



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## MADAGASCAR COMPREHENSIVE I

*30<sup>th</sup> October to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012*



Pitta-like Ground Roller by Markus Lilje

**Trip report compiled by tour leader Markus Lilje**

### **Top ten birds as voted for by participants:**

1. Long-tailed Ground Roller
  2. Schlegel's Asity
  3. Scaly Ground Roller
  4. Crested Ibis
  5. Subdesert Mesite
  6. Madagascar Flufftail
  7. Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher
  8. Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity
  9. Crab-plover
  10. Rainforest Scops Owl/White-breasted Mesite
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## Tour Summary

Despite the unrelenting pressure on Madagascar's natural resources, the island still yields superb birding and wildlife experiences, season after season. After a few years of lower interest in Madagascar as a birding destination due to some political instability, this year it again proved very popular – and with good reason – as a home for many endemic species and families. We enjoyed sightings of all five ground rollers, all four asities, all the couas and possible vangas on our route, plus two of the three Mesites, not to mention a host of other endemic/near endemic species and specials. In addition to this, many of the other unique mammals and reptiles of the island also presented themselves beautifully to the group, affording some fantastic photographic opportunities and experiences.



**Malagasy Pond Herons by Markus Lilje**

Our first birding site was in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, where we would spend a fair amount of time during the tour, due to all flights going through this hub. Lake Alarobia at Tsarasaotra is probably the top birding site in the city and always a great introduction to the island. We visited this location twice during the tour, seeing hundreds of waterfowl, other water-associated species and a number of birds that are fairly common in the surrounding trees and thickets. White-faced Whistling Duck and Red-billed Teal were numerous, while Knob-billed and the endemic Meller's Duck and Hottentot Teal were there in

small numbers. In addition, there were a few Malagasy Pond Herons (one of our big targets), joined by huge numbers of Black and Squacco Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Western Cattle and Dimorphic Egrets, and even a solitary Humblot's Heron. Maybe the biggest surprise, however, was finding a very uncommon Malagasy Marsh Harrier hunting over the reeds, while the reeds themselves produced Malagasy Kingfisher, Madagascar Swamp Warbler and Madagascar Mannikin, with Olive Bee-eater flying overhead.

Our first full day was effectively a driving day as we headed south towards Ranomafana National Park, having a brief stop in Ambositra for lunch. While there is never a lot to see on long drives in Madagascar, there were a few common roadside species as we headed through many hilly areas and drove along rivers with their adjacent rice paddies. During a brief walk after arriving in the Ranomafana area, we had our first vangas, with both Chabert's and Tylas Vangas obliging with good views. Over the next two days we covered fairly large parts of two different areas within this reserve. The rainforests in this region are located on steep hillsides and valleys and we were prepared for some challenging walks in order to find the specials. As we slowly worked through our target list here, we notched up fantastic views of Pitta-like Ground Roller, the often elusive Pollen's Vanga, Grey-crowned Tetraka, Blue Coua, Forest Rock Thrush and incredible male and female Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity (during a lengthy wait at their feeding trees), along with Grey



**Milne-Edward's Sifaka by Markus Lilje**

Emutail in a nearby wetland. Mammals were good here too with Golden Bamboo Lemur seen in the bamboo overhead, its protection being the original reason for the park's proclamation. We had incredible views of the now very rare Greater Bamboo Lemur as well as Red-bellied Lemur, and were given a wonderful leaping and playing display by a family of Milne-Edward's Sifakas, before we got totally drenched by a rainstorm. At night we enjoyed very close views of relaxed Brown Mouse Lemur and even a Tanala Tuft-tailed Rat. Ranomafana is also a great site for herpetologists and we found time to look at several of these gems of the forest, mainly during our night walks. Some of the creatures we found were the gorgeous Grandidier's Leaf Frog, Nose-horned, Blue-legged, Tusked and the impressive Oshaughnessy's Chameleons, as well as a few sightings of the cryptically camouflaged *Uroplatus sametii*. The bizarre Giraffe-necked Weevil also showed very well, when it was found feeding on its host plant in the upper reaches of the reserve.



Madagascar Hoopoe by Markus Lilje

After another drive to the south, we spent a night in Isalo, an area of interesting sandstone mountains and structures within very open palm savanna. During our brief stay, we spent several hours scouring the grasslands and edge habitats in search of Madagascar Partridge. This handsome species showed briefly for some and amazingly, despite much effort, managed to stay out of sight for the rest of the group. However, we did manage excellent views of a number of Madagascar Buttonquails, as well as Madagascar Lark and Madagascar Cisticola in the grasslands. One of the areas specials is Benson's Rock Thrush, which showed near the lodge, and we were also treated to a splendid sighting of a White-throated Rail and a pair of Madagascar Hoopoes that had a nest in a hole in the rocks.

Zombitse Forest is an isolated tract of dry, deciduous woodland, which, along with the nearby Vohibasia Forest, is the only home to the extremely range-restricted Appert's Tetraka, and here we were treated to sensational views of a pair of these birds that appeared completely unperturbed by our presence. In addition to this we notched the striking Rufous Vanga and secretive Coquerel's Coua, the monotypic Cuckoo Roller, Broad-billed Roller and Lesser Vasa Parrot. Other sightings



Red-tailed Tropicbird by Markus Lilje

worth a mention here were a number of Hubbard's Sportive Lemurs, Verreaux's Sifaka, Standing's Day Gecko and a female Oustalet's Chameleon. After lunch we continued our journey through the gemstone towns until we reached the coastal town of Tulear.



Appert's Tetraka by Markus Lilje

Near Tulear we visited an area of Coral Rag Scrub near the distinctive hill called La Tabla, where we had great views of the fairly recently described Red-shouldered Vanga and eventually, on a subsequent visit and with much effort,

Verreaux's Coua. The town is also the gateway to the tropical island of Nosy Vé, which performed as well as could be hoped for, as we observed the elegant Red-tailed Tropicbirds at close quarters along with shorebirds that included another of our major targets, the unique Crab-plover, plus Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone and White-fronted Plover, while a small tern roost had Lesser and Greater Crested as well as Common Terns in attendance. Our brief lunch stop on the mainland at Anakoa yielded Littoral Rock Thrush and great views of Madagascar Buttonquail and Sakalava Weaver before our boat trip back to the port in Tulear, during which we added Greater Flamingo and a few breeding Humblot's Herons.

The area around Ifaty has two very different and interesting habitats – wetlands and the Spiny Forest; where, despite the almost overpowering heat, we nevertheless triumphed with our explorations. The botanical wonderland of the Spiny Forest around this area produced numerous highlights, with sightings of the rare Subdesert Mesite, Sickle-billed,



Subdesert Mesite by Markus Lilje

Lafresnaye's and White-headed Vangas, Banded Kestrel on its nest, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Running and Green-capped Couas, the iconic Long-tailed Ground Roller, Archbold's Newtonia and Thamnornis being the most memorable. Our excursions to the various tidal mudflats, seashores and brackish wetlands here were also fruitful and we observed a number of endangered Madagascar Plovers, Little Bittern, Grey-headed Lovebird and the secretive Baillon's Crake, plus good numbers of shorebirds, many of which showed well during an atmospheric late afternoon beach walk.



Long-tailed Ground Roller by Markus Lilje

After some delayed flights and a night in Tana, we found ourselves in the south-eastern corner of the island at Fort Dauphin, from where we drove to the famous Berenty Lemur Reserve (privately owned by one of the well-known French families, the De Haume's). Finding Marsh and Western Barn Owls on the way was a good compensation for our very late arrival. This reserve offered us many spectacular sightings and we notched up most of the specials during our short time here. These included great views of the impressive Madagascar Sandgrouse, Giant Coua, breeding Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Totoroka Scops Owl and surprisingly common White-browed Hawk-Owl. The mammals were no less spectacular and we left completely satisfied with great encounters of Ring-tailed Lemur families, dancing Verreaux's Sifakas, delightful Grey-brown Mouse Lemur and many White-footed Sportive Lemurs under our



White-footed Sportive Lemur by Markus Lilje

belt. Three-eyed Lizards were common in the spiny forest areas and we had a large number of Warty Chameleon, with the best views being of some rather large animals in a mango plantation on the roadside as we headed back to Fort Dauphin's airport.

After another late drive, partially in very heavy rain, we arrived at the secondary forests and unspoiled swamps of Anjozorobe for another two-night stay. Our perseverance here definitely paid off and we located several targets including a stunning Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Wood Rail, the aberrant terrestrial Crossley's Vanga, skulking Red-fronted Coua, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Starling and the very elusive Madagascar Yellowbrow, which eventually showed well for all. Despite a lot of time spent in one of the area's swamps, trying to get views of the Slender-billed Flufftail that was calling just a few meters away, we were ultimately unable to coax it into view, although we were more successful with Madagascar Rail and Madagascar Snipe in the same area, with both giving great views. During a night walk in the forest we found a number of chameleons as well as obtaining great views of both Sikora and Fantastic Leaf-tailed Geckos after watching about 10 Brown Mouse Lemurs emerging from the corner of one of the lodge's rooms.



Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko by Markus Lilje



Rainforest Scops Owl by Markus Lilje

certainly rewarded as we managed to find many of the big targets we still had left. Short-legged and especially Scaly Ground Rollers both showed well after a fair amount of effort from us, which closed off this endemic family for the tour. During our time in the two forest areas here, we encountered many other specials such as Red-breasted Coua, a fantastically cryptic Collared Nightjar, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Rainforest Scops Owl, White-throated Oxylabes,

During a roadside stop at the Mangoro River we managed to get great views of some of the 5 Madagascar Pratincoles that were around near the bridge, while a short time before this we had added good flight views of the migrant Eleonora's Falcon. We were headed for the eastern rainforest again, where the forest sites around Andasibe were to host us for 3 days. Analamazaotra Special Reserve is a smaller park, very close to our lodge near Andasibe, while Mantadia National Park is a little more distant and a larger, more pristine reserve. Most of our time in this part of the island was spent scouring the forest in search of the remaining spectacular birds that make their homes here. Our efforts were



Comet Moth by Markus Lilje

a relaxed male Madagascar Flufftail, Frances's Sparrowhawk, Dark Newtonia, Madagascar Ibis, Ward's Flycatcher, Red-tailed, White-headed, Hook-billed, Blue, Tylas and the fascinating – and often difficult – Nuthatch Vangas, Cryptic Warbler, brilliant Forest Fody and Nelicourvi Weaver. Over and above this impressive haul, we found breeding Madagascar Grebe and the scarce Meller's Duck on a small forest pond in Mantadia. The island's other significant inhabitants, the lemurs, were well represented too. We notched up great sightings of the beautiful Diademed Sifaka, Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur, the striking Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur, Common Brown Lemur and the largest of the lemurs, Indri, which we spent some time with and eventually had calling right above our heads. Our nocturnal excursions produced Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur and the tiny Goodman's Mouse Lemur, along with Madagascar Tree Frog, Greater Stump-tailed Leaf Chameleon and the incredible Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko! We were also fortunate to have 2 huge Comet Moths sitting very near our accommodations – this is a species that has become scarce due to being a favourite for collectors.



Madagascar Jacana by Markus Lilje

Vangas. Further to this, Lac Ravelobe was teeming with waterfowl and associated aquatic species. We recorded thousands of breeding Cattle Egrets and large numbers of Squacco, Purple and Striated Herons, Little Bittern and White-faced Whistling Duck. Specials in attendance were Humblot's Heron, Greater Painted Snipe, Allen's Gallinule, Madagascar Jacana and the rare Madagascar Fish Eagle. Some of the mammalian highlights at Ankarafantsika were some very inquisitive Coquerel's Sifakas, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur and Western Avahi on a day roost. Nile Crocodile, Oustalet's Chameleon, Cuvier's Iguanid and Lesser Hog-nosed Snake headed up the list of "herps" recorded.

We then journeyed back to Mahajunga for a boating excursion into the Betsiboka Delta, where we eventually managed to get out on the difficult high tide. The delta's waters run brick-red and are a symptom of the ecological disaster taking place in Madagascar. Despite this, several highly sought-after species still make this place their home. As the waters very gradually subsided the conditions changed as did our search patterns: first

Our journey now drew to a close as we headed to the north-west of the island, where we explored the dry, deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika National Park near the village of Ampijoroa. This site ranks as one of the most productive birding areas on the whole island and our group was treated to a plethora of species! Our birding forays over the next couple of days yielded all the specials including the sensational Schlegel's Asity, a pair of White-breasted Mesites, Red-capped and Coquerel's Couas, and both Rufous and the range-restricted Van Dam's



White-breasted Mesite by Markus Lilje



Bernier's Teals by Markus Lilje

we had many Terek Sandpipers and a very close Malagasy Sacred Ibis waiting in the submerged mangroves. Searching the mudflats later produced great views of Bernier's Teal, which displayed their distinctive feeding technique in the mud. There were also a few other shorebirds around to keep us busy, while manoeuvring the boat became trickier in the shallow channels. During our time around the coastal town of Mahajunga we explored a nearby wetland and were rewarded with some excellent birding. Good numbers of White-faced Whistling Duck, Red-billed Teal, Common Moorhen (scarce in Madagascar), and the big target, the delicate African Pygmy Goose, were recorded.

A by-now-expected delayed flight back to the capital got us there just in time and allowed us a moment to reflect on what an amazing time we had shared together on this remarkable island! We observed almost all of the target endemic and near-endemic bird species possible on our route, plus an impressive 25 lemur species and an astonishing variety of other bizarre and unique creatures!

## Annotated List of Birds

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

### 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

**Total species recorded 192 (of which 2 were heard only):**

### Guineafowl Numididae

**Helmeted Guineafowl (I)**

*Numida meleagris*

This widespread and common African introduction was recorded at Isalo and Berenty.

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

### Pheasants, Fowl and allies Phasianidae

**Madagascar Partridge (En)**

*Margaroperdix madagascariensis*

Despite a huge amount of effort and time in the grassland, just a few participants had brief views.

### Ducks & Geese Anatidae

**White-faced Whistling Duck**

*Dendrocygna viduata*

We observed this species in largest numbers at Lake Alarobia, a few elsewhere.

**Knob-billed (Comb) Duck**

*Sarkidiornis melanotos*

One female bird was spotted at Lake Alarobia around the start of the tour.

**African Pygmy Goose**

*Nettapus auritus*

This beautiful little bird was encountered at a wetland near Majunga. We were fortunate to see 4 birds of which 3 were males.

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

We were surprised by 3 birds at Lake Alarobia, before we had another 2 at a small forest pond in Mantadia National Park and others in flight over Anjozorobe wetlands.

**Bernier's Teal (E) (En)** *Anas bernieri*

Our boat excursion into the Betsiboka Delta from Majunga finally yielded views of this highly sought-after bird, feeding on exposed mudflats.

*NOTE: This globally threatened endemic, currently known only from a few inaccessible sites on the west coast of Madagascar, has rarely been recorded until its discovery at this site by Rockjumper Birding Tours in 1999. "Only significant recent counts are 60 on Masama Lake in 1970 and 61 on Bemamba Lake in 1973" Volume 1; HBW.*

**Red-billed Teal (Duck)** *Anas erythrorhyncha*

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

**Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota*

Whilst birding a wetland near Ifaty we encountered several of these attractive ducks after first encountering them at Lake Alarobia.

### Grebes Podicipedidae

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

Good numbers were seen at the wetlands between Tulear and Ifaty.

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

This delicate and subtly beautiful species was seen extremely well at a small forest pond in Mantadia National Park, where they were breeding.

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

### Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopus roseus*

A good number of these birds were seen in the river mouth south of Tulear.

### Tropicbirds Phaethontidae

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda*

On Nosy V  we observed good numbers of this elegant species flying overhead at very close quarters. Fortunately, it is a local fady (taboo) to disturb this species and as such they are protected on the island.

### Storks Ciconiidae

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis*

A widespread stork on mainland Africa, 2 juvenile birds were seen at Lake Ravelobe, Ampijoroa NP.

### Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

**[Malagasy] Sacred Ibis (NE)** *Threskiornis [aethiopicus] bernieri*

The mangroves and mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta produced 3 birds. We had fabulous views of the species, showing off its very pale eye and almost totally white wings.

*NOTE: A globally threatened species restricted to largely inaccessible wetlands in western Madagascar and Aldabra Island. This species is often considered merely a race of the widespread Sacred Ibis of the African mainland and is treated as such by Clements.*

**Glossy Ibis***Plegadis falcinellus*

The only site at which we found these birds was Lake Ravelobe in the Ankarafantsika National Park.

**Madagascar (Crested) Ibis***Lophotibis cristata*

Unfortunately, this striking species was only glimpsed by a few members of the group in Mantadia NP, before everyone had fantastic scope views of a bird on the nest in Ankarafantsika NP.

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

We spotted this species at a wetland near Ifaty where we had 2 birds, a few others were seen at Lake Ravelobe.

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

Good numbers of these widespread birds were seen during the tour. Our best sightings were at Lake Alarobia on the final morning of the tour.

**Striated Heron***Butorides striatus*

This species was seen at most wetland sites on the tour with our best views at Lake Ravelobe.

*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*

The best sighting of this bird was at Lake Alarobia in Tana where good numbers of breeding birds were seen, scattered sightings elsewhere.

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

We observed this bird at Berenty, Lake Ravelobe and had great views of displaying birds at Lake 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 most days.

**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

First recorded on the exposed tidal flats between Tulear and Ifaty, we found this species again breeding on cliffs near Tulear and at wetlands near Majunga.

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

This endemic heron surprised us in Antananarivo, before it was seen well at the cliffs near San Augustine and at close quarters on Lac Ravelobe.

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

**Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea*

Lake Ravelobe at Ankarafantsika NP produced many sightings of this attractive heron, a few others elsewhere.

**Great Egret***Ardea alba*

Commonly encountered in rice paddies/wetlands throughout the island.

**Black Heron***Egretta ardesiaca*

This species was seen in good numbers at a number of wetlands during the tour.

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

This elegant egret was seen on most days at a variety of water associated habitats from rice paddies to coastal mudflats.

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

**Hamerkop Scopidae**

**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

Individuals and pairs were encountered mostly on travel days in the rice paddies at the roadside.

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

A fairly commonly seen bird during the tour especially in the arid southern part of the island.

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

A few birds were seen during the tour in the arid southern part of the island.

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

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

We recorded a total of 3 of these endangered birds in the area around Lake Ravelobe.

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

**Malagasy (Reunion) Harrier (E) (V)***Circus macroscelus*

A single female bird was seen very well while it flew and hunted over Lake Alarobia.

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

**Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)***Polyboroides radiatus*

A total of around 6 birds were seen during the tour, in Isalo, Andasibe and around Mahajunga.

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

Seen first at Berenty, before we had a few more sightings at Mantadia NP and Analamazaotra.

**Madagascar Sparrowhawk (E) (NT)***Accipiter madagascariensis*

A single bird was observed at close quarters in the woodlands of Analamazaotra NP.

**Henst's Goshawk (E) (NT)***Accipiter henstii*

Unfortunately we only heard this bird in Ranomafana, before we were caught by a huge thunderstorm.

*NOTE: A scarce endemic that occurs at low densities; usually detected by its far-carrying and distinctive calls.*

**Madagascar Buzzard (E)***Buteo brachypterus*

We found this bird at numerous sites during the trip, including around Isalo and Ampijoroa.

**Falcons Falconidae****Malagasy Kestrel (Ne)***Falco newtoni*

Numerous sightings were had throughout the island.

**Banded Kestrel (E)***Falco zoniventris*

Our only record for this species on its nest in the spiny forest near Ifaty, where we had close scope views despite it being hunkered down.

**Eleonora's Falcon***Falco eleonora*

A single bird was seen very well in flight overhead on the drive to Andasibe from Anjozorobe.

**Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus*

We enjoyed great views of a bird flying over the forest at Analamazaotra.

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

We recorded this attractive Mesite in the deciduous woodland of Ankarafantsika NP.

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

Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts to entice this bird out from the dense forest undergrowth we only managed to hear the bird and never even got a glimpse, despite it being very close to us.

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

Whilst birding the Spiny Forest near Ifaty our local guides tracked down a perched male bird. The

individual exhibited its bizarre behaviour of remaining motionless on its perch, despite us moving around at fairly close quarters.

### Flufftails Sarothruridae

- Madagascar Flufftail (E)** *Sarothrura insularis*  
This species was heard frequently, while we had views in the Anjozorobe and Andasibe areas.
- Slender-billed Flufftail (E)** *Sarothrura watersi*  
This very rare species was heard at close quarters in the dense reeds in the Anjozorobe area.

### Rails & Gallinules Rallidae

- Madagascar Wood Rail (E)** *Canirallus kioloides*  
We had brief views of this bird twice in the forest at Anjozorobe.
- Madagascar Rail (E)** *Rallus madagascariensis*  
True to form, this intrepid rallid showed beautifully and for an extended period at the edge of the large wetland at Anjozorobe.
- White-throated Rail (E)** *Dryolimnas cuvieri*  
This is a fairly widespread rallid that was seen on 7 days of the tour, in a wide variety of sites we visited. First good views in the Isalo 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. This is accepted by the IOC.*
- Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*  
This tiny rallid was briefly seen by a few participants in the Ifaty wetlands.
- Allen's (Lesser) Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni*  
This usually scarce and somewhat shy species (in Africa) was seen very well at Lake Ravelobe.
- Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*  
A couple of birds were found at Lake Alarobia in the capital.

### Buttonquails Turnicidae

- Madagascar Buttonquail (E)** *Turnix nigricollis*  
We did very well with this species on the tour, biggest numbers were seen in Isalo and Berenty.

### Crab-plover Dromadidae

- Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola*  
We had good scope views of a flock of 29 birds on the beach at Nosy Ve.

### Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

- Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*  
This widespread species was spotted at various wetlands on the island.

### Plovers Charadriidae

- Grey (Black-bellied) Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*  
The shoreline and coastal mudflats between Tulear and Ifaty produced many sightings of this species.
- Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*  
We recorded this shorebird on the coastal mudflats between Tulear & Ifaty and in the Betsiboka Delta.
- Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)** *Charadrius thoracicus*  
We had a single sighting of 2 birds that allowed for close views in the Ifaty area.

**Kittlitz's Plover***Charadrius pecuarius*

It was observed at several wetland and coastal sites during the trip.

**Three-banded Plover***Charadrius tricollaris*

Nowhere near as prolific as in Africa, this species was seen in the Ifaty area and later near Majunga.

**White-fronted Plover***Charadrius marginatus*

2 single birds were seen in the Ifaty area and on Nosy Ve.

**Lesser Sand Plover***Charadrius mongolus*

This bird was seen in fairly good numbers in the Tulear area.

**Greater Sand Plover***Charadrius leschenaultii*

About 6 birds were seen in the Betsiboka Delta on the mudflats.

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

We recorded a total of 7 birds at two different wetland sites around the Ankarafantsika NP.

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

We had some good scope views of this bird around the edge of Lake Ravelobe.

**Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae****Madagascar Snipe (E) (NT)***Gallinago macrodactyla*

The pristine wetland at Anjozorobe yielded excellent flight views of this large snipe.

**Whimbrel***Numenius phaeopus*

This large shorebird was seen in good numbers on the coastal mudflats between Tulear and Ifaty and in the Betsiboka Delta.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Recorded along the Mandrare River at Berenty, on the coastal mudflats around Tulear and Ifaty.

**Terek Sandpiper***Xenus cinereus*

We had great views of around 30 birds on the mudflats in the Betsiboka Delta and perched in the trees during high tide.

**Common Sandpiper***Tringa hypoleucos*

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

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

Good numbers were recorded around the Ifaty and Tulear area as well as on Nosy Vé.

**Sanderling***Calidris alba*

Recorded in biggest numbers on the beaches at Nosy Ve, others were seen between Ifaty and Tulear.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

A single bird was seen on the shoreline at a large wetland between Ifaty and Tulear.

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea*

Good numbers were seen around the Ifaty wetlands, while a few others were seen near Mahajunga.

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

5 birds were seen well on rocks in the middle of the Mangoro River and flying around the bridge we were standing on.

**Gulls & Terns Laridae**

**Great Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bergii*

Around 10 birds were scoped in a roost on Nosy Ve.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*

Most terns at a roost on Nosy Ve were of this species, before we had a few more in flight in the Betsiboka Delta.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

4 birds seen roosting on Nosy Ve island.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

Around 30 birds were seen around a large lake between Ampijoroa and Mahajunga.

**Sandgrouse Pteroclididae****Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)** *Pterocles personatus*

Excellent views were had of this massive Sandgrouse in the sisal fields at Berenty.

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

Widespread and fairly common in urban/settlement areas throughout the island.

**Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NEe)** *Columba picturata*

These birds were seen on most days throughout the island in both dry deciduous forest and rainforest habitats.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*

Good numbers of these attractive doves were seen in the dry south and north-west of the country.

**Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)** *Treron australis*

We had good views of this species in Berenty and Ifaty as well as a few other sites.

**Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)** *Alectroenas madagascariensis*

We had a few good views of this lovely species in Anjozorobe and around the Andasibe area.

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

This species was seen in good numbers in the drier south and west of the island, including at Ifaty, Berenty and Ankarafantsika.

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

Best views of this species were enjoyed at close quarters in the spiny forest near Ifaty, with a few other sightings elsewhere.

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

Far more common than the previous species, this was seen at most sites during the tour.

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

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

**Crested Coua (E)** *Coua cristata*

Our best sightings of this pretty species were in the gallery and spiny forest at Berenty, other sightings in Ankarafantsika and Ifaty.

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

This localized species was seen very well in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

**Blue Coua (E)** *Coua caerulea*

Ranomafana and Andasibe are both forest sites where we found this very different coua species.

**Red-capped Coua (E)***Coua ruficeps*

Ankarafantsika NP held wonderful views of this beautiful coua.

NOTE: See notation under Green-capped Coua.

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

The spiny forests at Berenty and Ifaty produced good sightings of this species.

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

**Red-fronted Coua (E)***Coua reynaudii*

This shy and skulky rainforest species was seen well in Ranomafana, Anjozorobe and the Andasibe area.

**Coquerel's Coua (E)***Coua coquereli*

Great views were enjoyed in the deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP, after we had our first views in Zombitse.

**Running Coua (E)***Coua cursor*

This beautiful species was elusive but was eventually showed very well in the Ifaty area and again in the Berenty Spiny forest.

**Giant Coua (E)***Coua gigas*

Around 8 of these very large birds were seen very well in the riverine woodland at Berenty, we we had good close-up views.

**Red-breasted Coua (E)***Coua serriana*

Probably the most difficult of the coua species to find. We managed to get fantastic views of a pair that walked right to us in the Mantadia NP forest.

**Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)***Cuculus rochii*

More often heard than seen, this vocal bird was encountered at Anjozorobe, where we had best views, Ifaty, Ranomafana, Berenty, Zombitse and Ankarafantsika NP.

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

A single bird was seen briefly as we drove into Berenty late at night.

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

We enjoyed excellent close up views of this little bird in Berenty – first 2 during a late night walk and then a rufous morph on a day roost.

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

After hearing it commonly in Anjozorobe and around Andasibe, we had great views in Analamazaotra during a night walk and also on a day roost.

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

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

This attractive owl was recorded at Isalo and Zombitse, before we enjoyed good views around Berenty Private Reserve during walks there.

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

A highly sought-after species in Madagascar, we first had views of a juvenile, before we were treated to great scope views of the adult on day roosts, including one bird not looking too happy in the rain.

**Marsh Owl***Asio capensis*

Uncommonly recorded in the country – we had a brief flight view of a bird flying near our ferry on the way to Berenty.

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

Common and widespread on Madagascar, we had numerous sightings during the tour, with good daylight views in the Ifaty area.

**Collared Nightjar (E)***Caprimulgus enarratus*

Thanks to our local guide in the Eastern Rainforests, we had superb views of a single bird at a day roost in the forest interior at Mantadia NP.

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

Recorded at 2 sites only – Zombitse forest and over Mantadia NP.

**African Palm Swift***Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

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

**Alpine Swift***Tachymarptis melba*

2 birds were seen well in a large swift flock around the ferry near the Fort Dauphin area.

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

Most of the swifts in a large mixed flock were this species, to the north of Fort Dauphin. Other scattered sightings elsewhere.

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

**Little Swift (NE)***Apus affinis*

2 birds were seen on the outskirts of Tana.

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

This extremely vocal bird was first seen high over the forest in Mantadia NP, before we had close flight views in Zombitse Forest and perched views around Ankarafantsika NP.

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

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

This stunning bird was recorded at many sites with superb views at Mantadia NP and Ampijoroa Forest Station.

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

We were expecting a long search for this elusive bird which never materialized, when we got scope views of this species in the canopy of Mantadia NP forest soon after leaving our bus in the rain.

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

After much time and effort we found a pair of these stunning birds that showed very well in the end, when we followed them through the undergrowth in Mantadia NP.

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

This colourful bird was the first member of this family that we managed to find during the tour, when we located a calling bird on the Vohiparara Ridge in Ranomafana.

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

Unfortunately only a few participants had views of this dark Ground Roller as it skulked around in the undergrowth just a few meters from us in the higher-lying parts of Ranomafana.

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

Voted as the top bird of the tour, this species showed very well in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

### Kingfishers Alcedinidae

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

We had wonderful views of a bathing individual in Ranomafana, another showed well in Mantadia NP.

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

This little gem was recorded at most freshwater wetlands throughout the tour.

### Bee-eaters Meropidae

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

We had many very good views of this common species on the island.

### Hoopoes Upupidae

**Madagascar Hoopoe (E)** *Upupa marginata*

The dry woodlands of we visited yielded outstanding sightings of this charismatic bird. First and best views were had of birds at their cliff-nesting site at Isalo.

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

### Asities Philepittidae

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

We had a number of sightings of this interesting endemic in the rainforest sites, although most participants only ever saw female birds.

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

We spectacular bird was recorded on 2 days in the dry deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP.

**[Common] Sunbird-Asity (E)** *Neodrepanis coruscans*

Brief but close views of these tiny birds were had in Ranomafana.

**Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity (E) (En)** *Neodrepanis hypoxanthus*

We spent a lot of time in the right areas in Ranomafana, where everyone had good views of the female and a few participants had great views of the wonderfully marked male.

### Vangas Vangidae

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

One of the smaller vangas but no less attractive, we found it in Ranomafana, Zombitse Forest, Anjozorobe and Perinet/Mantadia.

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

The coral rag scrub near La Tabla yielded our sighting of this recently described and highly localized endemic. We were treated to good views of a male bird.

**Hook-billed Vanga (E)** *Vanga curvirostris*

First seen feeding chicks in a nest at Ranomafana NP, before we had a number of other sightings at scattered locations.

**Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)** *Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

In the Ifaty area we found this species remarkably easily, when it just flew into sightings on 2 consecutive days, giving great if somewhat brief views.

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

We encountered a pair in the dry, deciduous woodland of Ankarafantsika NP and enjoyed exceptional views of the bird after not finding it for a long time after it called.

**Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)** *Xenopirostris polleni*

We had great views of this scarce species on the outskirts of the forests of Ranomafana NP.

**Sickle-billed Vanga (E)** *Falcoelea palliata*

These incredible birds were seen in the drier sites at Ifaty, where we had birds building nests, and again in Ankarafantsika NP. Definitely always one of the strangest birds of the trip!

**White-headed Vanga (E)** *Artamella viridis*

We did well with this species, recording it often. Best views possibly in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Chabert[']s Vanga (E)** *Leptopterus chabert*

One of the most widespread vangas, this small species was fairly common throughout Madagascar.

**Blue Vanga (NE)** *Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

Another lovely vanga – seen well in Ranomafana, Perinet & Mantadia as well as 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*

After brief views in Ranomafana, we had much better views of a female in Zombitse forest and a male in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Tylas Vanga (E)** *Tylas eduardi*

Another canopy and mid-level species that was seen well in the rainforest sites on the tour.

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

**Nuthatch Vanga (E)** *Hypositta corallirostris*

One of the best examples of convergent evolution, this species was seen very well in Mantadia NP and Analamazaotra, where we could watch their distinctive feeding behaviour.

**Dark Newtonia (E)** *Newtonia amphichroa*

This deep forest species was seen in Ranomafana NP and Anjozorobe.

**Common Newtonia (E)** *Newtonia brunneicauda*

One of the most commonly recorded species, which was usually seen in small numbers in mixed feeding flocks.

**Archbold's Newtonia (E)** *Newtonia archboldi*

This is one of the specials for the arid southern region of the island. We observed a single bird at very close range in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

**Ward's Flycatcher (E)** *Pseudobias wardi*

Small numbers of this striking bird were encountered at the forest edge near Mantadia NP.

**Crossley's Vanga (E)** *Mystacornis crossleyi*

A single bird was seen well as it walked and called along the forest floor in the Anjozorobe area. This aberrant member of the vanga family has just recently been added here through taxonomic adjustments.

### Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae

**Madagascar (Ashy) Cuckooshrike (NE)** *Coracina cinerea*

This species was seen regularly at various forested sites during the tour.

### Drongos Dicruridae

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

We recorded this charismatic bird on all but a few days of the trip in a wide variety of habitats.

### Monarchs Monarchidae

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

A very attractive species, it was seen in all colour morphs in at woodland and forested sites on the island, often on its tiny nests.

### Crows & Jays Corvidae

#### **Pied Crow**

*Corvus albus*

Common and widespread in Madagascar except in areas with pristine forest.

### Larks Alaudidae

#### **Madagascar Lark (E)**

*Mirafra hova*

Despite being rather drab in plumage, we enjoyed this bird in the drier regions of the island.

### Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

#### **Malagasy (Madagascar) Bulbul (NE)**

*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

Recorded almost daily on tour in most habitat types.

### Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

#### **Mascarene Martin (BE)**

*Phedina borbonica*

Madagascar's most common hirundine and a regional breeding endemic, it was recorded at most sites associated with waterbodies/rice paddies.

#### **Brown-throated (Plain) Martin**

*Riparia paludicola*

Smaller than Mascarene Martin and lacking the streaking on the breast this species was regular around Anjozorobe.

#### **Barn Swallow**

*Hirundo rustica*

We were fortunate to find this uncommon summer visitor to Madagascar at a wetland near Ifaty.

### Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae

#### **Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)**

*Nesillas typical*

This nondescript bird was seen at Ranomafana NP, Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

#### **[Subdesert Brush Warbler] (E)**

*Nesillas lantzii*

A much paler form of the aforementioned species, it was seen very well in arid habitats in the Ifaty area and in the coral rag scrub at La Tabla.

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

#### **Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E)**

*Acrocephalus newtoni*

Our best sightings of this species were in wetlands at Lake Alarobia (Tana), near Ifaty and Anjozorobe.

### Grassbirds & Allies Locustellidae

#### **Grey Emutail (E)**

*Amphilius (Dromaeocercus) seebohmi*

We were lucky with this species that is getting pushed further and further into reserves as its habitat disappears. 2 birds showed well on the outskirts of Ranomafana NP.

#### **Brown Emutail (E)**

*Bradypterus (Dromaeocercus) brunneus*

Another extremely skulky species, this species was seen by some participants as it breezed through forest undergrowth in Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

**Malagasy Warblers Bernieridae****White-throated Oxylabes (E)***Oxylabes madagascariensis*

We had 4 of these beautiful birds flying around in the thick undergrowth in Anjozorobe for a while, giving most participants some great views.

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

A fairly common species, seen well in Ranomafana NP, Zombitse and Ankarafantsika NP.

**Cryptic Warbler (E)***Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

This fairly recently described species, with its incessant calling, eventually gave us all good views in the canopy on one of Mantadia's ridges.

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

4 of these skulking birds were seen chasing each other at very close quarters in Ranomafana NP.

**Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)***Thamnornis chloropetoides*

A pair of these strange spiny forest inhabitants showed very well near Ifaty in the south-west.

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

This rainforest specialist was seen at rainforest sites of Ranomafana and in good numbers around Anjozorobe.

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

Unfortunately, due to habitat destruction, this species is extremely range restricted and is confined to the small Zombitse/Vohibasia forest bloc. We did, however, have magnificent, point blank views of this attractive tetraka in Zombitse Forest.

**Grey-crowned Tetraka (Greenbul) (E)***Xanthomixis cinereiceps*

An elusive forest species that showed very well in Ranomafana's higher-lying area.

**[Madagascar] Yellowbrow (Oxylabes) (E) (NT)***Crossleyia xanthophrys*

This very scarce and secretive species was seen well at Anjozorobe by most participants.

*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*

2 birds were scoped, calling on exposed branches in the high forest at Ranomafana.

**Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae****Common Jery (E)***Neomixis tenella*

Widespread and common throughout the tour at most sites.

**Green Jery (E)***Neomixis viridis*

We had 2 birds high overhead on the final morning in Analamazaotra.

**Stripe-throated Jery (E)***Neomixis striatigula*

This species was seen well at a number of sites in the Ranomafana area in the drier south.

**Madagascar Cisticola (NE)***Cisticola cherinus*

Regularly encountered in a grassland and wetland habitats throughout the tour.

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

It was seen in almost all areas apart from the arid region of south-western Madagascar.

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

This introduced species was common and widespread in disturbed, open habitats throughout the island.

**Madagascar Starling (E)** *Hartlaubius aurata*

After much effort we finally located a few birds in the Anjozorobe area that gave us some great views.

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

This bold and confiding species was seen throughout the tour on most days in most habitat types.

**[Madagascar] Stonechat (E)** *Saxicola sibilla*

Commonly recorded in the higher-lying areas of the tour.

**Littoral Rock Thrush (E)** *Monticola (Pseudocossyphus) imerina*

A female welcomed us to lunch on her nest at Anakao, before we also had a male in the same area.

**Forest Rock Thrush (E)** *Monticola (Pseudocossyphus) sharpei*

This ridge top forest specialist was seen well in Ranomafana NP and again at the forest at Mantadia NP and Analamazaotra.

**(Benson's Rock Thrush) (E) (NT)** *Monticola (Pseudocossyphus) bensoni*

Our accommodations outside Isalo NP yielded magnificent sightings of this attractive rock thrush.

*NOTE: A recent paper dealing with the systematics of the Madagascar rock thrushes suggested that Benson's Rock Thrush is merely a race of Forest Rock Thrush, based on DNA studies of specimens taken at the eastern and western limits of the species' range. However, these conclusions have recently been disputed, since no specimens of Benson's Rock Thrush were ever tested! (Dowsett and Dowsett-Lemaire pers. comm.)*

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

A rather pretty species, it was seen on every day during the tour.

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

We recorded this species very well in Ranomafana NP and sporadically elsewhere on the trip.

**Old World Sparrows, Snowfinches Passeridae****House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

A first for this tour – this introduced species now seems to have moved down the coast from where it was introduced.

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

This attractive weaver was found in Ranomafana NP, Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP, some of which were around their nests.

**Sakalava Weaver (E)** *Ploceus sakalava*

Common in the arid areas of southern Madagascar.

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

Common and widespread on the island, we had numerous observations of this brilliantly plumaged species.

**Forest Fody (E)** *Foudia omissa*

Ranomafana NP produced initial views of the bird, which is far more elusive than the aforementioned bird. Later on, we spotted it in Mantadia NP.

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

This diminutive bird was recorded at Ranomafana, near Ifaty, Anjozorobe, Mantadia and a few sites in the north-west.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**

**Madagascar Wagtail (E)** *Motacilla flaviventris*  
 Seen at forest edge and lodgings in the higher altitude sites on tour.

**Annotated list of Mammals**

Garbutt, N. (2007) *Mammals of Madagascar, A Complete Guide*.

**Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae**

**Madagascar Flying Fox** *Pteropus rufus*  
 We had scope views of these bizarre creatures at their day roost in the riparian forest of Berenty Lemur Reserve.

**Old World Rats and Mice Muridae**

**Eastern Red Forest Rat** *Nesomys rufus*  
 This attractive forest rat was seen briefly on numerous occasions in the Eastern Rainforests.

**Tanala Tuft-tailed Rat** *Eliurus tanala*  
 A very distinctive species that was seen very well in the roadside forest at Ranomafana.

**Black Rat** *Rattus rattus*  
 This very widespread introduced species was seen in Antananarivo.

**Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae**

**Grey Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus murinus*  
 Around 8 were seen well in scrubby woodland near Ankarafantsika NP.

**Brown Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus rufus*  
 We enjoyed amazing views of these delightful mouse lemurs at Ranomafana NP, before we watched a group of around 10 emerge from one of the rooms at Anjozorobe.

**Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus griseorufus*  
 This is the common species in the south, where we found it in the spiny forest habitat of Berenty.

**Goodman's Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus lehilahytsara*  
 A handful of these tiny lemurs were seen well on night walks in the Andasibe area. It is a highly localized species which is confined to the forests of Analamazaotra around.

**Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur** *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*  
 A handful seen on consecutive nights during walks in the Andasibe area.

**Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur** *Cheirogaleus medius*  
 During a night walk near Ankarafantsika, we were fortunate to have extended views of a few of these very distinctive lemurs.

**Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae**

**Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur edwardsi*  
 More often heard than seen, these noisy animals were seen in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Hubbard's Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur hubbardi*  
 On our brief visit to Zombitse Forest we managed to locate around 7 of these attractive creatures on day roosts.

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

This lemur was encountered daily in Berenty Lemur Reserve, where they can be very common in good habitats.

### “True” Lemurs Lemuridae

#### **Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur**

*Hapalemur griseus griseus*

The eastern rainforest sites of Ranomafana NP and Mantadia NP yielded sightings of this adorable animal.

#### **Golden Bamboo Lemur**

*Hapalemur aureus*

A fairly recently described species, we had views of a few of these very range-restricted animals in bamboo forest in Ranomafana NP. This species has developed a feeding strategy that allows it to digest young bamboo leaves that are high in toxins, including cyanide. No other lemur is able to do so.

#### **Greater Bamboo Lemur**

*Hapalemur simus*

We were lucky to get views of the last 2 known animals in Ranomafana NP. There are plans underway to reintroduce a few animals from some of the very few known nearby populations. Our views were amazing, with the animals coming down onto the ground and feeding just metres from us.

#### **Ring-tailed Lemur**

*Lemur catta*

Mischievous but endearing, these comical lemurs were seen daily at Berenty Lemur Reserve – this is probably the most widely recognized lemur and always a favourite.

#### **Red-bellied Lemur**

*Eulemur rubiventer*

On our walk up to the Vohiparara ridge in Ranomafana NP we had excellent views of 2 animals, another 2 lower down in the park.

#### **Common Brown Lemur**

*Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

Seen well and in good numbers in Mantadia/ Analamazaotra and in Ankarafantsika NP.

#### **Red-fronted Brown Lemur**

*Eulemur fulvus rufus*

Good numbers were seen in the gallery forest at Berenty where this species has been introduced.

#### **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur**

*Varecia variegata variegata*

Always one of the most popular lemur species, this stunning animal was seen overhead in Mantadia NP, where we had 3 adults.

### Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae

#### **Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)**

*Avahi laniger*

The Analamazaotra area produced a fantastic sighting of this species during a night walk.

#### **Peyrieria's Avahi**

*Avahi peyrierasi*

This species that was seen in Ranomafana has recently been split from the above species.

#### **Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur)**

*Avahi occidentalis*

Ankarafantsika produced a very good sighting of this species at a day roost.

#### **Diademed Sifaka**

*Propithecus diadema diadema*

A family group was observed at very close range in the forests of Mantadia NP. Another species that is often considered one of the best looking lemur species.

#### **Milne-Edward's Sifaka**

*Propithecus diadema edwardsi*

Another beautiful creature despite a somewhat more dull appearance, it was recorded on 2 days in Ranomafana NP where a family group was seen with a youngster in attendance, causing some great interaction and playing before they leapt away into the distance.

#### **Verreaux's Sifaka**

*Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

The common southern Sifaka, these amusing creatures are famous for their comical, bipedal ‘dance’ as they cross open ground. They were recorded at Berenty Lemur Reserve and Zombitse forest.

#### **Coquerel's Sifaka**

*Propithecus verreauxi coquereli*

We enjoyed great close-up sightings of this species in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Indri***Indri indri*

We first heard this species at our lodgings in Anjozorobe and Andasibe. After searching for them we then had superb close-up views of these, the largest of the lemurs, in Analamazaotra. Hearing the family group vocalize nearby is certainly a memory that will be fondly cherished.

## **Annotated list of Amphibians and Reptiles**

Glaw, F. & Vences, M. *A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*; Third Edition (2007). Insect names were derived from various sources.

### **“True Frogs” Ranidae**

**Vohiparara Leaf-litter Frog***Aglyptodactylus vohiparara*

During our time at Ranomafana National Park we found this species on the higher Vohiparara ridge that the frog is named for.

**Green Tree Frog***Boophis viridis*

This elegant amphibian was recorded on night walks near Analamazaotra.

**Madagascar Tree Frog***Boophis madagascariensis*

This fairly common and large species was seen in Ranomafana NP and near Andasibe.

**Grandidier’s Leaf Frog***Mantidactylus grandidieri*

A single individual was seen looking over a leaf, quite high up on a tree in Ranomafana NP.

**Painted Mantella***Mantella madagascariensis*

This fantastic multi-coloured frog was found in the leaf litter of Mantadia NP.

*Guibemantis pulcher*

Another attractive little that makes its home in pandanus plants, we found many around Analamazaotra.

### **Land Tortoises Testudinidae**

**Spider Tortoise***Pyxis arachnoides*

This good-looking small testudin was spotted in a patch of Spiny Forest near Berenty.

### **Crocodiles Crocodylidae**

**Nile Crocodile***Crocodylus niloticus*

This ancient reptile was seen in good numbers in Lake Ravelobe during our stay in Ankarafantsika NP. 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 our night walk near Analamazaotra Special Reserve we found one of these ‘large’ stump-tailed Chameleons.

**Domergue’s Leaf Chameleon***Brookesia thieli*

We had great views of a single animal walking down the path in Ranomafana and another later in Anjozorobe.

**Short-horned Chameleon***Calumma brevicornis*

This common species was frequently sighted around Andasibe, particularly during night walks.

**Nose-horned Chameleon***Calumma nasuta*

A small species that was seen in the rainforests of Ranomafana NP and Analamazaotra.

- Band-bellied Chameleon** *Calumma gastrotaenia*  
Another small species, this one is brightly coloured animal was seen a number of times at Ranomafana, Anjozorobe and Andasibe.
- O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon** *Calumma oshaughnessyi*  
We enjoyed views of this large species in Ranomafana NP.
- Glaw's Chameleon** *Calumma glawi*  
Another small species, recorded on a night walk in Ranomafana NP.
- Blue-legged Chameleon** *Calumma crypticum*  
Seen very well and at close quarters during a Ranomafana night walk.
- Tusked Chameleon** *Furcifer balteatus*  
A single animal was seen in Ranomafana NP.
- Rhinoceros Chameleon** *Furcifer rhinoceratus*  
We had good looks at 2 animals this superb chameleon in forest edge around Andasibe.
- Oustalet's Chameleon** *Furcifer oustaleti*  
The largest chameleon (tied with Parson's) of the island – we had views of a female in Zombitse Forest and then more animals around Ankarafantsika NP.
- White-lipped Chameleon** *Furcifer wilsii*  
We had good looks at this superb chameleon in Ranomafana NP.
- Warty Chameleon** *Furcifer verrucosus*  
Another great chameleon, both by looks and size – best views at a roadside mango plantation near the ferry south of Berenty.
- Side-striped Chameleon** *Furcifer lateralis*  
A really gaudy species that was seen well and in fairly good numbers around Anjozorobe.

### Iguanas Iguanidae

- Three-eyed Lizard** *Chalarodon madagascariensis*  
This attractive reptile was seen almost daily in the drier southern areas at Ifaty, Berenty and Zombitse.
- Cuvier's Iguanid** *Oplurus cuvieri*  
We observed many of these striking iguanids in Ankarafantsika NP, especially in the camp grounds.
- Double-banded Iguanid** *Oplurus cyclurus*  
We observed a single animal in our hotel grounds at Ifaty.
- Four-striped Iguanid** *Oplurus quadrimaculatus*  
Less impressive than the other Oplurus lizards, this was seen well in the Isalo area, near our lodge.

### Geckos Gekkonidae

- Painted Big-headed Gecko** *Paroedura pictus*  
We found this species in the Gallery Forest at Berenty Lemur Reserve.
- Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko** *Uroplatus sikorae*  
A total of 3 of these amazing animals were seen in Anjozorobe and then the forests near Andasibe.
- Sameti's Leaf-tailed Gecko** *Uroplatus sametii*  
We observed this cryptic species on the edge of Ranomafana NP.
- Fantastic Leaf-tailed Gecko** *Uroplatus phantasticus*  
A single lizard was seen during a night walk in Anjozorobe.
- Southern Bark Gecko** *Lygodactylus tuberosus*  
These small reptiles are fairly common on plants and buildings at Berenty.
- Guibe's Bark Gecko** *Lygodactylus guibei*  
A camouflage master, it was found in Zombitse Forest.

**Madagascar Day Gecko***Phelsuma madagascariensis*

These beautiful day gecko was found once at Ankarafantsika NP.

**Brown Day Gecko***Phelsuma mutabilis*

2 of these different members of this genus were seen in the Zombitse Forest.

**Lineated Day Gecko***Phelsuma lineata*

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

**Four-spotted Day Gecko***Phelsuma quadriocellata*

Another lovely day gecko that was seen on 2 consecutive days in Ranomafana NP.

**Standing's Day Gecko***Phelsuma standingi*

These large, attractive reptiles were spotted in the Zombitse Forest.

**Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae****Lesser Plated Lizard***Tracheloptychus madagascariensis*

Fairly frequently encountered near Ifaty, La Tabla and Berenty.

**Madagascar Plated Lizard***Zonosaurus madagascarensis*

A few of these large reptilians were seen in Isalo and near Andasibe before we had good numbers and great views in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Gravenhorst's Skink***Mabuya gravenhorstii*

This delicate skink was found in Ranomafana NP and Zombitse forest.

**Elegant Skink***Mabuya elegans*

A skink sporting a small red spot on its neck, seen well in Ankarafantsika NP.

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

One seen on a night walk in Ranomafana NP, another basking in Analamazaotra.

**Madagascar Ground Boa***Acrantophis madagascarensis*

A highlight on the final morning in Ankarafantsika NP; we had a few birds mobbing this snake, moving just metres from us in the camouflaging leafy groundcover.

**Typical Snakes Colubridae****Lesser Hog-nosed Snake***Leioheterodon modestus*

A relaxed individual allowed for a close approach in the campsite in Ankarafantsika NP.

**Red-bellied Snake***Liophidium rhodogaster*

This beautiful, but foul-smelling species was seen well in Ranomafana NP.

*Liopholidophis sp.*

A well-camouflaged and hard to identify snake, seen in Ranomafana NP.

*Stenophis betsileoensis*

Another beautiful species seen during our night walk in Ranomafana.

**Mahafaly Sand Snake***Mimophis mahfalensis*

Another cryptically coloured species that was seen well in Zombitse Forest.

**Lateral Water Snake***Bibilava lateralis*

A snake we recorded on 3 occasions on the edge of wetland areas, twice in Anjozorobe.

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