



Madagascar Trip Report

Michael Ellis Private Tour

3rd to 23rd July 2007



Madagascar is a land of bizarre and endemic wildlife, spiny deserts and mist-shrouded forests. This super tour enabled us to explore some of the island's finest sites, marvelous scenes and fascinating cultures.

Our first day in Madagascar was spent in the bustling chaos of Tana, a colorful and vibrant capital city. Here we visited the inner city bird sanctuary – Lake Alarobia. This tiny protected enclave is home to an extraordinary assemblage of herons, egrets and ducks. The vegetated fringes offered our first views of some Madagascar endemics including Madagascar Mannikin and Madagascar Kingfisher. For the afternoon we visited the Tsimbazaza Zoo where a nocturnal viewing house has been constructed. Here we saw the unbelievable Aye Aye and dreamed of a wild encounter somewhere on our tour.

After a rather long but fascinating travel day south from Tana we arrived at Ranomafana National Park for a three night stay. Excited by the prospect of our first lemurs we dived into the forest at dawn. Our day list soon resembled a who's who in the lemur world. Greater Bamboo Lemur – one of the planets most endangered primates, Golden Bamboo Lemur – only discovered by science in the eighties and reason that the park exists, Milne-Edward's Sifaka – an astoundingly beautiful creature. Thrilled with

these rewarding encounters we spent the following days exploring new routes, seeking out special birds and entering the forest after dark in search of nocturnal species. One particularly rewarding evening produced the tiny Brown Mouse Lemur, a Malagasy Striped Civet and Rainforest Scops Owl. The birding highlight at Ranomafana surely belongs to Henst's Goshawk. This enormous and fierce, lemur hunting raptor was seen at close range after an exciting and steep hike to where it was heard calling.



After Ranomafana we made our way west across the country until arriving at the scenic splendors of Isalo National Park. Here we explored the colorful sandstone wonderland rich in unique and spectacular plants, *Pachypodium*, *Aloe* and *Kalanchoe*. This park is also home to a highly localized endemic bird, Benson's Rock Thrush and we had fine views in our hotel grounds. Across the "wild west" we continued through the shady and fascinating land of "Sapphire towns". A natural site of note on this route is the delightful Zombitse Forest. Exploring the forest trails we came across a fine variety of fascinating wildlife. Two new lemurs were seen, Verreaux's Sifaka and Red-tailed Sportive Lemur. We had an intimate experience with a Giant Hog-nosed Snake and the legendary Appert's Greenbul put in a star appearance. Leaving Zombitse we continued west to the coast and the otherworldly spiny forests and coral reefs of Ifaty.

Strolling amongst the globally unique spiny forests at Ifaty is a mega botanical highlight. Every plant is a striking and sometimes bizarre specimen. Complementing this fantastic assemblage of plants are some really stunning birds. The sensational Long-tailed Ground Roller was expertly tracked and finally seen under near perfect conditions. Sub-desert Mesite was found in its characteristic defensive posture perched upon a *Didieraceae*. The remainder of our time in Ifaty was spent walking the beaches, diving over coral reefs and enjoying some fresh seafood meals.

Berenty, our next destination is justly famous for its super-habituated lemurs and Ring-tailed Lemur and Verreaux's Sifaka offered intimate viewing in abundance. Whilst wondering the trails in the gallery forest we encountered a group of "sun worshipping" ring-tails. The opportunity too good to miss, we joined them to soak up the early sunshine, our common roots obvious to us all. Berenty also supports some spiny forest – here we found delightful Reddish-gray Mouse Lemurs at their day roost and an amazing Torotoroka Scops Owl. A highlight for me was the discovery of a beautiful Dumeril's Boa on our last morning.

After returning to Tana we boarded the early flight to Maroansetra, gateway to the Masoala peninsula. Our lodge on a remote stretch of forested beach was accessed by boat. What a welcome it turned out to be. Numerous sightings of magnificent Hump-backed Whales were had, the most memorable being of a pair in dramatic display right alongside the boat. To top it all off a number of dolphins joined the show encouraged by our squeals of delight. We had ample time on the peninsula to soak up its wonders. Long walks into magical forest revealed two of Madagascar's most colorful and desirable creatures: Red-ruffed Lemur and Helmet Vanga. Along the shore gaudy Panther Chameleons and flowering orchids held our attentions. Fine food, kayaking in the bay and pirogue trips in the river mouth rounded off a rewarding few days in this beautiful region. An added surprise came after our return flight was delayed – allowing us a mornings exploration of Nosy Mangabe. What a score – a fantastic forest walk ended with great views of the phenomenal Fimbriated Leaf-tailed Gecko, master of camouflage.

Our last site on our tour was the Andasibe / Mantadia National Park, most noted for its habituated and vocal population of Indri. We were thrilled to have excellent and prolonged views of these fantastic



lemurs. Madagascar Crested Ibis stalked the forest trails and the mind boggling Collared Nightjar was found at its day roost. The awesome forest at Mantadia produced Diademed Sifaka – widely regarded as one of the planets best looking Primates. At night we were treated to views of the seldom seen Madagascar Long-eared Owl and numerous chameleon species.

A successful and most enjoyable tour was ended with some fine wine and celebration at a restaurant in Tana. Thanks to all who took part to make this such a memorable experience in Madagascar.

Photo credits (in order of appearance): Indri by David Shackelford, Madagascar Striped Civet and Diademed Sifaka by James Wakelin.

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

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

Madagascar Little Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

This species was found once only on the tour, at Lake Alarobia on our first day in Madagascar.

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

Hérons Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Large numbers recorded during the visit to Lake Alarobia.

(Common) Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

Widespread and common in a variety of wetland habitats across the island, we recorded this species at Lake Alarobia.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Common throughout and recorded daily in open and semi-open habitats.

Green-backed (Striated) Heron

Butorides striatus

Small numbers recorded at Maroansetra and Masoala.

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.

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

Recorded on the river in Maroansetra.

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

Small numbers in roadside rice paddies on the drives from Tana to Perinet and Fort Dauphin to Berenty.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Madagascar Crested (White-winged) Ibis (E) (NT)

Lophotibis cristata

We enjoyed great views of a single individual on the forest trails at Perinet Special Reserve.

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

Fulvous Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna bicolor

We were fortunate to find eight 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.

Comb (Knob-billed) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Recorded at Lake Alarobia.

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

Probably the commonest duck, good numbers seen at Lake Alarobia.

Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Yellow-billed Kite

Milvus [migrans] parasitus

Recorded in Isalo National Park and at Berenty Reserve.

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.

Henst's Goshawk (E) (NT)

Accipiter henstii

We had crippling views of an adult perched near the nest at Ranomafana.

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

Frances' Sparrowhawk (NE) *Accipiter francesii*
Recorded everyday on the Masoala peninsula.
Madagascar Buzzard (E) *Buteo brachypterus*
Common and widespread, seen at Masoala and Andasibe.

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.

Buttonquail *Turnicidae*

Madagascar Buttonquail (E) *Turnix nigricollis*
This tiny species was found once on the tour at Zombitse Forest.

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl (I) *Numida meleagris*
We encountered this species in Ifaty.
NOTE: This African species was probably introduced to Madagascar by early colonists.

Mesites *Mesitornithidae*

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V) *Monias benschi*
An early morning start enabled us to locate this elusive species in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty.

Rails & Gallinules *Rallidae*

Madagascar Flufftail (E) *Sarothrura insularis*
A species which can often prove particularly elusive, we unfortunately only ever heard its characteristic call.

Madagascar Wood Rail (E) *Canirallus kioloides*
This can be a devilishly hard bird to see! We were lucky to get fine views at Ranomafana.

White-throated (Cuvier's) Rail ([N]E) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*
We had great views of this attractive species along the river in Maroansetra.
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.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Small numbers were encountered at several sites including Lake Alarobia.

Avocets & Stilts *Recurvirostridae*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*
This species was found in wetlands between Tulear and Ifaty.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*
Small numbers on the river at Maroansetra.

Terns *Sternidae*

Greater Crested (Swift) Tern *Sterna bergii*
Recorded from the waters surrounding the Masoala Peninsula.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

We had good views of several at Masoala.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

This species was encountered at Masoala.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E) *Pterocles personatus*

Found at Berenty along the Mandrare River.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae

Rock Pigeon (I) *Columba livia*

Widespread in urban areas.

Madagascar Turtle Dove (NEe) *Columba picturata*

Particularly tame and conspicuous at Berenty.

Namaqua (Long-tailed) Dove *Oena capensis*

Widespread and common in drier areas.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE) *Treron australis*

Seen well at Masoala and Berenty.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E) *Alectroenas madagascariensis*

This beautiful bird is fairly common in eastern rainforest.

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 Masoala.

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 seen best along the Mandrare River where flocks came down to drink.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae

Giant Coua (E) *Coua gigas*

Common at Berenty where we had numerous sightings of fantastically relaxed birds.

Coquerel's Coua (E) *Coua coquereli*

This attractive bird was seen in Zombitse NP.

Running Coua (E) *Coua cursor*

Seen near Ifaty.

Red-breasted Coua (E) *Coua serriana*

After some work we were treated to great views at Masoala.

Red-fronted Coua (E) *Coua reynaudii*

We had views several birds in Eastern rainforest at Perinet.

Crested Coua (E) *Coua cristata*

This species was first recorded at Berenty, with many individuals being seen during our stay there.

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.

Barn Owls *Tytonidae*

Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Some really noisy young birds were seen at dusk close to Ifaty.

Typical Owls *Strigidae*

Madagascar (Rainforest) Scops Owl (NE)

Otus rutilus

This recently split form of the Madagascar Scops Owl was seen well during a night walk at Ranomafana.

Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)

Otus madagascariensis

This new species of Scops Owl (pronounced “Toorootoorook”, an onomatopoeic name) was seen 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)

Niño superciliaris

Our first sighting was fantastic views of one of these spectacular owls during our first day in Berenty.

Madagascar Long-eared Owl (E)

Asio madagascariensis

Luck was on our side when we managed to locate one of these fine looking owl at Perinet.

Marsh Owl

Asio capensis

Driving through the grasslands near Isalo we had a fantastic view of a single bird.

Nightjars *Caprimulgidae*

Collared Nightjar (E)

Caprimulgus enarratus

We had fantastic views of a 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 one at Ifaty.

Swifts *Apodidae*

Madagascar Spinetail (NE)

Zoonavena grandidieri

Recorded over forest at Perinet and Masoala.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus gracilis

Common in suitable palm habitat.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Madagascar Malachite (Diademed) Kingfisher (NE)

Alcedo vintsioides

Fairly common at freshwater and marine wetlands throughout.

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)

Ispidina madagascariensis

We had sensational views at Masoala.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

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

Ground-Rollers *Brachypteraciidae*

Scaly Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias squamigera

Another elusive and retiring species. We had extremely brief views of an individual near the nest site. A scarce and secretive bird.

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

Uratelornis chimaera

We enjoyed 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.

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.

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 species in several eastern rainforests.

Common Sunbird Asity (E)

Neodrepanis coruscans

We had a great sighting of this delightful bird 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 on most days at Masoala.

Brown-throated (Plain Sand) Martin

Riparia paludicola

This high plateau wetland hirundine was observed mostly *en route* including on the way to Perinet.

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. Observed regularly throughout the tour.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

Madagascar Bulbul (NE)

Hypsipetes madagascariensis

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

Long-billed Greenbul (E)

Phyllastrephus madagascariensis

Widespread in Madagascar, we first encountered this species in good numbers at Zombitse.

Spectacled Greenbul (E)

Phyllastrephus zosterops

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

Appert's 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.

Vangas Vangidae

Red-tailed Vanga (E)

Calicalicus madagascariensis

A fairly common and regularly encountered denizen of wooded and semi-wooded habitats, particularly once its “wolf-whistle” call is recognised.

Rufous Vanga (E)

Schetba rufa

This handsome bird was recorded in the forest of Masoala.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

This often heard and infrequently observed species was seen at Berenty.

Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)

Xenopirostris polleni

A scarce and local denizen of eastern forests, we heard this species calling at Ranomafana.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)

Falcula palliata

One of Madagascar's great birds and wonderfully common in the dry west. Particularly common and conspicuous at Berenty.

White-headed Vanga (E)

Artamella viridis

Seen briefly but well at Masoala.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

The commonest vanga, occurring in habitats ranging from pristine rainforest to degraded scrub. .

(Madagascar) Blue Vanga ([N]E)

Cyanolanius madagascarensis

Our first encounter with this species was several at Ranomafana. 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 Vanga (Nuthatch) (E)

Hypositta corallirostris

Seen well at Ranomafana.

Tylas (Vanga) (E)

Tylas eduardi

Several seen and many more heard in Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP, with further sightings at Ranomafana.

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 unbelievable views of this outrageous bird.

Thrushes Turdidae

Benson's Rock Thrush (E) (NT)

Pseudocossyphus bensoni

We had superb views of a pair 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.

Babblers Timaliidae

White-throated Oxylabes (E)

Oxylabes madagascariensis

A secretive endemic of the understorey of eastern rainforest and difficult to see. Our best sightings came from Masoala.

Crossley's Babbler (E)

Mystacornis crossleyi

We enjoyed views of this strikingly beautiful endemic at Ranomafana.

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Madagascar Brush Warbler (NE)

Nesillas typica

Very common in dense cover of any kind in the east.

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.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)

Thamnornis chloropetoides

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

Dark Newtonia (E)

Newtonia amphichroa

This smart little bird was found at Mantadia.

Common Newtonia (E)

Newtonia brunneicauda

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

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. Recorded throughout the trip.

Green Jery (E)

Neomixis viridis

Seen in eastern forests where we encountered small numbers at Perinet.

Puffback Flycatchers Platysteiridae

Ward's Flycatcher (E)

Pseudobias wardi

Fairly common at Ranomafana.

Monarch Flycatchers Monarchidae

Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher (NE)

Terpsiphone mutata

Common and widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats.

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.

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 such as Ifaty and Perinet.

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.

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 Ifaty

Madagascar Red Fody (E)

Foudia madagascariensis

Common, ubiquitous and good numbers recorded almost daily.

Starlings Sturnidae

Common Myna (I)

Acridotheres tristis tristis

Common in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E)

Hartlaubius aurata

This species was first seen at Perinet and Mantadia.

Drongos Dicruridae

Crested Drongo (NE)

Dicrurus forficatus

Common and highly conspicuous in a variety of wooded habitats throughout.

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

ORDER: Insectivora

Family Tenrecidae (Tenrecs and Otter Shrews)

Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Hemicentetes semispinosus

We were very lucky to see this delightful creature at Masoala.

ORDER: Rodentia

Family Muridae (Old World Rats and Mice)

Eastern Red Forest Rat

Nesomys rufus

Recorded from Ranomafana NP.

ORDER: Carnivora

Family Viverridae (Civets and allies)

Fanaloka (Madagascar Striped Civet)

Fossa fossana

Seen at very close quarters at Belle Vue in Ranomafana NP.

Family herpestidae Mongooses

Ring-tailed Mongoose

Viverricula elegans

This sensational mammal was found in our camp at Masoala, a lucky find indeed.

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 Berenty.

Brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus rufus

This delightful species was found at Ranomafana NP.

Reddish-Gray Mouse Lemur

Microcebus griseorufus

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

Family Megaladapidae (Sportive Lemurs)

Small-toothed Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur microdonta

An individual seen at its refuge at Ranomafana.

White-footed Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur leucopus

Commonly seen at Berenty.

Red-tailed Sportive Lemur

Lepilemur ruficaudatus

This species was found in the Zombitse forest.

Family Lemuridae ("True" Lemurs)

Golden Bamboo Lemur

Hapalemur aureus

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

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

First seen at Ranomafana.

Common Brown Lemur

Eulemur fulvus fulvus

These playful lemurs were seen in Perinet Special Reserve.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur

Eulemur fulvus rufus

Observed in Ranomafana NP during our stay.

White-fronted Brown Lemur

Eulemur albifrons

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

Red Ruffed Lemur

Varecia rubra

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

Family Indriidae (Avahis, Sifakas and Indri)

Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)

Avahi laniger

We were fortunate to find this species at Ranomafana.

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.

Milne-Edwards Sifaka

Propithecus edwardsii

This stunner was seen exceptionally well at Ranomafana.

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.

ORDER: Whales and Dolphins

Bottle-nosed Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus

We had an active pod leaping from the water surface in the company of the whales at Masoala.

Hump-backed Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

We had an incredible time with spectacular display right alongside our boat at Masoala.

Listing of amphibians and reptiles seen

Amphibians

Family; Ranidae (True Frogs)

Madagascar Tree Frog

Boophis madagascariensis

Boophis opisthodon

Mantidactylus spp

Painted Mantella

Mantella madagascariensis

Mascarene Grass Frog

Ptychadena mascareniensis

Reptiles

Family; Chamaeleonidae (Chameleons)

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

Nose-horned Chameleon

Calumma nasuta

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

Parson's Chameleon

Calumma parsonii

Rhinoceros Chameleon

Calumma rhinoceratus

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

Wills' Chameleon

Furcifer willsii

Panther Chameleon

Furcifer pardalis

Stump-tailed Chameleon

Brookesia peyrierasi

Family; Iguanidae (Iguanas)

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

Family; Gekkonidae (Geckos)

Fantastic Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus phantasticus

Fimbriated Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus fimbriatus</i>
Mercator Tropical House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>
Giant Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>
Madagascar Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma madagascariensis</i>
Lineated Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata</i>
Four-spotted Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>
Family; Scincidae (Skinks)	
Elegant Skink	<i>Mabuya elegans</i>
Family; Colubridae (Typical Snakes)	
Giant Hog-nosed snake	<i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i>
Red-eyed Snake	<i>Stenophis arctifasciatus</i>
Family; Boidae	
Dumerill's Ground Boa	<i>Acrantophis dumerilli</i>

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 delicate congregations of “Waxtail” nymphs of the Flatid Leaf Bug *Phromnia rosea*, and to the immense super-homes of Golden Orb-web Spiders *Nephila madagascariensis*. Other notable “creepy-crawlies” included Pill Millipedes *Sphaerotherium sp.*, an array of leaf- and stick-mimic mantids, and, of course, numerous spectacular moths and butterflies, most notably Madagascar’s largest butterfly, the beautiful swallowtail *Atrophaneura anterior*.