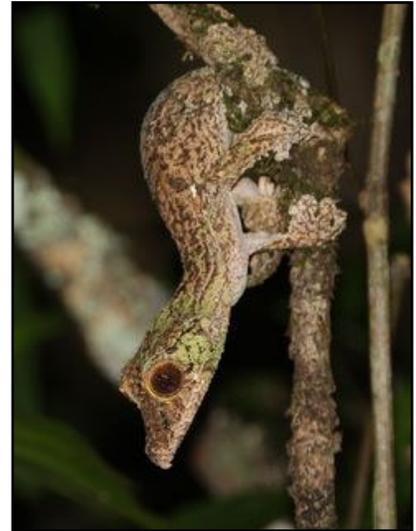
Top 10 Birds as voted by the Group

Cuckoo Roller
Pitta-like Ground Roller
Sub-desert Mesite
Scaly Ground Roller
Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher

Red-shouldered Vanga
Littoral Rock Thrush
Long-tailed Ground Roller
Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher
Velvet Asity

Tour Summary

Beginning in the seething, chaotic, urban sprawl that is the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo, we negotiated our way through the city and out into the calm countryside. Our destination for the first leg of the tour was the Eastern Rainforest site known as Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. This site is split into Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park. These reserves offer a diversity of forest and forest edge habitats along with the associated wetlands and forest pools. Our time spent in the area was very productive and after many sorties into the forests we racked up an impressive list of species. Madagascar Grebe, Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Wood Rail, Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Blue Coua, 4 species of Ground Roller (Short-legged, Scaly, Pitta-like and Rufous-headed), Cuckoo Roller, Common Sunbird-Asity, Nuthatch Vanga, Crossley's Babbler, Wedge-tailed Jery, Nelicourvi Weaver and Forest Fody are a selection



of the endemics and specials encountered. Mention must also be made of our tough, steep and very slippery clamber up and down forested ridges and valleys in search of Short-legged Ground Roller... a sojourn in its own rite. Other sightings that stand out were the jewel-like Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, liquid songster White-throated Oxylabes and mind-blowing views of a couple male Velvet Asities at point blank range! The island is replete with numerous spectacular creatures and we were fortunate to observe a good variety of these. Mammal highlights were a special encounter with a family of Indri, Eastern Avahi and the beautiful Diademed Sifaka. Night excursions near our lodgings also produced Madagascar Owl and a host of reptiles including Greater Stump-tailed, Short-horned, Nose-horned and Band-bellied Chamaeleons and Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko. However, the prized sighting had to be a Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur capturing and feeding on an unfortunate Madagascar Tree Frog.



Initially we were alerted by a blood-curdling scream to the fracas and after locating the creatures by torch-light we proceeded to watch in horrified amazement as the dwarf lemur slowly devoured its victim!

Leaving the moist, lush rainforest we ventured to the arid southern region of the country and our next port-of-call, the famous Berenty Lemur Reserve. After several flights and a lengthy journey on a bumpy "road" we arrived at the reserve which covers an area of 265 hectares and offers the birder, naturalist and general tourist alike a veritable feast of wildlife. Families of Ring-tailed Lemurs abound and are the obvious stars of the show at Berenty. One can literally spend hour upon hour observing and photographing their quizzical and comical social interactions and mischievous tendency to appropriate food items from the unsuspecting guests. However, not all our attention was focused on the ringtails and exploration of the Gallery Forest, Mandrare River, sisal plantations and Spiny Forest on the property yielded many other highlights. These included Frances's Sparrowhawk, good views of a pair



of Madagascar Buttonquail, Grey-headed Lovebird, the attractive Crested and monstrous Giant Couas, Totoroka Scops Owl and White-browed Hawk-Owl, Madagascar Nightjar, Hook-billed and Lafresnaye's Vangas, the beautiful Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher and the nondescript Subdesert Brush Warbler. Over and above this we were very fortunate to experience a close range sighting of Madagascar Sandgrouse. During a morning outing at Berenty we positioned ourselves in the riverbed of the Mandrare in an attempt to observe this great bird. Shortly after settling in a surprised yelp of "sandgrouse" rang out and lo and behold a flock was flying directly at us! Suddenly their flight path veered away from us and over the forest...but we remained motionless and soon afterwards the birds wheeled back toward the river and proceeded to land for their morning drink not 30 meters away. We spent at least ten incredible minutes watching the flock of 20+ birds satiating their thirst before erupting from the sandbank and disappearing into the distance...a truly memorable moment! Other notable sightings were the hilarious Verreaux's Sifakas exhibiting their bipedal, sideways locomotion, the secretive White-footed Sportive Lemurs holed up in their trees, the roost of 100's of Madagascar Flying Foxes and encounters with Madagascar Hissing Cockroach.



Continuing on our adventure we headed for the coastal resort area of Ifaty located on the southwestern region of the island, and the gateway to the Spiny Forest. This botanical wonderland is a must-see for every botanist and due to fairly rapid destruction it is fast becoming a must-see-soon habitat. Characterized by Baobabs and the spiky Didieraceae plants this incredible biome is home to some highly sought-after avians. Our time spent exploring here produced the bizarre Subdesert Mesite (a member of an endemic family), Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Green Pigeon, the gorgeous Running Coua, Long-tailed Ground Roller (to complete the Ground Roller suite), flocks of vocal Sickle-billed Vanga, the curious Archbold's Newtonia and Thamnornis. Scouring the sandbanks, wetlands and tidal mudflats along the coast between Ifaty and Tulear (Toliara) we added Hottentot



Teal, Little Grebe, Little Bittern, a super-charged Baillon's Crake, the endemic Madagascar and feisty White-fronted Plovers, Greater Sand Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Terek Sandpiper, Sanderling, Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper.

One of the standouts of the trip was a speed-boat excursion to Nosy Vé. En route to the small island we passed by a known breeding site for Humblot's and Grey Herons and managed to find several of these large birds. In addition to this we also spotted 2 Humpback Whales and some Common Dolphins. Our timing of the tides for the visit to the island was perfect and within minutes of arrival we had located our major target bird; 23 Crab-plovers in their striking pied plumaged which gave splendid views. Alongside were several tern species including Caspian, Lesser Crested, Swift and Common. A bonus bird for the island turned out to be a vagrant Sooty Gull, first recorded by Rockjumper in 2005 and



apparently returning to this site each year thereafter. Of course, no visit to Nosy Vé is complete without spending time admiring the nesting colony of Red-tailed Tropicbirds. Fortunately, the island is a sacred place to the local Vezo people and this has afforded these angelic birds a degree of protection. Despite the constant intrusion of visitors these birds continue to nest on the island and allow close approaches and in turn unbelievable sightings and photographic opportunities! On the mainland near Anakao we managed to spot a male Littoral Rock Thrush which showed very well, before enjoying a sumptuous seafood lunch and later heading back to Toliara.



Our flight schedule back to the capital meant an extra day in the south-west of the island and in turn afforded us the chance to head out from Tulear to the dry, deciduous woodland of Zombitse Forest. This small, remnant patch of forest is part of the Zombitse-Vohibasia National Park and is extremely important as it protects the remaining populations of Appert's Tetraka. Naturally this was the main target for the excursion and we did well to have good views of 2 birds foraging low down (even on the ground) in the understory. Other specials encountered were White-browed Hawk-Owl, stunning male Blue and Rufous Vangas, striking Cuckoo Roller and Coquerel's Coua. We were also entertained by the acrobatic Verreaux's Sifakas (at least 20 animals) and by the demure Hubbard's Sportive Lemur, not forgetting a monstrous Oustalet's Chamaeleon. Returning to the port we stopped en route at La Tabla, an area of coral rag scrub that supports two highly sought-after species. The birds in question were Verreaux's Coua and Red-shouldered Vanga. After much searching we managed to find the coua, albeit a series of brief sightings, but struck out on the Vanga. Fortunately, we still had another opportunity to observe the bird on the following morning.

In contrast to the previous day's unsuccessful foray for the Red-shouldered Vanga we had a relatively easy time locating a pair of the recently discovered birds. We were treated to unbelievably close-up views of a pair and all our efforts were definitely very worth while. We also spotted Madagascar Green Pigeon and Chabert's Vanga. Back in Toliara we spent some time at the harbor scanning the exposed mudflats. Nothing unusual turned up but good numbers of shorebirds were sighted including Grey and Common Ringed Plovers, 200+ Whimbrel, 50+ Common Greenshank and Ruddy Turnstone. Shortly before departing on our flight to Tana we treated ourselves with an exciting "pousse pousse" ride in the town. Initially somewhat nerve-racking, we then settled into the experience and thoroughly enjoyed by towed around in the man-powered rickshaw! A fitting end to a fun-filled birding and wildlife extravaganza on the eighth continent!



Annotated List of Birds

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List of Birds of the World Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Please cite the authors: Gill, F. and Wright, M. 2006 when you use their publication. For an up-to-date IOC checklist, please visit the following website <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>. Also available is a comparative IOC vs. Clements checklist.

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

This introduced species to the island was recorded at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

NOTE: This African species was probably introduced to Madagascar by early colonists.

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

A widespread species, it was seen at Lac Alarobia, along the Mandrare River and at wetlands near Ifaty.

Knob-billed (Comb) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Our only sightings of this bird were at Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Red-billed Teal

Anas erythrorhyncha

We recorded this duck at most freshwater wetlands on our route.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

A total of 10 birds were observed at a wetland near Ifaty.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

20+ birds were seen at the wetlands between Tulear and Ifaty.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelinii

A pair of birds was sighted at a small forest pond in the Mantadia National Park.

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

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

Lesser Flamingo

Phoenicopterus minor

A scarce species in Madagascar; it was found on a sandbar between Ifaty and Toliara.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae



Madagascar (Crested) Ibis (E)*Plegadis falcinellus*

The Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP both produced sightings of this attractive bird.

Hérons Ardeidae**Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus*

3 birds were spotted at a wetland near Ifaty where excellent views were obtained of the birds perched on top of the reeds during the late afternoon.

Black-crowned Night-Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

This extremely widespread species was encountered in the Tana area.

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

Small numbers were seen at most freshwater wetlands throughout the tour.

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*

Our best views of this bird were at Lac Alarobia where many full plumaged birds were nesting.

Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V)*Ardeola idea*

A striking species in breeding plumage, it was seen at Lac Alarobia and the Mandrare River.

NOTE: A regional endemic breeder that is considered vulnerable and declining due to habitat loss and competition with Squacco Heron.

[Western] Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Common throughout the tour and recorded on every other day.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

First recorded along the coastal sandbars between Toliara and Ifaty, it was also seen breeding on cliffs near Tulear.

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

The cliffs near San Augustine yielded 3 of these large herons.

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

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

1 bird was seen in flight at Ambohimarina near Perinet.

[Western] Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Scattered records of this elegant egret were had throughout the tour.

Black Heron*Egretta ardesiaca*

Lac Alarobia and the Ifaty wetlands held sightings of this charismatic species.

Dimorphic Egret*Egretta dimorpha*

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar with peak numbers at coastal sites.

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.

Tropicbirds Phaethontidae**Red-tailed Tropicbird***Phaethon rubricauda*

At least 20 of these stunning birds were observed at close quarters on the island of Nosy Vé. We were treated us to fantastic flight views and birds waddling into and out of their nest sites.

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

Consistent sightings of small numbers of this monotypic family were seen during the trip.



Falcons Falconidae

Malagasy Kestrel (NEe) *Falco newtoni*

Recorded almost daily throughout the tour in open habitats, forest edge and urban areas.

Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus migrans*

A fairly common bird during the tour, we observed this species in the south of the island.

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.

NOTE: This species, which occurs in Madagascar and the Comoros, differs from the Reunion Harrier (Circus maillardi) in its smaller size and darker plumage, and is now considered a separate species by the IOC.

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E) *Polyboroides radiatus*

An individual bird was recorded in Perinet Special Reserve.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE) *Accipiter francesii*

Our group was rewarded with 2 sightings of this small raptor at Berenty Private Reserve.

Madagascar Buzzard (E) *Buteo brachypterus*

Seen on many occasions in the highlands and over the Eastern rainforest.

Mesites Mesitornithidae

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

During our scouring of the Spiny Forest near Ifaty we had incredible close range views of a female bird of this elusive species.

Flufftails Sarothruridae

Madagascar Flufftail (E) *Sarothrura insularis*

A total of 3 birds were enticed into peaking out of the dense undergrowth in Mantadia NP.

Rails & Gallinules Rallidae

Madagascar Wood Rail (E) *Canirallus kioloides*

We had good views of this rallid species in Perinet Special Reserve.

Madagascar Rail (E) *Rallus madagascariensis*

First sighted at a wetland near Mantadia NP, we later had brief, but good views at Ambohimarina.

White-throated Rail (E) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

This species was seen very well in Perinet Special Reserve.

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*

We enjoyed an exceptional, close quarter sighting of this secretive bird at a wetland en route to Ifaty from Toliara.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Lac Alarobia and waterbodies around Perinet produced views of this common bird.



Buttonquails Turnicidae**Madagascar Buttonquail (E)***Turnix nigricollis*

Good views of this attractive species were had in Berenty Lemur Reserve and around our lodgings at Ifaty.

Crab-Plover Dromadidae**Crab-plover***Dromas ardeola*

A very impressive tally of 23 of these striking birds was recorded on Nosy Vé, one of the few sites to observe this bird in Madagascar.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Recorded at several wetland sites in the south-western part of the island.

Plovers Charadriidae**Grey (Black-bellied) Plover***Pluvialis squatarola*

The coastal mudflats around Tulear, Ifaty and Nosy Vé yielded views of this migrant species.

Common Ringed Plover*Charadrius hiaticula*

In addition to aforementioned sites for Grey Plover, this bird was also seen on the Mandrare River.

Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)*Charadrius thoracicus*

An individual bird was found near Ifaty in south-western Madagascar. This endemic is seriously threatened by habitat loss due to development and human encroachment.

Kittlitz's Plover*Charadrius pecuarius*

Seen along the Mandrare River at Berenty and in the Tulear/Ifaty area.

Three-banded Plover*Charadrius tricollaris*

Only found at a roadside wetland near Ifaty.

White-fronted Plover*Charadrius marginatus*

These feisty shorebirds was seen on the beach at Nosy Vé and the mudflats between Toliara and Ifaty.

Greater Sand Plover*Charadrius leschenaultii*

Several of these plovers were spotted on the mudflats between Tulear and Ifaty.

Painted Snipes Rostratulidae**Greater Painted Snipe***Rostratula benghalensis*

En route to Perinet we spotted 2 male birds at a roadside wetland.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

1 bird was found on the extensive mudflats between Toliara and Ifaty.

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

The Toliara Harbor produced sightings of over 200 of these large shorebirds.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

Good numbers were recorded in the southern part of the island.

Terek Sandpiper*Xenus cinereus*

After much searching of the mudflats along the coastline north of Toliara we finally spotted 1 bird.



Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

Individuals and pairs were seen at most waterbodies throughout the trip.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Good numbers of this attractive shorebird were found in south-west Madagascar.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

As per the aforementioned species.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

The tidal flats in the Ifaty and Toliara areas held multiple sightings of this shorebird.

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Sooty Gull

Ichthyaetus hemprichii

1 of these rare vagrants to the coast of Madagascar was seen extremely well on Nosy Vé. This species was originally observed by Rockjumper during a 2005 tour which represented the first record of the species in Indian Ocean Islands.

Kelp Gull

Larus dominicanus [melisandae]

4 birds were encountered at a tidal lagoon not far from Fort Dauphin.

NOTE: The race *L. d. melisandae* that we observed is sometimes considered a full species by some authorities. As yet, neither Clements nor the IOC recognize the above.

Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

During our boat trip to Nosy Vé we observed this large tern.

Lesser Crested Tern

Sterna bengalensis

20+ birds were seen around the island of Nosy Vé.

Swift (Greater Crested) Tern

Sterna bergii

Small numbers recorded at Nosy Vé and along the coastal sandbars in the Tulear/Ifaty areas.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

As per the aforementioned species.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

Shortly after positioning ourselves at a spot along the Mandrare River, a flock of 20+ birds flew in to drink and afforded excellent views!

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Common Pigeon (I)

Columba livia

It was widespread and fairly common in the urban areas throughout the island.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NEe)

Streptopelia picturata

First seen in Perinet Special Reserve it was later recorded on most days in the south-west.

Namaqua Dove

Oena capensis

The arid habitats in the south of the island produced daily sightings of this delicate dove.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)

Treron australis

We found this beautiful species in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty, the coral rag scrub near Toliara and Zombitse Forest.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)

Alectroenas madagascariensis

Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park held views of this attractive endemic.



Parrots Psittacidae

Grey-headed Lovebird (E) *Agapornis canus*

Most sites in the south of the island yielded sightings of this beautiful bird.

[Greater] Vasa Parrot (NE) *Coracopsis vasa*

We had a few encounters of this bird in Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park

Lesser Vasa (Black) Parrot (NE) *Coracopsis nigra*

This raucous parrot species was seen regularly throughout our trip with peak numbers in the camp at Ampijoroa.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae

Malagasy (Madagascar) Coucal (NEe) *Centropus toulou*

Common and widespread, this bird was recorded in small numbers on most days of the tour.

Crested Coua (E) *Coua cristata*

Berenty Lemur Reserve and the Spiny Forest near Ifaty held sightings of this coua.

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

Our effort of scouring the coral rag scrub near La Tabla were rewarded with views of this secretive species.

Blue Coua (E) *Coua caerulea*

During our time spent in the Eastern Rainforest at Perinet and Mantadia we had several good views of this stunning bird.

Red-capped (Green-capped) Coua (E) *Coua [ruficeps] olivaceiceps*

The Spiny Forest at Berenty and near Ifaty held sightings of this species.

NOTE: This southern, khaki-capped form of Red-capped Coua is considered to be a full species in Sinclair I. and Langrande O. Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands however many other authorities consider this form to be a subspecies of Red-capped Coua.

Running Coua (E) *Coua cursor*

1 of these gorgeous birds was tracked down in the spiny forests at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

Coquerel's Coua (E) *Coua coquereli*

Our unscheduled visit to the dry, deciduous forests of Zombitse yielded a sighting.

Giant Coua (E) *Coua gigas*

Numerous birds were encountered at Berenty Lemur Reserve and 1 more at Zombitse Forest.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE) *Cuculus rochii*

One of the most common background calls on the island, we managed to track down the bird at Perinet and Berenty.

Barn Owls Tytonidae

[Western] Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

During our exploration of the Gallery Forest at Berenty Lemur Reserve we found a bird at a day roost.

Typical Owls Strigidae

Torotoroka Scops Owl (E) *Otus madagascariensis*

This diminutive gem of a bird was observed daily at Berenty.

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

1 bird was seen in the Eastern Rainforest of Perinet Special Reserve.

NOTE: These Scops Owls have recently been split, based on morphological and vocal differences and habitat preferences.



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

Berenty produced amazing views of this attractive species. We also found another bird in Zombitse Forest.

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

A nocturnal bird walk produced a sighting of this endemic owl.

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

Seen at scattered sites during the tour with our best views in the Spiny Forest at Berenty.

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

Recorded daily over the eastern rainforest of Perinet/Mantadia and also at Berenty and Zombitse.

African Palm Swift (e)*Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

This elegant swift was recorded at various sites with suitable habitat on the island.

Malagasy [Black] Swift (NE)*Apus balstoni*

Recorded at scattered localities with peak numbers near Zombitse and the St. Augustine Cliffs south of Tulear.

NOTE: These Malagasy birds are usually considered a species distinct from the African Black Swift (A. barbatus), however no dedicated research has been done.

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

This beautiful breeding migrant from the African mainland was recorded at Perinet/Mantadia and Zombitse Forest.

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

After clambering up steep, slippery slopes in Mantadia NP we were rewarded with a superb sighting of a pair of these fabulous birds.

Scaly Ground Roller (E) (V)*Brachypteracias squamigera*

1 bird was seen exceptionally well during our birding forays in the forests of Mantadia NP.

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

We found 2 of these colourful Ground Rollers in Mantadia NP.

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

Some members of the group had brief but good views of this stunner, deep in the forest of Perinet Special Reserve.

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

The Spiny Forest near Ifaty held sightings of 2 of these magnificent birds; another species threatened by habitat loss in the south-western part of the island.

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

Great views were had of this ill-proportioned endemic species in Perinet/Mantadia and Zombitse.



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.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E) *Ispidina madagascariensis*

Mantadia NP produced good sightings of this glowing gem.

Malagasy (Diademed) Kingfisher (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Recorded at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout the tour.

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

Scattered sightings were enjoyed throughout the tour of this beautiful bird.

Hoopoes Upupidae

Madagascar Hoopoe (E) *Upupa marginalis*

It was a pleasure to record this attractive bird at most sites on the tour.

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

Asities Philepittidae

Velvet Asity (E) *Philepitta castanea*

We had phenomenal sightings of both male and female birds in the Eastern Rainforest sites of Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Common Sunbird-Asity (E) *Neodrepanis coruscans*

Decent views of a male bird were had in Perinet Special Reserve.

Vangas Vangidae

Red-tailed Vanga (E) *Calicalicus madagascariensis*

Several birds were seen in Perinet/Mantadia and Zombitse Forest.

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

After inexhaustible searches we were fortunate to have an up close and personal experience with a pair in the “coral rag” scrub near La Tabla. This is a recently described and highly localized endemic bird.

Hook-billed Vanga (E) *Vanga curvirostris*

First seen at Perinet, it was later observed in Berenty Lemur Reserve.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E) *Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

This large vanga species was recorded in the Spiny Forest en route to Berenty.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E) *Falcula palliata*

One of the favorite birds of the trip, it was observed in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty and again at Zombitse Forest. These great birds have long scimitar-like bills and a bizarre cat-like call.

White-headed Vanga (E) *Artamella viridis*

The Spiny Forest at Berenty and near Ifaty yielded sightings, as did Zombitse Forest.

Chabert's Vanga (E) *Leptopterus chabert*

Regularly recorded at most sites throughout the tour.

Blue Vanga (NE) *Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

An absolutely gorgeous bird, it was seen Perinet, Mantadia NP and Zombitse Forest.



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 had incredible views of a male bird in the dry deciduous woodland of Zombitse.

Tylas Vanga (E) *Tylas eduardi*

It was encountered in both Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (E) *Hypositta corallirostris*

1 male bird was spotted in Perinet Special Reserve as it moved rapidly from tree to tree whilst feeding.

Dark Newtonia (E) *Newtonia amphichroa*

1 of these ridge top specialist was seen in Mantadia NP.

Common Newtonia (E) *Newtonia brunneicauda*

This species was recorded regularly in small numbers during the tour.

Archbold's Newtonia (E) *Newtonia archboldi*

A total of 3 birds were observed at close quarters in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E) *Pseudobias wardi*

This attractive, small flycatcher was viewed in the forests of Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Crossley's Babbler (E) *Mystacornis crossleyi*

Truly one of Madagascar's gorgeous endemic birds, its liquid song was heard in the Eastern Rainforest often. We had good views of the bird at Mantadia NP.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae

Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike (NE) *Coracina cinerea*

Small numbers were recorded at Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

Drongos Dicruridae

Crested Drongo (NE) *Dicrurus forficatus*

This charismatic bird with its spiky, punk hairdo was observed on most days of the tour.

Monarchs Monarchidae

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE) *Terpsiphone mutata*

We enjoyed multiple sightings of this beautiful species during the trip. Our best views were at Berenty.

Crows & Jays Corvidae

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Common and widespread, it was recorded daily during the southern leg of the tour.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin (BE) *Phedina borbonica*

Madagascar's most common hirundine and a regional breeding endemic, it was recorded at most sites.

Brown-throated (Plain) Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Small numbers were seen at wetlands sites in the Perinet area.

Larks Alaudidae



Madagascar Lark (E)*Mirafra hova*

Good numbers were observed in arid areas in the south-west of Madagascar.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**Madagascar Cisticola (NE)***Cisticola cherinus*

Commonly recorded in suitable habitat during the tour.

Family Uncertain**Common Jery (E)***Neomixis tenella*

This species was seen in Mantadia NP, Perinet Special Reserve and Zombitse Forest.

Green Jery (E)*Neomixis viridis*

Our only record of this bird was at Perinet Special Reserve.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)*Neomixis striatigula*

We found good numbers of this common songster in the east and south of Madagascar.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae**Malagasy (Madagascar) Bulbul (NE)***Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

Common and ubiquitous, we found these birds on almost every day of the tour.

Old World Warblers Sylviidae**Grey Emutail (E)***Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

Despite our relentless search for this denizen of the wetlands we only managed to hear the bird at Ambohimarina.

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)*Nesillas typica*

Seen and heard daily in the Eastern Rainforests of the island.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E)*Nesillas lantzii*

The Spiny Forest at Berenty and Ifaty produced this nondescript species.

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*

The marshes near Mantadia, at Lac Alarobia and near Ifaty yielded sightings of this species.

White-throated Oxylabes (E)*Oxylabes madagascariensis*

We enjoyed incredible views of this secretive endemic of the understorey in forests at Perinet.

Long-billed Bernieria (Greenbul) (E)*Bernieria madagascariensis*

Seen well in forest sites during the tour.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) (NT)*Hartertula flavoviridis*

2 birds were recorded moving swiftly through the undergrowth in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)*Thamnornis chloropetoides*

In the Spiny Forest near Ifaty we observed 2 birds.

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

The rainforests sites of Perinet & Mantadia held views of this understory dweller.

Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul) (E) (V)*Xanthomixis apperti*

During our non-scheduled trip to Zombitse we located 2 of these highly localized endemics.

Rand's Warbler (E)*Randia pseudozosterops*

2 birds were seen calling from high, exposed perches in the eastern rainforest site of Mantadia NP.



White-eyes Zosteropidae

Madagascar White-eye (NE) *Zosterops maderaspatana*
Regularly recorded during the first half of our trip.

Starlings Sturnidae

Madagascar Starling (E) *Hartlaubius aurata*
On 2 occasions we found this uncommon bird at Mantadia NP.

Common Myna (I) *Acridotheres tristis tristis*
This introduced species was common in open habitats throughout the island.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E) *Copsychus albospecularis*
This bold and confiding species was observed on most days during the tour.

[African] Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*
Fairly common in open habitats of the eastern highlands.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus imerinus*
1 male bird allowed good, extended scope views in the dune scrub near Anakao, south of Tular.

Forest Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus sharpei*
Sighting at an unusual locality en route to Mantadia NP.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris sovimanga*
One of Madagascar's most common species, this sunbird was seen almost daily.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Green Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris notatus*
This attractive sunbird was only recorded at Perinet Special Reserve and near Ifaty.

Weavers Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver (E) *Ploceus nelicourvi*
Regularly encountered during our forays into the forests at Perinet and Mantadia.

Sakalava Weaver (E) *Ploceus sakalava*
Seen almost daily in the arid southern region of the island.

(Madagascar) Red Fody (E) *Foudia madagascariensis*
A gorgeous bird in breeding plumage, it was recorded at most sites in good numbers during the tour.

Forest Fody (E) *Foudia omissa*
This species is very elusive and was only sighted at Mantadia NP.

Waxbills Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E) *Lemuresthes nana*
A flock of 8 of these diminutive birds were observed in Mantadia NP.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail (E) *Motacilla flaviventris*
An attractive endemic, it was found at most highland sites, being first seen at our lodgings in Tana.



Annotated list of Mammals

Garbutt, N. (1999) *Mammals of Madagascar* with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier *et al* (2006) *Lemurs of Madagascar*.

Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae

Madagascar Flying Fox

Pteropus rufus

100+ of these large, handsome creatures were observed at their day roost in the Gallery Forest at Berenty.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae

Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus griseorufus

This delightful species was seen in the Spiny Forest at Berenty.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus crossleyi

We spotted 1 of these creatures on night walk near our lodge in Perinet.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur hubbardi

At Zombitse Forest we found 2 of these cute animals at day roosts.

White-footed Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur leucopus

We recorded this sportive lemur in the Gallery Forest at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

"True" Lemurs Lemuridae

Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur

Haplemur griseus griseus

During our visits to Mantadia NP we found small groups of this lemur.

Ring-tailed Lemur

Lemur catta

We encountered many families of these loveable but mischievous lemurs at Berenty.

Common Brown Lemur

Eulemur fulvus fulvus

These lemurs were seen at in the forests of Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur

Eulemur fulvus rufus

Good numbers were seen in the gallery forest at Berenty. This species was introduced here and because it is the more dominant lemur it out competes the ringtails for food.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae

Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)

Avahi laniger

2 were recorded in the forest at Perinet Special Reserve.

Diademed Sifaka

Propithecus diadema diadema

This rather attractive sifaka was spotted during a walk in Perinet Special Reserve.

Verreaux's Sifaka

Propithecus verreaux verreauxi

The comical, bipedal locomotion of this lemur is undoubtedly one of the mammalian highlights of our trip to Madagascar. It was seen daily at Berenty with further views in Zombitse Forest.

Indri

Indri indri



After hearing the taunting howls of this beats on 3 consecutive days, we finally managed to locate a family group and spent time admiring the largest lemur's social interaction. This creature is nicknamed "Babakoto" which means Father/Ancessor of the Forest!

Whales and Dolphins Delphinidae

Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

We had views of 2 of these amazing creatures en route to Nosy Vé.

Common Dolphin

Delphinus capensis

We enjoyed a sighting of a these mammals on our boat ride back to Nosy Vé.

Annotated list of Amphibians and Reptiles

Glaw, F. & Vences, M. (1994) *A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. Insect names were derived from various sources.

"True" Frogs Ranidae

Tawny Tree Frog

Boophis luteus

This species was recorded during walks in the eastern rainforest sites.

Madagascar Tree Frog

Boophis madagascariensis

Again, the eastern rainforest yielded sightings of this amphibian.

Mascarene Grass Frog

Ptychaderna mascareniensis

We found this species during a visit to Ambohimarina near Perinet.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon

Brookesia superciliaris

Our night walks at Mitsinjo Forest we found a few of these 'large' stump-tailed Chameleons.

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

This common species several times in the Eastern Rainforest sites.

Nose-horned Chameleon

Calumma nasuta

Both Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve held sightings of this chamaeleon.

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

Night walks at Mitsinjo Forest produced views of this small reptile.

Parson's Chamaeleon

Calumma parsonii

Arguably the largest chamaeleon on the island, it was seen at both Perinet and Mantadia.

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

Also one of the largest chameleons, it was found near Tana on the main road into the city (followed by a major rescue operation which involved transporting the beastie inside the vehicle to the nearest sanctuary through rush hour traffic) and later in much more natural habitat at Zombitse Forest.

Warty Chameleon

Furcifer verrucosus

This reptile was seen in the small patch of spiny forest at Berenty.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

This attractive reptile was seen in the arid, sandy areas of Berenty and the spiny forest near Ifaty.



Geckos Gekkonidae**Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko***Uroplatus sikorae*

A total of 3 of these master camouflage artists were recorded in the rainforests at Mantadia & Perinet.

Moreau's Tropical House Gecko*Hemidactylus mabouia*

Sighted at a few lodgings around the country.

Standing's Day Gecko*Phelsuma standingi*

Zombitse Forest produced a sighting of this large day gecko.

Lineated Day Gecko*Phelsuma lineata*

These beautiful day geckos were found at all eastern rainforest sites during the tour.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae**Madagascar Plated Lizard***Zonosaurus madagascarensis*

We observed these large lizards in Mantadia NP.

Elegant Skink*Mabuya elegans*

The eastern rainforest sites yielded views of this delicate skink.

Boas Boidae**Madagascar Tree Boa***Sanzinia madagascarensis*

This "constrictor" was seen on 2 occasions at Perinet Special Reserve.

Typical Snakes Colubridae*Liopholidophis stumpfia*

This grass snake was well seen on two consecutive days in the Analamazaotra area.

List of Notable Insects and other Invertebrates**Giraffe-necked Weevil***Trachelophorus giraffe*

This bizarre creature was observed along the forest edge in Mantadia NP.

Madagascar Hissing Cockroach*Gromphadorhina portentosa*

We were treated to good sightings of this roach in Berenty Lemur Reserve.

Golden Orb-web Spiders*Nephila madagascariensis*

These master web spinners were seen at Perinet.

Malagasy Emerald Pill Millipede*Sphaerotheriida spp*

100's of these beautifully coloured millipedes were seen along the dirt track in Mantadia NP.



Photo credits: Scaly Ground Roller by Jonathan Rossouw, Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko, Ring-tailed Lemur & Red-tailed Tropicbird by Cuan Rush, Spiny Forest by David Shackelford, Subdesert Mesite by Keith Valentine & Red-shouldered Vanga by Glen Valentine.

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