

Madagascar's Lemurs

Naturetrek Tour Report

19 September - 3 October 2012



Verreaux's Sifaka by Colin Johnson



Hubbard's Sportive Lemur by Colin Johnson



Ring-tailed Lemurs by Cathy Harlow



Subdesert Mesite by Cathy Harlow

Report compiled by Cathy Harlow
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Day 1

Wednesday 19th September

LONDON TO PARIS

The group flew in on several flights to Paris and by early evening we had gathered at the Park Inn Hotel, near Paris Roissy Airport. Over dinner at the hotel we soon discovered that many in the group were seasoned Naturetrek travellers – some having clocked up half a dozen or more trips. After sharing past experiences, our thoughts turned to the weeks ahead and anticipation of what Madagascar would bring us.

Day 2

Thursday 20th September

PARIS TO ANTANANARIVO

We took the bus from the hotel back to the airport. Some of the group had already checked in their bags the whole way to Antananarivo, whilst others had elected to pick them up at Paris, so needed to check them back in again. Arriving early at the airport meant that we could sail through the security checks, giving time for breakfast before boarding. Here we met Jean, the final member of our group, who had arrived by train from Brussels.

Luckily the flight was not full and some had empty seats to spread into. There was a slight delay leaving but eventually we were airborne. After lunch, the hours passed enjoying the good selection of films and music on board or catching up on some reading. We were served a light snack just before landing and got handed immigration cards to fill out. As we were all seated quite far forward in the plane we were first off, which helped us to get near the front of the immigration queue. This can take hours but we were all through quite swiftly, only to wait a while for the bags to come through. In the arrivals hall, local guide Rivo was waiting for us. At the money exchange bureaux, we swapped sterling, euros and dollars for thick wads of local Ariary - millionaires at last! By now it was past midnight but after a short bus ride, we were checked in and ready to bed down at the Orchid Hotel.

Day 3

Friday 21st September

ANTANANARIVO TO ANT SIRABE

Weather: scattered cloud and warm

After a restful night and breakfast at the Orchid Hotel, Rivo and Cathy did a briefing on the holiday on the hotel's terrace. Overhead, we spotted some Mascarene Martins and Black Egrets were foraging in the rice paddies below. Once the luggage was loaded on the roof, we stopped at a supermarket to stock up on bottled water and then we were off heading west through the suburbs of Antananarivo, Madagascar's colourful and chaotic capital. The city is sited on numerous hills, dotted like colourful islands on a sea of emerald rice paddies. We observed Squacco Heron, Great Egret and Dimorphic Egret foraging for food as we shuffled our way along the traffic-clogged roads to the Lemur Park. This small private zoo on the outskirts of the city is aimed at introducing local children to their country's wildlife. Among the park's nine lemur species were Black and White Ruffed Lemur, Ring-tailed Lemur and Common Brown Lemur, all species we would encounter in the wild. The visit also introduced us to several types we would not be seeing: Crowned Sifaka, Coquerel's Sifaka, Mongoose Lemur and Black Lemur.

A network of paths zig-zag along the banks of the river, that bounds the reserve on one side. Here we spotted Common Sandpiper, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar White Eye, Stonechat, Souimanga Sunbird and numerous Mascarene Martins in flight. A couple of noisy Madagascar Kestrels were busy mating on the branch of a large eucalyptus. The warm sunshine had coaxed out a splendid Collared Iguanid, which was noted basking on a granite boulder. A Zonosaurus Plated Lizard, and our first chameleons of the trip a male and female Oustalet's also met with enthusiasm. A Citrus Swallowtail butterfly flitted around but wouldn't pause for the camera and a large Digger Wasp (*Sphegidae*) buzzed around us. A vine, decked with yellow trumpet-shaped flowers, was identified by the park guide as *Solandra maxima*, introduced from Central America. On the opposite bank of the river, we saw *Cassia didymobotrya* a shrub with yellow candelabra flower heads and a Greenback Heron skulking at the water's edge. Ann spotted our first Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher along the same stretch of river.

After lunch at the Lemur Park, we set off back towards the capital but got caught in traffic. As we inched along, we passed an exhumation ceremony, known locally as *famadibana*, where relatives of a deceased family member exhume the bones to rewrap them in a clean burial shroud and parade them around the village. These are happy celebrations, when families gather from all corners, ending with a feast of zebu. Once on the RN7, the main road south, we passed the president's residence, an opulent edifice modelled on the nineteenth century Queen Ranaivalona's palace.

Soon, we were enjoying the sweeping vistas typical of Madagascar's Hauts Plateaux - smooth granite inselbergs rising from the fertile rice paddies, where women were bent double planting out rice seedlings. We paused by the roadside to admire the handiwork of local villagers, who skilfully crochet hats and bags from raffia. Along the way we noted abundant Cattle Egrets, Feral Pigeons, a Madagascar Fody, several Madagascar Wagtails and numerous Common Mynas. We ended this day of travel arriving just after dark at Antsirabe, where we checked into our rooms at Camelia, a small family-run hotel. With a long drive ahead tomorrow, most of the group headed for bed straight after dinner.

Day 4

Saturday 22nd September

ANTSIRABE TO RANOMAFANA

Weather: light cloud, fairly warm and good visibility

An early start got us on the road at 7.30 to continue the drive south through the mountainous backbone of the island. The scenery is seldom dull, punctuated by ever-changing scenes from village life. Zebu cattle play a pivotal role, both in providing transport and in softening the hard-baked clay of the rice paddies, which we stopped to photograph as a trio of Hamerkops were displaying on the paddy wall. The Indonesian origin of Madagascar's highland people is evident in the way the rice paddies are stacked up the hillsides in terraces, which we photographed at our next stop by a small village. Within seconds of alighting from the bus, we were surrounded by a host of giggling children, who were delighted by the pictures in the bird book. Here we saw flocks of Brown-throated Sand Martins in flight over the paddies. A Long-billed Green Sunbird flew over, its iridescent plumage lit up by the early morning sun.

A little further on we passed through a forest of native Tapia trees *Uapaca bojeri*. Madagascar's native silk worm feeds on the leaves of this fire-resistant tree, which resembles a cork oak. This was a good place to break the journey and take a short walk and we spotted Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Bulbul, Common Jery, Madagascar Kestrel and a very distant Madagascar Buzzard. Local women were collecting the tapia fruit, which become edible once they fall to the ground. Continuing south, we finally arrived at the attractive historic town of Ambositra, known for its skilled wood carvers, several of the group bought souvenirs and locally produced raw silk scarves, while others got refreshments at the 'not so' Grand Hotel.

Still journeying south, we stopped for our picnic lunch by a fragment of rainforest, where a small pond and marsh looked promising. A dozen Red-billed Teal were on the water and this was a fruitful stop as we also found Purple Heron, Mascarene Martins, a male Madagascar Fody in breeding plumage, Madagascar Wagtail and two splendid Jewel Chameleons – these are often spotted in degraded vegetation and close to the ground so quite easy to identify. A Four-spotted Iguanid was seen basking on a granite boulder. We'd hoped to find Snipe here but were out of luck this time, though we did hear Madagascar Flufftail call.

Back on the road again, Sarah spotted a Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher perched over a rice paddy and a succession of Dimorphic, Cattle and Great Egrets added interest to the next stage of the journey. Stopping to view a Madagascar Kestrel, we then turned off the main road towards Ranomafana National Park. The early start meant that we had time to stop to see the Namorona Falls, where the river of the same name tumbles off the eastern escarpment in several dramatic leaps. The cliff-face on the opposite side of the road was festooned with Dancing Lady Orchids *Cynorchis purpurescens*, pink and white terrestrial *Cynorchis sp* and a purple *Streptocarpus sp*. Soaked by water droplets, the cliff was an idea habitat for *Boophis madagascariensis* Tree Frogs. Their deep croaks were unmistakable but trying to see them against the rock involved some effort. As Sarah had a special interest in bats, we peeked into a cave where we found three Eastern Sucker-footed Bats roosting.

The last 30 minutes of the journey brought us down off the escarpment to the Cristo Hotel, a ten-minute drive from the village of Ranomafana. It's an unpretentious family-run hotel in a beautiful riverside setting. With an early rise in the morning, most were ready for bed as soon as dinner was over.

Day 5

Sunday 23rd September

RANOMAFANA

Weather: sunny and warm

After a 5.30 breakfast, we hopped on the coach for the short drive to the park entrance, where we met up with park guides Jean-Chrys and Bertrand and lemur spotters Bako and Ju. This was our first full day of wildlife viewing and everyone was keen to get into the forest to look for lemurs. But the car park is often really good for birds and within minutes we were checking out a pair of Madagascar Starlings perched on a nearby tree – as starlings go it's rather a dull bird though not always easy to see. A Madagascar Cuckoo Roller flew overhead and Rand's Warbler called from a distant tree-top. A Nelicourvi Weaver was flitting among the shaving-brush blossom of an introduced *Eugenia jambos* and a pair of Red-tailed Vangas showed well.

Ranomafana National Park is a rainforest reserve protecting important tracts of both primary and regrowth forest. It was created following the discovery of the Golden Bamboo Lemur *Hapapapamur aureus*, which was identified as a new species in 1985. The morning light was mellow and as we crossed the Namorona River, Mascarene Martins were busy gathering nesting material and a Common Sandpiper was spotted on the rocks. Several of the group recognized the white flowers of the Spider Lily *Crinum asiaticum*. Plunging into thicker forest on the river's opposite bank, the lemur spotters were sent ahead to look for lemurs – this can take some time so we continued climbing through the forest at a steady pace, enjoying a close view of a female Paradise Flycatcher and Pitta-like Ground Roller, one of Madagascar's most stunning birds. Another highlight was a male Velvet Asity, obligingly perched at eye level, its lime-green wattle clearly visible. Related to broadbills, asities are endemic to the island and the males of this species are thought to establish leks.

After enjoying the birds, we switched our focus to mammals. Ranomafana is a lemur hot spot and eight or more mammal species are readily observed. First up was a group of Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, headed by the dominant female and moving on all fours along the branches, with agile leaps from bough to bough. An Eastern Red Forest Rat scuttled among the leaf litter and some of our group got a decent view of it as we approached a group of Greater Bamboo Lemur. Golden Bamboo Lemurs are Ranomafana's signature species but Greater Bamboo Lemur are now considered more endangered. We were lucky to observe the most accessible family group, which is now down to just two closely related individuals, who will not breed unless an outsider joins them. Next up were a family of Milne-Edwards Sifaka, who allowed us a brief look before bounding out of sight in huge trunk-to-trunk leaps. Lastly we came across four Red-bellied Lemurs at rest. It's such a privilege to sit on the forest floor and quietly observe them just doing their lemur things: a little grooming, a snuggle, a bit of scent marking and then fully awake moving off to forage. We also got a distant view of Golden Bamboo Lemur today. This was a long and full-on morning so by 11.30 we were ready for a break. Making our way out of the park, we came across a Pygmy Kingfisher perched close to the path. What a stunning little bird and so obliging!

We took lunch at Setam Lodge close to the park before making our way back to the hotel for a short rest. At 3.30 we were back on the bus, making our way to Vohiparara in the upper section of the park. En-route we stopped to watch three Red-fronted Brown Lemurs feeding on a *Ficus* sp just above the road – a Blue Pigeon and Lesser Vasa Parrot were there for the same reason.

Pausing further up the road, our guides dived into the undergrowth and emerged with a stunning Baron's Painted Mantella, a tiny but very colourful frog. Here too we observed an impressive spotted beetle and a Giraffe-necked Weevil, on its host plant *Dichaetanthera cordifolia*.

As the light faded, we made our way back down the hill where Blue Coua, Forest Rock Thrush and Forest Fody showed well. Rivo identified a small frog as *Scaphiophryne spinosa*. At dusk, Brown Mouse Lemurs come to lick the banana-smeared roadside tree-trunks, set up by some of the local guides. Properly managed, this can be a rewarding experience but there are often too many people and too many torch beams making it a bit of circus. For some it was more rewarding to see the Nose-horned Chameleon and Blue-legged Chameleon at rest on spindly boughs overhanging the roadside.

Day 6

Monday 24th September

RANOMAFANA

Weather: sunny and warm

A glorious day dawned and over a stunning sunrise, we observed Madagascar Fody, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar Bee-eater and Madagascar Kestrel from the hotel veranda. This morning, another early start, we split into two groups for our park visits. Those who were keen to focus on lemurs went with Bertrand and Rivo into the Talataky forest, while the birders went with Jean-Chrys and Cathy to Vohiparara.

The birders had a fabulous morning covering a wide area at a keen pace and clocking up an impressive list of species, thanks to Jean-Chrys' expertise; Spectacled Greenbul, Long-billed Greenbul, Blue Coua, Wedge-tailed Jerry, Green Jerry, Common Jerry, Madagascar Flufftail, Pitta-like Ground Roller, Tylas, White-headed Vanga, Common Newtonia, Dark Newtonia, Nelicourvi Weaver, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo, Velvet Asity, Cryptic Warbler, Red-tailed Vanga, Common Sunbird Asity and White-throated Rail. We heard but failed to see Rufous-headed Ground Roller – at the best of times this is an elusive bird. Also noted were a Giraffe-necked Weevil, Golden Orb Spider, Pandanus Tree Frog, 'bird poo mimic' Moth. As some of the birders were also keen on plants, we paused to photograph an *Angraecum* sp. Orchid and a *Tambourissa* sp, which flowers and fruits on its trunk.

The lemur group with Bertand and Rivo had a fruitful morning with good sightings of four lemur species, including two that we'd missed yesterday. After only managing a distant view of Golden Bamboo Lemur yesterday, today's group of four was a treat, especially as they were active and feeding. Another scoop was a nocturnal Small-toothed Sportive Lemur holed up in a tree cavity about 15m off the ground. Next up were the same four Red-bellied Lemurs we'd seen yesterday. The photographers were kept busy when one of the group came down to eye level. Finally, two Grey Bamboo Lemurs resting brought us to a total of eight lemur species and it doesn't get much better than that in Ranomafana. Well actually it does, because the lemur group also got to see both Satanic and Mossy Leaf-tailed Geckos – nocturnal masters of disguise whose cryptic shape and colouring keeps them safe during the day. The birders were just a little green! Colin photographed a snake, which we later identified as a *Dromicodryas bernieri*.

On the way back to the hotel for lunch we paused to examine a sleepy Tree Boa tucked inside a cavity in a stone wall. After lunch at Cristo Hotel, some of the group took a kip, while others strolled down to the river. Later, we drove to visit some of Jean-Chrys' relatives, who showed us a pair of Parson's Chameleons and a Belted Chameleon that favour the trees in their garden. On the way back, we rescued another Belted Chameleon crossing the road. As Rivo placed it safely on a bush, it launched into action, its long tongue pouncing on a hapless cricket!

As night fell, we walked along the road near the hotel and Rivo's excellent eyesight produced a Stick Insect, numerous manic web spinning spiders, a Praying Mantis, Huntsman Spider and two White Spotted Reed Frogs *Heterixalus alboguttata*. Arriving back at the hotel a power cut led to a candlelit dinner. They are pretty common in the area and we were assured that the power would soon return, and conveniently it did just as we were off back to our rooms.

Day 7

Tuesday 25th September

RANOMAFANA TO ISALO

Weather: hot and sunny

Another early rise and a 5.45 breakfast – I think we're getting used to it now! There was still not a drop of rain around, just threads of mist hanging over the river valley. As the luggage was hauled up on the roof of the bus, Dave spotted a Madagascar Turtle Dove and Green Pigeon in flight. We were on the road by 6.30 and as the first rays of sunshine lit the rainforest canopy, we paused to reflect on just how fragmented it has become. We stopped briefly at the Namorona Falls but they were still in shade. A pair of Crested Drongos surveyed us from a perch and a flock of Madagascar Bulbul flew noisily over the road. We would not be back in the rainforest until the end of our trip as we were now heading for the hot, dry southern savannah.

At Madagascar's second highland city Fianarantsoa, the drivers took on fuel, while we bought postcards and coffee at the Soafia Hotel. Back on the move, we passed the taxi brousse (bush taxi) station, where throngs of over-laden minibuses were preparing to depart, their roof racks piled high with anything from bicycles and sofas to hens and ducks. Leaving the city, many of the rice paddies had been turned to brickworks, and huge smoking brick ovens lined the road. We passed herds of zebu cattle on a long slow march north to the capital to be sold – in some parts of Madagascar a family's wealth is measured by the size of their herd and zebu take the place of money. We also passed fields of *Artemesia*, a plant used to treat fever and malaria, but also grown as bio-fuel. In the rice paddies we began to notice increasing numbers of dark phase Dimorphic Egrets. Hamerkop, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher and a succession of Pied Crows and Bush Larks helped to pass the time on this leg of the journey.

After a breather at a viewpoint, there was a sharp descent to Madagascar's main wine-producing area on the approach to the attractive town of Ambalavao. Local guide Adrien showed us around the Antaimoro paper workshop, where beautiful flower-impregnated paper is made by hand from the pulp of the Avoha shrub, following a technique developed by Arab settlers on the coast.

We collected our picnic lunch and drove the short distance to the community reserve at Anja, where a surprisingly lush pocket of gallery forest sits at the foot of a cluster of monumental granite domes. The forest supports a healthy population of Ring-tailed Lemurs. We soon had them in sight and enjoyed quietly observing them at rest. These are highly social lemurs and soon they began grooming one another and going about the all-important business of scent marking to define their territory and leave messages to one another. At least 15 adults and juveniles headed by the dominant female made up this group but being spring, there were also many new-born babies to be seen, still clinging to their mother's belly. What makes Anja a particularly rewarding place to see the ring-tails are the large granite boulders that make a natural adventure playground for these agile and acrobatic lemurs, who are as comfortable on the ground as they are in trees. Needless to say, the photo opportunities were superb. One of the females was very curious about Cathy's water bottle and came to check it out, just a few feet away from where we were standing. Anyone who didn't manage to get a good photo at that point should seriously consider giving it up!

It was getting noticeably hotter so the bird life was subdued. We did observe Yellow-billed Kite, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Bee-eater, Madagascar Coucal and three rather grumpy looking Oustalet's Chameleons. It's the down-turned mouth that does it. We enjoyed our picnic lunch under a shady straw canopy but all too soon it was time to move on with still several hours' drive ahead of us.

Our next stop was on a granite outcrop peppered with tombs. Here we found interesting plants that are typical of the area's inselbergs: an Elephant's Foot *Pachypodium densiflorum*, Crown of Thorns *Euphorbia millii*, Salotse *Ichneopsis graminifolia* and a yellow-flowered *Senecio cedrorum* that we found later in the botanical gardens at Toliara. All around us, the coarse dry grass, which zebu find unpalatable, was being burned off to encourage new shoots – this introduced grass has largely replaced the original savannah. Where wild fires were raging, Pied Crows and Yellow-billed Kites were gathered, snatching insects fleeing the flames.

After a short stop at Ihosy, the centre for the Bara people, we tackled the long climb to the Horombe Plateau. It's a desolate place, punctuated with clusters of mud huts. Here we scanned for Madagascar Harrier without success though we did see Bush Larks, Pied Crows, a Madagascar Kestrel and abundant Black Swifts. Soon Isalo's sandstone massif appeared ahead of us, glowing in the afternoon sun. We arrived at Satrana Lodge, whose spacious bungalows were clustered over a hillside at the foot of a sandstone cliff. Madagascar Nightjars were calling as we made our way to our rooms.

Day 8

Wednesday 26th September

ISALO NATIONAL PARK

Weather: very hot and sunny, some cloud in the afternoon

After the long hot drive yesterday, most of the group opted for a lie in but Dave, Rivo and Cathy were up before sunrise to check out the birds in the pocket of forest behind the hotel. It is magical to be there at dawn, watching the sandstone change from purple to pink to orange as the sun emerges. We noted a noisy pair of mating Madagascar Kestrels on the cliffs, a couple of Crested Drongos, Common Myna, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Cisticola, Common Jery and Madagascar Hoopoe. We got good views of Yellow-billed Kites collecting nesting material. A stunning Citrus Swallowtail butterfly was warming up on the ground, wings outstretched.

After an early breakfast we had a short drive to the town of Ranohira, which means 'watering place for ring-tailed lemurs' – it sounded promising! We picked up our National Park guides Charles and Feno, who suggested our best chances of finding lemurs would be at Canyon des Rats and Canyon des Makis. It takes about an hour on a bumpy dirt road to reach the Canyons with a stop en route for a view. Charles pointed out a yellow-flowering tree *Acridocarpus excelsus*, the fire-resistant *Medemia nobilis* palm and *Abrus precatorius* an African shrub known as Rosary Pea, with red and black seeds that are often used to make beads. Madagascar Kestrel, Cisticola and Bush Lark were in evidence in this open grassland. Leaving the bus, we set off on foot at a slow pace. The heat was mounting as we walked through the rice paddies. We were followed by a gaggle of children, keen to sell us miniature zebu and pig ornaments they'd fashioned out of clay.

Once inside the forest at the foot of Isalo's sandstone cliffs, our guides went off to look for lemurs, while we cooled off in the shade. We were in luck – they'd found a group of six Verreaux's Sifaka, the species we were keenest to observe. Vertically clinging and leaping, these gorgeous creamy white lemurs with dark faces are the 'dancing sifakas'. Short fore-limbs and long hind-limbs make it impractical for them to walk on all fours so when they need to cross open ground they hop sideways in a quasi comical 'dancing' motion. Resting high in the canopy, these lethargic white balls of fluff looked anything but acrobatic. In the heat, you could hardly blame them. We sat down on the forest floor to wait. Then first one, then two pairs of sleepy yellow eyes opened to check who was intruding on the morning nap. Then they bounded down to our eye level – what a privilege to see tiny fingers grasp a handful of leaves, to watch how males rub their throat to scent-mark a branch. Isalo sees thousands of many hundreds of visitors a day in high season, yet here we were alone with the lemurs.

Moving on, Dave spotted a Paradise Flycatcher and we had fun trying to photograph a very restless Madagascar Swallowtail, the island's largest butterfly. A bit easier on that score were the fluffy white nymphs of Flatid Leaf Bug – exuding the sticky fluff is a canny defence against predators. Another interesting find was a shrub festooned with Plataspid Bug nymphs and adults. We also observed Gravenhorst's Skink and Broad-tailed Plated Lizard, scuttling among the dry leave litter. Moving on through the forest we stumbled on a shy group of four Red-fronted Brown Lemurs but they were quick to move off. And then we hit the lemur jackpot with a very entertaining group of nine or ten Ring-tailed Lemurs, gathered on huge granite boulders at the foot of the cliffs. We listened to their plaintive mewling – a contact call between group members.

Now that we'd seen all the lemurs, it was time to make our way through the forest to the Canyon des Makis, where our picnic lunch was waiting for us. Some of the group cooled off in a natural bathing pool in a spectacular setting at the foot of the high canyon walls. Surrounded by *Pandanus pulcher* and the palm *Dyopsis onilabensis*, this was a lush and scenic spot. After lunch some of the group elected to explore further up the canyon, on an acrobatic path cut into the boulders. The birding was a bit subdued today, no doubt because of the time of day but we did get a good view of a female Benson's Rock Thrush, a pair of Paradise Flycatchers and heard though failed to locate a White-browed Owl.

Returning to the hotel, there was time to relax by the pool or have a well-earned nap. Cathy found a Night Snake *Ithyophis miniatus* near her bungalow. Some of the group also found Hissing Cockroaches in the hotel gardens. With a very early rise next day, we had an early supper.

Day 9

Thursday 27th September

ISALO TO IFATY

Weather: very hot and sunny, humid near the coast

Satrana Lodge's manager was up to make our breakfast this morning! At 5.30 we were loaded up and on the road, enjoying sunrise over the statuesque 'Reine de L'Isalo' rock formation. Palm Swifts, Namaqua Doves, Pied Crows and Bush Larks kept us company along the straight road to Zombitse National Park, our next stop. We drove through the sapphire mining town of Ilakaka, which exploded from a hamlet to a city in the early years of the sapphire boom.

Zombitse National Park is a pocket of dry deciduous forest, sharing some characteristics of rainforest and known as a transitional forest. Not many people bother to stop as its isolation and lack of accommodation mean that most visitors arrive during the heat of the day. By having an early start, we were there by seven. Approaching the park entrance we stopped to admire a group of six perching Lesser Vasa Parrots. As everyone was keen to see lemurs we focused our walk on the north side of the park, where our guides found us first one and then a second Hubbard's Sportive Lemur. This is a nocturnal species that spends the day in a cavity or wedged in the fork of a tree, not looking very sportive, it has to be said. The species is restricted to Zombitse. Next we came across two groups of Verreaux's Sifaka, first a singleton and then a larger group of six adults and juveniles and two young. We noticed that their pelage was darker than that of the group we'd seen at Isalo. Madagascar Swallowtails were flitting around. The birding was slightly disappointing in that we failed to see any couas, which are normally easy to find but Common Jerry, Crested Drongo, Souimanga Sunbird and Madagascar Spinetail were readily seen. Reptiles were rewarding and included an impressive Standing's Day Gecko wedged between two branches, a huge male Oustalet's Chameleon and numerous Three-eyed Lizards. We also stopped to photograph a beautiful epiphytic orchid *Angraecum humbertii*.

Continuing the journey, we traversed undulating terrain, punctuated by statuesque baobabs and the highly decorative roadside tombs of the Mahafaly people. On the approach to Toliara, we crossed an ancient coral rag plateau, whose scrub vegetation was dominated by *Alluandia comosa*, a species only found in this area. Here we saw Crested Drongo, Yellow-billed Kite, Pied Crow and Madagascar Coucal. Dropping down to sea level, the heat and humidity were intense. Madagascar Spinetail, Glossy Ibis and Cattle Egrets were noted around the salt flats. We took lunch at the Arboretum, where we found Magpie Robin, Sakalava Weaver and Madagascar Bee-eater. Rivo produced a Changeable Emerald Day Gecko for us to admire and we spotted a snake *Ithycyphus miniatus*. With the heat, no one much felt like visiting the Arboretum and we agreed to head instead for Ifaty. Along the way we passed many fishing villages of the Vezo people. We saw Common Sandpiper by a pond and Sanderling, Whimbrel, Curlew, Terek Sandpiper and Grey Plover near the mangroves. The 20km stretch of road from Toliara to Ifaty is bumpy and sandy and it's not unusual to get stuck in the drifting sand. And we did. Luckily a 4x4 jeep was at hand to tow us out.

Arriving at the seaside Hotel Paradissier, we checked in and had a short rest. Later in the afternoon Rivo led us through the spiny forest behind the hotel, where we found Subdesert Brush Warbler, Crested Coua, Souimanga Sunbird, Long-billed Green Sunbird, Namaqua Dove, Magpie Robin and Crested Drongo. Mick noted a Greenshank on the shore.

At dusk we gathered outside bungalow 10 (Mick and Carol's) where in past years we've had a resident roosting Reddish-grey Mouse Lemur in the rafters. Just after dark it appeared on cue. Another was spotted in a tree by the hotel swimming pool and was much admired by Jean. Here too we could see Madagascar Nightjars swooping to grab insects attracted by the swimming pool lights.

Day 10

Friday 28th September

IFATY

Weather: very hot; windy in the afternoon

We were up at first light for pre-breakfast bird watching at the Reniala private reserve, a 20 minute drive to the north. Here, adjacent to the village of Ifaty, an area of spiny forest is protected, and the guides are expert at finding Long-tailed Ground Roller and Sub-desert Mesite, two local rarities confined to this corner of the island and both under threat. With plenty of dry leaf litter, this is perfect habitat for these birds. Also typical of this forest are the red-barked *Adansonia rubrostipa* baobabs and we noted that several of the larger examples had hand-holds cut into their huge swollen trunks so that locals can climb to pick the fruits.

Walking along the sandy track to the entrance to the reserve, Joan spotted a Crested Coua perched in a baobab. While our guide Bebe and his helpers were searching for the rarer species we enjoyed sightings of Crested Drongo, Madagascar Bee-eater, Sakalava Weaver, Common Newtonia, Common Jery, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, and Magpie Robin. Because the forest isn't yet in leaf, birds are much easier to observe. Soon we were diving through the spiny scrub (long sleeves useful!) to a clearing where a Long-tailed Ground Roller ambled into view and then flew onto a low perch. This ground-dwelling bird has splendid blue feathers and an incredibly long tail and is a most impressive one to view and photograph.

Next, an exquisitely coloured Running Coua was spotted perched in sunlight on a branch and everyone enjoyed good views of it. Chabert's Vanga showed well with its blue eye-ring clearly visible and Greater Vasa Parrot also. Another highlight of the morning were excellent views of a Sub-desert Mesite – when alarmed, this ground-dwelling bird flies to a perch and freezes - perfect for photography. We also got fantastic views of a Madagascar Harrier Hawk perched in the open. In between bird sightings Bebe showed us some of the interesting tree species in the reserve; Octopus Tree *Didiera madagascariensis*, a red-flowered *Combretum grandidieri*, a tree Elephant's Foot *Pachypodium geayi* and *Givotia madagascariensis*, whose lightweight timber is used to make canoes. We also had a good tree-hugging session with the reserve's largest baobab, which has a 12m circumference!

As the temperature began to rise, it was time to head back to the hotel. Cathy went with Dave and Liz on a snorkel trip by boat to an outcrop of coral, protected as a reserve further up the coast. Though lettuce corals were abundant, the stag-horn corals were in a sorry state but showing some signs of regrowth. Mushroom corals and sea urchins were plentiful and we also noted anemones and bright blue sea stars. We were surprised by the variety and number of fish species: showy parrotfish, grazing on coral algae, various butterflyfish, trumpetfish, damselfish, boxfish, pufferfish, squirrelfish, triggerfish and wrasse, including cleaner wrasse, obligingly picking off parasites from larger fish, sergeant major and chocolate dip chromis, darting around in small shoals.

Back at the hotel, it was low tide and the beach offered a steady parade of shorebirds: Whimbrel, Greenshank, Ruddy Turnstone and Ringed Plover. Sarah spotted a pair of mating Madagascar Swallowtails. After lunch, most had a siesta or lounged by the pool. A Crested Coua and flock of Grey-headed Love Birds were seen around the hotel.

Late afternoon some of the group accompanied Rivo and Cathy to the Tortoise Village, a conservation and captive breeding project for Radiated and Spider Tortoises. On the ponds behind the hotel, we found Three-banded Plover, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Madagascar Bulbul, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Kestrel, Crested Drongo. Rivo showed us a gecko *Lygodactylus tolampyae*. At dusk the mouse lemurs were active again – in fact hyperactive! These tea-cup sized lemurs tear along the branches at supersonic speed, leaping from tree to tree. Not the photographers' favourite lemur... The hotel arranged for a local group of singers, dancers and musicians to perform for guests over dinner. We were impressed to see that all of their instruments were home-made. Rivo found a Big-headed Gecko to show us.

Day 11

Saturday 29th September

IFATY – ANTANANARIVO

Weather: very hot, with a light breeze; cooler in Tana

Some of the group were keen to return to Reniala as the birding there is so rewarding so we met up bleary-eyed in the car park at first light. Along the way, Rivo found us a pair of Madagascar Hoopoes, a bird that had almost eluded us until now. This was an action-packed morning and guide Dabe worked hard to find us the species we'd missed on our first visit; Stripe-throated Jery, Thamnornis Warbler, Archbold's Newtonia, Lafresnaye's Vanga, a Sickie-billed Vanga probing for grubs and a purring Green-capped Coua warming up in the morning sun. We got another excellent view of Sub-desert Mesite and Long-tailed Ground Roller and Madagascar Spinetail, Running Coua, Madagascar Fody, Madagascar Bee-eater, Common Jery, Paradise Flycatcher, Turtle Dove and Magpie Robin also showed. It was a bit early for most reptiles but Rivo found a Bark Gecko *Blaesodactylus sakalava* on a trunk.

Back at the hotel we met up with the rest of the group over breakfast. Ann and others had been watching and photographing shore birds and produced some very useful additions to our list: Madagascar Plover, White-fronted Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone. There was time for everyone to relax at the hotel before check-out and lunch.

En route to Toliara, we saw a pair of Chabert's Vanga and then fitted in a worthwhile stop at the mangroves, where two Grey Plovers and a delightful Kittlitz Plover with two chicks, ran along the beach. A brackish pond gave us Black-winged Stilt and a flock of Sakalava Weavers in flight. We took a guided tour of Toliara's Arboretum, which has a comprehensive show of spiny forest and other tree and shrub species, all nicely labelled up! Some were just coming into flower and leaf at the onset of spring but a number of dry Western and Southern Madagascar species, in particular Euphorbias don't much bother with leaves anyway and do most photosynthesis through their trunks and branches. Yellow-flowered *Delonix floribunda* was in bloom and its timber resonates well so is used for musical instruments; *Jatropha mahfalensis*, whose red sap is an antidote to euphorbia latex poisoning; *Cyphostemma montagnaci*, with a bulbous water-storing base and a beautiful pink lily-like Desert Rose *Adenium florida* not a native to Madagascar.

Because it was mid-afternoon, birds were not much in evidence but we saw Madagascar Magpie Robin, Madagascar Bee-eater and Sakalava Weaver. Two chameleon species – an Oustalet's and a Spiny-backed (Warty) Chameleon kept the photographers busy. We were pleased to get a peek at a roosting Reddish-grey Mouse Lemur – so much easier to see in the daylight – just as it was stirring at dusk.

We had dinner at the Victory Hotel, then made for the airport, where we discovered our flight had been delayed. It was time to say goodbye to our driver and helper, who would return by road to Tana – a two-day drive. We arrived at the Orchid Hotel at 23.45.

Day 12

Sunday 30th September

ANTANANARIVO TO ANDASIBE

Weather: fine and sunny

This morning we were on the road, with thankfully almost no traffic as it was Sunday. Squacco Herons, Great Egrets and Cattle Egrets were feeding in the rice paddies as we made our way around the capital's perimeter. Once on the road east, heads began to nod – all those early mornings are finally catching up with us! We stopped to buy bottled water along the way, and again by the bridge over the Mangoro River. There were plenty of Mascarene Martins around but no sign of any Pratincoles. We reached Andasibe at 11.00, where we immediately heard and saw Indri in the canopy on the other side of the lake. This got everyone fired up and ready to move – some of our group had such lemur withdrawal symptoms they'd almost have swum the lake to get at the Indri!

With the permits sorted, we set off with guide Luc on the main trail into the Indri Reserve of Analamazaotra. Dave spotted a Ward's Flycatcher en route to the first lemur, a Common Brown Lemur, unusually feeding on the leaves of *Rubus*, an invasive introduced bramble. It took us quite a while to reach the group of Indris we'd seen earlier and though the terrain is a bit easier here than at Ranomafana, lemurs have a habit of choosing the more inaccessible spots to hang out. This group of five plus a baby were spread over several trees so we sat quietly watching them feeding, grooming and then bounding from trunk to trunk in huge vertical leaps. Unlike other lemurs, Indri have only a short stubby tail and with rounded ears, wide green eyes and gorgeous thick fur, they look like big cuddly teddies. They're also very vocal and this is what we were hoping to hear. Instead, the peace was broken by the arrival of a large Malagasy family group on an outing from the capital – of course it's encouraging to see the locals visiting the reserves.

Moving back towards the entrance of the reserve, we found a Lined Emerald Day Gecko, a beautiful blue brush-footed butterfly *Precis rhadama* and a Forest Water Snake *Bibilava infrasignatus*. We enjoyed a good view of a male Velvet Asity, a Kite Spider and a fleeting glimpse of Grey Bamboo Lemur. We ate a late picnic lunch at the reserve entrance and then headed for Vakona Lodge, our accommodation for the next two nights.

Once we'd checked in, Jean, Sarah and Auriol went with Cathy to Lemur Island where we spent a while getting mobbed by enthusiastic Black and White Ruffed and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, rescued from the pet trade. Back at the hotel, Mick spotted two Grey Bamboo Lemurs bounding through the eucalyptus forest fringing the lodge's small lake.

Keen to pack as much as possible into our days at Andasibe, we elected for a night walk in the Mitsinjo Private Reserve. It's quite hilly terrain so it takes a while to cover the ground. Lemurs were hard to spot and we only managed a quick glimpse of a Goodman's Mouse Lemur on this occasion. Chameleons were a bit more obliging and we saw three species - Short-horned, Nose-horned and White-bellied Chameleons as well as two tree frogs – *Boophis viridis* and *Boophis madagascariensis*. A sleepy Paradise Flycatcher, a Madagascar Tree Boa and a Dragonfly completed the line-up for this evening's walk. After dinner, most of the group were ready for bed.

Day 13

Monday 1st October

MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK

Weather: fine and sunny

Over an early breakfast Rivo showed us a beautiful Hawk Moth, warming up its wings – we had no idea what species it could be. We set off for Mantadia National Park, over an hour's drive from the hotel on a bumpy dirt road. We planned to search out some of the rarer birds in the area but primarily focus on finding Black and White Ruffed Lemur and Diademed Sifaka. As the lemurs in Mantadia are not as habituated as those of Analamazaotra, patience is needed. We could not have been more fortunate with our reserve guide as Luc knew all the likely lemur spots and has huge experience in tracking them down. While we were getting ourselves sorted in the car park, we saw Lesser Vasa Parrot perched in the sun, Madagascar Spinetail in flight, Rand's Warbler calling and a Madagascar Starling.

While Luc was checking for lemurs we took in the magnificent primary rainforest that Mantadia protects. The name actually means 'Hard Walking' and it fits! As well as some steep slopes there are great buttressed trunks with splendid creeping roots, razor-sharp saw-edged *Pandanus*, tangles of lianas and orchids, fallen trunks festooned with bracket fungi and meandering clear-running streams. As Luc returned with good lemur tidings we rushed off in pursuit to the four Black and White Ruffed Lemurs he'd found resting in the canopy of an *Ocotea* tree. Unlike many other lemurs, this species doesn't carry the young on its back, but parks them in a nest. Unusually, twins are common. They're mostly canopy feeders (and important rainforest pollinators) so a bit of neck craning is unavoidable. We observed this family group at rest, then grooming and feeding.

Next Luc took us to a Collared Nightjar's roost. This bird is so cryptic it's almost impossible to detect in the leaf litter it mimics. It's a rare bird and I think everyone appreciated how lucky we were to see it. Next up were three Common Brown Lemurs (one with a new baby) feeding on dead Tree Fern fronds. While Luc went to look for Sifaka, we enjoyed some of the National Park's birds – a Madagascar Cuckoo Roller in flight, Pitta-like Ground Roller and Madagascar Buzzard. Once again Luc had done it for us, coming back excitedly with news of a group of Diademed Sifaka – three adults and a baby. They were in a clearing, where several large trees had fallen during last summer's cyclone Giovana. We watched as they hung upside down to feed, swinging like circus acrobats.

Next we split into two groups with the birders heading with Luc to check for Scaly Ground Roller. We stopped to photograph a Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher perched above the stream and found more Black and White Lemurs – or perhaps the same group as before – but no Scaly Ground Roller.

The rest of the group went with Rivo, seeing Ashy Cuckoo Shrike, Tylas and Forest Fody. We reassembled by the small lake, finding Swamp Warbler, Madagascar Little Grebe and some dead Pill Millipedes.

After lunch back at the hotel, most of the group went to Lemur Island and we had a lot of fun taking silly pictures of one another wearing various models of lemur. On a more serious note it is fantastic to be able to study at close quarters the nuances of the lemurs' interactions with one another.

Before dinner, we took an hour's torch-lit walk in the grounds of the hotel, seeing two White-bellied Chameleons and several Stick Insects. We were disappointed not to get views of any Mouse Lemurs – just a frustrating flash of eye-shine.

Day 14

Tuesday 2nd October

ANDASIBE RESERVE

Our last morning with the lemurs and everyone was keen to make the most of it so we were again up at crack of dawn and ready for a 6.30 departure. Over breakfast Sarah and Rivo saw a Purple Heron fly in and land on a tree across the pond.

At Analamazaotra, we divided into two groups: Lemur group with Rivo and Herman – Herman dashed all over the place looking for woolly lemurs.

Luc with Cathy, Joan, Mick and Dave had an exciting start and got eye to eye with a Blue Coua and enjoyed a pair of Madagascar Kingfishers on the bridge and a Long-billed Green Sunbird and Madagascar White eye on the forest edge. With luck and rather a lot of patience, we managed to see Red-fronted Coua and while watching a group of Indri at rest, a couple of Madagascar Buzzards showed well in flight. Then we heard a Henst's Goshawk call and Luc was keen to find it. After several failed attempts to call it, we were about to move on, when Luc spotted a family of nocturnal Woolly Lemurs clinging to a tree trunk, with a startled look about them. Usually, they're well hidden under foliage or a bird's nest fern but these were out in the open. Clearly they'd been spooked by the Henst's Goshawk calling and when they saw us it was the last straw – they bounded off. We now had a steep descent to get back on the main path, but this detour brought us a splendid male Parson's Chameleon and a Wedge-tailed Jerry. Then we were hauling up another slope to a Collared Nightjar's roost and what a master of camouflage. A Wood Rail called but wouldn't show though we had good views of Ward's Flycatcher and a Stripe-throated Jerry.

Rivo and Herman's group were focusing on lemurs and Carol got 'spotter of the day' award for finding Diademed Sifaka... Passing a group of Common Brown Lemurs we encountered two groups of Indri, the first calling right overhead. This is arguably the most memorable sound of Madagascar's rainforest and it was a fitting climax to the tour. In the second group, a youngster came down to eye level keeping the photographers busy. Here too, a female Parson's Chameleon performed for the group, catching an insect – hopefully someone got that on camera too! Hook-billed Vanga, Red-tailed Vanga, Paradise Flycatcher and Velvet Asity also showed well. All too soon it was time to leave the forest and we reassembled over lunch at Feony Ala. Some of the group went to the craft shop across the road while others admired a Short-horned Chameleon located by Rivo at the restaurant.

After lunch, we set off back to Tana, where we had day use of rooms at the Orchid Hotel to shower and change before dinner at the Savannah, a nearby bistro. Beware of ordering three courses as the portions are huge! We now said goodbye to Jean Dille, who was staying on in Madagascar to visit Maroansetra and Kirindy. Soon too we were bidding Rivo goodbye. More than anything, the success of a wildlife tour like this is down to the expertise and dedication of the local guide and Rivo, everyone agreed, had done an exceptional job, sharing his vast knowledge at every opportunity. Check in was straightforward and soon we were boarding the plane for the overnight flight to Paris.

Day 15

Wednesday 3rd October

ANTANANARIVO TO PARIS AND ONWARD FLIGHTS TO THE UK

The flight arrived into Paris on time and gradually we dispersed onto our respective flights back to the UK and it was time to say '*Veloma*' to one another.

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Madagascar Harrier Hawk by Cathy Harlow



Indri by Cathy Harlow

Species List

Lemurs (H = heard)

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
1	Reddish-grey Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus griseorufus</i>							2	2	1			
2	Rufous Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus rufus</i>			3									
3	Goodman's Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus lehilahytsara</i>										1		
4	Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus crossleyi</i>										1		
5	Small-tooth Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur microdon</i>				1								
6	Hubbard's Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur hubbardii</i>							2					
7	Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur griseus</i>				2						4		1
8	Golden Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>			1	4								
9	Greater Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur simus</i>			2									
10	Ring-tailed Lemur	<i>Lemur catta</i>					13	9						
11	Common Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>										6	4	10
12	Red-fronted Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur rufus</i>			10			4						
13	Red-bellied Lemur	<i>Eulemur rubriventer</i>			3	4								
14	Black and White Ruffed Lemur	<i>Varecia variegata variegata</i>												
15	Eastern Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi laniger</i>												2+1
16	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>						6+2	7+2					
17	Diademed Sifaka	<i>Propithecus diadema</i>											3+1	4+1
18	Milne-Edwards' Sifaka	<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>				4								
19	Indri	<i>Indri indri</i>										5+1	H	10

Other Mammals

1	Eastern Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys rufus</i>			1									
2	Eastern Sucker-footed Bat	<i>Myzopoda aurita</i>			3									

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

1	Madagascar Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>											3	
2	Common Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	1									✓		1

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	1		1									
4	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓
5	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
6	Black Egret	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	3				1							✓
7	Dimorphic Heron	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓						
8	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		1										1
9	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>									2			
10	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		3			1							
11	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		1					1			1		
12	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>		12										
13	Henst's Goshawk	<i>Accipiter henstii</i>												H
14	Madagascar Harrier- Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>								1				
15	Madagascar Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>		3										2
16	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptus</i>		2			✓	20+	✓	1				
17	Madagascar Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	2	3	3	1	1	10	10	8	4			
18	Madagascar Wood Rail	<i>Canirallus kioloides</i>												H
19	Subdesert Mesite	<i>Monias benschi</i>								1	2			
20	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>				1		H						
21	Madagascar Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>				1								
22	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>								4	6			
23	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>								1	1			
24	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>							15		3			
25	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>								6	6			
26	Madagascar Plover	<i>Gallinago macrodactyla</i>									6			
27	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>									1+2			
28	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>									1			
29	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>								3				
30	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>							✓	2	2			
31	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>							1	2				
32	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>									1			

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
33	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1		1				1					
34	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>							✓					
35	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>							1					
36	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>									1			
37	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
38	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>							✓	✓	✓			
39	Madagascar Blue Pigeon	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>			1									
40	Madagascar Green Pigeon	<i>Treron australis</i>					1							
41	Madagascar Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>					6			✓	✓		1	H
42	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>								✓				
43	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>								2	2	1		
44	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>			1	H			7				1	1
45	Madagascar Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>				1	H	H	1	6	2	H	1	1
46	Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>			2	2						H	H	H
47	Green-capped Coua	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>									1			
48	Running Coua	<i>Coua cursor</i>								1	1			
49	Red-breasted Coua	<i>Coua serriana</i>												H
50	Red-fronted Coua	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>												1
51	Blue Coua	<i>Coua caerulea</i>			1	1						1	H	1
52	Crested Coua	<i>Coua cristata</i>							1	5				
53	White-browed Owl	<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>						H						
54	Collared Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus enarratus</i>											1	1
55	Madagascar Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>				H	1	2	4	H	1	H	H	
56	Madagascar Black Swift	<i>Apus balstoni</i>					✓	✓						
57	Madagascar Spine-tailed Swift	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>							✓	1	✓		✓	
58	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>		4		4								
59	Brown-throated Sand Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	✓											
60	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
61	Madagascar Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo vintsioides</i>	1	1			1					1	3	2
62	Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx madagascariensis</i>			1	1								

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
63	Madagascar Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	1			1	12	1	6	2	4		1	
64	Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>			1	H		H						H
65	Pitta-like Ground-Roller	<i>Atelornis pittoides</i>			1	1							1	
66	Rufous-headed Ground-Roller	<i>Atelornis crossleyi</i>				H								
67	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>								1	1			
68	Velvet Asity	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>			2	2						1		1
69	Common Sunbird-Asity	<i>Neodrepanis coruscans</i>				1								
70	Madagascar Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
71	Long-billed Greenbul	<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>			1	2								
72	Spectacled Greenbul	<i>Bernieria zosterops</i>				1								1
73	Yellow-browed Oxylabes	<i>Crossleyia xanthophrys</i>				H								
74	White-throated Oxylabes	<i>Oxylabes madagascariensis</i>			1									H
75	Crossley's Babbler	<i>Mystacornis crossleyi</i>												H
76	Madagascar Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus albospecularis</i>			✓				2	3	6		4	2
77	Madagascar Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>						1			2			
78	Forest Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei</i>			1									
79	Benson's Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei bensoni</i>						1						
80	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	1	4									1	
81	Madagascar Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	6	2	✓	✓	✓					2	✓	✓
82	Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>			✓	1		3		1	2	1		2
83	Ward's Flycatcher	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>										1		1
84	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>			✓	6			2	1		H	✓	1
85	Dark Newtonia	<i>Newtonia amphichroa</i>				1								H
86	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>									1			
87	Madagascar Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>						3	6					
88	Madagascar Bush Lark	<i>Mirafra hova</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
89	Madagascar Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>											1	
90	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>							2	2				
91	Madagascar Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>	1	H	✓	H							1	H
92	Thamnornis Warbler	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>									1			

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
93	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	H	H		6		2	2	4	✓	1	1	1
94	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>									1			1
95	Green Jery	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>				1	1							
96	Wedge-tailed Jery	<i>Neomixis flavoviridis</i>				1								1
97	Rand's Warbler	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>				1							1	1
98	Cryptic Warbler	<i>Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi</i>				1								
99	Madagascar White-eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	1		✓	✓								1
100	Madagascar Green Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia notata</i>				1			1			1	1	1
101	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia sovimanga</i>	1	2	✓	1	1	1	4	6	✓	✓	1	1
102	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>				1								
103	Chabert's Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>				1				1	2	1		
104	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falculea palliata</i>								H	2			
105	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>			1	2							H	1
106	Lafresnaye's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>									1			
107	Hook-billed Vanga	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>												1
108	Pollen's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris polleni</i>				H								
109	Tylas Vanga	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>			1	1							1	
110	Madagascar Cuckoo Shrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>											1	
111	Madagascar Starling	<i>Saroglossa aurata</i>			2								1	
112	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
113	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>			✓	1	2	6	8	✓	✓	✓		1
114	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		✓			200+	✓	✓	✓	✓			1
115	Madagascar Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	✓	1					1		1			
116	Forest Fody	<i>Foudia eminentissima</i>			1								1	
117	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>							✓	✓	✓			
118	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>			3	3								
119	Madagascar Mannikin	<i>Lonchura nana</i>											✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2

Reptiles & Amphibians

1	a Tree Frog	<i>Boophis viridis</i>										2		
2	a Tree Frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>		✓								1		
3	Spiny rain frog	<i>Scaphiophryne spinosa</i>			1									
4	Baron's Golden Mantella Frog	<i>Mantella baroni</i>			1									
5	White-spotted Reed Frog	<i>Heterixalus alboguttatus</i>				2								
6	Beautiful Pandanus Frog	<i>Guibemantis pulcher</i>				1								1
7	Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>										1		1
8	Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>			1									
9	White-bellied Chameleon	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>										2	2	
10	Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii</i>				3								2
11	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>			1	1						1		
12	Spiny-backed Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>									1			
13	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>	2				3	1	1		1			
14	Jewel (Carpet) Chameleon	<i>Furcifer lateralis</i>		2										
15	Belted Chameleon	<i>Furcifer balteatus</i>				2								
16	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chalerodon madagascariensis</i>							1	✓	✓			
17	Collared Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cuvieri</i>	1											
18	Duméril's Madagascar Swift	<i>Oplurus quadrimaculatus</i>		1										
19	Large-headed Gecko	<i>Paroedura picta</i>								1				
20	a Day Gecko	<i>Lygodactylus tolampyae</i>								1				
21	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>				1								
22	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>				1								
23	Bark Gecko	<i>Blaesodactylus sakalava</i>									1			
24	Lined Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata bifasciata</i>										1	2	1
25	Four-eyed Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>			✓	✓								
26	Marbled Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>							1					
27	Changeable Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>							1					
28	Modest Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma modesta</i>								1				

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
29	House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>			1	1								
30	a Skink	<i>Trachylepis gravenhorstii</i>						1						
31	Broad-tailed Girdled (Plated) Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus laticaudatus</i>	1					1						
32	A Night Snake	<i>Ithycyphus miniatus</i>							1					
33	Big-eyed Grass Snake	<i>Mimophis mahafalensis</i>								1				
34	Forest Water Snake	<i>Bibilava infrasignatus</i>										2		
35	Madagascar Tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>				1						1		
36	Dumeril's Ground Boa	<i>Acrantophis dumerili</i>								1				
37	Bernier's Striped Snake	<i>Dromicodryas bernieri</i>				1								
38	Radiated Tortoise	<i>Geochelone radiata</i>								✓				
39	Spider Tortoise	<i>Pyxis arachnoids</i>								✓				

Butterflies

1	Madagascar Swallowtail	<i>Atrophaneura antenor</i>						✓	✓	✓				
2	Kite Swallowtail	<i>Graphium polices</i>											✓	
3	Citrus Swallowtail	<i>Papilio demodocus</i>				✓		✓	✓					
4	Blue Pansy	<i>Precis rhadama</i>										✓		
5	African Monarch	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>						✓	✓	✓				

Other Invertebrates

1	Dragonfly (Red)	<i>Trithemis selika</i>				1		✓				1		
2	Dragonfly (pale blue)	<i>Orthetrum julia</i>						1						
3	Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis sp.</i>				1								
4	Hissing Cockroach	<i>Gromphadorhina portentosa</i>						1						
5	Cicada	<i>Tibicinidae sp.</i>	1											
6	Stick Insect	-				1							1	
7	Giraffe-necked Weevil	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>			2	1								
8	Rhinoceros Beetle	<i>Oryctes sp.</i>							1			1		1
9	Flatid Leaf-bug	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>						✓	✓					
10	Firefly	<i>Lampyridae sp.</i>				1								

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			21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
11	Golden Orb-web Spider	<i>Nephila madagascariensis</i>									✓	✓		
12	Orb-web Spider	<i>Nephila sp.</i>			✓									
13	Thorn Spider (Orange)	<i>Gasteracanthinae sp</i>			✓									
14	Huntsman' Spider	<i>Holconia sp.</i>				✓								
15	Digger Wasp	<i>Sphecidae</i>	✓											
16	Plataspid Bug	<i>Libyaspis coccinelloides</i>						✓						
17	Centipede	<i>Scolopendra sp.</i>												1
18	Hermit Crab	<i>Coenobita sp.</i>								✓				



Group at Isalo by Cathy Harlow