



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Comprehensive I

28th October to 18th November 2011 (22 days)



Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader: Glen Valentine

Tour Summary

Yet another extremely successful Rockjumper tour to the wonderfully diverse and endemic-rich island of Madagascar took place towards the end of 2011 and by the end of our adventure we had racked up a whole host of incredibly memorable sightings, including some of the world's most sought-after and bizarre birds, mammals and "herps".

Some of the many highlights included all five endemic bird families: namely the incomparable Cuckoo Roller, all 3 mesites, all 5 stunning ground rollers, 18 species of remarkable vangas and 10 of the 11 Malagasy warblers. Other mouth-watering species seen included Crab-plover, Madagascar

Flufftail, striking and secretive Madagascar Ibis, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, the rare and endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle, elusive Banded Kestrel, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Jacana, Madagascar Pratincole, eight species of Coua, the often-evasive Madagascar Owl, exquisite Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Madagascar Sandgrouse and all four electric Asities! An amazing host of fabulous mammals (34 species, of which 26 were lemurs) and “herps” (68 species) were also enjoyed in this unique, endemic wonderland!



Our tour kicked off in the country's busy capital, Antananarivo. With the sun glistening off the brilliant green rice paddies and contrasting red brick kilns, we traversed the open meat markets and vegetable stands towards Tsimbazaza Zoo and nearby Lake Alarobia. At these two introductory sites we found our first of



many exciting Malagasy specialties such as Malagasy Coucal, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Malagasy Turtle Dove, Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Black Swift and Mascarene Martin overhead, Malagasy Swamp Warbler, radiant Malagasy Kingfisher, Common Jery, Madagascar White-eye, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Souimanga Sunbird, Red Fody, Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Wagtail, Dimorphic Egret plus a host of more common and widespread



species and, best of all, the scarce and local Malagasy Pond Heron (in full breeding plumage).

The next morning saw us leaving the hustle and bustle of Tana and catching our early morning flight to the vibrant town of Mahajanga on the north-west coast. Our flight took us via the island of Nosy Be and we arrived in Mahajanga in the mid-morning and headed straight for breakfast. After re-energizing we began the road trip to Ankarafantsika National Park/Ampijoroa Forest Station, our exotic destination in the heart of a wonderful remnant of dry deciduous forest to the south of Mahajanga where we would spend the next two days.



Birding around the camp was productive as usual and we soon picked up many mouth-watering species. These included Grey-headed Lovebird, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Sickle-billed, Hook-billed, White-headed and Chabert's Vangas, noisy Crested Drongo, flashy Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Malagasy Bulbul, gaudy Broad-billed Roller and the stately Madagascar Hoopoe all before



lunch! Friendly Cuvier's Iguanids scurried around our feet, Mauritian Tomb Bats roosted in the nearby trees and family troops of endearing Coquerel's Sifaka foraged in the canopy nearby – what a fabulous introduction to one of Madagascar's most special reserves!

The dry deciduous woodlands of Ampijoroa added many highly sought-after, gorgeous and



entertaining mammals, birds and “herps” alike during our stay. As we worked through the different levels of the forest we slowly reeled in all the specialties of the area: Immaculate Schlegel’s Asity that showed amazingly well on two separate occasions, outlandish White-breasted Mesite and the very uncommon Van Dam’s Vanga all stole the show, but Rufous and Blue Vangas, Coquerel’s, Red-capped and Crested Couas, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, a lovely pair of



Frances’s Sparrowhawk, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Torotoroka Scops Owl, Madagascar Cuckoo, Souimanga and Malagasy Green Sunbirds, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Long-billed Berniera and the big-headed Cuckoo Roller were also enjoyed and admired immensely.

A boat ride on Lake Ravelobe proved extremely productive and yielded wonderful close-up views of Humblot’s Heron, Olive Bee-eater, White-throated Rail, Allen’s Gallinule, Madagascar Jacana and the rare and endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. In order

to soak in the complete array of species in this wonderful reserve we also embarked on night walks, which added several nocturnal mammal species that included Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Grey Mouse Lemur and Milne-Edward’s Sportive Lemur all showing well. Other lemur species encountered during our wonderful stay here included Western Avahi, Common Brown Lemur and the rarely seen Mongoose Lemur on consecutive days. We also come across a wide range of interesting reptiles such as Madagascar Tree and Madagascar Ground Boas, Madagascar Spotted, Giant Hog-nosed and Mahafaly Sand Snakes, Fish-scaled and Madagascar Day Geckos and the massive Oustalet’s Chameleon to name just a few! We left Ampijoroa extremely satisfied and with anticipation for the many exciting days to come.



A short visit to a small pan at the edge of Mahajanga produced good numbers of the boldly-patterned African Pygmy Goose, several Kittlitz’s and Three-banded Plovers, Madagascar Lark, Madagascar Cisticola and flocks of Madagascar Mannikin.

Our boat trip into the fabled Betsiboka Delta awaited us the next morning. This estuary is the only known easily accessible site for the rare and endangered Bernier’s Teal and Malagasy Sacred Ibis, both of which were found and showed exceptionally well for all on board.

After a very successful trip to the north-west it was time to head back to Tana and continue south and east towards the luscious and extensive rainforests of Ranomafana National Park. This would be our first rainforest destination of the trip and it did not disappoint! The park protects a fairly large tract of mid-altitude rainforest and is home to a host of exciting endemic Malagasy species. Ranomafana was initially proclaimed to protect the only known population of the localized Golden Bamboo Lemur, which was discovered in the area in the late 1980’s, and we were extremely fortunate to see this rare primate during our stay in the park.

A range of delightfully bizarre and sought-after endemic bird species occur in the forests of Ranomafana and we managed to obtain views of most of these specials: Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity, eccentric Velvit Asity, gorgeous Pitta-like and Rufous-headed



Ground Rollers, elusive Brown Mesite, Pollen's and Tylas Vangas, Forest Rock Thrush, Red-fronted Coua, White-throated Oxylabes, Dark Newtonia, Wedge-tailed Jery, Cryptic Warbler, Spectacled Tetraka, Madagascar Starling, Forest Fody and Nelicourvi Weaver were some of the many avian highlights that were seen during our stay here.

On the mammal front we enjoyed watching Milne Edward's Sifaka, Red-bellied Lemur, Red-fronted Brown Lemur, Brown Mouse Lemur, Greater Bamboo Lemur (one of the world's rarest primates) and the spiny Lowland Streaked Tenrec over and above the already mentioned Golden Bamboo Lemur.

Reptiles are also very well represented in these diverse forests with Oshaughnessy's, Band-bellied, Nose-horned, Blue-legged and Tusked Chameleons and bright green Four-spotted Day Gecko being just a few of the fantastic species that we added to our ever-growing list. Our fabulous local guide also produced a multitude of different frog species for us, of which the most impressive was probably the beautifully patterned *Mantella baroni*.



Bidding farewell to the riches of Ranomafana we continued westwards towards the jagged sandstone mountains of Isalo National Park.

It was wonderful to enjoy the luxuries of our fabulous hotel, with its divine food and amazing setting in the heart of the rugged Isalo Mountains. The area's endemic specialty, Forest (Benson's) Rock Thrush, was quickly located upon arrival and we enjoyed the remainder of the afternoon pottering around the expansive hotel grounds admiring the area's unique flora as well as the numerous Four-banded Iguanids that scurry along the rocky areas around the lodge.

After our short stop-over at Isalo we left the comforts of our lodge and hit the road south towards Tulear on Madagascar's south-western coastline, passing several Sapphire towns and stopping along the way at the productive, deciduous forest reserve of Zombitse. Here we spent some time in the mid-morning wondering the forest trails and locating the extremely localized Appert's Tetraka while enjoying fabulous, prolonged views of White-browed Hawk-Owl, Cuckoo Roller, Verreaux's Sifaka and the immaculate Standing's Day Gecko. After a picnic lunch and excellent scope views of a Banded Kestrel we continued on to Tulear.



The afternoon was spent enjoying the nearby Arboretum with its wonderful display of endemic plants. We also found some great endemic birds here including Madagascar Buttonquail, Red (Green)-capped Coua, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Common Jery and Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher. Double-banded Iguanids and Lesser Plated Lizards occupied the undergrowth and we were thrilled to find the localized *Furcifer antimena*, a great-looking spiny-forest chameleon.



Next up was our boat trip adventure to the tropical, offshore island of Nosy Ve. The island lies just off the coast of Tulear and is home to several breeding pairs of the graceful Red-tailed Tropicbird. These bold and elegant birds were admired as they flew effortlessly within meters of us



Trip Report - RBT Madagascar Comprehensive I 2011

parading their exquisite red tails, bright scarlet bills and pitch black, webbed feet. The island also yielded the much sought-after Crab-plover as well as Little, Greater Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Our morning finished off with some snorkelling just off the island and a short boat trip took us to our lunch spot at Anakaon on the mainland opposite the island. A delicious seafood lunch was enjoyed and we managed to locate the very special endemic Littoral Rock Thrush, which showed well without much effort at all.



Reaching Tulear in the mid-afternoon we headed back to our comfortable hotel, enjoyed a revitalizing shower and then departed for the nearby landmark of La Table, a small mountain just to the east of Tulear, where we would target two more severely range-restricted endemics: Red-shouldered Vanga and Verreaux's Coua. Both of these species obliged and were found fairly easily in their dry, coral rag scrub habitat.



Before heading north to Ifaty we ventured out early to a small pan to the east of town where a wonderful flock of Madagascar Sandgrouse came in to drink right in front of us. What a great start to the day and this put us in great spirits for the next leg of the trip!



The spiny forest around Ifaty, where a variety of exciting and exceptionally localized birds are on offer, was our next target destination. This unique habitat of giant Baobabs - most of them being hundreds of years old - along with many species of *didierea*, *pachypodium* and *Euphorbia* support the only populations of two of the world's most specialized and desirable birds: Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert Mesite. During our time here we were treated to incredibly satisfying views of both species, along with great views of the rest of the area's specialties: Archbold's Newtonia, Lafresnaye's and Red-tailed



Vangas, Madagascar Nightjar, the strange Thamnornis, Stripe-throated Jery, brilliant Red Fody and Running Coua on the nest! The surrounding grasslands and wetlands produced a few more of the area's specialties, most notably the rare Madagascar Plover as well as Baillon's Crake.



After finding all the region's target birds, we made our way back to Tulear and boarded a flight bound for Fort Dauphin on the south-west coast of the island. Leaving the airport at Fort Dauphin we bounced along the road to Berenty passing villages, farmlands (rice, kasava, mangos, litchis and sisal) and patches of spiny forest. Eventually we arrived at the famous Berenty Lemur Reserve and settled into our comfortable accommodation. A night walk in the spiny forest produced many interesting sightings: White-



footed Sportive Lemurs and Grey-brown Mouse Lemurs were abundant and we also found Warty Chameleon and loads of bizarre Flatid Leaf Bugs.

The next morning was warm and sunny with Ring-tailed Lemurs walking around our feet and Verreaux's Sifaka's dancing across the red sand. A walk in the nearby riparian woodland produced the scarce Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Frances's Sparrowhawk, confiding Giant and Crested Couas, White-browed Hawk-Owl and Lesser Hog-nosed Snake as highlights. Lemurs were ubiquitous in the remaining forest and provided close, intimate encounters and great photographic opportunities. A night walk in the riparian woodland proved worthwhile and produced some interesting reptiles such as Plain and Painted Big-headed Geckos.

The tiny patches of spiny forest still harbour some good endemics and we found Running Coua, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Nightjar, Malagasy Green and Souimanga Sunbirds, Grey-headed Lovebird, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Torotoroka Scops Owl as well as White-footed Sportive Lemur, Grey-brown Mouse Lemur, Ring-tailed Lemur, Verreaux's Sifaka and comical Three-eyed Lizards.



After enjoying our time at Berenty we headed back along the road to Fort Dauphin to catch our flight back up to Tana on the central plateau. Our flight was delayed however and we eventually landed in Tana just after midnight, picked up our luggage and headed straight for our nearby hotel for a well-earned, good night's rest before striking out east for Anjozorobe the next morning.

The lush rainforests and pristine marshes around Anjozorobe beckoned and we spent a full two days exploring this interesting area. We enjoyed success here with Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Snipe, the secretive Grey Emutail and Meller's Duck all showing well.

The forest surrounding our lovely lodge added noteworthy species such as Crossley's Babbler, which gave itself away by its piercing call and was seen waltzing across the forest undergrowth in front of us. A pair of iridescent Common Sunbird-Asity showed really well and we managed to obtain views of the shy and elusive Madagascar Yellowbrow. Other noteworthy species sighted during our time here were Grey-crowned Tetraka, Madagascar Wood Rail, Madagascar Starling and a lovely male Madagascar Flufftail that showed briefly but well.



One of our most amazing and memorable sightings at Anjozorobe was that of a troop of impressive Indri, which represented the very rarely



seen black morph. It was amazing how our local guides managed to blaze a trail through the rainforest and track these ghostly creatures down. We all eventually enjoyed amazing views as they bounced through the canopy and then spent ages hanging from the mossy branches and showing amazing affection towards each other.

Night walks in the forest were productive and we scored with great views of Rainforest Scops Owl, Greater Dwarf Lemur and Brown Mouse Lemur. These walks also yielded Short-horned, Nose-horned, Band-bellied and Domergue's Leaf Chameleons as



Trip Report - RBT Madagascar Comprehensive I 2011

well as *Calumma globifer*, a large, bold, attractive and extremely localized eastern rainforest chameleon.

Anjzorobe provided a great deal of special experiences but it was time to head off to our final destination of the trip, Perinet and Mantadia National Parks. These forest reserves in the east of the country protect reasonably sized tracts of rainforest and harbour some of Madagascar's most highly acclaimed species. Like most rainforest sites, Perinet and Mantadia require a lot of hard work, perseverance and patience but in so doing, offer great reward.



Mantadia National Park, offering more extensive primary forest than Perinet, lies just to the north of the latter park and was our prime focus for the next two days.

We covered a fair amount of ground and were rewarded with some excellent sightings that included a marvellous pair of Short-legged Ground-Roller, gaudy Pitta-like Ground Roller, Blue Coua, Rand's Warbler and finally a stunning pair of immaculate Scaly Ground Roller. A small pond at the forest edge produced Madagascar Grebe, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Ward's Flycatcher, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Spinetail and several more Meller's Duck.



We also spent a full day at Perinet Special Reserve and highlights here included the spectacular Collared Nightjar, elusive Nuthatch Vanga, dazzling Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher and handsome Madagascar Ibis in the late afternoon – awesome!

Mammals are an attractive feature of these forests and we enjoyed sightings of some of Madagascar's most prized lemurs. Indri with its deafening howls enthralled us and the rare Diademed Sifaka stole our hearts,

whilst Eastern Grey Bamboo, Common Brown Lemur and Eastern Avahi provided us with ample excitement.

Night walks in the area yielded some great species too and we were thrilled to find Madagascar Owl, Furry-eared Dwarf and Goodman's Mouse Lemurs, Madagascar Tree Boa, Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko, Short-horned and Nose-horned Chameleons as well as the large, bright green Parson's Chameleon.

Alas, it was time to make our way back to Antananarivo after an enthralling three weeks on the "eighth continent". Thank you to everyone for making this yet another highly successful and extremely enjoyable Rockjumper birding tour to Madagascar. We hope to see you all again soon!

Photo Credits (in order of appearance): Schlegel's Asity, Cuckoo Roller, Malagasy Pond Heron, Sickle-billed Vanga, Blue Vanga, Madagascar Buttonquail, Coquerel's Sifaka, Allen's Gallinule, Madagascar Fish Eagle, Bernier's Teal, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Pitta-like Ground Roller, *Mantella baroni*, Banded Kestrel, Red-tailed Tropicbird, Crab-plover, Subdesert Mesite, Long-tailed Ground Roller, Spiny Forest Scenery, Verreaux's Sifaka, Ring-tailed Lemur, Torotoroka Scops Owl, White-footed Sportive Lemur, Indri, Parson's Chameleon, Scaly Ground Roller, Collared Nightjar, Diademed Sifaka and Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher. All photographs by Glen Valentine on Rockjumper's Madagascar trips.



Annotated Checklists of Birds, Mammals and “Herps”

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS (181 species recorded including 2 heard only)

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the bird species list follows that of IOC (International Ornithological congress), Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2011; *Birds of the World: Recommended English Names*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press (version 3.0). Names in square brackets represent names given by IOC and omitted by Clements whereas names in round brackets represent names given by Clements and omitted by IOC. Names without square or round brackets represent the name given by both IOC and Clements. A notes section can be found where notably distinctive subspecies or races are concerned and where splitting or lumping is involved. Insect names were derived from various sources.

Key to abbreviations:

E: an endemic species

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

BE: a breeding endemic species

I: an introduced species

e: an endemic subspecies

ne: a near-endemic subspecies

be: a breeding endemic subspecies

CONSERVATION STATUS

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

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl (I)

Numida meleagris

A single bird was sighted alongside the main road east of Isalo with further sightings at Berenty.

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

Ducks, Geese & Swans *Anatidae*

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Large numbers were recorded at freshwater wetlands throughout the island.

Knob-billed (Comb) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Several individuals were seen at Lake Alarobia.

NOTE: IOC splits Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* into two species: Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* and Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis sylvicola*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*.

African Pygmy Goose

Nettapus auritus

Good scope views were obtained of at least 20 birds at a lake near Mahajanga.

Meller's Duck (E) (En)

Anas melleri

A total of four birds were seen at Anjozorobe with a further two being found in Mantadia NP.

Bernier's Teal (E)(En)

Anas bernieri

The greatest prize of our adventurous trip into the Betsiboka Delta! We wasted no time in finding a pair of these rare and extremely localized birds perched up in the mangroves.

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

Probably the commonest duck and widespread in freshwater wetlands across the island.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

A few birds were seen at a wetland south of Ifaty.



Grebes *Podicipedidae*

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

A few birds were seen on a pan near Mahajanga with large numbers being found on the wetlands south of Ifaty.

NOTE: IOC splits Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis into two species: Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis and Tricolored Grebe Tachybaptus tricolor, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

A total of two adults and three chicks were encountered at a small pond 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

We enjoyed intimate encounters with these most elegant birds on the island of Nosy Ve.

Ibises & Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

[Malagasy] Sacred Ibis (NE)

Threskiornis bernieri

Another prize of our speedboat adventure up the Betsiboka Delta, we were lucky to encounter a single sub-adult bird that flew past our boat and then perched up in the mangroves for an extended period.

NOTE: A globally threatened species restricted to largely inaccessible wetlands in western Madagascar and Aldabra Island. IOC splits African Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopicus into two species: African Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopicus & Malagasy Sacred Ibis Threskiornis bernieri, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopicus.

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

Good numbers were found at Lac Ravelobe and in the rice paddies around Amboromalandy near Ampijoroa.

Madagascar Ibis (E) (NT)

Lophotibis cristata

After an extensive search in the Perinet area we finally located this scarce endemic and managed to obtain excellent views as it sat for ages in a tall tree at the forest edge.

Bitterns & Herons *Ardeidae*

Little Bittern

Ixobrychus minutus

A singleton flew up from a patch of reeds while birding a wetland south of Ifaty offering brief views before it landed in dense vegetation after a few meters.

Black-crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Several birds were seen at Lake Alarobia and in the Berenty area.

Striated Heron

Butorides striatus

Small numbers were seen at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout.

Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

Widespread and common in a variety of wetland habitats across the island, from rice paddies to tidal mudflats.

Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V)

Ardeola idae

A few adults in immaculate breeding plumage were seen at Lake Alarobia in Tana and at a small wetland near Mahajanga.

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

[Western] Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Common throughout and recorded daily in open and semi-open habitats.



Trip Report - RBT Madagascar Comprehensive I 2011

NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Western Cattle Egret B. ibis as Cattle Egret B. ibis.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

A handful of birds were encountered in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

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

Wonderful views were had of this massive, endemic heron at Lake Ravelobe.

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

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

A few individuals were seen at Lake Ravelobe and surrounding wetlands with another sighting en route to Mantadia NP.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Small numbers were recorded at wetlands throughout the country.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

Commonly encountered throughout the island with especially good numbers in the Lake Alarobia and Lake Ravelobe areas.

Dimorphic (Western Reef) Egret (NE) *Egretta dimorpha*

A widespread and common species throughout Madagascar with all three colour morphs being encountered.

NOTE: IOC splits Western Reef Heron Egretta gularis into two species: Western Reef Heron Egretta gularis and Dimorphic Egret Egretta dimorpha, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Western Reef-Heron Egretta gularis.

Hamerkop *Scopidae*

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Small numbers of these unique, stork-like birds were encountered in roadside rice paddies between Fort Dauphin and Berenty and between Tana and Anjozorobe.

Anhingas *Anhingidae*

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

An uncommon species in Madagascar, which was only recorded on Lake Ravelobe, Ampijoroa.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles *Accipitridae*

Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk *Aviceda madagascariensis*

This extremely scarce and endemic forest raptor was scoped at length at its nest at Berenty.

Yellow-billed (Black) Kite *Milvus aegyptius*

This is a common and conspicuous raptor of open habitats, particularly in the west.

NOTE: IOC splits the above species into two separate species; Black Kite M. migrans and Yellow-billed Kite M. aegyptius whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Black Kite M. migrans.

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

Brilliant, close views of a pair of these critically endangered, endemic eagles was had at the edge of Lake Ravelobe, Ampijoroa.

NOTE: This is one of the world's rarest raptors, with a total global population of no more than 120 birds.

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E) *Polyboroides radiatus*

Individuals were seen at three separate sites: Ampijoroa, Zombitse and Anjozorobe.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (Goshawk) (NE) *Accipiter francesii*

A fabulous pair was first seen at extremely close range at Ampijoroa with further sightings at Zombitse, Berenty and Perinet.

Madagascar Buzzard (E) *Buteo brachypterus*

Common and widespread, with small numbers recorded from almost all wooded sites.



Falcons *Falconidae*

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

A very common endemic occurring in open and semi-open habitats throughout the island. This raptor was seen on nearly every day of the trip.

Banded Kestrel (E) *Falco zoniventris*

Excellent views were had of this scarce, endemic raptor at Zombitse.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

This species was seen hunting in the late afternoon around the town of Fort Dauphin.

Mesites *Mesitornithidae*

White-breasted Mesite (E) (V) *Mesitornis variegata*

Ampijoroa produced several great sightings of these wonderful endemic beauties. Their distinctive, piercing duet was heard on several occasions in the forest.

Brown Mesite (E) (V) *Mesitornis unicolor*

Unbeatable, close views were enjoyed of this scarce, localized and richly-coloured endemics at Ranomafana NP.

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

An early morning start enabled us to locate this elusive species in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty. We all enjoyed exceptional scope views of a striking male.

Flufftails *Sarothruridae*

Madagascar Flufftail (E) *Sarothrura insularis*

A species which is always particularly difficult to see. Its characteristic call was heard on many occasions and we finally managed to coax a gorgeous male into view at Anjozorobe.

Rails, Crakes & Coots *Rallidae*

Madagascar Wood Rail (E) *Canirallus kiolooides*

This can be a devilishly hard bird to see! We had a reasonable sighting of this rallid at Anjozorobe.

Madagascar Rail (E) *Rallus madagascariensis*

We had fantastic views of this shy species at Anjozorobe.

White-throated Rail (NE) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

This large, striking rail was first seen during our boat trip on Lake Ravelobe. We later had several sightings in the Perinet/Mantadia 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.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

Two birds were seen in the afternoon at a wetland south of Ifaty.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

Phenomenal views were had of this species during our afternoon boat trip around Lake Ravelobe.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Small numbers were encountered at several wetland sites with particularly large numbers at Lake Alarobia.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Several birds were seen at a wetland south of Ifaty.



Buttonquails *Turnicidae*

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

This can often be a tricky bird to find and see well but we were especially lucky this trip as we kept finding this species at several different sites. Our first sighting was of a beautiful female at Ampijoroa.

Crab-plover *Dromadidae*

Crab-plover

Dromas ardeola

Outstanding scope views were had of two adults and a juvenile at the island of Nosy Ve. A very sought after bird indeed and Madagascar remains one of the best places to see this unique species.

Stilts, Avocets *Recurvirostridae*

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Fair numbers were seen in the Betsiboka Delta with further sightings on the south western coastline.

Plovers *Charadriidae*

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Several birds were seen on the mudflats near Ifaty.

Common Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

We found several on mudflats throughout the Ifaty area.

Madagascar Plover (E)(NT)

Charadrius thoracicus

This scarce, localized and boldly-patterned endemic wader was seen well near Ifaty.

Kittlitz's Plover

Charadrius pecuarius

Seen near Mahajanga and in the south around Ifaty where large numbers were observed.

Three-banded Plover

Charadrius tricollaris

This striking wader was seen near Mahajanga and at various small pans in the Ifaty area.

White-fronted Plover

Charadrius marginatus

This delicately beautiful wader was seen just south of Ifaty and on Nosy Ve Island.

Lesser Sand Plover

Charadrius mongolus

A single bird was found at fairly close range on the mudflats near Ifaty.

Jacanas *Jacanidae*

Madagascar Jacana (E)

Actophilornis albinucha

Excellent views were had of three birds on Lake Ravelobe.

Snipes & Sandpipers *Scolopacidae*

Madagascar Snipe (E)(NT)

Gallinago macrodactyla

This species is becoming rare and extremely local on the island due to habitat destruction. We had flight views of a single bird at a large marsh at Anjozorobe.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

This species was fairly common on tidal flats in the Betsiboka Delta and around Tulear and Ifaty.

Marsh Sandpiper

Tringa stagnatilis

A scarce visitor to Madagascar, we saw two birds on the mudflats south of Ifaty.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

This common wader was regularly seen at the wetlands in the Tulear and Ifaty area.

Terek Sandpiper

Tringa cinerea

A few birds were encountered in the Betsiboka Delta and on the mudflats south of Ifaty.



Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

Small numbers were seen in freshwater and brackish wetland habitats throughout our tour.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Seen south of Ifaty and on the island of Nosy Ve where they showed well at close range.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

A few birds were found on mudflats south of Ifaty.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

The commonest Calidrid, seen on the tidal flats in the Betsiboka Delta and in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

Pratincoles Glareolidae

Madagascar Pratincole (BE)

Glareola ocularis

We were fortunate to find a single bird on a fairly large, boulder-strewn river en route from Anjozorobe to Perinet. Good scope views were obtained!

Gulls & Terns Laridae

Greater (Great) Crested Tern

Sterna bergii

A common and widespread species that was recorded in the Betsiboka Delta, around Nosy Ve and off Fort Dauphin.

Lesser Crested Tern

Sterna bengalensis

Good scope views were had of a single bird on a sandspit off the Island of Nosy Ve.

Little/Saunders's Tern

Sternula albifrons/saundersi

A single bird was seen in flight hunting off Nosy Ve Island. Unfortunately Little and Saunders's Terns are impossible to distinguish from each other in the field unless in breeding plumage.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

An extremely widespread species! Several birds were seen around Nosy Ve.

Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybrida

A few birds were encountered at a brackish wetland south of Ifaty.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

A flock of nine of these wonderful birds was seen extremely well at a small pan in the Tulear area. We also saw a single bird flying over the camp at Berenty in the morning.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Common (Rock) Pigeon (I)

Columba livia

Widespread in urban areas.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NEe)

Columba picturata

This common endemic was seen on most days of the trip.

Namaqua Dove

Oena capensis

Widespread and common in drier areas.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)

Treron australis

This woodland species was seen in small numbers at Ampijoroa and Berenty.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)

Alectroenas madagascariensis

This beautiful pigeon is fairly common in eastern rainforest where we had especially good views in Mantadia National Park. We also saw a few distant birds at Anjozorobe and at Perinet.



Parrots *Psittacidae*

Grey-headed Lovebird (E)

Agapornis canus

This tiny parrot was first found in the campsite at Ampijoroa and later seen again in fair numbers throughout the south of the island.

[Greater] Vasa Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis vasa

A much scarcer bird than Lesser Vasa Parrot! We first encountered this species in the camp at Ampijoroa and later had a few birds in Mantadia NP and near Perinet.

Lesser Vasa (Black) Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis nigra

A widespread and common bird and exceedingly vocal, this species was regularly recorded in good numbers throughout our trip.

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

Malagasy (Madagascar) Coucal (NEe)

Centropus toulou

Common, widespread and recorded in small numbers virtually daily during our tour.

Crested Coua (E)

Coua cristata

This species was first recorded at Ampijoroa and we continued to enjoy views throughout the drier regions of the country.

Verreaux's Coua (E) (NT)

Coua verreauxi

A secretive and exceedingly localized species that was seen in the dry, coral rag scrub near La Table.

Blue Coua (E)

Coua caerulea

Fairly common in the eastern forests. Strangely turaco-like and one of the world's great "Blue Birds"!

Red-capped Coua (E)

Coua ruficeps

We enjoyed great views of several confiding birds at Ampijoroa as well as at Ifaty and near Tulear. The birds seen at Ampijoroa refer to the red-capped race while the birds seen in the south of the island refer to the green-capped race (*olivaceiceps*) that is sometimes split as a separate species, Green-capped Coua.

NOTE: The southern, greenish-capped subspecies (olivaceiceps) of Red-capped Coua is considered to be a full species in Sinclair I. and Langrande O. Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands however most other authorities consider this form to be a subspecies of Red-capped Coua.

Red-fronted Coua (E)

Coua reynaudii

This forest-dwelling endemic was first seen at Ranomafana with further views later on at Anjozorobe.

Coquerel's Coua (E)

Coua coquereli

Commonly heard and seen fairly regularly too at Ampijoroa. This species was also heard at Zombitse.

Running Coua (E)

Coua cursor

This species was found on a nest in the spiny forest at Ifaty and later on we located a single bird in the spiny forest at Berenty.

Giant Coua (E)

Coua gigas

Common at Berenty where we had numerous sightings of these amazingly relaxed birds. This species was also heard at Zombitse Forest.

Red-breasted Coua (E)

Coua serriana

This is an extremely tough bird to see outside the Masoala Peninsula. We heard it in the distance on a few occasions in the Perinet/Mantadia area.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)

Cuculus rochii

Very common and one of the dominant sounds in wooded and semi-wooded habitats throughout but difficult to see. We did however have some good sightings during the trip with an especially memorable sighting of a bird perched up in great afternoon light, calling in the spiny forest at Berenty.



Barn Owls *Tytonidae*

[Western] Barn Owl

Tyto alba

A single bird was seen at dusk at Berenty.

*NOTE: IOC splits Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* into three species: Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto delicatula* and Andaman Masked Owl *Tyto deroepstorffi*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*.*

Owls *Strigidae*

Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)

Otus madagascariensis

This recently split species of Scops Owl (pronounced “Toorotoorook”, an onomatopoeic name) was seen extremely well at Ampijoroa and at Berenty.

Rainforest (Malagasy) Scops Owl (NE)

Otus rutilus

We had superb views of a bird on a night walk at Anjozorobe with further views the following day of a bird on the nest.

White-browed [Hawk-] Owl (E)

Ninox superciliaris

Crippling views were had of this beauty at Zombitse and Berenty Reserves.

Madagascar (Long-eared) Owl (E)

Asio madagascariensis

We were amazingly lucky to find to fairly large, fluffy white immature birds one evening near Perinet.

Nightjars *Caprimulgidae*

Madagascar Nightjar (NE)

Caprimulgus madagascariensis

This common nightjar was seen on several occasions in the south of the island. Our first sighting was in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Collared Nightjar (E)

Caprimulgus enarratus

We enjoyed two fabulous encounters with this beautifully-patterned nightjar in the Perinet area: one on a nest in a treefern and another with two chicks on the ground in the orchid garden. No one would ever see this gorgeous endemic were it not for the local guides!

Swifts *Apodidae*

Madagascar (Malagasy) Spinetail (NE)

Zoonavena grandidieri

A handful were seen hunting above the rainforest at Mantadia NP.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus gracilis

Common in suitable palm habitat throughout the island.

Malagasy Black (Madagascar) Swift (NE)

Apus balstoni

We had several sightings of these large swifts throughout the trip.

Little Swift

Apus affinis

A single bird was seen at Tana Airport on our way to boarding the flight to Mahajanga.

Cuckoo-Roller *Leptosomidae*

Cuckoo Roller (NE)

Leptosomus discolor

This spectacular and bizarre endemic was seen at several forest sites, the first being Ampijoroa, where excellent flight and perched views were obtained. What a great endemic!

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

Rollers *Coraciidae*



Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

A widespread, common and gaudy breeding migrant from the African mainland, which we first observed at close proximity at Ampijoroa and later at most forest sites throughout the island.

Ground-Rollers *Brachypteraciidae*

Short-legged Ground Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias leptosomus

Often the most difficult of the ground-rollers to find, we were treated to absolutely sensational views of a pair in Mantadia NP.

Scaly Ground Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias squamigera

Another elusive and retiring species. We had great views of a pair in Mantadia NP. This species was formerly considered to be restricted to the forests of the Masoala Peninsula until it was discovered in Mantadia NP a few years ago!

Pitta-like Ground Roller (E)

Atelornis pittoides

We were treated to excellent views of this colourful and highly sought-after endemic at Ranomafana NP and in Mantadia NP.

Rufous-headed Ground Roller (E) (NT)

Atelornis crossleyi

We put in a lot of work to find this elusive endemic at Ranomafana and were finally rewarded with outstanding views after only brief views earlier in the morning.

Long-tailed Ground Roller (E) (V)

Uratelornis chimaera

A pair and a sub-adult bird were seen extremely well in the spiny forest at Ifaty. This is undoubtedly one of the star birds of the spiny forest!

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)

Ispidina madagascariensis

After much effort we were finally treated to amazing views of this brilliantly-coloured species near Perinet Special Reserve.

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE)

Alcedo vintsioides

Fairly common at freshwater and marine wetlands throughout.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

This common but extremely striking bee-eater was seen on most days of the trip.

Hoopoes *Upupidae*

Madagascar Hoopoe (E)

Upupa marginalis

We first found this charismatic species at Ampijoroa and thereafter had regular sightings throughout the south of the island.

Broadbills *Eurylaimidae*

Velvet Asity (E)

Philepitta castanea

Good views were had of a stunning male in the deep forest understory on our first morning in Ranomafana NP.

Schlegel's Asity (E) (NT)

Philepitta schlegeli

Another extremely attractive and highly localized forest endemic that was seen exceptionally well at Ampijoroa. Two separate pairs were encountered and our last sighting was particularly close and memorable!



[Common] Sunbird-Asity (E)

Neodrepanis coruscans

Our first sighting was of a female that was seen briefly in Ranomafana NP. Thereafter we encountered a further two females and a brilliant male at Anjozorobe.

Yellow-bellied [Sunbird-]Asity (E) (En)

Neodrepanis hypoxanthus

A sub-adult male and female of this elusive, high-altitude endemic were seen remarkably well in Ranomafana NP.

Vangas Vangidae

Red-tailed Vanga (E)

Calicalicus madagascariensis

Excellent views were had of a pair in the spiny forest at Ifaty. We also encountered this species at Perinet.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)

Calicalicus rufocarpalis

We were thrilled to find this “coral rag” scrub endemic very soon after entering its habitat near La Table. This is one of Madagascar’s most localized endemics and was only discovered very recently.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

Several sightings were had of this large, pied vanga at Ampijoroa Forest Station.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)

Xenopirostris xenopirostris

A male showed well but rather briefly in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) (En)

Xenopirostris damii

We had saturation views of this extremely localized and uncommon species at Ampijoroa after a concerted search.

Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)

Xenopirostris polleni

A scarce and local denizen of higher-altitude eastern rainforests, we saw a pair that preferred to stick to the canopy of the forest.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)

Falcula palliata

One of Madagascar’s great birds and wonderfully common in the dry west and south of the country. Particularly common and conspicuous at Ampijoroa, where we saw our first individuals.

White-headed Vanga (E)

Artamella viridis

Seen at several of the forest sites with our first views at Ampijoroa.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

The commonest vanga, occurring in habitats ranging from pristine rainforest to degraded scrub. First seen at Ampijoroa, where observed daily.

Blue Vanga (NE)

Cyanolanius madagascarensis

We encountered small numbers at various scattered localities with our first sighting at Ampijoroa.

Another one of the world’s great “Blue Birds”!

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

This robust and striking bird was enjoyed in the forest at Ampijoroa and was also heard on one occasion at Ranomafana.

Tylas Vanga (E)

Tylas eduardi

A fairly common member of mixed species flocks in the eastern rainforest. We observed them at Ranomafana and in the Mantadia/Perinet area.

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

Nuthatch Vanga

Hypositta corallirostris

This scarce and often rather elusive vanga proved difficult this trip and we eventually located a single immature bird feeding diagnostically but rather unobtrusively on a nearby tree near Perinet Special Reserve.



Dark Newtonia (E)

Newtonia amphichroa

A rather dull and non-descript endemic that was heard and seen on a few occasions in Ranomafana NP and at Anjozorobe.

Common Newtonia (E)

Newtonia brunneicauda

Common and widespread in wooded and semi-wooded habitat throughout our tour.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)

Newtonia archboldi

This species is best noted for its distinctive call and was seen well and on a few occasions in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)

Pseudobias wardi

This rather scarce rainforest endemic was seen adjacent to an open forested pond in Mantadia NP and near Perinet Special Reserve.

Crossley's Vanga (Babbler) (E)

Mystacornis crossleyi

This exceptionally attractive ground-dwelling vanga almost took our breath away when a rather confiding male was located and showed extremely well at Anjozorobe. We also heard this species in Ranomafana NP.

Cuckooshrikes *Campephagedae*

Madagascar (Ashy) Cuckooshrike (NE)

Coracina cinerea

This species was regularly encountered in wooded habitat throughout the trip.

Drongos *Dicruridae*

Crested Drongo (NE)

Dicrurus forficatus

A common, noisy and highly conspicuous species of wooded habitat throughout the country.

Monarchs *Monarchidae*

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE)

Terpsiphone mutata

A flashy and extremely attractive species that is widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. We enjoyed sightings on most days of the trip with both rufous and white morphs being noted.

Crows & Jays *Corvidae*

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Common and widespread in open habitats throughout the island.

Larks *Alaudidae*

Madagascar Lark (E)

Mirafra hova

Extremely common in all dry country and open habitats.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

Malagasy (Madagascar) Bulbul (NE)

Hypsipetes madagascariensis

Common and ubiquitous, with daily sightings in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats.

Swallows & Martins *Hirundinidae*

Mascarene Martin (NE)

Phedina borbonica

Madagascar's commonest hirundine and a regional breeding endemic. Recorded at almost all sites, on most days of the tour.



Brown-throated (Plain) Martin

Riparia paludicola

A single bird was seen by some of the group at a lunchtime stop en route from Tana to Ranomafana.

NOTE: IOC splits Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* into two species: Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* and Grey-throated Martin *Riparia chinensis*, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola*.

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

A few of these migrants (extremely scarce in Madagascar however!) were noted during the drive from Isalo to Tulear.

Reed Warblers & Allies *Acrocephalidae*

Malagasy (Madagascar) Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*

Very common in dense cover of any kind in the east, where several were recorded daily. Our first views however were of a single bird that showed rather well at Lake Alarobia on our first afternoon.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*

We saw this dry-country endemic in the *euphorbia* scrub at our lunch stop at Anakao opposite Nosy Ve Island and later heard many in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

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

Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E) *Acrocephalus newtoni*

A common species of wetland habitat throughout the country, ranging from highland marshes in the east to mangroves in the west. We saw this species on several days of the trip with our first sighting at Lake Alarobia.

Grassbirds & Allies *Megaluridae*

Grey Emutail (E) *Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

Two of these highly secretive birds were seen at a large marsh at Anjozorobe.

Brown Emutail (E) *Dromaeocercus brunneus*

Unfortunately, this “avian rodent” refused to show itself this time and was only heard on a few occasions in Ranomafana NP and at Anjozorobe!

Malagasy Warblers *Bernieridae*

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*

This rather shy and secretive endemic of the eastern rainforest understorey was first seen at Ranomafana and later seen much better at Anjozorobe.

Long-billed Berniera (Greenbul) (E) *Phyllastrephus madagascariensis*

This widespread endemic was first encountered at Ampijoroa in the west with further regular sightings in the eastern rainforest.

Cryptic Warbler (E) *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

This fairly recently described species was seen well at Ranomafana NP when we stopped for a final look for Madagascar Pratincole at the river on our way to Isalo.

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

An uncommon and elusive endemic of eastern forests. A pair was seen at Ranomafana NP and another group was heard during our time at Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

This subtly attractive and extremely local spiny forest endemic was eventually seen tremendously after an initial run-around in the spiny forest at Ifaty. What a crazy call!

Spectacled Tetraka (E) *Phyllastrephus zosterops*



Restricted to eastern forests, where it was commonly seen.

Appert's Tetraka (E) (V) *Phyllastrephus apperti*

We enjoyed superb encounters with this attractive and confiding species in Zombitse NP. A globally threatened bird that is restricted to two forests in south west Madagascar.

Grey-crowned Tetraka (E) (NT) *Phyllastrephus cinereiceps*

A low-density, uncommon bird of eastern rainforest that was seen well in a mixed tetraka flock at Anjozorobe. This species was also seen briefly on two occasions in Ranomafana NP.

Madagascar Yellow-brow (Yellow-browed Oxylabes) (E) (NT) *Crossleyia xanthophrys*

A scarce, localized and devilishly skulking rainforest endemic! Some of the group managed to obtain good but brief views of a single bird at Anjozorobe.

NOTE: Apart from its ground-loving habits, this species has little in common with the White-throated Oxylabes and is better retained in its own genus, with its own English name.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

This species was scoped on its calling perch high up in the canopy at Mantadia NP.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Common Jery (E) *Neomixis tenella*

This ubiquitous endemic was recorded on most days of the tour.

Green Jery (E) *Neomixis viridis*

After hearing this species at Ranomafana we finally obtained good views of a single bird at Anjozorobe and saw a few more at Mantadia NP.

Stripe-throated Jery (E) *Neomixis striatigula*

This species's scratchy call is a common background noise in the spiny forest and the rainforests. We had regular sightings at Ranomafana and Ifaty.

Madagascar Cisticola (NE) *Cisticola cherinus*

Commonly seen in open habitats throughout the island.

White-eyes Zosteropidae

Madagascar White-eye (NE) *Zosterops maderaspatana*

Good numbers were encountered in the east but occurring throughout the island.

Starlings Sturnidae

Common Myna (I) *Acridotheres tristis tristis*

A common but introduced species that was unfortunately seen nearly every day of the trip.

Madagascar Starling (E) *Hartlaubius aurata*

A single bird was seen in the open at the main entrance to Ranomafana NP with further sightings at Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E) *Copsychus albospecularis*

This species was seen throughout the tour almost daily and is a rather bold and confiding endemic.

[Madagascar] Stonechat *Saxicola axillaries*

Common in open habitats in the highlands, where several were seen daily. This species was particularly common at Anjozorobe.

NOTE: IOC splits African Stonechat Saxicola torquatus into five species: European Stonechat Saxicola rubicola, Siberian Stonechat Saxicola maurus, African Stonechat Saxicola torquatus, Stejneger's Stonechat Saxicola stejnegeri & Madagascar Stonechat Saxicola sibilla, whereas Clements only recognizes one species, African Stonechat Saxicola torquatus.



Littoral Rock Thrush (E) *Monticola imerinus*

An attractive male was seen in dry *euphorbia* scrub behind Anakao.

Forest Rock Thrush (E) *Monticola sharpei*

We enjoyed good views of a female on a nest at Ranomafana NP. A lovely male was later found while hiking up Vohiparara Ridge in Ranomafana NP and further views were had of several birds around our accommodation in the Isalo area. Note that if this species is one day split up into different species we saw Forest Rock Thrush *Monticola sharpei* at Ranomafana and Benson's Rock-Thrush *Monticola bensoni* at Isalo.

NOTE: Clements splits Forest Rock Thrush Monticola sharpei into three species: Forest Rock Thrush Monticola sharpei, Amber Mountain Rock-Thrush Monticola erythronota & Benson's Rock-Thrush Monticola bensoni, whereas IOC only recognizes one species, Forest Rock Thrush Monticola sharpei.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird (NE) *Nectarinia souimanga*

By far the more common of Madagascar's sunbird species, occurring in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. This species was seen on every single day of the tour.

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

A very handsome and widespread but uncommon species. Individuals were encountered at scattered sites, namely: Ampijoroa, Ranomafana and Berenty.

Weavers Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver (E) *Ploceus nelicourvi*

A striking bird of the eastern rainforest areas, where small numbers were seen daily.

Sakalava Weaver (E) *Ploceus sakalava*

This species was commonly seen in the dry south of Madagascar.

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

Common, ubiquitous and good numbers recorded almost daily with several bright red males seen at Ifaty.

Forest Fody (E) *Foudia omissa*

A scarce and usually tough endemic to find, we had wonderful views of several stunning males in full breeding plumage in Ranomafana NP.

Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E) *Lonchura nana*

Several flocks were encountered at scattered localities throughout the tour.

Wagtails Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail (E) *Motacilla flaviventris*

Common in the east and central plateau, where small numbers were seen regularly.

ANNOTATED LIST OF MAMMALS (34 Species recorded including 1 heard only)

Names and taxonomical order of the mammal species list follows that of Garbutt, N. (1999) Mammals of Madagascar with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier et al (2006) Lemurs of Madagascar.

Rorquals Balaenopteridae



Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

Two of these huge mammals were seen off the coast at Fort Dauphin during our late afternoon vigil there.

Old World Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae*

Madagascar Flying Fox

Pteropus rufus

We enjoyed watching these fascinating creatures at their day roost in the gallery woodland at Berenty.

Tomb Bats *Emballonuridae*

Mauritian Tomb Bat

Taphozous mauritanus

Close-up views were had at a day roost at Ampijoroa.

Trident Bats *Hipposideridae*

Major's Bentwing

This species was found at its roost in a small cave in Ranomafana NP.

Tenrecs and Otter Shrews *Tenrecidae*

Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Hemicentetes semispinosus

We were treated to amazingly close views of this bizarre and attractive species one afternoon in Ranomafana NP.

Old World Rats and Mice *Muridae*

Eastern Red Forest Rat

Nesomys rufus

This ground-dwelling species was seen in Ranomafana and Mantadia National Parks.

Black Rat

Rattus rattus

One was seen at Lake Alarobia.

Mongoose *Herpestidae*

Ring-tailed Mongoose

Viverricula elegans

This usually difficult species was seen extremely well in Ranomafana NP.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs *Cheirogaleidae*

Grey Mouse Lemur

Microcebus murinus

Several of these tiny lemurs were seen on our night walks at Ampijoroa.

Brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus rufus

We enjoyed wonderful views of this species in the early evening at Ranomafana as well as several individuals on night walks at Anjozorobe.

Grey-brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus griseorufus

This species was encountered on our spiny forest night walk at Berenty and we also saw a few at their day-time roosts.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur

Microcebus lehilahytsara

Two were seen on a night walk in the Perinet area.

Greater Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus major

Good views were had of a singleton on the night walk at Anjozorobe.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus crossleyi



We found two of these cute lemurs on a night walk in the Perinet area.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*

Several were encountered on our second night walk at Ampijoroa. This species only becomes active in the warmer, wetter summer months as it hibernates in winter.

Sportive Lemurs *Megaladapidae*

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*

We enjoyed individuals on the day roost and on night walks at Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

This dry-country species was seen on many day roosts as well as on night walks at Berenty and their noisy calls were heard in the evening around the accommodation there.

Petter's Sportive Lemur

This localized and recently described species was seen on a day roost on consecutive days in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

"True" Lemurs *Lemuridae*

Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur griseus griseus*

These endearing lemurs were seen on several occasions in the eastern rainforest at Perinet and Mantadia National Parks.

Golden Bamboo-Lemur *Hapalemur aureus*

A small group of these extremely localized lemurs were seen very well in Ranomafana NP.

Greater Bamboo-Lemur *Hapalemur simus*

We were exceptionally lucky to find a group of these localized and rare lemurs in Ranomafana NP. This is one of the world's rarest primates and the total known world population is only around 100 individuals!

Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta*

The quintessential Malagasy mammal! We enjoyed prolonged encounters with numerous groups of these delightful animals at Berenty.

Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*

Great views were had of these rare, localized and crepuscular lemurs on consecutive days at Ampijoroa.

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*

A troop of these wonderful lemurs were found at Ranomafana NP.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These playful lemurs were seen at Ampijoroa, Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

Several troops were encountered at Ranomafana NP with large numbers being seen later on at Berenty (where they have been introduced).

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

Unfortunately this rare, primary forest lemur was only heard at Ranomafana and Mantadia National Parks.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri *Indriidae*

Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi laniger*

Two of these nocturnal lemurs were seen on the day roost in Perinet Special Reserve.

Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi occidentalis*



This species was found on day roosts on two consecutive days at Ampijoroa.

Diademed Sifaka

Propithecus diadema diadema

We had a very memorable sighting of a troop of four of these magnificent creatures in Perinet Special Reserve. Widely considered to be Madagascar's most beautiful primate, this is also the largest of the lemurs, with a number of specimens heavier than the largest Indri on record (Mittermeier et al 1994).

Milne-Edward's Sifaka

Propithecus diadema edwardsi

We were fortunate to encounter several troops at Ranomafana NP. This handsome and striking lemur is extremely localized and is only readily seen at Ranomafana where it is scarce.

Verreaux's Sifaka

Propithecus verreauxi verreauxi

This magnificent primate, with its soulful expressions and comical, bipedal locomotion, is undoubtedly one of the mammalian highlights of Madagascar. It is common in Berenty, where seen daily.

Coquerel's Sifaka

Propithecus verreauxi coquereli

Common at Ampijoroa, where recorded daily, even within the confines of the camp.

Indri

Indri indri

We had extremely memorable experiences with this incredible lemur! Our first was at Anjozorobe (which represents the very rarely seen Black Indri) and our second at Perinet Special Reserve. The territorial calls of this lemur is one of the world's great wildlife sounds and it is often considered the largest extant lemur species (but see Diademed Sifaka, above),

ANNOTATED LIST OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS (68 Species seen)

Names and taxonomical order of the reptiles and amphibians list follows A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar by F. Glaw and M. Vences.

Amphibians

Madagascar Leaf-litter Frog

Aglyptodactylus madagascariensis

Madagascar Tree Frog

Boophis madagascariensis

Boophis albilabris

Boophis goudoti

Dark-sided Leaf Frog

Mantidactylus opiparus

Mournful Leaf Frog

Mantidactylus lugubris

Mantidactylus melanopleura

Mantidactylus aerumnalis

Mantidactylus majori

Anodonthyla mora mora

Guibemantis pulcher

Gephyromantis tschenki

Plethodontohyla inguinalis

Mantella baroni

Mascarene Grass Frog

Ptychadena mascareniensis

Scaphiophryne marmorata

Reptiles

Land Tortoises Testudinidae

Spider Tortoise

Pyxis arachnoides



Crocodiles *Crocodylidae*

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*

Chameleons *Chamaeleonidae*

Domergue's Leaf Chameleon	<i>Brookesia thieli</i>
Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>
Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>
Band-bellied Chameleon	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>
Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii</i>
Oshaughnessy's Chameleon	<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>
Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>
	<i>Calumma globifer</i>
Tusked Chameleon	<i>Furcifer balteatus</i>
Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>
Warty Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>
Side-striped Chameleon	<i>Furcifer lateralis</i>
	<i>Furcifer antimena</i>

Iguanas *Iguanidae*

Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chalarodon madagascariensis</i>
Cuvier's Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cuvieri</i>
Double-banded Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cyclurus</i>
Four-striped Iguanid	<i>Oplurus quadrimaculatus</i>

Geckos *Gekkonidae*

Plain Big-headed Gecko	<i>Paroedura bastardi</i>
Painted Big-headed Gecko	<i>Paroedura pictus</i>
Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>
	<i>Uroplatus sameti</i>
Sakalava Gecko	<i>Homopholis sakalava</i>
Mercator Tropical House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>
Southern Bark Gecko	<i>Lygodactylus tuberosus</i>
	<i>Lygodactylus sp.</i>
Madagascar Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma madagascariensis</i>
Brown Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>
Lineated Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata</i>
Four-spotted Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>
Standing's Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>
	<i>Geckolepus typica</i>
Fish-scaled Gecko	<i>Geckolepus maculata</i>
	<i>Blaseodactylus antongilensis</i>
	<i>Blaseodactylus sakalava</i>

Plated Lizards *Gerrhosauridae*

Zonosaurus laticaudatus



Madagascar Plated Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus ornatus</i>
Lesser Plated Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus madagascariensis</i>
Gravenhorst's Skink	<i>Tracheloptychus madagascariensis</i>
	<i>Mabuya gravenhorstii</i>
	<i>Trachylepis boetgeri</i>

Boas boidae

Madagascar Tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>
Madagascar Ground Boa	<i>Acrantophis madagascariensis</i>

Typical Snakes Colubridae

Madagascar Spotted Snake	<i>Madagascarophis colubrinus</i>
Giant Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i>
Lesser Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leioheterodon modestus</i>
Black-and-White Striped Snake	<i>Liopholidophis lateralis</i>
	<i>Liopholidophis doliocercus</i>
Mahafaly Sand Snake	<i>Mimophis mahfalensis</i>
	<i>Ithycyphus oursi</i>
	<i>Typhlops arenarius</i>

Notable Insects and other Invertebrates

As if this staggering diversity of life forms was not enough, we also encountered a bewildering variety of invertebrates that ranged from the bizarre Giraffe-necked Weevil *Trachelophorus giraffa* to the immense super-homes of Golden Orb-web Spiders *Nephila madagascariensis*. Other notable "creepy-crawlies" included Giant Red Millipedes *Sphaerotherium sp.*, Green Pill Millipedes, Flatid Leaf Bugs, brightly-coloured Shield Bugs, over-sized Madagascar Hissing Cockroach, and of course, numerous spectacular moths and butterflies.

Rockjumper Birding Tours CC
Worldwide Birding Adventures
Registration number 2001/059480/23
PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa
Tel: +27 33 394 0225
Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225
Tel (USA & Canada) toll free: 1-888-990-5552
Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com
Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com

