



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Highlights I

1st to 15th October 2010 (15 days)

Trip Report



Trip report compiled by tour leader Glen Valentine

Top 10 Birds as voted by the tour participants:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1) Subdesert Mesite | 6) Velvit Asity |
| 2) Short-legged Ground Roller | 7) Bernier's Vanga |
| 3) Pitta-like Ground Roller | 8) Sickle-billed Vanga |
| 4) Long-tailed Ground Roller | 9) Baillon's Crake |
| 5) Scaly Ground Roller | 10) Red Fody |



Tour Summary

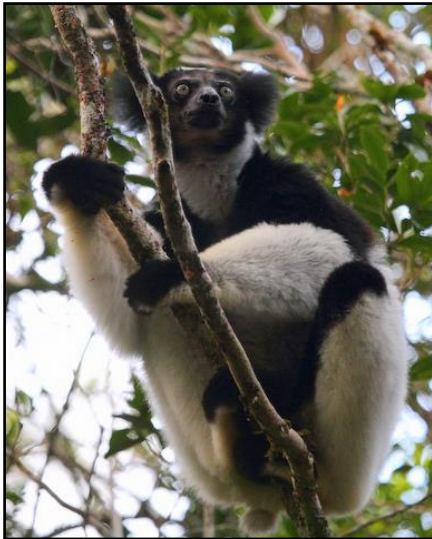
Madagascar conjures up all sorts of wonderful images of dancing lemurs, misty rainforests with the echoing wails of Indri, colourful, endemic birds and gigantic baobabs...Well, the Island really is all that and much more! Madagascar never disappoints in producing a myriad of incredibly memorable sights and sounds. This two week Rockjumper Highlights tour to one of the world's biodiversity wonderlands proved a great success once again in yielding a plethora of highly sought-after endemic birds, lemurs and reptiles.

Our Highlights tour of Madagascar began in the country's capital where we soaked in the distinct scenery comprised mainly of rice-paddies, narrow, winding streets with old French vehicles chugging along, double-storey mud houses and busy street stores selling everything from Chinese clothes to unrefrigerated meat, fruit and vegetables.

We were soon heading out to the Capital's finest birding site, Lake Alarobia, a small wetland that supports a large number of freshwater wetland birds. The lake literally teems with Red-billed Teals and White-faced Whistling Ducks, Dimorphic Egrets, Squacco and Black Herons. The Lake's best bird, however, is the Malagasy Pond Heron, a breeding endemic to the Island that turns a brilliant, pure white with a pastel blue bill and bright pink legs in breeding plumage. We found several birds in



immaculate plumage during our visit and we also picked up some lovely introductory endemics, including Malagasy Kingfisher, Malagasy Coucal, Malagasy Swift and Malagasy Brush Warbler.



We were very eager though to get to the Country's core birding and mammal sites, and soon we were heading off east over the central plateau towards the Eastern Rainforest where we would spend four full days getting to grips with the area's avian and mammalian gems. Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park were our two focal points and these two localities produced a cacophony of mouth-watering and extremely memorable sightings. Mantadia is one of the Island's best localities to try and find some of Madagascar's most sought-after endemics, which include the four rainforest-dwelling ground rollers. We managed to find Scaly, Pitta-like and Short-legged Ground Rollers during our time here, but the difficult Rufous-headed Ground Roller was not yet calling in full swing and unfortunately we didn't manage to see this elusive species this time around. Scaly proved to be amazingly easy this year as a pair was building a nest during our visit, and we were

rewarded with unbeatable views of this scarce and intricately patterned endemic. Pitta-like also showed very well on several occasions, whereas Short-legged really gave us a work-out – while walking along the maze of flat trails in Mantadia we heard one calling deep inside the forest. We knew that we needed to try and find this bird when we had the opportunity so off we went...off the trail and straight through the rainforest. Eventually the path crossed a small stream but this did not deter us from the chase; our local guide built a make-shift bridge from falling logs and one by one we crossed the stream. Soon we were clambering uphill over vines and fallen branches still intent on tracking the birds poop poop call. Finally we got to the area where the bird was calling and there it was, sitting only a few meters away just above eye level in all its glory! What an amazing and extremely memorable experience with one of Madagascar star avian gems!

Our time in the Eastern Rainforest also yielded a great deal of other very special sightings. While traversing the trails we found a host of shy understory skulkers, including Madagascar Wood Rail, Madagascar Flufftail, exquisite Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Red-fronted Coua, confiding Crossley's Babbler, White-throated Oxylabes, stunning Velvit Asity, Long-billed Berniera and Spectacled Tetraka. We also spent a good amount of time searching through mixed flocks and came up with some great birds like the vibrant Blue Coua, Common Sunbird-Asity, Red-tailed, White-headed, the often elusive Nuthatch, Chabert's, Blue and



Tylas Vangas, Dark Newtonia, Ward's Flycatcher and Madagascar Cuckooshrike among others. Lemurs abound in the rainforest reserves of Perinet and Mantadia and we were treated to many close and intimate encounters with these wonderful mammals. Diademed Sifakas and Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs were located in Perinet, while the beautiful Red-bellied Lemur was only found in Mantadia.



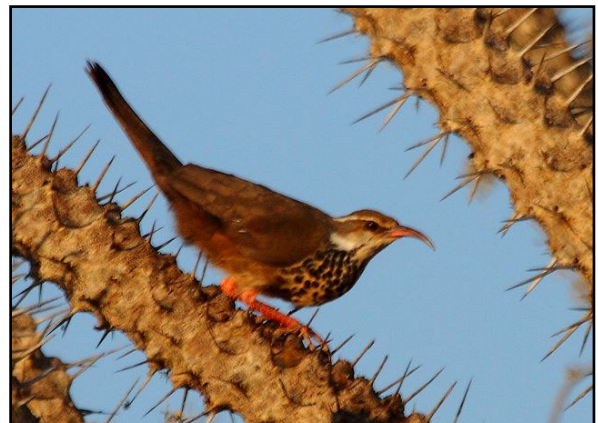
The awesome Indri, one of Madagascar's most spectacular and charismatic lemurs, was seen very well on several occasions in both Perinet and Mantadia Reserves. Night walks near the entrance of Perinet Special Reserve proved very rewarding and yielded some good sightings of Rainforest Scops and Madagascar Owls, Goodman's Mouse and Furry-eared Dwarf Lemurs, Eastern Avahi as well as Nose-horned and Band-bellied Chameleons. Other great birds that were found during our time here included



Madagascar Ibis on the night roost, Madagascar and White-throated Rails, the elusive Henst's Goshawk, outstandingly patterned Collared Nightjar and bizarre Cuckoo Roller. One of the most remarkable sightings of the entire trip came in the form of a spectacular female Bernier's Vanga that showed incredibly well for a prolonged period in Perinet Special Reserve! In fact, we ended up walking away from this very rare and inexplicably elusive vanga! This species is only known to occur in the lowland forests on and around the Masoala Peninsula in the north-east of the Island where it is little known and seldom-recorded, and our record in Perinet constitutes only the second confirmed sighting

for the reserve! Absolutely incredible!! Having seen a vast array of very special creatures during our time in the Eastern Rainforest, most of which are endemic, it was time to leave the wonderful haunts of Perinet and Mantadia and make our way down south to the coastal town of Fort Dauphin and inland towards the privately owned lemur reserve of Berenty. This world renowned sanctuary was our base for the next two nights.

Berenty lies 80 km inland and protects a small patch of riparian woodland along the Mandrare River as well as a few very small patches of native Spiny Forest. Berenty is THE place to see Ring-tailed Lemurs as well as the famous dancing Verreaux's Sifakas! Both abound here and we were permanently entertained by these endearing creatures. We were also lucky to find several sifakas doing their bipedal locomotion across the open areas near the lodgings, a very memorable experience indeed. Brown Lemurs, previously introduced here, are commonly encountered throughout the Reserve and we picked up White-footed Sportive Lemur and the minute Grey-brown Mouse Lemur on night walks in the spiny forest. Several very special avian endemics are also to be found here, including the brightly-coloured Giant Coua, Torotoroka Scops and White-browed Owls, Frances's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Madagascar Sandgrouse and Madagascar Buttonquail, all of which we found easily and obtained brilliant views. Other more common but no less beautiful species that were seen included the noisy Crested Drongo, dazzling Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, striking Crested Coua, showy Madagascar Hoopoe, Grey-headed Lovebird and Sakalava Weaver. Our drive back to Fort Dauphin was also highly rewarding as we picked up some good quality birds like Banded Kestrel, Lafresnaye's Vanga and Archbold's Newtonia, among the more common and widespread species of the didierea-clad Spiny Forest.



Leaving the south-east we took a short flight to the south-western corner of the Island and boarded our 4x4 vehicles to Ifaty, a small fishing village just north of Tulear. This was our base from where we explored this interesting and tantalizing area. Our prime focus here was the unique Spiny Forest with its monstrous baobabs, didiereas and many other endemic succulents. Two exceptionally localized species, Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert Mesite, share their entire world distribution in this tiny region of Madagascar. Besides these two extremely desirable avian specialties, there are also loads of other great birds to see in this unique, endemic habitat. We picked up all our target birds, namely Thamnornis, Running Coua, Sickle-billed Vanga and the Mesite and Ground Roller in quick succession, as well as enjoying the multitude of other great birds, including Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, Chabert's Vanga and Archbold's Newtonia. The afternoon was spent exploring the area's grasslands, wetlands and mudflats picking up further good species like Madagascar Plover, Baillon's Crake and Red Fody, of which we had a number of stunning males in full breeding plumage. Another very unique habitat of significant interest that supports two of the world's most range-restricted endemics is the Coral Rag Scrub near Tulear, and we spent a morning birding this area for our targets, Verreaux's Coua and the recently described Red-shouldered Vanga. Both species were found relatively quickly and co-operated brilliantly for superb views.



Our final leg of the trip saw us heading out on a speedboat to the offshore island of Nosy Ve where a sizable population of Red-tailed Tropicbird breeds. These exquisite birds were easily seen and we were treated to fabulous, close-up views in flight and on the ground. After a short snorkelling session and a close flyby of a small flock of Crab-Plovers we made our way to the mainland opposite the island for a delicious seafood lunch. We also took some time out to look for the very local Littoral Rock Thrush, a pair of which were easily found and showed extremely well. We headed back to Tulear in the late afternoon where we

spent our last night in the south-west of the Island. The next day we then flew back to Tana for our final night in the country, where we enjoyed a lovely last dinner together and rested up before our international flights home.

Photo credits (in order of appearance): Short-legged Ground Roller, Bernier's Vanga, Indri, Blue Vanga, Verreaux's Sifaka, Subdesert Mesite and Red-tailed Tropicbird. All photographs taken by Glen Valentine on Rockjumper's Madagascar Highlights I 2010 tour.

Annotated List of Birds

153 species recorded (151 seen and 2 heard only)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List of Birds of the World Recommended English Names V2.5. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Please cite the authors: Gill, F. and Wright, M. 2006 when you use their publication.

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 to the island was recorded at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

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

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

This widespread species was seen in good numbers at Lac Alarobia.

Knob-billed (Comb) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Several birds were seen at Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Meller's Duck (E)

Anas melleri

We were exceptionally lucky to find a pair of these scarce, endemic ducks at a small pond in Mantadia NP.

Red-billed Teal (Duck)

Anas erythrorhyncha

We recorded this duck at most freshwater wetlands on our route.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

Fair numbers were encountered at the wetlands south of Ifaty.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Good numbers were found at the wetlands south of Ifaty.

Madagascar Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

A pair of birds was sighted at a small forest pond in the Mantadia NP.

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

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

Greater Flamingo

Phoenicopterus roseus

A scarce species in Madagascar; a small flock was found at the wetlands south of Ifaty.

Tropicbirds Phaethontidae

Red-tailed Tropicbird

Phaethon rubricauda

We were treated to close and intimate encounters with these very special and graceful birds on the island of Nosy Ve.

White-tailed Tropicbird

Phaethon aethereus



A single bird made an appearance at the island of Nosy Ve. A rare bird in Madagascar and an unexpected find indeed!

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

Madagascar (Crested) Ibis (E)

Plegadis falcinellus

We were extremely lucky to find a pair of these attractive birds on a night roost in the Perinet area.

Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

This extremely widespread species was encountered in the Tana area.

Striated Heron

Butorides striatus

Two separate encounters were had of this species at the edge of mangroves in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

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

Our best views of this bird were at Lac Alarobia where many birds in full breeding plumage were seen.

Malagasy Pond Heron (BE) (V)

Ardeola idea

A striking species in breeding plumage, it was seen at Lac Alarobia and en route to Berenty.

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

[Western] Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Common throughout the tour and recorded on most days.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

This species was seen on the coastal mudflats of the south-west.

Humblot's Heron (E) (V)

Ardea humbloti

Two of these massive, dark herons were found on the mudflats south of Ifaty.

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

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Small numbers were encountered in the Perinet/Mantadia area.

[Western] Great Egret

Ardea alba

Scattered records of this elegant egret were had throughout the tour.

Black Heron

Egretta ardesiaca

Lac Alarobia and the scattered wetlands in the south held sightings of this charismatic species.

Dimorphic (Western Reef) Egret

Egretta dimorpha

Fairly common and widespread throughout Madagascar with peak numbers 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.

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop

Scopus umbretta

Sightings of this charismatic species were had to the east of Tana and in the south-east of the island.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (E)

Aviceda madagascariensis



This extremely elusive endemic raptor was seen very well in Mantadia NP and in Berenty Reserve with another sighting in flight at Perinet.

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite

Milvus migrans

A fairly common bird during the tour, we observed this species in Tana as well as in the south of the island.

NOTE: This species is sometimes split into two, Yellow-billed and Black Kite. We observed the Yellow-billed form throughout Madagascar. This split is currently not recognized by Clements or the IOC.

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)

Polyboroides radiatus

We had an amazing encounter with three of these attractive raptors in the Ifaty area.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)

Accipiter francesii

We enjoyed sightings of this small raptor at Mantadia NP and at Berenty Lemur Reserve.

Henst's Goshawk

Accipiter henstii

A pair of these large raptors was seen soaring and calling above the forest in Mantadia NP.

Madagascar Buzzard (E)

Buteo brachypterus

This commonly recorded raptor was seen on many occasions throughout the tour.

Falcons Falconidae

Malagasy (Madagascar) Kestrel (NE)

Falco newtoni

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

Banded Kestrel (E)

Falco zoniventris

A very scarce and little-recorded endemic that we found in the spiny forest en route to Berenty.

Mesites Mesitornithidae

Subdesert Mesite (E) (V)

Monias benschi

We enjoyed fabulous views of a male perched up in the spiny forest near Ifaty.

Flufftails Sarothruridae

Madagascar Flufftail (E)

Sarothrura insularis

After hearing this secretive species on many occasions we finally managed to coax one out as it scurried across a gap in the undergrowth in Mantadia NP.

Rails & Gallinules Rallidae

Madagascar Wood Rail (E)

Canirallus kioloides

We heard this secretive species on a few occasions in the eastern rainforest and finally bumped into a singleton that scampered across a trail in Perinet.

Madagascar Rail (E)

Rallus madagascariensis

We had reasonably good views of this wetland species en route to Mantadia NP.

White-throated Rail (E)

Dryolimnas cuvieri

This species was seen very well 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. This is accepted by the IOC.

Baillon's Crake

Porzana pusilla

After much effort we were eventually rewarded with views of this secretive crake at a wetland south of Ifaty.



Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Lac Alarobia and waterbodies around Perinet produced views of this common bird.

Red-knobbed Coot

Fulica cristata

We saw a singleton at a wetland south of Ifaty. This species is surprisingly scarce in Madagascar.

Buttonquails Turnicidae

Madagascar Buttonquail (E)

Turnix nigricollis

Brilliant views were had of this attractive species in Berenty Lemur Reserve as well as near Ifaty.

Crab-Plover Dromadidae

Crab-plover

Dromas ardeola

A total of approximately 15 birds few past us while slowly making our way by boat around Nosy Ve.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Recorded at wetlands in the south-western part of the island.

Plovers Charadriidae

Grey (Black-bellied) Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

The coastal mudflats around Tulear, Ifaty and Nosy Vé yielded views of this migrant species.

Common Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

This attractive wader was encountered on many occasions at wetlands in the south of the island.

Madagascar Plover (E) (NT)

Charadrius thoracicus

A pair of these localized birds was found near Ifaty in south-western Madagascar. This endemic is seriously threatened by habitat loss due to development and human encroachment.

Kittlitz's Plover

Charadrius pecuarius

Seen at wetlands in the south-west of the island with particularly large numbers being found at wetlands south of Ifaty.

White-fronted Plover

Charadrius marginatus

These busy little shorebirds were found on coastal mudflats in the south-west of the island.

Lesser Sand Plover

Charadrius mongolus

We found two birds feeding on mudflats south of Ifaty.

Greater Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii

Small numbers of these plovers were spotted on the mudflats at the Tulear Harbor.

Sandpipers & Snipes Scolopacidae

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Large numbers of these widespread waders were encountered on the mudflats near Tulear and Ifaty.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Good numbers were recorded in the south of the island.

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus cinereus

Small numbers were seen on mudflats near Ifaty and at the Tulear Harbor.

Common Sandpiper

Tringa hypoleucos

Individuals and pairs were seen at scattered waterbodies throughout the trip.



Ruddy Turnstone*Arenaria interpres*

Good numbers of this attractive shorebird were found in south-west Madagascar.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

Small numbers of these tiny shorebirds were encountered on mudflats in the south-west of the island.

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

The tidal flats in the Ifaty and Toliara areas held multiple sightings of this abundant shorebird.

Coursers & Pratincoles Glareolidae**Madagascar Pratincole (BE)***Glareola ocularis*

We were thrilled to find a single bird at the Mangoro river en route from Perinet to Tana where we enjoyed wonderful scope views of this species.

Gulls & Terns Laridae**Caspian Tern***Sterna caspia*

A single bird was seen in flight near Ifaty.

Swift (Great Crested) Tern*Sterna bergii*

Small numbers were recorded at Nosy Vé.

Lesser Crested Tern*Sterna bengalensis*

Good numbers were encountered en route to Nosy Vé and at the island itself.

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

Good numbers were encountered en route to Nosy Vé and at the island itself.

Sandgrouse Pteroclididae**Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)***Pterocles personatus*

We enjoyed good flight views of three separate birds at Berenty.

Pigeons & Doves Columbidae**Common (Rock) Pigeon (I)***Columba livia*

These birds were widespread and fairly common in the urban areas throughout the island.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Turtle Dove (NEe)*Streptopelia picturata*

First seen in Perinet Special Reserve it was later recorded on most days in the south of the island.

Namaqua Dove*Oena capensis*

The arid habitats in the south of the island produced daily sightings of this delicate dove.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)*Alectroenas madagascariensis*

We had fairly regular, daily sightings of this beautiful, large pigeon in the eastern rainforest area of Perinet and Mantadia.

Parrots Psittacidae**Grey-headed Lovebird (E)***Agapornis canus*

These lovely little parrots were seen very well on many occasions in the dry south of the island.

[Greater] Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis vasa*

This relatively scarce parrot was seen on a few occasions in the eastern rainforest with further sightings in the Ifaty area.



Lesser Vasa (Black) Parrot (NE) *Coracopsis nigra*

This raucous songster was seen regularly throughout our trip.

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

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

Crested Coua (E) *Coua cristata*

Berenty Lemur Reserve and the Spiny Forest near Ifaty yielded several wonderful sightings of this coua.

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

We found this very local endemic exceptionally quickly and were treated to good views in the coral rag scrub near Tulear.

Blue Coua (E) *Coua caerulea*

This exceptionally beautiful and vivid coua was seen well on several occasions in the Perinet/Mantadia area.

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

This localized endemic was seen extremely well as it fed unperturbed by our presence at the Tulear Arberetum.

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 *Coua reynaudii*

This rainforest species was seen on a single occasion in Mantadia NP where it was also heard several times.

Running Coua (E) *Coua cursor*

This species was encountered once in the spiny forest near Ifaty.

Giant Coua (E) *Coua gigas*

Several of these large and colourful couas were encountered in the riparian woodland in Berenty Reserve.

Red-breasted Coua (E) *Coua serriana*

Unfortunately this rarely seen species was only heard on a single occasion in Mantadia NP.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE) *Cuculus rochii*

One of the most common background calls on the island, we enjoyed views of this species on a few separate occasions.

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

This dry-country owl was seen on the day roost at Berenty.

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

We found this rainforest species on a night walk at Perinet where incredibly close views were obtained. Later on we also found a pair on the day roost 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 superciliaris*

Berenty produced amazing views of this attractive species.

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

Amazing views were enjoyed of this tricky endemic on a night walk near Perinet.



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

This species was seen at scattered sites during the tour.

Collared Nightjar (E) *Caprimulgus enarratus*

This little-known, elusive and exceptionally beautiful endemic nightjar was seen at close quarters on the day roost in Perinet Special Reserve.

Swifts Apodidae**Madagascar (Malagasy) Spinetail (NE)** *Zoonavena grandidieri*

Recorded daily over the eastern rainforest at Perinet/Mantadia.

African Palm Swift (e) *Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*

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

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

A small flock of these large swifts were seen en route from Fort Dauphin to Berenty.

Malagasy [Black] Swift (NE) *Apus balstoni*

Recorded in small numbers in the Tana, Berenty and Ifaty areas.

*NOTE: These Malagasy birds are usually considered a species distinct from the African Black Swift (A. barbatus), however no dedicated research has been done.***Little Swift** *Apus affinis*

A single bird was seen in flight while driving through Tana.

Cuckoo-Roller Leptosomidae**Cuckoo Roller (NE)** *Leptosomus discolor*

Great views were had of this bizarre endemic species in the Perinet/Mantadia region.

*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.***Ground Rollers Brachypteraciidae****Short-legged Ground Roller (E) (V)** *Brachypteracias leptosomus*After clambering off-trail through the rainforest, over a river and up a steep, slippery slope while tracking a calling bird we were rewarded with a superb sighting of this fabulous species! No wonder it was rated the 2nd best bird of the trip! Well done team, you really deserved this one!**Scaly Ground Roller (E) (V)** *Brachypteracias squamigera*

We were exceptionally fortunate to have a pair of these immaculate ground rollers nesting in Mantadia NP, which afforded us with unbeatable and prolonged views.

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

Several excellent views were enjoyed of this stunning forest-dweller.

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

This species is notoriously tough to find when not calling and we only heard a single bird briefly in a steep ravine in Mantadia NP.

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

The Spiny Forest near Ifaty afforded us great views of this mega-endemic. A fantastic looking bird that is incredibly localized!



Kingfishers Alcedinidae**Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)***Ispidina madagascariensis*

Mantadia NP produced a good sighting of this glowing gem as did Perinet Special Reserve.

Malagasy Kingfisher (NE)*Alcedo vintsioides*

Another very attractive species that was seen on many separate occasions at waterbodies throughout the island.

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

These noisy, gregarious and handsome birds were seen on most days of the tour with particularly good, close encounters in the south-west of the country.

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

Two fantastic pairs were found during our time at Berenty.

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 good sightings of both male and female birds in the Eastern Rainforest sites of Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

[Common] Sunbird-Asity (E)*Neodrepanis coruscans*

A pair responded to song playback and showed briefly on one of the ridges in Mantadia NP.

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

Good views of several birds were had in the forests of Perinet and Mantadia in eastern Madagascar.

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

Searching the coral rag scrub near Tulear produced amazingly close views of a pair of these extremely range-restricted and recently discovered vangas.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)*Vanga curvirostris*

First seen at Perinet, this species was later observed in Berenty Lemur Reserve.

Bernier's Vanga (E)*Oriolia bernieri*

We were absolutely blown away to find a female of this inexplicably rare and elusive vanga in Perinet Special Reserve where we had prolonged, close-up, walk-away views of this sought-after mega-endemic. This species is a strict lowland rainforest specialist and should not be found at Perinet. Its previous occurrence here has been in the form of a single female observed several years ago and our record represents the 2nd confirmed record of this species for Perinet.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*

This large, noisy vanga was recorded on two separate occasions in the Spiny Forest en route to Berenty.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)*Falcolea palliata*

One of the favorite birds of the trip, we observed a small family group in the spiny forest near Ifaty. These bizarre birds have long scimitar-like bills and a strange cat-like call.

White-headed Vanga (E)*Artamella viridis*

This species was first observed in the eastern rainforest with further encounters in the spiny forest near Ifaty.

Chabert[’s] Vanga (E) *Leptopterus chabert*

We regularly recorded this species in the eastern rainforest with further views in the south-west.

Blue Vanga (NE) *Cyanolanius madagascarensis*

This brilliantly blue and white vanga was seen on several occasions in the eastern rainforest at Perinet and Mantadia.

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.

Tylas Vanga (E) *Tylas eduardi*

This forest-dwelling vanga was seen on a few occasions in the Perinet and Mantadia areas.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (E) *Hypositta corallirostris*

We encountered this often tricky-to-find species on several occasions in the forests at Perinet and Mantadia.

Dark Newtonia (E) *Newtonia amphichroa*

This species was seen once in Mantadia NP.

Common Newtonia (E) *Newtonia brunneicauda*

A common and widespread endemic that was encountered regularly at most sites on tour.

Archbold’s Newtonia (E) *Newtonia archboldi*

A pair of these spiny forest dwellers were encountered en route from Berenty with further views being enjoyed near Ifaty.

Ward’s Flycatcher (E) *Pseudobias wardi*

This attractive, black-and-white vanga was viewed in the forests of Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Crossley’s Babbler (E) *Mystacornis crossleyi*

Truly one of Madagascar’s gorgeous endemic birds, its liquid song was heard in the eastern rainforest and we were treated to point blank views of a male carrying nesting material on the forest floor in Mantadia NP.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae

Madagascar (Ashy) Cuckooshrike (E) *Coracina cinerea*

Small numbers were recorded in Mantadia NP and Perinet Special Reserve.

Drongos Dicruridae

Crested Drongo (NE) *Dicrurus forficatus*

This charismatic bird was observed in many different habitats on most days of the tour.

Monarchs Monarchidae

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE) *Terpsiphone mutata*

We enjoyed multiple sightings of all the various different colour morphs of this beautiful species during the trip.

Crows & Jays Corvidae



Pied Crow*Corvus albus*

A Common and widespread species that was recorded daily during the southern leg of the tour.

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

Good numbers were observed in arid areas in the south of Madagascar.

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

Another ubiquitous species that we found on almost every day of the tour.

Swallows & Martins Hirundinidae**Mascarene Martin (BE)***Phedina borbonica*

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

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

A single bird was seen flying over the wetlands south of Ifaty.

Reed Warblers & Allies Megaluridae**Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE)***Nesillas typica*

Seen and heard daily in the Eastern Rainforest. Our first sighting, however, was at Lake Alarobia in Tana.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E)*Nesillas lantzii*

We found this species commonly in dry thickets in the south-west of the country.

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*

This widespread and ubiquitous endemic was first encountered at Lake Alarobia with further views at wetlands in the Mantadia and Ifaty areas.

Malagasy Warblers Bernieridae**White-throated Oxylabes (E)***Oxylabes madagascariensis*

This species can be quite skulking and elusive but we managed to obtain good views of several birds during our time in the eastern rainforest.

Long-billed Bernieria (Greenbul) (E)*Bernieria madagascariensis*

We had several sightings in the eastern rainforest.

Thamnornis (Warbler) (E)*Thamnornis chloropetoides*

This localized spiny forest specialty was seen well near Ifaty.

Spectacled Tetraka (Greenbul) (E)*Xanthomixis zosterops*

The rainforest sites of Perinet & Mantadia yielded several views of this understory dweller.

Grey-crowned Tetraka (Greenbul) (E)*Xanthomixis cinereiceps*

Some of the group saw this scarce species in Mantadia NP.

Rand's Warbler (E)*Randia pseudozosterops*

Good, scope views were obtained of this species in Mantadia NP.



Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae**Common Jery (E)** *Neomixis tenella*

This very common species was seen at most localities.

Green Jery (E) *Neomixis viridis*

We saw this uncommon endemic on one occasion on our first afternoon in Perinet.

Stripe-throated Jery (E) *Neomixis striatigula*

We found good numbers of this common songster in the east of Madagascar.

Madagascar Cisticola (NE) *Cisticola cherinus*

This species was commonly seen and heard in suitable habitat during the tour.

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

A commonly encountered species in the east of the country.

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

This introduced species was unfortunately abundant in open habitats throughout the island.

Madagascar Starling (E) *Hartlaubius aurata*

We located this relatively scarce species on a few occasions in the Perinet and Mantadia region of Eastern Madagascar.

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

This bold and confiding species was observed on most days during the tour.

[Madagascar] Stonechat (E) *Saxicola sibilla*

We encountered this recently split endemic species daily in open habitats in the east of the country.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus imerinus*

A pair of these handsome birds were seen at close range in the St. Augustin area of the south-west.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae**Souimanga Sunbird (NE)** *Cinnyris sovimanga*

One of Madagascar's most common species, this stunning sunbird was seen almost daily.

Malagasy (Madagascar) Green Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris notatus*

Another attractive sunbird that was seen on several occasions in the east and south-west of the island.

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

We regularly encountered this forest species during our forays into the forests at Perinet and Mantadia.

Sakalava Weaver (E) *Ploceus sakalava*

This gregarious weaver was seen almost daily in the arid southern region of the island.

(Madagascar) Red Fody (E) *Foudia madagascariensis*

This is one of Madagascar's most widespread species and we were lucky to find several stunning males in full breeding plumage in the south-west of the country.



Waxbills, Munias & Allies Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (Munia) (E) *Lemuresthes nana*
Several small flocks were found in the Perinet/Mantadia area and in Tana.

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail (E) *Motacilla flaviventris*
An attractive endemic, it was found throughout the first half of the tour.

Annotated list of Mammals**17 species seen**

Garbutt, N. (1999) *Mammals of Madagascar* with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier *et al* (2006) *Lemurs of Madagascar*.

Old World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae

Madagascar Flying Fox *Pteropus rufus*
100+ of these massive bats were observed at their day roost in the Gallery Forest at Berenty.

Tenrecs & Otter Shrews Tenrecidae

Lowland Streaked Tenrec *Hemicentetes semispinosus*
Some of was lucky enough to encounter this tiny ground-dwelling mammal in Mantadia NP.

Old World Rats & Mice Muridae

Black Rat *Rattus rattus*
Several were found scurrying around the harbor at Tulear.

Mouse and Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae

Grey-Brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*
This delightful species was seen on the night-walk in the Spiny Forest at Berenty.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus lehilahytsara*
We were rewarded with a very intimate encounter of this recently described and extremely localized lemur on a night-walk near Perinet.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*
Several of these extremely range-restricted lemurs were seen on night walks near Perinet.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

Petter's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur petteri*
A sportive lemur was seen during the day near Ifaty and almost definitely represents this newly described species. However, according to *Mammals of Madagascar* by Garbutt, neither *petteri* nor *leucopus* should occur there. More work obviously needs to be done on Madagascar's lemurs.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*
We recorded this spritely, nocturnal lemur in the Gallery and Spiny Forest at Berenty Lemur Reserve.



“True” Lemurs Lemuridae**Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur***Haplemur griseus griseus*

Small groups of these endearing lemurs were seen on several occasions during our visits to Mantadia and Perinet Reserves.

Ring-tailed Lemur*Lemur catta*

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

Red-bellied Lemur*Eulemur rubriventer*

We enjoyed close encounters with this beautiful lemur in Mantadia NP.

Common Brown Lemur*Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

These lemurs were seen at the forest-edge near Perinet Special Reserve.

Brown Lemur*Eulemur fulvus*

Brown Lemurs made up of hybrid Common and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs were commonly seen in Berenty Lemur Reserve. These species were introduced there some time ago and are not native to the area.

Avahis, Sifakas and Indri Indriidae**Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur)***Avahi laniger*

One was seen on a day roost in Perinet with a further two encountered on a night walk near Perinet.

Diademed Sifaka*Propithecus diadema diadema*

This rather attractive sifaka was spotted during excursions in Perinet Special Reserve.

Verreaux's Sifaka*Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

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

Indri*Indri indri*

Our first sighting was of a group in Mantadia NP where we also heard many troops during our time there. We were further treated to amazingly intimate views of these stunning creatures in Perinet Special Reserve.

Annotated list of Amphibians and Reptiles**10 species seen**

Glaw, F. & Vences, M. (1994) *A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. Insect names were derived from various sources.

“True” Frogs Ranidae*Boophis grandidieri*

This species was seen on a night walk near Perinet in the eastern rainforest.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae**Nose-horned Chameleon***Calumma nasuta*

This miniscule chameleon was found on a night walk near Perinet.

Band-bellied Chameleon*Calumma gastrotaenia*

Night walks near Perinet produced views of this tiny reptile.

Warty Chameleon

Furcifer verrucosus

This large, aggressive chameleon was seen on a few occasions in the Berenty area.

Iguanas Iguanidae

Three-eyed Lizard

Chalarodon madagascariensis

This attractive reptile was seen in the arid, sandy areas of Berenty and the spiny forest near Ifaty.

Geckos Gekkonidae

Mercator Tropical House Gecko

Hemidactylus mercatorius

This species was seen at a few lodgings around the country.

Lineated Day Gecko

Phelsuma lineata

These beautiful day geckos were commonly found in the Mantadia/Perinet area.

Pale-bellied Day Gecko

Phelsuma leiogastor

We found this reptile at our hotel in Tulear.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae

Gravenhorst's Skink

Mabuya gravenhorstii

This species was seen on a few occasions in Mantadia NP.

Elegant Skink

Mabuya elegans

This attractive skink was seen at a few scattered localities during the tour.

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