



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Comprehensive V

30th September – 21st October 2007



Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Cuan Rush

Top 20 Birds as voted by the participants (in no particular order)

Short-legged Ground Roller
Pitta-like Ground Roller
Long-tailed Ground Roller
Scaly Ground Roller
Rufous-headed Ground Roller
Madagascar Marsh Harrier
Madagascar Flufftail
Collared Nightjar
Blue Coua
Red-breasted Coua
Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher
Sub-desert Mesite
White-breasted Mesite
Schlegel's Asity
Madagascar Kingfisher
Madagascar Long-eared Owl
Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity
Sickle-billed Vanga
Blue Vanga
Red-shouldered Vanga

Tour Summary

Our comprehensive tour of the exotic island of Madagascar began in the vibrant and slightly chaotic capital city of Antananarivo (Tana). Before heading out from our hotel we found Madagascar Brush Warbler and Madagascar Coucal in the gardens. The cool, misty drizzle conditions were punctuated by short bursts of sunshine during our visit to Lake Alarobia which was teeming with waterfowl and other aquatic species. The heronries at the lake consisting of Dimorphic, Cattle, Great and Black Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron were alive and very noisy. However, special mention must go to the solitary African Openbill, half-a-dozen breeding plumaged Malagasy Pond Heron, the endemic Madagascar Grebe and a very responsive Madagascar Swamp Warbler. After enjoying a sumptuous lunch in town we headed out for the Tsimbazaza Zoo where the highlight was undoubtedly a visit to the nocturnal exhibit. Here, after our eyes had adjusted to the gloomy light, we watched in awe as a pair of Aye Aye agily traversed the maze of branches in their enclosure in search of tasty goodies and mouse lemurs and dwarf lemurs stole our hearts!!!

We left Tana after negotiating our way through the busy streets crowded with people, taxis, buses and Zebu-drawn carts and journeyed towards Anjozorobe. Our very comfortable accommodation which



was ideally located in an extremely peaceful setting automatically created a relaxed atmosphere. We enjoyed a short pre-lunch walk which produced several endemics including Madagascar Cisticola and Madagascar Lark. During lunch we had excellent views of a hunting Frances's Sparrowhawk and another highly sought-after raptor, the impressive Banded Kestrel. The afternoon's birding was very productive and we notched up a pair of Madagascar

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Partridge, Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Snipe and at dusk around the lodge, Madagascar Nightjar.

Despite some frustrating forest birding in the early morning we did manage to add some good birds to our tally, namely Crossley's Babbler, Dark Newtonia, Blue Coua, White-throated Oxylabes, a stunning pair of Cuckoo-Roller, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Forest Rock Thrush and Hook-billed Vanga. Also on the cards for the morning was our first our first lemur species for the tour in the form of Eastern Avahi resting up after a long night of foraging. Another visit to the dam not far from the lodge produced good scope views of Meller's Duck, an endemic species fast disappearing from the island. The rest of the day was non-eventful apart from sightings of three chameleon species which included Parson's (2nd largest in Madagascar), Short-horned (expertly spotted by John) and Band-bellied.

Continuing on our Malagasy adventure we headed back to Tana and onto the coastal town of Fort Dauphin in the south-east. As it was mostly a travel day, we did not encounter much but the rice paddies between Anjozorobe and Tana did provide us with our first Hamerkop for the tour. Some birding around the airport gave us a good sighting of Malagasy Kestrel and a small flock of Brown-throated Martin. After arriving in Fort Dauphin we made for our hotel, freshened up and enjoyed a hearty meal before turning in for the day.

Keen to get under way and eagerly looking for some new birds, we had an early breakfast and did some birding in the hotel surrounds. This proved a good idea as we found Madagascar Green Pigeon and had exquisite close-up views of this attractive species. Then it was off to Berenty on the infamous potholed surfaced/unsurfaced road or is it track? After some grueling hours of travel we arrived at Berenty Lodge but not before adding Namaqua Dove and a nesting colony of Sakalava Weavers. En route we also passed by several very colorful and festive local markets where one could barter for anything from clothing and accessories to the best looking Zebu of the district! As usual, our lunch was interrupted by another new bird, this time a gorgeous Crested Coua was the culprit. Thereafter, the afternoon was spent strolling the flat trails of the gallery forest alongside the Mandrare River. Despite the pesky horse flies that appeared in the early evening, we found most of the specials for the area in just a couple of hours. These included the elusive Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, the fabulous Giant Coua, Grey-headed Lovebird, 3 roosting White-browed Owls and a couple of Kelp Gull. The mammals of this private reserve were also well represented and we had intimate encounters with families of Ring-tailed and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, Verraux's Sifaka and White-footed Sportive Lemur.



The day started with a brief fly-over by the resident Cuckoo-Hawk followed by some roosting Totoroka Scops Owls and both Giant and Crested Coua. We were fortunate to find both Frances's and Madagascar Sparrowhawk in the riverine forest and a visit down to the Mandrare River was quite successful. Here we again had the two Kelp Gulls, followed by Kittlitz's Plover, Purple Heron and distant views of Madagascar Sandgrouse. On a short visit to the small patch of spiny forest near the lodge we found a number of Three-eyed Lizards and the morning was rounded off with a visit to the interesting museum at the lodge. Mammals and reptiles were on the menu for the rest of the day and we had fantastic encounters with Madagascar Flying Fox at their roost followed by an eventful night walk which yielded White-footed Sportive Lemur, at least 6 Reddish-gray Mouse Lemurs and a couple of Warty Chameleons.

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With a long day of flights and rough road ahead, we left shortly after dawn for Fort Dauphin to connect with our flight to Tulear. All went smoothly and before we knew it, we were dining at a seaside hotel where we scoped some Swift Terns in the port area. We then continued on towards Ifaty and en route made a stop at a very productive wetland. Here we found 6 Little Bittern (excellent close-up scope views of breeding birds perched on top of the reeds calling), Greater Painted Snipe, Baillon's Crane, Hottentot Teal, 30+ Great Egret, Black-winged Stilt and a single Madagascar Mannikin. Along the coastal strip closer to Ifaty we scanned the shoreline and were rewarded with views of Whimbrel, Grey Plover and Greater Sand Plover.

The weird but wonderful spiny forest near Ifaty was our major destination for the day and we left the hotel before day to begin our day. This proved fruitful and within minutes we spotted a Madagascar



Plover in road which showed well in the lights of the bus. We had an exceptional few hours in the unique habitat of the spiny forest and before long we had nailed almost all of our target species. Archbold's Newtonia, Lafresnaye's Vanga, Sub-desert Mesite, Thamnornis, Subdesert Brush Warbler, Long-tailed Ground Roller and Running and Green-capped Coua were all seen well. Other species worth a mention were excellent looks at Chabert's Vanga and a couple of Madagascar Harrier Hawk. As the fresh morning gave way to sweltering heat we made our way back to

the hotel for some rest and relaxation. Venturing out later (much later) in the afternoon we again found the striking Madagascar Plover (this time a pair) and on a visit to the saltworks produced Marsh Sandpiper, White-fronted Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Greenshank and a fly-over Caspian Tern. Back at the hotel, an after dinner foray was successful and we had amazing, very close-up views of perched Madagascar Nightjar.

Order of the day was a boat excursion to Nosy Vé, a small but important island off the coast of Anakao south of Tulear. We boarded the boat using an unusual transport method and powered away for the island. We found Madagascar Black Swift and nesting Grey and Humblot's Heron at the seaside cliffs near St. Augustine before landing on Nosy Vé. This beautiful island gave us Lesser Crested, Caspian and Common Tern, Ruddy Turnstone, Whimbrel and Dimorphic Egret. The obvious highlight of the visit was the nesting colony of the elegant Red-tailed Tropicbirds. These stunning birds are protected on this island by "fady" and we had fantastic close-up views of these birds. A short hop across to the mainland at a nearby resort gave us another target Littoral Rock Thrush and then it was onto lunch further down the coast. After some great food and a short break we set sail for Tulear, meanwhile the wind had come up and we endured a bumpy ride back to the port. Nevertheless, it was the end to an adventurous and successful days birding!



Leaving the coast behind, we headed inland for the town of Ranohira and the rugged sandstone landscape of Isalo. Our first stop for the day was La Tabla and here we found the newly discovered Red-shouldered Vanga and a secretive Verraux's Coua. Continuing on northwards we visited the dry woodland of Zombitse Forest, another natural area safeguarded because of tombs of ancestral tribal kings. Key bird for the forest is Appert's Tetraka and we eventually found a small, foraging flock of these understory dwellers. Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Long-billed Bernieria and Blue Vanga were some of the other species seen. The oppressive heat forced us to retreat into the shade of a forest glade where we enjoyed a delicious packed lunch before pushing on to Isalo. A pair of Benson's Rock Thrush was found nearby the town

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of Ranohira and we enjoyed a fantastic sunset surrounded by the harsh but enchanting sandstone landscape.

Ranomafana was the destination for the day and this meant a fairly long drive. We left Isalo after breakfast and immediately began scanning the grasslands of the region. For many kilometers all we saw were Pied Crows and Black Kites and our spirits began to wane...suddenly a shout of HARRIER echoed through the bus and we screeched to a halt! It was poetry in motion as we watched a magnificent male Madagascar Marsh Harrier lazily quarter over the grassland close to the road and after disappearing for some minutes, he returned for an even closer second encounter. What a fabulous bird! Spirits soaring we forged on towards the rainforest and another highlight of the journey was a massive Oustalet's Chameleon just outside the town of Ihosy. Before reaching our hotel, we spent some time traversing rice paddies on foot in search of Grey Emutail which put in several brief but satisfactory appearances near the national park. An early evening walk in the forest put us on track and we had Long-billed Green Sunbird, Mascarene Martin overhead and a pair of Rufous-headed Ground Roller at dusk.



We spent two full days exploring the beautiful but challenging Ranomafana National Park. Many a quiet moment was shattered by a fantastic sighting of a top class bird or mammal. Of special mention are extended views of Pitta-like Ground Roller which showed well and called from a perch and then proceeded to hop along the forest trail in front of us for approximately 15 minutes. Other exciting stuff was a pair of displaying Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, male Forest Rock Thrush, excellent views of Crossley's Babbler, Brown Mesite, a pair of roosting Collared Nightjar, Henst's Goshawk, Wedge-tailed Jery and the elusive Madagascar Yellowbrow. We also found the same pair of Rufous-headed Ground Roller we had seen on the first afternoon and viewed them for an extended period by torchlight. On the mammal front we treated to a very special afternoon which yielded both Greater and Golden Bamboo Lemur, Greater Dwarf Lemur, Eastern Red Forest Rat, a pair of beautiful Eastern Ring-tailed Mongoose, Lowland Streaked Tenrec, Brown Mouse Lemur and Madagascar Striped Civet!!! Some other interesting creatures found during our stay in this forest wonderland were Milne Edwards Sifaka, *Uroplatus eburni* (Spear-point Leaf-tailed Gecko), *Caluma nasuta* (Nose-horned Chameleon) and an out-of-this-world Comet Moth.

After the wonders of Ranomafana we headed back to the capital city, Tana, and after an overnight stay flew out to the north-west of Madagascar. Upon arrival in Majunga on the coast we transferred to Ankarafantsika National Park formerly know as Ampijoroa Forest Station. Upon arrival the camp at the reserve we immediately picked-up the colorful and noisy Broad-billed Roller, Cuvier's Iguanid and a very obliging family of Coquerel's Sifaka. An afternoon walk in the dry forest not far from the camp produced Coquerel's Coua, a pair of Rufous Vanga and glimpses of the major special White-breasted Mesite (better views desired). Later that evening we found Mongoose Lemur feeding in the Mango trees in camp.



We had a good start to the day by adding the outrageous Sickle-billed Vanga at breakfast but activity tailed-off shortly thereafter until around mid-morning when we eventually found a pair of Van Dam's Vanga. After appreciating good views of these special birds we headed back to camp for brunch and found a male Frances's Sparrowhawk sitting quietly in a large tree near to our dining area. The afternoon could not have gone more to clockwork then in a fairytale story and we had absolutely sensational, close-

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up scope views of a pair of Schlegel's Asity shortly after entering the forest. Thereafter, we had a pair of the striking White-breasted Mesite and 3 Madagascar Green Pigeon. A boat cruise on Lake Ravelobe was also productive and we observed Little Bittern, the endemic Madagascar Jacana and White-throated Rail, Allen's Gallinule and the highly endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. Nile Crocodile which is revered in this region because of the belief that they are ancestors of the people also put in an appearance. Our night walk was also successful and we had Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, a family of Western Avahi, the cute Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Madagascar Nightjar and a Nose-horned Chameleon.

A morning session at Lake Amboromalandy not far from the village of Ampijoroa was on the cards before our departure for Majunga. Here we scoped some African Pygmy Geese and Whiskered Tern along with the other usual waterfowl. After lunch we left Ankarafantsika NP and reached our destination in the late afternoon. The rest of the day was spent relaxing at our beach hotel in anticipation of the boat ride into the Betsiboka Delta the following day.

Our Betsiboka Delta adventure was very successful despite some hiccups at the start. We had great views of both perched and flying Madagascar Sacred Ibis, good numbers of the endangered Bernier's Teal, large numbers of Dimorphic Egret and Curlew Sandpiper and a few Terek Sandpiper. Scanning the mudflats we also found a flock of 20+ Saunders' Tern. Satisfied we headed back to our hotel to freshen up for lunch and our flight to Tana. Amazingly enough we had a slightly early departure back to Tana and transferred to our comfortable hotel to rest up before the last leg of our journey in Madagascar.

Our Madagascar trip now moved eastwards and onto Perinet Special Reserve. En route we stopped off at Madagascar Exotic, a delightful reptile park with loads of fascinating creatures including many species of chameleons, frogs and leaf-tailed geckos. Shortly after lunch we spotted A Ward's Flycatcher from the lodge deck and we managed to have good scope views of this attractive bird. Thereafter, a Madagascar Blue Pigeon showed extremely well at close range and our local guide led us to a day roost of the secretive but magnificent Collared Nightjar. Our search during the evening for owls proved unsuccessful but we still had two full days birding in the area.

We made a pre-dawn start and headed for Mantadia NP along a dirt track into the forests. Upon reaching the site we found a pair of Madagascar Starling and a solitary Rand's Warbler perched in a large dead tree. After scoping these birds we began, what turned out to be, a marathon session searching for Short-legged Ground Roller. Traversing up and down some steep slopes, scrambling through forest undergrowth and tracking the call of this species we eventually located an individual bird. Fortunately, the bird afforded us awesome views for at least 15 minutes before flying away. The rest of the day was much more relaxed and despite the quiet forest we added a male Common Sunbird Asity, a stunning Scaly Ground Roller and the cuddly Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur. At dusk while looking for Madagascar Long-eared Owl, we had a fly over Barn Owl and then made our way back to the hotel.



Perinet Special Reserve was the site for our last full days exploring of Madagascar. Before entering the reserve our guide had a wonderful surprise for us, namely a roosting Madagascar Long-eared Owl. We enjoyed outstanding views of this good-looking bird perched low down in a large Pine tree. Perinet is most famous for its Indri, the largest of the lemurs with a very memorable call. Highlights for the day came in the form of a pair of Red-breasted Coua, a family of Madagascar Wood Rail calmly crossing

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the forest trail in front of us, a group of Indri launching into their territorial vocalizations, 3 Nuthatch Vanga, Rainforest Scops Owl, Spectacled Tetraka and Forest Fody.

On the last day of the tour we managed to squeeze in some final birding at Perinet. We picked-up the gorgeous Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, a bird that had eluded us throughout the tour – a fitting last endemic bird. After breakfast we departed for Antananarivo to catch our international flights home. And so ended a very successful tour of the “eight continent” filled with many memorable sightings of the unique wonders of this strange land!

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

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl (I)

Numida meleagris

This species was encountered daily at Berenty with peak numbers of fifty on the first afternoon.

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

Partridges, Quails & Pheasants *Phasianidae*

Madagascar Partridge (E)

Margaroperdix madagascarensis

A pair of these partridge were found at Anjozorobe north-east of Antananarivo. We had very good scope views of the birds feeding on a dirt track.

Ducks & Geese *Anatidae*

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

Large numbers, an estimated 200+, were recorded at Lake Alarobia on the first day of the tour, with further sightings at wetlands in the south-west and Lake Ravelobe.

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Knob-billed Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

First recorded at Lake Alarobia, we had other sightings on the Mandrare River near Berenty.

African Pygmy Goose

Nettapus auritus

We found 10 of these stunning waterfowl at a lake near Ankarafantsika National Park.

Meller's Duck (E) (En)

Anas melleri

We were very fortunate to find a single bird on a lake near Anjozorobe. Unfortunately, this species numbers seem to continue to decline.

Bernier's Teal (E) (En)

Anas bernieri

On our trip into the Betsiboka Delta from Majunga we had good views of at least a dozen birds in the mangroves and mudflats. This endangered endemic was a very valuable edition to our tour of Madagascar.

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

Common and widespread in Madagascar, we recorded this duck at most freshwater wetlands across the island.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

This beautiful teal was observed at a wetland near Ifaty in good numbers, with further sightings at Lake Amboromalandy in the north-west.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

High numbers of fifty plus were found on the wetlands south of Ifaty and others on Lake Amboromalandy.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelinii

A stunning bird in breeding plumage, we had a pair at Lake Alarobia and another single bird on a lake near Anjozorobe.

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

Storks Ciconidae

African Openbill

Anastomus lamelligerus

We were fortunate to find one at Lake Alarobia and another near Ampijoroa. This is a rare species in Madagascar.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Madagascar Sacred Ibis (NE)

Threskiornis [aethiopicus] bernieri

We had at least ten of these birds on our boat trip into the Betsiboka Delta.

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

Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus

This species was common at wetland sites and rice paddies in north-west Madagascar.

Hérons Ardeidae

Little Bittern

Ixobrychus minutus

The wetland near Ifaty produced fantastic sightings of 6 breeding birds calling from the reedbeds and a single bird was also recorded at Lake Ravelobe.

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Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

Large numbers recorded during the visit to Lake Alarobia, and seen in smaller numbers at Berenty and Ampijoroa.

Striated Heron

Butorides striatus

Small numbers were seen at most freshwater wetlands throughout the tour.

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).

Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

Peak numbers of 50+ breeding birds recorded at Lake Alarobia with further sightings at a variety of wetland habitats across the island.

Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V)

Ardeola idea

Lake Alarobia provided us with our initial sightings of this species where 6 birds were seen, followed by views of singletons en route to Tulear and at Lake Ravelobe.

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

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Common throughout the tour and recorded almost daily.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

First recorded at a wetland near Ifaty, we also found this species nesting on cliffs near the Onilahy River mouth on our boat trip to Nosy Ve and at wetlands in the north-west of the island.

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

Ardea humbloti

Four birds were sighted at breeding cliffs near St. Augustine and a single bird was observed daily on Lake Ravelobe near Ampijoroa.

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

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Small numbers of this attractive heron were found at wetlands sites throughout the tour.

Great (White) Egret

Ardea alba

Recorded throughout the tour with peak numbers of 30+ at a wetland near Ifaty in the south-west.

Black Heron

Egretta ardesiaca

Seen at Lake Alarobia and in the rice paddies near Lake Amboromalandy in large numbers.

Dimorphic Egret (NE)

Egretta [garzetta] dimorpha

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar, it was interesting to notice the dominance of the white form at inland sites and the dark form along the coast.

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.

Tropicbirds *Phaethontidae*

Red-tailed Tropicbird

Phaethon rubricauda

Our group was treated to some special encounters with these elegant birds on the island of Nosy Ve.

Hamerkop *Scopidae*

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

Small numbers in roadside rice paddies on the drives from Anjozorobe to Tana and later en route to Perinet Special Reserve.

Falcons *Falconidae*

Malagasy Kestrel (NEe)

Falco newtoni

Recorded almost daily throughout the tour in open habitats, regularly encountered at the roadside during travel days.

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Banded Kestrel

Falco zoniventris

A single bird was seen from the deck of our lodge near Anjozorobe on consecutive days with a further sighting in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Hawks & Eagles *Accipitridae*

Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk

Aviceda madagascariensis

We recorded an individual bird in the riverine forest at Berenty and another flew over during our breakfast the following day.

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

NOTE: This species is often lumped by some authorities with Yellow-billed Kite. 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

This critically endangered, endemic eagle was recorded at the edge of Lake Ravelobe in Ankarafantsika National Park.

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

Malagasy Marsh Harrier (NE) (V)

Circus macroscelus

We were very fortunate to have outstanding views of a male bird of this seldom seen species in the grasslands near Isalo.

NOTE: This species, which occurs in Madagascar and the Comoros, differs from the Reunion Harrier (Circus maillardi) in its smaller size and darker plumage, and is now considered a separate species.

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)

Polyboroides radiatus

Small numbers of these attractive raptors were encountered at several sites including Ifaty and Ampijoroa.

Madagascar Sparrowhawk (E) (NT)

Accipiter madagascariensis

We were fortunate to encounter this uncommon species in gallery forest at Berenty and again in Ranomafana NP where we had good views of an individual devouring a Madagascar Bulbul.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)

Accipiter francesii

We had excellent views of this small raptor, firstly in Anjozorobe where it interrupted our peaceful lunch, then at Berenty and also in the camp at Ampijoroa.

Henst's Goshawk (E) (NT)

Accipiter henstii

We had a pair of these visually impressive birds perched near their nest in Ranomafana National Park.

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

Madagascar Buzzard (E)

Buteo brachypterus

This common and widespread species, was recorded in small numbers throughout the tour.

Mesites *Mesitornithidae*

White-breasted Mesite (E) (V)

Mesitornis variegata

Ankarafantsika NP produced great sightings of this beautiful species; we had superb views of a pair of these birds as they crossed the pathway during an afternoon walk.

Brown Mesite (E) (V)

Mesitornis unicolor

We eventually had fairly brief, but good views of a pair of these skulking birds at Ranamofana NP.

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V)

Monias benschi

We were fortunate to locate this elusive species in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty during an early morning session.

Flufftails *Sarothruridae*

Madagascar Flufftail

Sarothrura insularis

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This gorgeous little bird was seen well in the Macchia vegetation near our lodge in Anjozorobe.

Rails & Gallinules *Rallidae*

Madagascar Wood Rail (E) *Canirallus kiolooides*

A particularly tricky forest undergrowth species to see well, we eventually had views of this species at Anjozorobe and an excellent sighting of a family of three on a forest trail in Perinet.

Madagascar Rail (E) *Rallus madagascariensis*

An individual bird was found in a wetland at Anjozorobe. We had very good close-up views of this attractive rallid.

White-throated Rail (NE) *Dryolimnas cuvieri*

We were treated to good scope views of a bird at Ampijoroa and a further sighting at a forest pool near Perinet Special Reserve.

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 observed this rallid species at a wetland en route to Ifaty from Tulear in south-west Madagascar.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

We had good views of this seldom seen species in Madagascar during a boat trip on Lake Ravelobe.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

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

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

A single bird was seen at a roadside wetland near Ifaty.

Buttonquails *Turnicidae*

Madagascar Buttonquail (E) *Turnix nigricollis*

We recorded this lovely species at Anjozorobe and Ankarafantsika NP. A special sighting was of a female and three chicks near our lodge in Anjozorobe.

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.

Plovers *Charadriidae*

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

We found small numbers of this species in the Ifaty area.

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

This scarce, localized endemic was observed on a pre-dawn drive near to our hotel in Ifaty. We later found the same pair on the same afternoon and enjoyed fantastic views of this striking bird.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Recorded on the Mandrare River near Berenty and in good numbers around the brackish lakes near Ifaty.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

First found at a roadside wetland near Ifaty and later seen on the shores of Lake Ravelobe.

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White-fronted Plover

Charadrius marginatus

We enjoyed sightings of this coastal species at the saltworks near Ifaty and again on the island of Nosy Ve.

Lesser Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii

Two birds were seen at the saltworks near the village of Ifaty.

Greater Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii

Single birds were recorded in the Ifaty area with further sightings on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta.

Painted Snipes *Rostratulidae*

Greater Painted Snipe

Rostratula benghalensis

Half-a-dozen of these beautiful snipe were recorded at a wetland near Ifaty and a further 3 near Lake Amboromalandy in the north-west.

Jacanas *Jacanidae*

Madagascar Jacana (E)

Actophilornis albinucha

A total of three of these endemics were found in wetlands of the northwest, where birds were seen at Lake Ravelobe and near Lake Amboromalandy.

Sandpipers & Allies *Scolopacidae*

Madagascar Snipe (E) (NT)

Gallinago macrodactyla

We had good flight views of a single bird at the Anjozorobe Marsh.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

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

Marsh Sandpiper

Tringa stagnatilis

On a visit to the saltworks at Ifaty, we managed to find five of these waders.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

This common wader was regularly seen at various wetland sites during the tour.

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus cinereus

Half-a-dozen of these birds were seen on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta.

Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

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

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

An attractive shorebird, it was found in good numbers on the Island of Nosy Vé.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

A single bird was seen along the coast between Tulear and Ifaty.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

The commonest Calidrid, seen on the tidal flats in the Ifaty and Tulear areas and in good numbers on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta.

Pratincoles *Glareolidae*

Madagascar Pratincole (BE)

Glareola ocularis

These attractive birds were seen by Mark and Fran in the early evening en route from Perinet to Tana.

Gulls *Laridae*

Kelp Gull

Larus dominicanus

A couple of these gulls were found on the Mandrare River near Berenty on two consecutive days.

Terns *Sternidae*

Caspian Tern

Sterna caspia

An individual bird was seen flying over the saltworks at Ifaty and then another two on our boat trip to Nosy Vé.

Lesser Crested Tern

Sterna bengalensis

We had good views of 10 or so on the island of Nosy Vé and another bird on our boat trip into the Betsiboka Delta.

Swift (Greater Crested) Tern

Sterna bergii

Small numbers recorded at most coastal sites in the Ifaty area and the mouth of the Betsiboka Delta.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Nosy Vé produced our only sighting of this usually common and widespread species.

Saunders' Tern

Sterna saundersi

This diminutive tern was seen on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta. We had fairly distant views of at least twenty birds.

Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybridus sclateri

Two birds were recorded at a fresh water wetland in the north-west.

Sandgrouse *Pteroclididae*

Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)

Pterocles personatus

The initial sighting was of a flock of three birds over the Mandrare River which later came down to drink.

Pigeons & Doves *Columbidae*

Rock Pigeon (I)

Columba livia

Widespread and fairly common in urban areas throughout the island.

Madagascar Turtle Dove (NEe)

Columba picturata

These birds were seen well at Berenty and Ankarafantsika NP where they were particularly confiding.

Namaqua Dove

Oena capensis

A commonly seen species in all drier areas visited on the tour.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)

Treron australis

This attractive bird was first seen around the hotel grounds in Fort Dauphin, followed by further sightings in Ankarafantsika NP.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)

Alectroenas madagascariensis

A beautiful bird which was first recorded in good numbers in the secondary rainforest near Anjozorobe. Thereafter, we had a memorable scope view of an individual at Perinet Special Reserve and other sightings at Mantadia NP.

Parrots *Psittacidae*

Gray-headed Lovebird (E)

Agapornis canus

A delightful little parrot, it was seen on a daily basis around Berenty, Ifaty and Ankarafantsika NP.

Greater Vasa Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis vasa

Sightings of this species were had at Berenty, Ranomafana NP and Mantadia NP.

Lesser Vasa Parrot (NE)

Coracopsis nigra

An exceptionally vocal parrot, this bird was regularly recorded in small numbers throughout our trip with peak numbers in the camp at Ampijoroa.

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White-browed Hawk-Owl (E)

Ninox superciliaris

Berenty Private Reserve was the site that produced amazing views of this attractive species. We found these birds at their day roosts on both days at Berenty.

Madagascar Long-eared Owl (E)

Asio madagascariensis

After searching high and low in the forests of Perinet and Mantadia our guide expertly tracked down a bird at its day roost in a large Pine tree. We had fabulous views of this bird and left it to doze off for the day.

Nightjars *Caprimulgidae*

Madagascar Nightjar (NE)

Caprimulgus madagascariensis

The common and widespread nightjar on Madagascar, we had our first sighting at Anjozorobe and a particularly memorable sighting at our hotel near Ifaty.

Collared Nightjar (E)

Caprimulgus enarratus

This rare endemic restricted to the eastern forests was seen extremely well at a day roost in Perinet Special Reserve.

Swifts *Apodidae*

Madagascar Spinetail (NE)

Zoonavena grandidieri

Recorded over forest at Anjozorobe and Mantadia NP.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus gracilis

This elegant swift was common in suitable habitat on the island.

Alpine Swift

Tachymarptis melba

We only found two of these large swifts at Anjozorobe.

Madagascar Black Swift (NE)

Apus balstoni

Recorded at scattered localities throughout the tour with peak numbers at the St. Augustine Cliffs south of Tulear.

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.

Rollers *Coraciidae*

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus

This breeding migrant from the African mainland was first recorded in the camp at Ampijoroa followed by further sightings at Perinet and Mantadia.

Ground Rollers *Brachypteraciidae*

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

Brachypteracias leptosomus

A single bird was tracked down after a lengthy period of scouring the forests and hillsides at Mantadia. This is probably the most difficult of the Ground Rollers to find, but once in our sights we were treated to great views!

Scaly Ground-Roller (E) (V)

Brachypteracias squamigera

This scarce and secretive bird, was found in the forest undergrowth of Mantadia NP. We had excellent views of this species without much effort.

Pitta-like Ground-Roller (E)

Atelornis pittoides.

A truly magnificent ground roller, we struggled initially in locating this species but our visit to Ranomafana NP set this right. Here we found good numbers of these birds with particular mention of a bird perched and calling then running along the forest trail in front of us for approx. 15 minutes.

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

First recorded at dusk on a forest trail, we later had amazing views using torchlight of the same pair a couple of days later.

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

The Spiny Desert at Ifaty was the site for this magnificent bird where one of the local guides tracked down a stunning individual.

Cuckoo-Rollers *Leptosomidae*

Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller (E) *Leptosomus discolor*

This species was extremely vocal throughout our tour of the island. We had a number of good sightings especially at Anjozorobe and Ranomafana.

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.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E) *Ispidina madagascariensis*

A pure gem of the forests of Madagascar, we eventually found a co-operative bird on the final morning of our tour at Perinet Special Reserve.

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Recorded at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout the tour.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

Common and widespread in semi-open areas and recorded from almost all sites during the tour.

Hoopoes *Upupidae*

Madagascar Hoopoe (E) *Upupa marginalis*

A striking species which was observed in small numbers during the tour with particularly confiding birds at Ankarafantsika NP.

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 had sightings of this species at most rainforest sites on the tour, however, most individuals seen were female birds.

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

On a near perfect afternoon's birding in the deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP we found a pair of these absolutely gorgeous birds. They proceeded to perch lazily giving us amazing extended views until we left after approximately 20 minutes of viewing!!!

Common Sunbird-Asity (E) *Neodrepanis coruscans*

A female was seen at Ranomafana NP and a male at Mantadia NP.

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

A lengthy wait in the ridge-top forest at Vohiparara proved fruitful as we had brief but great sighting of a pair displaying side-by-side. One of the top birds for our tour!

Vangas *Vangidae*

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Red-tailed Vanga (E)

Calicalicus madagascariensis

We had a very good sighting of a pair in some ridge-top forest at Vohiparara. The birds responded to tape and came in quickly and showed well while calling back to us.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)

Calicalicus rufocarpalis

The “coral rag” scrub near La Tabla produced a good sighting of a pair. This recently described and highly localized endemic is a great find for any tour to Madagascar.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

This species was seen well at Anjozorobe with further sightings at Berenty.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)

Xenopirostris xenopirostris

A pair of these large vangas were found in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) (En)

Xenopirostris damii

During a quiet morning session at Ankarafantsika NP we finally spotted a pair and were treated to good views of this species.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)

Falculea palliata

A large flock of approximately 20 of these fantastic birds were seen at Ankarafantsika NP. We obtained better views the following day.

White-headed Vanga (E)

Artamella viridis

Recorded in the spiny forest at Ifaty and in Ankarafantsika NP.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

Probably the most common vanga, catholic in its choice of habitats, it was recorded regularly during the tour. We had great sightings of this species in the spiny forest in the south-west.

Blue Vanga ([N]E)

Cyanolanius madagascarensis

Recorded at various sites, this has to be one of the most beautiful birds in Madagascar.

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.

Rufous Vanga (E)

Schetba rufa

Ankarafantsika NP was the only place that we found this striking species. Both the male and female birds were observed in the dry deciduous forest.

Tylas (Vanga) (E)

Tylas eduardi

This species was seen in the canopy of the rainforests of Ranomafana NP.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (E)

Hypositta corallirostris

An extremely active and fast-moving little bird, we had a small foraging party of 3 in the ridge-top forest of Perinet Special Reserve.

Dark Newtonia (E)

Newtonia amphichroa

Two individuals were found on the tour, one at Anjozorobe and another at Ranomafana NP.

Common Newtonia (E)

Newtonia brunneicauda

This species was recorded regularly in small numbers during the tour using in mixed feeding flocks.

Archbold's Newtonia (E)

Newtonia archboldi

A special for the southern region of Madagascar, we had two birds at close quarters in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)

Pseudobias wardi

This delightful small flycatcher was only seen once on the tour at our hotel near Perinet Special Reserve.

Crossley's Babbler (E)

Mystacornis crossleyi

Unsatisfactory views were had at Anjozorobe, but later we observed a bird at very close range and experienced awesome views.

Cuckooshrikes *Campephagedae*

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Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike (NE)

Coracina cinerea

Recorded at various sites during the tour, we had good views of this species at Zombitse Forest.

Drongos Dicruridae

Crested Drongo (NE)

Dicrurus forficatus

Common and highly conspicuous, it was observed on most days of the tour.

Monarchs Monarchidae

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE)

Terpsiphone mutata

Common and widespread in a variety of wooded and semi-wooded habitats, our best sightings were at Berenty Private Reserve.

Crows & Jays Corvidae

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Common and widespread in open habitats, with peak numbers in Berenty and en route from Tulear to Isalo.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin (NE)

Phedina borbonica

Madagascar's most common hirundine and a regional breeding endemic, it was recorded at almost all sites, on most days.

Brown-throated (Plain Sand) Martin

Riparia paludicola

Our best sighting of this species was of a small flock over a rice paddy near the Ivato Airport in Tana.

Larks Alaudidae

Madagascar Lark (E)

Mirafrha hova

First views of this bird were at Anjozorobe followed by numerous sightings especially in the drier grasslands of the island.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Madagascar Cisticola (NE)

Cisticola cherinus

This diminutive bird was commonly recorded during the first half of our tour in grassland habitat.

Family Uncertain

Common Jery (E)

Neomixis tenella

Small numbers seen at various sites during the tour. Despite its name, this bird is quite an attractive little number.

Green Jery (E)

Neomixis viridis

A fairly nondescript little bird, it was seen in the rainforests of Ranomafana NP.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)

Neomixis striatigula

Easily located by its call, we found small numbers of these birds in the drier regions of Madagascar, in particular at Berenty.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Madagascar Bulbul (NE)

Hypsipetes madagascariensis

Common and ubiquitous, we had sightings of these birds on almost everyday of the tour.

Old World Warblers *Sylviidae*

Grey Emutail (E)

Dromaeocercus seebohmi

The remaining wetlands near Vohiparara produced several brief sightings of this skulker. Congratulations to my group on their successful balancing acts while traversing the rice paddy

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)

Nesillas typica

Another denizen of the undergrowth, this species was recorded at various localities starting in our hotel grounds in Tana.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E)

Nesillas lantzii

We found several birds in the spiny forest at Ifaty and in the coastal scrub near Anakao. This species replaces Madagascar Brush Warbler in the south-west of the island.

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

On our outing to Lake Alarobia we had a great sighting of this bird. It was later seen at various other wetland sites.

White-throated Oxylabes (E)

Oxylabes madagascariensis

A secretive endemic of the rainforest understorey that favors *Pandannas* plants, these birds were found in Anjozorobe and Ranomafana.

Long-billed Bernieria (E)

Bernieria madagascariensis

First seen in Zombitse Forest, we later had fantastic views at close range in Ankarafantsika.

Cryptic Warbler (E)

Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi

This recently described species was seen on exposed perch during a walk in the ridge-top forests of Vohiparara.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) (NT)

Hartertula flavoviridis

Recorded in a mixed flock together with White-throated Oxylabes in Ranomafana NP. This is an uncommon and elusive endemic of eastern forests.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)

Thamnornis chloropetoides

One seen in at exceptionally well in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty. The bird responded quickly to tape and came in and proceeded to sing boldly from a nearby perch.

Spectacled Greenbul (E)

Phyllastrephus zosterops

Small numbers of this rainforest specialist were seen in Anjozorobe, Perinet and Mantadia.

Appert's Greenbul (E) (V)

Phyllastrephus apperti

Zombitse Forest is the key site for this bird and on our short visit here, we managed to see at least six birds feeding low down in the undergrowth.

Gray-crowned Greenbul (E) (NT)

Phyllastrephus cinereiceps

Unfortunately, I was the only member of the group to have very brief views of this species at Vohiparara as the birds raced through the understory.

Madagascar Yellow-brow (E) (NT)

Crossleyia xanthophrys

We were fortunate to observe this skulker at dusk when at least four birds came down to drink at a forest pool in Ranomafana NP.

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.

Rand's Warbler (E)

Randia pseudozosterops

We had good scope views of a bird calling from an exposed perch in Mantadia NP.

White-eyes *Zosteropidae*

Madagascar White-eye (NE)

Zosterops maderaspatana

This common but beautiful little bird was regularly encountered during the tour at most sites.

Starlings *Sturnidae*

Madagascar Starling (E)

Hartlaubius aurata

We had a good sighting of a pair of these forest starlings during a visit to Mantadia NP.

Common Myna (I)

Acridotheres tristis tristis

Common and widespread throughout the island with peak numbers in the urban areas.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers *Muscicapidae*

Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E)

Copsychus albospecularis

Despite being common and widespread, this delightful robin kept us entertained throughout the tour with its sweet melodies and confiding nature.

Eurasian Stonechat

Saxicola torquata

First seen in the gardens of our hotel in Antananarivo, we also had numerous sightings at other highland sites on the island especially on road trips.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E)

Pseudocossyphus imerinus

A family of these birds were seen in the coastal scrub south of Tulear while enjoying a refreshing drink.

Forest Rock Thrush (E)

Pseudocossyphus sharpei

This striking bird was recorded in the forests of Anjozorobe and Ranomafana.

Benson's Rock Thrush (E) (NT)

Pseudocossyphus bensoni

Isalo produced several sightings of this species, with a highlight being a pair seen at close quarters.

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.

Sunbirds *Nectariniidae*

Souimanga Sunbird (NE)

Nectarinia souimanga

Very common and widespread throughout Madagascar, with peak numbers of these sunbirds recorded in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Long-billed (Madagascar) Green Sunbird (NE)

Nectarinia notata

Not as prolific as its cousin, this stunning sunbird was found at several sites with good sightings at our hotel in Tana and in Ranomafana National Park.

Weavers *Ploceidae*

Nelicourvi Weaver (E)

Ploceus nelicourvi

A beautiful weaver, it was observed in Ranomafana NP, Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Sakalava Weaver (E)

Ploceus sakalava

This dry country weaver species was recorded near Berenty, in the Ifaty region and in the north-west.

Madagascar Red Fody (E)

Foudia madagascariensis

Common, ubiquitous and good numbers recorded on most days. It was interesting to notice that birds were in full plumage at the coastal sites and not on the highlands during this tour.

Forest Fody (E)

Foudia omissa

We struggled to locate this scarce bird, but eventually managed to find four on our final day in Perinet Special Reserve.

Waxbills *Estrildidae*

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Madagascar Mannikin (E)

Lonchura nana

Surprisingly, we had few sightings of this species during the tour and more often than not it was recorded in small numbers of 5 or less.

Wagtails & Pipits *Motacillidae*

Madagascar Wagtail (E)

Motacilla flaviventris

This attractive bird was common on the highlands and in particular along forested mountain streams.

MAMMALS

Old World Fruit Bats *Pteropodidae*

Madagascar Flying Fox

Pteropus rufus

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

Tenrecs and Otter Shrews *Tenrecidae*

Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Hemicentetes semispinosus

We (expertly spotted by Alison) were very fortunate to find this delightful creature on an afternoon walk in the rainforests of Ranomafana NP.

Old World Rats and Mice *Muridae*

Eastern Red Forest Rat

Nesomys rufus

A denizen of the forest floor, it was recorded on most days at Ranomafana NP.

Black Rat

Rattus norvegicus

An individual was seen in Tulear foraging in some debris on the beach near the port.

Civets and allies *Viverridae*

Fanaloka (Madagascar Striped Civet)

Fossa fossana

The viewpoint in Ranomafana NP produced awesome close-up views of this attractive mammal.

Mongoose *Herpestidae*

Ring-tailed Mongoose

Viverricula elegans

A pair of these stunning mongooses was seen well in the rainforest of Ranomafana NP.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs *Cheirogaleidae*

Gray-brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus griseorufus

Half-a-dozen of these extremely cute creatures were found in the small patch of spiny forest at Berenty.

Brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus rufus

This delightful species was found at Ranomafana NP near Belle Vue.

Golden-brown Mouse Lemur

Microcebus ravelobensis

Recently discovered in Ankarafantsika NP, we recorded a couple of these animals at Ampijoroa Forest Station on a night walk.

Greater Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus major

Two of these cuddly creatures were seen on a night walk in Ranomafana NP.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur

Cheirogaleus medius

This species was observed in the dry deciduous forest of Ankarafantsika NP during a night walk.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*

This species was recorded in the dry forest around Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

Several seen in the gallery and spiny forest during our stay in Berenty.

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur hubbardi*

This recently described species, previously assumed to be Red-tailed Sportive Lemur, was recorded at a day roost in the dry forest of Zombitse and in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

"True" Lemurs Lemuridae

Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur griseus griseus*

This attractive species was seen in the rainforests of Mantadia National Park.

Golden Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur aureus*

Two were found sleeping amidst a tangle of bamboo leaves in the canopy at Ranomafana. This species although quite large, was only discovered in 1987.

Greater Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur simus*

On an afternoon walk in Ranomafana NP, we were fortunate to come across a foraging party of these lemurs. It is quite incredible how quickly they move through the forest!

Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta*

Probably the most well-known of Madagascar's lemurs, we enjoyed prolonged encounters with numerous groups of these delightful animals during our stay at Berenty.

Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*

We were very fortunate to have good views of these creatures at night in the camp at Ampijoroa. This is one of the most difficult lemurs to find in Madagascar.

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*

Another one of the species seen during our afternoon "mammal blitz" at Ranomafana NP. We recorded a pair of these lemurs in the late afternoon.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

Recorded in small numbers at Ankarafantsika NP and also seen in Perinet Special Reserve.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

Although this species is introduced in Berenty, we observed good numbers at this private reserve and later had 3 at some distance in Ranomafana NP.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae

Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi laniger*

Two of these mammals were found during a morning walk in Anjozorobe. These lemurs are strictly a rainforest species.

Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi occidentalis*

During a night walk in Ankarafantsika NP, we found a family of 4 in the dry forest. This species is far more local and uncommon than its eastern counterpart.

Milne Edward's Sifaka *Propithecus diadema edwardsi*

Our first view of these attractive animals was a distant scope view at Ranomafana. Fortunately, we did have another much closer encounter with these lemurs the following day.

Verreaux's Sifaka *Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

Berenty Private Reserve and Zombitse Forest were the two sites where we recorded these creatures. At Berenty they entertained us with their side-to-side running abilities and in Zombitse we found them in their more natural habitat.

Coquerel's Sifaka *Propithecus verreauxi coquereli*

One of my favorite lemurs, we had numerous sightings of these beautiful animals in the camp at Ampijoroa.

Indri

Indri indri

A family of four was seen in Perinet Special Reserve on the last full day of the tour. While we were watching these fantastic creatures, they burst into their far-ranging territorial vocalizations – a sound that will be well remembered.

Amphibians and Reptiles

True Frogs Ranidae

Madagascar Tree Frog

Boophis madagascariensis

Seen during a night walk in Ranomafana NP.

Crocodiles Crocodylidae

Nile Crocodile

Crocodylus niloticus

This ancient beast was seen in Lake Ravelobe during our stay in Ankarafantsika NP. The local people of the region believe that their ancestors were drowned in a massive flood and transformed into crocodiles. Thus, the crocodiles of this lake are protected.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae

Short-horned Chameleon

Calumma brevicornis

Found during night walks in Anjozorobe and Perinet.

Nose-horned Chameleon

Calumma nasuta

Seen in the rainforests of Ranomafana NP.

Band-bellied Chameleon

Calumma gastrotaenia

This small chameleon was recorded during our stay in Anjozorobe.

Parson's Chameleon

Calumma parsonii

A particularly colorful individual was seen in the Macchia-like vegetation at Anjozorobe.

Rhinoceros Chameleon

Calumma rhinocerotus

The dry forest around Ampijoroa produced a sighting of this reptile.

Oustalet's Chameleon

Furcifer oustaleti

First spotted in Anjozorobe (well done John), we later found these creatures just outside the town Ihosy and in Ankarafantsika NP. This is the largest species of chameleon in Madagascar.

Warty Chameleon

Furcifer verrucosus

Recorded on several occasions in the spiny forest at Berenty.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

This attractive reptile was seen in Berenty and the spiny forest at Ifaty.

Cuvier's Iguanid

Oplurus cuvieri

What a fabulous creature! We observed many of these iguanids in Ankarafantsika NP, especially in the camp.

Geckos Gekkonidae

Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus sikorae

This fantastically camouflaged creature was found at the forest edge in Perinet Special Reserve.

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Leaf-tailed Gecko

Uroplatus ebenauii

Recorded on a night walk in Ranomafana NP.

Madagascar Day Gecko

Phelsuma madagascarensis

Seen in the dry deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP.

Lineated Day Gecko

Phelsuma lineata

These beautiful day geckos were found at many sites during the tour.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae

Madagascar Plated Lizard

Zonosaurus madagascarensis

Good numbers of these large lizards were observed in Ankarafantsika NP.

Boas Boidae

Madagascar Ground Boa

Acrantophis madagascarensis

A single boa was seen near our accommodation in Ranomafana NP. This was a particular favorite of Denise who was brave enough to hold the beast!

Typical Snakes Colubridae

Black-and-white Striped Snake

Liopholidophis lateralis

Two of these attractive snakes were seen in Ranomafana NP.

Mahafaly Sand Snake

Mimophis mahfalensis

Recorded in the dry deciduous woodland of Ankarafantsika NP.

List of Notable Insects and other Invertebrates

Giraffe-necked Weevil

Trachelophorus giraffa

Flatid Leaf Bug

Phromnia rosea

Golden Orb-web Spiders

Nephila madagascariensis

Comet Moth

Argema mittrei

Photo Credits (in order of appearance): Verreaux's Sifaka by James Wakelin, Sickie-billed Vanga by Adam Riley, Oustalet's Chameleon by Keith Valentine, Isalo scenery with *Pachypodium* by David Hoddinott, Madagascar Partridge & Crested Coua by James Wakelin, Sub-desert Mesite by Adam Riley, Red-tailed Tropicbird & Pitta-like Ground Roller by James Wakelin, Schlegel's Asity by Cuan Rush and Indri by James Wakelin.

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