



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Indian Ocean Islands

Comoros & Mayotte

12th October to 20th October 2022 (9 days)



Mayotte Scops Owl by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

Sprinkled on the tropical seas off East Africa are a series of islands where paradise is defined! On our exploration of these idyllic isles, we will search for birds in the most spectacular scenery, be it rugged, forest-clad volcanic peaks, verdant forest patches or white, shell-laden beaches, fringed by warm water and teeming coral reefs. Island wildlife is generally susceptible to extinction and the islands of this area are no exception, with birds like the unfortunate Dodo serving as stark reminders of Mans' heavy hand in these sensitive environments.

The Comoros form an archipelago of volcanic islands off the central-east African coast. They are divided between the Union of the Comoros, a sovereign nation formed by the three islands of Grande Comoro, Anjoua & Mohéli, and the French overseas department of Mayotte. The vast evergreen forests that once dominated these islands have largely been removed leaving a few remaining pockets of pristine habitat boasting roughly 24 endemic species (and likely to reach a staggering 40 with further research). The addition of incredible scenery, a series of easily approachable active volcanoes and particularly friendly locals have made these islands an enticing and rewarding experience. We welcome you to join us as we island-hop with binoculars in hand on our quest to find the birds of these heavenly Indian Ocean isles.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Moroni, Grande Comoro (Njazidja)
Day 2	Mount Karthala
Day 3	Mount Karthala and Salamini
Day 4	Moroni to Moheli (Mwali)
Day 5	Moheli to Anjouan (Nzwani)
Day 6	Baramtsanga & Moya Jungle
Day 7	Anjouan to Mayotte and transfer to Grande-Terre
Day 8	Pic Combani
Day 9	Grande-Terre to Petit-Terre and final departures



TOUR MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Moroni, Grande Comoro (Njazidja). On arrival in the Comoros, we shall be transferred to our hotel before setting out for an afternoon of birding. Our bird list is likely to start ticking over immediately, with Pied Crow and possibly even Madagascan Spinetail overhead. Having gotten ourselves settled, we will venture out this afternoon to Iconi and Marabou Lake, a series of freshwater wetlands where we will find a number of waterfowl, targeting the near endemic Malagasy Kingfisher, Malagasy Pond, Striated, Squacco and Black-crowned Night Herons, possibly a vagrant Humblot's Heron or Dimorphic Egret, Great Egret, Little Grebe and a chance for the odd Great or Lesser Frigatebird amongst others, before returning to our hotel for the evening.



Karthala Scops Owl by Daniel Keith Danckwerts

Day 2: Mount Karthala. Today is dedicated to exploring the fabled Mount Karthala. Setting off early from Mvouni village, we shall hike slowly up the mountains, initially passing through fallow fields and secondary forest before reaching primary forest at just over 1 000m above sea level.

The early part of the morning will no doubt be taken up with sightings of Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher (ssp: *comorensis*), Malagasy Black Swift, African Palm Swift,



Kirk's White-eye by Dubi Shapiro

Malagasy Green Sunbird (ssp: *moebii*), **Grand Comoro Bulbul**, **Comoros Fody** (ssp: *cosobrina*), the near-endemic Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, **Kirk's White-eye**, Comoros Blue Pigeon, Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp: *griveaudi*), Cuckoo Roller (Grand Comoro Cuckoo Roller, ssp: *gracilis*), introduced Tambourine Dove, **Comoros Cuckooshrike** (ssp: *cucullata*) and **Humblot's Sunbird** (ssp: *humbloti*).

As we reach primary forest our target species change completely, with both **Humblot's Flycatcher** and **Comoros Thrush** (ssp: *comorensis*) being relatively common. We ascend higher up Mount Karthala, passing through a diverse range of habitats from moss lined forest paths to broken heath where we are sure to find the common, endemic sub-species of African Stonechat (ssp: *voeltzkowi*). The highest reaches of the mountain support one of our primary targets, the endemic **Karthala White-**



eye. Whilst searching for the white-eye, we will no doubt also come across Madagascan Spinetail and Greater Vasa Parrot. We will remain in situ till darkness falls, giving ourselves the best chance of finding the near mythical, Critically Endangered **Karthala Scops Owl**. After what we hope is a successful owling session, we will return to Moroni for the remainder of the night.

Day 3: Mount Karthala and Salamini. Our birding plans this morning will depend on what species we still require on Mount Karthala. In the afternoon, we shall make our way to a known **Grand Comoro Drongo** stakeout. Surprisingly, this is one of the trickiest endemics on the island and we shall hope to have a little luck on our side. While searching for the Drongo, we also have good chances of seeing **Comoros Olive Pigeon** and further sightings of **Humblot’s Sunbird** and **Comoros Fody**.

Day 4: Moroni to Moheli (Mwali). Today we depart Grand Comoro and take a short flight to Moheli, or Mwali as it is locally known. Our birding will be largely dependent on the time of our arrival, but we certainly expect to be out this afternoon at Miringoni, searching for the endemic **Comoros Green Pigeon**, **Moheli Brush Warbler (Benson’s Brush Warbler)** and the local form of **Comoros Thrush** (ssp: *moheliensis*). We shall also search for the variant sub-species of Malagasy Brush Warbler, which is rather confusingly referred to as ‘Moheli Brush Warbler’ by some authorities.



Mayotte Drongo
by Daniel Keith Danckwerts



Comoros Olive Pigeon by Dubi Shapiro

With the aid of some local knowledge, we should be able to find the highly sought after, endemic **Moheli Scops Owl** on its day roost, alternatively, we shall spend time this evening searching of this species. While exploring the area we may also encounter an inquisitive Mongoose Lemur or two.

Day 5: Moheli to Anjouan (Nzwani). Today we have some more time to search for any species we may be missing such as **Comoros Green Pigeon**, **Humblot’s Sunbird** or Malagasy Turtle Dove (**Comoro Turtle Dove**, ssp: *comorensis*) before departing on a ferry to Anjouan, or Nzwani as it is locally known. While on the ferry, we shall spend our time searching for any pelagic species of interest such as Lesser Frigatebird, Masked Booby or even Persian Shearwater.

Of the Comoros Archipelago, Anjouan has suffered the most from deforestation, with only the steepest mountain slopes having any intact primary forest cover. As a result, one of our primary target species for the island, the



Critically Endangered **Anjouan Scops Owl** is rather challenging to find. We will thus dedicate a fair amount of our time, especially in the evenings and early mornings to finding this small predator.

On arrival, we shall check into our local hotel and bird the local environs for the endemic **Anjouan Sunbird** and **Anjouan Brush Warbler**, before heading out to Lac Dzianlandzé this afternoon for our first foray into the forest for **Anjouan Scops Owl**. Other species we expect to find around Lac Dzianlandzé include Malagasy White-eye (Anjouan White-eye, ssp: *anjuanensis*), Comoros Thrush (ssp: *bewsheri*) and Malagasy Harrier.

Day 6: Baramtsanga & Moya Jungle. We have a full day to explore the Baramtsanga and Moya Jungle areas, searching for any target species we may have missed yesterday, or simply getting improved views of desirable individuals.

No doubt a highlight of the day will be the long streamer-tailed Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (Pale Paradise Flycatcher, ssp: *vulpina*), Crested Drongo (ssp: *potior*), **Comoros Fody** (Anjouan Fody, ssp: *anjuanensis*), Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp: *pusillus*), Cuckoo Roller (Anjouan Cuckoo Roller, ssp: *intermedius*), **Anjouan Sunbird**, Malagasy Kestrel and Red Fody.

We shall head out again this evening should we not have seen **Anjouan Scops Owl** as yet, for one final attempt at finding this cryptic owl.

Day 7: Anjouan to Mayotte and transfer to Grande-Terre. We take another short flight to the final island destination of the tour, Mayotte. Despite being Comorian in most aspects, Mayotte is a department of France and the infrastructure is markedly superior to what we shall have experienced to date. On arrival in Petit-Terre, the small island hosting the international airport, we shall take a ferry transfer to the mainland, or Grande-Terre. The ferry ride can produce some interesting species, with White-tailed Tropicbird being of particular interest. We shall then drive up to our rural accommodation, a stunning lodge surrounded by rain forest and home to all the endemics we will be searching for – right on our doorstep!



Humblot's Flycatcher
by Dubi Shapiro



Comoros Fody by Dubi Shapiro



We will spend the remainder of the afternoon birding the lodge grounds searching for the near endemic Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp: *brutus*), the striking **Mayotte Drongo**, beautiful **Mayotte Sunbird** and the gregarious **Mayotte White-eye**. We have a good chance of finding **Mayotte Scops Owl** on a day roost, alternatively, we shall search for them later in the evening when they become more active.

Day 8: Pic Combani. We have a full day to bird the lodge grounds for any species we may have missed yesterday. While specifically targeting the endemics, we shall also be looking for any of the island specific sub-species which may include Cuckoo Roller (Anjouan Cuckoo Roller, ssp: *intermedius*) and Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (ssp: *pretiosa*), while we should also have great photographic opportunities for Comoros Blue and Olive Pigeons, near endemic Malagasy Bulbul, Malagasy Pond Heron, Olive Bee-eater, Comoros Fody.

This afternoon we shall head to the nearby Pointe Mahabo to search for **Comoros Fody** (Mayotte Fody, ssp: *algondae*), while also investigating the mudflats in the region for Crab-plover and a handful of other Palearctic waders and *Larids* such as Caspian, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested and Bridled



Mohéli Scops Owl
by Daniel Keith Danckwerts



Comoros Green Sunbird by Dubi Shapiro

Terns, Grey, Common Ringed and Greater Sand Plovers, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Terek, Curlew and Commons Sandpipers, Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone.

We will then return to our fabulous forest accommodation, where we have another chance of finding **Mayotte Scops Owl** should we desire further views.

Day 9: Grande-Terre to Petit-Terre and final departures. All good adventures must come to an end, unfortunately. After breakfast this morning, we shall back to Petit-Terre and onwards to Dzaoudzi–Pamandzi International Airport where the tour will conclude.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 9;
- Bottled drinking water each day;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground and ferry transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips for local guides and services.

The tour fee does not include:

- ANY flights;
- Visa fees;
- Any beverages except bottled water;
- Extra excursions and activities not included in the itinerary;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tiping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters and restaurants) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he and/or any local guide/s or other staff have given you very good service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.



PLEASE NOTE:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kgs for check in luggage and 8kg's for hand luggage.
- **The island of Mayotte is an overseas Department of France (Département de Mayotte), therefore it is necessary to obtain Visa's for both the Union of Comoros and France (Schengen).**
- **Fitness:** This Indian Ocean Islands – Comoros tour requires a good level of fitness, and participants should be in good health to consider this tour. Most of the birding will be done on foot. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Accommodation is mostly of an average standard. On Anjouan and Moheli the hotels are fairly basic.
- Camping is no longer required on this tour.
- We no longer need to hike and camp on Mount Karthala. The prevalence of a forest track up the mountain has allowed us to access and return from the primary birding spots in a 4x4 vehicle.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour does not include any international airfares. The tour departs from Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport, Moroni (IATA: HAH) on day 1. While you are free to arrive at any time on this day, should you wish to join the planned afternoon birding, it would be advisable to arrive in the early morning or preferably a day in advance. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 9 with a transfer to Dzaoudzi–Pamandzi International Airport, Dzaoudzi (IATA: DZA).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport, Moroni (IATA: HAH), on the island of Grand Comoro is the main port of entry for international flights for the start of this tour. Dzaoudzi–Pamandzi International Airport, Dzaoudzi (IATA: DZA) on the island of Mayotte is the main port of exit for international flights departing this tour. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

