



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Comprehensive III

27th October – 17th November 2007



Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Cuan Rush

Top 10 Birds as voted by the participants (in no particular order)

Long-tailed Ground Roller
Madagascar Crested Ibis

Nuthatch Vanga
 Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher
 Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity
 Madagascar Cuckoo Roller
 Pitta-like Ground Roller
 Sickle-billed Vanga
 Schlegel's Asity
 Crossley's Babbler

Tour Summary

Our start to the tour was slightly different with a venture into the grasslands north-west of Antananarivo. Here we found Madagascar Buzzard, Madagascar Lark, Madagascar Cisticola and the scarce Malagasy Marsh Harrier, a stunning adult male bird quartering over the extensive grasslands and wetlands of this area. Then a visit to Lake Alarobia in the capital produced large numbers of waterbirds including breeding Malagasy Pond Heron, Madagascar Grebe, African Openbill, Fulvous Whistling Duck and Madagascar Swamp Warbler.

Next up was the north-west leg of the tour where we explored the dry, deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika National Park near the village of Ampijoroa. This wonderful habitat is home to some magic birds and animals that were on our target list. Our searching added great birds including White-breasted Mesite, the spectacular Schlegel's Asity, both



Coquerel's and Red-capped Coua, 7 species of Vanga (including the bizarre Sickle-billed and range-restricted Van Dam's Vanga), Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher and Torotoroka Scops Owl. The wetlands and lakes in the region also hold some specials that we found easily, namely: Humblot's Heron, African Pygmy Goose, Madagascar Jacana, White-throated Rail, Greater Painted Snipe and Madagascar Fish Eagle. Coquerel's Sifaka, Mongoose Lemur, Grey Mouse Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, Milne

Edward's Sportive Lemur and Western Avahi were some of the mammalian highlights. Rhinoceros and Oustalet's Chameleon and Cuvier's Iguanid headed up the list of "herps" recorded. During this section of the trip, we also embarked on a boat trip into the Betsiboka Delta from the coastal town of Mahajunga. The mudflats of the delta were alive with various shorebirds and waterfowl and we managed to find all the top birds including Bernier's Teal, good numbers of Terek Sandpiper, Madagascar Sacred Ibis and a flock of nine Crab-plover.

The rainforests of the Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park were next on our schedule and they proved to be well worth the visit! Before we reached the rainforest though, we stopped in at Madagascar Exotic, a reptile park near Mandraka village. Here we were awed by the fascinating array of creatures on exhibit! Key birds in the forests of the east are the endemic family of Ground Rollers, and we expertly recorded all four that inhabit this region, namely Short-legged, Scaly, Pitta-like and Rufous-headed. Madagascar Wood Rail, Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Flufftail, Greater Vasa Parrot, Red-fronted and Blue Coua, Collared Nightjar, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Rainforest Scops Owl, Velvet Asity, Dark Newtonia, Crossley's Babbler, Ward's Flycatcher, Wedge-tailed Jery and Grey-crowned



Tetraka were some of the other great birds seen. Mammals that stole the show were Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur, the attractive Diademed Sifaka and the largest of the lemurs, the Indri. An overnight stop near to Anjozorobe en route to Antananarivo was very fruitful and we picked-up Madagascar Snipe, Meller's Duck, Madagascar Partridge, Grey Emutail and a pair of Banded Kestrel.

It was now time to head for the hot and dry southern regions of Madagascar and our first stop was Berenty Private Reserve. Despite the intense conditions, we did very well with our target species and recorded Madagascar Sandgrouse, good numbers of Giant Coua, the striking White-browed Hawk-Owl, Madagascar Buttonquail, Running Coua and Subdesert Brush Warbler. Our walks in the small patches of spiny forest near Berenty were also good for furry critters that came in the form of White-footed Sportive Lemur and the absolutely, cute Grey-brown Mouse Lemur. A visit to this private reserve would not be complete without numerous casual observations of the resident Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verraux's Sifakas. These lemurs put on a fantastic show as they entertained us with their mischievous antics and hilarious exhibition of bipedal motion.



Continuing our Madagascar adventure, we headed for the south-west of the country and the weird and wonderful landscape of the Spiny Desert! En route, we notched-up another major bird, Lafresnaye's Vanga, and a great surprise bird, Bernier's Teal (an out-of-range bird seen very well). Before reaching Ifaty, we had found the striking endemic Madagascar Plover along the shoreline and a flock of seven Great Frigatebirds soaring in the late afternoon updrafts along the coast. In this hot, dry region the early bird catches the worm, and this was certainly the case. A memorable morning was spent in the Spiny Desert and with the aid of our local guides; we had great views of Archbold's Newtonia, Thamnornis, the mythical Sub-desert Mesite, Green-capped Coua and the charismatic Long-tailed Ground Roller. The coral reefs off the coast were unavoidable and some members of the group enjoyed the cool, refreshing waters and mind-blowing myriad of reef fish while snorkeling!



From Ifaty, we made an excursion out to La Tabla not far from the bustling port town of Tuléar. Here we braved the harsh 'coral rag scrub', a very dense and prickly vegetation type, in efforts to locate two major, range-restricted endemics of the region. Our endeavours were successful and after an hour or so of searching, we had observed both Verraux's Coua and the recently discovered Red-shouldered Vanga at close range. Whilst in Tuléar, we were fortunate to experience a boat trip to Nosy Vé. This island, off the coast near Anakao, is the breeding ground for a population of Red-tailed Tropicbirds (protected by fady) and these elegant birds treated us to unforgettable encounters. Other specials during the day were a large flock of Malagasy Black Swift, a pair of Littoral Rock Thrush and several White-fronted Plover.

The last stretch of the tour was the south-north migration back to Tana. We headed from Tuléar towards the scenic landscape of Isalo and made a stop at Zombitse Forest. This remaining patch of dry, deciduous woodland is very special as it protects a key species only found in this area, Appert's Tetraka. After locating the Tetraka successfully, little did we know that there was a big surprise install for us...our guide led us to a nest site of the shy and elusive Madagascar Crested Ibis. Wow, it was



such a fabulous sighting that we had to drag ourselves away from the beautiful bird! Hubbard's Sportive Lemur and Standing's Day Gecko (*Phelsuma standingi*) were other good additions to our animal list. Our travels then took us through endless golden grasslands dotted with tall palm trees and the occasional Sapphire mining town to the majestic sandstone landscape of Isalo. Near our lodgings in Isalo we flushed a pair of Madagascar Partridge and later, with a massive lightning storm threatening, we quickly went in search of another target. Our site for this species once again proved very reliable and we watched a male Benson's Rock Thrush singing his heart out until we were duly satisfied (or was he just bored of displaying for us?). Shortly thereafter, we raced back to our lodge before the skies opened up and the storm took control of the night.

Ranomafana National Park was our final site for our tour of the "eight continent". The rainforests in this area are located on some hilly terrain and we knew it would require a last physical effort in order to find the specials. However, we set about our task with great enthusiasm and this aided us in locating a Henst's Goshawk at the nest, the magical Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity, Brown Emutail, the secretive Madagascar Yellowbrow, Forest Rock Thrush and Nelicourvi Weaver. The other inhabitants of the rainforests were also well represented at Ranomafana and on a particularly memorable evening walk, we had good views of the stunning Eastern Ring-tailed Mongoose, a Brown Mouse Lemur and a beautifully marked Madagascar Tree Boa (not to mention the Rainforest Scops Owl that was acutely focused on the boa)!



All in all, this successful tour of unique Madagascar recorded a total of 124 endemic or near-endemic bird species and 20 lemur species. Most importantly, most of these creatures were seen well and this mixed with the colourful culture and outstanding scenery of the island made it a fascinating experience!

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 introduced species was encountered daily at Berenty.

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

Partridges, Quails & Pheasants Phasianidae

Madagascar Partridge (E) *Margaroperdix madagascarensis*

Very good scope views of a female bird feeding on a dirt track were had at Anjozorobe and later we flushed a pair in the Isalo area.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

At least half-a-dozen birds were flushed while walking the airstrip at Berenty.

Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*

A female bird flushed from some thick grass in north-west Madagascar.

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Large numbers were seen at Lake Alarobia on the first day of the tour, with further sightings at various wetlands during the tour.

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Four birds were spotted in amongst the hordes of White-faced Duck at Lake Alarobia.

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

More than thirty birds were seen at Lake Alarobia and a single bird on the Mandrare River near Berenty.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*

Lake Amboromalandy in the north-west produced a pair of these stunning geese.

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

At our lodge near Anjozorobe we had a fly-over duck not long after our arrival, followed by a bird on the lake and then another pair flying overhead at dusk. 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 finally found a singleton bird in the mangroves at the 11th hour and then totally unexpected we had good views of a male bird at a wetland near Ifaty.

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 *Anas erythrorhyncha*

A common and widespread bird in Madagascar, we recorded this duck at most freshwater wetlands on the island.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*

This good-looking teal was seen at Lake Amboromalandy in the north-west and at a wetland near Ifaty.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*



A single bird was seen at a lake north-west of Tana, with further sightings of some pale bird at a wetland north of Tulear and a pair in the Isalo region.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V) *Tachybaptus pelzelinii*

Three birds seen at Lake Alarobia, a gorgeous pair found in Mantadia NP and a single bird observed in the Anjozorobe area.

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*

This is a rare species in Madagascar and we were fortunate to see three birds on the tour. These were found at Lake Alarobia and in Ankarafantsika National Park.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

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

The mangroves of the Betsiboka Delta produced good sightings of this species.

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

Madagascar Crested Ibis (E) (NT) *Lophotibis cristata*

After eluding us at most of the usual sites, we finally found this spectacular bird on a nest in Zombitse Forest.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Large numbers of this species were observed at wetland sites and rice paddies in north-west Madagascar.

Hérons Ardeidae

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Two birds were recorded at Lake Ravelobe and another two at a wetland near Ifaty.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Large numbers recorded during the visit to Lake Alarobia, and a couple seen flying over the Mandrare River at Berenty.

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 100+ breeding birds recorded at Lake Alarobia with further sightings at a variety of wetland habitats on the island.

Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V) *Ardeola idea*

Small numbers of breeding and non-breeding birds seen at Lake Alarobia 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 on most days during the tour.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

First recorded at a wetland in the north-west, we found peak numbers of six birds nesting on cliffs near the Onilahy River mouth on our boat trip to Nosy Ve.



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

This attractive heron was observed at Lake Ravelobe and on the cliffs near St. Augustine.

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

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Ankarafantsika NP produced many sightings of this attractive heron.

Great (White) Egret *Ardea alba*

Recorded throughout the tour with peak numbers of 20+ en route from Tulear to Isalo.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

Good numbers seen at Lake Alarobia and in the rice paddies near Lake Amboromalandy.

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

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar with large numbers of 200+ at Lake Alarobia.

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*

These elegant birds on the island of Nosy Ve treated us to fantastic views at close range.

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop** *Scopus umbretta*

Half-a-dozen of this charismatic birds seen in roadside rice paddies on the drive from Anjozorobe to Tana.

Anhingas Anhingidae**Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster*

We had three birds flying overhead at Lake Ravelobe.

Falcons Falconidae**Malagasy Kestrel (NEe)** *Falco newtoni*

Recorded almost daily throughout the tour in open habitats, forest edge and urban areas.

Banded Kestrel (E) *Falco zoniventris*

We had fantastic close-up scope views of a pair near our lodge in Anjozorobe.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*

A beautiful adult bird was seen in flight over the beach at Majunga on an evening walk.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

This sleek falcon was spotted at Ivato airport at dusk shortly after arrival from Majunga.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

We had fly-over views of this chunky falcon in Perinet Special Reserve.

Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (E)** *Aviceda madagascariensis*

On a morning walk in the dry forest of Ankarafantsika NP we stumbled upon an individual bird.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

A fairly common bird during the tour, we observed both forms of this species throughout the island.

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*

We had excellent, prolonged views of this regal bird at Lake Ravelobe during our boat cruise.

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

Malagasy Marsh Harrier (E) (V)*Circus macroscelus*

The grasslands to the north-west of Tana produced a double sighting of an impressive male bird of this seldom seen species.

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*

A few of these attractive raptors were encountered at several sites including Ifaty and Ampijoroa.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)*Accipiter francesii*

Good views were had of this small raptor at the Orchid garden in Perinet Special Reserve.

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

We were fortunate to encounter this uncommon species in gallery forest at Berenty, where we viewed an individual at close quarters for an extended period.

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

During our visit to Ranomafana National Park, we made a special visit to a nest site of these strapping raptors and were rewarded with good scope views of one of the pair.

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

Madagascar Buzzard (E)*Buteo brachypterus*

The best sighting of this species was on the first day at a nest site north-west of Tana. We enjoyed both perched and flight views of this good-looking raptor at close quarters.

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 crossing the forest trail on consecutive days.

Brown Mesite (E) (V)*Mesitornis unicolor*

Despite valiant efforts on three consecutive mornings and good response from several pairs, we were unable to coax this skulking bird out of the undergrowth at Ranomafana NP.

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

We were fortunate to locate a female bird of this elusive species in the Spiny Desert at Ifaty during an early morning walk. Another female was seen by some participants the same afternoon.

Flufftails Sarothruridae**Madagascar Flufftail (E)***Sarothrura insularis*

This gorgeous little bird was seen very well at close quarters at the forest edge in Mantadia NP.

Rails & Gallinules Rallidae**Madagascar Wood Rail (E)***Canirallus kiolooides*

We had an excellent sighting of a pair at close-quarters on a forest trail in Perinet.

Madagascar Rail (E)*Rallus madagascariensis*

A wetland near to Perinet Special Reserve produced an unbelievable sighting of this attractive railid. The bird responded to playback and approached to within a couple of feet from the group.

White-throated Rail (NE)*Dryolimnas cuvieri*

This species was recorded at Lake Ravelobe, Perinet Special Reserve and Ranomafana NP.



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*

At least four birds, a pair and their chicks, were observed at a wetland en route to Ifaty from Tulear in south-west Madagascar.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

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

Buttonquails Turnicidae

Madagascar Buttonquail (E) *Turnix nigricollis*

Several female birds and some chicks seen at Ankarafantsika NP. Then we found a beautiful male in the gallery forest at Berenty.

Crab-Plover Dromadidae

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola*

A flock of 9 birds observed during our boat trip in the Betsiboka Delta, followed by sightings in the south of Madagascar near Ifaty and on Nosy Ve.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Recorded at several sites, both coastal and inland, with peak numbers found in wetlands of the north-west.

Plovers Charadriidae

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Peak numbers of this migrant were observed on the mudflats in the port at Tulear.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

As above, good numbers (20+) were seen in the port at Tulear.

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

This striking endemic was seen very well along the coast between Tulear and Ifaty.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*

Small numbers recorded at various sites throughout the tour.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

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

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

Half-a-dozen of these shorebirds were seen on the beach at Nosy Ve.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*

Sightings were had on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta and large numbers in the port at Tulear.

Painted Snipes Rostratulidae

Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Half-a-dozen of these beautiful snipe were recorded in the rice paddies of the north-west.

Jacanas Jacanidae

Madagascar Jacana (E) *Actophilornis albinucha*

A total of three of these endemics were found in wetlands of the northwest.



Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

- Madagascar Snipe (E) (NT)** *Gallinago macrodactyla*
Three birds were flushed and seen well in flight at the Anjozorobe Marsh.
- Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*
We had scope views of this Palearctic migrant in the port at Tulear.
- Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
Large numbers of 100+ were observed on tidal flats of the Betsiboka Delta.
- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*
This common wader was seen regularly at various wetland and coastal sites during the tour.
- Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*
More than fifty 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*
Peak numbers of this attractive shorebird were found in south-west Madagascar.
- Sanderling** *Calidris alba*
Small numbers seen along the coast in the south-west of the island.
- Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*
Seen on the tidal flats in the Ifaty and Tulear areas on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta.

Pratincoles Glareolidae

- Madagascar Pratincole (BE)** *Glareola ocularis*
A pair was seen en route to Perinet from Tana; we observed courtship interaction between the birds.

Terns Sternidae

- Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*
We had good views of 15 birds on the island of Nosy Vé.
- Swift (Greater Crested) Tern** *Sterna bergii*
Small numbers recorded at most coastal sites in the south-west of the island.
- Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*
A massive flock of more than 100 birds were seen on the sandbanks between Ifaty and Tulear.
- Saunders' Tern** *Sterna saundersi*
This diminutive tern was seen on the mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta.
- Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus sclateri*
Four birds were recorded at a fresh water wetland in the north-west.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae

- Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)** *Pterocles personatus*
A total of eight birds seen near Berenty Private Reserve. Highlight was a flock of 5 birds coming in to drink and flying by at close range.

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*

Peak numbers of 50+ birds were seen en route to Berenty from Fort Dauphin.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)*Treron australis*

Ankarafantsika NP produced several sightings of this beautiful species.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)*Alectroenas madagascariensis*

Perinet Special Reserve was the site great close-up views of this attractive endemic.

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. We also had a sighting of three birds feeding on drying rice north-west of Tana.

Greater Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis vasa*

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

Lesser Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis nigra*

This raucous parrot species was seen regularly throughout our trip with peak numbers in the camp at Ampijoroa.

Cuckoos, Couas & Coucals Cuculidae**Malagasy Coucal (NEe)***Centropus toulou*

Common and widespread, this bird was recorded in small numbers on most days of the tour.

Crested Coua (E)*Coua cristata*

This attractive species was recorded at Ankarafantsika NP, followed by sightings at Berenty and Ifaty.

Verreaux's Coua (E) (NT)*Coua verreauxi*

Views of this rare and localized species were had in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Blue Coua (E)*Coua caerulea*

We had sightings of this colourful bird at Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

Red-capped Coua (E)*Coua ruficeps*

Six birds seen very well in the dry deciduous forest in Ankarafantsika NP.

NOTE: See notation under Green-capped Coua.

Green-capped Coua (E)*Coua [ruficeps] olivaceiceps*

The spiny forest at Ifaty and Berenty produced sightings of this species.

NOTE: This southern, khaki-capped form of Red-capped Coua is considered to be a full species in Sinclair I. and Langrande O. Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands however many other authorities consider this form to be a subspecies of Red-capped Coua.

Red-fronted Coua (E)*Coua reynaudii*

Seen in the rainforests of Perinet, Anjozorobe and Ranomafana.

Coquerel's Coua (E)*Coua coquereli*

The dry, deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP and Zombitse were sites for this coua.

Running Coua (E)*Coua cursor*

The spiny forest on the island produced a couple of sightings of this gorgeous coua.

Giant Coua (E)*Coua gigas*

The largest of the couas was easily found at Berenty Private Reserve.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)*Cuculus rochii*

We recorded this species at most sites throughout the tour.



Barn Owls Tytonidae**Barn Owl***Tyto alba*

A single bird was seen and heard at dusk in Berenty Private Reserve.

Typical Owls Strigidae**Torotoroka Scops Owl (E)***Otus madagascariensis*

Ampijoroa Forest Station produced a sighting of a pair and good views were had at day roosts in Berenty.

Madagascar (Rainforest) Scops Owl (NE)*Otus rutilus*

We spotted a bird at very close range during an evening walk in Perinet.

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

White-browed Hawk-Owl (E)*Ninox supercilialis*

Berenty produced amazing views of this attractive species. We also found another bird in Zombitse Forest.

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

Unfortunately, we only heard this species at dusk in Mantadia NP.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae**Madagascar Nightjar (NE)***Caprimulgus madagascariensis*

Common and widespread on Madagascar, we had numerous sightings during the tour at most sites.

Collared Nightjar (E)*Caprimulgus enarratus*

A pair of 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 the rainforests of Perinet and Mantadia NP.

African Palm Swift*Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

This elegant swift was recorded at various sites with suitable habitat on the island.

Alpine Swift*Tachymarptis melba*

We only one bird en route from Isalo to Ranomafana.

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, Mantadia, Berenty and Ranomafana.

Ground Rollers Brachypteraciidae**Short-legged Ground-Roller (E) (V)***Brachypteracias leptosomus*

Mantadia NP produced a sighting of an individual bird. We were treated to great views!



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

Another secretive ground roller, it was found in the forest undergrowth of Mantadia NP.

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

We found several of these beautiful birds in Perinet, Mantadia and Ranomafana NP.

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

Our persistence was rewarded with views of this gorgeous bird in Perinet Special Reserve.

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*

A strange and extremely vocal species, it was seen throughout our tour of the island.

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*

Ankarafantsika NP, Perinet Special Reserve and Ranomafana produced sightings of this gem!

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE)*Alcedo vintsioides*

Recorded at most freshwater and marine wetlands throughout the tour.

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

Despite its common and recorded from most sites during the tour, it is always a pleasure to views these birds.

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

We encountered this striking species at Ankarafantsika NP, Berenty and Ifaty.

NOTE: This form is usually considered distinct from the African Hoopoe, based on vocal and morphological differences.

Asities Philepittidae**Velvet Asity (E)***Philepitta castanea*

This rainforest special was seen in Mantadia and Ranomafana NP's.

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

The deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika NP gave us several sightings of this gorgeous species.

Common Sunbird-Asity (E)*Neodrepanis coruscans*

A pair was seen in Mantadia NP and later we had another pair in the forests of Ranomafana NP.

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

The lengthy wait in the ridge-top forest at Vohiparara proved fruitful as we several good sightings of a pair!

Vangas Vangidae**Red-tailed Vanga (E)***Calicalicus madagascariensis*

One of the most common vangas in Madagascar, we had numerous sightings during the tour.



Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)*Calicalicus rufocarpalis*

This recently described and highly localized endemic is a great find for any tour to Madagascar and we were fortunate to have an up close and personal experience with a pair in the “coral rag” scrub near La Tabla.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)*Vanga curvirostris*

This species was seen well at a number of forested sites on the tour.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

A pair of these striking vangas were found in the spiny forest en route from Berenty to Ifaty.

Van Dam's Vanga (E) (En)*Xenopirostris damii*

Ankarafantsika NP produced good views of this range restricted species.

Pollen's Vanga (E) (NT)*Xenopirostris polleni*

Birding the forest edge near Ranomafana NP was eventually successful with views of this attractive vanga.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)*Falcula palliata*

We were entertained on a daily basis in Ankarafantsika NP by these bizarre, fantastic birds.

White-headed Vanga (E)*Artamella viridis*

Recorded at a number of sites throughout the tour, our best sightings being in Ankarafantsika NP.

Chabert's Vanga (E)*Leptopterus chabert*

Catholic in its choice of habitats, this vanga, was recorded regularly during the tour.

Blue Vanga (NJE)*Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

An absolutely gorgeous bird, our best views were of a three birds in the camp at Ampijoroa.

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*

Surprisingly, we only found a single bird during the tour in the dry woodland of Ankarafantsika NP.

Tylas (Vanga) (E)*Tylas eduardi*

This species was seen along the forest edge and in the canopy of the eastern rainforests.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (E)*Hypositta corallirostris*

Whilst in Perinet Special Reserve, we found a foraging party of 4 birds in the ridge-top forest.

Dark Newtonia (E)*Newtonia amphichroa*

Two birds were found along the forest edge in Mantadia NP.

Common Newtonia (E)*Newtonia brunneicauda*

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

Archbold's Newtonia (E)*Newtonia archboldi*

A special for the southern region of Madagascar, we found at least four birds in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty.

Ward's Flycatcher (E)*Pseudobias wardi*

Small numbers seen in the forests of Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Crossley's Babbler (E)*Mystacornis crossleyi*

One of the top ten birds of the tour, it was located and seen very well in Mantadia NP and again in Anjozorobe.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae**Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike (NE)***Coracina cinerea*

Small numbers recorded at various sites during the tour.



Drongos Dicuridae**Crested Drongo (NE)***Dicrurus forficatus*

This charismatic bird with its punk hairdo 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, we managed to find all the colour morphs of this very attractive species.

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 most sites.

Larks Alaudidae**Madagascar Lark (E)***Mirafra hova*

First views of this bird were in the grasslands north-west of Tana, followed by numerous sightings thereafter.

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**Madagascar Cisticola (NE)***Cisticola cherinus*

This bird was commonly recorded in a variety of habitats throughout the tour.

Family Uncertain**Common Jery (E)***Neomixis tenella*

Recorded throughout the tour at most sites.

Green Jery (E)*Neomixis viridis*

A fairly nondescript bird, it was seen in the rainforests of Mantadia, Perinet and Ranomafana.

Stripe-throated Jery (E)*Neomixis striatigula*

We found small numbers of these birds in the drier regions of Madagascar.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae**Madagascar Bulbul (NE)***Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

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

Old World Warblers Sylviidae**Grey Emutail (E)***Dromaeocercus seebohmi*

A denizen of the wetlands of the highlands, we tracked them down near Perinet and Anjozorobe.

Brown Emutail (E)*Dromaeocercus brunneus*

An incredible skulker, we had brief views of this species on the ridge-top forests of Ranomafana.

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)*Nesillas typica*

Another denizen of the undergrowth, this species was recorded at various localities during the tour.



Subdesert Brush Warbler (E)*Nesillas lantzii*

Several birds found in the spiny forest at Ifaty and Berenty. 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*

Lake Alarobia, the marshes near Perinet and Anjozorobe produced sightings of this species.

White-throated Oxylabes (E)*Oxylabes madagascariensis*

A secretive endemic of the understorey in forests, it was seen in Mantadia NP.

Long-billed Bernieria (E)*Bernieria madagascariensis*

Seen first in Ankarafantsika NP, we later had sightings at most other forest sites.

Cryptic Warbler (E)*Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

Mantadia on a rainy morning, produced a sighting of this recently described species.

Wedge-tailed Jery (E) (NT)*Hartertula flavoviridis*

Recorded in a mixed flock together with Grey-crowned Tetraka in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)*Thamnornis chloropetoides*

Three birds seen well in the Spiny Desert near Ifaty after responding to playback.

Spectacled Greenbul (E)*Phyllastrephus zosterops*

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

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

A couple of birds were seen feeding low down in the undergrowth at Zombitse Forest.

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

We stumbled upon a mixed feeding flock in Mantadia and located several of these birds, bustling about the undergrowth.

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

We were fortunate to observe this skulker at dusk a few 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*

Usually located by its characteristic call, we had several of these warblers in the eastern rainforests.

White-eyes Zosteropidae**Madagascar White-eye (NE)***Zosterops maderaspatana*

Regularly recorded throughout the tour at most sites except in the south of the island.

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

This introduced species was common in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E)*Hartlaubius aurata*

An uncommon bird, it was seen in the eastern rainforests of Perinet, Mantadia and Ranomafana.

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae**Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E)***Copsychus albospecularis*

Seen throughout the tour on most days, this bold and confiding species entertained royally.

Eurasian Stonechat*Saxicola torquatus*

Fairly common in open habitats of the eastern highlands, where it was seen on most days.



Littoral Rock Thrush (E)*Pseudocossyphus imerinus*

The dune scrub near Anakao, south of Tulear, produced a number of sightings of this rock thrush.

Forest Rock Thrush (E)*Pseudocossyphus sharpei*

Whilst birding the forest edge on the main road near Ranomafana, we had fantastic views of a male bird singing sweetly!

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

We had superb views of a male singing boldly near 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.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae**Souimanga Sunbird (NE)***Nectarinia souimanga*

Madagascar's most common sunbird, we had peak numbers of 30+ in the spiny desert at Ifaty.

Long-billed Green (Madagascar) Sunbird (NE) *Nectarinia notata*

A large, attractive sunbird, it was seen at several sites during the tour with the best views in Perinet.

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

Fairly uncommon during the trip, but seen in eastern rainforests of Perinet, Mantadia & Ranomafana.

Sakalava Weaver (E)*Ploceus sakalava*

Common in the drier regions of Madagascar, first sighted in Ampijoroa and later in the south at Ifaty.

Madagascar Red Fody (E)*Foudia madagascariensis*

A gorgeous bird in breeding plumage, it was recorded at most sites in good numbers during the tour.

Forest Fody (E)*Foudia omissa*

Low numbers of this forest bird were observed in the eastern rainforests.

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

Peak numbers of 20+ seen at a roadside wetland between Tulear and Ifaty, otherwise it was uncommon during the tour.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae**Madagascar Wagtail (E)***Motacilla flaviventris*

Another attractive endemic, it was observed at most sites on most days during the tour.

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 woodland at Berenty.

Old World Rats and Mice Muridae

Eastern Red Forest Rat *Nesomys rufus*

This attractive forest rat was recorded from Ranomafana NP.

Civets and allies *Viverridae***Fanaloka (Madagascar Striped Civet)** *Fossa fossana*

This attractive beast was observed at Belle Vue in Ranomafana NP.

Mongoosees *Herpestidae***Ring-tailed Mongoose** *Viverricula elegans*

A pair of these stunning mongooses was seen well on the Vohiparara trail of Ranomafana NP.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs *Cheirogaleidae***Gray Mouse Lemur** *Microcebus murinus*

A single animal was seen on our night walk at Ampijoroa.

Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus rufus*

This delightful species was found at Ranomafana NP on an evening walk.

Gray-Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

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

Greater Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus major*

We spotted a few of these creatures on a night walk near our lodge in Ranomafana NP.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*

Only active during the wet season, this lemur was seen on a night stroll in Ankarafantsika NP.

Sportive Lemurs *Megaladapidae***Small-toothed Sportive Lemur** *Lepilemur microdonta*

A parent and its youngster were found in Mantadia NP at their day roost.

Milne-Edwards's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*

Good numbers of these vocal sportive lemurs were recorded in the dry forests at Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

Fairly common in the small patches of spiny forest at Berenty.

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur hubbardi*

This recently described lemur was found in the dry forests of Zombitse.

"True" Lemurs *Lemuridae***Eastern Gray Bamboo Lemur** *Haplemur griseus griseus*

This attractive species was found during our day visit to Mantadia NP and later at Ranomafana.

Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta*

We encountered many families of these delightful but mischievous lemurs at Berenty.

Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*

We were very fortunate to have good views of this range restricted species at Ampijoroa.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These lemurs were seen at Ankarafantsika NP and later in Mantadia.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

Good numbers were seen in the gallery forest at Berenty.

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

This, the most vocal of all lemurs, was unfortunately only heard in Mantadia and Ranomafana.



Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae**Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur)***Avahi occidentalis*

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

Diademed Sifaka*Propithecus diadema diadema*

Widely considered to be Madagascar's most beautiful primate, we had good views of this magnificent creature in Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

Verreaux's Sifaka*Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

The comical, bipedal locomotion of this lemur is undoubtedly one of the mammalian highlights of our trip to Madagascar. It was seen daily at Berenty.

Coquerel's Sifaka*Propithecus verreauxi coquereli*

This magnificent primate was common around the camp near the village of Ampijoroa.

Indri*Indri indri*

The territorial calls of this lemur are unforgettable, and the close encounter that we shared with a small family in Perinet will be etched in our memories forever!

Amphibians and Reptiles**True Frogs Ranidae****Painted Mantella***Mantella madagascariensis*

This multi-coloured frog was found in the undergrowth of Mantadia NP.

Crocodiles Crocodylidae**Nile Crocodile***Crocodylus niloticus*

This ancient reptile 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**Nose-horned Chameleon***Calumma nasuta*

Seen in the rainforests of Perinet and Ranomafana NP.

Band-bellied Chameleon*Calumma gastrotaenia*

This small chameleon was recorded during our stay at Perinet and also at Anjozorobe.

Parson's Chameleon*Calumma parsonii*

An individual was seen in the forests of Perinet Special Reserve.

Rhinoceros Chameleon*Calumma rhinocerotus*

The dry forest around Ampijoroa produced two sightings of this chameleon.

Oustalet's Chameleon*Furcifer oustaleti*

The most common chameleon seen during the tour, it was first observed in Ankarafantsika NP.

Warty Chameleon*Furcifer verrucosus*

A singleton was found in the small patch of 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**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.

Standing's Day Gecko*Phelsuma standingi*

A couple of these attractive reptiles were seen in Zombitse Forest (endemic to this forest patch).

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae**Madagascar Plated Lizard***Zonosaurus madagascarensis*

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

Boas Boidae**Madagascar Tree Boa***Sanzinia madagascarensis*

A single boa was seen curled up in a tree during an afternoon walk along the Vohiparara trail in Ranomafana NP.

Typical Snakes Colubridae**Black-and-white Striped Snake***Liopholidophis lateralis*

One of these attractive snakes was seen during a pit-stop en route to Perinet from Tana.

Pelomedusidae*Pelomedusa subrufa*

This terrapin was found in the leaf litter of Ankarafantsika NP.

Photo credits (in order of appearance): Scaly Ground Roller by James Wakelin, Indri by David Shackelford, Madagascar Cuckoo Roller by Adam Riley, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher by Keith Valentine, Schlegel's Asity, Gray-brown Mouse Lemur and Long-tailed Ground Roller by David Chantler and Forest Rock Thrush by Keith Valentine.

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