



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Madagascar Highlights II

*16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010 (15 days)*

### Trip Report



**Trip report compiled by tour leader Glen Valentine**

### Tour Summary

Our second of two Madagascar Highlights tours this year kicked off in the capital city of Antananarivo where we immediately struck out for the nearby wetland of Lake Alarobia. This small, privately owned piece of land supports a fairly large array of waterbirds, most important of which is the small number of Malagasy Pond Herons that breed here annually. We enjoyed great views of several immaculate

adult Pond Herons in full breeding plumage and also found a host of more widespread species like Hottentot and Red-billed Teal, White-faced Whistling Duck and scores of Dimorphic Egrets, Black Herons and Squacco Herons, as well as Red-knobbed Coot, a surprisingly scarce bird in Madagascar. We also encountered our first Malagasy Kingfishers, Olive Bee-eaters and Broad-billed Rollers of the trip and we were delighted to find two quality endemics here, namely a single Madagascar Grebe and a fabulous female Malagasy Harrier that quartered over the wetland for quite some time, forcing the multitude of waterbirds into flight as it did so.



From Tana we flew immediately down south to Tulear via Fort Dauphin and proceeded to the coastal town of Ifaty. Here we spent some time in the beautiful and unique spiny forest, a habitat that supports a feast of mouth-watering endemics found nowhere else on earth! Our morning traversing the maze of trails in this dry woodland was very memorable and enjoyable indeed and we came up with all the major targets, plus a host of other great sightings. Subdesert Mesite and Long-tailed Ground Roller, two of Madagascar's most localized and acclaimed endemics, stole the show for most of the group, while Archbold's *Newtonia*, *Thamnornis* with its

bizarre call, Sickle-billed, Chabert's, Red-tailed and Lafresnaye's Vangas, Running, Red-capped (Green-capped) and Crested Couas, Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, Madagascar Hoopoe and Madagascar Buttonquail were all enjoyed during our morning excursion. We were also extremely fortunate to have one of the most intimate encounters with a Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec, while a Petter's Sportive Lemur on the day roost was also a major highlight.

Whilst in the area we took some time to explore the grasslands and wetlands near Ifaty, and these habitats produced some good birds like the rare Madagascar Plover, White-throated Rail, Lesser Sand Plover and beautiful Grey-headed Lovebird.



Leaving Ifaty we drove back south past Tulear and east to the obvious landmark of La Table where our search for the exceptionally range-restricted Red-shouldered Vanga and Verreaux's Coua began. It wasn't long before we located both species and were treated to terrific views of these sought-after endemics. One of the highlights of visiting the south-west of Madagascar is doing a boat trip to the offshore island of Nosy Ve. This small island just off of Tulear supports a reasonably sized breeding population of the exquisite Red-tailed Tropicbird. Here one is able to approach these beautiful birds on foot and amazingly close-up views and unbeatable photographic

opportunities are literally guaranteed! Apart from the tropicbirds we also found a small flock of Crab-Plover, an extremely striking bird that is placed in its own unique monotypic family. Madagascar remains one of the best places on earth to see this species. A short snorkelling session was also enjoyed



by some of the group, while the non-snorkelers enjoyed some down-time relaxing in the shade on the beach. After a scrumptious seafood lunch and brilliant views of a male Littoral Rock Thrush we headed back to Tulear for our final night in the south-west.

The acclaimed and world-famous Berenty Lemur Reserve beckoned, and we were soon on the road to the reserve after our flight to Fort Dauphin. We settled into our comfortable accommodation and excitement mounted for the next full day in this prolific wildlife sanctuary. Berenty literally teams with lemurs and we were permanently entertained by Ring-tails, Verreaux's Sifakas and Brown Lemurs. We were also fortunate to have several sifakas doing their bi-pedal locomotion as groups cross the barren areas to their feeding grounds near the lodge. Bird-wise Berenty is a must-visit reserve as it supports good populations of several localized and scarce endemics. All of the area's specialties showed very well during our stay here and these included Giant Coua, White-browed Owl, Torotoroka Scops Owl, Madagascar Sandgrouse, uncommon and highly elusive Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk and Frances's Sparrowhawk. Night walks at Berenty are fantastic, and besides the two endemic owls that are seen on most walks, we encountered an array of fabulous night-life in the form of White-footed Sportive, Grey and Grey-brown Mouse Lemurs, Plain Big-headed Gecko, Warty Chameleon and Flatid Leaf Bugs. *En route* back to Fort Dauphin we found the very special Banded Kestrel perched up on a tall didierea tree, a fitting end to our time spent in the south-east of the Island.



We left Berenty with spirits high and there was much anticipation as we neared the eastern rainforest sites of Perinet and Mantadia. A whole host of different species occur in these forests and we had the next four full days to get to grips with the amazing fauna of the area. Mantadia is THE place for ground rollers and we found and obtained brilliant views of all four rainforest ground rollers during our time here! Our first ground roller was Scaly Ground Roller, an incredibly intricately patterned bird that was found at its nest and provided us with unbeatable views! Later on we found the outrageously colourful Pitt-like Ground Roller that eventually showed

very well on several occasions. The often difficult-to-find Short-legged Ground Roller was next and amazingly we found this species at Perinet, where it was not previously known to occur and our record here represents the first confirmed sighting for the reserve! Our final ground roller of the tour, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, was finally found on our last full day in the area after hiking for hours up the ridges in Mantadia National Park. We eventually located a calling bird just off the main road through the Park that showed remarkably well, a very special and unbelievably beautiful bird that was well worth the effort!



Our time spent in the rainforests of Mantadia National Park and Perinet Special Reserve produced a further array of wonderful and extremely memorable sightings of birds, mammals and reptiles alike. We enjoyed many sightings of the sensationally beautiful Velvet Asity, while the shy and secretive Madagascar Wood Rail also showed exceptionally well. We had no trouble finding other sought-after species such as Madagascar Flufftail, Meller's Duck, Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Red-fronted and stunning Blue Couas, sensationally beautiful Collared Nightjar, outrageous Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Starling, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher and the bizarre Crossley's Babbler. Flock specialists such as Red-tailed, Hook-billed, White-headed, Blue, Tylas and Nuthatch Vangas, Dark Newtonia, Ward's Flycatcher, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Common Sunbird-Asity and Nelicourvi Weaver also showed extremely well on several occasions, and we managed to pick up most of the understory skulkers, including White-throated Oxylobes, Long-billed Berniera, Spectacled and Grey-crowned Tetrakas and the very scarce Wedge-tailed Jery. We also found Rainforest Scops Owl on its day roost, while Madagascar Owl presented itself very nicely on a night walk. These night walks in the reserve's secondary forest generally proved to be very rewarding and we found a host of creatures that would otherwise be impossible to see during the day. Goodman's Mouse, Furry-eared Dwarf and Weasel Sportive Lemurs, as well as Eastern Avahi were all encountered



during these nocturnal excursions; while delightful reptiles such as Greater Stump-tailed, Short-horned, Nose-horned and Band-bellied Chameleons, and Sikora Leaf-tailed Geckos entertained us as well. The reserves of Perinet and Mantadia are brilliant places to see diurnal lemurs and we managed to find Diademed Sifaka, Eastern Grey Bamboo, Red-bellied and Common Brown Lemurs as well as several groups of Indri, with which we had some very special and intimate encounters. Other interesting species that were encountered during in the rainforest included Giraffe-necked Weevil, exquisite Painted Mantella, the rare and seldom recorded Will's Chameleon and the massive Tree Boa, which was found on a few occasions.

Alas, it was time to say goodbye to the Eastern Rainforest and the very special Island of Madagascar, and so we made our way back to Tana. *En route* we stopped to pick up Madagascar Pratincole, which showed well in the telescope, before arriving at our very comfortable and now familiar hotel near the airport in Tana.

All in all we had yet another very successful and enjoyable trip to the "Laboratory of Evolution" – Madagascar! A total of 155 birds, 21 mammals and 23 reptiles and amphibians were seen during this quick-fire trip around the Island, of which most of these species are found nowhere else on earth. It's therefore no surprise that Madagascar is an absolute must-visit destination for any naturalist or wildlife enthusiast....



**Photo credits (in order of appearance):** Long-tailed Ground Roller, Ring-tailed Lemur, Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec, Madagascar Wood Rail, Scaly Ground Roller, Velvet Asity and Diademed Sifaka. All photographs taken by Glen Valentine on Rockjumper's Madagascar Highlights II 2010 tour.

## Annotated List of Birds

### 159 species recorded (155 seen and 4 heard only)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List of Birds of the World Recommended English Names V2.5. 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

### Guineafowl Numididae

#### **Helmeted Guineafowl (I)**

*Numida meleagris*

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

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

### Ducks & Geese Anatidae

#### **White-faced Whistling Duck**

*Dendrocygna viduata*

This widespread species was seen in good numbers at Lac Alarobia and at the wetlands south of Ifaty.

#### **Knob-billed (Comb) Duck**

*Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Several birds were seen at Lac Alarobia in Tana.

#### **Meller's Duck (E)**

*Anas melleri*

A pair of these scarce ducks was seen at a small pond in Mantadia NP. This species is very seldom recorded on this route!

#### **Red-billed Teal (Duck)**

*Anas erythrorhyncha*

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

#### **Hottentot Teal**

*Anas hottentota*

We first found two birds at Lake Alarobia with further encounters at the wetlands south of Ifaty.

### Grebes Podicipedidae

#### **Little Grebe (Dabchick)**

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Small numbers were found on the wetlands south of Ifaty.

#### **Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)**

*Tachybaptus pelzelinii*



Our first sighting was of a single bird at Lake Alarobia. Thereafter we found a pair at 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 all enjoyed fantastic repeat views of many of these elegant birds at their nesting sites on the island of Nosy Ve.

### Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

#### **Madagascar (Crested) Ibis (E)**

*Plegadis falcinellus*

We were exceptionally lucky to have a single adult bird fly over our heads while birding in Perinet Special Reserve.

### Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae

#### **Black-crowned Night-Heron**

*Nycticorax nycticorax*

This extremely widespread species was encountered in the Tana area.

#### **Striated Heron**

*Butorides striatus*

Small numbers were seen in the south of the Island.

*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*

Good numbers were seen at Lake Alarobia and Tsimbazaza Zoo with further sightings at wetlands in the south of the Island.

#### **Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V)**

*Ardeola idea*

A striking species in breeding plumage, it was seen on our first day at Lac Alarobia.

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

#### **[Western] Cattle Egret**

*Bubulcus ibis*

Common throughout the tour and recorded on most days.

#### **Grey Heron**

*Ardea cinerea*

We found a few of these birds at their nesting site near San Augustine.

#### **Humblot's Heron (E) (V)**

*Ardea humbloti*

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

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

#### **Purple Heron**

*Ardea purpurea*

Our first sighting was of a bird in flight at a wetland south of Ifaty. We later encountered this species in the Perinet area.

#### **[Western] Great Egret**

*Ardea alba*

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

#### **Black Heron**

*Egretta ardesiaca*

Sightings were had at various scattered wetlands throughout the tour.

#### **Dimorphic Egret**

*Egretta dimorpha*

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar with peak numbers at Lake Alarobia in Tana.

*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*

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

### Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

#### **Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (E)**

*Aviceda madagascariensis*

We were treated to brilliant views of a pair of these rare, endemic raptors at Berenty with a further sighting in Mantadia NP.

#### **Black (Yellow-billed) Kite**

*Milvus migrans*

A fairly common bird in Madagascar that was seen throughout the south of the Island as well as in the Tana area.

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

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

#### **Malagasy (Reunion) Harrier (E)**

*Circus macroscelus*

This rare, endemic raptor is very seldom recorded and we were extremely lucky to have seen a female quartering over Lake Alarobia in the late afternoon.

#### **Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)**

*Polyboroides radiatus*

This species was unfortunately just heard in Perinet Special Reserve.

#### **Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)**

*Accipiter francesii*

We had brilliant views of this special on a few occasions in Berenty Lemur Reserve and in Perinet Special Reserve.

#### **Madagascar Buzzard (E)**

*Buteo brachypterus*

Seen on many occasions throughout the tour.

### Falcons Falconidae

#### **Malagasy Kestrel (NE)**

*Falco newtoni*

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

#### **Banded Kestrel (E)**

*Falco zoniventris*

This very special and seldom-recorded raptor was seen well in the spiny forest en route from Berenty to Fort Dauphin.

### Mesites Mesitornithidae

#### **Subdesert Mesite (E) (V)**

*Monias benschi*

We enjoyed great views of a female bird in the spiny forest near Ifaty. This is one of Madagascar's most sought-after endemics and always proves to be a trip favorite.

### Flufftails Sarothruridae

#### **Madagascar Flufftail (E)**

*Sarothrura insularis*

Flufftails are notoriously difficult and elusive birds! We did, however, have amazingly close, good views of a fairly co-operative and very responsive male in Mantadia NP. We later encountered a pair feeding in the forest undergrowth while trying for Rufous-headed Ground Roller on our last day in Mantadia. This pair was completely oblivious to our presence and nearly stumbled over our feet on a few occasions. Absolutely mind-blowing!



### Rails & Gallinules Rallidae

**Madagascar Wood Rail (E)** *Canirallus kioloides*

Our encounters with this scarce, shy, rainforest-dwelling species was nothing short of mind-blowing! We had prolonged and intimate encounters with this difficult-to-see species in Mantadia NP. A total of three birds were seen.

**Madagascar Rail (E)** *Rallus madagascariensis*

First sighted in Perinet Special Reserve, which is a very unusual records indeed! Later we found a single bird at a wetland near Mantadia NP.

**White-throated Rail (E)** *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

This species was seen on a few occasions in Perinet. Our first sighting however was en route from Ifaty to Tulear.

*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 species was seen very briefly at a wetland south of Ifaty.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

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

**Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata*

We found a single bird at Lake Alarobia. This species is surprisingly scarce throughout Madagascar.

### Buttonquails Turnicidae

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

We encountered this species on two occasions in the Ifaty area.

### Crab-Plover Dromadidae

**Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola*

We first encountered a single adult bird on a shallow sandspit at the island of Nosy well, which showed really well and later we found a small group of around 15 birds on another stretch of the Island.

### Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

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

### Plovers Charadriidae

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

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

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

The coastal and inland wetlands in the Ifaty and Tulear area produced sightings of this attractive wader.

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

We enjoyed brilliant views of this attractive and scarce endemic in the Ifaty area. This endemic wader is seriously threatened by habitat loss due to development and human encroachment.

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

This beautiful plover was seen in large numbers at wetlands south of Ifaty.

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

A single bird was encountered at a small pool of water to the south of Ifaty.



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

These feisty shorebirds were seen on the beach at Nosy Vé.

**Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*

Small numbers were seen on mudflats in the Ifaty and Tulear area.

**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Several of these plovers were spotted on the mudflats at the Tulear Harbor.

### Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

Mudflats in the Tulear area produced large numbers of this shorebird.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*

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

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*

We found a hand-full of birds on mudflats in the Tulear area.

**Common Sandpiper** *Tringa hypoleucos*

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

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*

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

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*

Small numbers were found on mudflats in the south-west of the Island.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

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

### Couriers & Pratincoles Glareolidae

**Madagascar Pratincole (BE)** *Glareola ocularis*

We found a single bird at the Mangoro River en route from Perinet to Tana.

### Gulls & Terns Laridae

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia*

We observed this large tern on a sandbank on the island of Nosy Ve.

**Swift (Great Crested) Tern** *Sterna bergii*

A hand-full of birds were seen in the Tulear area and on the Nosy Ve boat trip.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*

Good numbers were found on the Nosy Ve boat trip.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Small numbers were encountered on the Nosy Ve boat trip.

### Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

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

We were rewarded with brilliant views of this beautiful endemic species at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

### Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

**Common Pigeon (I)** *Columba livia*

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



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

This species was commonly recorded in various habitats throughout the trip.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*

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

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

This species was seen in flight in the spiny forest near Ifaty in the coral rag scrub near Tulear. The species was also later heard at Berenty and at Perinet.

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

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

**Parrots Psittacidae**

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

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

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

Our first sighting of this species was in the spiny forest near Ifaty with later encounters in Mantadia NP at the end of the trip.

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

This raucous parrot species was seen regularly throughout our trip.

**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*

Berenty Lemur Reserve and the Spiny Forest near Ifaty gave us good sightings of this coua.

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

We were quickly rewarded with excellent views of this extremely localized endemic in the coral rag scrub near Tulear.

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

Our time spent in the Eastern Rainforest at Perinet and Mantadia yielded several good views of this stunning bird.

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

This species was seen at the spiny forest near Ifaty as well as at the Tulear Arboretum.

*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** *Coua reynaudii*

This rainforest species was seen and heard a few times in Perinet Special Reserve.

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

We had amazingly good, close views of this coua in the spiny forest near Ifaty with a further encounter near San Augustin.

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

We all enjoyed fabulous views of this large, attractive endemic at Berenty.

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

Although we heard this difficult species extremely close on a few occasions in Perinet we were unable to obtain a view.



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

One of the most common background calls on the island, we obtained views of this species at Berenty and Mantadia.

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

We had fantastic views of this dry-country species at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

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

Good views of this species were had at Perinet.

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

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

Berenty produced amazing views of this attractive species.

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

Outstanding views were achieved of this often difficult-to-find endemic owl near Perinet.

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

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

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

Outrageously good views were had of two separate pairs in Mantadia NP.

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

We first saw this species in the dry spiny forest near Ifaty with further sightings at Berenty and in the eastern rainforest where the species is more typically encountered.

**African Palm Swift (e)***Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

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

**Alpine Swift***Tachymarptis melba*

We recorded this species on one occasion in Mantadia NP.

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

Recorded at scattered localities with peak numbers at the San Augustine Cliffs south of Tulear.

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

**Little Swift***Apus affinis*

A single bird was encountered during our time in Tana.

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

Good views were had of this bizarre and extremely vocal endemic in the Perinet/Mantadia area.

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

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

Amazingly we found this sought-after endemic in Perinet Special Reserve, which apparently represents



the first confirmed record for the reserve. Later we bumped into a pair right next to the path in Mantadia NP – incredible luck!

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

A pair was feeding chicks at their nest in Mantadia NP and provided us with mind-blowing sightings.

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

Several excellent encounters were had of this gorgeous species in Mantadia NP.

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

Some of the group was rewarded with outstanding views of this exceptionally beautiful but often difficult-to-see ground roller on our last day in Mantadia NP.

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

The Spiny Forest near Ifaty yielded unbeatable views of this extremely range-restricted endemic.

### Kingfishers Alcedinidae

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

Mantadia NP produced a good sighting of this very attractive little forest-interior kingfisher.

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

Recorded at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout the tour.

### Bee-eaters Meropidae

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

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

### Hoopoes Upupidae

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

This species was first noted at the Tsimbazaza Zoo in Tana with further sightings throughout the south of the island. An especially memorable encounter was had at Berenty!

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

### Asities Philepittidae

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

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

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

Both males and females were seen, albeit briefly, in Mantadia NP.

### Vangas Vangidae

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

Several birds were seen very well in the Perinet/Mantadia forests and in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

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

After an intensive search we managed to locate three birds, a male, female and juvenile male in the coral rag scrub near Tulear. This species was only recently discovered and described in this remote part of the island and its global distribution remains tiny.

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

First seen at Berenty, it was later observed in Perinet where we located a nest.



**Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)**

*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

This large, noisy vanga was seen very well in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

**Sickle-billed Vanga (E)**

*Falcoelea palliata*

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

**White-headed Vanga (E)**

*Artamella viridis*

We found this species on single occasions in Mantadia NP and in Perinet Special Reserve.

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

*Leptopterus chabert*

A rather attractive species that was regularly recorded at most sites throughout the tour.

**Blue Vanga (NE)**

*Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

We enjoyed fantastic views of this outrageously gorgeous vanga in Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

*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.*

**Tylas Vanga (E)**

*Tylas eduardi*

This species was encountered in both Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

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

**Nuthatch Vanga (E)**

*Hypositta corallirostris*

We enjoyed several good views of this often tricky-to-find vanga in the eastern rainforest at Perinet/Mantadia..

**Dark Newtonia (E)**

*Newtonia amphichroa*

This ridge specialist was seen well in Mantadia NP.

**Common Newtonia (E)**

*Newtonia brunneicauda*

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

**Archbold's Newtonia (E)**

*Newtonia archboldi*

Good views were had of this localized endemic in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

**Ward's Flycatcher (E)**

*Pseudobias wardi*

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

**Crossley's Babbler (E)**

*Mystacornis crossleyi*

Truly one of Madagascar's gorgeous endemic birds, this stunner was seen exceptionally well in Mantadia NP.

**Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae**

**Madagascar (Ashy) Cuckoo-shrike (E)**

*Coracina cinerea*

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

**Drongos Dicruridae**

**Crested Drongo (NE)**

*Dicrurus forficatus*

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

**Monarchs Monarchidae**

**Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE)**

*Terpsiphone mutata*

We enjoyed multiple sightings of all the various colour morphs of this beautiful species during the trip.

**Crows & Jays Corvidae**



**Pied Crow***Corvus albus*

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

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

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

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

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

**Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae****Mascarene Martin (BE)***Phedina borbonica*

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

**Brown-throated (Plain) Martin***Riparia paludicola*

A single bird was seen in flight en route from Tana to Perinet.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Several of these migrant swallows were seen skimming over a wetland to the south of Ifaty.

**Reed Warblers & Allies Megaluridae****Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)***Nesillas typica*

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

**[Subdesert Brush Warbler] (E)***Nesillas lantzii*

The Spiny Forest at Ifaty and San Augustine area produced this nondescript species.

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

**Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E)***Acrocephalus newtoni*

Lac Alarobia and the wetlands near Ifaty yielded sightings of this common endemic.

**Grassbirds & Allies Megaluridae****Brown Emutail (E)***Dromaeocercus brunneus*

Another very difficult species to see! We unfortunately only heard this ridge-top specialist while searching for Rufous-headed Ground Roller.

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

This species was seen on two separate occasions in Mantadia NP. A very difficult bird to see well!

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

We had several sightings of this understorey species.

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

This ridge specialist was only heard on two occasions in Mantadia NP.

**Wedge-tailed Jerry (E)***Hartertula flavoviridis*

This scarce, secretive endemic was seen only once in Mantadia NP where it was associated with other understorey forest species.



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

A very charismatic endemic that is restricted to spiny forest in the south. We enjoyed great scope views of this species near Ifaty.

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

The rainforests sites of Perinet & Mantadia held views of this understory dweller, which included a pair on the nest in Mantadia NP.

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

This very uncommon and often elusive endemic was seen well in Mantadia NP on our last day there.

**Rand's Warbler (E)***Randia pseudozosterops*

We had good scope views of calling birds in Perinet and Mantadia National Parks.

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

This species was seen at most localities on the tour.

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

A rather scarce species that was seen on a few occasions in Perinet Special Reserve and in Mantadia NP.

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

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

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

Commonly recorded in suitable habitat during the tour.

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

A very attractive species that was regularly recorded during the second half of our trip.

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

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

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

An uncommon endemic that was seen on a few occasions in the eastern rainforest.

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

This bold and confiding species was observed on most days during the tour.

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

This species has been recently split from African Stonechat and is now endemic to Madagascar. It was fairly commonly encountered in open habitats of the eastern highlands.

**Littoral Rock Thrush (E)***Pseudocossyphus imerinus*

One male bird allowed good, extended scope views in the dune scrub near San Augustine, south of Tulear.

**Forest Rock Thrush (E)***Monticola sharpie*

A single male was observed well in stunted ridge-top forest in Mantadia NP.



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

One of Madagascar's most common species, this sunbird was seen almost daily.

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

This attractive sunbird is much scarcer than the previous species and was only recorded in the eastern rainforest on a few occasions.

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

This very attractive weaver was regularly encountered during our forays into the forests at Perinet and Mantadia.

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

Seen almost daily in the arid southern region of the island.

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

This species was commonly recorded throughout the trip with several stunning males being encountered in the south-west of the island.

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

This elusive species was only seen once in Perinet Special Reserve when a female bird was encountered.

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

Several small flocks were encountered at various scattered localities during the tour.

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

An attractive endemic, it was found at most highland sites, being first seen at our lodgings in Tana.

**Annotated list of Mammals****21 species seen**

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

**Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae****Madagascar Flying Fox***Pteropus rufus*

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

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

We were incredibly lucky to have seen this species during the day in the spiny forest near Ifaty where we had amazing views of a singleton.



**Lowland Streaked Tenrec***Hemicentetes semispinosus*

Some of the group was lucky to observe this species at Mantadia NP.

**Old World Rats & Mice Muridae****Eastern Red Forest Rat***Nesomys rufus*

Some of the group had a view of this rainforest-dwelling rat in Mantadia NP.

**Rat sp.***Eliurus sp.*

An unidentifiable species of rat was seen on one of the night walks near Perinet Special Reserve.

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

This delicate little critter was seen exceptionally well in the riparian woodland in Berenty Lemur Reserve.

**Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur***Microcebus griseorufus*

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

**Goodman's Mouse Lemur***Microcebus lehilahytsara*

Brief encounters were had of this lively species on night walks near Perinet.

**Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur***Cheirogaleus crossleyi*

We spotted a couple of these creatures on night walks near Perinet with a further encounter right at our lodge.

**Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae****Weasel Sportive Lemur***Lepilemur mustelinus*

This scarce, nocturnal mammal was seen well on a night walk near Perinet. A very good find!

**Petter's Sportive Lemur***Lepilemur petteri*

A sportive lemur was seen during the day near Ifaty and almost definitely represents this newly described species. However, according to Mammals of Madagascar by Garbutt, neither petteri nor leucopus should occur there. More work obviously needs to be done on Madagascar's lemurs.

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

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

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

Our time spent in the eastern rainforest at Mantadia and Perinet yielded sightings of this cute and gregarious species.

**Ring-tailed Lemur***Lemur catta*

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

**Red-bellied Lemur***Eulemur rubriventer*

Fantastic, close encounters were had of this beautiful lemur in Mantadia NP.

**Common Brown Lemur***Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

A wonderful family group was seen near Perinet Special Reserve.

**Brown Lemur***Eulemur fulvus*

Brown Lemurs made up of hybrid Common and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs were commonly seen in Berenty Lemur Reserve. These species were introduced there some time ago and are not native to the area.



### Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae

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

*Avahi laniger*

We initially saw three on a night walk near Perinet with a further sighting of two animals on a day roost in Perinet Special Reserve.

#### **Diademed Sifaka**

*Propithecus diadema diadema*

This large, attractive and endearing lemur was seen on several occasions in Mantadia NP.

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

*Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

The comical, bipedal locomotion of this lemur is undoubtedly one of the mammalian highlights of any trip to Madagascar. It was seen daily at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

#### **Indri**

*Indri indri*

We were treated to extremely close up and intimate encounters with these regal mammals on several occasions in both Perinet Special Reserve and in Mantadia NP. An especially memorable sighting was had on our last morning in Perinet when we had a troop calling and interacting right around us for a prolonged period.

## Annotated list of Amphibians and Reptiles

### 24 species recorded (23 seen and 1 heard only)

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

### “True” Frogs Ranidae

*Boophis grandidieri*

This massive frog was heard on numerous occasions in the eastern rainforest.

#### **Madagascar Tree Frog**

*Boophis madagascariensis*

This species was seen on a night walk near Perinet.

#### **Painted Mantella**

*Mantella madagascariensis*

One of the highlights of the trip! This strikingly patterned species was seen very well in Mantadia NP.

### Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

#### **Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon**

*Brookesia superciliaris*

This seldom-recorded chameleon was seen well on a night walk near Perinet.

#### **Short-horned Chameleon**

*Calumma brevicornis*

Several of these medium-sized chameleons were seen in the Perinet area.

#### **Nose-horned Chameleon**

*Calumma nasuta*

This miniscule chameleon was found on one of the night walks in the Perinet area.

#### **Band-bellied Chameleon**

*Calumma gastrotaenia*

This small reptile was seen well on night walks in the Perinet area.

#### **Will's Chameleon**

*Furcifer willsii*

A very seldom-seen and beautiful chameleon that was seen on two occasions, once in Mantadia NP and again at the entrance to Perinet Special Reserve.

#### **Warty Chameleon**

*Furcifer verrucosus*

This large, aggressive chameleon was seen on our night walk in the spiny forest at Berenty.



**Iguanas Iguanidae****Three-eyed Lizard***Chalarodon madagascariensis*

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

**Double-banded Iguanid***Oplurus cyclurus*

This large reptile was seen on a few occasions in the Tulear/Ifaty region of south-western Madagascar.

**Geckos Gekkonidae****Plain Big-headed Gecko***Paroedura bastardi*

This beautiful and seldom-encountered reptile was seen exceptionally well on a night walk in the riparian woodland in Berenty Reserve.

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

This fabulous reptile was seen amazingly well on two separate night walks in the Perinet area.

**Mercator Tropical House Gecko***Hemidactylus mercatorius*

Sighted at a few lodgings around the country.

**Bark Gecko sp.***Lygodactylus sp.*

Lygodactylus bark geckos were seen on numerous occasions in the south of the country but it is not possible to identify the different species in the field.

**Lineated Day Gecko***Phelsuma lineata*

These beautiful day geckos were found in the eastern rainforest.

**Pale-bellied Day Gecko***Phelsuma leiogastor*

This species was seen on several occasions in the south of the island.

**Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae****Madagascar Plated Lizard***Zonosaurus madagascariensis*

A commonly recorded reptile in the eastern rainforest.

**Bouton's Skink***Cryptoblepharus boutonii*

This bizarre-shaped skink was seen commonly at the Tulear Harbor.

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

We found this species on a few occasions.

**Elegant Skink***Mabuya elegans*

This delicate skink was observed at several scattered localities during the tour.

**Boas Boidae****Madagascar Tree Boa***Sanzinia madagascariensis*

This huge snake was seen on a few occasions in Perinet Special Reserve and surrounds.

**Typical Snakes Colubridae****Mahafaly Sand Snake***Mimophis mahfalensis*

We encountered this species only once at our hotel on the beach near Ifaty.

**Snake sp.**

Some of the group found an interesting looking snake on a night walk near Perinet but the exact species could not be determined for sure.



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