



# Madagascar - Tom and Linda Army

7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2007



**Trip Report compiled by James Currie**

## **Tour Summary**

The tour started on the 7<sup>th</sup> November after meeting Tom and Linda at Johannesburg International Airport. We arrived in Tana in the late afternoon and commenced the journey to Perinet, ticking our first selection of egrets and herons in the Tana wetlands. It was dark by the time we arrived at Perinet and we embarked on a short evening walk, hearing both Long-eared Owl and Rainforest Scops Owl. The next morning saw us visiting Perinet Special Reserve where we were treated to superb views of Indri. We spent 3 nights in the Perinet/Mantadia area and visited Mantadia on two consecutive mornings, with the balance of the time being spent at Perinet. Highlights from Mantadia included crippling views of Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, nesting Velvet Asity and Pitta-like and Scaly Ground-Rollers with particularly good looks at the latter species, several good views of Nuthatch Vanga climbing up and down tree trunks, a pair of Madagascar Little Grebes, stunning looks at Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, a greenbul flock that included Grey-crowned, Longbilled and Spectacled Greenbuls with a brief sighting of an unconfirmed Madagascar Yellowbrow, a troop of confiding Diademed Sifakas with Rufous-headed Ground-Roller calling in the background. Highlights from

Perinet included superb close-up views of both Red-breasted Coua and Madagascar Wood Rail, roosting Collared Nightjar, Madagascar Long-eared Owl, skulking Madagascar Flufftail, Red-fronted Coua, nesting Chabert's and White-headed Vangas and a roosting Rainforest Scops Owl.

Next on our itinerary was an evening and morning at Tana. We arrived to a drenched and flooded Tana in the early evening on the 10<sup>th</sup> November, after stopping en route to search a wetland for Grey Emutail. We heard the birds calling but couldn't lure any closer during the heat of the mid afternoon. The next morning we visited Lac Alorobia where we were treated to the impressive breeding plumages of Madagascar and Common Squacco Herons, beautiful Comb Ducks, a single Open-bill Stork and a host of the more common waterfowl.

Leaving the North we travelled south by plane to Tulear. Although Mad Air lost one of our bags, this was successfully retrieved the next day. Lost baggage was certainly not going to stop us visiting the sacred island of Nosy Ve the next morning. Our main targets here were Crab Plover, Red-tailed Tropicbird, Humblot's Heron and Littoral Rock Thrush, all of which were seen well. A further bonus was the 2<sup>nd</sup> record ever of Sooty Gull for Madagascar!! The same afternoon we headed off to Ifaty, stopping at the wetlands along the way. Highlights of the journey included our first Grey-headed Lovebirds and a few Whiskered Terns in breeding plumage (these birds are uncommon in Madagascar!).

Our visit to the Spiny Desert at Ifaty was superb and we had a wonderful time finding many specials including the highly sought-after Long-tailed Ground Roller, Banded Kestrel, Subdesert Mesite, Archbold's Newtonia, Lafresnaye's Vanga, Thamnornis Warbler, Running Coua and the striking Madagascar Buttonquail. In addition to these specials we also had great views of Sickle-billed Vanga at the nest and great reptiles including Three-eyed Lizard, Sakalava Gecko, Spot-headed Gecko and Warty Chameleon. Due to a debilitating bug that did the rounds, we were unfortunately unable to visit La Table for Verreaux's Coua and Red-shouldered Vanga.

Last site on our itinerary was the world-renowned Berenty Private Reserve. Besides the mammal highlights and close encounters with Ringtailed and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas we were privileged to see two drinking Madagascar Sandgrouse, a brief glimpse of a Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, perched Madagascar Sparrowhawk, great views of Whitebrowed and Totoroka Scops Owl and Giant and Green-capped Coua. We also enjoyed walking amongst the wonderful botanical diversity and marvelled at the Moringas, Celtis, Combretums, Neostinas, Albizias and Caparis species. After three days in the Berenty/Fort Dauphin area we left for Tana where we spent an afternoon and morning relaxing before heading back to Johannesburg.



## **Annotated Checklists of Birds, Mammals and “Herps”**

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Morris, P. & Hawkins, F. (1998) *A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Madagascar*, with the notable exception of a few of the recent taxonomic changes; Garbutt, N. (1999) *Mammals of Madagascar*, and Glaw, F. & Vences, M. (1994) *A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. Insect names were derived from various sources.

## BIRDS

*Key to abbreviations:*

### ENDEMISM

*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

(163 species/sub-species)

### Grebes Podicipedidae

#### Little Grebe (Dabchick)

*Tachybaptus ruficollis capensis*

Fairly common and easily seen in the South, with good numbers seen at the wetlands between Tulear and Ifaty.

#### Madagascar Little Grebe (E) (V)

*Tachybaptus pelzelni*

Our only sighting was of a pair seen extremely well on a forest lake in Mantadia, close to the graphite mine.

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

### Tropicbirds Phaethontidae

#### Red-tailed Tropicbird

*Phaethon rubricauda rubricauda*

We enjoyed good sightings of breeding birds on Nosy Ve.

### Hérons Ardeidae

#### Little Bittern (e)

*Ixobrychus minutus podiceps*

Uncommon in Madagascar, James had good views of 2 birds at wetlands near Ifaty.

#### Black-crowned Night-Heron

*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Many adults and fledglings recorded during the morning visit to Lake Alarobia. Also noted on the river at Berenty.

#### (Common) Squacco Heron

*Ardeola ralloides*

Widespread and common in a variety of wetland habitats across the island, from rice paddies to tidal mudflats. Highest numbers were recorded at Lake Alarobia, including many in magnificent nuptial plumage.

#### Madagascar Pond-Heron (BE) (V)

*Ardeola idae*

We enjoyed stunning scope views of half a dozen birds in nuptial plumage at Lake Alarobia.

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

#### Cattle Egret

*Bubulcus ibis ibis*

Common throughout and recorded daily in open and semi-open habitats. Large numbers also seen at Lake Alarobia.

#### Green-backed (Striated) Heron (ne)

*Butorides striatus rutenbergi*

Small numbers at most freshwater wetlands and seen on a number of occasions whilst driving.

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).

#### Black Egret (Heron)

*Egretta ardesiaca*

Seen at Lake Alarobia where we found a bird engaged in its unique “umbrella” feeding display.

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

Widespread and common throughout the trip. First seen at wetlands around Tana and later at Lake Alorobia, all of which were the white morph.

NOTE: The latest Clements checklist considers this form a subspecies of Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta dimorpha*).

**Great (White) Egret***Ardea alba melanorhynchos*

Small numbers at wetlands and rice paddies throughout.

**Purple Heron (e)***Ardea purpurea madagascariensis*

Single bird seen at Lake Alorobia.

**Grey Heron (ne)***Ardea cinerea firsas*

Small numbers seen at Lake Alorobia and around Tulear.

**Humboldt's (Madagascar) Heron (E) (V)***Ardea humbloti*

Good views of a bird nesting on the cliffs during the boat trip to Nosy Ve.

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

**Hamerkop Scopidae****Hamerkop (e)***Scopus umbretta bannermanni*

Commonly seen in roadside rice paddies on the drives from Tana to Perinet and from Fort Dauphin to Berenty. A nest was seen en route to Perinet.

**Storks Ciconiidae****African Openbill***Anastomus lamelligerus madagascariensis*

A single bird was seen in flight at Lake Alorobia.

NOTE: This is an uncommon bird in Madagascar and is a sub-species of the African nominate.

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

A single bird was seen from the car on the way to Mantadia.

**Madagascar Crested (White-winged) Ibis (E) (NT)***Lophotibis cristata urschi*

This elusive species was heard, but missed at Perinet

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

Large numbers were recorded at freshwater wetlands around Tana, at Lake Alarobia and at wetlands around Ifaty.

**Comb (Knob-billed) Duck***Sarkidiornis melanotos melanotos*

5 birds were seen well at Lake Alarobia and single birds were seen at Tulear and Berenty respectively.

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

About 20 birds were seen at Lake Alarobia with further sightings at Ifaty wetlands.

**Hottentot Teal***Anas hottentota*

Several birds were seen in the wetlands between Ifaty and Tulear.

**Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae****Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk***Aviceda madagascariensis*

We had fleeting views of a single bird at Berenty. A rare bird that is seldom seen.

**Yellow-billed Kite***Milvus [migrans] parasitus*

This species is common and conspicuous in open habitats, particularly in the South. Small numbers were seen at the roadside on most road journeys.

NOTE: This species is usually lumped with Black Kite, *M.migrans*.

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

A single bird, located by Adam's group, was seen well at Berenty.

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

Seen at both Perinet and at Mantadia

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

A single bird was seen well by James at Perinet.

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

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

We were extremely fortunate to encounter this rare species not only once but twice. We had one bird en route to Berenty in the palm forest and a second view in the forest at Berenty

**Frances' Sparrowhawk (NEe)** *Accipiter francesii francesii*

James had a good view of a male between Mantadia and Perinet.

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

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

**Falcons *Falconidae*****Madagascar (Newton's) Kestrel (NEe)** *Falco newtoni*

Very common in most habitats throughout. Recorded almost daily.

**Banded Kestrel** *Falco zoniventris*

We were very fortunate to have views of one of these rare birds at the Spiny Forest at Ifaty.

**Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor*

A brief view of a flying bird close to Tana Airport

**Guineafowl *Numididae*****Helmeted Guineafowl (I)** *Numida meleagris mitrata*

We encountered small flocks at Berenty.

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

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

An early morning start enabled us to locate this elusive species in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty. We enjoyed great views of a female.

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

We recorded a pair at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty and had superb views of a male and a newly hatched chick en route to Berenty.

NOTE: On of the few bird species where the male is solely responsible for the rearing of the young

**Rails & Gallinules *Rallidae*****Madagascar Flufftail (E)** *Sarothrura insularis*

A species which can often prove particularly elusive. However we were treated to good but brief views of a male near Perinet Special Reserve.

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

We had awesome views of a single bird at Perinet Special Reserve, only a few feet away! This is a notoriously difficult bird to see well.

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

We had superb views of two individuals at a pond between Perinet and Mantadia.

**White-throated (Cuvier's) Rail ([N]Ee)** *Dryolimnas cuvieri (cuvieri)*

We were treated to superb views of two birds on two occasions in the river in front of our hotel at Perinet. This species was also heard calling on several occasions.

NOTE: Some authorities consider the nominate Madagascar race of this bird as distinctive from the near-flightless Aldabra Island race, making this another endemic rallid to Madagascar.

**Baillon's Crake***Porzana pusilla intermedia*

James, on an excursion with Keith, was very fortunate to have cracking views of a few individuals at the wetland near Ifaty.

**Common Moorhen (ne)***Gallinula chloropus pyrrhoroa*

Small numbers were encountered at several sites, including the lake near the graphite mine at Mantadia.

**Crab Plover *Dromadidae*****Crab Plover***Dromas ardeola*

3 birds were seen on Nosy Ve. We enjoyed good scope views of these strange waders.

NOTE: Crab Plovers are so unusual that they are placed in their own family, *Dromadidae*.

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

Small numbers seen at the wetlands near Ifaty.

**Plovers *Charadriidae*****Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius hiaticula tundrae*

We found 20+ on the mudflats at Tulear.

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

Largest numbers recorded at brackish lakes near Ifaty with at least 12 birds being seen.

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

A pair of this scarce, localised endemic were observed at close quarters by James and Keith at a small salt pan in Ifaty.

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

A few birds were seen on the island of Nosy Ve.

**Greater Sand Plover***Charadrius leschenaultii crassirostris*

A few birds were seen by James at the Tulear mudflats.

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

This species was fairly common on tidal flats around Tulear.

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

Up to 20 were seen at the mudflats near Tulear.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

A common wader, seen several times on the trip.

**Terek Sandpiper***Tringa cinerea*

James had a single bird on the mud flats at Tulear.

**Common Sandpiper***Tringa hypoleucos*

Small numbers in freshwater and brackish wetland habitats throughout, with half a dozen birds recorded on the Mangoro River en route to Perinet.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres interpres*

Fairly common on tidal flats around Tulear and Ifaty where up to 20 were seen.

**Sanderling***Calidris alba*

Up to 10 were seen on tidal flats around Tulear.

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea*

Several individuals seen around Tulear and Ifaty.

**Terns *Sternidae*****Sooty Gull***Larus hemprichi*

An amazing record – seen on the sandbar at Nosy Ve whilst looking at 3 Crab Plovers.

NOTE: This is only the second record ever of this species in Madagascar. Normally found off the coast of NE Africa.

**Caspian Tern***Sterna caspia caspia*

A single bird seen with Keith at the wetlands around Ifaty.

**Greater Crested (Swift) Tern***Sterna bergii enigma*

A few birds were seen on a sandbar near Nosy Ve.

**Lesser Crested Tern***Sterna bengalensis bengalensis*

Several birds were seen near Nosy Ve and at the wetlands near Ifaty.

**Common Tern***Sterna hirundo hirundo*

Dozens of birds were seen en route to Nosy Ve and on the sandbar at the island.

**Whiskered Tern***Childonias hybridus sclateri*

We were fortunate to see 3 individuals in breeding plumage at the wetlands near Ifaty.

NOTE: Not a common bird on Madagascar

**Saunders' Tern***Sterna saundersi*

James saw 3 birds diving for baitfish at the Tulear mudflats.

NOTE: Some authors regard this as a sub-species of Little Tern.

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

We had great views of two birds at the river at Berenty.

**Pigeons & Doves Columbidae****Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) (I)***Columba livia*

Widespread in urban areas.

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

Frequent sightings at almost all sites. Particularly confiding and common at Berenty.

**Namaqua (Long-tailed) Dove (e)***Oena capensis aliena*

Widespread and common in drier areas in the South. Most frequent on the drive between Tulear and Ifaty and at Berenty.

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

A small flock of birds were seen flying over the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

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

This beautiful bird is fairly common in eastern rainforest. We had superb views at both Perinet and at Mantadia.

**Parrots Psittacidae****(Greater) Vasa Parrot (NEe)***Coracopsis vasa vasa*

Small numbers were seen at Mantadia and Perinet. Nice comparative views with Lesser Vasa Parrot were had at Mantadia.

NOTE: Much less common than Lesser Vasa Parrot. Two sub-species occur.

**(Greater) Vasa Parrot (NEe)***Coracopsis vasa drouhardi*

A single bird of the western subspecies of this large parrot was seen at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

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

A widespread and fairly common bird and exceedingly vocal. Small numbers were seen at Perinet and Mantadia.

**Lesser Vasa (Black) Parrot (NEe)***Coracopsis nigra libs*

A few birds of the drier country (Western and Southern) subspecies of Lesser Vasa Parrot were observed at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

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

The southern subspecies was seen frequently in the Ifaty, Tulear and Berenty areas.

**Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae**

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

Very common and one of the dominant sounds in wooded and semi-wooded habitats throughout. We had views of one bird at the Spiny Desert and another view of a perched bird at Berenty.

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

Common at Berenty where individuals were watched feeding, calling and strolling about at close quarters.

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

We saw a few individuals well at the Spiny Desert.

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

We had excellent, close views of this difficult species bird at Perinet. An excellent tick!

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

We enjoyed great views of a single bird at Green Lake, Perinet.

**Olive-capped (Green-capped) Coua (E)***Coua olivaceiceps*

One was seen excellently during the drive from Fort Dauphin to Berenty.

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.

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

This southern subspecies, with a rufous vent, was commonly observed at Berenty and Ifaty.

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

Fairly common in the eastern forests. Our first sighting was of a bird in the car-park at Perinet with subsequent sightings around Perinet and two birds at a small wetland en route to Tana from Perinet.

**Madagascar Coucal (NEe)***Centropus toulou toulou*

Common, widespread and recorded daily during our tour. We recorded them in a huge variety of habitats from desert to forest.

**Typical Owls Strigidae****Rainforest Scops Owl (NEe)***Otus rutilus rutilus*

This recently split form of the Madagascar Scops Owl was regularly heard at Perinet and we had excellent close-up views of a bird in the car-park at Berenty.

**Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)***Otus madagascariensis*

This new species of Scops Owl (pronounced "Toorotoorook", an onomatopoeic name) was seen at its day-roost in Berenty.

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

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

Great views of these beautiful owls at their day roosts in Berenty.

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

We had great views of an adult on a night walk at Perinet.

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

We had fantastic views of one roosting during the day in Perinet Special Reserve.

NOTE: A rare endemic restricted to the eastern forests.

**Madagascar Nightjar (NEe)***Caprimulgus madagascariensis madagascariensis*

The common nightjar on Madagascar. We had several sightings at dusk and heard them often.

**Swifts Apodidae****Madagascar Spinetail (NEe)***Zoonavena grandidieri grandidieri*

We had overhead sightings in Mantadia.

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

Common in suitable palm habitat and frequently seen during the trip. Especially common at our hotel at Perinet.

**Madagascar (Black) Swift (NE)***Apus balstoni*

Good numbers were seen around the cliffs on the way to Nosy Ve and overhead in Tana.

NOTE: These Malagasy birds are usually considered a species distinct from the African Black Swift (*A. barbatus*), however no dedicated research has been done. There seems to be two distinct sizes of all black swifts in Madagascar, and these may represent two or more species.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae****Madagascar Malachite (Diademed) Kingfisher (NEe)** *Alcedo vintsioides vintsioides*

Recorded at Lake Alarobia, the forest lake at Mantadia and at a rice paddy on the way to Perinet.

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

This attractive endemic was recorded at Mantadia NP where we had crippling views of one.

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

Widespread in semi-open areas and recorded fairly often. First seen flying with Cuckoo Rollers above the forest in Mantadia.

**Rollers Coraciidae****Broad-billed Roller (be)***Eurystomus glaucurus glaucurus*

Widespread and common breeding migrant from the African mainland. Seen at all sites except Tulear and Ifaty.

**Ground-Rollers Brachypteraciidae****Scaly Ground-Roller (E) (V)***Brachypteracias squamigera*

An elusive and retiring species. We had great views of a pair at Mantadia with one bird showing itself particularly well.

NOTE: A scarce and secretive bird, formerly considered to be restricted to the forests of the Masoala peninsula.

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

We had several looks at this beautiful Ground-Roller at Mantadia and heard other birds frequently. Despite being the commonest of the ground-rollers, this magnificent creature is justifiably one of the most sought-after birds on Madagascar.

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

Although the bird did not show itself, we had one calling a few metres from us after first hearing it whilst viewing the Diademed Sifakas in Mantadia.

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

We enjoyed superb views of a female in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

**Cuckoo-Rollers Leptosomidae****Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller (E)***Leptosomus discolor (discolor)*

This spectacular endemic was seen at Mantadia and at Perinet, although never well. We tried hard to get perched views and had a single bird calling from near the palm forest en route to Berenty.

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

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

First recorded at Tulear and seen subsequently 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 enjoyed superb views of a female at the nest at Mantadia.

**Common Sunbird Asity (E)** *Neodrepanis coruscans*  
We heard a bird calling at Mantadia but were unsuccessful in locating it.

### Larks *Alaudidae*

**Madagascar (Hova) Lark (E)** *Mirafra hova*  
Common in open habitats throughout the South.

### Swallows & Martins *Hirundinidae*

**Mascarene Martin (NEbe)** *Phedina borbonica borbonica*  
Madagascar's commonest hirundine and a regional breeding endemic. Recorded often throughout the trip.

**Brown-throated (Plain Sand) Martin (e)** *Riparia paludicola cowani*  
This high plateau wetland hirundine was observed *en route* to Perinet.

### Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

**Madagascar Wagtail (E)** *Motacilla flaviventris*  
Common in the east and highland plateau, where good numbers were seen daily.

### Cuckooshrikes *Campephagedae*

**Ashy (Madagascar) Cuckoo-shrike (NEe)** *Coracina cinerea cinerea*  
The eastern forest form of this cuckoo-shrike was seen on several occasions at Mantadia and Perinet Special Reserve.

### Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

**Madagascar Bulbul (NEe)** *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*  
Common and ubiquitous, with daily sightings throughout.

### Vangas *Vangidae*

**Red-tailed Vanga (E)** *Calicalicus madagascariensis*  
A fairly common and regularly encountered denizen of wooded and semi-wooded habitats, particularly once its "wolf-whistle" call is recognised. Seen at Perinet and Mantadia.

**Red-tailed Vanga (E)** *Calicalicus madagascariensis*  
We were fortunate to see one of these at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty. The call of this South Western form is quite different to the Eastern sub-species.

**Hook-billed Vanga (Ee)** *Vanga curvirostris curvirostris*  
This often heard and infrequently observed species was seen twice at Perinet.

**Hook-billed Vanga (Ee)** *Vanga curvirostris cetera*  
One of the southern desert race was seen at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty and we heard one calling at Berenty.

**Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)** *Xenopirostris xenopirostris*  
This species was seen very well in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

**Sickle-billed Vanga (E)** *Falcula palliata*  
One of Madagascar's GREAT birds. A pair was observed at the nest in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty and several others were seen and heard.

**White-headed Vanga (Ee)** *Artamella viridis viridis*  
The more uncommon eastern forest subspecies of this attractive vanga was observed at the nest at Perinet.

**White-headed Vanga (Ee)** *Artamella viridis annae*  
The more widespread western race was seen at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

**Chabert's Vanga (Ee)** *Leptopterus chabert chabert*  
The commonest vanga, occurring in habitats ranging from pristine rainforest to degraded scrub. Seen regularly with the highlight being a pair at the nest at Perinet.

**Chabert's Vanga (Ee)***Leptopterus chabert schistocercus*

This southern desert race is morphologically and vocally distinct from the nominate and may represent a different species. It was observed during our trip into the Spiny Desert and along the road from Tulear to Ifaty.

**(Madagascar) Blue Vanga ([N]E)***Cyanolanius madagascarinus (madagascarinus)*

Only seen at Perinet where we had good views of a perched bird. A stunningly beautiful vanga!

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.

**Nuthatch Vanga (Coral-billed Nuthatch) (E)***Hypositta corallirostris*

A few birds were seen well at Mantadia. A peculiar and localised eastern rainforest endemic.

**Tylas (Vanga) (Ee)***Tylas eduardi eduardi*

A single bird was seen very well perched on a cable at Perinet.

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

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

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

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

A pair of these birds were seen well at the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

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

Only seen at Perinet where several views were had close to the hotel.

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

Seen at the restaurant on the boat trip to Nosy Ve. We had good looks at two adults and a fledged chick and two birds at the nest at the proprietor's house! Most peculiar habitat for a Rock-Thrush.

**Madagascar Magpie-Robin (Ee)***Copsychus albospecularis inexpectata*

This white-bellied forest form was seen at Perinet and at Mantadia where it reaches its most northern limit and intergrades with the nominate subspecies.

**Madagascar Magpie-Robin (Ee)***Copsychus albospecularis pica*

This larger western subspecies was frequently seen at all the southern locations including Tulear, Ifaty and Berenty.

**African Stonechat (e)***Saxicola axillaries sibilla*

Common in open habitats of the eastern highlands, where several seen daily.

**Old World Warblers Sylviidae****White-throated Oxylabes (E)***Oxylabes madagascariensis*

Fairly common endemic of the understorey of eastern rainforest, although nearly always difficult to see. Seen well at Perinet where we observed a few birds feeding young and saw other birds on a different occasion.

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

An unconfirmed sighting of a single bird amongst bulbuls at Mantadia.

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.

**Grey Emutail (E)***Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

We heard a few birds calling at the marsh en route to Tana from Perinet but were unsuccessful in seeing one.

**Madagascar Brush Warbler (NEe)***Nesillas typica typica*

Very common in dense cover of any kind in the east, where several recorded daily.

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

Replaces Madagascar Brush Warbler in the South West, where very common: Small numbers were seen in the Ifaty area.

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*

Fairly common in wetland habitat throughout, ranging from highland marshes in the east to mangroves in the west.

- Long-billed Greenbul (Ee)** *Xanthomixis madagascariensis madagascariensis*  
Widespread in eastern forests of Madagascar. First seen well at Mantadia.
- Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)** *Thamnornis chloropetoides*  
Seen well in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty.
- Spectacled Greenbul (Ee)** *Xanthomixis zosterops zosterops*  
Restricted to eastern forests, where it is the commonest of the small greenbuls. Seen several times at Mantadia and at Perinet.
- Grey-crowned Greenbul (E) (NT)** *Xanthomixis cinereiceps*  
Uncommon in eastern rainforest, mainly at altitudes above the range of Spectacled Greenbul. We found a few birds in a bulbul party at Mantadia and had excellent close-up looks.
- Rand's Warbler (E)** *Randia pseudozosterops*  
Fairly common denizen of eastern rainforest, with small numbers seen/heard daily in the Perinet and Mantadia areas. A bird vocalising from a typical treetop perch in Perinet was the first seen.

### Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

- Madagascar Cisticola (NE)** *Cisticola cherinus*  
Common in open habitats throughout, including rice paddies and the man-altered plateau grasslands. Also seen behaving uncharacteristically like a pipit above the high tide mark on Nosy Ve.

### Family Uncertain Incertae sedis

- Common Jery (Ee)** *Neomixis tenella tenella*  
Common and ubiquitous. This nominate subspecies occurs in the West, South and Highland Plateau.
- Common Jery (Ee)** *Neomixis tenella orientalis*  
This eastern forest subspecies was recorded daily from the eastern rainforests in Mantadia and Perinet.
- Green Jery (E)** *Neomixis viridis*  
Fairly common in eastern forests, where small numbers recorded daily. First seen at Perinet Special Reserve.
- Stripe-throated Jery (Ee)** *Neomixis striatigula striatigula*  
This species scratchy call is a common background noise in the rain forests. It was first seen in the Perinet area.
- Stripe-throated Jery (Ee)** *Neomixis striatigula pallidior*  
This south-western dry-country form of the Stripe-throated Jery, is morphologically and vocally distinct and very likely to be split off as a separate species. It was commonly seen calling from the top of *Diedierecea* spikes in the spiny desert at Ifaty.

### Monarch Flycatchers Monarchidae

- Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (NEe)** *Terpsiphone mutata mutata*  
Common and widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. First recorded at Perinet but seen in the Spiny Desert and at Berenty too. Both colour morphs were recorded.

### Sunbirds Nectariniidae

- Souimanga Sunbird (NEne)** *Nectarinia souimanga souimanga*  
By far the more common of Madagascar's sunbird species, occurring in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. First seen at Perinet and recorded many times thereafter.
- Souimanga Sunbird (NEe)** *Nectarinia souimanga apolis*  
A common species in the Tulear-Ifaty and Berenty-Fort Dauphin areas.
- Long-billed Green (Madagascar) Sunbird (NEe)** *Nectarinia notata notata*  
A very handsome and widespread but uncommon species. Only fleeting glimpses were had at Mantadia.

### White-eyes Zosteropidae

- Madagascar White-eye (NEne)** *Zosterops maderaspatana maderaspatana*  
Common and widespread, though scarce in the south-west. Seen at the nest at Mantadia.

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

Fairly common throughout. First recorded at Perinet. Small numbers were also seen at Lake Alorobia.

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

Fairly common in eastern rainforest areas, where small numbers were seen on most days. First seen in Perinet. This species was also seen at Mantadia.

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

Abundant in the dry south, where recorded in large numbers in the Tulear-Ifaty area.

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

Common, ubiquitous and good numbers recorded almost daily. First seen driving from the airport in Tana.

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

Common in open habitats throughout the island.

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

This species was first seen at Perinet, with further sightings at Mantadia NP.

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

Common and highly conspicuous in a variety of wooded habitats throughout. First seen at the river en route to Perinet from Tana.

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

Common and widespread in open habitats in the South with largest numbers seen near Berenty

**MAMMALS**

ORDER: Chiroptera

Family Pteropodidae (Old World Fruit Bats)

**Madagascar Flying Fox***Pteropus rufus*

We had great views of the colony at Berenty

ORDER: Rodentia

Family Muridae (Old World Rats and Mice)

**Black Rat***Rattus rattus*

One seen at restaurant in Tulear

ORDER: Primates

Family Cheirogaleidae (Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs)

**Grey-brown Mouse Lemur***Microcebus griseorufus*

We were very fortunate to find one of these localised lemurs on the night walk at Berenty.

NOTE A recently described species

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

We had fantastic views of these delightful creatures at our restaurant at Perinet.

Family Megaladapidae (Sportive Lemurs)

**Hubbard's Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur hubbardi*

One individual was seen at its day roost in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

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

One individual was seen at a day roost in Berenty.

*Family Lemuridae ("True" Lemurs)***Ring-tailed Lemur** *Lemur catta*

The quintessential Malagasy mammal. We enjoyed prolonged encounters with numerous groups of these delightful animals, the most terrestrial of the lemurs, at Berenty.

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

A troop with young were seen at Perinet.

**Red-fronted Brown Lemur** *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

A very common and conspicuous lemur at Berenty (where introduced).

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

Two individuals were seen well during the day at Perinet.

**Diademed Sifaka** *Propithecus diadema diadema*

We had outstanding encounters with these magnificent creatures in Mantadia NP, prolonged studies of a relaxed feeding group of 5 animals, with Rufous-crowned Ground-Roller calling in the background. Also saw the introduced group at Perinet. Widely considered to be Madagascar's most beautiful primate.

**Verreaux's Sifaka** *Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

This magnificent primate, with its soulful expressions and comical, bipedal locomotion, is undoubtedly one of the mammalian highlights of Madagascar. Common in Berenty, where up to fifteen were seen daily. We even witnessed their comical dancing behaviour as they crossed open ground.

**Indri** *Indri indri*

A small family group was seen during the middle of the day, at Perinet Special Reserve. The territorial calls of this lemur, often considered the largest extant species, is one of the world's great wildlife sounds and we heard the call often during our stay.

## AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

**ORDER: Anura (Amphibians)***Family Ranidae ("True" Frogs)***Painted Mantella** *Mantella magascariensis*

A single frog was heard and seen in Mantadia

**ORDER: Squamata (Scaled Reptiles)***Family Chamaeleonidae (Chameleons)***Short-horned Chameleon** *Calumma brevicornis*

Usually the commonest chameleon at Perinet, we found one right at the entrance to Perinet.

**Parson's Chameleon** *Calumma parsonii*

We found one of these impressive chameleons at Perinet.

**Warty Chameleon** *Furcifer verrucosus*

A prehistoric-looking chameleon, with triangular occipital crest and dinosaur-like dorsal spines. We found one large individual at the Spiny Desert.

**Side-striped Chameleon** *Furcifer minor*

We found two individuals at Lake Alorobia

*Family Iguanidae (Iguanas)***Three-eyed Lizard** *Chalarodon madagascariensis*

The commonest reptile around Ifaty where we saw many individuals. This species has a central pineal eye that can detect light but about which little is known.

*Family Gekkonidae (Geckos)*

**Madagascar Day Gecko**

*Phelsuma madagascariensis*

We had superb views of these at our hotel at Perinet.

**Lineated Day Gecko**

*Phelsuma lineata*

These luminescent green day gecko's were fairly common around Perinet.

**Standing's Day Gecko**

*Phelsuma standingii*

We had great views of an individual in the Spiny Desert.

*Family Gerrhosauridae (Plated Lizards)*

**Madagascar Plated Lizard**

*Zonosaurus madagascariensis*

We found an individual at the small forest lake at Mantadia

*Family Colubridae (Typical Snakes)*

**Striped Snake**

*Liopholidophis sp.*

We found one at the spiny desert.

**Black-browed Snake**

*Liophidium torquatus*

Saw a single individual well at Mantadia.

**Mahafaly Sandsnake**

*Mimophis mahfalensis*

Possibly saw this species at the Spiny Desert.

*Family Boidae (Boas)*

**Tree Boa**

*Sanzinia madagascariensis*

We saw one of these at Perinet

**Dumeril's Boa**

*Acrantophis dumerili*

We had great views of a large specimen at Bernety

## Notable Insects

As if this staggering diversity of life forms was not enough, we also encountered a bewildering variety of invertebrates that ranged from the bizarre Giraffe-necked Weevil *Trachelophorus giraffa* to delicate congregations of "Waxtail" nymphs of the Flatid Leaf Bug *Phromnia rosea*, and to the immense super-homes of Golden Orb-web Spiders *Nephila madagascariensis*. We also encountered many beautiful butterflies, including swallowtails, swordtails and acreas.

**Photographs: Torotoroka Scops Owl, Diademed Sifaka, Long-tailed Ground-Roller & Madagascar Sandgrouse by David Hodinott**

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