



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar

Masoala Peninsula Extension

28th October to 2nd November 2017 (6 days)

Trip Report



Helmet Vanga by Gareth Robbins

Trip report compiled by Tour Leader: Gareth Robbins

Tour Summary

A few of us began the tour in the bustling city of Antananarivo and decided to do some birding within the area of Lac Alarobia. It was after a thirty-minute drive through parts of the city that we arrived at Lac Alarobia. As soon as we walked down to the water's edge, we were inundated by enormous



Our chartered aircraft to fly us to Maroantsetra by Gareth Robbins

numbers of water birds, namely Red-billed Teals, Dimorphic, Great and Western Cattle Egrets, Common Moorhens, Squacco and Black Herons and Madagascar Grebes. In addition, we had glimpses of Malagasy Kingfishers and Black-crowned Night Herons. The pivotal points of the day were spotting the Meller's Duck and the Malagasy Pond Heron! Furthermore, we got looks at an extremely shy White-throated Rail, as well as several Hottentot Teals. Other highlights

were seeing a Malagasy Kestrel mob a Yellow-billed Kite and then observing the very vocal Malagasy Brush Warbler hide and call from within a thick, tangled part of a tree above us.

Our adventure began with taking a fancy private chartered flight out of Antananarivo Airport. After successfully passing the weigh-in, we waited patiently on the runway for our plane to be ready to set off. It was in this moment that we had phenomenal views of Mascarene Martins and Malagasy Kestrels. We then ventured forth onto the red carpet leading up to the plane and boarded. Our takeoff was smooth and elegant and we were able to admire and enjoy the scenic views overlooking the city of Antananarivo. We were heading to the town of Maroantsetra. Our flight took us over the exquisite Antongil Bay and soon after we landed in the town of Maroantsetra. After disembarking the plane, we

noticed the grounds were wet due to the recent downpour of rain – *little did we know that this was only the beginning of many more rainy days.* We then took a forty-five-minute drive to the other side of the town and to the small harbour, where we boarded our tiny boat. This boat took us to the Farankaraina Lodge, on the



Panther Chameleon by Gareth Robbins

edge of the Masoala National Park. Birding along the Farankaraina River offered us multiple opportunities to see Red Fodys in breeding plumage, Whimbrels, Malagasy Kingfishers and Great and Dimorphic Egrets. The most exciting part of the boat trip was watching a Panther Chameleon walk along a fence above the water. At this point, we reversed to get close-up looks at the Chameleon but

then the boat started playing up so we ventured towards the closest village to make an emergency stop! After a quick and efficient repair, we were back on track and eventually we got to the shallow end of the river, where we exited the boat to take a thirty-minute walk to our quaint and rustic camp.



Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher by Gareth Robbins

After a scrumptious lunch and a short break, we went on an adventurous walk with our guide, Juberson. The walking trail became steep and it was here that we all saw a Madagascar “Crested Ibis” fly on and off the path three times. After the arduous walk and a delightful dinner, we went out in search of the well-known Aye-aye. We took a stroll along the coast and then headed up the high mountain and along the trail. En route we got yet another fantastic look at the Panther Chameleon. Further up the mountain there was a massive commotion, and this turned out to be a group of White-fronted “Brown” Lemurs. A number of Grey Mouse Lemurs also made an appearance along the way. We stopped for a moment at a spot under a fruiting Canarium Tree and waited patiently for the Aye-aye, but had no luck. We tried another potential Aye-aye area which was near the lodge, but again, unfortunately, we weren’t in luck. Most of the group wanted to persist in finding this bird, so we made our way back up the mountain, sat at the same place as before and eagerly waited for an Aye-aye. This really did take some endurance and time – *members of the group began to drift off and others even fell asleep*. It was indeed the snoring that woke up the Aye-eyes, as all of a sudden we heard the fruits falling from the Canarium Tree and before we knew it we were staring at these ambiguous, yet enthralling creatures. We maximised the time we spent with these amazing animals and some members of the group even managed to get decent photos of them! We made our way back to our lovely lodge before continuing with the next part of our journey.

After a delectable breakfast, we left our lodge and ventured forth on our long walk back to our boat. Along the way the heavens opened and graced us with pouring rain – needless to say all of us got completely soaked! Thankfully, we found a small shelter near the boat and waited for the heavy rain to pass. After some time, we boarded the boat and made our way back to the port of Maroantsetra. We then waited for the next two boats to take us to our lodge in the Masoala NP. By the time we entered the Antongil Bay, we noticed that the ocean was rather vicious with its volatile waves so we endured an extremely bumpy ride before arriving at our camp to sit down for a bite to eat for lunch. One of the first



Photographing a Short-legged Ground Roller in the rain by Gareth Robbins

completely soaked! Thankfully, we found a small shelter near the boat and waited for the heavy rain to pass. After some time, we boarded the boat and made our way back to the port of Maroantsetra. We then waited for the next two boats to take us to our lodge in the Masoala NP. By the time we entered the Antongil Bay, we noticed that the ocean was rather vicious with its volatile waves so we endured an extremely bumpy ride before arriving at our camp to sit down for a bite to eat for lunch. One of the first

birds we saw, which was a resident bird in the area, was a Madagascan Pratincole. We also found a Chabert Vanga nest and Olive Bee-eaters, Broad-billed Rollers and Lesser Vasa Parrots. After a lengthy rest, we took a short trail with our new guides, Rummy and Aldon. We had splendid views of



Short-legged Ground Roller by Gareth Robbins

Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers and of a Crossley's Vanga. Additionally, we heard Red-breasted Coua call and we saw Red-tailed and Rufous Vangas, as well as a Crested Drongo on a nest.

Today was the primary day of the extension for most. We left our lodge after a pleasant breakfast and took a short boat ride to a location in the Masoala National Park. Here, we commenced with our search for the Helmet Vanga. Once we had docked we headed along a trail which took us straight to a steeper one. Along this section, we got incredible views of a Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher. Further along the trail, Rummy summoned us to join him in a section of the nearby forest, and here we saw the superb Helmet Vanga! The Helmet Vanga was sitting right in front of us in its nest and this allowed us to spend quality time with this bird. Another highlight of the walk was sighting a Madagascan Wood Rail running across the trail a couple of times. As soon as we left the site, the rain came down once again. We returned to the boats and

headed back to the lodge on another very bumpy journey! After a fancy lunch, we went on another walk and got brief glimpses of Red-breasted Coua. We then tried to locate a Bernier's Vanga and couldn't find it; but as a consolation prize, we spotted the very vocal Red-fronted Coua.

We awoke once again to another wet and rainy day! Despite the poor weather conditions, we continued with our day as planned. We boarded the boat and took a trip back to the Masoala National Park. We walked through a small village towards the back, where there was an open clearing. Here we saw Madagascan Spinetails and Madagascan Green Pigeons. The rain continued to pour and some of our equipment started to get wet; nonetheless, we continued with the trails, coming across Blue Coua and a Rufous Vanga. In addition, we saw one drenched Red-ruffed Lemur sitting on an exposed branch at the top of a large tree. We were fortunate to get some extraordinary looks at the White-fronted Lemurs, but the most impressive find was that of a Short-legged Ground Roller, found by Aldon. We followed the trail back to the boat and enjoyed a lavish lunch at the lodge. Shortly after lunch, we were entertained by the local village people,



Madagascan Pratincole by Gareth Robbins

where they played some catchy songs and sold us some delightful home-made souvenirs. After a tasty lunch, we went back in search of the Bernier's Vanga. This involved marching adamantly through the forest, but we had to make it to the top plateaux! From the top of the plateaux, we saw a few birds along with some cracking views of White-headed Vanga, Blue Vanga and Spectacled Tetraka. Finally, we made it to an open clearing and here we again saw White-headed Vangas. As the sun started to set, a few Blue Couas were seen. A few minutes after this, Rummy pointed out two Bernier's Vanga calling from and perching themselves in a tree quite far down the clearing. This was indeed a very rare sighting; and to top it off, the pair of Vangas flew straight towards us, allowing us to get exceptional views of the birds.

After a couple of wet but equally productive days, we were ready to head back to Antananarivo! Guillaume had kindly organised us a covered speedboat, which bolted across the Antongil Bay in great time to get us back to Maroantsetra harbour. From here we got a transfer back to the airstrip in order for us to take our chartered flight back to Antananarivo. Later in the afternoon, we met with the rest of the group and went to Lac Alarobia for the last time to obtain more delightful and better sightings of recently seen birds. This afternoon was the official start of the Madagascar Comprehensive III Tour!

Annotated List of species recorded

Note: Number in brackets () indicate number of days on the tour the species was recorded.
List powered through the report generator of our partner iGoTerra.

Birds (84 in total: 79 seen, 5 heard)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2017. IOC World Bird List (v 7.2).

Status codes: E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced

IUCN codes: CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient

Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos

Observed 1 day in total.

Meller's Duck (EN)

Anas melleri

Observed 1 day in total.

Red-billed Teal

Anas erythrorhyncha

Observed 1 day in total.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

Observed 1 day in total.

Guineafowl *Numididae*

Helmeted Guineafowl

Numida meleagris

(1) 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Grebes *Podicipedidae*

Madagascan Grebe (VU)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

Observed 1 day in total.

Ibises and Spoonbills *Threskiornithidae*

Madagascan Ibis (NT)

Lophotibis cristata

(2) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and 1 heard Masoala NP 1.11.

Hérons, Egrets, and Bitterns *Ardeidae*

Black-crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax

(2) 1 Maroantsetra 30.10.

Striated Heron

Butorides striata rutenbergi

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 1.11 and 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

(2) 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Malagasy Pond Heron (EN)

Ardeola idae

Observed 1 day in total.

Western Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Antongil Bay 30.10 and 1 Antongil Bay 2.11.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea firsas

(1) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10.

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea madagascariensis

(2) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10 and 1 Maroantsetra 30.10.

Great Egret *Ardea alba melanorhynchos*

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Dimorphic Egret *Egretta dimorpha*

(3) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Hawks, Eagles, and Kites Accipitridae

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius parasitus*

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Flufftails Sarothruridae

Madagascar Wood Rail *Canirallus kioloides*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 heard Masoala NP 1.11.

Rails, Gallinules, and Coots Rallidae

White-throated Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri cuvieri*

(5) 1 heard Maroantsetra 29.10 and up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*

(1) 1 heard Maroantsetra 30.10.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus pyrrhorrhoa*

Observed 1 day in total.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

(1) 1 heard Maroantsetra 30.10.

Sandpipers and Allies Scolopacidae

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Tampolodge 1.11.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

(1) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

(2) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10 and 1 Maroantsetra 30.10.

Pratincoles and Coursers *Glareolidae*

Madagascan Pratincole (VU) *Glareola ocularis*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Masoala NP 30.10 and up to 1 Tampolodge 31-2.11.

Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers *Laridae*

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii thalassinus*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Antongil Bay 1.11.

Pigeons and Doves *Columbidae*

Rock Dove *Columba livia var. domestica*

(2) 1 Relais des Plateaux, Antanetibe Ivato, Antananarivo. 28.10 and 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10.

Malagasy Turtle Dove *Nesoenas picturatus picturatus*

(3) 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 heard Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 heard Masoala NP 1.11.

Madagascan Green Pigeon *Treron australis*

(3) 1 Farankaraina Forest 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Cuckoos *Cuculidae*

Malagasy Coucal *Centropus toulou toulou*

(5) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Blue Coua *Coua caerulea*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Red-fronted Coua *Coua reynaudii*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Red-breasted Coua *Coua serriana*

(3) Up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

Owls *Strigidae*

Rainforest Scops Owl

Otus rutilus

(4) 1 heard Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

Nightjars and Allies *Caprimulgidae*

Madagascan Nightjar

Caprimulgus madagascariensis madagascariensis

Observed 1 day in total.

Swifts *Apodidae*

Madagascan Spinetail

Zoonavena grandidieri grandidieri

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

African Palm Swift

Cypsiurus parvus gracilis

(6) 1 Antananarivo 28.10, 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10, 1 Masoala NP 1.11 and 1 Maroantsetra 2.11.

Malagasy Black Swift

Apus balstoni balstoni

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Little Swift

Apus affinis

(1) 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10.

Cuckoo-Roller *Leptosomidae*

Cuckoo Roller

Leptosomus discolor discolor

(2) 1 heard Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 heard Masoala NP 1.11.

Rollers *Coraciidae*

Broad-billed Roller

Eurystomus glaucurus glaucurus

(2) 1 heard Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Ground-Rollers *Brachypteraciidae*

Short-legged Ground Roller (VU) *Brachypteracias leptosomus*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Scaly Ground Roller (VU) *Geobiastes squamiger*

(1) 1 heard Masoala NP 1.11.

Kingfishers *Alcedinidae*

Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher *Corythornis madagascariensis*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Malagasy Kingfisher *Corythornis vintsioides vintsioides*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Bee-eaters *Meropidae*

Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus superciliosus*

(4) 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10, 1 Masoala NP 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Tampolodge 1.11.

Falcons and Caracaras *Falconidae*

Malagasy Kestrel *Falco newtoni newtoni*

(2) 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10.

Old World Parrots *Psittaculidae*

Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Vangas *Vangidae*

Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis*

(3) 1 Masoala NP 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Tampilodge 1.11.

Hook-billed Vanga *Vanga curvirostris*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Bernier's Vanga (VU) *Oriolia bernieri*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

White-headed Vanga *Artamella viridis*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Chabert Vanga *Leptopterus chabert*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11 and 1 Tampilodge 2.11.

Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascarinus madagascarinus*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Helmet Vanga (VU) *Euryceros prevostii*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Common Newtonia *Newtonia brunneicauda*

(3) 1 Masoala NP 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 heard Tampilodge 1.11.

Crossley's Vanga *Mystacornis crossleyi*

(1) 1 Maroantsetra 30.10.

Cuckoo-shrikes *Campephagidae*

Madagascan Cuckooshrike *Coracina cinerea*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Drongos *Dicruridae*

Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus forficatus*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10, 1 Masoala NP 1.11 and 1 Tampilodge 2.11.

Monarch Flycatchers *Monarchidae*

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata*

(3) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Crows, Jays, and Magpies *Corvidae*

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

(2) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10 and 1 Maroantsetra 30.10.

Bulbuls *Pycnonotidae*

Malagasy Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis madagascariensis*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Swallows *Hirundinidae*

Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica madagascariensis*

(3) 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola cowani*

Observed 1 day in total.

Reed-Warblers and Allies *Acrocephalidae*

Malagasy Brush Warbler *Nesillas typica*

Observed 1 day in total.

Malagasy Warblers *Bernieridae*

Spectacled Tetraka *Xanthomixis zosterops*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Cisticolas and Allies *Cisticolidae*

Common Jery *Neomixis tenella*

(2) 1 heard Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Stripe-throated Jery *Neomixis striatigula*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 31.10.

Madagascan Cisticola *Cisticola cherina*

(1) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10.

Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies Zosteropidae

Malagasy White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatanus maderaspatanus*

(5) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

Starlings Sturnidae

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis tristis*

(5) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10, 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Madagascan Starling *Hartlaubius auratus*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Madagascan Magpie-Robin *Copsychus albospectularis*

(4) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

Madagascan Stonechat *Saxicola sibilla*

(1) 1 Antananarivo 28.10.

Sunbirds and Spiderhunters Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris sovimanga*

(5) 1 heard Farankaraina Forest 29.10, up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11 and 1 Tampolodge 2.11.

Weavers and Allies Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver *Ploceus nelicourvi*

(2) 1 Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Red Fody *Foudia madagascariensis*

(4) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Waxbills and Allies Estrildidae

Madagascan Mannikin *Lepidopygia nana*

(3) 1 Maroantsetra 29.10, 1 Maroantsetra 30.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Wagtails and Pipits Motacillidae

Madagascan Wagtail *Motacilla flaviventris*

(2) 1 Relais des Plateaux, Antanetibe Ivato, Antananarivo. 28.10 and 1 Antananarivo Int Airport 29.10.

Mammals (6 in total: 6 seen)

Status codes: **E** = Endemic, **NE** = Near-endemic, **I** = Introduced

IUCN codes: **CR** = Critically endangered, **EN** = Endangered, **VU** = Vulnerable, **EW** = Extinct in the Wild, **NT** = Near Threatened, **DD** = Data Deficient

Lemurs Lemuridae

White-fronted Lemur *Eulemur albifrons*

(2) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra*

(2) 1 heard Masoala NP 31.10 and 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Dwarf and Mouse Lemurs Cheirogaleidae

Geoffroy's Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus major*

(1) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10.

Rufous Mouse Lemur *Microcebus rufus*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Aye-aye Daubentoniidae

Aye-aye*Daubentonia madagascariensis*

(1) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10.

Climbing Mice, Rock Mice, White-tailed Rat, Malagasy Rats and Mice *Nesomyidae***Eastern Red Forest Rat***Nesomys rufus*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 1.11.

Reptiles (3 in total: 3 seen)**Status codes:** E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced**IUCN codes:** CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient**Chameleons *Chamaeleonidae*****Panther Chameleon***Furcifer pardalis*

(1) 1 Farankaraina Forest 29.10.

Geckos *Gekkonidae***Striped Day Gecko***Phelsuma lineata*

(3) Up to 1 Masoala NP 30-1.11.

Boas *Boidae***Madagascar Tree Boa***Sanzinia madagascariensis volontany*

(1) 1 Masoala NP 30.10.

Rockjumper Birding Ltd
 River View Commercial Centre
 Black River
 Mauritius

Tel: (USA & Canada) toll-free: 1-888-990-5552
Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com
Alternative email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com