

Madagascar

Naturetrek Tour Report

20 October - 11 November 2010



Ashy Cuckoo Shrike



Verreaux's Sifaka



Baron's Painted Mantella



Giant Coua

Report and images compiled by Cathy Harlow



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Day 1

Wednesday 20th October

ARRIVAL AT ANTANANARIVO

Janette, Michael, Kathy and John from Australia arrived in advance of the rest of the group and were comfortably settled into the Relais des Plateaux Hotel by the time the rest of the group landed at Antananarivo Airport. After collecting bags and changing money, it was just a short ride to the hotel.

Day 2

Thursday 21st October

ANTANANARIVO TO ANTSIRABE

Hot and sunny, then hazy with rain in the afternoon

A few of the group were up early and in the grounds of the hotel, spotting Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Wagtail, Common Myna, Long-billed Green Sunbird, Madagascar White-eye, Cattle Egret and Stonechat. After breakfast and a short briefing with local guide Desi and tour leader Cathy, we loaded luggage onto the bus and we were off to visit Tana's Tsimbazaza Zoo, a WWF funded project that aims to raise public awareness among local people of the importance of conserving Madagascar's habitats and wildlife. Driving past the rice paddies that flank the main road into the city, we noted Madagascar Kestrel, Great Egret, Dimorphic Egret and Madagascar Black Swift. As well as numerous caged species, including Fosa, Madagascar's largest carnivore, the zoo has some natural habitat and two small lakes, attracting large numbers of wild birds. Here we observed hundreds of nesting Cattle Egret and Dimorphic Egret, including three dark phase individuals. Large numbers of mostly juvenile Black-crowned Night Herons were also evident, along with Great Egret, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher and Madagascar Hoopoe. We also enjoyed observing the zoo's Ring-tailed Lemurs and their young on one of the small islands on the lake.

We now left the capital on RN7, the main road that winds southwards along the backbone of the island. Ambatofotsy Lake, once a wildlife hotspot, has suffered from human disturbance, yet we found a pair of Madagascar Little Grebe and a flock of White-faced Duck and Red-billed Teal. Madagascar Bee-eater and Mascarene Martins were seen in flight. Along the roadside, the villagers have set up stalls selling rafia hats, bags, chameleons, even giraffes. Some of the group were tempted to buy souvenirs, while others searched for birds along the riverside, finding Common Sandpiper, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher and a Long-billed Green Sunbird perched beautifully for the photographers.

Lunch was at the ever-enduring Rendezvous des Pecheurs in Ambatolampy, where we tucked into local speciality *Romaçava* and the chocolate crepes went down well for dessert. Continuing the journey, we passed spectacular granite outcrops and the red-brick villages of the Merina people, surrounded by their rice paddies. After a hot and sunny start to the day, it had clouded over during the afternoon. A second riverside stop gave us a sighting of Purple Heron and Hamerkop, and we repeatedly heard Common Quail, though failed to see them. Arriving at Antsirabe in the rain, just before nightfall, there was time for a visit to the Chocolaterie after checking into the Arotel.

Day 3

Friday 22nd October

ANTSIRABE TO RANOMAFANA

Cloudy and cool

In the hotel grounds the early risers found Madagascar Brush Warbler, Common Myna and Madagascar Wagtail. After loading the bus, we ran the gauntlet of eager tablecloth sales ladies to visit the prominent monument depicting the different ethnic groups of Madagascar. We wandered down Avenue de l'Independence to the grandiose, if a little dated Hotel des Thermes, where we saw a Madagascar Kestrel perched on the building and several Great Egrets on the lake below.

The day started out cloudy, and surprisingly cool, as we continued the journey south...We stopped to photograph some of the Merina tombs – these are often much more solid than the village houses, because though a house is to last a lifetime, a tomb is for eternity so it must be very well-built. The Malagasy people are very hard-working and everywhere we could see the men and yoked-up teams of zebu labouring to soften the clods of clay, while the women were planting out seedlings from the rice nursery. Here we noted Brown-throated Sand Martins, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher, Madagascar Mannikin, Stonechat and Green-backed Heron, in addition to a number of Madagascar Kestrel, Great Egret and Cattle Egret.

For lunch we paused at the town of Ambositra, famous for its wood-carvings and raw silk scarves so a good chance to buy very reasonably priced gifts and souvenirs. Snaking up to a ridge, we paused for a breath of fresh air among a grove of *Uapaca bojeri*. Silk worms feed on this native species, known as Tapia, which has a fire-resistant trunk and an edible fruit. Here we sighted our first Madagascar Bulbul and a couple of Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo – a species that is often heard but seldom seen. Surprise additions were four Common Quail that some of the group got a good look at, while others were distracted by a Skink *Trachylepis elegans*.

A little further on, we stopped at the bee-eater nests in a roadside cutting, where we could observe them flying in and out of their holes. Common Sandpiper, Pied Crow, a pair of Madagascar Coucals, Common Jery and Souimanga were seen Sunbird also showed well at that stop but the star performer was a White-throated Rail. Often shy and skulking, it strutted along a paddy wall giving great photo opportunities.

Today's journey was long, but eventful with yet another rewarding stop by a pocket of rainforest and small area of wetland, where with the help of Steve B, Bagsy and Bill, we got a decent view of Madagascar Snipe. This spot also yielded Madagascar Cisticola, a pair of Souimanga Sunbird, Three-banded Plover and a small flock of Red-billed Teals. Madagascar Flufftail was heard but not seen. Jonas and Steve W got busy on the reptiles and invertebrates, spotting a Giant Locust and an Iguanid *Oplurus quadrimaculatus*.

By the town of Ambohimahaso, with its huge banyan tree festooned with egrets, we came across herds of zebu on the long march north to the capital, prompting Bagsy to give us a decent rendition of 'Rawhide', which helped to lighten the journey. Now approaching the turning to Ranomafana, we saw a flock of Madagascar Fody and several more Hamerkop. Night was beginning to fall as we rolled up at Domaine Nature, a welcome sight after the long road journey. Some of the group were allocated bungalows, near the restaurant complex but for most us, accommodation was in the newer bungalows up the road, but this does involve a climb up 100 steps! On the positive side, we discovered some interesting wildlife – a single bush being devoured by a brigade of Stick Insects, and on closer inspection we found a Praying Mantis and Nose-horned Chameleon had taken up residence there as well. Over dinner, we met up with the Naturetrek - Madagacars Lemurs group, who were also staying at Domaine Nature.

Day 4

Saturday 23rd October

RANOMAFANA

Rain, then clearing. Heavy rain in the evening

We awoke to a damp start to the day, gathering for a 5.30 bird walk up the road from the hotel. In spite of the drizzle we clocked up several species; Madagascar Magpie Robin, Chabert's Vanga, Broad-billed Roller, Madagascar White-eye, Crested Drongo, Long-billed Green Sunbird and Souimanga Sunbird and Madagascar Mannikin, in typical posture, feeding on grass seeds.

After breakfast, we assembled outside the hotel by the bus, where our reserve guides Fidy and Jean-Chrys pointed out a Belted Chameleon. Then Steve W. appeared with a spectacular Emperor Moth *Antherina suraka*, with prominent pink false eye-spots. Just as everyone was photographing it, the rain came down in earnest. The bus transferred us to the main entrance to Ranomafana National Park, where we divided into two groups, Fidy taking the generalists and Jean-Chrys heading off with the birders. Our guides were ably assisted by their sons, who were in charge of locating family groups of lemurs for us. Ranomafana's terrain is steep and some of its paths challenging, especially in the rain so it is a great help to have competent lemur spotters do the hard work! We started by heading down towards the river, where we stopped to admire some huge Golden Orb Spiders and their webs, which span the bridge supports. Fidy's group started with a sighting of Golden Bamboo Lemur, the park's signature species. Like the other bamboo lemurs, they are found in small family groups and are usually quite easy to locate once you know their preferred feeding patches.

Next up were a family of Milne-Edwards Diademed Sifaka. In 2009, the female and her young had been killed by poachers, leaving just the male. It was very rewarding to see that he had found another partner and that they had a new baby, who was playful. Our final lemur sighting of the morning was two Red-bellied Lemurs at rest. The generalists got good views of a Pygmy Kingfisher, Blue Coua and a fascinating Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko, so successfully masquerading as a dead twig and leaf, that it took several attempts before we could pick it out. Two beautiful frogs were also identified by our guides as *Anodonthyla* sp. “*Ranomafana*” and *Plethodontohyla notosticta*, the second mimicking a dead leaf. At Belle Vue, numerous *Phelsuma quadriocellata* Emerald Day Geckos scuttled around the shelter and were a popular subject for the photographers. Janette had elected to rest at Belle Vue and spotted a Red Forest Rat and a Ring-tailed Mongoose, which later returned to get photographed by the rest of the group.

The birding group added in a good selection of endemics including Rand’s Warbler, Blue Pigeon, Crossley’s Babbler, White-headed Vanga, Spectacled Greenbul, Common Newtonia and a mixed feeding flock of Tylas, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Red-tailed Vanga, Green Jery and Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher. Kathy ably picked out a female Velvet Asity for us, while Steve W, our confirmed non-birder, spotted our first Pitta-like Ground Roller, easily recognized by its colourful plumage and its bobbing head motion and ‘whoop’ call.

After lunch at Setam Lodge, there was time for a short break and rest back at Domaine Nature, where some of the group photographed the Madagascar Tree Boa, which lives in the stone wall across from the hotel. We also noticed dozens of Emerald Day Geckos on the Ravenala tree by the hotel. By the time we set off again, the rain had let up. Several Madagascar Wagtails were spotted in the road and a Madagascar Buzzard flew overhead as we drove up to the Namorona Falls, at a scenic spot on the edge of the escarpment. Here our guides led us to a damp cave, where hundreds of Eastern Sucker-footed Bats were roosting on the roof. On the moist cliff face opposite the waterfall, we found several frogs, all identified as *Boophis madagascariensis*. A Giraffe-necked Weevil showed well on a pink-flowering *Melastoma*.

At the village of Vohiparara, we turned onto the old road, where our guides dived into the undergrowth, emerging with a beautifully coloured Baron’s Painted Mantella *Mantella baroni*, a diminutive frog. Here on the same species of *Melastoma*, another Giraffe-necked Weevil was admired. Back on the bus, our driver spotted a raptor in flight, which turned out to be a male Madagascar Harrier (formerly Reunion Harrier), a very rare species down to possibly as few as 30 breeding pairs. Everyone got a good view as it flew low over the paddies.

At our next stop we walked along a ridge through a patch of regrowth rainforest, whose original cover had been destroyed by fire. Arriving at a viewpoint overlooking a river, we hoped to see Meller’s Duck but none were evident but a Blue Coua perched obligingly in the open. We were luckier with a pair of Grey Emutail, which we succeeded in calling out in the swamp below the viewpoint.

As nightfall was now imminent, we returned to the bus and made our way back down towards the hotel. As torch-lit walks are no longer allowed within the National Park, night-spotting now takes place along the road instead. Here the guides lured out a Brown Mouse Lemur by smearing banana on a tree trunk. We now hit the chameleon jackpot with three new species here: White-bellied Chameleon, Blue-legged Chameleon and Wills Chameleon. The list-keepers had a busy time this evening, but with the torrential rain there were few takers for a second night walk!

Day 5

Sunday 24th October

RANOMAFANA

Rain in the morning, clearing to a cloudy afternoon

Another wet start to the day as we made our way back into the reserve after an early breakfast. The birders headed for Vohiparara with Jean-Chrys, while Jonas, Steve W and Maria were keen to focus on photography and to try for Greater and Grey Bamboo Lemurs and reptiles. First up for the generalists were an adult and a juvenile Greater Bamboo Lemur feeding in the canopy, then resting. This species has now been found to have a much more limited distribution than the Golden Bamboo Lemur, which the National Park was originally created to protect. This morning also brought better views than yesterday's Golden Bamboo Lemurs and some good photo opportunities. Two Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs completed the hat-trick. A group of six to eight Red-fronted Brown Lemurs and five Red-bellied Lemurs added to the excitement of this very productive morning. Heading for Setam Lodge for lunch, we found a number of Mascarene Martins nesting at the research centre and came across a dead Comet Moth in the car park and a rather impressive giant red and black Millipede.

The birding group headed for Vohiparara, an area of montane rainforest, with a lower canopy and easier terrain. They clocked-up a respectable number of endemics, including Grey-crowned Greenbul, Long-billed Greenbul, Tylas, Red-tailed Vanga, Blue Vanga, Blue Coua, Red-fronted Coua, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Blue Pigeon, Forest Rock Thrush and Dark Newtonia. To this they added Milne-Edwards Diademed Sifaka, Red-bellied Lemur and Beautiful Tree Frog *Mantidactylus pulcher*. Joining the rest of the group for lunch at Setam, John noted a Red-fronted Coua.

After lunch, some of the group opted for a rest, while Bill and Bagsy made their way back up the road, where they found Forest Fody, Stripe-throated Jery, Common Jery, Common Newtonia, Forest Rock Thrush, Long-billed Green Sunbird, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Wagtail, Mascarene Martin, Brown-throated Sand Martin, Madagascar White-eye, Brush Warbler and Madagascar Bulbul. Picking up Bill and Bagsy along the way, we arrived at an opportune moment as they had just stumbled on a Madagascar Flufftail. Though not uncommon, this rail-like endemic is shy and difficult to see. Though Bill and Bagsy had a good view of the bird, the rest of us had to make do with its call, in reply to our tape.

Several of the group were keen to give Meller's Duck a second chance from the ridge beyond Vohiparara. This rare endemic duck is threatened by hunting and disturbance to its habitat but this stretch of the river is relatively quiet and with luck provides a chance to see the species. While we were waiting a Madagascar Nightjar called and we located it perched on a nearby tree-stump. It then flew onto the ground in front of us – a great photo opportunity for those with cameras at the ready. Just as the light was fading we spotted a couple of ducks on the water and shortly after, a group of five in flight but the light was too poor to be sure. Finally, a lone duck which was clearly a Mellers flew straight overhead. Worth waiting for!

Day 6

Monday 25th October

RANOMAFANA TO ISALO

Clear and cool, then progressively hotter during the day

By now getting into the rhythm of it, we were all ready for an early departure but not before yet another species of chameleon was found on one of the branches overhanging the road just outside the hotel – an O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon. Twisting our way back up the winding road, we paused briefly to observe a couple of male Red-fronted Brown Lemurs feeding on passion fruit. It was curious how they fussily inspected each fruit, carefully rejecting the unripe ones. Along the road we also came across a Madagascar Buzzard and Ward's Flycatcher.

Back on RN7, we turned south to reach the small town of Andranokely, where it was market day, with everything from hens, duck and pigs to hats, mats, baskets and medicinal herbs being sold or bartered. It may be fascinating and hugely colourful to us, but to most rural Malagasy, it's the only way they can hope to pick up a little cash and many people walk for hours to take what little they have to sell to market. After a stroll around the market we continued to Fianarantsoa, Madagascar's second city, where we stopped for fuel, and for some of the group coffee and pastries at the patisserie. The morning had started with a chill in the air but was soon warming up as we continued the journey south, passing through the island's main wine-producing region. Away from the forests bird life is limited but we noted several Madagascar Kestrels, Buzzards and Yellow-billed Kites. Madagascar Bee-eaters were common and the rice paddies were productive for Great, Dimorphic and Cattle Egrets and Hammerkop.

Arriving at Ambalavao, we were shown around the Antaimoro paper workshop followed by lunch at the Bougainvilliers Restaurant. Leaving this attractive town of wooden balconies and red-brick houses, the scenery changed abruptly and we found ourselves in a pocket of relict native forest at the foot of a magnificent granite dome. Here the community of Ambanja has set up a small nature reserve to show visitors a healthy population of Ring-tailed Lemur. Local taboos have protected the lemurs and their forest and now that they are getting a steady flow of admiring visitors, they are far from shy. This species, often seen as the emblem of Madagascar, is confined to the drier areas of the south of the island. More terrestrial than other lemur species, they are as happy on the ground as in the trees and at the Anja Reserve they are often seen hopping from boulder to boulder. The young are born in September and October and there were many babies about – the older ones already riding piggy-back, while the newborn cling to their mother's belly.

Back on the bus, we still had quite a way to go, so we spent the next hours counting pied crows and enjoying the fabulous mountain scenery. Our guide Desi recounted a grim story that took place during the 19th Century power struggles between the highland Merina and Betsileo peoples. Chased from their homes the Betsileo took refuge on the top of the precipitous cliff of the summit known as the Bishop's Hat, which was easily defended. After they ran out of food and water, they chose suicide rather than capitulate, dancing blindfolded until they fell off the cliff.

Approaching the town of Ihosy, we were now in the homeland of the Bara people, whose currency is zebu. Around us open grassland stretched into the distance, much of it charred after the annual burning of old growth to encourage new tender shoots for the cattle. The two storey houses of the high plateau were replaced by single storey dwellings, often of mud and straw and the villages seemed markedly less prosperous. Bush Larks were numerous around here and we stopped for a couple of Madagascar Partridges by the side of the road, which showed well when they flew up.

Beyond Ihosy, the road twisted in a series of hairpin bends, rising to the stark Horombe Plateau. Just as night was falling, a Marsh Owl flew over the road, landing just 30 yards from us. It was already dark when we arrived at Hotel Relais de la Reine, spectacularly sited among the sandstone pillars for which Isalo is famous. The hotel rooms are spacious and beautifully appointed.

Day 7

Tuesday 26th October

ISALO NATIONAL PARK

Hot and sunny

Sunrise is always a beautiful time at Isalo, as the light is good for photography and the air fresh, with just a touch of dew on the ground. Most of the group were up for an early walk to the small lake in the grounds of the hotel, which was greatly reduced in size because this is the end of the dry season. A few African Palm Swifts were about and a dozen or so Yellow-billed Kites were perched on a tree. Benson's Rock Thrush males were on their prominent calling perches on the roof of the hotel buildings and on the tops of the sandstone outcrops. Broad-billed Rollers could be heard 'cackling' and Souimanga Sunbirds were up and about too. On the water's edge, we noted a flock of Red-billed Teal and several White-faced Whistling Duck.

After breakfast, we set off by coach for Ranohira, the gateway town to Isalo National Park, where we picked up our park guide who explained that a recent fire in the park had burned out much of the area of Namaza that we would normally visit. This meant a longer drive to the alternative area of the Canyon des Makis. Leaving the coach at the end of the track, we crossed a small stream, where a Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher flew past, and walked along the rice paddy walls towards the sandstone cliffs ahead, which took around 40 minutes. In the paddies, we found two Mascarene Grass Frogs *Ptychadena mascareniensis* with a prominent dorsal line and three Lined Water Snakes *Liopholidophis lateralis*. A large Plated Lizard *Zonosaurus laticaudata* was also noted. Already the temperature was rising fast and apart from Yellow-billed Kite, Madagascar Kestrel and Paradise Flycatcher, birds were scarce. We spent our morning in the park exploring one of the spectacular canyons the cut deep into the sandstone. Follow the stream, the narrow canyon walls opened ahead of us and we carefully picked our way among giant boulders to an idyllic pool, surrounded by endemic pandanus and palms. Several of the group had a bathe or paddle in the refreshingly cool water. Some of the group continued further up the canyon, while others sat it out in the cool of the shady pool. The pocket of forest here supports several groups of lemurs and our guide located six Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, which we were able to enjoy as they fed and then rested.

Returning to the hotel for a late lunch, there was time for a rest and swim in the hotel's pool. Late in the afternoon, we set off to explore the sandstone canyons around the hotel, and look at some of the interesting flora, which included the endemic Madagascar Rosy Periwinkle *Catharanthus roseus*, *Aloe isaloensis*, yellow-flowering *Pachypodium rosulatum gracilis* and *Kalanchoe*. Here we found large numbers of Plataspid bugs and nymphs *Libyaspis coccinelloides* clinging to the stems and trunks of several shrubs. Predictably there was a brief flurry of bird activity with Broad-billed Roller, Black Swift, White-faced Duck, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar Hoopoe, Cuckoo Roller, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Kestrel and Yellow-billed Kite. Scops Owl was heard calling. The sun was now low in the sky and we climbed to a prominent rocky outcrop to get tripods out for the sunset, which can be truly spectacular at Isalo. As expected, it did not disappoint with the surrounding rock turning from beige to yellow, gold, then briefly glowing red before a finale of rose-pink.

Day 8

Wednesday 27th October

Hot and sunny

With a pre-dawn start, the hotel provided us with a packed breakfast to take with us. Leaving Isalo, we passed the sapphire mining town of Ilakaka, which sprang up a decade ago but seems to be dying now as new mines are set up elsewhere. The swanky mansions of the gem dealers were a shocking contrast to the shanty huts of the miners. As the sun rose, we passed a flock of Grey-headed Lovebirds perched on the reeds by a bridge.

Arriving at Zombitse National Park at 6.30, the barren grassland gave way to a transitional forest with elements of both western dry deciduous forest and the spiny forest of the deep south. Lemurs tend to be quite shy here as the park sees rather few visitors, but the bird watching can be superb. Starting in the car park, a Crested Coua shuffled along a broad branch, pecking for grubs and showed well. We also noted a Madagascar Hoopoe in flight, several Kestrels and Lesser Vasa Parrot perched and a pair of Buttonquails rooting around in the leaf litter. Setting off on foot on Zombitse's level trails, persistence paid off and we found the local endemic Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul), with four of these understory birds showing well. Other highlights of the morning included Coquerel's Coua, Running Coua, Green Pigeon, Blue Vanga and Rufous Vanga. A Long-billed Greenbul also showed well as it searched for grubs moving from branch to branch. More common species including White-eye, Crested Drongo, Paradise Flycatcher, Common Newtonia, Broad-billed Roller, Hoopoe, Buzzard and Magpie Robin were also plentiful. On the lemur front we did pretty well finding Hubbard's Sportive Lemur, a nocturnal species holed up in its daytime roost, three Verreaux's Sifaka, to which Caroline added a sighting of Red-fronted Brown Lemur.

Continuing the drive west, the forest ends abruptly and it's back to fire-scorched grassland, where a few defiant *Tapia* trees survive as their trunks are clad in a fire-resistant bark. Isolated baobabs dotted the plain, one was festooned with egrets on the approach to Sakaraha, the only town of any size in this sparsely populated region. Namaqua Doves were plentiful during the journey. We paused briefly by a village house, shaded by a large tree decorated with numerous Sakalava Weaver nests. Along the roadside were numerous tombs of the Mahafaly people. Mahafaly means 'those who make happy – or those who make taboos' and it is strictly taboo or 'fady' to photograph the tombs, which are often painted with scenes or objects of importance from the deceased person's life. Approaching the coast we travelled over a coral rag plateau of thorny scrub, dotted with *Euphorbia*. It's hard to believe that anyone would choose to settle here, yet we passed several villages, where dried stalks of maize, stands of cassava and a few straggly papaya trees surrounded the simple straw and mud dwellings. After a very late lunch in Tulear, everyone opted for an afternoon nap at the Paille en Queue.

Day 9

Thursday 28th October

TULEAR TO ANAKAO

Hot, sunny and windy

After another early breakfast, we made our way to the mud flats where we were loaded onto zebu carts for the short ride out to the motor launch. At this time of year it is invariably windy and already there was a stiff breeze, making for a fairly bumpy ride. Anakao is located an hour's boat ride south of Tulear – by road it takes hours on a very rough track, which is why we opt for the boat! There was really too much movement to use binoculars, though we did make out a Grey Heron on the beach.

Inside the reef, hundreds of outrigger canoes with sails were fishing or transporting goods from place to place. Anakao is one of a number of Vezo fishing settlements along this stretch of coast – the dark-skinned Vezo people are of African origin. Though run by a French lady, the Safari Vezo Hotel employs all local staff and their wages are an important supplement to the villagers' subsistence income from fishing. Its craft shop sells items made by the villagers as well. The sea-front bungalows are simple but tastefully done. To conserve the limited fresh water, which comes from a well, the only running water is in the loos and its sea water. For washing, the staff bring fresh water in buckets and once you get the hang of it a bucket shower is perfectly acceptable.

Because of the wind, we opted to head straight out to Nosy Ve, the offshore island nesting ground of a thriving colony of Red-tailed Tropic Birds. Now 1000 strong, the birds only began breeding here in 1980. We were right at the end of the breeding season but still there were some adults with young on the nests, which are sited on the ground in the shade of low-lying thorny bushes. A number of birds were in the air, circling over the nesting site. Taking care not to disturb the birds, we picked our way along a path through low-lying scrub to the beach on the other side of the coral cay. Here we picked up a number of Turnstones and White-fronted Plover, while a little further on at the end of a sand spit was a large flock consisting of Crab Plover, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Common and Caspian Terns. While most of the group focused on these birds, Caroline, Kathy, John and Cathy opted to go snorkelling on a small area of coral just offshore. The corals are badly damaged here but colourful Wrasse, Butterfly Fish and Soldier Fish kept us amused.

Back on shore we tucked into a lunch of squid and fresh fruit and with the intense heat of the afternoon, most opted to retire to their bungalows for a rest. John noticed a flock of 12 Lesser Flamingo in flight, while others focused their attention on the resident Littoral Rock Thrushes and Subdesert Brush Warblers, both species abundant around the hotel, though with the strong winds, most birds were keeping a low profile. At 4.30 we set off into the scrub behind the hotel. Recent rainfall had formed pools of water along the track, where Bill picked out a Madagascar Plover, and two Kittlitz Plovers. Steve W, a self-confirmed 'non birder' was delighted to spot a Madagascar Hoopoe. A beautifully illuminated Madagascar Fody and several Littoral Rock Thrushes perched for the photographers. At sunset we assembled in the beachside bar and restaurant for drinks and dinner. Thankfully the wind had died down and we could hear the sea gently lapping on the beach. A stunning starlit sky looked promising for star-gazing, but getting that telescope sorted in the pitch-dark requires a bit more practice from the tour leader!

Day 10

Friday 29th October

ANAKAO – IFATY

Hot, sunny and windy

The group assembled at dawn for an early walk. Many had already enjoyed a pre-dawn chorus of Littoral Rock Thrush from their bed. Heading into the scrub behind the village, several of these delightful birds were perched on the tops of bushes, while Sub-desert Brush Warblers flitted in and out of undergrowth. Kittlitz Plover and Madagascar Plover were around the same pond as yesterday. We also noted Namaqua Dove, Madagascar Turtle Dove, Common Myna, Cisticola and Madagascar Bee-eater. On the beach by the hotel, the locals were launching their outrigger canoes to go out fishing. We could see some of these dug-out vessels being crafted, repaired and carefully painted in bright colours.

After breakfast, we loaded up the boat and set off for a slightly calmer return journey north along the coast to Tulear, where we were met again by our bus drivers. Thankfully, the terrible road to Ifaty has now been improved (relatively!) and we did the 28km journey in just over an hour. Following the coastal mudflats and mangroves, we picked out a number of waders: Greenshank, Black-winged Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Turnstone and Kittlitz Plover.

Arriving at Paradisier Hotel, we checked into the well-appointed bungalows, which are lined up along the dunes. After lunch, there was free time to enjoy the hotel's gorgeous infinity pool, take a stroll on the beach or a nap. Once the heat had subsided, we set off for a walk through the spiny forest in the hotel grounds, spotting Souimanga Sunbird, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Hoopoe, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Coucal, Common Jery, Madagascar Fody, Chabert's Vanga. Three-eyed Lizards were common and we noted several of these fast-moving iguanids with a prominent spot on the top of the head – their 'third' eye. The ponds along the road side had filled from the recent rainfall. Here we saw Three-banded Plover, Kittlitz Plover, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Lesser Vasa Parrot and Madagascar Turtle Dove. Walking back through the spiny forest, hundreds of red Millipedes were emerging from the ground after the recent rainfall. On the beach by the hotel, we noted several Sanderling, Grey Plover, Turnstone and Dunlin. Madagascar Nightjars were heard calling and seen at dusk.

Steve B and Julia were allocated bungalow no. 10 and were concerned that the scuttling noises coming from the roof could be a rat. I was fairly sure that this was the bungalow where members of the previous Lemurs group had a resident Grey Mouse Lemur and sure enough it was. On cue at dusk it emerged and after a brief showing, disappeared off into a nearby *Euphorbia stenoclada*. With our torch beams, we picked out several others in the vicinity.

Day 11

Saturday 30th October

IFATY TO ANTANANARIVO

Hot and sunny but pleasantly cool in Antananarivo

We had a very early 4.30 start today for the twenty-minute drive to Reniala Reserve, just north of our hotel. This is a private reserve, set up to protect and show visitors an unspoiled tract of spiny forest and its birdlife, which includes two endangered species with very limited distribution: Long-tailed Ground-roller and Sub-desert Mesite. We were joined by reserve guide Dabe and his helpers. Meandering along its flat, sandy trails, we passed dozens of impressive *Adansonia za* baobabs, whose huge bulbous trunks reached 12m in circumference and are said to be 1200 years old. Most of the spiny forest species are deciduous, dropping their leaves at the onset of the dry season in May. Some were just beginning to bud but mostly the branches were bare, which for bird watchers is an advantage. On our two-hour walk through this highly unusual forest we got good views of Green-capped Coua and a Running Coua, spotted by Bill. Both Archbold's Newtonia and Thamnornis Warbler were present but more challenging to see though most of the group got a reasonable view. The star performance came from a pair of Long-tailed Ground-rollers. Often shy and hard to photograph, this pair seemed almost relaxed in our presence, one taking a dust-bath at the base of a tree, then perching on top of a termite mound. To this we added four Vanga species: Lafresnaye's Vanga, Chabert's Vangas, Sickle-billed Vanga and finally a pair of Hook-billed Vangas feeding on a chameleon, using the tiny hook on the massive bill to tear up the prey.

Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Hoopoe, Lesser Cuckoo, Madagascar Coucal, Stripe-throated and Common Jery, Magpie Robin, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Fody, Namaqua Dove, Greater Vasa Parrot and Grey-headed Lovebird were also noted during the walk. After breakfast, Caroline and Maria went for a snorkel tour, while the rest of the group enjoyed the surrounds of the hotel, photographing birds and reptiles.

We set off in the afternoon for Tulear, taking the journey slowly and stopping at a patch of very degraded mangrove, which has now been protected and attempts to replant are underway. Thanks to the keen bird watchers in the group today's listed topped 51 species including ten waders: Black-winged Stilt, Ringed Plover, Kittlitz Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Turnstone and Sanderling. Caspian Tern, Madagascar Swamp Warbler, White-faced Duck, Flamingo and Dimorphic Egret were also noted during the journey back to Tulear. We had an evening flight to Tana but frustratingly we found that our early flight the next day to Fort Dauphin, was now going to be even earlier, departing at 5.40. This left us with a short night in Tana but that's Air Madagascar for you!

Day 12

Sunday 31st October

FORT DAUPHIN - BERENTY

Hot and humid in Fort Dauphin, hot and dry in Berenty

The change in the Air Mad flight schedule meant we had to snatch a couple of hours sleep at the Relais des Plateaux before we loaded back on to the bus for the 10 minute ride to the airport. Check in went smoothly and to everyone's relief the 5kg hand baggage allowance was not checked. The flight left on time and in an hour we were at Fort Dauphin and met by local guide Benoit.

After breakfast at the Dauphin Hotel we drove to the viewpoint to scan for humpback whales making their way south to their feeding grounds after spending the austral winter off Madagascar, where mating and calving take place. A couple of mother and calf pairs blew not far offshore, while two other blows were noted further out to sea. The wind was already up, the waves crashed onto the shore and it was hard to tell a white cap from a whale spout. Back on the bus we drove past a gorgeous arc of white sand stretching northwards around a broad bay, where hundreds of pirogues were out fishing.

After a stop to buy water, we set off for Berenty, a journey of 90km on a bumpy road of fragmented bitumen and pot holes. In places, work had begun on filling the worst of the holes. We paused to photograph some obelisks, erected by local people in memory of their deceased – the larger the stone, the older the person. Some had vivid paintings, depicting important events or elements of their life. Bill picked out a distant flock of Red-billed Teal in flight over distant paddies. Cattle Egrets and flocks of circling Pied Crows were seen, as well as groves of lychees laden with fruit and orange-flowering grevillea. As it was Sunday, the locals were out in their best clothes. We passed roadside ponds filled with water lilies and patches of rosy periwinkle.

Soon the lush vegetation gave way to a transitional forest dominated by the curious triangular palms *Dypsis decaryi*, which are only found here. This tiny pocket of forest forms part of the larger protected area of Andohahela National Park, which also includes some rainforest and spiny forest. A short walk along the road here gave us sightings of Namaqua Dove, Black Swift, Souimanga Sunbird, Stripe-throated and Common Jery, Crested Coua, Madagascar Magpie Robin, and Alpine Swift.

Four Iguanids *Oplurus quadrimaculatus* were basking on rocks to the side of the road and posed for the cameras. Benoit pointed out the thorny tree *Mimosa delicatula*, known locally as 'Roy' from which the local people the Antandroy (People of the Thorns) get their name. Many other colourful shrubs were in bloom along the roadside. Back on the bus, in a few kilometres we emerged into a 'sea' of spiny forest, the dominant natural vegetation of Southern Madagascar. Huge stands of *Didieraceae* swayed in the breeze, their thorny boughs sporting the new season's growth of leaves. Uncannily cactus-like, these are deciduous trees. One species, *Allandia procera*, recognised by its flowers emerging from the top of the branches, is a valuable timber species planked for local housing needs. We stopped by an impressive baobab *Adansonia za*, where locals make carved wooden boxes and animals for tourists, as part of a forest regeneration project financed by Japan. Beyond here, most of the spiny forest has been cleared for the sisal plantations that surround the town of Amboasary. Crossing the Mandrare River by a huge bridge, the locals thronged the riverside, bathing, washing clothes and frolicking in the water, which was flowing again after a heavy downpour. Prior to that, the river bed had been dry for a whole month, the locals obliged to dig for water.

We now turned off the main road down the dusty trail leading through sisal to the entrance to Berenty, where a group of Verreaux's Sifaka's greeted us 'dancing' across the track. After quickly checking into our bungalows, we reassembled at the restaurant for a Sunday roast of pork and potatoes though Jonas and Steve skipped lunch in favour of a date with the sifaka. After lunch, most enjoyed a nap before Benoit took us to explore the gallery forest hugging the banks of the Mandrare. Before long, we were treated to sifaka leaping from bough to bough, and then Ring-tailed Lemurs scent-marking with anal and wrist glands as they moved in to feast on the purple and white flowers of *Crataeva sp.* Numerous large groups of Red-fronted Brown Lemurs were also present, but unlike Berenty's other lemurs, they were introduced to the reserve by the De Heaulme family. Soon Benoit called us over to the day-time hideout of the largest of Berenty's nocturnal lemurs, White-footed Sportive Lemur, which hides in tree cavities or under dense canopy vegetation. In spite of its large eyes and slightly quizzical look, this species has poor daytime vision but good hearing and it was clearly aware of our presence. A second one was found roosting in the same area. On the bird front, we enjoyed close-up views of several terrestrial Giant Couas, a Crested Coua feeding on a caterpillar, Torotoroka Scops Owl roosting in a twig thicket, an audacious Crested Drongo taking on a Yellow-billed Kite, and a White-browed Owl, which called just before sundown. Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar White-eye and Madagascar Turtle Dove also showed well.

Collecting torches, we headed for Berenty's tract of spiny forest for a night walk. Benoit soon had his beam trained on a White-footed Sportive Lemur, which lived up to its name by taking impressive leaps among the spiny boughs of *Didieraceae*. Though largely solitary, this one was quickly joined by a second but after a quick sniff at one another, they parted. The spiny forest also supports a high density of Reddish-grey Mouse Lemurs which we were also able to observe as with great agility they leap from tree to tree and run along branches. On the chameleon front, Steve found us two Warty Chameleons by the side of the path. After supper, most were ready for bed!

Day 13

Monday 1st November

BERENTY

Hot and sunny

We rose just after dawn to a clear sky and a welcome chill in the air. This morning's birding was rewarding and varied with good views of Crested Coua feeding on a caterpillar, pale phase male Paradise Flycatcher, Broad-billed Roller, Grey-headed Lovebirds, a pair of Hook-billed Vanga and a roosting White-browed Owl. Kestrels were numerous, along with Stripe-throated and Common Jery, Madagascar Turtle Dove, Crested Drongo. Madagascar Coucal showed briefly, as did Lesser Vasa Parrot. Desi found a Hissing Cockroach in a rotting log, but it scuttled away into a crevice before the photographers could snap it. The Ring-tailed Lemurs and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs were busy feeding on the purple-flowering *Crataeva*, their noses yellow with pollen. Some of the sifaka were also up and about but we came across one group still huddled on a branch. We also visited the Madagascar Fruit Bat roost where several hundred bats hang out during the day in an almost bare Tamarind tree, waiting for nightfall to head off to their feeding grounds many kilometres away.

After a late breakfast, everyone set off to explore on their own. As a private reserve, visitors are free to wander at leisure and Berenty provides the perfect opportunity for people to indulge their personal interests like photography. Some of the group visited the excellent museum that depicts the way of life of the local people and how they cope with drought in this dry region of the island.

After lunch, with the heat intense, most had a nap, reassembling at 3.30. First we went in search of Madagascar Sandgrouse in an area of stony grassland, where Bagsy picked out three birds almost perfectly camouflaged. Benoit then took us to an area of spiny forest that escaped clearance when the De Healume family set up their sisal plantations. This habitat is perfect for Spider Tortoises, one of the smaller Malagasy species that we spotted on the forest floor. Next we found a Grey-brown Mouse Lemur hidden in the dense tangle of upright boughs of an *Alluandia dumosa*. Unlike other Didieraceae, this tree never gets leaves but it still provides a safe roost for nocturnal mouse lemurs.

Next Benoit took us to a Torotoroka Scops Owl, roosting just above head height and easy to photograph. An overturned rock revealed a scorpion – Malagasy ones are small but can still deliver a nasty sting. A bulbul nest was spotted by the path about 6ft off the ground. A great find for the afternoon was a Madagascar Nightjar on the path, picked out by Maria. The afternoon's walk also gave us a good view of a White-footed Sportive Lemur, just beginning to stir. Bagsy entertained the children of the forest guard with his bottle-top trick, which delighted them. On the way back to the bungalows, a flock of 30 Helmeted Guineafowl was observed foraging in the field.

There was just time to shower and change before setting off into the gallery forest for the night walk. White-browed Owls were calling around the bungalows and were briefly seen. Here we found Grey Mouse Lemur and several Big-headed Geckos just above the base of tree trunks. These were hard to observe as they generally scuttled off into cracks in the bark. We also found two Hissing Cockroaches.

Day 14

Tuesday 2nd November

BERENTY TO FORT DAUPHIN

Hot and sunny, then cloudy and light showers

We made a 5 o'clock start for the 30 minute drive to Anjapolo, an area often used by film crews wanting to get footage of Verreaux's Sifaka in the spiny forest.

Madagascar Sandgrouse flew over en route and a pair of Madagascar Buttonquails was also seen. We stopped at two large baobabs *Adansonia za*, one festooned with Sakalava Weavers' nests. Walking among the huge stands of spiky Didieraceae was almost like being on another planet, so alien and hostile looking. Though most of the flowers were over, some species were already in leaf, including the valuable timber tree *Alluandia procera* whose spines spiral up the tall straight trunk. When the tree is felled, the branches take root easily to produce a new generation of trees. This morning the birders were rewarded with both Red-capped and Green-capped Coua, a largely terrestrial and secretive species – unusually, both are found in this pocket of forest. A pale-phase Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher showed well and Magpie Robin, Stripe-throated Jery, Common Jery, Souimanga Sunbird and Madagascar Spinetail were also seen.

A highlight of the morning was the four Verreaux's Sifaka feeding on Didieraceae and we were lucky to observe how skilfully they leap from one lethal spine-laden branch to another with ease. As we grouped around an *Alluandia dumosa* to look at a Scops Owl, a Madagascar Nightjar flew out from our feet, landing on the path nearby, where it began to flap around and gape. We quickly retired as it was nesting almost at our feet. Returning to the bungalows for breakfast there was free time for some final exploration of the reserve before lunch. On the journey back to Fort Dauphin we stopped again to buy woodcarvings in the spiny forest. With the prospect of an early rise ahead, most of the group were ready for bed after supper.

Day 15

Wednesday 3rd November

FORT DAUPHIN TO TANA

Hot and humid, cooler in the evening

Our flight left earlier than originally scheduled so we had a short wait before the bus turned up at Tana Airport. Once aboard the bus we headed straight for Lake Alarobia - a small private reserve in the outskirts of the capital - where we spent a good 90 minutes observing the abundant birdlife around a small lake, fringed by woodland. Apart from the expected large numbers of Cattle Egret, Dimorphic Egret, Squacco Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron we noted several Madagascar Pond Herons and a single Common Moorhen. Among the large flocks of Red-billed Teal and White-faced Whistling Duck were eight Knob-billed Ducks and Michael picked out a few Hottentot Teal, differing from the Red-billed by their blue bill. A large raptor circling over the lake was identified as a female Reunion (Madagascar) Harrier. Desi succeeded in coaxing a Swamp Warbler out of the reeds. Madagascar Coucal called.

We then headed for the city centre down the bustling Avenue De l'Independence to the Railway Station, which has recently been converted into a mall of upmarket boutiques and a pleasant eatery, the Cafe de la Gare, where we took a rather un-Malagasy lunch of club sandwiches and chips. After lunch there was time for a quick tour of the city centre from where we climbed to the viewpoint at the Queen's Palace. We ended the day with a visit to the craft market, a row of over 100 stalls selling handicrafts from all over the island. Dinner and overnight were at the Orchid Hotel, near the airport.

Day 16

Thursday 4th November

TANA TO AMPIJOROA

Cool in Tana, very hot at Mahajanga and Ampijoroa

The flight left on time and we landed at Mahajanga in time for breakfast at the Piscine Hotel on the estuary front. A Common Sandpiper was about all we could muster up on the mud flats. En route to Ampijoroa, we paused to rescue an Oustalet's Chameleon crossing the road and subsequently found another in a nearby tree. We stopped at a viewpoint over the Betsiboka estuary and mangroves, where an unidentified raptor was picked out. We also paused to look at the information panels about dinosaur fossils unearthed in the area by researchers from Antananarivo University and Stony Brook University in the States. Some of the fossils may date from before Madagascar split from India. Arriving at Amboromalandy Lake, where the town was bustling as it was market day, we got out to look at a variety of birds in the rice paddies including Black-wing Stilt, Great Egret, Black Egret and Glossy Ibis. On the lake, a single Madagascar Little Grebe was on the water near the shore and Yellow-billed Kites were catching fish.

Ankarafantsika National Park, incorporating Ampijoroa Forestry Station, protects one of the largest remaining tracts of dry deciduous forest on the island. This superb reserve sees relatively few visitors because of the limited accommodation but its wildlife viewing can be superb. The bungalows and camp site are located by Lake Ravelobe, where several viewing platforms have been set up along the shore. After checking into our bungalows, we had lunch and then sat out the heat of the day until 3pm, when we met National Park guides Roman and Ravy. Some of the keen birders in the group had already been down to the lake shore and spotted Madagascar Jacana along with Humblot's Heron, Purple Heron, Green-backed Heron, Squacco Heron and the rarer Madagascar Pond Heron.

We decided as usual to divide into two groups: those keen to focus on birds went with Ravy and Desi, while the generalists set off with Roman and Cathy. We were hardly inside the park boundary, when Bagsy spotted a small raptor, which perched long enough for a couple of photos and was later confirmed as a female France's Sparrowhawk, though for a wild moment of excitement we had hoped that it might be a much rarer Banded Kestrel. We soon notched up a Paradise Flycatcher pair, Long-billed Greenbul and two Coquerel's Coua foraging on the forest floor, a Crested Coua and two Red-capped Couas that came into the open for the photographers. We failed to find the local speciality Van Dam's Vanga but Chabert's Vanga, Hook-billed Vanga and Sickle-billed Vanga were readily seen in the forest and in the car park area, where all three were nesting. Some of the group were lucky to get fantastic sightings of one of Ampijoroa's most sought after birds, White-breasted Mesite. This large terrestrial bird is spectacular to look at but comes into a new league with its piercing whistle call. Arguably the most beautiful of Ampijoroa's lemurs are Coquerel's Sifaka, of which several family groups are habituated and easy to observe, even around the car park area. Common Brown Lemurs were also spotted this afternoon, along with Milne-Edwards Sportive Lemur coming out of their day-time roosts at dusk.

Ampijoroa is a top reptile spot and during our afternoon's walk we saw Oustalet's Chameleon – jointly with Parson's this is Madagascar's and the world's largest chameleon. Local to this area and usually seen on tree trunks is the largest of the Phelsuma – the emerald green Koch's Giant Day Gecko. Collard and Spiny-tailed Iguanids are ubiquitous at Ampijoroa, especially in the car park and around the bungalows. Lined Plated Lizards are perhaps a little less common but also readily seen around the car park.

Day 17

Friday 5th November

Very hot and dry

Ampijoroa gets incredibly hot during the day so we confined our wildlife watching to the morning and late afternoon. Setting off at dawn, we had a fantastic pre-breakfast walk along the ridge behind the reception area. Here we found one of the target species, Van Dam's Vanga and what a sighting - an adult feeding a chick and both flitting from branch to branch. At least six Chabert's Vanga were spotted and as many Sickie-billed Vanga, including a pair on the nest and another using its curved bill to probe for insects on a tree-trunk. To this we added two sightings of Red-capped Coua, one on the nest right by the path and a pair of mating Greater Vasa Parrots. Rufous Vanga, a pair of Buttonquail, Green Pigeon, Ashy Cuckoo Shrike, Long-billed Greenbul, Crested Drongo and Broad-billed Roller. White-breasted Mesite and Crested Coua were heard but not seen.

Those interested in plants were drawn to a white 'shaving brush' flower *Tylachium angustifolium* on a long stem, whose Malagasy name 'Teloravina' means 'three leaves'. Both Collared Iguanid and Koch's Giant Day Gecko were also noted, together with a juvenile snake, which our guides identified as *Mimophis mahfalensis*. On the lemur front we did well this morning, with our guides finding a group of three roosting Grey Mouse Lemurs and two groups of Coquerel's Sifaka, the second with a young baby and beautifully lit by the morning sun as they fed in the canopy.

We returned for breakfast after which we enjoyed some action in the car park - first a quick look at some Mauritian Tomb Bats roosting in the narrow fork of a tree trunk. Then a Sickie-billed Vanga probing for insects, a Hook-billed Vanga tucking into a chameleon and lastly a pair of mating Lined Plated Lizards thrashing around in the leaf litter. Then, heading back into the forest, we observed Blue Vanga, Paradise Flycatcher, Common Jery and France's Sparrowhawk and another memorable encounter with White-breasted Mesite. Milne Edwards Sportive Lemur and Common Brown Lemur kept the generalists happy. Returning mid-morning Janette discovered that she and Michael had an unwanted (but harmless) guest wrapped around their curtain rail - a Tiny Night Snake *Ithyocybus miniatus*. Armed with a broom, our guides coaxed it back out of the bungalow.

After lunch there was time for a rest, though this was not that easy when the temperature tops 36 Celsius! Late afternoon we split into two groups for a boat trip on Lake Ravelobe. Both groups were lucky and saw Fish Eagle and some got spectacular photographs. Bagsy was more than happy with the 10 sightings of Allen's Gallinule, while others were delighted by the sheer numbers of Purple Heron, Humblot's Heron, Green-backed Heron, Black Egret and Glossy Ibis. Also present were two Madagascar Jacana, Kittlitz and Three-banded Plover and Common Moorhen. Finally, there were great views for one of the groups of Madagascar Harrier Hawk, as it swooped down at the end of the lake. Lake Ravelobe is famous for its Nile Crocodiles, which are protected in the area by local taboos. With several very large individuals hauled out on the lake shore, we were surprised to see so many locals fishing in the area!

At sunset, it was time to get torches and go in search of nocturnal lemurs. Now that it's no longer allowed to go into the park after dark, we knew it would be difficult to find Golden Brown Mouse Lemur, a local rarity. Much easier to find are Ampijoroa's Mongoose Lemurs, cathemeral rather than strictly nocturnal, and active at dusk, often starting their foraging activities close to the reception area. Ampijoroa is the best place in Madagascar to observe this species, which has a very limited distribution in the north west of the island.

After enjoying the antics of the Mongoose Lemurs, we began to walk through the forest alongside the lake and road, where we found three Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemurs and a Grey Mouse Lemur. Dwarf Lemurs move on all fours, unlike the Sportive Lemurs which move vertically, so it's easy to tell the difference. They also have, as the name suggests, large tails which store fat, allowing them to go into aestivation at the onset of the dry season. We also found an Oustalet's Chameleon tonight. After dinner, most of the group were ready for bed in anticipation of an early rise in the morning.

Day 18

Saturday 6th November

AMPIJOROA

Hot and sunny

We made our way to the forest at the northwest end of the lake, where there are chances to see another of Ankarafantsika's rarities, Schlegel's Asity. On this occasion we failed to find it but we did get very good views of Crested Coua and Coquerel's Coua and a brief sighting of White-breasted Mesite. Crested Drongo, Long-billed Greenbul, Chabert's Vanga, Hook-billed Vanga, Green Pigeon, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Souimanga Sunbird and Madagascar Buzzard were also seen. Every tour has a day that stands out, perhaps because a difficult species is seen or some unusual behaviour is noted and today was the day for us – well for Janette at any rate. Waiting for the rest of the group to return to the bus, Janette and the driver's mate saw two fosa amble across the road in front of the bus! A matter of minutes later, the rest of the group returned and as we dashed off in pursuit, a further two members of the group got a glimpse of Madagascar's elusive largest carnivore! Fosa are notoriously hard to observe except during the mating season in October and November when females pick a 'mating' tree, where they wait for interested males to turn up.

After breakfast with the heat building up, everyone had free time to do their own thing. There's so much wildlife around the bungalows – a pair of nesting Hoopoes, plus plenty of birds, reptiles and lemurs in the car park and restaurant area, so plenty of opportunities for photography. Assembling for lunch we compared notes and added Knob-billed Duck, Madagascar Harrier Hawk and Eleonora's Falcon to the day's list.

Later in the afternoon, we set out again to visit the large baobab on the north east side of the lake. Crossing the open ground we noted a Harrier Hawk and Buzzard circling overhead. We spotted Oustalet's Chameleon, a Koch's Giant Day Gecko and a Lined Plated Lizard devouring a large beetle. We also stopped to photograph a *Sourindea madagascariensis* whose grape-like fruits emerge from the trunk and are popular with Common Brown Lemurs.

Back at the bungalows, some of the group were keen to look for more lemurs and just inside the park entrance, the Mongoose Lemurs were waiting, as if on cue. This was a fantastic finale to the day as our guides then produced a Western Woolly Lemur pair with baby and a Milne-Edwards Sportive Lemur as well! Continuing with torches, we found Grey Mouse Lemur and Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, making a day total of seven lemur species, which equalled our best day at Ranomafana. For a change, Desi arranged for us to have dinner at the restaurant on the other side of the campsite, which went down well with everyone.

Day 19

Sunday 7th November

AMPIJOROA TO ANTANANARIVO

Very hot at Ampijoroa, cooler in Tana

This our final morning at Ampijoroa was a last chance for Schlegel's Asity and the birding group headed off again to the western end of the lake. After a lot of frustrating craning of necks our local guide came up trumps and found us not one but three Schegel's Asity, including a female perched on a high branch in the open, just perfect for photographing. We also enjoyed good views of Crested Coua, Magpie Robin and a perched Buzzard. Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Long-billed Greenbul, Common Newtonia and Souimanga Sunbird also showed. The generalists meanwhile found four Western Woolly Lemurs, a Milne-Edwards Sportive Lemur, a family of Coquerel's Sifaka and an assortment of birds including France's Sparrowhawk, Rufous Vanga, Magpie Robin, Coquerel's Coua, Red-capped Coua and Scops Owl.

Back for a final breakfast there was time to enjoy the Coquerel's Sifaka in the campsite as they climbed to the top of a huge bare tree, gaining enough height to then make spectacular leaps to reach the neighbouring mango tree, with its attendant benefits! Interestingly, not all of the lemur group were brave enough to do this, and several of them backed down and took another route. We had a last few sightings of White-headed Vanga, Lesser Vasa Parrot and Sickle-billed Vanga. The hoopoe pair that was nesting in a tree hollow by one of the bungalows was also in evidence and very obliging for the photographers as they pecked in the dirt. Leaving the forest of Ampijoroa, we spotted a Crested Drongo chasing a Madagascar Harrier Hawk, a bird very much larger than itself. It's easy to see why the Malagasy call the Drongo "King of the Birds". During the journey back to Mahajanga, we discovered our flight had again been re-scheduled to depart a little earlier than planned – that's Air Mad. These little changes mean we always have to allow additional time. Then arriving at the airport, we found we had to wait anyway! Our overnight stay was at the Orchid Hotel again.

Day 20

Monday 8th November

ANTANANARIVO TO ANDASIBE

Cooler and partly cloudy

The journey to Andasibe is never dull as we passed a succession of country towns and villages surrounded by market gardens and rice fields. Now well into spring, the paddies were brilliant green and many colourful shrubs and trees were coming into bloom along the road side, including yellow-flowering *Cassia* sp. The terrain is hilly with the underlying crystalline basement rocks in evidence at the surface. The recent building boom in Antanarivo has increased the demand for granite and all around we could see huge boulders being split by hand to supply the trade. Granite chips are made by hand too, and we noticed women with young families sitting by the side of the road chipping it by hand. We stopped by a viewpoint on the eastern escarpment before the road drops to the plain below. Down below in the paddies two Hamerkops posed for us and we observed one of their huge nests in a nearby tree. Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher and Green-backed Heron were also noted.

A little further along, we paused by the Mangoro River to look for Pratincole. Increasingly because of human pressure in the area, the species has become more difficult to see. We were lucky to have several excellent spotters in the group and on this occasion it was Bill who picked one out at great distance.

Two Common Sandpipers were also spotted, along with a Crested Drongo on its nest, seen by Maria. Arriving for lunch, we then had an afternoon visit to the Analamazaotra Reserve, now part of the huge Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. The main part of the reserve, which was created to preserve Indri habitat, is a 15-minute drive from the Vakona Lodge. Though containing some original forest cover, much of it is regrowth yet there's an impressive variety of wildlife on offer here. With local reserve guide Maurice and our Naturetrek guide Desi, who hails from this area, we were in good hands. Splitting into two groups we set off and noticed immediately that the terrain here is easier than on our earlier rainforest experience at Ranomafana.

Maurice drew our attention to a Nelicourvi Weaver nest overhanging the water as we crossed the stream. Here we also heard White-throated Rail and Madagascar Flufftail, but neither was inclined to show. By the small lake, we saw Purple Heron and Malachite Kingfisher, along with common species like Madagascar White-eye and Souimanga Sunbird. A Madagascar Starling flew over – they are dull in plumage and nowhere abundant. More rewarding were excellent views of a male Nuthatch Vanga, followed by Tylas, White-headed Vanga, Ward's Flycatcher and a further three Nuthatch Vangas and pair of Spectacled Greenbul.

We now turned our attention to the lemurs with our first sighting of Indri, the largest of these mammals. The best time to see them is in the morning and unsurprisingly these two were resting high in the canopy and out of reach of the cameras. Close by, Maurice's assistant had located a couple of Diademed Sifaka, who have recently been introduced into the reserve, following destruction of their habitat by a road alongside the nickel pipeline. Equal in size to Indri and arguably the most colourful of the lemurs, these Sifaka are very acrobatic and often hang upside down when feeding. We were also fortunate to observe a roosting pair Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur) with their baby and an Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur. Exploring around Vakona Lodge, numerous birds were noted, including Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar Fody, Madagascar White-eye and many Mascarene Martins nesting under the eaves of the dining room. Babsy, Steve, Jonas, Kathy and John all found the first and only tenrec of the trip on the path by the small stream, which we identified as a Lowland Streaked Tenrec.

Day 21

Tuesday 9th November

ANDISABE-MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK

Patchy rain and cool

Some of the group were up early around the grounds of the hotel, finding Madagascar Fody, Madagascar White-eye, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar Coucal, Souimanga Sunbird and Ward's Flycatcher. After an early breakfast we loaded onto the coach for the one-hour drive into the heart of Mantadia's rainforest. The dirt track was forged into this primary forest for the benefit of a graphite mine, which has since closed, but the track remains to allow visitor access to a network of trails. Mantadia sees a lot fewer visitors than Analamazaotra, but it offers the chance to observe some very rare birds, as well as possible sightings of Black and White Ruffed Lemur, a canopy species that are notoriously difficult to see. As we drove along, we checked out the red-flowering *Symphonia* sp, where Indri and Black and White Ruffed Lemurs can be seen feeding at this time of year. Kathy spotted two Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs feeding on stands of bamboo by the side of the road but they quickly moved off when we stopped to observe them.

A little further on we stopped again to photograph a male Cuckoo Roller, perched on a branch above the road. A couple of Blue Couas were moving to and fro, bringing food to the nest. A Lesser Vasa Parrot also obliged for the cameras. Arriving at the trailhead, Maurice went immediately to check out a nesting site for Scaly Ground Roller, its tunnel entrance actually in the car park. A little patience paid off and shortly we were treated to a great view of this rare endemic bird, returning to the nest. Next, Maurice and his assistant led us to view a pair of Short-legged Ground Rollers, one being harassed by a Paradise Flycatcher, perhaps nesting nearby. Another close sighting was a pair of Crossley's Babbler, easily recognised by the male's prominent white eye stripe. Everyone got excellent views of a family group of Woolly Lemurs roosting under a huge epiphytic *Asplenium* clinging to a tree trunk. Three pairs of eyes stared down from a huddle of furry limbs, distinguished by the clear white patches on the hind legs.

At this point we divided into two groups, the birders going with Maurice to try and locate Common Sunbird Asity and Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, while the generalists went with Desi. Mantadia means 'hard walking' and the reserve trails certainly live up to their name as they are often steep. We elected to take it at a steady pace, enjoying the many epiphytic plants adorning the huge buttressed tree trunks of this largely undisturbed primary rainforest. The birding group heard but did not see Common Sunbird Asity and Maurice commented that both species of Sunbird Asity are getting more difficult to see. Common Newtonia, Red-tailed Vanga, Nuthatch Vanga, Blue Vanga, Blue Coua were seen, and a Velvet Asity showed well on the nest. Three Red-bellied Lemurs were spotted and after a lot of searching, both groups got good views of Black and White Ruffed Lemur. A canopy-feeding species, they rarely descend to oblige the photographers. Reptiles were more challenging this morning, but we did see a Short-horned Chameleon and two Lined Emerald Day Geckos on a *Ravenala* Travelles' Palm.

The small pond by the remains of the graphite mine yielded numerous birds, including Madagascar Little Grebe, Common Moorhen, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher, Tylas, Swamp Warbler, Spinetail Swift, Ward's Flycatcher and a Meller's Duck. Strolling along the road, several huge yellow and black caterpillars were noted. Returning to Vakona Lodge for lunch we met up with Janette, who had stayed behind that morning to explore the surrounds of the hotel and had seen a fosa on her walk. Now just how lucky is that – three fosas in one trip!

After lunch, some of the group were keen to go back into Analamazaotra reserve, where we found two Madagascar Tree Boas by the old fish farm and at the Lac Vert. A Parson's Chameleon provided some of the group with great photo opportunities, while others spotted a Glass Frog *Mantidactylus pulcher* on a *Pandanus* leaf – these diminutive frogs entire life-cycle takes place on this tree. Common Brown Lemurs put in an appearance and numerous birds, including Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher on its tiny cup-shaped nest, just a few feet off the ground, Nelicourvi Weaver, Cuckoo Roller, Spectacled Greenbul, Long-billed Greenbul, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Crested Drongo, and Red-billed Teal in flight.

At dusk we regrouped at Feo Ny'Ala for a drink before starting a night walk along the road. A Short-nosed Chameleon and several Short-horned Chameleons were spotted on overhanging branches and a skink *Amphiglossus* sp by the side of the road. Two brightly coloured Tree Frogs *Boophis viridis* and *Boophis rappoides* were observed on wild ginger leaves. On the lemur front, we picked out a pair of vertically leaping Woolly Lemurs in action and three horizontal moving Furry-eared Dwarf Lemurs, easily recognised by their long body and short legs.

Day 22

Wednesday 10th November

Cool and partly cloudy

A 7am start gave us most of the morning to enjoy a last visit to Analamazaotra Reserve. As we entered the reserve, a couple of Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs were busy stripping the tough outer sheath of a bamboo stalk to get to the more palatable pith. Along this stretch of path we saw two Blue Pigeon in flight and heard both Rand's Warbler and Stripe-throated Jery. A Madagascar Wood Rail crossed the path in front of us and most got a good view of it.

Though everyone had their own "last chance to see" agenda for the morning, most were keen to see more of the Indri and hear them call. Indri groups defend their territory by scent-marking and by haunting melodic calls that improbably resemble those of killer-whales. This was the sound that drew us to quicken our pace as calling bouts normally last just minutes and we wanted to be there! But clearly this was no normal vocal session. Arriving on the scene five breathless minutes later, the Indri were still howling, heads tilted skywards, gaping muzzles launching their deafening wails.

Unknowingly we had stumbled on a rare territorial dispute involving two groups of Indri and it was out and out war. We listened and watched mesmerised as the fight progressed from a slanging match to fisticuffs, witnessing one hapless Indri fall from its perch, dislodged by a powerful blow from a rival. It was hard to tear ourselves away from this amazing encounter but Maurice and Desi had seen the Diademed Sifaka close by and they were in a 'playful' mood. The morning also gave us good views of White-throated Oxylobes and Spectacled Greenbul feeding its young on the nest. The group now divided with some heading off to look for the Parson's Chameleon that had been photographed yesterday, while Maurice took the others to explore a different area of forest, where we found Common Brown Lemur, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Long-billed Greenbul, Spectacled Greenbul and a large stick insect.

During the journey back to the capital, we stopped off at the Madagascar Exotic Reptile Breeding Centre, which gave us a chance to photograph and observe numerous species of Chameleon, Gecko, Frog and Butterfly. There was time for a quick visit to the craft market before our final dinner at the Orchid Hotel. Then it was time to say goodbye to our Australian group members, who were staying on for another night, and we made our way to the airport.

Day 23

Thursday 11th November

Return to the UK

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Species List

Mammals (✓ = recorded but not counted) (H = heard only)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																			
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Indri	<i>Indri indri</i>																		2+1		8
2	Diademed Sifaka	<i>Propithecus diadema diadema</i>																				2
3	Milne-Edwards Sifaka	<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>			2+1	1																
4	Coquerel's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi coquereli</i>														✓	✓	✓	✓			
5	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi verreauxi</i>							6				✓	✓	✓							
6	Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi laniger</i>																		2+1	4+2	
7	Western Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi occidentalis</i>																2+1	4			
8	Ring-tailed Lemur	<i>Lemur catta</i>					20+						✓	✓	✓							
9	Black and White Ruffed Lemur	<i>Varecia variegata variegata</i>			H																	4
10	Mongoose Lemur	<i>Eulemur mongoz</i>															6	7+1				
11	Red-bellied Lemur	<i>Eulemur rubiventer</i>			2	9																3
12	Common Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus fulvus</i>														✓	1	1	✓		2	1+1
13	Red-fronted Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus rufus</i>			4	✓	2	4+2	1				✓	✓	✓							
14	Greater Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur simus</i>				2																
15	Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur griseus griseus</i>				2														3	2	2
16	Golden Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>			2	2																
17	Grey Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus murinus</i>									8		2			1	4	4				
18	Brown Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus rufus</i>			2	1																
19	Reddish-grey Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus griseorufus</i>											5	4	1							
20	Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus medius</i>															3	1				
21	Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogaleus crossleyi</i>																				
22	Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur edwardsi</i>														3	1	1	1			
23	White-footed Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur leucopus</i>											6	8	1							
24	Hubbard's Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur hubbardi</i>							1													

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																			
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
25	Fosa	<i>Cryptoprocta ferox</i>																2			1	
26	Eastern Ring-tailed Mongoose	<i>Galidia elegans</i>			2	1																
27	Lowland Streaked Tenrec	<i>Hemicentetes semispinosus</i>																				
28	Eastern Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys rufus</i>			3																	
29	Western Tuft-tailed Rat	<i>Eliurus myoxinus</i>																1				
30	Commerson's Leaf-nosed Bat	<i>Hipposideros commersoni</i>																	✓			
31	Mauritian Tomb Bat	<i>Taphozous mauritanus</i>																2		8		
32	Madagascar Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus rufus</i>												✓								
33	Eastern Sucker-footed Bat	<i>Myzopoda aurita</i>			✓																	
34	Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>											6									

Reptiles

1	White-bellied Chameleon	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>			2															9	1	
2	Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicorn</i>			1																4	
3	Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii cristifer</i>																			1	1
4	Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii</i>			1																	
5	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>		1	1	1														1		
6	O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>					1															
7	Wills Chameleon	<i>Calumma willsi</i>			1																	
8	Blue-nosed Chameleon	<i>Calumma boettgeri</i>				1																
9	Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>			1																	
10	Belted Chameleon	<i>Furcifer balteatus</i>			1																	
11	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>					1								3	1	2					
12	Rhinoceros Chameleon	<i>Furcifer rhinocerotus</i>															2					
13	Spiny-backed (Warty) Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>											3									
14	Jewel (Carpet) Chameleon	<i>Furcifer lateralis</i>						1														

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																			
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	Lined Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata bifasciata</i>			10															6		4
16	Koch's Giant Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma madagascariensis kochi</i>														3	6	1				
17	Four-spotted Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>			4																	
18	Modest Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma modesta modesta</i>											1	1								
19	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikoriae</i>																				1
20	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>			2																	
21	Collared Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cuvieri</i>						1								✓	✓	✓	✓			
22	Spiny-tailed Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cyclurus</i>										1				✓	✓	✓	✓			
23	Dumeril's Madagascar Swift	<i>Oplurus quadrimaculatus</i>		1					1				4									
24	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chalerodon madagascariensis</i>										✓	✓			✓						
25	Lined Plated Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus laticaudata</i>						1								✓	✓	✓		1		
26	Ornate Plated Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus ornata</i>			2						1						2					
27	Big-headed Gecko	<i>Paroedura picta</i>											4									
28	Grandidier's Dwarf Gecko	<i>Lygodactylus tolampyae</i>																1				
29	Gray's Leaf-toed Gecko (House Gecko)	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>									2	2				✓						
30	Elegant Skink	<i>Trachylepis elegans</i>		1																		1
31	Gravenhorst's skink	<i>Trachylepis gravenhorstii</i>				1																
32	Skink	<i>Amphiglossus sp.</i>																				1
33	Madagascar tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>			1	3														2	1	1
34	Cat-eyed snake	<i>Madagascarophis colubrinus occidentalis</i>										1										
35	Tiny Night Snake (Zebu killing snake)	<i>Ithyocyphus miniatus</i>															1	1				
36	Malagasy Giant Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i>																1				
37	Lined Snake	<i>Liopholidophis lateralis</i>						3											1			
38	Big-eyed Snake	<i>Mimophis mahfalensis</i>															1					
39	Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>															6	2				

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																				
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
40	Spider Tortoise	<i>Pyxis arachnoides</i>												1									

Amphibians

1	Mascarene Grass Frog	<i>Ptychadena mascareniensis</i>						2							2								
2	Madagascar Bright-eyed frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>			6	2					6												
3	Red-backed tree frog	<i>Boophis rappoides</i>																				1	
4	Green Bright-eyed frog	<i>Boophis viridis</i>																				1	
5	Dark-sided stream frog	<i>Mantidactylus melanopleura</i>																					1
6	Madagascar glass frog	<i>Mantidactylus pulcher</i>																				1	
7	Baron's Painted Mantella	<i>Mantella baroni</i>			1																		
8		<i>Anodonthyla boulengeri</i> "Ranomafana"			1																		
9		<i>Plethodonothyla notosticta</i>			1																		

Birds (H = heard only)

1	Madagascar Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>	2													2						2	
2	Red-tailed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>								12													
3	Long-tailed Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>											1										
4	African Darter	<i>Anhinga rufa</i>														1	3	1					
5	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	20												✓								
6	Common Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	10												✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
7	Madagascar Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola idae</i>													3	1	1						
8	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>		2		1										3	10	✓	✓	2			
10	Black Egret	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	1												20+	10	5	2	1				
11	Dimorphic Heron	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	100+	20			3	2		1		1			1	✓	✓	✓	✓	10	10		6
12	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	20	10									1		5	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	5		

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																			
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1				1									4	10	10	10	2	1	
14	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>								1										1		
15	Humboldt's Heron	<i>Ardea humbloti</i>														1	3	2	1			
16	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1	3			2							2						8		2
17	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>														✓	✓	✓	✓	4		
18	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>										1										
19	Lesser Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>								11												
20	White-faced Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	✓					20				2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
21	Knob-billed Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>													6			1				
22	Meller's Duck	<i>Anas melleri</i>				1															1	
23	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	30	11		4		40				✓			✓						2	2
24	Hottentot Teal	<i>Anas hottentota</i>													✓							
25	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptus</i>		5	1	2	5	20	15	1	1	1	20	20	20	2	20		1	6		
26	Madagascar Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vociferoides</i>															2					
27	Madagascar Harrier- Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>															1	1	2			
28	Madagascar Harrier	<i>Circus macroscleles</i>			1										1							
29	Frances's Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter francesiae</i>														1	1		1			
30	Madagascar Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>			1		2	1	2							2	1	2	2	1		
31	Madagascar Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	1	4		1	4	10	6		2	2	3	10	8	3	1		1		1	1
32	Eleonora's Falcon	<i>Falco eleonora</i>																2				
33	Madagascar Partridge	<i>Margaroperdix madagascariensis</i>					2															
34	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	H	4								1										
35	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>							6				H	50	50		40					
36	White-breasted Mesite	<i>Mesitornis variegatus</i>														2	2	2	H			
37	Madagascar Buttonquail	<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>							2	3	2			2	2		2	2	2	2		
38	Madagascar Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>		H		1														H		
39	Madagascar Wood Rail	<i>Canirallus kioloides</i>																		1	H	1

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																				
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
40	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>		1					H									H	H		H	1	
41	Lesser Gallinule	<i>Porphyryla alleni</i>																10	4				
42	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>														1	1	1	1				1
43	Madagascar Jacana	<i>Actophilornis albinucha</i>															2	2					
44	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>									10	10					20			1			
45	Crab Plover	<i>Dromas ardeola</i>									12												
46	Madagascar Pratincole	<i>Glareola ocularis</i>																			1		
47	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>										2	3										
48	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>									2	10	10				1	6					
49	Madagascar Plover	<i>Charadrius thoracicus</i>									1	2					1						
50	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>		2								4					3						
51	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>									6												
52	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>											3										
53	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>									5	1	2										
54	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>									2	1	5										
55	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										2	2	10	3								
56	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1	1								1	1		2		1				2		
57	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>									20	7	6										
58	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>										8	13										
59	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>										2											
60	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>										1											
61	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>												3									
62	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>									3	1	1										
63	Greater Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bergii</i>									10	1		1									
64	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>									10												
65	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>									20												
66	Madagascar Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles personatus</i>													5	6							

	Common Name	Scientific Name	OCTOBER / NOVEMBER																				
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
67	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columbalivia</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
68	Madagascar Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>			1	2			H		1	4	10	10	10		3	12	3	2	2	2	
69	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>						5	3	6	6	5	10	50	50		3	10	6	2			
70	Madagascar Green Pigeon	<i>Treron australis</i>							2						1		2	2	2				
71	Madagascar Blue Pigeon	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>			2	6	1														1	2	
72	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>				2						4					2						
73	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>			H			1	10		1			5	3		3	10	6	6	1	4	
74	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>							8		2	15		20	20		1	10	10	10			
75	Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>		1	H	1	H	H	H		H	1		H	H		H	1	H	H	H	H	
76	Giant Coua	<i>Coua gigas</i>							H				4	2	10								
77	Coquerel's Coua	<i>Coua coquereli</i>							4								1		1	3			
78	Red-fronted Coua	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>				2																	
79	Running Coua	<i>Coua cursor</i>							1			2											
80	Red-capped Coua	<i>Coua ruficeps</i>													1		3	2		1			
81	Green-capped Coua	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>										1			1								
82	Crested Coua	<i>Coua cristata</i>						H	3				4	10	10		4	8	1	3			
83	Blue Coua	<i>Coua caerulea</i>			2	3															H	3	
84	Madagascar Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>		2	1	3	1	1	1		2	6	1	2	4	H	6	5	6		1	2	1
85	Torotoroka Owl	<i>Otus madagascariensis</i>						1			H		1	2	1			1		1			
86	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>																				H	
87	White-browed Owl	<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>											2	4									
88	Marsh Owl	<i>Asio capensis</i>					1														1		
89	Madagascar Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>			H	1	H		2		2	1	2	1	1	H	H	H	H		H	1	
90	Madagascar Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>											1		2							1	
91	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>					1	10			1		2				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	
92	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>											1										
93	Madagascar Black Swift	<i>Apus balstoni</i>	1					10	2											1			

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
94	Madagascar Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo vintsioides</i>	2	2				2				1				2	2	2	2	1	1	3	
95	Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx madagascariensis</i>			1																		
96	Madagascar Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	4	10	2		6	20	2		4	6	4		2		3	4	10	4	10	10	
97	Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>			1			6	2				3	2	1		2	2	10	10	H	3	
98	Short-legged Ground Roller	<i>Brachypteracias leptosomus</i>																					2
99	Scaly Ground Roller	<i>Brachypteracias squamigera</i>																					1
100	Pitta-like Ground Roller	<i>Atelornis pittoides</i>			1																		
101	Rufous-headed Ground Roller	<i>Atelornis crossleyi</i>				1																	
102	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>										2											
103	Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>				4		5	2							3	1	2			H	4	
104	Madagascar Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>	2					1	2	2	2	2	2	3	1		2	2	3	3			
105	Velvet Asity	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>			1	1																	
106	Schlegel's Asity	<i>Philepitta schlegeli</i>															2	H	4				
107	Common Sunbird-Asity	<i>Neodrepanis coruscans</i>																					H
108	Madagascar Bush Lark	<i>Mirafra hova</i>	4	1			10	6	✓	✓	2	✓		4	4		4						
109	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>			10	3	4	10	1			1	3		10	1	15	6	2	2	20	20	
110	Brown-throated Sand Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	10	10		1		6			1												
111	Madagascar Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	6	3	5	10	1	1								1					1	4	2
112	Ashy Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>			2	6						1					2	6	2	1	2	1	
113	Madagascar Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>		1	✓	4	1	✓	✓		✓	4	✓	4	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	Littoral Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola imerinus</i>								5	4												
115	Forest Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei</i>				2																	1
116	Benson's Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola bensoni</i>						10															
117	Madagascar Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus albospectularis</i>			6	1	1		1		8	4	10	2	6		2	2	8	2	1	2	2
118	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	3	2	1	2	3																
119	Grey Emu-tail	<i>Amphispalis seebohmi</i>			2																		
120	Madagascar Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>		6	8	17	H														1	3	H

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
121	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>									✓	✓	✓										
122	Madagascar Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>											1			1						2	
123	Thamnornis Warbler	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>											1										
124	Rand's Warbler	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>				1	1															H	
125	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>			1	1			1		1	4	1	H	1		2	1	4	4		1	
126	Dark Newtonia	<i>Newtonia ampichroa</i>				1																	
127	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>											1										
128	Madagascar Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>		2				2	4		8	4	4		1	2	2	H			H		
129	Ward's Flycatcher	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>			1		1														2	2	
130	Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>			4	5		1	2				3	10	8		4	10	4	8	2	6	2
131	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>		1		3			2		1	3	✓	✓	4			2	✓		H		
132	Green Jery	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>			1			1						1									
133	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>				2							4	4	1	1		1			H	1	
134	Cryptic Warbler	<i>Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi</i>				H																	
135	White-throated Oxylabes	<i>Oxylabes madagascariensis</i>			1																		2
136	Crossley's Babbler	<i>Mystacornis crossleyi</i>			2																		2
137	Appert's Greenbul	<i>Berniera apperti</i>							7														
138	Long-billed Greenbul	<i>Berniera madagascariensis</i>				1			2								2	2	1	3	H	1	2
139	Spectacled Greenbul	<i>Berniera zosterops</i>			4																2	2	2
140	Grey-crowned Greenbul	<i>Berniera cinereiceps</i>				1																	
141	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia sovimanga</i>		3	2	6	1	2	3	2	2	4	4	1	1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2
142	Madagascar Green Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia notata</i>	3		1	2		2			2				1		1	1	1	4	1	4	1
143	Madagascar White-eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	2	1	6	10	3		8				2	6	10	10			1		10	10	
144	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>			2	2															1	2	
145	Rufous Vanga	<i>Schetba rufa</i>							1									4		1			
146	Hook-billed Vanga	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>			1							2	2	3	3		2	2	2	1			1
147	Van Dam's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris damii</i>																3	1				

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
148	Lafresnaye's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>										1										
149	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falculea palliata</i>										2				1	6	6	4			
150	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>			2											2	2	2	5			
151	Chabert's Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>			2	1					3	3		1		1	6	4	2		1	
152	Madagascar Blue Vanga	<i>Cyanolanius madagascarinus</i>			2	4			1							2		1		1		
153	Nuthatch Vanga	<i>Hypositta corallirostris</i>																	5	1		
154	Tylas	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>			1	2													2	1		
155	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
156	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
157	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
158	Madagascar Starling	<i>Saroglossa aurata</i>																	1			
159	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>				1													2	4	2	
160	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>							15	4	2	4	✓	10	✓		1	4	✓	✓		
161	Madagascar Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	✓	✓				1	1	4	✓	2			✓	✓				1	1	
162	Forest Fody	<i>Foudia eminentissima</i>			4	2	1					1										
163	Madagascar Mannikin	<i>Lonchura nana</i>	3	1	2			4		2						1				10	2	

Other Taxa

1	Golden orb spider	<i>Nephila madagascariensis</i>			✓	✓																
2	Crab (kite) spider	<i>Gasteracanthinae sp</i>				✓																
3	Green Lynx spider	<i>Peucetia madagascariensis</i>								✓												
4	Giant Pill Millipede	<i>Sphaerotheriida sp.</i>			✓	✓														✓		
5	Hissing cockroach	<i>Elliptorhina coquereliana</i>							✓					✓								
6	Flatid leaf bug	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>							✓													
7	Plataspid bug	<i>Libyaspis coccinelloides</i>						✓														
8	Giraffe-necked weevil	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>			✓	✓																
9	African monarch butterfly	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>						✓														

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
10	Blue butterfly	<i>Anternica radama</i>													✓											
11	Giant Swallowtail type butterfly	<i>Atrophaneura anterior</i>							✓	✓																
12	Citrus swallowtail butterfly	<i>Papilio demodocus</i>							✓																	
13	Emperor Moth	<i>Antherina suraka</i>			✓																					
14	Giant locust	<i>Phymateus saxosus</i>		✓																						
15	Scorpion	<i>Opisthacanthus sp</i>												✓												
16	Stick insect	order Phasmatodea		✓																			✓			
17	Praying mantis	order Mantodea		✓																			✓			
18	Firefly	<i>Lampyridae sp</i>																				✓				

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