



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Comprehensive IV

3rd – 24th November

Masoala Extension

26th October – 1st November



Collared Nightjar; Scaly Ground Roller

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Glen Valentine

Tour Summary

The trip kicked off in the remote, well-forested and incredibly scenic north-east of the country. Those fortunate enough to have done the Masoala Peninsula Extension were in for a rewarding experience. The Masoala National Park protects the largest tract of lowland rainforest on Madagascar and supports several very rare species restricted to this exotic and beautiful region. Several species such as Short-legged and Scaly Ground Roller are possibly easier to see here and we had cracking views of both species. The legendary Helmet Vanga, one of the world's most bizarre and striking birds was seen extremely well on a nest and some of the group had further views of another individual feeding in a mixed flock.

Other highlights on this remote part of the island included flocks of Madagascar Pratincole, a Common Noddy feeding in a mixed flock of terns, confiding Red-breasted Coua and the incomparable

Red-ruffed Lemur. Several of these gorgeous mammals were encountered as were small groups of White-fronted Brown Lemur. Night walks in the area saw us adding Panther Chameleon to the reptile list whilst an unknown species of sportive lemur shows that Madagascar still needs much research to be done in its more remote areas.



Pitta-like Ground Roller; Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur

Our main tour, visiting all the key birding sites throughout the country proved to be extremely successful as far as mammals, herps and birds were concerned. We started out in the capital city, Antananarivo where some of the group headed out to Lake Alarobia, a small water body within the city limits where we found Malagasy Pond Heron, African Openbill, Fulvous Duck and many other more common and widespread endemics.

The dry deciduous woodlands of Ampijoroa beckoned and on arrival provided us with immediate entertainment. Bird activity was good even though we arrived at midday and we were pleased to pick up gaudy Broad-billed Rollers, Lesser Vasa and Greater Vasa Parrots, various species of Vanga and the friendly Cuvier's Iguanid providing us with a wonderful opening experience to Madagascar. Wondering along the paths, we managed to pick up most of the specials of the area. White-breasted Mesite eventually provided us with crippling views whilst Schlegel's Asity came easily for a change. In the late morning heat, we added Van Dam's Vanga on a nest, an extremely localised, uncommon and often difficult-to-find endemic. Other noteworthy finds included Rufous Vanga, Coquerel's and Red-capped Couas, White-throated Rail, Madagascar Jacana, Humblot's Heron, Grey-headed Lovebird and unbeatable views of Madagascar Fish Eagle. On the mammal front we enjoyed repeated views of the beautiful Coquerel's Sifaka whilst Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemurs were found poking their cute little faces out of tree trunks. Night walks were very productive and we enjoyed Grey Mouse Lemur, Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, Western Avahi and Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur.

After our stay at Ampijoroa we made the drive back to the coastal town of Mahajanga adding Yellow-billed Stork along the way. This is where we would embark the following day on a boat trip into the Betsiboka Delta in search of the extremely rare and localised Bernier's Teal, which we found feeding on exposed tidal mudflats. The other target bird, Bernier's (Madagascar Sacred) Ibis was also seen, as were good numbers of waders. Notable oddities that are very seldom recorded in Madagascar but were seen on our trip included African Openbill and African Spoonbill.

We flew back to Tana and hastily moved on to the legendary eastern rainforest site of Perinet. Like most rainforest sites, Perinet and Mantadia require a lot of hard work, perseverance and patience but in so doing, offer great reward at the same time. Little did we know that we were to be involved in a near record-breaking experience on our first morning in Mantadia NP. We were the exceedingly lucky group to have seen all four eastern rainforest ground rollers before 9:00 a.m! First it was Short-legged then Rufous-headed across the road and a little further down, Scaly and Pitta-like Ground Roller. All four provided us with killer views and an experience that none of us will ever forget! Other

highlights in these forests included several point blank views of the comical Cuckoo Roller with its distinctive display flight and call. Red-breasted Coua and Nuthatch Vanga proved particularly tricky but views were ultimately obtained of both these species. We had crippling encounters with Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher whilst Grey-crowned Tetraka was unusually confiding. Wedge-tailed Jery and Madagascar Flufftail put in a brief appearance whilst Madagascar Starling and Rainforest Scops-Owl showed well. Mammals are an attractive feature of these forests and we had numerous sightings of some of Madagascar's most prized lemurs. Indri with its deafening howls and the rare Diademed Sifaka stole our hearts whilst Eastern Grey Bamboo, Red-bellied, Common Brown and the incomparable Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur entertained us through the days.

Moving on to Anjozorobe, we were over-awed by the scenery and amount of pristine habitat that remains in these parts. Birding in the extensive rainforest saw us racking up Forest Rock Thrush, Madagascar Yellowbrow, Madagascar Wood Rail and Henst's Goshawk. The nearby marsh gave us Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Snipe and Meller's Duck, a bird that's numbers seem to be decreasing at an alarming rate. A night walk in the forest was extremely productive and we had Spectacled Greenbul, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher and Pitta-like Ground-Roller on night roosts, several close-up views of Short-horned, Band-bellied, Parson's and stump-tailed Chameleons. We also added Weasel Sportive Lemur to the ever-growing mammal list whilst Calumma Globifer and the beautiful Side-striped Chameleon were wonderful finds.

Bidding farewell to the botanical wonderland of Anjozorobe, we plane-hopped from Tana to Fort Dauphin and then hit the bumpy road to Berenty. Huge stands of sisal plantations as far as the eye could see stood ahead of us and when we finally arrived at the gallery woodland of the reserve, a sigh of relief enveloped the bus. The next morning was hot and sunny with Ring-tailed Lemurs sitting up in trees with their meditation-like stance catching the first rays of light. Verreaux's Sifakas were soon seen bounding across the open sand in front of the breakfast area in their typical bipedal sideward movement. Several special bird species that are seldom-seen elsewhere are relatively easily found at Berenty. These include Madagascar Sandgrouse, Giant and Green-capped Coua and White-browed Hawk Owl. All were seen brilliantly at close quarters. The ever so cute White-footed Sportive Lemur was found during the day and Reddish-Grey Mouse Lemur appeared at night. These tiny creatures move rat-like through the canopy but the thrill of seeing one is immense.

It was time to head for the spiny desert where a variety of delectable birds are on offer. This unique habitat of giant Baobabs that are hundreds of years old and several species of *didierea*, *pachypodium* and *Euphorbia* support the only populations of the mega birds: Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert Mesite in the world, two of the most sought-after birds on any tour to Madagascar. We had incredibly satisfying views of both species along with a number of other range-restricted endemics such as Subdesert Brush Warbler, Archbold's Newtonia, Madagascar Buttonquail, Thamnornis with its characteristic song and Running Coua. The spiny desert becomes unbearably hot by mid-morning and the idea of going snorkelling sounded like the only sensible plan. The coral reef off Ifaty teems with the most amazingly colourful fish and swimming in these tropical waters amongst them was an amazing experience. After having success in finding a small flock of Crab Plovers south of Ifaty we decided to give the spiny desert one last shot in the afternoon. This proved to be a great decision and an afternoon filled with many memories. We blazed through the scrub after hearing Lafresnaye's Vanga call and eventually, when our bodies wouldn't carry us much further, there it was, sitting in the open for us all to gawk over. With the spirits at an all time high we headed back to the vehicles only to be blown away by a Banded Kestrel sitting at the top of a *Didierea*, which eventually allowed for great photographic opportunities.

After finding all the target birds, we made for Tulear, the largest town in the south-west from where we would depart on a wonderful boat voyage to the island of Nosy Ve which lies just off the coast and is the home of breeding Red-tailed Tropicbirds. The island also supports over-wintering Crab Plovers and a variety of Terns. Our trip out to our Littoral Rock Thrush site was fairly calm with a

slight breeze picking up, we found the Thrush and made for the island and had scope views of small flocks of Crab Plovers whilst the tropicbirds soared over our heads. The highlight for the leader at least was finding the Sooty Gull that was hanging around on the sand spit near the island. The wind was picking up so we retreated to the mainland, enjoying the wall of spray along the way. A fantastic day with a scrumptious lunch was had by all.

Driving north to our final destination, Ranomafana, we enjoyed an overnight stay at Isalo where we found the localised Benson's Rock Thrush. En route to Isalo, we stopped at Zombitse Forest, a small patch of deciduous woodland that holds the inexplicably localised Appert's Tetraka of which we had wonderful close-up views. Hubbard's Sportive Lemur and the outrageous Phelsuma Standingi, an electric-looking day gecko were two more localised species that were seen and we had our final encounters of Verreaux's Sifaka in these forests.



Side-striped Chameleon; Diademed Sifaka

Ranomafana National Park protects a fairly large tract of pristine mid to high-altitude rainforest that once covered the entire area. The proclamation of the park was due to the discovery of Golden Bamboo and Greater Bamboo Lemurs, which are still only known from the national park and its immediate surrounds. Many extremely elusive and sought-after endemic bird species also occur in the forests of Ranomafana and high on the priority list were Crossley's Babbler, Velvet Asity, Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Pollen's Vanga and Madagascar Pratincole, all of which we saw. One of the star birds of the trip was a Madagascar Sparrowhawk sitting on one of the forest trails, another bird that we had worked extremely hard to find without any success until now. We had brilliant views of Golden Bamboo and Red-bellied Lemur and Greater Bamboo-Lemur was also seen in the rainforest canopy. *Furcifer balteatus* and Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon were two cracking herps to add to the list.

It was time to make our way back to Antananarivo for everyone to depart on their separate ways.

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* with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier *et al* (2006) *Lemurs 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

195 species

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

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

High numbers were found on the wetlands south of Ifaty.

Madagascar Little Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

5 birds were seen on Lake Alarobia which included 3 breeding plumage adults. A pair was also seen well on a forest lake in Mantadia with another being present at Anjozorobe.

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

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopterus roseus

A flock of 12 were seen on pans near Ifaty.

Lesser Flamingo

Phoeniconaias minor

A flock of 8 were seen near St. Augustin.

Tropicbirds Phaethontidae

Red-tailed Tropicbird

Phaethon rubricauda

We enjoyed intimate encounters with these most elegant birds on the island of Nosy Ve.

Darters Anhingidae

African Darter

Anhinga rufa

Uncommon in Madagascar, only recorded on Lake Ravelobe, Ampijoroa.

Reed Cormorant

Phalacrocorax africanus

A single bird was seen on mudflats near Maroantsetra on the Masoala Extension.

Hérons Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Large numbers recorded during the visit to Lake 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 Lake Alarobia.

Madagascar Pond-Heron (BE) (V) *Ardeola idae*

Small numbers, mainly singletons, at scattered localities across the island, with the first sightings from Lake Alarobia, including many in magnificent nuptial plumage.

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 breeding at Ampijaroa and at Lac Alarobia.

Green-backed (Striated) Heron *Butorides striatus*

Small numbers at most freshwater and marine wetlands.

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 Lake Alarobia where we found good numbers on the island. Encountered regularly thereafter.

Dimorphic (Mascarene Reef) Egret (NE) *Egretta [garzetta] dimorpha*

Widespread and common throughout Madagascar.

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*

Peak numbers of three at Lake Amboromalandy and wetlands around Ampijoroa, small numbers at various other wetland localities.

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Mainly in western wetland where we found several birds.

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

We were very fortunate in obtaining sightings of this sometimes difficult species. First sighted at the lake in Ampijoroa and later seen on nests near St. Augustin.

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 the drives from Tana to Perinet and from Ranomafana to Tana.

Storks Ciconiidae

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria Ibis*

A single adult bird flew across the road from Ampijoroa to Mahajanga.

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

True to form a lone bird at Lac Alarobia put in an appearance during our visit, a rare species in Madagascar. We were blown away when we picked up a singleton on the mudflats in the Betsiboka Delta.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Bernier's (Madagascar Sacred) Ibis (NE) *Threskiornis [aethiopicus] bernieri*

One of the prizes of our speedboat adventure up the Betsiboka Delta, a total of 15 individuals, and even the diagnostic blue eye colour was seen.

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

Island.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

We found several at Lac Ravelobe and Amboromalandy near Ampijoroa.

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

We enjoyed magnificent views of a single bird at Ampijoroa. This was an extremely lucky encounter.

We did also see a further individual on the nest at Zombitse and a single encounter in Ranomafana.

African Openbill *Platylea Alba*

An incredible total of 4 birds were encountered in the Betsiboka Delta.

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

We were fortunate to find 3 individuals of this uncommon species in Madagascar while birding Lake Alarobia in Tana.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Large numbers were recorded at freshwater wetlands around Tana, Ampijoroa and south of Ifaty.

Comb (Knob-billed) Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

Several individuals were seen at Lake Alarobia.

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

We were especially lucky to have had scope views of a pair sitting at the edge of a pond and several flight views of at least 2 individuals at Anjozorobe. This species' numbers seem to continue to decline.

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

The greatest prize of our adventurous trip into the Betsiboka Delta. We wasted no time in finding this species. Within minutes of arriving in the delta we found our first birds feeding on mudflats.

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

Red-billed Teal (Duck) *Anas erythrorhyncha*

Probably the commonest duck and widespread in freshwater wetlands across the island.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*

Several were seen at Lake Amboromalandy. We also had good views of several at wetlands south of Ifaty.

Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus migrans*

Common and conspicuous in open habitats, particularly in the west. Small numbers at the roadside on most road journeys, very common on the drive from Isalo NP to Ranomafana.

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

Fine studies of 2 of these critically endangered, endemic eagles at the edge of Lake 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 sites.

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

A single bird was heard at Mantadia. We later had cracking flight views of a single bird at Anjozorobe.

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

Frances' Sparrowhawk (NE) *Accipiter francesii*

A few individuals were seen at various sites including a lovely male seen at close quarters at Berenty.

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

We had a very special and intimate encounter of this extremely elusive species at Ranomafana after intensive but unsuccessful searching at Berenty.

Madagascar Buzzard (E)

Buteo brachypterus

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

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

Falco zoniventris

We had awesome views of this rare endemic at Ifaty. Well done for putting in the effort guys!!

Eleonora's Falcon

Falco eleonora

We were ecstatic when we 3 adults flew over our heads at the Tana Airport. We saw another bird at a river en route to Perinet.

Sooty Falcon

Falco concolor

4 individuals flew over our heads at the Tana Airport along with several Eleonora's Falcons.

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

A single bird was seen at Ifaty.

Partridges, Quails & Pheasants *Phasianidae*

Madagascar Partridge (E)

Margaroperdix madagascarensis

Cracking views of a male and female were had at Anjozorobe. This is one of the most frequently missed birds during a tour to Madagascar.

Common Quail

Coturnix coturnix

A total of 3 birds were seen on the road in the early morning at Berenty.

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl (I)

Numida meleagris

Fairly large numbers were encountered at Berenty.

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

Mesites *Mesitornithidae*

White-breasted Mesite (E) (V)

Mesitornis variegata

Ampijoroa produced great sightings; we had superb views of 2 pairs of these beautiful birds and also heard their shrill duet.

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 scope views of a pair.

Buttonquails *Turnicidae*

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

This can often be a tricky bird to find and see well. A total of 11 birds were found in the Ifaty area.

Rails & Gallinules *Rallidae*

Madagascar Flufftail (E)

Sarothrura insularis

A species which can often prove particularly elusive, we had brief views of a male running the 100m print in the Olympics in record time at Perinet. Thereafter heard its characteristic call at many sites.

Madagascar Wood Rail (E)

Canirallus kioloides

This can be a devilishly hard bird to see! We recorded several birds at various forest sites.

Madagascar Rail (E)

Rallus madagascariensis

We had fantastic views of this shy rallid at Anjozorobe after hearing it near Perinet.

White-throated (Cuvier's) Rail (NE) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

We saw several birds at various sites. Our first views were of a single bird in a drainage ditch en route to Ampijoroa.

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*

Stupendous views were had of several birds running around like baby chickens at a wetland near Ifaty.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Small numbers were encountered at several sites including Lake Alarobia and lake Ravelobe.

Jacanas *Jacanidae*

Madagascar Jacana (E) *Actophilornis albinucha*

Only in wetlands of the northwest, where birds were seen at Lac Ravelobe.

Crab Plover *Dromadidae*

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

A highlight of the trip for many! We enjoyed scope views of these strange waders at Nosy Ve and near Ifaty, so unusual in fact that they are placed in their own family *Dromadidae*.

Avocets & Stilts *Recurvirostridae*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Recorded at several sites, both coastal and inland, with peak numbers found in wetlands between Tulear and Ifaty.

Coursers & Pratincoles *Glareolidae*

Madagascar Pratincole (BE) *Glareola ocularis*

We had views of 2 birds on a sandbank in the river at Ranomafana. Large numbers were also encountered at Mosoala.

Plovers *Charadriidae*

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

We found several on mudflats throughout the Ifaty area.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Largest numbers recorded at brackish lakes near Ifaty.

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

This scarce, localized endemic was observed at close quarters in a dry field in the Ifaty area. At least 8 individuals were seen.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Recorded at roadside wetlands near Ifaty and at Lake Ravelobe.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

We enjoyed sightings of this coastal species on mudflats near Maroantsetra, in the Betsiboka Delta and in the area of Tulear.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Common on mudflats in the Betsiboka Delta and Tulear, also recorded near Maroantsetra.

Gray (Black-bellied) Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Painted Snipes *Rostratulidae*

Greater Painted Snipe

Rostratula benghalensis

Scope views were had of this species near Lake Amboromalandy. This striking bird is in its own monotypic family.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*

Madagascar Snipe (E)(NT)

Gallinago macrodactyla

We had good flight views of several birds at Anjozorobe.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

This species was fairly common on tidal flats around Tulear and Ifaty and in the Betsiboka Delta.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Another common wader, this species was regularly seen in the wetlands in the Tulear and Ifaty area.

Terek Sandpiper

Tringa cinerea

We had views of good numbers in the Betsiboka Delta.

Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

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

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Fairly common on tidal flats around Tulear and Ifaty.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Several of this cosmopolitan bird were seen on tidal flats around Ifaty.

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

A single bird was scoped on the mudflats south of Ifaty.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

The commonest Calidrid, seen on the tidal flats in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

Terns *Sternidae*

Sooty (Hemprich's) Gull

Larus Hemprichii

This species is a rarity on Madagascar having first been recorded only 2 years ago on a Rockjumper birding tour by David Shakelford. The same bird returned to the same site this season and we had the good fortune of seeing this species on our tour. This species was a lifer for the leader.

Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

Several were seen at wetlands in the south-west.

Greater Crested (Swift) Tern

Sterna bergii

Recorded at most coastal sites in small numbers.

Lesser Crested Tern

Sterna bengalensis

We had good views of several at Nosy Ve and at Masoala.

Roseate Tern

Sterna dougallii

Several were seen in mixed feeding flocks in the Bay of Antongil on the Mosoala Peninsula.

Saunders's Tern

Sterna saundersi

Our first sighting was of a singleton in the Betsiboka Delta; thereafter we saw at least 8 birds near Ifaty.

Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybrida

Recorded at fresh water wetlands in the west..

Common Noddy

Anous stolidus

We were thrilled to find a single bird in a mixed feeding flock in the Bay of Antongil on our Mosoala extension.

Sandgrouse *Pteroclididae*

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

Our first sighting was of a pair drinking at the Mandrare River at Berenty, this was followed by a further 3 individuals.

Pigeons & Doves *Columbidae*

Rock Pigeon (I)

Columba livia

Widespread in urban areas.

Madagascar Turtle Dove (NEe)

Columba picturata

First seen at Tsimbazaza Zoo, 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

This species was seen well at Ampijoroa.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)

Alectroenas madagascariensis

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

Parrots *Psittacidae*

(Greater) Vasa Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis vasa

This is the less common of the two Vasa Parrots in Madagascar, and we enjoyed good views at Ampijoroa.

Black (Lesser Vasa) Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis nigra

A widespread and fairly 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 near Tulear and Ifaty.

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 on several occasions.

Giant Coua (E)

Coua gigas

Common at Berenty where we had numerous sightings of fantastically relaxed birds. More views were had at Zombitse.

Coquerel's Coua (E)

Coua coquereli

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

Running Coua (E)

Coua cursor

We all had good views of this dry-country coua in the spiny desert at Ifaty.

Red-breasted Coua (E)

Coua serriana

Earlier on Masoala this species was common and conspicuous. We were, however, lucky to get views at Perinet after intensive and frustrating searching.

Red-fronted Coua (E)

Coua reynaudii

We had superb views of this unusually tricky species at Anjozorobe.

Red-capped Coua (E)

Coua ruficeps

We enjoyed great views of numerous birds at Ampijoroa.

NOTE: See notation under Green-capped Coua

Green-capped Coua (E)

Coua [ruficeps] olivaceiceps

A single bird was 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 with many individuals being seen during our stay there. 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 localized species in coral rag scrub near La Table. The most localized member of this endemic sub-family.

Blue Coua (E)

Coua caerulea

Fairly common in the eastern forests. 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.

Typical Owls Strigidae

Madagascar (Rainforest) Scops Owl (NE)

Otus rutilus

This recently split form of the Madagascar Scops Owl was seen exceptionally well on a day roost at Perinet.

Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)

Otus madagascariensis

This new species of Scops Owl (pronounced "Toorootoorook", an onomatopoeic name) was seen at Ampijoroa and again at 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

Crippling views were had of this beauty at Berenty.

Madagascar Long-eared Owl (E)

Asio madagascariensis

Most people eventually attained flight views at Perinet.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae

Collared Nightjar (E)

Caprimulgus enarratus

We had fantastic views of a single bird roosting during the day in Perinet Special Reserve. A rare endemic restricted to the eastern forests.

Madagascar Nightjar (NE)

Caprimulgus madagascariensis

The common nightjar on Madagascar. Our first sighting was of several birds flying around our hotel in Tana. Every night we were treated to their "bouncing marble" calls.

Swifts Apodidae

Madagascar Spinetail (NE)

Zoonavena grandidieri

Recorded over forest at Perinet, Mantadia and Masoala. We also saw this species over Zombitse forest in the south-west.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus gracilis

Common in suitable palm habitat.

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

2 separate individuals were seen, 1 over the Tsimbazaza Zoo and another en route to Ranomafana.

Madagascar (Black) Swift (NE)

Apus balstoni

Recorded at scattered localities throughout the tour.

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.

Little Swift

Apus affinis

3 birds were seen on our 2nd day at the Tana airport. A scarce and localized bird in Madagascar.

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher (NE)

Alcedo vintsioides

Fairly common at freshwater and marine wetlands throughout.

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)

Ispidina madagascariensis

A total of 5 of these delightful kingfishers were seen in Mantadia. This gorgeous species was also seen on Masoala.

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

Common, widespread in semi-open areas and recorded from almost all sites.

Rollers Coraciidae

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

Widespread and common breeding migrant from the African mainland. We first recorded this brightly coloured 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, we were treated to absolutely sensational views on our first morning at Mantadia. This was our first Ground Roller of the main tour. Earlier on the Masoala Extension we had brilliant views of a pair.

Scaly Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias squamigera

Another elusive and retiring species. We had cracking views of a pair near the nest sight. A scarce and secretive bird, formerly considered to be restricted to the forests of the Masoala peninsula where we had crippling views on a night roost.

Pitta-like Ground-Roller (E)

Atelornis pittoides

Our first sighting was on our first morning in Mantadia. 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

One of the most beautiful birds in the world, we had awesome views of a pair on our first morning in Mantadia.

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

Uratelornis chimaera

We salivated over superb views of one cooperative individual in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty after the local guides shepherded the bird in our direction.

Cuckoo-Rollers Leptosomidae

Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller (E)

Leptosomus discolor

This spectacular endemic was seen at all forest sites, the first being seen at Ampijoroa.

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

Hoopoes Upupidae

Madagascar Hoopoe (E)

Upupa marginalis

Commonly recorded at all western sites.

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 Mantadia and Ranomafana.

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

We found this mega endemic fairly quickly on our first morning at Ampijoroa. A total of 3 birds were seen.

Common Sunbird Asity (E) *Neodrepanis coruscans*

After only glimpsing this species at Perinet, some of the group had fantastic views at Ranomafana.

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

I'm sure that this bird will hold a special place in those people's hearts that were fortunate to have seen it. We had unbeatable views of a single male at Ranomafana.

Larks Alaudidae

Madagascar (Hova) Lark (E) *Mirafra hova*

Common in all dry country and open habitats.

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.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

An extremely good find for Madagascar, we had a single bird flying around near Ifaty.

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 on the island of Madagascar, we first recorded this species in the forests of Ampijoroa associating with a mixed flock. Observed regularly throughout the tour thereafter.

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.

Long-billed Berniera (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 Tetraka (Greenbul) (E) *Phyllastrephus zosterops*

Restricted to eastern forests, where it is the commonest of the "small greenbuls".

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

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

Gray-crowned Tetraka (Greenbul) (E) (NT) *Phyllastrephus cinereiceps*

Uncommon in eastern rainforest, mainly at altitudes above the range of Spectacled Greenbul. We saw it

at Mantadia and heard it Ranomafana.

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 recognized.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)

Calicalicus rufocarpalis

After long searching we eventually had superb close studies of a male of this recently described and highly localized 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

This handsome bird was recorded in the forest of Ampijoroa.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

This often heard and infrequently observed species was seen at few times at scattered localities throughout the tour.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)

Xenopirostris xenopirostris

This difficult species was enjoyed after an intense search in the spiny desert. This afternoon became extremely memorable for many reasons.

Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)

Xenopirostris polleni

A scarce and local denizen of eastern forests, we had brilliant views of a pair at Ranomafana.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) (En)

Xenopirostris damii

We were rewarded with superb views of a female on the nest at Ampijoroa.

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.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

The commonest vanga, occurring in habitats ranging from pristine rainforest to degraded scrub. First seen at Ampijoroa, where observed daily, 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 several at Ampijoroa. 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.

Coral-billed (Nuthatch)Vanga (E)

Hypositta corallirostris

After considerable effort we finally caught up with 3 birds at Perinet.

Tylas (Vanga) (E)

Tylas eduardi

Several seen and many more heard in Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP. Several were also found at Masoala.

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

Helmet Vanga (E)

Euryceros prevostii

A MEGA indeed, we had scope views of a bird on the nest and some of the younger, more intrepid members of the group had unbeatable views further up the trail. A Masoala specialty and one that makes the extension well worth doing.

Thrushes Turdidae

Littoral Rock Thrush (E)

Pseudocossyphus imerinus

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

Forest Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus sharpei*

We had cracking views of this forest-dweller at Anjozorobe.

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

We had superb views of at least 4 birds 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 seen daily. This species was particularly common at Anjozorobe.

Babblers Timaliidae

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*

An extremely secretive endemic of the understorey of eastern rainforest and unbelievably difficult to see. Most of the group had at least some type of a view during the tour.

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

A scarce, localized and incredibly skulking and secretive rainforest endemic seen in the dense undergrowth 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.

Crossley's Babbler (E) *Mystacornis crossleyi*

We enjoyed close views of this strikingly beautiful endemic at Ranomafana NP.

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Brown Emu-tail (E) *Dromaeocercus brunneus*

Some of the group managed to see this "rat-like critter" at Anjozorobe with further audibles at Ranomafana.

Gray Emu-tail (E) *Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

We had very brief sightings of 1 bird near Perinet and another at Anjozorobe.

Madagascar Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas 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 it was very common.

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.

Thamnornis (Warbler)(E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

A total of 3 of these unique birds were seen in the spiny desert near Ifaty.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

Fairly common denizen of eastern rainforest, with small numbers seen and heard in the Perinet and Ranomafana areas. A bird vocalizing from a typical treetop perch in Mantadia was the first seen.

Dark Newtonia (E) *Newtonia amphichroa*

This smart little bird was found at Mantadia and Ranomafana NP.

- Common Newtonia (E)** *Newtonia brunneicauda*
Common and widespread in wooded and semi-wooded habitat throughout our tour.
- Archbold's Newtonia (E)** *Newtonia archboldi*
Seen at close quarters in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty, located by call.
- Madagascar Cisticola (NE)** *Cisticola cherinus*
Common in open habitats throughout, including rice paddies and the man-altered plateau grasslands.
- Common Jery (E)** *Neomixis tenella*
Common and ubiquitous. First seen at Ampijoroa and recorded almost daily throughout the trip.
- Green Jery (E)** *Neomixis viridis*
Seen regularly in eastern forests where we encountered small numbers daily.
- Stripe-throated Jery (E)** *Neomixis striatigula*
This specie's scratchy call is a common background noise in the rain forests.
- Cryptic Warbler (E)** *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*
This recently described species was seen and heard on the way to Mantadia singing at the top of a tall tree. We had further views at Ranomafana.
- Wedge-tailed Jery (E) (NT)** *Hartertula flavoviridis*
An uncommon and elusive endemic of eastern forests. We enjoyed views of this species at Mantadia NP.

Puffback Flycatchers *Platysteiridae*

- Ward's Flycatcher (E)** *Pseudobias wardi*
Fairly common in the Perinet and Mantadia reserves where it was recorded almost daily. Also seen at Ranomafana.

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 sites throughout.

White-eyes *Zosteropidae*

- Madagascar White-eye (NE)** *Zosterops maderaspatana*
Common and widespread, though scarce in the southwest. First sightings at Ampijoroa and at most localities thereafter.

Waxbills *Estrildidae*

- Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E)** *Lonchura nana*
First recorded in Tana and seen in small numbers throughout the tour thereafter.

Sparrows *passerida*

- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticu*

Several were seen at Tamatave.

Weavers Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver (E)

Ploceus nelicourvi

Regular only in eastern rainforest areas, where small numbers were seen.

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.

Forest Fody (E)

Foudia omissa

Scarce and can be tough to find, we found a lovely full breeding plumage male at Perinet with further sightings at Ranomafana.

Starlings Sturnidae

Common Myna (I)

Acridotheres tristis tristis

Unfortunately this species is common in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E)

Hartlaubius aurata

This species was seen at Mantadia. Brilliant scope views were obtained at Mosoala.

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

31 Species

ORDER: Chiroptera

Family Pteropodidae (Old World Fruit Bats)

Madagascar Flying Fox

Pteropus rufus

We enjoyed good views of these handsome but noisy animals at their day roosts in gallery woodland at Berenty.

ORDER: Chiroptera

Family Emballonuridae

Mauritian Tomb Bat

Taphozous mauritanus

Close-up views were had at a day roost at Ampijoroa.

ORDER: Insectivora

Family Tenrecidae (Tenrecs and Otter Shrews)

Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Hemicentetes semispinosus

A family group was seen by some on Mosoala.

ORDER: Rodentia

Family Muridae (Old World Rats and Mice)

Eastern Red Forest Rat *Nesomys rufus*

Recorded from Mantadia and Ranomafana NP's.

Lesser Tuft-tailed Rat *Eliurus minor*

A total of 3 were seen on Masoala Peninsula.

ORDER: Carnivora

Family Herpestidae (Mongoose)

Ring-tailed Mongoose *Viverricula elegans*

1 brief sighting was had at Ranomafana.

ORDER: Primates

Family Cheirogaleidae (Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs)

Gray Mouse Lemur *Microcebus murinus*

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

Reddish-Gray Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

This newly described species was found in the spiny forest habitat of Berenty.

Golden-Brown Mouse-Lemur *Microcebus ravelobensis*

At least 4 of these extremely localised lemurs were seen on a night walk at Ampijoroa.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*

This extremely localised and unknown lemur was seen outside our hotel near Perinet.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*

Several were seen on night walks at Ampijoroa. These were the first active mammals of the season as they hibernate during the cooler months of the year right through October.

Family Megaladapidae (Sportive Lemurs)

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*

Several individuals were seen at Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

Commonly seen at Berenty.

Weasel Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur mustelinus*

This species was found on our night walk at Anjozorobe.

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur hubbardi*

Two of these exceedingly cute lemurs were seen at Zombitse.

Weasel/Seal's/Unknown Sportive Lemur

3 of these lemurs to which most authorities cannot place the species were seen well on Masoala peninsula.

Family Lemuridae ("True" Lemurs)

Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur griseus griseus*

This attractive species was found at Perinet and Mantadia.

Golden Bamboo-Lemur *Hapalemur aureus*

A group of 2 were seen exceptionally well in Ranomafana NP.

Greater Bamboo-Lemur *Hapalemur simus*

A small group of 2 were seen well hidden in the canopy of the rainforest of Ranomafana.

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.

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*

2 of these beautiful lemurs were found at Ranomafana.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These playful lemurs were seen at Ampijoroa and in Perinet Special Reserve.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

Large numbers were seen at Berenty.

White-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur albifrons*

Excellent views of large groups of these lemurs were had at Masoala.

Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur *Varecia variegata variegata*

This, my favourite lemur in Madagascar was seen exceptionally well in Mantadia NP.

Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra*

One of the world's MEGA mammals, very vocal and remarkable to look at. We enjoyed many sightings of these fine beasts at Masoala.

Family Indriidae (Avahis, Sifakas and Indri)

Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi occidentalis*

This species is far more local and uncommon than its eastern counterpart, we recorded it at Ampijoroa during a night walk.

Diademed Sifaka *Propithecus diadema diadema*

We had outstanding encounters with this magnificent creature in Mantadia NP. Widely considered to be Madagascar's most beautiful primate, this is also the largest of the lemurs, with a number of specimens heavier than the largest Indri on record (Mittermeier et al 1994).

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 seen daily.

Coquerel's Sifaka *Propithecus verreauxi coquereli*

Common at Ampijoroa, where recorded daily, even within the confines of the camp.

Indri *Indri indri*

We had fantastic experiences with this incredible lemur. The territorial calls of this lemur, often considered the largest extant species (but see Diademed Sifaka, above), is one of the world's great wildlife sounds.

Listing of amphibians and reptiles seen

29 Species

Amphibians

Family; Hyperolilidae (Reed Frogs)

Betsileo Reed Frog *Heterixalus betsileo*

Family; Ranidae (True Frogs)

Yellow-banded Tree Frog *Boophis Tephraeomystrax*

Mascarene Grass Frog *Ptychadena mascareniensis*

Reptiles

Family; Crocodylidae (Crocodiles)

Nile Crocodile

Crocodylus niloticus

Family; *Chamaeleonidae* (Chameleons)

Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon

Brookesia superciliaris

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

Parson's Chameleon

Calumma parsonii

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

Panther Chameleon

Furcifer pardalis

Side-striped Chameleon

Furcifer lateralis

Brookesia thieli

Calumma globifer

Furcifer Balteatus

Family; *Iguanidae* (Iguanas)

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

Cuvier's Iguanid

Oplurus cuvieri

Four-striped Iguanid

Oplurus quadrimaculatus

Family; *Gekkonidae* (Geckos)

Mercator Tropical House Gecko

Hemidactylus mercatorius

Lineated Day Gecko

Phelsuma lineata

Phelsuma standingi

Family; *Gerrhosauridae* (Plated Lizards)

Madagascar Plated Lizard

Zonosaurus madagascarensis

Zonosaurus laticaudatus

Elegant Skink

Zonosaurus elegans

Gravenhorst's Skink

Mabuya gravenhorstii

Family; *Scincidae* (Skinks)

Gravenhorst's Skink

Mabuya gravenhorstii

Elegant Skink

Mabuya elegans

Family; *Colubridae* (Typical Snakes)

Mahafaly Sand Snake

Mimophis mahfalensis

Dumeril's Boa

Acrantophis dumerilli

Liopholidophus thieli

Notable Insects and other Invertebrates

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 the immense super-homes of Golden Orb-web Spiders *Nephila madagascariensis*. Other notable "creepy-crawlies" included Pill Millipedes *Sphaerotherium sp.*, centipedes, Flatid Leaf Bugs, and, of course, numerous spectacular moths and butterflies.

Photos by James Wakelin and David Shakelford

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