



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Highlights I

26th July to 9th August 2015 (15 days)

Trip Report



Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur by Markus Lilje

Trip report compiled by tour leader: Markus Lilje

Top ten birds as voted for by participants:

1. Subdesert Mesite
2. Long-tailed Ground Roller
3. Sickle-billed Vanga
4. Blue Coua
5. White-browed Hawk-Owl
6. Collared Nightjar
7. Hamerkop
8. Madagascar Green Pigeon
9. Brown Emutail
10. Madagascar Green Sunbird

Tour Summary

Sometimes referred to as the “laboratory of evolution”, Madagascar, the huge Indian Ocean island situated 500km off the coast of east Africa, has long attracted the attention of naturalists and travelling birders alike. Our winter tour, although a departure from the standard summer tours to the “Red Isle”, was very successful, and we managed to see a large proportion of the amazing creatures that call Madagascar home, while enjoying a very pleasant and much cooler climate at the same time.

We began our tour with an afternoon to the bird-filled Lake Alarobia, which proved to be most enjoyable and an easy start and introduction to the varied birding that was to come. We viewed large numbers of waterfowl including mainly White-faced Whistling Duck and Red-billed Teal, with a few Knob-billed Duck and Hottentot Teal in the mix. To add to this we had a total of no less than 7 Meller’s Ducks, a rather surprising find in this area and a fantastic Malagasy endemic. Around the lake



Indri by Markus Lilje

there were also hordes of Black and Dimorphic Egrets, while smaller numbers of Western Cattle and Great Egrets were also seen, as were a few Squacco Heron hiding on the water’s edge. Malagasy Kingfisher showed very well, as did a number of other endemics: Madagascar White-eye, Common Jery, Madagascar Wagtail, Red Fody, Common Newtonia and Malagasy Kestrel overhead, before we headed back to enjoy a good dinner at our comfortable accommodations.

Our first major destination of the tour was the area around Andasibe: the rainforest reserves of Analamazaotra and Mantadia to the east of Antananarivo. This biome of Madagascar harbours the richest assemblage of sought-after birds and mammals on the whole island. Because of the diversity here we spent 5 days exploring the area, hoping to find as many of the possible species as we could. The drive there is fairly long and was quite uneventful, although the villages and rice paddies generally hold some interest and

produced a few egrets, kingfishers and even Hamerkop for some participants, while a brief stop along the Mangaro River got us Chabert Vanga. Our time was divided between visits to the Analamazaotra reserve and the more distant Mantadia National Park,

both offering good rainforest birding. Our hard work and time in the field paid off, and we were rewarded with a mouth-watering selection of eastern rainforest endemics. The pick of the species seen during this time included perched and flying Cuckoo Roller, beautifully camouflaged Collared Nightjar, Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Mannikin, Blue, Red-fronted and phenomenal Red-breasted Couas, Madagascar Spinetail, the delightful terrestrial Crossley’s Vanga, Madagascar Grebe, Madagascar Wood, Madagascar and White-throated Rails, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Common Sunbird-Asity and Velvet Asity. A feature of the area, especially in winter, are the mixed-species flocks that can occasionally be encountered and in some of these we found a great variety of birds, which included a



Collared Nightjar by Markus Lilje

plethora of vangas including Red-tailed, White-headed, Blue, Tylas and Nuthatch (as well as the new additions to the vanga family in the form of Dark and Common Newtonias and Ward's Flycatcher), Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Wedge-tailed, Green and Common Jerys, Spectacled Tetraka, Long-billed Bernieria, Souimanga and Malagasy Green Sunbirds and beautiful Nelicourvi Weaver. The Forest Rock Thrush was seen very well after we initially heard them calling near the top of one of the Mantadia ridges; soon afterwards we were surprised to find a very responsive Brown Emutail that gave unusually good views as it crossed one of the pathways. Despite putting in much time and effort trying to track down the ground rollers, these can never be expected in the cooler winter months when they are not calling. We did however get close to a Rufous-headed Ground Roller that called just a few meters from us, but we unfortunately never managed to see any of them. A big-effort attempt to find some other special species in a nearby forest also proved fruitless, although we did managed to find some of the more widespread forest species here too.



Red-breasted Coua by Markus Lilje



Grey-headed Lovebird by Markus Lilje

Lemurs are certainly one of Madagascar's greatest drawcards – even on birding tours, and we saw a lovely selection of these, also putting in the required effort to find as many as we could. On the first attempt we were rewarded with views of the famous and highly vocal Indri and later added Common Brown Lemur, Eastern Avahi and 2 of the best-looking lemurs around: the elegant Diademed Sifaka and Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur! The latter gave us sensational

views as it came down very low in the trees overhead, allowing for close looks from everyone. During the night walks we did in the area, we found the tiny nocturnal Goodman's Mouse Lemur as well as a number of smart chameleons and a few frogs. On our last afternoon in the reserve we also saw a relaxed and newly-shed Madagascan Tree Boa.



Ring-tailed Lemur by Markus Lilje

Leaving the rainforest behind us, we flew south over vast expanses of dry and often very eroded landscapes to the scenically located town of Fort Dauphin, after again spending a night in Antananarivo. After landing we drove the rather long and very rough road inland to Berenty in the late afternoon. The area we visited consists mainly of vast sisal plantations, with a few pockets of gallery forest along the Mandrare River and Spiny



forest being conserved at the Berenty Lemur Reserve. Due to less-than-ideal flight schedules, we were a little rushed for time here, but we nonetheless did very well, obtaining very good views of a great number of target species. During 2 night walks, which proved most entertaining, we had excellent sightings of Grey-brown and Grey Mouse Lemurs, White-footed Sportive Lemur, White-browed Hawk-Owl, Torotoroka Scops Owl and colourful Painted Big-headed Gecko, in addition to a number of Warty Chameleon and many spiders. Our full day at Berenty was spent walking the trails through the tall Tamarind trees along the river and nearby, finding Madagascar Green Pigeon, Hook-billed Vanga, Grey-headed Lovebird, Madagascar Hoopoe, Stripe-throated Jery, Madagascar Coucal, the lovely Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher and, finally, even a Giant Coua for some participants – this bird was bizarrely hard to find during this visit, despite much time and effort used to look for it. The large and raucously quarrelsome Madagascar Flying-foxes provided an enjoyable interlude. In the Spiny Forest and surrounding areas there were other attractions and we had Madagascar Sandgrouse, a number of flushed Madagascar Buttonquail and Madagascar Lark in the grasslands, and Torotoroka Scops Owl, Madagascar Nightjar and a wonderful resting White-footed Sportive Lemur in the spiny forest itself. Arguably the top attraction for this reserve are the lemurs, with the Ring-tailed Lemur being ever-present and a few Verreaux's Sifakas providing great entertainment for us. The introduced Red-fronted Lemur was also seen in large numbers in the gallery forest. For some participants though, the mammal highlight here was seeing an estivating Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec, where it was hiding deep in its hollow log – a definite bonus sighting, especially at this time of year!



Subdesert Mesite by Markus Lilje

After an early, long and rough drive back to Fort Dauphin we enjoyed a good breakfast and a little time before we boarded our quick flight west, where we landed at the Tulear airport. This region was to be our base for the next 4 nights, although we first headed a little north to the small beach resort town of Ifaty. During our 2 days here we enjoyed some great birding in the spiny forest as well as around some nearby wetland and salty grassland flats. Our first stop was at some wetland sites, where we found a few species that we did not see elsewhere on the tour. These included some unusually relaxed Baillon's Crake feeding in the open, while more widespread species included Common Moorhen, Little Grebe and Kittlitz's Plover. Undoubtedly the main attraction of the area though is the spiny forest near the settlement of Ifaty, which is justly famous for its bizarre appearance. The sandy orange soil is punctuated with bulbous baobabs, unique octopus trees and other succulents – many of them with spikes and thorns of various descriptions, creating a unique and unforgettable landscape! Our morning's outing was very successful, as we bagged 2 of the most



Banded Kestrel by Markus Lilje

important species of the whole tour – both representing endemic Malagasy families and eventually taking the top 2 spots on the participants' top 10 list for the tour! The birds we are talking about are of



course Subdesert Mesite and the amazing Long-tailed Ground Roller. The area holds many other great birds too and we added the incredible Sickie-billed Vanga, Running and Crested Couas, Archbold's Newtonia, Banded Kestrel, a pair of Lafresnaye's Vanga and the strange Thamnornis. During the afternoon we again visited the area, enjoying more views of some of the same species, but also adding the sought-after Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk and a fantastic female Cuckoo Roller! In a nearby open area, we worked hard to get some great views of the rare and much-desired Madagascar Plover, while we also had Subdesert Brush Warbler in bushes along the roadside.



Standing's Day Gecko
by Markus Lilje

Back in the Tulear area we paid a visit to the coral rag scrub habitat near La Tabla, where we put in a lot of time and effort to find the residents of this rather tough habitat. Our efforts were rewarded with great views of Verreaux's and Red-capped Couas, while the Red-shouldered Vanga unfortunately never showed for us.

The following day was a little different, with us heading out on a boat towards the small island of Nosy Ve, to the south of Tulear. After a short ox-wagon ride to the boat, our first stop was to look for endemic Humblot's Heron at some nearby cliffs – we managed to get great views of around 8 of these large, surprisingly attractive birds between some more widespread Grey Herons. The Nosy Ve Island itself hosts a dispersed nesting colony of Red-tailed Tropicbird, which breed undisturbed at the site as a result of a local “fady” or superstition that protects them. We enjoyed some amazing views of these elegant birds flying overhead and floating on the water. The island also produced a flock of overwintering Ruddy Turnstone, White-fronted Plover and Whimbrel. Some participants even enjoyed a short stint of snorkelling near the island in great water and weather conditions. After a short ride to the mainland, we then enjoyed a great lunch, while Subdesert Brush Warbler and the localised Littoral Rock Thrush entertained us right around the buildings. Undoubtedly some of the most memorable highlights of the day came on



Red-tailed Tropicbird by Markus Lilje

the boat ride back to Tulear, where we first had extremely close Humpback Whale surfacing maybe 20 metres from the boat followed by a pod of interested Risso's Dolphin with us for a while! This, added to a wonderfully calm ocean and lovely weather, made for a special and memorable day!

As is so often the case in Madagascar, we ended up with some flight problems, which we were fortunate to be able to solve fairly easily. We decided to drive from Tulear to the capital over 2 days, having had enough time at all the important locations in the south. This gave us the bonus of being able to visit the Zombitse Forest for a few hours – usually not on this itinerary. This turned out to be a great



plus for the tour as we added a fair number of new species including the very localised Appert's Tetraka as well as Rufous Vanga and Coquerel's Coua. On the non-birding front we were equally happy, enjoying the different habitat as well as views of Hubbard's Sportive Lemur and the huge Oustalet's Chameleon! After this the crossing of Madagascar's central spine offered some lovely scenery during our long drive and we enjoyed a meal in the beautiful Isalo Mountains. Here we were happy to get good views of Benson's Rock Thrush – sometimes split from Forest Rock Thrush!



Hubbard's Sportive Lemur by Markus Lilje

Despite our tour running in the “low” season, we enjoyed a very successful trip and managed to see a superb selection of the island's inhabitants. It must be said again that the weather was very pleasant on the whole at this time of the year, without the blistering heat that characterises large portions of the island from October onwards. And with over 135 birds (including members of all endemic families) and 15 mammals recorded, this tour offered most of the potential birds and mammals on the route!

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 136 (135 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

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Common at Lake Alarobia in Tana.

Knob-billed Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

We recorded 2 birds at Lake Alarobia.



Red-billed Teal*Anas erythrorhyncha*

Seen well and in huge numbers on Lake Alarobia.

Hottentot Teal*Anas erythrorhyncha*

4 birds were seen well on Lake Alarobia.

Meller's Duck*Anas melleri*

We recorded at least 7 birds on Lake Alarobia, before finding another 3 on a small Mantadia waterbody.

Guineafowl Numididae**Helmeted Guineafowl (I)***Numida meleagris*

We managed views of a number of small flocks in the Berenty area.

Grebes Podicipedidae**Little Grebe (Dabchick)***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A few birds were seen in a wetland near Ifaty.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)*Tachybaptus pelzelinii*

A single bird was seen very well 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.***Tropicbirds Phaethontidae****Red-tailed Tropicbird***Phaethon rubricauda*

These beautiful, confiding birds showed fantastically for us at Nosy Ve, where they nest.

Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

Very good numbers of close birds were seen at Lake Alarobia, and later at the gallery forest in Berenty.

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

We recorded birds in the wetlands near Mantadia and outside Antanarivo.

*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*

We had views of a number of birds in reeds around Lake Alarobia, all in non-breeding plumage.

Western Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Widespread, and seen in a number of wetland / open country situations, but in fairly small numbers.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Good numbers were seen on the coastal cliffs of the Onilahy River, near San Augustin.

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

The Onilahy Cliffs produced excellent views of this species, with around 8 birds recorded in flight and on their nests.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

A bird was seen flying over us as we were in the forest in Analamazaotra and Berenty.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Seen at Lake Alarobia and around paddies in the Antananarivo area.

Black Heron*Egretta ardesiaca*

Very common at Lake Alarobia.



Dimorphic (Western Reef) Egret*Egretta dimorpha*

Seen both in the highlands in and around Tana, as well as later on the coast; both the very dark and white colour morphs were recorded, with many breeding at Lake Alarobia.

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*

Seen briefly along the road to Andasibe and later very well on both days during our long drive to Tana.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Madagascan Harrier-Hawk (E)***Polyboroides radiatus*

We enjoyed views of this endemic in the Ifaty area, after brief flight views in Mantadia.

Madagascan Cuckoo-Hawk (E)*Aviceda madagascariensis*

We enjoyed good scope views of this bird in Ifaty spiny forest.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)*Accipiter francesii*

A first bird was seen in Mantadia, before we had great views in Berenty.

Madagascan Sparrowhawk (E)*Accipiter francesii*

We enjoyed good views of this bird in Mantadia.

Yellow-billed Kite*Milvus aegyptius*

Birds were recorded at a few scattered locations throughout the south.

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.

Madagascar Buzzard (E)*Buteo brachypterus*

Seen well a number of times in the Analamazaotra and Mantadia areas.

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

One female bird showed very well near Ifaty, when she held her typical bent-over frozen pose and allowed a very close approach – definitely one of the star birds of the tour, being the only member of this endemic family we had a chance for.

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

Heard on a number of occasions in Perinet – Mantadia; we had one great sighting of a single bird near dense vegetation in Analamazaotra.

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

Great views of this skulky terrestrial species were had at Analamazaotra, where around 6 birds were seen feeding on an open patch in the forest and running through the undergrowth.

Madagascar Rail (E)*Rallus madagascariensis*

This wetland species was seen when a single birds showed on the edge of a dense reedbed near Mantadia NP after much time and effort, particularly from our local guide.



White-throated Rail (E)

Dryolimnas cuvieri

We had fantastic views of one bird feeding on the edge of a small river in Analamazaotra reserve.

Baillon's Crake

Porzana pusilla

This very widespread, yet tough and skulky species was seen incredibly well in the Ifaty wetlands.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Good views were had at Lake Alarobia in Tana and near Ifaty.

Buttonquails Turnicidae

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

We had views of these skulking ground birds in Berenty and later in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Recorded in good numbers at a wetland near Ifaty.

Plovers Charadriidae

Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)

Charadrius thoracicus

2 birds allowed superb views near Ifaty – a rare endemic.

Kittlitz's Plover

Charadrius pecuarius

Very common around Ifaty wetland areas.

Three-banded Plover

Charadrius tricollaris

Seen well at rice paddies near Mantadia and later near Ifaty.

White-fronted Plover

Charadrius marginatus

Great views of this shorebird were on the island of Nosy Ve after initial views near Ifaty.

Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

2 birds were seen on Nosy Ve and Tulear beaches.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

One was seen briefly at wetlands near Ifaty.

Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

This species was seen on the way to Andasibe and later on the beach near Ifaty.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Quite a few over-wintering birds were seen very well on the island of Nosy Ve.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

3 lovely birds were seen and scoped in open grassland in the Berenty area.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Common (Rock) Pigeon (I)

Columba livia

Widespread and common around human habitation.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NE)

Streptopelia picturata

Seen at a number of sites, with best views in Berenty.



Namaqua Dove*Oena capensis*

This very small and distinctive dove was common in the dry south and south-west.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (E)*Treron australis*

We had good views of these birds in, and flying out of a fig tree in Berenty.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)*Alectroenas madagascariensis*

We had birds every day in the Analamazaotra and Mantadia areas, usually early in the morning.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae**Madagascan Coucal (NE)***Centropus toulou*

Small numbers were recorded on numerous of the days during the tour.

Crested Coua (E)*Coua cristata*

Large numbers were seen well in the woodlands around Berenty as well as at Ifaty in the spiny forest, with a few others seen elsewhere in the south.

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

We had great views of 2 of this species in the coral rag scrub at La Tabla.

Blue Coua (E)*Coua caerulea*

A large, stunning blue coua, we enjoyed some great views at Analamazaotra and Mantadia.

Red-capped (Green-capped) Coua (E)*Coua reynaudii olivaceiceps*

We finally managed to get views of this bird in the stunted shrubs in the La Tabla area.

NOTE: This southern, khaki-capped form of Red-capped Coua, which we saw, 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.

Red-fronted Coua*Coua reynaudii*

Single birds showed really well in Analamazaotra on 3 occasions.

Coquerel's Coua*Coua coquerellii*

Zombitse forest provided 2 sightings of this terrestrial species.

Running Coua (E)*Coua cursor*

A few birds were seen well in Ifaty, with one in particular giving us good close views.

Giant Coua (E)*Coua gigas*

Surprisingly uncommon this year – we had a single bird for some in Berenty and another that was seen briefly in Zombitse forest.

Red-breasted Coua (E)*Coua serriana*

Usually a very tricky species that we were very fortunate with – managing 3 sightings of close birds in Analamazaotra!

Barns Owls Tytonidae**Western Barn Owl***Tyto alba*

Heard during a night walk in Berenty and seen well at the roadside near Fianarantsoa.

Typical Owls Strigidae**Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)***Otus madagascariensis*

We had superb views during a night walk in Berenty as well as a bird on a day-roost in the same area.

Rainforest Scops Owl (NE)*Otus rutilus*

We had a single very dark brown roosting bird during the day near Analamazaotra NP, others were heard in the same area.

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



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

Our time in Berenty produced some excellent views of this species during a night walk, where one allowed fantastic close-up views.

Madagascar Owl (E)*Asio madagascariensis*

Another owl that we saw on its day roost in the Analamazaotra area, we had good scope views.

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

Seen and heard at scattered locales during the tour, including on a day roost in Tana, Berenty and the Ifaty area.

Collared Nightjar (E)*Caprimulgus enarratus*

Wonderful views of a pair were enjoyed, when we managed to see them at close range in the leaf litter in the Analamazaotra Park.

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

A few of these fluttery swifts were over forest in Analamazaotra and Mantadia, where we even had some drinking.

African Palm Swift*Cypsiurus parvus*

A number of these very slender birds were seen in flight between Fort Dauphin and Berenty.

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

This species was seen on the final afternoon in the capital.

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

Seen on 5 days, with best views in Mantadia and Ifaty. Much more frequently heard that seen, with their piercing calls carrying a long way when they display over the forest canopy.

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.

Ground Rollers Brachypteraciidae**Rufous-headed Ground Roller (E) (NT)***Uratelornis chimaera*

Heard at close range in very thick undergrowth in Mantadia forest.

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

A highly localised and very sought-after endemic, we had excellent close-range views of a single bird and glimpses of 2 others in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae**Malagasy Kingfisher (NE)***Alcedo vintsioides*

Commonly encountered at various wetlands on the tour, great views at Alarobia.

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

This beautiful member of a very popular family was commonly recorded on the tour.



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

After a brief drive-by view for some, we got great views of 2 birds in the Berenty riverine woodland.

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

Seen on a number of occasions on the tour, greatest density in Berenty.

Banded Kestrel (E)*Falco zoniventris*

This is a tough and uncommon species; a single bird allowed close approach and excellent views in the Spiny Forest at Ifaty.

Parrots Psittacidae**Grey-headed Lovebird (E)***Agapornis canus*

Our best views of this delightful species were had at Berenty, with a few others in the Ifaty area.

Greater Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis vasa*

We had 2 views of these large, slow-flying parrots over Mantadia forests.

Lesser Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis nigra*

Smaller than the previous species, we saw them on a number of occasions on the island.

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

A female was seen well by most participants during a ridge-walk in Mantadia National Park.

Common Sunbird-Asity (E)*Neodrepanis coruscans*

We enjoyed a sighting of a male of this species in the Analamazaotra reserve.

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

First seen in Ifaty's Spiny forest, with others scattered views later, best in Mantadia NP.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)*Vanga curvirostris*

Heard and seen well in Analamazaotra and Berenty later.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

This heavy-billed and often uncommon species was seen very well in spiny forest at Ifaty.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)*Falcula palliata*

This bizarre bird, often on of the biggest targets of the tour, was seen well at Ifaty.

White-headed Vanga (E)*Artamella viridis*

Some participants had good views of this species on 2 occasions in Analamazaotra.

Chabert Vanga (E)*Leptopterus chabert*

Widespread and seen in a number of woodland and forest situations on the tour.

Blue Vanga (NE)*Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

An absolutely stunning blue bird; it was seen on a few occasions in Mantadia and Analamazaotra forests as well as at Zombitse Forest at the end of the tour.

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*

Another bonus bird that we found during our excursion to Zombitse Forest to the north of Tulear.



Tylas Vanga (E)*Tylas eduardi*

We saw a few very well as mixed flock attendants while in Mantadia NP.

Nuthatch Vanga (E)*Hypositta corallirostris*

Often a difficult bird to find, we enjoyed excellent views on at least 2 occasions in mixed flocks while in Mantadia NP.

Dark Newtonia (E)*Newtonia amphichroa*

This is a fairly shy bird of the forest undergrowth and was seen on 2 days in the Analamazaotra and Mantadia areas.

Common Newtonia (E)*Newtonia brunneicauda*

This widespread species was first seen in forest at Lake Alarobia.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)*Newtonia archboldi*

We had close-up views of this species in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)*Pseudobias wardi*

A number were seen well in Analamazaotra and Mantadia areas.

Crossley's Babbler (E)*Mystacornis crossleyi*

We had a pair at very close range that some participants saw well, but their skulking nature in dense undergrowth made them hard to observe.

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

This species showed very well in the forests around Andasibe.

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

This is a very common species throughout many of the different habitats on the island.

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

A beautiful bird, it was seen in the eastern rainforest as well as at Berenty.

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

We saw this species daily in the south and south west of the island.

Larks Alaudidae**Madagascar Lark (E)***Mirafrona hova*

Common in the dry areas around Tulear, a few others seen in Berenty.

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

Seen frequently during the tour.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin (BE) *Phedina borbonica*

Best views were had of birds flying near the cliffs at St. Augustine.

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola*

We had many of these birds flying around wetland and grassland areas.

Reed Warblers & Allies Megaluridae

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*

Seen and heard on a number of occasions in the east of Madagascar.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*

This species showed very well near Ifaty, in the La Table scrub and at Anakao, all in the south-west of Madagascar.

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*

We had good views of this species at a small pool in the Mantadia forest.

Grassbirds & allies Megaluridae

Brown Emutail (E) *Bradypterus brunneus*

A very shy species that we were very surprised to find and see well as it moved across a small path in Mantadia NP forest.

Malagasy Warblers Bernieridae

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*

A beautiful species that showed well, but fleetingly in the forests of Mantadia NP.

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

First seen in Analamazaotra, before we had other good views later in the drier Zombitse Forest.

Cryptic Warbler (E) *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

Seen briefly in Mantadia, where it is an unobtrusive member of mixed flocks.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) *Hartertula flavoviridis*

We enjoyed fantastic views of 2 birds that were associating with Spectacled Tetraka in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

We had excellent views of this greenish-tinged localised endemic in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

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

Our time in Perinet – Mantadia provided a number of sightings of this bird. Usually sighted in mixed feeding flocks in the under and mid story.

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

This is a very range-restricted species in the south of the country that we found on an extra excursion we did on the long drive to Antananarivo.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

A single bird was seen briefly in a mixed flock in Mantadia's forest.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Common Jery (E) *Neomixis tenella*

Recorded frequently in woodland sites on the tour.



Green Jery (E)*Neomixis viridis*

Seen very well in Analamazaotra on our first afternoon there.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)*Neomixis striatigula*

We had a very nice sighting of 5 birds in the Berenty area, before another bird showed in Ifaty.

Madagascar Cisticola (NE)*Cisticola cherinus*

Seen commonly in open habitat around Tulear.

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

Very common in a variety of areas during the tour.

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

Commonly recorded in the vicinity of human habitation.

Madagascar Starling (E)*Hartlaubius aurata*

A few birds showed well at Mantadia over 2 days – this species can be hard to find, so we were thrilled to get the great views we managed.

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

Seen on many occasions on the tour, often very relaxed and confiding.

Madagascar Stonechat (E)*Saxicola sibilla*

This was first seen in the Tana hotel garden, at scattered locations later.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E)*Monticola imerinus*

We had excellent views of a pair at Anakao, south of Tulear.

Forest Rock Thrush (E)*Monticola sharpei*

We had excellent views of a pair in Mantadia, where the male sang beautifully. Later in the Isalo Mountains we saw a male which is sometimes split off as Benson's Rock Thrush.

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

Seen virtually daily.

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

A few views were had in the eastern rainforest area.

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

This smart bird was seen a few occasions in Mantadia, including a nest-building individual.

Sakalava Weaver (E)*Ploceus sakalava*

We had great views of this dry country bird near Ifaty and at Berenty. While most birds were in non-breeding plumage now, we were lucky to have a few males already looking good at Berenty.

Red Fody (E)*Foudia madagascariensis*

Widespread, and seen on numerous days of the tour, including a bird in breeding plumage near Mantadia.



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

We had some wonderful views of this species at a few sites, including near Mantadia, Analamazaotra and south of Ifaty.

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

First seen at a few sites around Tana. Seen daily in the Andasibe and Mantadia areas.

Annotated List of Mammals recorded

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

Total species recorded 15**Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae****Madagascar Flying Fox** *Pteropus rufus*

These noisy, quarrelsome creatures were seen and scoped well at the roost at Berenty; a large flock was seen in flight over the forest in the same area.

Tenrecs & Otter Shrews Tenrecidae**Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec** *Echinops telfairi*

We were very fortunate to obtain excellent views of one in its estivation hole in the spiny forest; Ifaty.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae**Grey Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus murinus*

Good views of this species were obtained in the gallery forest in Berenty.

Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

We had fantastic views of this cute creature at Berenty's spiny forest on a night walk.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus lehilahytsara*

We had some great views of this species in the rainforest near Andasibe during a night walk.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae**White-footed Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur leucopus*

We had great views of many of these nocturnal lemurs in the Berenty area – including sightings during both night walks and at day roosts.

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur microdonta*

During our walk in the Zombitse Forest we recorded at least 2 of these localised animals on day roosts.

"True" Lemurs Lemuridae**Ring-tailed Lemur** *Lemur catta*

Certainly the most recognisable of all Malagasy fauna, we had numerous extended views of these endearing mammals during our time at Berenty.



Common Brown Lemur*Eulemur fulvus*

Seen on a few occasions in Analamazaotra.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur*Eulemur rufus*

Introduced to Berenty where they are common and putting the other species under pressure.

Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur*Varecia variegata variegata*

We were fortunate to get to see one of these fantastic creatures in the Mantadia NP area. Our great sighting included close views of these animals hanging by their legs to get to some lower-hanging fruit.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae**Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)***Avahi laniger*

We found 3 of these nocturnal lemurs at a day roost during a walk in the Analamazaotra area.

Diademed Sifaka*Propithecus diadema diadema*

Surely one of the most handsome of all lemurs, we saw this species very well in Mantadia and later a few relocated animals in Analamazaotra.

Verreaux's Sifaka*Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

The famous “dancing” sifaka was seen very well on a number of occasions at Berenty.

Indri*Indri indri*

Always one of the highlights of a tour in Madagascar – these animals were often heard in Andasibe and Mantadia NP. We had great views already during the first walk we did in Analamazaotra forest, getting close views on this and another occasion later during the tour.

Annotated List of Amphibians 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).

Green Tree Frog*Boophis viridis*

A beautiful little frog that was seen well on both night walks in the Andasibe area.

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: 15**Chameleons Chamaeleonidae****Brown Leaf Chameleon***Brookesia superciliaris*

A single animal was seen very well during a night walk near Analamazaotra.

Short-horned Chameleon*Calumma brevicornis*

We found a single animal during a night walk in the Andasibe area – a fairly large species.

Nose-horned Chameleon*Calumma nasuta*

This tiny chameleon, was seen on night walks in the Andasibe area, where we had 3 animals.

Parson's Chameleon*Calumma parsonii*

One of the largest chameleons: a young animal was seen during an Andasibe area night walk.

Carpet/Side-striped Chameleon *Furcifer lateralis*

Two stunning animals were during our night walk in Berenty's Gallery forest.

Oustalet's Chameleon *Furcifer oustaleti*

A huge chameleon, a single animal was seen very well-camouflaged on a large vine in the Zombitse forest.

Warty Chameleon *Furcifer verrucosus*

A large chameleon, we saw a fair number during our time in Berenty and one each in Ifaty and La Tabla.

Geckos Gekkonidae

Sakalava Gecko *Blaesodactylus sakalava*

A beautiful large gecko, we were lucky enough to briefly see the head of one animal in Zombitse Forest.

Painted Big-headed Gecko *Paroedura picta*

A beautiful gecko, we were lucky enough to find a single animal during a Berenty night walk.

Mercator Tropical House Gecko *Hemidactylus mercatorius*

Seen at our lodging near Andasibe.

Standing's Gecko *Phelsuma standingi*

Quite an impressive and distinctive species, seen on one occasions on a large Baobab tree in the Ifaty forest.

Lineated Day Gecko *Phelsuma lineata*

This stunning species was seen well in a few locations, including at our Analamazaotra Lodge and in Fort Dauphin.

Skinks Scincidae

Gravenhorst's Skink *Trachylepsis gravenhorstii*

We recorded this species in Ifaty.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Dumeril's Madagascar Swift *Oplurus quadrimaculatus*

We recorded this species in Ifaty.

Boas Boidae

Madagascar Tree Boa *Sanzinia madagascariensis*

A single snake was seen very well, where it was sunning itself on the edge of Analamazaotra forest near Andasibe.

List of Notable Insects and other Invertebrates

Names where 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 these clustered on branches at Ifaty.

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 colourful little terrestrial animal that was seen in Mantadia NP.

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