



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Budget Madagascar

4th to 15th October 2011



Schlegel's Asity by Markus Lilje

Trip report compiled by tour leader Markus Lilje

Top ten birds and top 5 mammals of the tour as voted for by participants:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Long-tailed Ground Roller | 6. Crossley's Babbler |
| 2. Collared Nightjar | 7. Crab-plover |
| 3. Schlegel's Asity | 8. Pitta-like Ground Roller |
| 4. Short-legged Ground Roller | 9. Velvet Asity |
| 5. Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher | 10. Nuthatch Vanga |
| 1. Fosa! | 4. Goodman's Mouse Lemur |
| 2. Indri | 5. Coquerel's Sifaka |
| 3. Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur | |

Tour Summary

Madagascar is undoubtedly one of the world's must-see birding and wildlife destinations due to the exceptional number of endemics and other special species to be found here. This budget tour visited 3 areas that gave us a great cross-section of the island's different habitats, as well as allowing us the opportunity to see many of the species for which Madagascar has become so famous.

Our tour kicked off in the capital city of Antananarivo, where Lac Alarobia was our first birding site and provided a great introduction to some of the more common birds of the tour. Malagasy Kingfisher and Olive Bee-eater provided a splash of colour, while a few Malagasy Pond Herons were among the large numbers of Squacco Herons and Dimorphic Egrets. The scrubby and reed edges of the lake produced Madagascar Scrub and Reed Warblers as well as Madagascar White-eye and Madagascar Mannikin. The largest species numbers, however, were the White-faced Whistling Ducks and Red-billed Teals, while a few Hottentot Teals and Knob-billed Ducks made up the numbers.



Our journey then really began with a drive to the north-west of the island. On the way we recorded Humblot's Heron, White-throated Rail and our first Madagascar Lark and Madagascar Cisticola, followed by the great Madagascar Pratincole at the Betsiboka River crossing. The dry, deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika National Park near the village of Ampijoroa provided our birding for the next few days. We arrived at Ankarafantsika NP in the late afternoon and began our explorations of this wonderful place with a night walk, picking up our first lemurs and chameleons. Our searching over the following couple of days produced the spectacular Schlegel's Asity, White-breasted Mesite, Red-capped Coua, and Rufous, Sickle-billed, White-headed, Hook-billed, Chabert's, Blue and eventually the range-restricted Van Dam's Vanga. The region's



wetlands and lakes also hold numerous specials that we managed to locate, namely Allen's Gallinule, Madagascar Jacana and the rare Madagascar Fish Eagle. Coquerel's Sifaka, Grey and Golden-brown Mouse Lemurs, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Mongoose Lemur and Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur were some of the mammalian highlights, while Nile Crocodile, Rhinoceros and Oustalet's Chameleons, Madagascar Day Gecko and Cuvier's Iguanid headed up the list of "herps" recorded.

Continuing our Madagascar adventure, we headed for the south-west of the country and the stunning Didieraceae and baobabs of the Spiny Desert! Our drive from Tulear then took us north to the little town of Ifaty, where we stayed on the beach for the next 2 days. Just to the south there were a number



of wetlands that provided us with some great birding, and here we recorded the localized Madagascar Plover, endemic to the southern portion of the island, the tiny Baillon's Crake, Red-knobbed Coot, as well as almost managing to see a Madagascar Rail that was calling just behind the first row of reeds. In this hot, arid region it is important to do as much birding as possible early on in the day, which is what we did as we entered the thickets at daybreak. A memorable morning was spent in this bizarre area, with its great variety of spiny vegetation and Baobab trees. With the very enthusiastic help of the local guides that know the area extremely well, we were able to track down and enjoy great views of the charismatic Long-tailed Ground Roller just metres away, the mythical Sub-desert Mesite on a nest, Archbold's Newtonia, Thamnornis and uncommon Banded Kestrel, amongst others. Because we were here before the rains, the reptiles were only around in very low numbers, although the well-marked Three-eyed Lizard is always present in good numbers.



We also visited 3 other areas in the Tulear region over the next 2 days. With a bit of work in the thick and spiky vegetation around the flat La Table hill, we managed to finally tick all our targets for the area by obtaining views of Red-shouldered and Lafresnaye's Vanga, while a few participants also saw Verreaux's Coau. Due to having an extra day here, we added the Zombitse Forest onto the itinerary and walked through this dry deciduous area for a number of hours before we finally managed to find the forest's most special species, Appert's Tetraka, which is effectively endemic to this forest – it finally allowed great views. Other birds we had here were the impressive Giant Coua, Coquerel's Coua and Cuckoo Roller. The large Verreaux's Sifaka and range-restricted Hubbard's Sportive Lemur were two mammals that we recorded in the forest, while the lovely Standing's Day Gecko entertained us at our lunch hut.



We also added a day excursion from Tulear to the very small island of Nosy Vé. This island, south of Tulear and situated off the coast near Anakao, is the breeding ground for a small population of Red-tailed Tropicbirds, and these elegant birds treated us to unforgettable encounters, both of relaxed scoped birds on their nests and good numbers of them flying overhead. Maybe even more special was the very sought-after Crab-plover, which must have just arrived during the previous few days – we had great views of half-a-dozen individuals including juvenile and adult birds feeding on the



open flats around the island. Other specials during the day were a very showy male Littoral Rock Thrush, Lesser Crested Tern, great views of White-fronted Plovers, and both colour forms of Dimorphic Egret.



After this somewhat more relaxed birding in the south-west of the country, we headed to our final area for this short tour after another night in the capital and a transfer to two of the best eastern rainforest sites in Madagascar, Analamazaotra Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park. Soon after entering Analamazaotra for the first time, we had a fantastic experience by following a group of wonderful Indris and having them call directly above our heads; their piercing and far-carrying cries being a common feature over the next few days. On the same afternoon we also

had amazing views of Rainforest Scops Owl and Collared Nightjar, both of which were almost impossibly well camouflaged on their day roosts. Nuthatch Vanga, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Blue Coua and Malagasy Green Sunbird were other species we encountered in this, the smaller of the 2 reserves. Other more common species that were seen here included Malagasy Kingfisher, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher and Red-tailed Vanga.

The best part of 2 days was then spent around Mantadia NP, just a short distance from our accommodations near the town of Andasibe. This is a large area covered by beautiful primary forest and with a much more intact fauna, although some of the species can be easier to find in the



Analamazaotra area. With our limited time here we did well to find many of our major targets for the region when we picked up Velvet Asity, Rand's and Cryptic Warbler, as well as a Forest Fody and a very cooperative Madagascar Rail in a small reedbed. We were also amazingly fortunate to find one of the top Madagascan mammals within minutes of entering the forest – the incredible Fosa, the island's largest predator and an animal that is very thinly distributed and seldom seen. We watched this unusual creature climb up a large tree trunk and then spend the next 30 minutes or so climbing

around in and searching through the higher limbs of the trees over our heads. What a fantastic experience!

One of our primary targets here was the Short-legged Ground Roller, a bird that is always tricky and turned out to require a fair amount of time and work before we were finally rewarded with great scope views of a pair, probably near their nest, after we had crossed a river and made our way through the thick undergrowth. The sighting was further improved by a pair of Common Sunbird-Asities that



took exception to the presence of the much larger ground rollers and gave us repeated chances to obtain views of these often tricky nectar feeders. A small pool in the forest then provided a chance to see the scarce Madagascar Little Grebe in stunning breeding plumage as well as a pair of Meller's Duck, normally resident further west. With more visibility overhead and into the canopy, we also had good views of Olive Bee-eater, Ward's Flycatcher and Madagascar Spinetail, plus a distant calling Henst's Goshawk. Other good birds including the stunning Pitta-like Ground Roller, White-throated Oxylabes, ground-dwelling Crossley's Babbler and Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher showed very well and Spectacled Tetraka and Tylas Vanga were fairly common. Moving quietly along the edge of one of the rivers that drains the area, we then managed brief views of the scarce Madagascar Crested Ibis before it again blended into the forest. The area is also very good for a number of mammal species and we enjoyed Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur and Diademed Sifaka as well as Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur and Eastern Red Forest Rat around the variety of trails we followed during our time here.



In the same area we also did two short evening and night walks that showed a very different side to the forests of the Madagascan highlands, allowing us good looks at a number of different species that can only typically be seen during the night shift. On these walks we were able to view several resting chameleons, a fantastically camouflaged leaf-tailed gecko, as well as a few sightings of the tiny Goodman's Mouse Lemur and Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur.

As always, Madagascar produced a fantastic variety of endemic species and we managed to find a large number of the many lovely targets that we were hoping for, including all of the island's endemic bird families. Mammals and reptiles were also not overlooked and a good variety of the groups that are already active at this time of the year were seen well. Thank you to all participants for making this, our first budget birding tour of this huge and magical island, a thoroughly enjoyable experience!

Photo Credits (in order of appearance): Sickle-billed Vanga, Madagascar Fish Eagle, Long-tailed Ground Roller, Nosy Vé boat, Collared Nightjar, Crossley's Babbler, Fosa; all taken during the tour by Markus Lilje.

Annotated List of Birds (154 species recorded; 4 heard only)

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

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



CONSERVATION STATUS

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

Ducks & Geese Anatidae**White-faced Whistling Duck***Dendrocygna viduata*

Lake Alarobia in Antananarivo held a very large number of birds on the first afternoon; more were seen on the road to Ampijoroa and near Ifaty.

Knob-billed Duck*Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Our first views were in Tana on Lake Alarobia, with more distant birds on the Betsiboka River.

Meller's Duck (E) (En)*Anas melleri*

A pair was seen well on a small lake in Mantadia.

Red-billed Teal*Anas erythrorhyncha*

A common and widespread bird in Madagascar, we recorded this duck at most freshwater wetlands on the island, with largest numbers on Lake Alarobia.

Hottentot Teal*Anas hottentota*

This good-looking and tiny teal was seen first at Lake Alarobia and again at a wetland near Ifaty.

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

Good numbers 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 area.

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 truly elegant birds on the island of Nosy Vé treated us to fantastic views in flight and on the ground at nesting sites. A total of around ten birds were seen.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**Glossy Ibis***Plegadis falcinellus*

Large numbers of this species were observed around Lake Ravelobe in north-west Madagascar.

Madagascar (Crested) Ibis*Lophotibis cristata*

We were very fortunate to enjoy brief but good views of 2 birds along a river in the Mantadia area, before they disappeared again – this species is seldom observed away from its nest.

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

The Alarobia Lake in Tana was the site on the tour where this extremely widespread species was encountered in good numbers; a few were seen at Lake Ravelobe.

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

Small numbers were seen at most freshwater wetlands throughout the tour, as well as on Nosy Vé.

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*

Huge numbers were sighted at Lake Alarobia in Tana, before we had a few later on near Ampijoroa and at wetlands south of Ifaty.

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

About 3 birds were present at Lac Alarobia.

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 many days.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

A single bird was seen on the tour – recorded near Ampijoroa.

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

This large, attractive heron was observed on Lac Ravelobe while our initial sighting was on the previous day near Ampijoroa.

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

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

Ankarafantsika NP produced half-a-dozen birds on Lake Ravelobe.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Recorded throughout the tour in small numbers, while many were seen on the way to Ampijoroa.

Black Heron*Egretta ardesiaca*

Encountered in small numbers across the island and occasionally observed using their famous canopy feeding technique. Three birds were seen at Lac Ravelobe, with a few on wetlands elsewhere.

Dimorphic Egret*Egretta dimorpha*

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar with peak numbers at the coastal sites in southern Madagascar and in Tana, where we had huge numbers at Lake Ravelobe.

NOTE: This species is sometimes lumped by authorities as a distinct subspecies of the Western Reef Heron, Egretta gularis. Clements treats it as a subspecies of Western Reef-heron.

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

Pairs and single birds were sighted on a few occasions from the bus on drives through rice-growing areas on the central highlands.

Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Yellow-billed Kite***Milvus aegyptius*

A fairly common bird during the tour, we observed this species during many of the drives on the island.

NOTE: This species is sometimes lumped with Black Kite M. migrans, Clements follows this taxonomy. We observed the Yellow-billed Kite throughout Madagascar.

Madagascar Fish Eagle (E) (C)*Haliaeetus vociferoides*

We had great, prolonged views of this regal bird at Lac Ravelobe during our boat cruise.

NOTE: This is one of the world's rarest raptors, with a total global population of no more than 60 pairs.

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)*Polyboroides radiatus*

A number of birds were seen during the tour, with the first birds being chased by a Frances's Sparrowhawk on the road to Ampijoroa. Others at Ifaty and Andasibe areas.



Frances's Sparrowhawk (Goshawk)(NE) *Accipiter francesii*
 Good views were had of small raptor on a few occasions, including in Ankarafantsika and Mantadia NPs.

Madagascar Sparrowhawk (E) (NT) *Accipiter madagascariensis*
 A single bird was seen on the way to the Perinet area.

Henst's Goshawk (E) (NT) *Accipiter henstii*
 We recorded a circling bird on two occasions above Mantadia NP.

Madagascar Buzzard (E) *Buteo brachypterus*
 We enjoyed both perched and flight views of this good-looking raptor on numerous occasions.

Falcons Falconidae

Malagasy Kestrel (NEe) *Falco newtoni*
 Recorded almost daily throughout the tour in open habitats, forest edge and urban areas.

Banded Kestrel (E) *Falco zoniventris*
 We were fortunate to have two of this scarce species on the tour on our morning walk in the spiny forest near Ifaty.

Mesites Mesitornithidae

White-breasted Mesite (E) (V) *Mesitornis variegata*
 Ankarafantsika NP produced a great sighting of this beautiful species; one was seen crossing the road after we followed it for a while in the fairly open undergrowth.

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V) *Monias benschi*
 We were fortunate to have a male on a nest in the spiny forest near Ifaty during an early morning walk. Fine views were enjoyed of this, one of the island's highly-sought species.

Flufftails Sarothruridae

Madagascar Flufftail (E) *Sarothrura insularis*
 This shy little bird was only heard on a few occasions in Mantadia and Analamazaotra NPs.

Rails & Gallinules Rallidae

Madagascar Wood Rail (E) *Canirallus kiolooides*
 A few birds were heard on a few occasions in the Andasibe area.

Madagascar Rail (E) *Rallus madagascariensis*
 This bird was seen very well at a wetland near Mantadia NP, after we heard birds near Ifaty.

White-throated Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri*
 This species was seen very well on the drive to the Ampijoroa area.

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. Both the IOC and Clement's currently don't accept this split.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*
 We found a single bird at a wetland south of Ifaty, which was seen well by most participants.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*
 This usually scarce and somewhat shy species was sighted at Lac Ravelobe, where we enjoyed great looks of a single bird.



Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

Good numbers were encountered at the moist edges around Lac Ravelobe, a few elsewhere.

Red-knobbed Coot*Fulica cristata*

This rare bird in Madagascar was seen at a wetland site near Ifaty, with a total of around seven.

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

We had views of 3 of these stunning birds in the Ampijoroa area – two put on a little show for some of the participants, as they fed in the leaf-litter.

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

A flock of 6 birds were observed on the island of Nosy Vé, where good views were enjoyed.

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

Recorded at several wetland sites, both coastal and inland in the south and north-west of the island.

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

This migrant was observed on the mudflats in the port at Tulear.

Common Ringed Plover*Charadrius hiaticula*

This species was sighted by some participants at a wetland near Tulear.

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

This striking endemic was seen very well near Ifaty.

Kittlitz's Plover*Charadrius pecuarius*

Small numbers of this small species were recorded in the Tulear area.

Three-banded Plover*Charadrius tricollaris*

Found at roadside wetlands near Ifaty.

White-fronted Plover*Charadrius marginatus*

Half-a-dozen of these shorebirds were seen on the beach at Nosy Vé while our first views were from mudflats at Tulear and on the beach south of Ifaty.

Jacanas Jacanidae**Madagascar Jacana (E)***Actophilornis albinucha*

A single juvenile bird was found at Lac Revelobe.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae**Whimbrel***Numenius phaeopus*

Large numbers were observed on tidal flats of the Toliara area, around 5 on Nosy Vé.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

Around 15 were observed during our breakfast near the Tulear mudflats.

Common Sandpiper*Tringa hypoleucos*

Small numbers recorded in freshwater and brackish wetland habitats at the start of the tour.



Ruddy Turnstone*Arenaria interpres*

A total of 4 birds were seen, split between Ifaty area and Nosy Vé in south-western Madagascar.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

5 birds were seen at a distance on the island of Nosy Vé.

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

Seen in good numbers on the tidal flats and brackish pools in the Ifaty and Toliara areas.

Pratincoles Glareolidae**Madagascar Pratincole***Glareola ocularis*

Our intensive search for this species from a bridge over the Betsiboka River eventually turned up one bird, before two others flew over the bridge as we were about to leave.

Gulls & Terns Laridae**Swift (Greater Crested) Tern***Sterna bergii*

We had two birds, along the beach south of Ifaty and around the island of Nosy Vé.

Lesser Crested Tern*Sterna bengalensis*

4 birds were scoped on the island of Nosy Vé.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae**Common Pigeon (I)***Columba livia*

Widespread and fairly common in urban areas throughout the island.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NE)*Nesoenas picturata*

These birds were seen almost daily throughout the island in a good variety of habitats.

Namaqua Dove*Oena capensis*

Good numbers of this tiny dove were seen in the north-west and in the dry south of the country.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)*Treron australis*

Ankarafantsika NP produced several sightings of this beautiful species, while additional views were obtained in the Analamazaotra/ Mantadia area.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)*Alectroenas madagascariensis*

Analamazaotra and Mantadia NPs gave us a number of very good views of this attractive endemic.

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

A delightful little parrot, it was seen on a daily basis around Ankarafantsika NP and Ifaty areas.

Greater Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis vasa*

This bird was unfortunately only seen in flight over the forest at Mantadia.

NOTE: Clements calls this species Vasa Parrot.

Lesser Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis nigra*

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

NOTE: Clements calls this species Black Parrot.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae**Malagasy 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*

This attractive species was recorded at Ankarafantsika NP and near Ifaty.

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

A few participants had very brief views of this species near La Tabla.

Blue Coua (E)*Coua caerulea*

This species' behaviour is very reminiscent of the turacos of Africa, running and jumping along the larger canopy branches of trees in the Analamazaotra/ Mantadia NPs.

Red-capped Coua (E)*Coua ruficeps*

A total of around 9 birds were seen very well in the dry deciduous forest in Ankarafantsika NP.

NOTE: See notation under Green-capped Coua.

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

A single bird was seen perched briefly in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

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 including IOC and Clements consider this form to be a subspecies of Red-capped Coua.

Red-fronted Coua (E)*Coua reynaudii*

Some participants had views of this species in Analamazaotra NP; another calling bird in Mantadia could not be enticed from its hiding place.

Coquerel's Coua (E)*Coua coquereli*

The dry, deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP and Zombitse were sites for this coua and we recorded a total of around 8 birds.

Running Coua (E)*Coua cursor*

The spiny forests at Ifaty produced a great sighting of this coua, sitting in the open for a short while.

Giant Coua (E)*Coua gigas*

We were fortunate to get a good view of this impressive bird in the forest of Zombitse, during our few hours there.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)*Cuculus rochii*

We recorded this species only in the rainforest during the final days of the tour, many were heard and a single bird was seen very well in Analamazaotra NP.

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

We heard this species calling at Ampijoroa during a night walk.

NOTE: This species has recently been split with the Eastern Barn Owl *T. delicatula* occurring in the Lesser Sundas and Australasia; Clements does not accept this split.

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

A single bird was seen on a day roost at Ankarafantsika, before we had great views of another bird was seen very well on a night walk in the same area.

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

This species was heard calling on numerous occasions at Analamazaotra and Ranomafana NP

NOTE: The above 2 species Scops Owls have recently been split, based on morphological and vocal differences and habitat preferences.

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

A single bird was seen well on its day roost in the Zombitse Forest.



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

Common and widespread on Madagascar, we had numerous sightings during the tour at most sites.

Collared Nightjar (E) *Caprimulgus enarratus*

One of the memorable moments of the tour was standing in front of a pair of these small nocturnal birds in Analamazaotra forest, where they were almost invisible, totally unobscured, but camouflaged among the leaf litter just a few metres away.

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

Recorded by some above Zombitse Forest and seen very well at Analamazaotra and Mantadia NPs.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

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

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

2 birds were seen on the drive from Tana to Anpisoroa.

Malagasy Black Swift (NE) *Apus balstoni*

Recorded at scattered localities throughout the tour with peak numbers around the Tulear region.

*NOTE: These Malagasy birds are usually considered a species distinct from the African Black Swift (A. barbatus); however no dedicated research has been done.***Cuckoo-Rollers Leptosomidae****Cuckoo Roller (NE)** *Leptosomus discolor*

A strange and extremely vocal species, it was seen in small numbers throughout our tour of the island.

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

A classic Madagascar species and the only one of the five members of this family to nest in trees.

Mantadia NP produced a superb sighting of a pair on the final morning in the area. We were treated to great views of these birds getting mobbed by a pair of Common Sunbird-Asity!

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

We found several of these beautiful birds in Mantadia NP, where everyone had great views.

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

The Spiny Forest at Ifaty was the site for this magnificent bird where the local guides got this bird to within a few metres of where we were waiting for it. Deservedly voted the top bird of the tour.

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

After getting brief views of a bird in Analamazaotra NP, we got a stunning, relaxed bird on the final morning of the tour in Mantadia NP.

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Recorded at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout the tour: highest numbers at Lake Alarobia and Analamazaotra / Mantadia NPs.



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

Despite it being very common and recorded from most sites during the tour, it was always a pleasure to view these birds.

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

We encountered this striking species at Ankarafantsika NP, Ifaty forest and Zombitse NP.

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

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

This rainforest special was seen brilliantly at Mantadia NP where we had around 6 birds over 2 consecutive days.

Schlegel's Asity (E) (NT)*Philepitta schlegeli*

The deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP gave us wonderful sighting of this gorgeous species – enjoyed at very close quarters.

Common Sunbird-Asity (E)*Neodrepanis coruscans*

A pair of these birds were very actively mobbing Short-legged ground Rollers in Mantadia NP on the tours final day.

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

This species was seen on 2 days in Madagascar, first a female in Zombitse NP, before we had more birds in Analamazaotra and Mantadia NPs.

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

This recently described and highly localized endemic is a great find for any tour to Madagascar and we were fortunate to have 2 birds at close quarters in the “coral rag” scrub near La Tabla, Tulear.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)*Vanga curvirostris*

Definitely filling the niche of the African bushshrikes in Madagascar. This species was seen well at Ankarafantsika NP, where a pair was constructing a nest.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

This striking and fairly localized vanga made us work hard before we finally had views of one bird in the thick scrub near La Tabla.

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

Ankarafantsika NP produced a great sighting of this highly range-restricted species after much hard work and hours of walking for it.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)*Falcula palliata*

We were entertained on a daily basis in Ankarafantsika NP by these bizarre, fantastic birds. We also found a few birds at Ifaty.

White-headed Vanga (E)*Artamella viridis*

Recorded in good numbers in Ankarafantsika, where some were nest-building, 2 seen near Ifaty.

Chabert's Vanga (E)*Leptopterus chabert*

Very unspecific in its choice of habitats, this vanga, was recorded daily during the tour.



Blue Vanga (NE)*Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

An absolutely gorgeous bird seen brilliantly at Mantadia NP and Ankarafantsika NP.

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*

A total of 6 birds were seen in the deciduous woodlands of Ankarafantsika NP, where both the female and male were seen very well.

Tylas Vanga (E)*Tylas eduardi*

Excellent views were had of this fairly vocal species in mixed flocks in the Perinet area.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (E)*Hypositta corallirostris*

We were very lucky with this sometimes tricky species – around 6 were seen on 3 days in the Analamazaotra / Mantadia NP area, feeding in their typical way.

Common Newtonia (E)*Newtonia brunneicauda*

This species was recorded regularly in small numbers during the tour usually in mixed feeding flocks.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)*Newtonia archboldi*

A real special for the southern region of Madagascar, we had excellent views of a calling bird in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)*Pseudobias wardi*

Small numbers of this smart species were seen in the forests of Analamazaotra / Mantadia NPs.

Crossley's Babbler (E)*Mystacornis crossleyi*

This gorgeous bird was first heard in the Andasibe area, before we managed stunning views of this ground-level species in Mantadia NP, on the final morning.

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

Highest numbers were seen in Ankarafantsika NP, with smaller numbers at Ifaty and Mantadia NP.

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

This charismatic bird with its punk hairdo was observed on every day of the tour.

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

Common and widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats, we managed to find all the colour morphs of this very attractive species.

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

Common and widespread in open habitats throughout.

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

Common and widespread in the drier regions of the island.



Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Madagascar Bulbul (NE) *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*
Common and ubiquitous, we found these birds on almost every day of the tour.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin (BE) *Phedina borbonica*
Madagascar's most common hirundine and a regional breeding endemic, it was recorded in flight at a number of sites.

Brown-throated (Plain) Martin *Riparia paludicola*
A few birds were seen at scattered sites on the tour, with 4 seen at Lake Alarobia.

Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*
A denizen of the undergrowth, this species was recorded at various localities during the tour.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*
Several birds found in the spiny forest at Ifaty. This species replaces Madagascar Brush Warbler in the south-west of the island.

NOTE: Formerly considered conspecific with Madagascar Brush Warbler but vocally distinct and sympatric with that species near Fort Dauphin. Clements does not accept this split

Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E) *Acrocephalus newtoni*
The marshes near Mantadia, Tulear and at Lake Alarobia produced sightings of this species.

Malagasy Warblers Bernieridae

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*
A secretive endemic of the understorey in forests, three birds were seen very well at Mantadia NP.

Long-billed Bernieria (E) *Bernieria madagascariensis*
Seen very well in Ankarafantsika NP, with further sightings at a number of sites later.

Cryptic Warbler (E) *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*
A single bird was seen singing on its perch on the way to Mantadia NP.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) (NT) *Hartertula flavoviridis*
Unfortunately this bird was only heard in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*
In the Spiny Forest near Ifaty we found 2 birds that eventually showed well.

Spectacled Tetraka (E) *Xanthomixis zosterops*
Small numbers of this rainforest specialist were seen in Analamazaotra and Mantadia NPs.

Appert's Tetraka (E) (V) *Xanthomixis apperti*
A group of 4 birds were seen very well, before we had another very relaxed individual, all in the dry deciduous Zombitse Forest, to which the species is restricted.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*
A single bird was seen well during our drive into Mantadia NP.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Common Jery (E) *Neomixis tenella*
Recorded throughout the tour at most sites.



Green Jery (E)*Neomixis viridis*

A fairly nondescript bird, it was seen well near the entrance to Analamazaotra NP.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)*Neomixis striatigula*

We found good numbers of this common songster, first views in Ifaty before more were recorded in the Mantadia area.

Madagascar Cisticola (NE)*Cisticola cherinus*

This bird was recorded in grasslands, on edges of wetlands and scrubby habitats throughout the tour.

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

Regularly recorded throughout the tour at most sites except in the Ifaty area.

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

This introduced species was common in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E)*Hartlaubius aurata*

An uncommon bird, it was seen well in Mantadia NP after we only had distant views on the previous day near Perinet.

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

Seen throughout the tour on most days, this is a very bold and confiding species.

Madagascar (Eurasian) Stonechat*Saxicola sibilla*

Fairly common in open habitats of the eastern highlands, seen on the way to the Ampijoroa and Perinet areas.

NOTE: Clements considers this species conspecific with Stonechat S. torquatus.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E)*Pseudocossyphus imerinus*

The dune scrub near Anakao, south of Tulear, produced a great sighting of this rock thrush.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae**Souimanga Sunbird (NE)***Nectarinia souimanga*

Madagascar's most common sunbird and one of the most common birds on the island generally.

Malagasy Green (Madagascar) Sunbird (NE)*Nectarinia notata*

A large, attractive sunbird, seen well in 2 areas during the tour: in a large flowering tree in Ankarafantsika and Analamazaotra /Mantadia NPs.

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

Seen regularly during the trip in the Analamazaotra and Mantadia NPs.

Sakalava Weaver (E)*Ploceus sakalava*

Common in the drier regions of Madagascar, where we enjoyed good views, including birds around a small colony near Ifaty.

Red Fody (E)*Foudia madagascariensis*

A gorgeous bird in breeding plumage, it was recorded in good numbers during the tour.

Forest Fody (E)*Foudia omissa*

This species is much rarer than the previous species and was only sighted once when a calling male was located at Mantadia NP.

Waxbills Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (E)

Lonchura nana

Small numbers were recorded at a few sites on the tour, including at Lake Alarobia and Mantadia NP.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail (E)

Motacilla flaviventris

Another attractive endemic, observed at moist sites during the tour, including great close views at Analamazaotra NP.

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 Rats and Mice Muridae

Eastern Red Forest Rat

Nesomys rufus

This attractive forest rat was recorded in Mantadia NP.

Old World Rats and Mice Muridae

Fosa

Cryptoprocta ferox

A single animal was seen on 2 consecutive days in Mantadia NP, where we were able to watch it for a long time as it climbed through the canopy – outside Kirindy Forest this, the country's top predator is an extremely tough species to see in Madagascar.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae

Grey Mouse Lemur

Microcebus murinus

We enjoyed great sightings on our night walks at Ampijoroa.

Golden-brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus ravelobensis

We were extremely fortunate to find this tiny, localized species during our night walk.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur

Microcebus lehilahytsara

A very localized species, we enjoyed great views of some of the 7 animals we recorded near Perinet.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus crossleyi

We spotted a single animal near Perinet.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus medius

We were very fortunate to see this species because they are only active during the wet season; this lemur was seen well on a night stroll in Ankarafantsika NP.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur edwardsi

We did very well to get around 7 of these nocturnal lemurs during our 2 night walks in the dry forests at Ampijoroa.



Hubbard's Sportive Lemur*Lepilemur hubbardi*

At Zombitse Forest we found a single lemur during the day at a resting spot.

"True" Lemurs Lemuridae**Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur***Hapalemur griseus griseus*

This attractive species was found during our time in the Perinet area, with great views in Analamazaotra NP.

Mongoose Lemur*Eulemur mongoz*

This is a very uncommon species and we were treated to incredible views of 3 animals as they became active around dusk in Ankarafantsika NP.

Common Brown Lemur*Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These lemurs were seen by some at Ankarafantsika NP and later in Analamazaotra / Mantadia NPs.

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

This, the most vocal of the true lemurs, was seen very well in the forest in Mantadia NP.

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

We had a great view of one animal during a night walk near Perinet.

Diademed Sifaka*Propithecus diadema*

Widely considered to be one of Madagascar's most beautiful primates, we had good views of around 4 of these magnificent creatures in Mantadia NP.

Verreaux's Sifaka*Propithecus verreauxi*

4 of these large lemurs were recorded sitting quietly on their mid-day resting place in the shade in Zombitse Forest.

Coquerel's Sifaka*Propithecus coquereli*

Another stunning lemur that was seen very well, this time in the Ampijoroa area.

Indri*Indri indri*

The territorial calls of this lemur are unforgettable, and the close encounter that we shared with a small family in Analamazaotra NP will be etched in our memories forever! More animals were seen in the canopy of Mantadia NP on the 2 days we had in that area.

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**Madagascar Tree Frog***Boophis madagascariensis*

A single was found calling on a night walk in Ranomafana NP.

Gephyromantis sculpturatus

We found one of these frogs while on a walk through the lower elevations of Ranomafana NP.

Crocodiles Crocodylidae**Nile Crocodile***Crocodylus niloticus*

This ancient reptile was seen by some participants in Lake Ravelobe during our stay in Ankarafantsika NP. Some of the local people of the region believe that their ancestors were drowned in a massive flood and transformed into crocodiles. Thus, the crocodiles of this lake are protected.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon

Brookesia superciliaris

On a night walk in the Perinet area we found one of these 'large' stump-tailed Chameleons.

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

This fairly common species was sighted on a night walk near Perinet.

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

We recorded one of these chameleons near Perinet.

Rhinoceros Chameleon

Calumma rhinocerotus

The dry forest around Ampijoroa produced two of these lovely chameleons.

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

The most common chameleon seen during the tour, with sightings of some huge animals near Ampijoroa and in the Zombitse Forest.

Warty Chameleon

Furcifer verrucosus

This chameleon was observed near the Betsiboka River, where we had 2 individuals.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

This attractive reptile was seen in the spiny forest around Ifaty and La Tabla.

Cuvier's Iguanid

Oplurus cuvieri

What a fabulous creature! We observed many of these iguanids in Ankarafantsika NP, especially in the camp.

Geckos Gekkonidae

Sakalava Gecko

Homopholis sakalava

We found this largely nocturnal species in the spiny forest around Ifaty during the day.

Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus sikorae

These are very difficult animals to find – one was seen on the first night walk in the Perinet area.

Fantastic Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus phantasticus

Another exceptionally well-camouflaged lizard that was seen near Perinet – unfortunately this one was lacking its tail!

Madagascar Day Gecko

Phelsuma madagascarensis

Seen in the dry deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP.

Lineated Day Gecko

Phelsuma lineata

A few of these beautiful day geckos were found at Mantadia NP.

Standing's Day Gecko

Phelsuma standingi

These large, attractive reptiles were seen in the fairly good numbers in Zombitse Forest.

Bark Gecko sp.

Lygodactylus tolanpyae

This is a tiny, well camouflaged species that showed very well in Ankarafantsika NP and the Zombitse Forest.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae



Madagascar Plated Lizard

Zonosaurus madagascarensis

A few really big examples of this species were seen very well in Ankarafantsika NP.

Elegant Skink

Mabuya elegans

Seen well at Mantadia NP.

Typical Snakes Colubridae

Mahafaly Sand Snake

Mimophis mahfalensis

A total of 3 of these extremely thin snakes were seen in the Ankarafantsika NP.

Dromicodrias quadrilineatus

A single animal was seen well just after lunch in the Ampijoroa area.

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