



Madagascar

13th October – 3rd November 2007



Top 10 Birds as voted by participants:

1. Collared Nightjar
2. Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher
3. Rainforest Scops Owl
4. Madagascar Fish Eagle
5. Giant Coua
6. Rufous-headed Ground-Roller
7. Madagascar Crested Ibis
8. Crossley's Babbler
9. Blue Vanga
10. Long-tailed Ground-Roller

Top 5 Mammals as voted by participants:

1. Indri
2. Verreaux's Sifaka
3. Ring-tailed Mongoose
4. Milne Edward's Sifaka
5. Brown Mouse Lemur

Trip Report compiled by tour leader Keith Valentine

This comprehensive Madagascar tour was a truly fantastic experience, being both highly enjoyable and extremely successful, as we managed to locate an incredible 126 endemic and near-endemic bird species to the island, as well as 22 delightful species of Lemur!



Tour Summary

The tour started in high spirits as we boarded our first of many flights and jetted to the north-west of the island for a two-night stay at Ampijoroa. The dry deciduous forest in this area was teeming with birds and within camp we enjoyed the likes of Sickie-billed, Hook-billed, Chabert's and White-headed Vanga, Madagascar Hoopoe, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Turtle Dove, Madagascar Green Pigeon, the delicate Gray-headed Lovebird and Malagasy Green Sunbird. Walking the forest trails, east and west of the forest station, produced all the desired targets with crippling views of all the highly localized endemics such as the superb Schlegel's Asity, White-breasted Mesite, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Henst's Goshawk, Coquerel's, Crested and Red-capped Coua, Torotoroka Scops Owl, Madagascar Nightjar, Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Rufous, Blue and the highly range restricted Van Dam's Vanga. At Lac Ravelobe we enjoyed awesome views of Madagascar Fish Eagle, Humblot's Heron, African Openbill, White-throated Rail and Madagascar Jacana while a short excursion to Lac Amboromalandy gave us a group of African Pygmy-Goose and a flock of Madagascar Mannikin. The lemurs in this dry, deciduous forest are incredible and we had good luck on both night and day walks. Excellent views were obtained of Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Milne Edward's Sportive Lemur, Mongoose Lemur, Common Brown Lemur, Western Avahi and Coquerel's Sifaka. From the town of Mahajunga we boarded a boat for what turned out to be a very successful trip to the Betsiboka Delta, where we located the endangered Bernier's Teal, Madagascar Sacred Ibis and a host of waders including the distinctive Terek Sandpiper.

We made a short stop at Lac Alarobia in the capital, Antananarivo, where we had good views of some of the more widespread species in Madagascar including Comb Duck, Madagascar Little Grebe and Madagascar Pond-Heron in full breeding plumage. We also enjoyed an excursion to the Tsimbazaza Zoo where we spent some time with the highly endangered Aye-aye.

The eastern rainforest sites of Perinet and Mantadia were thoroughly enjoyable and, during our explorations here, we again managed to locate all desired targets. Star birds for these forests were Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Red-breasted and Blue Coua, Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo, Barn, Rainforest Scops and Madagascar Long-eared Owl, the rare Collared Nightjar, the stunning Scaly, Pitta-like and Short-legged Ground-Rollers, Velvet Asity, Red-tailed, Nuthatch and Tylas Vangas, Dark

Newtonia, Ward's Flycatcher, skulking Brown Emutail, White-throated Oxylabes, Cryptic Warbler, Wedge-tailed Jery, Gray-crowned Greenbul, Madagascar Starling and Nelicourvi Weaver. The rainforest habitat also provided us with a new suit of lemurs and included exceptional views of Indri, Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur, Red-bellied Lemur, brilliant Diademed Sifaka, Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur and Weasel Sportive Lemur.

The pristine highlands and marshes of the Anjozorobe area produced a lovely array of specials with the marshes taking the prize for the best specials as we located Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Snipe, Madagascar Swamp Warbler and the very rare Meller's Duck. The various forest trails gave us Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Wood Rail, Common Sunbird-Asity, Crossley's Babbler, stunning views of the rare Madagascar Yellowbrow and Forest Rock Thrush while we enjoyed Madagascar Partridge and Madagascar Buttonquail at the camp.

We then visited our first dry habitat where we spent some time in beautiful gallery and spiny forest at the famous Berenty Lemur Reserve. Good birds included a group of drinking Madagascar Sandgrouse, France's Sparrowhawk, White-browed Owl and Giant, Green-capped and Running Couas. The unique habitat here also produced no less than five new species of lemur that included Ring-tailed, Red-fronted Brown, Gray-brown Mouse, White-footed Sportive and Verreaux's Sifaka.

Our time spent in the unique spiny habitats around Ifaty and Tulear gave us some fantastic sightings, including the scarce Banded Kestrel, amazing Long-tailed Ground-Roller, Subdesert Mesite, Thamnornis and Subdesert Brush Warbler, Madagascar Plover, Lafresnaye's Vanga and Archbold's Newtonia. In marshy areas we found Little Bittern, Greater Flamingo and Baillon's Crake. A boat trip to the island of Nosy Ve to visit the breeding Red-tailed Tropicbirds was a certain highlight, and we added the localized Littoral Rock-Thrush at a site en route. A visit to the nearby coral rag scrub produced the desired result when we located the highly localized Red-shouldered Vanga and Verreaux's Coua.

We then made our way back towards the rainforests of the east stopping en route at two important sites. Firstly, at Zombitse Forest we found a couple of groups of the desired Appert's Greenbul while at the scenically splendid Isalo National Park we came up trumps with Benson's Rock-Thrush. The rainforests of Ranomafana National Park were brilliant and we enjoyed a bounty of sightings of a number of very special birds and lemurs. The forest trails and surrounds yielded most of our remaining targets and we enjoyed Brown Mesite, Madagascar Pratincole, Rufous-headed Ground-Roller, Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, Pollen's Vanga and Gray Emutail. The lemurs here were also outstanding and excellent views were obtained of Brown Mouse Lemur, Small-toothed Sportive Lemur, Golden and Greater Bamboo Lemur, Red-fronted Brown Lemur and Milne Edward's Sifaka while we also enjoyed Lowland Streaked Tenrec, Eastern Red Forest Rat and Fanaloka.



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:

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

(178 Species)

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

High numbers were seen at the shallow, brackish roadside lake between Tulear and Ifaty with an estimated thirty individuals observed.

Madagascar Little Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

Birds were noted at Lac Alarobia in Tana and on a small pan in Isalo NP.

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

We enjoyed intimate encounters with these most elegant birds, including sightings of at least twenty-five birds, some adults with young fledglings and many sub-adults, on the island of Nosy Ve.

Darters Anhingidae

African Darter

Anhinga rufa

Uncommon in Madagascar, with four birds seen on Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa.

Herons Ardeidae

Little Bittern

Ixobrychus minutus

Uncommon in Madagascar, three birds were seen at wetlands near Ifaty.

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Large numbers recorded during the first morning visit to Lac Alarobia, seen in smaller numbers throughout the tour thereafter.

(Common) Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

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

Madagascar Pond-Heron (BE) (V)

Ardeola idae

A single bird was found at Lac Alarobia in full breeding plumage, singles also seen at Lac Ravelobe at Ampijoroa and at Ranomafana NP.

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

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Common throughout and recorded daily in open and semi-open habitats. Large numbers roosting at Berenty and at Lac Alarobia.

Green-backed (Striated) Heron

Butorides striatus

Small numbers at most freshwater and marine wetlands, including the wetlands near Ampijoroa, brackish marshes between Tulear and Ifaty, the tidal mudflats in Tulear Harbour.

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

First seen at Lac Alarobia, where we found good numbers on the island, also well seen at the wetlands around Lakes Ravelobe and Amboromalandy near Ampijoroa.

Dimorphic (Mascarene Reef) Egret (NE)

Egretta [garzetta] dimorpha

Widespread and common throughout Madagascar. First seen at Lake Alarobia of white morphs, With dark morph birds being found at the Betsiboka Delta and Tulear. Birds seen inland were predominantly of the white morph and about 80% of coastal birds were dark morph.

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.

Great (White) Egret

Ardea alba

Small numbers at wetlands throughout.

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

This species was found in small numbers throughout the island.

Gray Heron

Ardea cinerea

Seen at western wetlands, Lac Amboromalandy and the Betsiboka Delta.

Humblot's (Madagascar) Heron (E) (V)

Ardea humbloti

We were very fortunate in obtaining superb sightings of this sometimes difficult species. First sighted at Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa with a further sighting at the Betsiboka Delta.

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

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

Small numbers in roadside rice paddies on drives. Our first and most memorable sighting was between Tana and Perinet.

Storks Ciconiidae

African Openbill

Anastomus lamelligerus

We were fortunate to find one at Lac Ravelobe, a rare species in Madagascar.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Bernier's (Madagascar White) Ibis (NE)

Threskiornis [aethiopicus] bernieri

One of the prizes of our speedboat adventure up the Betsiboka Delta, a total of fifteen individuals.

NOTE: A globally threatened species restricted to largely inaccessible wetlands in western Madagascar and Aldabra Island.

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

We found good numbers at Lac Ravelobe in Ampijoroa and at other wetlands between Mahajanga and Ampijoroa.

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

We enjoyed fantastic views of a single individual along a stream at dusk in Analamazaotra S.R.

Flamingos *Phoenicopteridae*

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopus ruber roseus

Uncommon in Madagascar. A single was observed at a marsh between Tulear and Ifaty.

Ducks & Geese *Anatidae*

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Large numbers were recorded at freshwater wetlands around Tana, one hundred estimated at Lac Alarobia, and in the west, at wetlands around Ampijoroa, Isalo and Ifaty.

Comb (Knob-billed) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Fifteen at Lac Alarobia and further sightings at Berenty.

African Pygmy Goose

Nettapus auritus

A group of seven birds were encountered at a lily covered pond north of Ampijoroa.

Meller's Duck (E) (En)

Anas melleri

We were very lucky to find a total of four birds at Anjozorobe. This species' numbers seem to continue declining.

Madagascar (Bernier's) Teal (E) (En)

Anas bernieri

The greatest prize of our adventurous trip into the Betsiboka Delta. A total of fifty birds were seen actively feeding on a mudflat in the delta.

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

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

One of the most common ducks and widespread in freshwater wetlands across the island. Peak numbers were seen at Lac Amboromalandy.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

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

Hawks & Eagles *Accipitridae*

Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (E)

Aviceda madagascariensis

We had a beautiful adult at Ankarafantsika NP that showed well at close range.

Yellow-billed Kite

Milvus [migrans] parasitus

Common and conspicuous in open habitats, particularly in the west. Small numbers at the roadside on most road journeys.

NOTE: Although considered a separate species from Black Kite by some authorities, in the south of Madagascar at Berenty it is possible to witness both Yellow-billed and Black Kites interbreeding, hence one of the reasons for confusion in taxonomy.

Madagascar Fish-Eagle (E) (C)

Haliaeetus vociferoides

Fine studies of two of these critically endangered, endemic eagles at the edge of Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa.

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

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)

Polyboroides radiatus

Small numbers encountered at several sights, including Ampijoroa and Berenty.

Henst's Goshawk (E) (NT)

Accipiter henstii

We had brilliant views of an adult soaring over deciduous forest in Ankarafantsika NP.

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

Frances' Sparrowhawk (NE)

Accipiter francesii

Our first sightings were at Ampijoroa and we had several sightings thereafter, including nice looks at a male in Berenty.

Madagascar Buzzard (E)

Buteo brachypterus

Common and widespread, with small numbers recorded from almost all wooded sites. First seen at Ampijoroa.

Falcons *Falconidae*

Madagascar (Newton's) Kestrel (NEe)

Falco newtoni

Very common in open and semi-open habitats throughout. Recorded almost daily, regularly at the roadside and at most birding sites.

Banded Kestrel (E)

Falco zoniventris

This scarce species was very well seen on our morning walk through the spiny desert at Ifaty.

Partridges, Quails & Pheasants *Phasianidae*

Madagascar Partridge (E)

Margaroperdix madagascarensis

We had great sightings near the camp in Anjozorobe.

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl (I)

Numida meleagris

We encountered one flock at Berenty.

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

Mesites *Mesitornithidae*

White-breasted Mesite (E) (V)

Mesitornis variegata

This highly prized species was well seen in Ankarafantsika NP on two occasions.

Brown Mesite (E) (V)

Mesitornis unicolor

We had very close encounters with two of these usually skulking birds at Ranamofana NP.

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V)

Monias benschi

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

Buttonquails *Turnicidae*

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

Fairly common and widespread. Views were enjoyed at Anjozorobe, Berenty and Ifaty.

Rails & Gallinules *Rallidae*

Madagascar Flufftail (E)

Sarothrura insularis

A species which can often prove particularly elusive, however, we were treated to simply awesome views of a couple of stunning males at Anjozorobe. This was certainly one of the highlights of the trip.

Madagascar Wood Rail (E)

Canirallus kioloides

Two birds gave us views in the forest undergrowth at Anjozorobe after they were initially located calling. This can be a devilishly-hard bird to see!

Madagascar Rail (E)

Rallus madagascariensis

Amazing views of this skulker were obtained at Anjozorobe.

White-throated (Cuvier's) Rail (NE)

Dryolimnas cuvieri

We were treated to superb views at Analamazaotra S.R with our initial sighting coming from Lac Ravelobe.

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

We were very fortunate to have cracking views of a single bird at a wetland near Ifaty.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Small numbers were encountered at several sites, including Lac Alarobia, in the lake in front of our hotel at Perinet and at Lac Amboromalandy.

Jacanas *Jacanidae*

Madagascar Jacana (E)

Actophilornis albinucha

Only in wetlands of the northwest, where a pair were seen at Lac Ravelobe and five at Lac Amboromalandy.

Avocets & Stilts *Recurvirostridae*

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Recorded at several sites, both coastal and inland.

Plovers *Charadriidae*

Kittlitz's Plover

Charadrius pecuarius

Largest numbers recorded at brackish lakes near Ifaty.

Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)

Charadrius thoracicus

A total of four of this scarce, localised endemic were observed at close quarters at a small salt pan in Ifaty.

Three-banded Plover

Charadrius tricollaris

Birds were encountered at Lac Ravelobe and Ifaty.

White-fronted Plover

Charadrius marginatus

We enjoyed sightings of this coastal species throughout the area of Tulear and on the Betsiboka Delta.

Greater Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii

Three birds were seen on the Betsiboka Delta.

Gray (Black-bellied) Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

This species was fairly common on tidal flats around Tulear and Ifaty.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*

Madagascar Snipe (E) (NT)

Gallinago macrodactyla

We had superb views of several birds at Anjozorobe Marsh.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

At least six birds were seen on the tidal mudflats at Tulear.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

This species was common on tidal flats around Tulear and Ifaty.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Another common wader, our first sighting was from the northwest en route to Ampijoroa. This species was regularly seen in the wetlands in the Tulear and Ifaty area.

Terek Sandpiper

Tringa cinerea

We had views of several in the Betsiboka Delta.

Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

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

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Seen at mudflats near Ifaty, where three birds were found.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

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

Couriers & Pratincoles *Glareolidae*

Madagascar Pratincole (BE)

Glareola ocularis

We enjoyed brilliant views of five birds at Ranomafana NP.

Terns *Sternidae*

Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

Two birds were found at a wetland between Ifaty and Tulear.

Saunders's Tern

Sterna saundersi

We had great views of around twenty-five feeding birds on our excellent boat trip up the Betsiboka Delta.

Whiskered Tern

Chilidonias hybridus

Three birds were found at Lac Amboromalandy in the north-west of the country.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

Fantastic views were had of around fifteen birds seen at close quarters in flight as they came in to drink at pools along the Mandrare River, Berenty.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Rock Dove (I)

Columba livia

Widespread in urban areas.

Madagascar Turtle Dove (NEe)

Columba picturata

First seen at Ampijoroa, with numerous subsequent sightings at almost all sites. Particularly tame and conspicuous at Berenty and Ampijoroa.

Namaqua (Long-tailed) Dove

Oena capensis

Widespread and common in drier areas.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)

Treron australis

Our only sightings were of birds perched conspicuously atop tall trees at Ampijoroa.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)

Alectroenas madagascariensis

This beautiful bird is fairly common in eastern rainforest, we had superb views of several at Perinet Special Reserve, Anjozorobe and again at Ranomafana NP.

Parrots Psittacidae

(Greater) Vasa Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis vasa

This is by far the less common of the two Vasa Parrots in Madagascar, and we had single birds at Mantadia and Anjozorobe.

Black (Lesser Vasa) Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis nigra

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

Gray-headed Lovebird (E)

Agapornis canus

This small parrot was first found in the campsite at Ampijoroa and later seen again in strong numbers at Berenty.

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.

Giant Coua (E)

Coua gigas

Common at Berenty, where we watched up to a dozen individuals feeding, calling and strolling about at close quarters.

Coquerel's Coua (E)

Coua coquereli

Commonly heard at Ampijoroa, and several individuals seen well. Also heard and well seen in Zombitse NP.

Running Coua (E)

Coua cursor

Seen at close quarters at Berenty with further views near Ifaty.

Red-breasted Coua (E)

Coua serriana

A single bird was sighted at Analamazaotra S.R. This species is confined to lowland forest.

Red-fronted Coua (E)

Coua reynaudii

We had brilliant views of one bird in scrubby bush on our drive between Perinet and Tana. This species was initially located by its vocalizations.

Red-capped Coua (E)

Coua ruficeps

We enjoyed great views of birds in the trails at Ampijoroa.

NOTE: See notation under Green-capped Coua

Green-capped Coua (E)

Coua [ruficeps] olivaceiceps

A pair of birds were seen very well at 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

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

Verreaux's Coua (E) (NT)

Coua verreauxi

We enjoyed superb views of this rare and localised species in coral rag scrub on La Table. The most localised member of this endemic sub-family.

Blue Coua (E)

Coua caerulea

Fairly common in the eastern forests. Our first sightings were in Perinet and Mantadia, with several at Ranomafana NP. Strangely turaco-like and one of the world's great "Blue Birds"!

Madagascar Coucal (NEe)

Centropus toulou

Common, widespread and recorded in small numbers virtually daily during our tour. The first sighting was superb views of one at Ampijoroa, with regular sightings thereafter from deciduous forest, reedbeds, secondary growth, primary rainforest, spiny desert and all habitats in between.

Barn Owls Tytonidae

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Uncommon in Madagascar. We found four birds along the road from Perinet to Mantadia during the early morning and late evening.

Typical Owls Strigidae

Madagascar (Rainforest) Scops Owl (NE)

Otus rutilus

This recently split form of the Madagascar Scops Owl was found at night in Mantadia, where we enjoyed superb views at close range in the spot light. One of the undoubted highlights of the tour.

Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)

Otus madagascariensis

This new species of Scops Owl (pronounced "Toorootoorook", an onomatopoeic name) was seen at Berenty, where we found an individual on a night walk. Our first views were of one bird on a day roost in Ankarafantsika NP

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

At least five of these superb owls were located in gallery forest along the Mandrare River in Berenty NP.

Madagascar Long-eared Owl (E)

Asio madagascariensis

After a sterling effort of patience we were rewarded with an incredible sighting of a single bird at Mantadia after dark.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae

Collared Nightjar (E)

Caprimulgus enarratus

We had fantastic views of a pair of birds roosting during the day in Analamazaotra Special Reserve and another pair at Ranomafana NP. A rare endemic restricted to the eastern forests.

Madagascar Nightjar (NE)

Caprimulgus madagascariensis

The common nightjar on Madagascar. Our first sightings were at Ampijoroa, during the night on a call perch.

Swifts Apodidae

Madagascar Spinetail (NE)

Zoonavena grandidieri

Pairs were sighted in Mantadia NP, Berenty and Ifaty.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus

Common in suitable palm habitat throughout.

Madagascar (Black) Swift (NE)

Apus balstoni

Birds were found at Isalo and Ankarafantsika NP.

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 (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Fairly common at freshwater and marine wetlands throughout. This attractive endemic was first recorded at Lac Alarobia. We later enjoyed further sightings of small numbers at roadside rice paddies and all wetland sites.

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)

Ispidina madagascariensis

This scarce species was seen exceptionally well at Analamazaotra Special Reserve, Mantadia NP and Ankarafantsika NP where we had our initial sighting.

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

Common, widespread in semi-open areas and recorded from almost all sites. First seen at Ampijoroa, with highest totals coming from the area of Tulear.

Rollers Coraciidae

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

Widespread and common breeding migrant from the African mainland. First recorded this species in large numbers at Ampijoroa.

Ground-Rollers Brachypteraciidae

Short-legged Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias leptosomus

The most difficult of the Ground-Rollers to find, on our second morning walk in Mantadia we finally rewarded when we managed to obtain exceptional views of this species. This species required considerable effort and the determination of the entire group was outstanding.

Scaly Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias squamigera

Another elusive and retiring species. We had outstanding views of a pair in Mantadia NP. A scarce and secretive bird, formerly considered being restricted to the forests of the Masoala peninsula.

Pitta-like Ground-Roller (E)

Atelornis pittoides

Our first sighting was from the trails in Mantadia, where we found a pair of birds calling from a perch quite high above the ground. A total of five were seen and others heard during the trip. We were fortunate to get great views on several occasions including Ranomafana NP and Anjozorobe. Despite being the most common 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

This species always requires a fair bit of effort and patience and ours was rewarded with a superb sighting of a single calling bird at close range in Ranomafana NP.

Long-tailed Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Uratelornis chimaera

This species is by far the most localized of the Ground-Rollers. We enjoyed superb views of one cooperative individual in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

Cuckoo-Rollers Leptosomidae

Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller (E)

Leptosomus discolor

This spectacular endemic was seen at all forest sites, the first being seen at Ampijoroa. Other sightings were had at Anjozorobe, Analamazaotra S.R, Mantadia NP, Zombitse NP and Ranomafana NP.

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

Commonly recorded at all western sites, including daily sightings at Ampijoroa, the Spiny Desert at Ifaty and 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 this electric species in Ranamofana NP when a male was sighted in full breeding plumage. Other sightings were enjoyed at Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

Schlegel's Asity (E) (NT)

Philepitta schlegeli

This jewel was sighted at Ampijoroa where we had cracking views of a single male who was initially located when calling.

Common Sunbird Asity (E)

Neodrepanis coruscans

We had good views of a single female at Anjozorobe and then further views of a pair in Ranomafana NP.

Yellow-bellied (Small-billed) Sunbird-Asity (E) (En)

Neodrepanis hypoxanthus

We had amazing views of a single knockout male on the Vohiparara ridge in Ranomafana NP. An extremely difficult bird to locate due to its rarity, small size, fast flight and insignificant call.

Larks *Alaudidae*

Madagascar (Hova) Lark (E)

Mirafra hova

Good numbers were located in the Ifaty area and around Lac Amboromalandy.

Swallows & Martins *Hirundinidae*

Mascarene Martin (NE)

Phedina borbonica

Madagascar's commonest hirundine and a regional breeding endemic. Recorded at almost all sites, on most days, with our first record being at Lac Alarobia.

Brown-throated (Plain Sand) Martin

Riparia paludicola

This species was sighted once in the Ifaty area.

Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

Madagascar Wagtail (E)

Motacilla flaviventris

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

Cuckooshrikes *Campephagedae*

Ashy (Madagascar) Cuckoo-shrike (NE)

Coracina cinerea

The only cuckoo-shrike of the island of Madagascar, we first recorded this species in the forests of Ampijoroa associating with a mixed flock. Observed again at Mantadia NP and Anjozorobe.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

Madagascar Bulbul (NE)

Hypsipetes madagascariensis

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

Vangas *Vangidae*

Red-tailed Vanga (E)

Calicalicus madagascariensis

We heard this species "wolf-whistle" call on a number of occasions. This species was well in the Mantadia area.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)

Calicalicus rufocarpalis

We enjoyed superb close studies of a male and female of this recently described and highly localised endemic,

in “coral rag” scrub on La Table. This species can be particularly hard to find and we were very fortunate to get such good views.

Rufous Vanga (E)

Schetba rufa

We enjoyed very good views of this species in the dry forests of Ampijoroa.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

This often heard and infrequently observed species was seen at Ampijoroa, where we found a pair. Later this species was found at Mantadia NP and Berenty.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)

Xenopirostris xenopirostris

A single female bird was sighted on our early morning walk through the spiny desert at Ifaty.

Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)

Xenopirostris polleni

A scarce and local denizen of eastern forests, we enjoyed stunning views at Vohiparara.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) (En)

Xenopirostris damii

We enjoyed superb views of two birds in a mixed foraging flock at Ampijoroa. The most localised of the vangas, after the recently discovered Red-shouldered.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)

Falcula palliata

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

White-headed Vanga (E)

Artamella viridis

Seen very well daily in small numbers at Ampijoroa, often in the campsite, with further sightings at Ifaty and Vohiparara.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

The commonest vanga, occurring in habitats ranging from pristine rainforest to degraded scrub. First seen at Ampijoroa, this species was also regularly observed throughout the trip, especially in the dry south.

(Madagascar) Blue Vanga ([N]E)

Cyanolanius madagascarensis

Our first encounter with this species was one at Ampijoroa. Several others were heard and seen in Zombitse NP and a single was seen in Ranomafana NP. Another one of the world's great “Blue Birds”!

NOTE: Sinclair I. and Langrande O., consider the Comoros race of this species to be distinct, resulting in the Madagascar Blue Vanga being another Madagascar endemic. This stance is not widely accepted.

Nuthatch Vanga (Coral-billed) (E)

Hypositta corallirostris

A pair was seen very well at Mantadia. A peculiar and localised eastern rainforest endemic.

Tylas (Vanga) (E)

Tylas eduardi

A single bird was seen and many more heard in Analamazaotra Special Reserve and Mantadia NP, with further sightings at Vohiparara and Ranomafana NP.

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

Dark Newtonia (E)

Newtonia amphichroa

This species was well seen at Mantadia NP after it was initially located calling.

Common Newtonia (E)

Newtonia brunneicauda

Common and widespread in wooded and semi-wooded habitat throughout our tour. The first seen was at Ampijoroa, where up to six were recorded daily.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)

Newtonia archboldi

One was seen at close quarters in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)

Pseudobias wardi

Fairly common in the Perinet area, where a pair were seen. Later seen again at Ranomafana NP.

Crossley's Babbler (E)

Mystacornis crossleyi

We enjoyed close views of a pair at Anjozorobe, including what can only be described as awesome, minimum-focus views of a singing male of this strikingly beautiful endemic.

Thrushes Turdidae

Littoral Rock Thrush (E)

Pseudocossyphus imerinus

A pair of birds were found in dune scrub behind Anakao; a most peculiar habitat for a Rock Thrush.

Forest Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus sharpei*

A stunning male was seen in ridge top forest at Anjozorobe.

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

We had superb views of a single bird in Isalo NP.

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

Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E) *Copsychus albospecularis*

This species was seen throughout the tour, almost daily, and is a rather bold and confiding species. Both white-bellied and dark-bellied races were noted during the course of the tour.

African Stonechat *Saxicola axillaries*

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

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Brown Emu-tail (E) *Dromaeocercus brunneus*

This species was found skulking about in ridge top forest at Mantadia NP.

Gray Emutail (E) *Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

A pair of birds was seen well in the wetlands at Vohiparara.

Madagascar Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*

Very common in dense cover of any kind in the east, where several recorded daily. First seen at Lac Alarobia, where we had superb views of two birds.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*

Replaces Madagascar Brush Warbler in the South West and was located in the spiny forest around Ifaty.

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. First seen in the wetlands at Anjozorobe.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

One seen at exceptionally close distance in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

Fairly common denizen of eastern rainforest, with small numbers seen and heard daily in the Perinet and Ranomafana areas.

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*

A secretive endemic of the understorey of eastern rainforest and often difficult to see. We had good views at Anjozorobe and Ranomafana NP.

Cryptic Warbler (E) *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

This recently described species was first seen singing from its treetop perch in the ridge-top forest at Vohiparara.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) *Hartertula flavoviridis*

A single bird was sighted in a mixed greenbul flock in Mantadia NP.

Long-billed Greenbul (E) *Phyllastrephus madagascariensis*

Widespread in Madagascar, we first encountered this species in good numbers at Ampijoroa and heard and saw it regularly in forest sites thereafter.

Spectacled Greenbul (E) *Phyllastrephus zosterops*

Restricted to eastern forests, where it is the commonest of the "small greenbuls". Sightings were had in Mantadia NP, Anjozorobe and Ranomafana NP.

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

We enjoyed superb encounters with two groups and seven individuals of this attractive and confiding species in Zombitse NP. A globally threatened bird that is restricted to two forests in southwest Madagascar.

Gray-crowned Greenbul (E) (NT)

Phyllastrephus cinereiceps

Uncommon in eastern rainforest, mainly at altitudes above the range of Spectacled Greenbul. Seen exceptionally well in the mid-storey at Vohiparara, after our first sightings at Mantadia NP.

Madagascar Yellow-brow (E) (NT)

Crossleyia xanthophrys

A scarce and localised rainforest endemic with a pair of birds brilliantly seen in dense thicket at Anjozorobe.

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

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Madagascar Cisticola (NE)

Cisticola cherinus

Common in open habitats throughout, including rice paddies and the man-altered plateau grasslands.

Family Uncertain Incertae sedis

Common Jery (E)

Neomixis tenella

Common and ubiquitous. First seen at Ampijoroa.

Green Jery (E)

Neomixis viridis

First encountered in Perinet and later in Ranomafana NP, where we encountered small numbers daily.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)

Neomixis striatigula

This species scratchy call is a common background noise in the rain forests. It was seen in Perinet, Ifaty and Ranomafana NP.

Monarch Flycatchers Monarchidae

Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (NE)

Terpsiphone mutata

Common and widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. First recorded at Ampijoroa, with subsequent sightings almost daily of both rufous and white phases.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird (NE)

Nectarinia souimanga

By far the more common of Madagascar's sunbird species, occurring in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats. First seen at Ampijoroa and virtually daily thereafter.

Long-billed Green (Madagascar) Sunbird (NE)

Nectarinia notata

A very handsome and widespread but uncommon species. This species was seen in small numbers at Ampijoroa, Analamazaotra S.R and Ranomafana NP.

White-eyes Zosteropidae

Madagascar White-eye (NE)

Zosterops maderaspatana

Common and widespread, though scarce in the southwest. First sightings at Ampijoroa and seen at other eastern rainforest localities.

Waxbills Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E)

Lonchura nana

First recorded at Lac Amboromalandy and thereafter at Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Weavers Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver (E)

Ploceus nelicourvi

Regular only in eastern rainforest areas, where small numbers were seen in Mantadia and again at Ranomafana NP.

Sakalava Weaver (E)

Ploceus sakalava

This species was common in the drier regions of Madagascar and first sighted in Ampijoroa.

Madagascar Red Fody (E)

Foudia madagascariensis

Common, ubiquitous and good numbers recorded almost daily. First seen at Ampijoroa.

Forest Fody (E)

Foudia omissa

This species is under threat from forest fragmentation and hybridisation with Madagascar Red Fody. Our only sighting was two birds in Anjozorobe.

Starlings *Sturnidae*

Common Myna (I)

Acridotheres tristis tristis

Common in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E)

Hartlaubius aurata

Our only sighting of the trip was six birds near Mantadia NP.

Drongos *Dicruridae*

Crested Drongo (NE)

Dicrurus forficatus

Common and highly conspicuous in a variety of wooded habitats throughout. First seen at Ampijoroa, and almost daily in small numbers thereafter.

Crows & Jays *Corvidae*

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Common and widespread in open habitats.

MAMMALS

ORDER: Chiroptera

Family Pteropodidae (Old World Fruit Bats)

Madagascar Flying Fox

Pteropus rufus

We enjoyed close studies of approximately one hundred of these handsome, but noisy, animals at their day roost in the gallery woodland at Berenty.

Family Molossididae (Free-tailed Bats)

Mauritian Tomb Bat

Tophozus mauritanus

We found two individuals of this species near our campsite at Ampijoroa on a day roost.

ORDER: Insectivora

Family Tenrecidae (Tenrecs and Otter Shrews)

Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Hemicentetes semispinosus

We had brief views of one in Ranomafana NP.

ORDER: Rodentia

Family Muridae (Old World Rats and Mice)

Eastern Red Forest Rat

Nesomys rufus

This species was sighted in the eastern rainforest sites of Mantadia NP, Anjozorobe and Ranomafana NP.

Family Viverridae (Civets and allies)

Fanaloka (Madagascar Striped Civet)

Fossa fossana

We had brilliant views of one at Belle Vue, Ranomafana NP.

Family Herpestidae (Mongooses)

Ring-tailed Mongoose

Galidia elegans

We were all afforded some excellent encounters with this rather shy species at Ranomafana NP.

ORDER: Primates

Family Cheirogaleidae (Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs)

Gray-brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

Several of these tiny lemurs were seen on our night walk at Berenty.

Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus rufus*

One of these delightful lemurs was sighted at Belle Vue, Ranomafana NP. This species allowed for extensive study as it was seen from only a few metres away.

Golden-brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus ravelobensis*

This recently described species was brilliantly seen on one of our night walks at Ampijoroa.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*

We enjoyed fantastic views of this delightful creature on a couple of our night excursions at Ampijoroa.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*

Excellent close up views were had at Feon 'ny ala, Analamazaotra S.R of three lemurs that visited the Travellers Palms outside the restaurant every night. These lemurs have only recently been recognised as this species.

Family Megaladapidae (Sportive Lemurs)

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*

Several individuals were seen, some on our night excursions and others at their day roosts at Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

Two individuals were sighted at Berenty.

Weasel Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur mustelinus*

First sighted at a day hole in Mantadia NP with a further one seen at Anjozorobe on a night walk.

Family Lemuridae ("True" Lemurs)

Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur griseus griseus*

Nine individuals seen in Mantadia NP and Analamazaotra S.R.

Golden Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur aureus*

We were particularly fortunate to find two of these rare prosimians in tall stands of Bamboo in Ranomafana. This species, although quite large, was only discovered in 1987.

Greater Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur simus*

We enjoyed excellent views of this species in Ranomafana NP.

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.

Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*

We were very fortunate to have amazing views of three of these animals at Ampijoroa, one of the most difficult lemurs to find in Madagascar.

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*

This species was found at Ranomafana NP and initially at Mantadia NP, where we had superb views of two and one respectively.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These playful lemurs were first seen at Ampijoroa. Small numbers were also seen in Analamazaotra Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

A very common and conspicuous lemur at Berenty (where introduced), and over thirty were seen daily.

Family Indriidae (Avahis, Sifakas and Indri)

Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi occidentalis*

This species was easily encountered at Ampijoroa during both of our night walks.

Diademed Sifaka

This gorgeous species was first sighted at Mantadia NP and then again at Analamazaotra S.R.

Propithecus diadema

Milne-Edwards's Sifaka

We were extremely fortunate to find two animals in Ranomafana NP.

Propithecus diadema edwardsi

Verreaux's Sifaka

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 twenty-five were seen daily.

Propithecus verreaux verreauxi

Coquerel's Sifaka

Common at Ampijoroa, where up to a dozen were recorded daily, even within the confines of the camp.

Propithecus verreauxi coquereli

Indri

We found a single animal that was seen at extraordinary close range on a ridge in Mantadia NP. The territorial calls of this lemur, often considered the largest extant species, is one of the world's great wildlife sounds.

Indri indri

Amphibians and Reptiles

Tawny Tree Frog

Boophis luteus

Green Tree Frog

Boophis viridis

Madagascar Tree Frog

Boophis madagascariensis

White-lipped Tree Frog

Boophis albilabris

Boophis rappoides

Mantidactylis sp.

Spider Tortoise

Pyxis arachnoides

Nile Crocodile

Crocodylus niloticus

Brookesia thieli

Brookesia nasus

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

Nose-horned Chameleon

Calumma nasuta

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

Parson's Chameleon

Calumma parsonii

Calumma O'Shaughnessy

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

Warty Chameleon

Furcifer verrucosus

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

Cuvier's Iguanid

Oplurus cuvieri

Spiny-tailed Iguanid

Oplurus saxicola

Henkel's Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus henkeli

Uroplatus ebenau

Mercator Tropical House Gecko

Hemidactylus mercatorius

Lygodactylus talampyae

Lygodactylus sp

Madagascar Day Gecko

Phelsuma madagascarensis

Lineated Day Gecko

Phelsuma lineata

Phelsuma standingi

Madagascar Plated Lizard

Zonosaurus madagascarensis

Zonosaurus trilineatus

Gravenhorst's Skink

Mabuya gravenhorstii

Elegant Skink

Mabuya elegans

Madagascar Tree Boa

Sanzinia madagascariensis

Madagascar Ground Boa

Acrantophis madagascariensis

Mahfaly Sand Snake

Mimophis mahfalensis

**Giraffe-necked Weevil
Shield Bug
Pill Millipede
Flatid Leaf Bug**

Photographs: Collared Nightjar, Rufous Vanga, Short-legged Ground-Roller & Rainforest Scops Owl by Keith Valentine.

Rockjumper Birding Tours
Worldwide Birding Adventures
PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa
Tel: +27 33 394 0225
Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225
Email: info@rockjumper.co.za
Alternative Email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumper.co.za