



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Madagascar Highlights

24th October to 7th November 2008 (14 days)



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Tour Summary

Our Madagascar Highlights adventure began in the bustling capital, Antananarivo. We enjoyed observing daily life on the streets during busy morning traffic until we arrived at Tsimbazaza Zoo and Gardens. Here we were treated to a very active breeding colony of herons and egrets including spectacularly adorned Dimorphic Egrets of both colour morphs. A single Madagascar Grebe was a treat, a scarce and declining endemic that was only seen on this day of the tour (another found at Lac Alarobia in the afternoon.) The new night house at the zoo provided us a wonderful encounter with several Aye-aye, we arrived just at feeding time and were fascinated by their use of their elongated skeletal middle finger. Our Lac Alarobia excursion provided us opportunity to watch another even larger egret and heron colony that included dancing Squacco and Madagascar Pond Herons, their spectacular nuptial plumage being displayed to best advantage. Hundreds of waterfowl included some

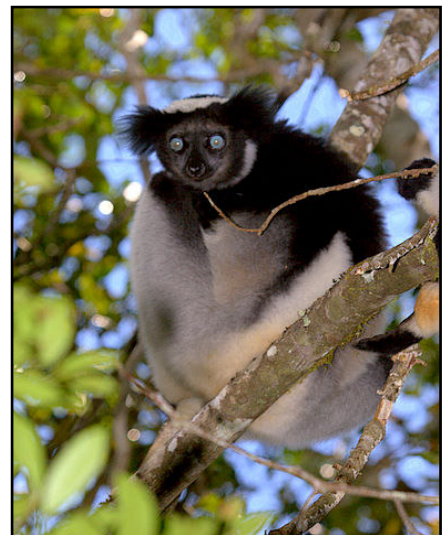
impressive Knob-billed Ducks. Other birds included our debut endemics such as Malagasy Kingfisher, Madagascar Coucal, Madagascar Swift and Common Jery. A Madagascar Nightjar at our hotel ended off a great first day.



The next day, our exploration of Madagascar began in earnest as we headed east across the Haux Plateau to the fabled rainforests of Perinet-Mantadia. Once we arrived, our bird list began growing in leaps and bounds and we added numerous vangas, both endemic sunbirds, a wonderful male France's Sparrowhawk and Cuckoo-Roller to our lifelists. The highlight was undoubtedly a stunning Madagascar (Crested) Ibis which allowed extended scope views. We thought this would be our only sighting of this tricky, crepuscular species until our final day when Jean-Marc spotted another bird on a nest, incredible indeed! The

next four days had us exploring the trails through Perinet Special Reserve and the wonderful primary forests of Mantadia as well as surrounding wetlands. We did incredibly well, scoring nearly every single available bird and lemur species. Highlights included excellent views of all four rainforest ground-rollers (Rufous-headed gave us the toughest time and after numerous attempts, we had this stunner almost at our feet!), a huge and noisy Henst's Goshawk mobbing a Madagascar Buzzard, superb views of 4 tricky rallids – Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Wood Rail and the stunning White-throated Rail, the toughest and most beautiful of the couas, Red-breasted showed uncharacteristically well, both Rainforest Scops and Madagascar (Long-eared) Owls and the rare Collared Nightjar were located on day roosts, no less than four Madagascar Pygmy Kingfishers during a single day!, the stunning Velvet Asity, Grey Emutail performing its strange aerial display flight and the beautiful White-throated Oxylabes. For those who "collect" blue birds, Madagascar's rainforests certainly have some wonderful treats and we enjoyed superb views of Blue Coua and Madagascar Blue Pigeon right from our lodge, as well as the brilliant Blue Vanga and the more subtle and difficult Nuthatch Vanga (Coral-billed Nuthatch).

Lemurs abounded and we enjoyed no less than 9 species of these primitive primates, all of them seen extremely well, from the diminutive and recently described Goodman's Mouse Lemur to the massive Indri. The latter was watched with fascination as a family performed an impressive territorial howl, an experience that will remain with us the rest of our lives. We are particularly lucky to obtain superb views of Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur, Red-bellied Lemur and the beautiful Diademed Sifaka. On the herp front, the wetter than usual weather induced higher than normal activity levels and we found a plethora of reptiles and amphibians, the highlights being the rare and beautiful Green Burrowing Frog and a Fat-tailed Gecko – both lifers for Adam on this his 16th Madagascar tour. We found numerous chameleons including some huge Parson's specimens down to a tiny Stump-tailed Chameleon and several snakes including a stunning Madagascar Tree Boa.



Thereafter we headed back to Tana, where the group met up with Cuan for the southern section of the tour. In contrast to the higher altitude Eastern Rainforest of the island, the south of Madagascar is arid, hot and humid. This was immediately apparent upon arrival in the coastal town of Tuléar. Despite these



oppressive conditions, we struck out in 4x4 vehicles on a very sandy track for the Spiny Forest near Ifaty. Our explorations of this botanical wonderland were rewarded with excellent sightings of Banded Kestrel, the mythical Subdesert Mesite, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Red-capped and Running Couas, the range-restricted Long-tailed Ground Roller, Lafresnaye's and Sickle-billed Vangas, Archbold's Newtonia, Subdesert Brush Warbler and Thamnornis. The wetlands, salt marshes and coastal mudflats were also productive and we encountered

Hottentot Teal, Greater Flamingo, Little Bittern, Malagasy Pond Heron, a female Malagasy Marsh Harrier, a very co-operative Baillon's Crake, and the endemic Madagascar Plover, large numbers of waders and terns, and flocks of the beautiful Grey-headed Lovebird. Back to Tulear, we ventured out into the harsh Coral rag scrub near La Tabla. Here we found both specials – Verreaux's Coua and the stunning Red-shouldered Vanga, while at a roadside wetland we added Greater Painted Snipe. Our outing to Nosy Vé was another highlight during our stay in this region. This island holds a healthy population of the Red-tailed Tropicbird and these elegant birds delighted us as they circled and swooped low overhead. Other notable species recorded on the island, the nearby mainland at Anakao and the boat trip were the endemic Humblot's Heron, White-fronted Plover, Malagasy Black Swift and Littoral Rock Thrush.

Before our flight to Fort Dauphin and visit to Berenty Private Reserve, some of the group made an unscheduled trip to the dry, deciduous Zombitse Forest. This forest holds several species not found on the regular highlights tour and thus the reason for this trip. We were successful in this endeavour and recorded 3 Coquerel's Coua and small flocks of the highly localised endemic Appert's Tetraka, with an added bonus of a Common Tenrec at close quarters. After negotiating the pot-holed road to Berenty, we commenced our search for the area's specials. Our efforts in the gallery forest and small patch of Spiny forest yielded Helmeted Guineafowl, the elusive Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Madagascar Buttonquail, good numbers of Madagascar Sandgrouse, the monstrous Giant Coua, Barn Owl, Totoroka Scops Owl, White-browed Hawk-Owl and Hook-billed Vanga. The birds were not the only creatures on show here, and we were also entertained by the comical Verreaux's Sifaka, the cheeky Ring-tailed Lemur, White-footed Sportive Lemur and the diminutive Grey-brown Mouse Lemur.



Leaving the dry, hot south behind, we headed for the highlands of Tana and our final day in Madagascar. Escaping the hustle-and-bustle of the city we drove out into the north western grasslands, home to our main target, Malagasy Marsh Harrier. After several hours of unsuccessful searching and shortly before making our way back to the city, we eventually spotted the bird. All the frustration of the search faded away as we watched, spell-bound by the effortless quartering of a magnificent male harrier - truly one of the top birds of the tour! Before the last rites of the tour were read, we delved into the arts and crafts market of Tana, bargaining for and buying all forms of gifts and trinkets. Thereafter, it was off to Ivato Airport for final farewells and our departure flights home.

Annotated Checklists of Birds, Mammals and “Herps”

Names and taxonomical order of the bird species list follows that of IOC (International Ornithological congress), Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006; Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press (version 2.0). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>; Garbutt, N. (1999) *Mammals of Madagascar* with recent changes as adopted by Mittermeier *et al.* (2006) *Lemurs of Madagascar*, and, Glaw, F. & Vences, M. (Third Edition - 2007) *A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*.

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

10+ birds were seen daily in Berenty Private Reserve (BPR).

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

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna viduata

We recorded peak numbers of 500+ birds at Lake Alarobia, with further daily sightings at wetlands near Ifaty.

Knob-billed (Comb) Duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

10 of these attractive ducks were found at Lake Alarobia in Antananarivo.

Red-billed Teal

Anas erythrorhyncha

Lake Alarobia yielded large numbers of this species, with 2 more seen near Ifaty.

Hottentot Teal

Anas hottentota

A single was seen at Lake Alarobia and briefly at a wetland area near Ifaty.

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (Dabchick)

Tachybaptus ruficollis

50+ birds were observed at a wetland area near Ifaty.

Madagascar (Little) Grebe (E) (V)

Tachybaptus pelzelni

We found 1 bird at Tsimbazaza Zoo and another at Lake Alarobia.

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*

An uncommon species in Madagascar, it was seen at a wetland near Ifaty.

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae**Madagascar (Crested/White-winged) Ibis (E)** *Lophotibis cristata*

This shy and elusive crepuscular bird was seen on our first evening at Perinet where we were rewarded with superb scope views. On our final day, Jean-Marc discovered another on a nest also in Perinet, what a treat!

Hérons Ardeidae**Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus*

We had excellent scope views of this bird at a wetland site near Ifaty. A total of 7 were seen.

Black-crowned Night-Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

First seen in large numbers at Lake Alarobia, it was later seen at a wetland near Ifaty.

Striated (Green-backed) Heron*Butorides striatus*

It was found in small numbers at scattered wetlands sites 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).

(Common) Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

This widespread species was recorded at Tsimbazaza Zoo, Lake Alarobia and near Ifaty.

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

We encountered 4 of these breeding endemics at Lake Alarobia and another at a wetland near Ifaty.

Some of the Alarobia birds were in full breeding dress and sporting these fabulous plumes in fantastic breeding displays.

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

Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Peak numbers of 1000+ were seen on the first day in Tana, followed by numerous sightings thereafter.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Observed in the Ifaty area and again on the cliffs near St. Augustine.

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

This attractive endemic heron was recorded *en route* to Nosy Vé.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

This species was first sighted near Perinet and later at a wetland to the north-west of Tana.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

Good numbers were seen in the rice paddies around Tana and en route to Perinet with scattered sightings thereafter.

Black Heron*Egretta ardesiaca*

30+ were seen at Lake Alarobia in Tana and 2 more at a roadside wetland near Ifaty.

Dimorphic Egret (NE)*Egretta dimorpha*

Peak numbers were seen at Lake Alarobia and Tsimbazaza Zoo, with a few birds seen at other wetland/coastal areas during the trip. Both the colour morphs were seen at Tsimbazaza and at both sites around Tana, breeding was noted.

NOTE: This species is lumped by Clements with the widespread Little Egret, E. garzetta.

Tropicbirds Phaethontidae**Red-tailed Tropicbird***Phaethon rubricauda*

We enjoyed excellent views of adult and immature birds during our excursion to Nosy Vé,

Hamerkop Scopidae**Hamerkop***Scopus umbretta*

This charismatic species was recorded at roadside rice paddies throughout the tour.

Falcons Falconidae**Malagasy (Newton's) Kestrel (NEe)***Falco newtoni*

It was regularly recorded throughout the tour.

Banded Kestrel (E)*Falco zoniventris*

The Spiny Forest near Mangily yielded outstanding sightings of this sought-after endemic.

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae**Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk***Aviceda madagascariensis*

A single bird was seen exceptionally well in the gallery forest at Berenty.

Black Kite*Milvus migrans*

This species was recorded regularly in the south of the island with peak numbers of 40+ at Berenty.

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.

Malagasy Harrier (NE) (V)*Circus macrosceles*

First seen (a female) between Ifaty and Tulear, then after a thorough search of the grasslands to the north-west of Tana, we enjoyed amazing views of a male bird quartering!

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*

We found 2 of these raptors in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (NE)*Accipiter francesii*

One of our first sightings at Perinet was a male of this small accipiter, it was later seen daily in the gallery forest at Berenty.

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

This huge and seldom seen accipiter was observed at Mantadia attaching the following species and thereafter vocally soaring over the forest, one of our special sightings.

Madagascar Buzzard (E)*Buteo brachypterus*

Small numbers were seen during the first half of the tour at Perinet and Berenty. We were rewarded with some very close quarter views on the roadside near Perinet.

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

The Spiny Forest near Mangily produced a great sighting of this difficult-to-locate species.

Flufftails Sarothruridae**Madagascar Flufftail***Sarothrura insularis*

A male of this fabulous, cute rallid was seen in Mantadia NP and thereafter birds were heard daily in the eastern Rainforests.

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

This skulking forest species was found at Perinet Special Reserve (PSR) where hard work was rewarded by views of the entire group.

Madagascar Rail (E)*Rallus madagascariensis*

After much hard work, a pair of these good-looking endemics were seen at a wetland between Perinet and Mantadia.

White-throated Rail (NE)*Dryolimnas cuvieri*

Superb views of this attractive rallid were obtained in Mantadia and at a wetland near Ifaty.

NOTE: Some authorities consider the nominate Madagascar race of this bird as distinctive from the near-flightless Aldabra Island race, making this another endemic rallid to Madagascar.

Baillon's Crake*Porzana pusilla*

We had incredible, close-up views of this diminutive rallid at a wetland near Ifaty.

Common Moorhen*Gallinula chloropus*

2 birds were seen at Lake Alarobia.

Buttonquails Turnicidae**Madagascar Buttonquail (E)***Turnix nigricollis*

We had good views of this attractive endemic near Ifaty and other sightings at Berenty.

Avocets & Stilts Recurvirostridae**Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

Peak numbers of 30+ birds were seen at roadside wetlands/salt pans en route to Ifaty.

Plovers Charadriidae**Grey (Black-bellied) Plover***Pluvialis squatarola*

Good numbers were seen daily on the tidal mudflats around Tulear and Ifaty.

Common Ringed Plover*Charadrius hiaticula*

The tidal mudflats near Ifaty and at Tulear yielded sightings of this diminutive shorebird.

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

This striking endemic was recorded daily in the Ifaty area and once at a small pan near Tulear.

Kittlitz's Plover*Charadrius pecuarius*

Good numbers were seen daily around the small wetlands in the vicinity of Ifaty and Tulear.

Three-banded Plover*Charadrius tricollaris*

20+ birds were recorded at the coastal wetlands near Tulear.

White-fronted Plover*Charadrius marginatus*

First seen along the shoreline en route to Ifaty, it was then observed in peak numbers of 10 on Nosy Vé.

Greater Sand Plover*Charadrius leschenaultii*

The tidal mudflats near Ifaty and at Tulear harbour yielded this species.

Painted Snipes Rostratulidae**Greater Painted Snipe***Rostratula benghalensis*

We had good views of this beautifully-patterned snipe at a small pan near Tulear.

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

A few of these waders were spotted on the coastal mudflats near Ifaty.

Whimbrel*Numenius phaeopus*

50+ were seen daily on the coastal mudflats near Ifaty and 15 in Tulear harbour.

Common Greenshank*Tringa nebularia*

Good numbers of these common birds were seen daily in the Ifaty, Tulear and Berenty areas.

Common Sandpiper*Tringa hypoleucos*

The rivers en route to Perinet and the wetlands/shoreline near Ifaty held this common migrant species.

Ruddy Turnstone*Arenaria interpres*

Another bird that was found daily in the Ifaty and Tulear areas.

Sanderling*Calidris alba*

Peak numbers of 100+ were scoped on the tidal mudflats south of Ifaty.

Curlew Sandpiper*Calidris ferruginea*

As above, large numbers were recorded on the coastal mudflats around Tulear and Ifaty.

Terns Sternidae**Swift (Great Crested) Tern***Sterna bergii*

We recorded this large tern in the Ifaty area.

NOTE: The Clements common name for this species is Great Crested Tern.

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

First seen along the coast between Ifaty and Tulear, 100+ were then seen at Nosy Vé.

Saunders's Tern*Sterna saundersi*

Only 2 of these diminutive terns were scoped on a sandbank south of Ifaty.

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

A total of 20 birds were observed coming in to drink on the Mandrare River at BPR.

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

This species was commonly recorded in urban areas and near human settlements.

Malagasy Turtle Dove (NEe)*Columba picturata*

Highest numbers of 20+ were encountered on a daily basis at BPR.

Namaqua Dove*Oena capensis*

The dry south of Madagascar yielded numerous sighting of this elegant, long-tailed dove.

Madagascar Green Pigeon (NE)*Treron australis*

3 birds were seen near Mangily and a few more spotted in the gallery forest at BPR.

Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)*Alectroenas madagascariensis*

Small numbers of this gorgeous forest species were observed at Perinet-Mantadia, in particular, we enjoyed several birds feeding on a fruiting tree right on the grounds of our lodge.

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

A large flock of 50+ birds were seen at a wetland south of Ifaty, with further sightings in the Spiny Forest near Mangily and at Berenty.

Greater Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis vasa*

This large, raucous parrot was first recorded at Perinet-Mantadia, it was later seen at Ifaty and Berenty.

Lesser Vasa Parrot (NE)*Coracopsis nigra*

One of the commonest background sounds during our time in the rainforests and up to six were observed daily in the Perinet/Mantadia and Ifaty and Berenty areas.

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

We recorded this species on most days during the tour with our first sighting at Lac Alarobia.

Crested Coua (E)*Coua cristata*

Initially encountered in the Spiny Forest near Mangily, it was then recorded at Berenty in peak numbers of 20+.

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

A localised and uncommon species, it was found in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Blue Coua (E)*Coua caerulea*

The Perinet-Mantadia parks produced daily sightings of this beautiful species. Best views were obtained right from the deck at our lodge!

Red-capped Coua (E)*Coua ruficeps*

Excellent views were had of this bird in the spiny forest at Berenty.

NOTE: This southern, khaki-capped form Green-capped Coua (C. ruficeps olivaceiceps), which we recorded, is considered to be a full species in Sinclair I. and Langrande O. Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands. However, the IOC and Clements still consider this form to be a subspecies of Red-capped Coua.

Red-fronted Coua*Coua reynaudii*

This denizen of the Eastern Rainforests was recorded at Perinet-Mantadia and we were treated to some especially superb views of this attractive bird.

Coquerel's Coua*Coua coquereli*

During an unscheduled trip to Zombitse Forest, we managed to locate 3 of these couas.

Running Coua (E)*Coua cursor*

We had a total of 4 of these gorgeous birds in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

Giant Coua (E)*Coua gigas*

The gallery forest at BPR produced numerous good sightings of this, the largest Coua species.

Red-breasted Coua (E)*Coua serriana*

More often heard than seen, we were fortunate to all see a single bird in Perinet Special Reserve which showed uncharacteristically well. This is arguably the most beautiful and definitely the most difficult of the couas.

Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)*Cuculus rochii*

Individuals were recorded at scattered sites during the tour with our first sighting being scoped views of a singing bird at Mantadia. Another common background sound!

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

1 bird was seen on consecutive days at a roost in the gallery forest of BPR.

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

2 of these beautiful owls were seen on a night walk at Berenty.

Rainforest Scops Owl (NE)*Otus rutilus*

Heard each evening in Perinet, we eventually found a single bird at a day roost in Perinet Special Reserve.

NOTE: The Clements common name for this species is Malagasy Scops-Owl. These Scops Owls have recently been split, based on morphological and vocal differences and habitat preferences.

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

We had unbeatable views of several birds in the gallery forest Berenty.

Madagascar (Long-eared) Owl*Asio madagascariensis*

We were extremely fortunate to stumble onto a day roost of this stunning and seldom encountered owl whilst following a Greenbul flock in Perinet Special Reserve. We were all treated to superb scope views and it was a fitting final bird seen on the eastern rainforest section of our tour.

NOTE: The Clements common name for this species is Madagascar Long-eared Owl.

Nightjars Caprimulgidae

- Madagascar Nightjar (NE)** *Caprimulgus madagascariensis*
 First recorded in Tana, it was then seen in the Perinet-Mantadia areas, and at a day roost near Ifaty.
- Collared Nightjar (E)** *Caprimulgus enarratus*
 Another very special sighting, we had close views of this secretive and little known forest nightjar roosting in a birds-nest fern in Mantadia.

Swifts Apodidae

- Madagascar Spinetail (NE)** *Zoonavena grandidieri*
 We observed this species over the forests of Perinet Special Reserve and at Zombitse Forest.
- African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*
 This elegant swift was recorded around suitable habitat during the first week of the tour.
- Malagasy Black Swift (NE)** *Apus balstoni*
 We recorded this large species in Tana, at the cliffs near St. Augustine and near Zombitse Forest.
 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 colourful bird was seen at Lake Alarobia (where it was an unusual record), over the eastern rainforests and at Berenty.

Ground Rollers Brachypteraciidae

- Short-legged Ground Roller (E) (V)** *Brachypteracias leptosomus*
 1 bird was scoped at close quarters in the rainforest of Mantadia National Park. Arguably the most difficult of the ground rollers.
- Scaly Ground Roller (E) (V)** *Brachypteracias squamigera*
 This attractive ground roller was seen attending a nest in the forest undergrowth of Mantadia NP. We were treated to extended views from a safe distance.
- Pitta-like Ground Roller (E)** *Atelornis pittoides*
 The most common of this family and arguably the most beautiful; we were treated to two sightings in the Mantadia forests, including a calling bird in the scope.
- Rufous-headed Ground Roller (E) (NT)** *Atelornis crossleyi*
 This dazzling bird was found in Perinet Special Reserve after much hard work! We eventually had one walking and calling close to our feet!
- Long-tailed Ground Roller (E) (V)** *Uratelornis chimaera*
 We encountered 1 of these striking and highly range-restricted birds in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

Cuckoo Rollers Leptosomidae

- Cuckoo Roller (E)** *Leptosomus discolor*
 The forests of Perinet-Mantadia and Zombitse yielded sightings of this bizarre bird and we enjoyed their elegant swooping display flights over the forests, accompanied by loud whistling!
 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*

This jewel of a bird was seen at Mantadia National Park; a highlight on any Madagascar tour! An incredible four were seen in a single day.

Malagasy (Diademed/Madagascar Malachite) Kingfisher (NE) *Alcedo vintsioides*

Small numbers observed at a number of wetland sites throughout the tour.

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eater

Merops superciliosus

A few were seen in the eastern rainforests, followed by good numbers in the dry south of the island.

Hoopoes Upupidae

Madagascar Hoopoe (E)

Upupa marginalis

A bizarre species with a strange call, we were treated to excellent views in the latter half of the tour.

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

Asities Philepittidae

Velvet Asity

Philepitta castanea

2 males and 4 females/immatures were notched-up in the forests of Mantadia and Perinet.

Common Sunbird-Asity (E)

Neodrepanis coruscans

A male bird was seen in Mantadia by part of the group and Perinet Special Reserve served up brief views or just calling birds. A truly elusive species that moves with lightning speed!

Vangas Vangidae

Red-tailed Vanga (E)

Calicalicus madagascariensis

This species with its characteristic “wolf-whistle” call was found in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia.

One of the commonest flock species.

Red-shouldered Vanga (E) (V)

Calicalicus rufocarpalis

A pair of these attractive little vangas were observed in the coral rag scrub near La Tabla.

Hook-billed Vanga (E)

Vanga curvirostris

1 bird was seen in the Spiny Forest at Mangily and another at Berenty.

Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)

Xenopirostris xenopirostris

A total of 3 birds were found in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

Sickle-billed Vanga (E)

Falculea palliata

This incredible vanga was seen very well in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

White-headed Vanga (E)

Artamella viridis

This striking species was found in Perinet Special Reserve where we observed both sexes.

Chabert's Vanga (E)

Leptopterus chabert

First seen in Perinet, it was then recorded in the south of Madagascar near Ifaty.

Blue Vanga ([N]E)

Cyanolanius madagascarensis

Several of these stunning birds were found in the forests of Perinet-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

Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP produced sightings of this species.

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

Nuthatch Vanga (Coral-billed Nuthatch) (E)

Hypositta corallirostris

One of the more difficult-to-locate Vangas, we spotted two birds in Perinet Special Reserve.

Dark Newtonia (E)

Newtonia amphichroa

We had views of this secretive species in ridge-top forests at Mantadia.

Common Newtonia (E) *Newtonia brunneicauda*

It was regularly encountered in the Eastern rainforests and the dry south.

Archbold's Newtonia (E) *Newtonia archboldi*

This range-restricted bird to the south of the Island, was observed in the Spiny Forest at Mangily.

Ward's Flycatcher (E) *Pseudobias wardi*

A diminutive flycatcher; it was recorded on numerous occasions in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia, with most numerous sightings right at our lodge near Perinet.

Crossley's Babbler (E) *Mystacornis crossleyi*

A single bird was glimpsed in the undergrowth of Perinet forest.

Cuckooshrikes Campephagedae**Madagascar Cuckooshrike (NE)** *Coracina cinerea*

Small numbers were found in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia, near Ifaty and Berenty.

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

We observed this impressively adorned species throughout the tour including a bird on a nest at Perinet.

Monarchs Monarchidae**Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (NE)** *Terpsiphone mutata*

This stunning species was recorded on numerous occasions during the tour including outstanding views at Berenty Private Reserve. Males of both the black-and-white and orange-and-white morphs were observed.

Crows & Jays Corvidae**Pied Crow** *Corvus albus*

It was frequently recorded in the dry south of the island.

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

A breeding endemic, it was recorded daily in Tana and the Eastern Rainforests.

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Two birds were spotted over rice paddies/wetlands in the Perinet area.

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

It was seen almost daily in the dry south, with peak numbers of 50+ en route to Ifaty.

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

First seen in the Perinet area, it was later observed at other grassland locations including Nosy Vé.

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

Small numbers of this noisy bird were found throughout the tour, first sightings from Lac Alarobia in Tana.

Green Jery (E) *Neomixis viridis*

Singles and pairs were seen in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia.

Stripe-throated Jery (E) *Neomixis striatigula*

This species was recorded at several sites on tour, including Perinet-Mantadia, Ifaty and Berenty.

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Malagasy Bulbul (NE) *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

A ubiquitous species recorded on almost every day of the tour.

Old World Warblers Sylviidae

Grey Emutail (E) *Amphilais seebohmi*

4 of these skulking birds were at a small wetland outside Perinet. The chirruping aerial display flights were appreciated by the group.

Malagasy Brush Warbler (NE) *Nesillas typica*

The dense undergrowth of the forests of Perinet-Mantadia yielded sightings of this skulker.

Subdesert Brush Warbler (E) *Nesillas lantzii*

Small numbers observed in the dry south of the island, with particularly confiding birds at Anakao.

NOTE: Formerly considered conspecific with Malagasy Brush Warbler but vocally distinct and sympatric with that species near Fort Dauphin.

Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E) *Acrocephalus newtoni*

It was recorded at wetlands near Perinet, Ifaty and in the Mangroves at Tulear.

White-throated Oxylabes (E) *Oxylabes madagascariensis*

This secretive understory species was seen in the forests of Perinet and Mantadia. We obtained impressively good views of this skulking species.

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

A flock species, it was encountered at Perinet Special Reserve where we finally had good views.

Cryptic Warbler (E) *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*

A single bird of this recently described species was found at its well known ridge-top call post in Mantadia NP.

Thamnornis (E) *Thamnornis chloropetoides*

Restricted to southern Madagascar, we had good views of 2 birds in the Spiny Forest near Ifaty.

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

The rainforests of Perinet-Mantadia produced sightings of this attractive species.

Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul) (E) *Xanthomixis apperti*

An unscheduled trip to Zombitse Forest yielded fantastic sightings of this sought-after endemic.

Rand's Warbler (E) *Randia pseudozosterops*

Small numbers of this aberrant species were recorded in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia.

White-eyes Zosteropidae

Madagascar White-eye (NE) *Zosterops maderaspatana*

Good numbers of this delightful bird were found in the Eastern Rainforests and in Tana.

Starlings Sturnidae

Madagascar Starling (E) *Hartlaubius aurata*

Individual birds were observed in Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia NP.

Common Myna (I) *Acridotheres tristis*

This introduced species was encountered around urban areas & other human settlements.

Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E) *Copsychus albospecularis*

A striking species, it was observed at most forest/woodland sites throughout the tour.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

Several of these birds were found in the Perinet-Mantadia area and in the highlands of Madagascar.

Littoral Rock Thrush (E) *Pseudocossyphus imerinus*

3 birds were seen extremely well at our lunch stop near Nosy Vé.

Sunbirds Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris souimanga*

The most common sunbird on the island, it was recorded in good numbers during the tour.

Malagasy Green Sunbird (NE) *Cinnyris notatus*

A few of these gorgeous birds were seen in the Perinet-Mantadia areas.

Weavers Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver (E) *Ploceus nelicourvi*

Perinet-Mantadia yielded good views of this attractive forest weaver.

Sakalava Weaver (E) *Ploceus sakalava*

We encountered good numbers of 20+ in the Ifaty area.

Red Fody (E) *Foudia madagascariensis*

First seen in Tana, it was then recorded in the Perinet-Mantadia area and at scattered sites in the south.

Waxbills, Munias & Allies Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin (E) *Lemuresthes nana*

Small family groups were recorded at the forest edge in Perinet-Mantadia and in the Ifaty area.

Wagtails Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail (E) *Motacilla flaviventris*

An attractive endemic, it was seen in the Perinet-Mantadia area and around Tana.

MAMMALSOld World Fruit Bats Pteropodidae

Madagascar Flying Fox *Pteropus rufus*

Several hundred of these large bats were seen at their day roost in the gallery forest at Berenty.

Tenrecs Tenrecidae

Common Tenrec *Tenrec ecaudatus*

Some of the group had excellent close-up views of this tenrec in Zombitse Forest.

Mouse & Dwarf Lemurs Cheirogaleidae

Grey-brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus griseorufus*

2 of these cute creatures were found in the Spiny Forest at Berenty.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus lehilahytsara*

Night walks in the Perinet area provided sightings of this delightful rainforest species.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*

As above, we observed this species during night walks in the Perinet area.

NOTE: The taxonomy of the genus *Cheirogaleus* has recently undergone a lot of revision, with seven species now accepted in place of the previous two, and as such, the “famous” Greater Dwarf Lemurs *C. major* of Feo Ny ala have been re-identified as Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *C. crossleyi*.

Sportive Lemurs Megaladapidae

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus*

Great views were had of a roosting individual in the gallery forest at Berenty, as well as a few more in the nearby spiny forest.

Hubbard's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur hubbardi*

2 of these highly range-restricted mammals were seen in the dry, deciduous forest of Zombitse.

“True” Lemurs Lemuridae

Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur *Haplemur griseus griseus*

We recorded this endearing species in the forests of Perinet-Mantadia and enjoyed some especially close views of this often elusive and retiring species.

Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta*

Good numbers of probably the most famous Malagasy mammal, were encountered at Berenty.

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*

The Eastern rainforests of Perinet-Mantadia yielded sightings of this attractive lemur. It is uncommon at this site and we were lucky to have such close views.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*

Again, the forests of Perinet-Mantadia produced views of this commonly encountered species.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus rufus*

An introduced species to Berenty, it was seen here daily.

NOTE: The animals we saw at Berenty are introduced individuals, with its natural range being much further north than Berenty.

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

These magnificent endangered creatures were found in the rainforest of Mantadia NP. Another species that can be extremely difficult to observed, we were treated to fabulous views as well as its ear-shattering bark-roars!

Avahis, Sifakas & Indri Indriidae

Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur) *Avahi laniger*

3 of these fluffy, teddy-bear like creatures were found in the rainforests of Mantadia NP.

Diademed Sifaka *Propithecus diadema diadema*

At least 8 of these gorgeous sifakas were encountered in the forests of Mantadia NP.

Verreaux's Sifaka *Propithecus verreaux verreauxi*

The “dancing” sifakas of Madagascar entertained us royally during our stay at Berenty Private Reserve,

Indri *Indri indri*

This, the largest of the lemurs, with an ear shattering howling, was observed in the forest at Perinet and Mantadia, where we enjoyed wonderful close-up views.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Microhylidae

(Boulenger's) Giant Tree Frog *Platepelis grandis*

We heard the distinctive bark of this species calling from treeholes in the rainforest at Perinet-Mantadia.

Barbour's Tree Frog*Platypelis barbouri*

Another denizen of the eastern rainforests we recorded 2 in Perinet-Mantadia area.

Green Burrowing Frog*Scaphiophryne marmorata*

1 was recorded in Perinet Special Reserve, a very beautiful and seldom seen species – a lifer for Adam on this his 16th tour of Madagascar.

Mantellidae**Green Tree Frog***Boophis viridis*

A single specimen was found in the rainforest at Perinet-Mantadia.

Great Tree Frog*Boophis opisthodon*

This large species was seen at a forest stream at Mitsinjo Forest.

Horned Leaf Frog*Mantidactylus asper*

1 was found in the eastern rainforests of Perinet-Mantadia.

Variiegated Golden Frog (Mantella)*Mantella baroni*

Unfortunately, this species was only heard at Mantadia NP.

Chameleons Chamaeleonidae**Greater Stump-tailed Chameleon***Brookesia superciliaris*

1 was observed on a night walk at Mitsinjo Forest.

Short-horned Chameleon*Calumma brevicornis*

A single creature was seen in the forests of Perinet.

Nose-horned Chameleon*Calumma nasuta*

The smallest “typical” chameleon, 1 was observed on a night walk at Mitsinjo Forest.

Band-bellied Chameleon*Calumma gastrotaenia*

A total of 4 were found in the Eastern Rainforests of Perinet-Mantadia.

Parson's Chameleon*Calumma parsonii*

One of the largest chameleon species in the world, we recorded 3 in Perinet-Mantadia, including some spectacularly large individuals.

Iguanas Iguanidae**Three-eyed Lizard***Chalarodon madagascariensis*

The arid areas of the south produced numerous sightings of this lizard.

Double-banded Iguanid*Oplurus cyclurus*

We recorded this retille in the Spiny Forest near Mangily.

Geckos Gekkonidae**Painted Big-headed Gecko***Paroedura pictus*

2 individuals of this nocturnal species were tracked down in the gallery forest at Berenty.

Beautiful Big-headed Gecko*Paroedura gracilius*

A single specimen was seen on night walk in Mitsinjo forest.

Fat-tailed Gecko*Ebenavia inunguis*

As above, we recorded this gecko in Mitsinjo Forest. Another seldom recorded species that was a lifer for Adam.

Sikora Leaf-tailed Gecko*Uroplatus sikorae*

This incredibly camouflaged creature was found in the forests at Perinet.

Mercator Tropical House Gecko*Hemidactylus mercatorius*

It was common around our lodgings in Ifaty.

Guibe's Bark Gecko*Lygodactylus tuberosus*

This species was observed on a night walk in Mitsinjo Forest.

Lineated Day Gecko *Phelsuma lineata*

We recorded this colourful little beastie around Tana, in Mantadia NP and in the town of Tulear.

Plated Lizards Gerrhosauridae

Madagascar Plated Lizard *Zonosaurus madagascarensis*

These large lizards were seen while at Mantadia NP.

Elegant Skink *Mabuya elegans*

An attractive skink, it was observed in the dry gallery forest at Berenty.

Boas Boidae

Madagascar Tree Boa *Sanzinia madagascarensis*

We recorded this beautiful snake on a night walk in Mitsinjo Forest.

Typical Snakes Colubridae

Red-bellied Snake *Liophidium rhodogaster*

1 was seen in the Perinet forests, a beautiful pink-bellied snake.

Mahafaly Sand Snake *Mimophis mahfalensis*

A widespread Malagasy snake, it was found daily in the Ifaty region.

Photo Credits (in order of appearance): Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, White-throated Rail and Indri by Adam Riley, Red-shouldered Vanga and Ring-tailed Lemurs by James Wakelin.

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