

Madagascar's Lemurs

Naturetrek Tour Report

23 September - 7 October 2016



Coquerel's Sifaka by Gerry Zambonini



Hubbard's Sportive Lemur by Cathy Harlow



Sub Desert Mesites by Gerry Zambonini



Ring-tailed Lemur mother and baby by Cathy Harlow

Report compiled by Cathy Harlow
Images courtesy of Gerry Zambonini and Cathy Harlow



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Day 1

Friday 23rd September

LONDON TO PARIS

Some of the group flew from London Heathrow to Paris Roissy Airport, while others came in from various regional airports. We transferred to the Ibis Hotel at the airport, a short transfer by free train shuttle. Over dinner we met up with Gloria, Rachel and Peter, who had flown in from Birmingham and Gerry and Nicola who'd come from Edinburgh. We soon discovered that some in the group were seasoned Naturetrek travellers, while for others it was a first trip. After sharing past experiences, our thoughts turned to the weeks ahead and anticipation of what Madagascar would bring us. This was not the moment for a full briefing as two of our group were to join us at Antananarivo.

Day 2

Saturday 24th September

PARIS TO ANTANANARIVO

We took the shuttle from the hotel back to the airport in the morning. Some of the group had already checked in their bags the whole way to Antananarivo, while others had elected to pick them up at Paris, and needed to check them in again.

There was a slight delay leaving but once airborne, the hours passed enjoying the good selection of films and music on board, a good lunch and catching up on some reading. We were served a light snack just before landing and got handed immigration cards to fill out on the plane. As we were seated in different areas of the plane, some were more quickly off the flight than others. Getting through the immigration and visa queue is always a slow affair, but eventually we had all got our visas and passport stamps and picked up our luggage.

In the arrivals hall, local guide Desi 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 by 2.45 at Combava Hotel, a 20-minute drive from the airport.

Day 3

Sunday 25th September

ANTANANARIVO TO ANT SIRABE; Weather: warm and sunny

After a rather short night, we tucked into a nice breakfast at the hotel and met Murray and Madeleine, who had arrived from Australia two days before us. Desi and Cathy did a briefing on the holiday on the hotel's terrace. Once the luggage was loaded on the vehicle's roof, we headed 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 Great Egret and Dimorphic Egret foraging for food as we shuffled our way along traffic-clogged roads to the Lemur Park. This small, private zoo on the outskirts of the city, established in 2001, aims to introducing local children to their country's wildlife. Among the park's lemur species, mostly rescued from the pet trade, were Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur, Ring-tailed Lemur, Grey Bamboo Lemur, Common Brown Lemur and Grey Mouse Lemur - all species we would hopefully encounter in

the wild. The visit also introduced us to two lemurs we would not be seeing on our trip: Crowned Sifaka and Coquerel's Sifaka.

Accompanied by guide Hanja, we explored the network of paths zig-zagging along the banks of the river bounding the reserve. By way of introduction, we got good views of several of Madagascar's most commonly seen birds: Common Myna, Madagascan Wagtail, (Madagascan) Olive Bee-eater, Malagasy Green Sunbird, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascan Magpie-Robin and Malagasy White-eye. We peered up at a huge Hamerkop's nest in a *Eucalyptus* tree. The warm sunshine had coaxed out a splendid Spiny-tailed Iguanid, which was basking on a granite boulder. An African Monarch butterfly flitted around but wouldn't pause for the cameras.

Down by the river, Bee-eaters were sallying from their perches to grab insects on the wing. Here we encountered the first lemurs: a group of three Coquerel's Sifaka were resting in the boughs of a tree but then obliged us with the classic sideways hop that gives them the name 'dancing sifakas'. We also found Crowned Sifakas from the west of Madagascar at the Lemur Park. A faint rustling alerted us to a Madagascan Buttonquail, foraging in the dry leaf litter. A Malagasy Kingfisher flew by, in a spectacular but brief flash of blue. Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs and Ring-tailed Lemurs were resting in the shade and we also got views of two nocturnal species, Greater Dwarf Lemur and Grey Mouse Lemur, curled up inside the noctarium.

We sat on a shady terrace overlooking the park for lunch, where we admired a vine, decked with yellow trumpet-shaped flowers, *Solandra maxima*, introduced from Central America. On the opposite bank of the river, we saw *Cassia didymobotrya*, a shrub with yellow candelabra flower heads.

After lunch at the Lemur Park, we set off back towards the capital. Once on the RN7, the main road south, we passed the president's residence, an opulent edifice modelled on the nineteenth-century Queen Ranavalona'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 over, planting out rice seedlings. Ruth pointed out a Squacco Heron. Because of the many villagers working in the fields, there were fewer birds around. We paused by the roadside to admire the handiwork of local villagers, who crochet colourful hats and bags from raffia. Along the banks of the nearby river, a Madagascan Stonechat was perched. Continuing the journey, we noted Cattle Egret, Feral Pigeon, Red Fody, Common Myna, Mascarene Martin and Malagasy Kestrel. We ended this day of travel arriving at dusk at Antsirabe, where we checked into our rooms at Café Couleur, a small but very comfortable boutique hotel. Antsirabe, means 'place of big salt', in reference to the frosts that sometimes occur here in winter. A Madagascan Wagtail was nesting above the entrance to the hotel's restaurant, where we enjoyed a good dinner and lively conversation. With a long drive ahead tomorrow, most of the group turned in soon after dinner.

Day 4

Monday 26th September

ANTSIRABE TO RANOMAFANA; Weather: warm and sunny

An early start got us on the road at 7.30am to continue the drive south through the mountainous backbone of the island. The scenery was magnificent, punctuated by granite outcrops, emerald-green rice paddies and changing scenes from village life. Zebu cattle play a pivotal role, both in providing transport and in softening the hard-baked clay of the paddies. The Indonesian origin of Madagascar's highland people is evident in the way the rice paddies are stacked up the hillsides in terraces. A Hamerkop flew over the paddies, where Cattle Egrets and

Dimorphic Egrets were foraging, beautifully illuminated by the morning sun. Rachel pointed out a Malagasy Kestrel.

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. The hard fruits become edible once they fall to the ground. This was a good place to break the journey and take a short walk and we spotted a Malagasy Bulbul and a flock of Common Jery in a *Tapia* tree. A Madagascan Cuckoo was calling in the distance. On the ground, we witnessed a Gravenhorst's Skink devouring a Stick Insect. On the hill-top we found a stone-built tomb. In this area, houses are built of clay bricks but tombs are of more durable stone, because while a house is only a temporary dwelling place, a tomb is for eternity.

Continuing south, Desi pointed out the bridge that had been bombed during the 2001 political crisis in an attempt to cut off access routes to the capital. The air was thick with smoke from wildfires and Yellow-billed Kites and Malagasy Black Swifts were grabbing insects on the wing as they tried to escape the flames. September is the 'burning' season, when dry grassland is torched to promote new growth before the onset of the rains. This destructive practice is encouraged by the zebu cattle owners and also helps to fertilise the rice paddies. Arriving at the attractive historic town of Ambositra, known for its skilled wood carvers, several of the group bought souvenirs.

Still journeying south, we paused by a fragment of rainforest, where a small pond and marsh looked promising. We noted Purple Heron, Madagascan Wagtail, a Yellow-billed Kite and two Madagascan Buzzards. An Emperor-type Dragonfly patrolled the shore of the pond and we heard a Cuckoo Roller calling. Orange-flowered Madagascar Buddleia (*Buddleia madagascariensis*) were in bloom along the roadside.

After a long morning of travel, we arrived at Ialatsara Forest Camp for our lunch. At the entrance to the park, a Blue-legged Chameleon crossed our path and obliged the photographers in our group. Among the introduced Iron Bark (*Eucalyptus robusta*), a Madagascan Cuckooshrike showed well as it paused on an overhead branch. A Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher flitted silently on the lower branches.

The owner of the rustic restaurant served up a tasty spread of goat's cheese with honey on toast and a local Malagasy stew with rice. The surprise lunchtime treat was a family group of four Red-bellied Lemurs and a youngster, led by the dominant female, who leapt past the restaurant, then paused to observe us before moving off. The males of this lemur species are easily distinguished by their white teardrop facial markings. Our first lemurs in the wild did not disappoint.

Back on the bus after lunch, sacks of charcoal lined the roadside as we passed villages whose livelihood centred on charcoal production. We paused to photograph Cattle Egrets, Dimorphic Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons nesting in the grounds of a large house. Shortly after, we turned off the main road towards Ranomafana National Park. We arrived at Centrest Hotel in the village of Ranomafana just before nightfall. After dinner, some of us went to look for 'nightlife' in the hotel gardens and found an orange Thorn Spider, dozens of Stick Insects attacking a Hibiscus shrub and a White-spotted Tree Frog. After the long journey, most of us were ready for an early night.

Day 5

Tuesday 27th September

RANOMAFANA; Weather: overcast with a morning shower but brighter later

After a 5.30am breakfast, we hopped on the coach for the short drive to the park entrance, with park guides Jean-Chrys and Delor 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. At the park entrance, a small flock of Madagascan Mannikin were foraging. Once the park permits were sorted, we made our way down steps into the rainforest.

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 (*Hapalemur aureus*), which was identified as a new species in 1985. As we crossed the Namorona River, Mascarene Martins were busy gathering nesting material. Plunging into thicker forest on the river's opposite bank, the lemur spotters went ahead to look for lemurs while we climbed at a steady pace.

Ranomafana is a lemur hot-spot and six to eight species can be readily observed. First up was a group of six Golden Bamboo Lemurs, foraging among dense canopy foliage. From time to time a face peered down at us and tails swung to and fro as they moved from branch to branch. While we were neck-craning, Delor appeared excitedly with news of a group of Ranomafana Grey Bamboo Lemur, not far off. They were feeding lower down and gave us excellent views, though again the light was tricky for photography.

We moved on through the forest, pausing to marvel at the camouflage of a Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko and the skill of our guides in finding it! Next up was a pair of Milne-Edwards Sifaka, whose stunning red eyes are framed by a dark face and back, with a white blaze on the thighs. We were lucky to find them right by the path and got very close views, before they moved to settle down for a rest in the V of a tree. Nearby, our guides found an Eastern Woolly Lemur, a nocturnal species that sits out the daylight hours safely hidden among foliage, often under a large Bird's Nest Fern. While roosting, they are wary of intruders and open eyes stared down at us.

It has to be said that this morning we were doing exceptionally well with lemur sightings. Though Golden Bamboo Lemurs are Ranomafana's signature species, Greater Bamboo Lemur are now considered more endangered. We were lucky to observe the most accessible family group of the species, which is now down to just two closely related individuals, who will not breed unless a suitable outsider is brought in. Quietly, we observed them feeding on the pith of Giant Bamboo, followed by a little grooming, a snuggle, and then a move up to the canopy.

This was a long and full-on morning, so by midday we were ready for a break. Stopping to investigate a rustle in the leaf litter, Rachel, Peter and Steve saw an Eastern Red Forest Rat scuttle past. Making our way back towards the park entrance, we focused on birds: a Souimanga Sunbird feeding on the blossom of an *Eugenia jambos*, Malagasy White-eye, Magpie-Robin and Stripe-throated Jery.

Over lunch at our hotel, we watched African Palm Swifts preparing their nests and found a roosting Owl Moth, Golden Orb Spider and Lined Emerald Day Gecko around the hotel gardens.

At 3.30pm we were back on the bus, making our way to Vohiparara in the upper section of the park. En route Ruth spotted a Madagascan Buzzard. We stopped by the Namorona Falls, where the river of the same name

tumbles off the eastern escarpment in several dramatic leaps. The cliff-face by the road was festooned with Dancing Ladies Orchids (*Cynorchis purpurescens*), a pink-and-white terrestrial orchid (*Cynorchis* sp.), carnivorous *Drosera* and a purple *Streptocarpus* sp. Soaked by water droplets, the cliff was an ideal habitat for *Boophis madagascariensis* Tree Frogs. Their deep croaks were unmistakable but trying to see them against the rock involved some effort – thank you Nicola for finding one! Desi spotted a Giraffe-necked Weevil on its host plant *Dichaetanthera cordifolia* and a large black Millipede, and Jean-Chrys showed us a Blue-legged Chameleon. In the improving afternoon light, we enjoyed sightings of Purple Heron, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascan Green Sunbird and Dimorphic Egret.

As the light faded, we made our way back down the hill where at dusk, Rufous Mouse Lemurs come to lick the banana-smear roadside tree-trunks, set up by some of the local guides. Properly managed, this can be a rewarding experience and a chance to observe these agile tea-cup-sized lemurs darting along the branches. Chameleons are also easy to spot at night, as they sleep on open spindly branches and our guides effortlessly clocked up four species: O'Shaughnessy's, Blue-legged, Glaw's and the diminutive Nose-horned Chameleon.

After dinner, we turned in for an early night.

Day 6

Wednesday 28th September

RANOMAFANA; Weather: sunny and breezy

A glorious day dawned and, over a stunning sunrise, we observed Red Fody, Malagasy Bulbul, Olive Bee-eater and Malagasy Kestrel from the hotel veranda. This morning we headed for Vohiparara forest where our early start reaped rewards on the bird front. A very obliging Blue Coua perched high on a branch for us and then, with a flap and glide, disappeared into the undergrowth. Souimanga Sunbirds were out in the open, feeding on nectar, and a Cuckoo Roller flew overhead, whistling in flight. We got good views of a Spectacled Tetraka hopping from branch to branch among the mid-storey foliage, and a Stripe-throated Jery held forth from its perch in the open. As we ambled along the more level paths of Vohiparara, Jean-Chrys found a Madagascar Tree Boa resting on a branch at our head height. Next, we hit upon a mixed feeding flock, with good views of Blue Vanga and Madagascan Cuckooshrike. Now, climbing steadily to a ridge, we had a quick view of two Red-Bellied Lemurs, but they soon moved off down a steep slope and out of our range. Coming back out of the forest, we paused by the river, where we found a Purple Heron.

Over lunch on the veranda at Centrest, many Citrus Swallowtail butterflies flitted around, attracted by the flowering plants in the hotel gardens. After lunch, Gloria and Judy opted for a relaxing afternoon at the hotel, while the rest of us went to the main Talatakey section of the National Park. At the entrance, a Malagasy Kestrel showed well. Once inside the reserve, we got good views of a Spectacled Tetraka, followed by a Scaly Ground Roller. Almost invisible to our eyes due to its cryptic colouring, it's always a huge privilege to see this rare tunnel-nesting species. Without Jean-Chrys's help, we would have little chance of encountering the more secretive birds at Ranomafana, including our next treat, a pair of confiding Crossley's Vanga (Babbler) on the forest floor. Andy found a Madagascan Blue Pigeon perched in the open and, whilst the park's lemurs seemed to be all having a long siesta, no one protested when a Ring-tailed Mongoose ambled into view on the trail. We topped off this excellent afternoon with good views of a Tylas Vanga and Frances's Sparrowhawk.

Day 7

Thursday 29th September

RANOMAFANA TO ISALO; Weather: hot and sunny

Another early rise and dawn breakfast - I think we're getting used to it now! We were on the road by 7am as the first rays of sunshine lit the rainforest canopy. Leaving Ranomafana, we reflected on just how fragmented the rainforest has become due to continuing slash and burn. We would not be back in 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 overladen 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 passed fields of *Artemisia*, a plant used to treat fever and malaria, but also grown as bio-fuel. In the rice paddies, we saw Dimorphic Egrets and Cattle Egrets but as there is so much human activity at this time of year, there were rather few birds around. A succession of Pied Crows, Yellow-billed Kites and Madagascan 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. Desi 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 among monumental granite domes. The forest supports a healthy population of Ring-tailed Lemurs and, after a short walk in the open, we enjoyed quietly observing them at rest on the forest floor and feeding on the flowers of introduced Indian Bead trees. 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 several 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 and the keen photographers in our group, among them Andy and Denise, were kept busy.

It was getting noticeably hotter so the bird life was subdued but we observed a Madagascan Harrier-Hawk, a Malagasy Kestrel and Ruth found a Malagasy Kingfisher. The reserve guide Daniel pointed out a grumpy-looking Oustalet's Chameleon; 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.

Back on the road, we passed granite outcrops peppered with tombs and some interesting plants that are typical of the area's inselbergs: an Elephant's Foot (*Pachypodium densiflorum*), Crown of Thorns (*Euphorbia millii*), Salotse (*Ichnelepis graminifolia*) and a yellow-flowered *Senecio cedrorum*. 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.

We had a short refreshment stop at Ihosy, the centre for the Bara people, and we watched as the tuk-tuks passed by, laden with children returning from school. Leaving Ihosy, we tackled the long climb to the Horombe Plateau. It's a desolate place, punctuated with clusters of mud huts and the ghostly remains of a failed experimental maize farm. Soon Isalo's sandstone massif appeared ahead of us, glowing in the afternoon sun. Reaching Jardin du Roy Hotel at sundown, we checked into our beautiful rooms set among sandstone cliffs and fragrant gardens, before a relaxing dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Day 8

Friday 30th September

ISALO NATIONAL PARK; Weather: hot and mostly cloudy with some sunny breaks

In spite of the long drive yesterday, most of the group were up before sunrise to check out the birds around 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 walked to the small lake near the hotel, where several Crested Drongos were noisily greeting the day with appearances from Malagasy Kestrel, Common Myna, Souimanga Sunbird, Pied Crow and Malagasy Bulbul. We also got good views of Grey-headed Lovebirds in flight and Judy found a Stick Insect.

After an early breakfast, we had a short drive to the town of Ranohira, spotting a Peregrine Falcon along the way. Ranohira means 'watering place for Ring-tailed lemurs' – it sounded promising! Twenty years ago, a hamlet of a few hundred people, Ranohira now has a population of 7,000, thanks to the rising popularity of Isalo National Park, known for its amazing sandstone cliffs and unusual flora and fauna.

We picked up our National Park guide, Charles, who suggested our best chances of finding lemurs would be at the Canyon de Namaza. Charles explained that Namaza translates as 'my friend' but the place once had a reputation for harbouring zebu rustlers. About 80% of the National Park is dotted with Tapia trees but other species are also common and 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. The sandstone cliffs are pitted with small caves, providing a safe roost for Ring-tailed Lemurs, and a place of burial for the Bara people. Along the river courses, we noted the endemic screwpines *Pandanus vakoana* and *Pandanus pulcher*.

Leaving the bus in a shady car park, we set off on foot at a slow pace. We spotted a small frog *Ptychoadena mascareniensis* by a clump of Clubmoss and admired the orange blooms of a *Chadsia flammea* Flame Bush, where Murray found a Cicada and we observed a pale-blue Dragonfly in flight and several Snout Bugs. A Brilliant Blue butterfly paused briefly on the path ahead of us. We passed a bush festooned with Flatid Leaf Bug nymphs, sporting fluffy white waxy secretions to confuse predators. Ruth noted a Chabert Vanga perched in the open, Desi pointed out an Olive Bee-eater and Peter spotted a Namaqua Dove. Yellow-billed Kites were soaring overhead while a Common Jery gathered nesting material. A White-headed Vanga paused briefly on a dead branch.

Once inside the forest at the foot of Isalo's sandstone cliffs, we paused in a shady spot, where a group of Ring-tailed Lemurs were having a mid-morning siesta, lethargically draped over the boughs of a tree. Also enjoying the shade were a group six Red-fronted Brown Lemurs with a delightful youngster. Ruth wandered off to photograph a very obliging, dark phase male Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher – these magnificent birds are absolutely silent as they flit from branch to branch.

Some of the group elected to stay in the shade, while Charles and the rest of the group explored further up the canyon, spotting an Emperor-type Dragonfly in flight over a clear-flowing stream. Clambering over large sandstone boulders with helpful steps cut into them, we arrived at the shady Cascade des Nymphes, where a female Forest Rock Thrush sat perched on a bough. Nicola, Madeline, Peter, Rachel, Steve and Cathy enjoyed a paddle and swim in the refreshing clear pool at the foot of the waterfall. On the way back to join the others, we witnessed a very determined *Liopholidophis lateralis* snake chasing an Oustalet's Chameleon. Murray spotted a pair of Malagasy Coucals foraging in the understorey. By now the heat was building up and it was time to return to the hotel for a late lunch.

After lunch, there was time to relax in the beautiful surrounds of the hotel and take advantage of the swimming pool. Later in the afternoon, as things began to cool down, we gathered on the hotel lawn, where Murray spotted a pair of Madagascan Hoopoes, which flew off and settled on a rocky outcrop. We took a stroll to the lush forested canyon behind the hotel, where Malagasy Turtle Dove, Grey-headed Lovebird, Crested Drongo and Madagascan Wagtail were easily observed. We also took time to examine the unusual endemic plants of the area *Aloe Isaloensis* and the yellow-flowered Elephant's Foot (*Pachypodium rosulatum gracilis*).

On our way back to the hotel shortly before nightfall, thanks to Desi, we got great views of a pair of White-throated Rail by the bridge over the stream and Peter found a Praying Mantis.

After dinner, we were ready for an early night with the prospect of a pre-dawn rise in the morning.

Day 9

Saturday 1st October

ISALO TO IFATY; Weather: very hot and sunny; heavy rain and thunder at Ifaty

At 5am we were loaded up and on the road, enjoying dawn over the statuesque Isalo sandstone formations. Pied Crows and Madagascan 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 during a 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 here, and its isolation and lack of accommodation mean that most visitors arrive during the heat of the day. With an early start, we were there by 7am. Approaching the park entrance we stopped to admire a Greater Vasa Parrot perched in the open. Reserve guide Lucien took us on a gentle forest walk on easy trails to find one of the specialities of the area, Zombitse 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.

We were also lucky to encounter a group of eight Verreaux's Sifaka. 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. At rest, these lethargic balls of fluff looked anything but acrobatic but as sleepy yellow eyes opened to check who was intruding on the morning nap, one by one they stirred and taking great leaps from trunk to trunk moved off to forage. One paused close by to feed - what a privilege to see tiny fingers grasp a handful of leaves, to watch how males rub their throat to scent-mark a branch. While Isalo has many thousands of visitors a day, here we were alone with the lemurs.

Zombitse is also a great place for birding and, with the help of our guides, we got views of the local endemic Appert's Tetraka and of Coquerel's Coua foraging in the leaf litter. Ruth spotted a Blue Vanga and Rachel and Peter found a Crested Coua. We also observed Cuckoo Roller in flight, a roosting White-browed Owl, a Frances's Sparrowhawk perched on a dead branch, Long-billed Berniera, Malagasy White-Eye, Common Jery and Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher. On the reptile front, we were happy to find an endemic Standing's Day Gecko on the rafters of the reserve's reception.

Continuing the journey, we traversed undulating terrain, punctuated by Fony baobabs and the highly decorative roadside tombs of the Mahafaly people, which depict the ambitions of the deceased or how they died. Desi explained that curiously Mahafaly translates as both 'make taboo' and 'make happy'. Denise, Andy and Gerry saw a pair of Hamerkop from the bus and we also noted a Madagascan Hoopoe and Madagascar Swallowtail during the journey. 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. Dropping down to sea level, the heat and humidity were intense.

We took lunch at the Antsokay Arboretum. Founded in 1980, this small tract of protected spiny forest showcases the unique flora of south-west Madagascar. Local guide Fara pointed out many plants used by the local people, some downright bizarre, others possessing unique ways of coping with drought: *Operculicarya pachypus*, a bonsai tree with tiny yellow flowers; *Delonix floribunda* used for making musical instruments; *Aloe vahombe* whose sap heals wounds and sunburn; the Octopus Tree *Alluandia procera*; false baobab *Moringa hildebrandtii* whose pulp is used to purify water; *Commiphora aprevalli*, whose flaking bark is likened to a sunburned foreigner and gives it the name 'tourist tree' and used for the outrigger of a boat; the giant Elephant's Foot *Pachypodium geayi*; *Uncarina stelluifera*, whose seeds are used as a mousetrap and whose leaves provide a natural shampoo; *Kalanchoe beharensis* is known as Napoleon's Hat and has soft velvety leaves and *Euphorbia stenoclada*, whose latex is used to seal boats. There are over 100 species of Euphorbia and it is as well to know them as the sap of one species, *Euphorbia cedrorum*, causes blindness. One of the most unusual plants at Antsokay is the vine *Cyphostemma montagnaci*, which forms a bulbous trunk base to store water.

During the walk through the arboretum, Fara pointed out two Madagascan Nightjars roosting on the ground and almost invisible among the leaf litter. We also saw a Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, a Malagasy Turtle Dove and over lunch by the swimming pool, Olive Bee-eater, Mascarene Martin, Madagascan Magpie-Robin, Sakalava Weaver and Crested Drongo. On the reptile front we noted Thick-tail Day Gecko and a colourful Gold-spotted Skink.

All too soon it was time to continue the journey but we paused by some ponds on the outskirts of Toliara, where we found Black-winged Stilt, Common Sandpiper, Kittlitz's Plover, White-fronted Plover, Three-banded Plover, Great Egret and Common Greenshank. Along the way we passed many fishing villages of the Vezo people, whose houses are made of reeds harvested from the surrounding wetlands.

Arriving at the beachfront Hotel Paradisier, we checked in and had time to relax as a heavy downpour and thunder storm were not conducive to exploring our surrounds.

Day 10

Sunday 2nd October

IFATY AND RENIALA RESERVE; Weather: very hot; windy in the afternoon

We were up before dawn for a visit to Reniala Reserve, a 20-minute drive to the north. Here, adjacent to the village of Ifaty is an area of protected spiny forest and the guides are expert at finding Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert 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 *Didieraceae* and *Alluaudia* which superficially resemble cacti but are deciduous trees, the red-barked *Adansonia rubrostipa* baobabs, red-flowered *Combretum grandidieri*, a tree Elephant's Foot *Pachypodium geayi* and *Givotia madagascariensis*, whose lightweight timber is used to make canoes.

With the help of Desi and our knowledgeable guide for the morning, Vongy, we observed an astonishing variety of birds in quick succession. For some, the highlight of the morning was the sight of five sleepy Subdesert Mesites lined up on a branch, slowly warming up under the first rays of the morning sun. For others, it was seeing eye-to-eye with a Long-tailed Ground Roller as we crouched noiselessly on the forest floor. With its absurdly long erect tail feathers and bright blue flanks, this is arguably Madagascar's most impressive bird. Adding to the list were a pair of Madagascan Nightjar in flight; Madagascan Magpie-Robin singing from a post; Madagascan Spinetail on the wing; Crested Coua warming up with wings fluffed up and rump exposed to the sun; Running Coua and Green-capped Coua; White-headed Vanga, Red-tailed Vanga and a Sickie-billed Vanga silhouetted on a baobab; Namaqua Dove, Common Jery, Stripe-throated Jery, Common Newtonia, Thamnornis and Subdesert Brush Warbler; Madagascan Buzzard and Malagasy Kestrel; Greater Vasa Parrot and three Madagascan Hoopoe posing for the cameras.

This morning wasn't just about birds as the heavy rain had brought out some interesting invertebrates, among them a Hissing Cockroach, a scorpion and a giant blue-legged cricket that took a shine to Ruth. We also observed a snake *Mimophis mahfalensis* and a Spiny-backed Chameleon.

After almost three hours in this marvellous forest, we were more than ready for a late breakfast. We then had time to relax and enjoy the surrounds of the hotel while some of the group took a stroll along the beach and others opted for a cruise on the reef lagoon on one of the traditional sailing boats.

We reassembled for lunch, and in the afternoon explored on foot the spiny forest in the hotel grounds and a couple of brackish ponds. Here we found Three-banded Plover, Kittlitz's Plover, Crested Drongo, Malagasy Coucal, Running Coua and a Madagascan Harrier-Hawk, spotted by Steve. We followed it as it landed on an exposed bough, offering great photo opportunities to those with the right lens. On the floor of the spiny forest the rain had brought out many hundreds of black millipedes and some red ones too. Returning to the hotel at

dusk, we took seats by one of the hotel outbuildings in the hope of spotting a Grey-brown Mouse Lemur leaving its daytime roost. We were in luck and found four of these acrobatic tea-cup-sized lemurs, but you needed to be quick, as within seconds they were away leaping into the night.

Day 11

Monday 3rd October

RENIALA AND IFATY – ANTANANARIVO; Weather: cloudy with heavy showers

The afternoon flight from Toliara to Tana gave us time for a second early morning visit to Reniala. Local guide Vongy and his helper had located three Subdesert Mesites, who had already dispersed from their communal roosting site and were perched on separate branches. After a quick view of them, news arrived of Long-tailed Ground Roller and we headed off at a pace through the spiny undergrowth, grateful for long sleeves! We were again lucky to get excellent views of this rare and beautiful bird by keeping absolutely still and silent, crouched on the ground.

After an unexpected heavy shower, we continued exploring the forest, marvelling at the baobabs' huge trunks and the steps carved into the bark to allow people to climb and harvest the fruits. This morning we hit the Vanga jackpot with Sickie-billed Vanga, White-headed Vanga, Lafresnaye's Vanga, Hook-billed Vanga and Chabert Vanga appearing one after another. Green-capped Coua, Archbold's Newtonia, Common Newtonia, Red Fody, Madagascan Hoopoe and Sakalava Weaver were rewarding additions to the morning's birds. We also observed a Spiny-backed Chameleon and a splendid 5cm-long Hissing Cockroach. Vongy explained that they give birth only once in their life, producing up to 100 live young, and can live to be five years old! Most of us probably had no idea that cockroaches could be so interesting.

Back at the hotel, over a leisurely breakfast, we watched a Whimbrel parade up and down the beach but, all too soon, it was time to pack and get ready to leave this idyllic spot. En route to Toliara, we encountered two large flocks of White-faced Duck on the beach and stopped at one of the roadside ponds where we found a young Kittlitz's Plover trapped in a piece of fishing line. With the help of a man working on the roads, the bird was freed and released and Murray rewarded him with 5000 Ariary. Thank you Murray!

Arriving at the Airport we found that our direct flight to Tana was now re-scheduled and diverted via Toalagnaro, adding an extra leg to the journey. The whole of southern Madagascar was shrouded in cloud and hopefully doused in rain – so badly needed in this drought-prone region. Arriving at Tana we had a short transfer to the Combava Hotel.

Day 12

Tuesday 4th October

ANTANANARIVO TO ANDASIBE; Weather: sunny with broken cloud

A 7am start got us on the road early to avoid the traffic. As we made our way around the capital's perimeter, Desi pointed out a Black Heron feeding in the rice paddies, its wings outstretched in umbrella formation. Once on the road east, we observed Hamerkop foraging in a rice paddy nursery and Madagascan Wagtail and Madagascan Stonechat along the roadside. We stopped at a viewpoint, where Desi bought kumquat fruits for us to taste. We observed a Striated Heron and, at the bridge over the Mangoro River, a Common Sandpiper.

Reaching Andasibe, we had lunch at Feony'Ala restaurant, overlooking a small lake, where Peter spotted a Malagasy Kingfisher. The open views across the lake to the rainforest gave us a good sighting of three Blue Pigeons, perched in the canopy.

Desi comes from Andasibe and has a vast knowledge of the area's wildlife. Together with veteran local guide Maurice, we were in excellent hands to make the most of our time in the rainforest. For our first afternoon, we visited the Andasibe Community Reserve, set up and run by the local people. Once inside the reserve, we encountered our first family group of Indris, an immediate antidote to the lemur withdrawal symptoms some of us had been feeling. The six Indris were feeding fairly high up and observing them involved neck craning and peering through dense foliage. After a while, they bounded off in vertical trunk-to-trunk leaps, leaving us breathless at their agility. Later, we found a group of Common Brown Lemur, also moving through the canopy but horizontally along the boughs, taking huge precision-leaps between the outer branches of the trees.

Maurice found a Parson's Chameleon for us – one of Madagascar's largest; however, this was a young one, orange rather than green in colour. Leaf-tailed geckoes are speciality of Andasibe and soon Maurice had us peering at a tree trunk, where a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko blended in perfectly with the mossy trunk. Head facing downwards, this master of deception has a fringe around its body that prevents any shadows forming that might give it away during the day. Also perfectly camouflaged was a Praying Mantis, spotted by Judy. Bird watching is often challenging in the low light of a cloudy day in the rainforest but we enjoyed good views of Red-fronted Coua, Lesser Vasa Parrot and Madagascar Wood Rail.

After checking in at Vakona Lodge, we returned to the reserve for a night walk along some of the trails we'd explored earlier. The night shift was already in action with a whole new set of lemurs beginning to stir and forage: our torch beams picked up the eye-shine of four very handsome Woolly Lemurs, the largest of the nocturnal species. In the understory, we found several Goodman's Mouse Lemurs, scuttling along the branches at speed almost impossible to photograph. We were also treated to very good views of slower-moving Furry-eared (Crossley's) Dwarf Lemur.

This rewarding evening also brought us a White-bellied Chameleon, Parson's Chameleon, a Lion Moth and Bright-eyed Frog. Back at the hotel for dinner, we were ready for an early night after a long and exciting day.

Day 13

Wednesday 5th October

MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK; Weather: cloudy with sunny spells

We set off for Mantadia National Park in 4x4 vehicles as the road to the reserve has deteriorated to a muddy, bumpy track. The drive through the rainforest is beautiful but it is sad to witness the continuing slash-and-burn activity outside the protected area.

Mantadia's lemurs are less habituated as those of Analamazaotra, but our guides Maurice and Desi know all the likely lemur spots and have huge experience in tracking them down.

While Desi and Maurice were 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.

In the distance we heard Indri calling, followed by the raucous snarling of Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur closer to where we stood. Soon we were gazing up at four of them bounding in great leaps from tree to tree before settling down to feed. Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs mostly feed on flowers and fruit in the canopy and are important rainforest pollinators for their preferred trees. In contrast to most other lemurs, the mother doesn't carry her babies on her back, but parks them in a well-concealed nest and twins are common.

After this great encounter, we continued to where Desi had found two Collared Nightjars roosting. These birds are so cryptic it's almost impossible to distinguish them from the leaf litter they mimic. Well done Desi!

As we moved on slowly through the forest, Ruth saw movement in the foliage and this turned out to be a group of Diademed Sifakas feeding on fruit and bringing us a third memorable lemur encounter of the day. For years, Mantadia offered a slim chance of seeing this large and very attractively coloured lemur, but in recent years, they have become more used to visitors and easier to observe.

The morning's sightings also included Long-billed Berniera, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, a *Mantidactylus* frog perfectly mimicking a dead leaf, an orange beetle spotted by Madeline and, as we exited the forest, a Madagascar Girdled Lizard, Madagascan Mannikin, Madagascan Buzzard in flight and a Madagascar Tree Boa. We also paused to photograph a beautiful white orchid *Aerangis stillosa*. We met up with Gloria, who had done a shorter circuit and been extremely lucky to see a Madagascar Crested Ibis. Several beautiful butterflies were in evidence as we left the forest: a green and red *Graphium cyrnus*, an orange, brown and white *Aterica rabena* and a blue and black *Papilio epiphorbas*.

For our picnic lunch, we gathered on the shore of a small lake, surrounded by rainforest. Here we observed Olive Bee-eater, Chabert Vanga, Madagascan Swamp Warbler, Madagascan Wagtail and several Madagascan Spinetails sweeping down to drink from the lake. On the lake, a Common Moorhen and a pair of Madagascan Grebes kept us entertained but were then eclipsed by the sudden appearance of a Pygmy Kingfisher.

Back at the hotel there was time for a rest and some of the group elected to visit the Lemur Island reserve, a home for lemurs rescued from the pet trade.

For our night walk we chose the Mitsinjo Private Reserve, run by a local conservation organisation. Led by local guide Pierre, we again had a varied evening of nocturnal viewing starting with a group of Eastern Woolly Lemur and baby. Then we came across a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko in hunting attire and marvelled at a perfectly camouflaged Brown Leaf Chameleon in the leaf litter. While we were admiring a Short-horned Chameleon, a huge spider dropped down on in front of us. We also found a tiny diurnal Dwarf Gecko, most likely a *Lygodactylus miops*.

Day 14

Thursday 6th October

ANDASIBE RESERVE; Weather: sunny and warm

This was our last morning in the rainforest and everyone was keen to make the most of it, so we were again up at crack of dawn and ready for an early departure.

Today we chose to visit the Analamazaotra Reserve, now combined with Mantadia to form Andasibe Mantadia National Park. Most of the forest here is secondary regrowth with evidence of intruding alien species such as *Eucalyptus* and *Rubus*. Whilst the park's signature species, Indri, is a picky eater and only feeds on certain native species, Common Brown Lemurs have adapted to include the aliens in their diet. For our last morning in the rainforest, we opted to split into two groups, some going with Desi and others with Maurice.

On our way down the main trail, Maurice's group saw an unusual yellow (flavistic) form of Red Fody. A Rand's Warbler was holding forth from the top of a tree while Nelicourvi Weavers flitted to and fro by the river. Malagasy Bulbuls were feasting on the fruit of a *Solanum* sp. A Blue Coua showed briefly. Maurice led us to two roosting Rainforest Scops Owl, a species we had heard calling on our night walks but failed to see. A Red-fronted Coua crossed the path ahead of us. We finally got a view of Malagasy Brush Warbler and a Malagasy Kingfisher showed well by the Lac Vert. Here a large Owl Moth flew up, spooked by a Lined Emerald Day Gecko. We particularly enjoyed watching a White-throated Rail amble along the lakeshore.

Along the path we ducked to avoid a Thorn Spider, whose threads spanned the trees over the path. Climbing to the plateau, we found two Indris, quietly foraging and ignoring the attention from a gathering of admiring visitors below them. There is something indefinably moving about these giant black and white, wide-eyed, fluffy-eared 'teddy bears'. Forming monogamous pairs, they are slow breeders and unable to survive in captivity. We heard their calls from afar, which they use to define and defend their large territories but they have no defence against hunters and habitat fragmentation. As we pondered their uncertain future, a group of six Diademed Sifakas crossed our path, pausing just a few feet from us. Amongst them a mother and infant quietly playing – no time to change camera lenses, some opted just to observe and etch the sight, scent and sounds in memories.

We came across a small group of Common Brown Lemurs feeding on the young shoots of *Rubus* and a Short-horned Chameleon. Meeting up with Desi's group, we exchanged sightings and they had found Indri and Common Brown Lemur, as well as Short-horned Chameleon, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Malagasy Kingfisher, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Common Moorhen, Rainforest Scops Owl and a Lined Emerald Day Gecko.

All too soon, it was time to leave the forest for lunch at Feony'Ala. Some of the group went to the craft shop across the road to buy vanilla pods but the shops were having problems with supplies – apparently vanilla production is being bought in bulk by the Chinese for export and so local shops can no longer sell it.

After lunch, we set off back to Tana with a short stop at the craft market. We had day use of rooms at the Combava Hotel to shower and change before our last dinner. This was a good time to thank Desi for all his hard work. More than anything, the success of a wildlife tour like this is down to the expertise and dedication of the local guide and Desi had done a great job, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm. Thank you Desi! Thanks too to the drivers who in turn took us skilfully and safely around Madagascar.

Our check in was straightforward and soon we were boarding the plane for the overnight flight to Paris.

Day 15

Friday 7th 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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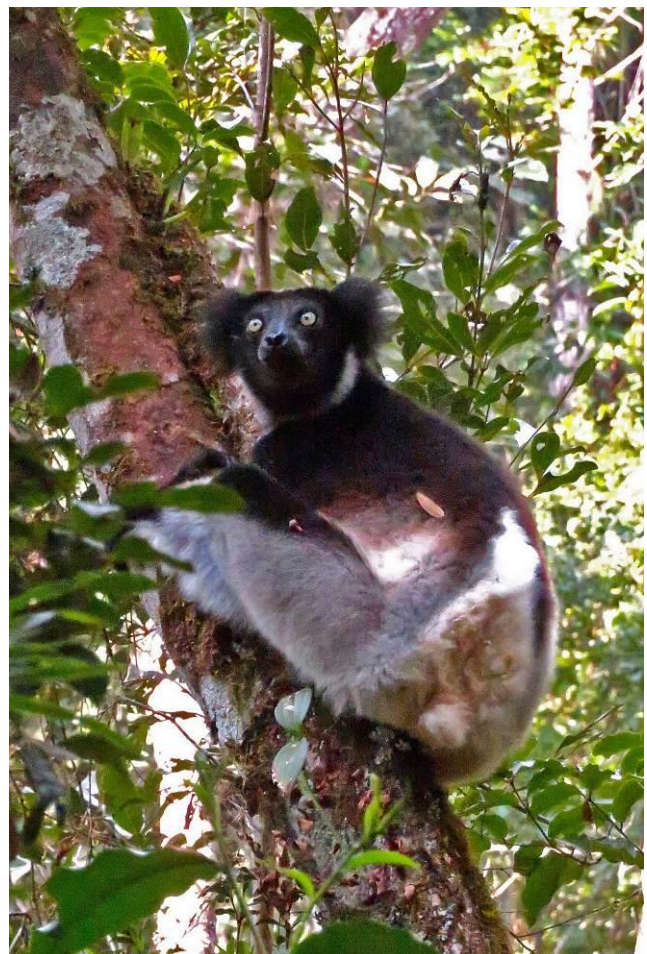
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Blue-legged Chameleon by Cathy Harlow



Indri by Cathy Harlow

Species Lists

Lemurs (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Grey-brown Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus griseorufus</i>								4				
2	Rufous Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus rufus</i>			2	3								
3	Goodman's Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus lehilahytsara</i>										6		
4	Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus crossleyi</i>										4		
5	Zombitse Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur hubbardorum</i>							1					
6	Ranomafana Grey Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur griseus ranomafanensis</i>			3									
7	Golden Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>			3	3								
8	Greater Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur simus</i>			2									
9	Ring-tailed Lemur	<i>Lemur catta</i>					20+	6+1						
10	Common Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>										6+1		6+1
11	Red-fronted Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur rufifrons</i>						6+1						
12	Red-bellied Lemur	<i>Eulemur rubriventer</i>		4+1		2								
13	Variegated Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur	<i>Varecia variegata variegata</i>			H								6	
14	Eastern Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi laniger</i>			3							3	3+1	
15	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>							8+1					
16	Diademmed Sifaka	<i>Propithecus diadema</i>											16	6
17	Milne-Edwards' Sifaka	<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>			3									
18	Indri	<i>Indri indri</i>										6	H	2

Other Mammals

1	Ringtailed Mongoose	<i>Galidia elegans</i>				1								
2	Eastern Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys rufus</i>			1									
3	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>			2	1								
4	A Bat	<i>Unknown</i>										1		

Frog

1	Mascarene Rocket Frog	<i>Ptychadena mascareniensis</i>					1							
2	Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>			4									

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	A Bright-eyed Frog	<i>Boophis viridis</i>										2		
4	A Bright-eye Frog	<i>Boophis</i> sp.											1	
5	White-spotted Tree Frog	<i>Heterixalus alboguttatus</i>		1										
6	A Frog	<i>Mantidactylus</i> sp.				1							1	
7	Brook Frog	<i>Mantidactylus betsileanus</i>			1									

Chameleons

1	O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>			1								1	
2	Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>		1	5									
3	Short-nosed Chameleon	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>										1		
4	Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii cristifer</i>										1		
5	Glaw's Flap-necked Chameleon	<i>Calumma glawi</i>			1								1	
6	Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>											1	
7	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>			2									
8	Spiny-backed Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>								2	1			
9	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>					3	1	2					

Lizards, Geckos & Skinks

1	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chalarodon madagascariensis</i>								✓				
2	Spiny-tailed Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cyclurus</i>	1						2					
3	Four-lined Iguanid	<i>Oplurus quadrimaculatus</i>						✓						
4	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>			3									
5	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>										1		
6	Lined Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata bifasciata</i>			3	1								
7	Standing's Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>							1					
8	Thick-tail Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>							1					
9	House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>			✓							✓		
10	A gecko	<i>Lygodactylus</i> sp											1	
11	Gravenhorst's Skink	<i>Trachylepis gravenhorstii</i>		1										
12	Gold-spotted Skink	<i>Trachylepis aureopunctata</i>							1					
13	Madagascar Girdled Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus madagascariensis</i>											1	

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Snakes

1	Madagascar Lined Snake	<i>Bibilava lateralis</i>						1						
2	Madagascar Tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>				1							1	
3	Malagasy Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i>								1				1
4	Big-eyed Snake	<i>Mimophis mahfalensis</i>								2				

Birds

1	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>									50			
2	Madagascan Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>											2	
3	Madagascan Ibis	<i>Lofotibis cristata</i>											1	
4	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		10								1		
5	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>										1		
6	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	1											
7	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓		✓		✓						
8	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		1	1	1		1						
9	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	10	✓					1	1		1		✓
10	Dimorphic Heron	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	10	✓	2		✓		✓			✓		
11	Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>										2		
12	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		1					3			1		
13	Madagascan Harrier- Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>					1			1				
14	Frances's Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter francesiae</i>				1			1					
15	Madagascan Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>		2	1	1		1		1		1	1	
16	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptus</i>		8			2	10	20		1			
17	Subdesert Mesite	<i>Monias benschi</i>								5	3			
18	Madagascan Wood Rail	<i>Canirallus kiolooides</i>										1		
19	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>										1		
20	Madagascan Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>											H	H
21	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>											2	1
22	Madagascan Buttonquail	<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>	1											
23	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>							10	2				
24	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>									1			

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>							6	1	3			
26	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>							1		3			
27	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>							1	3	1			
28	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>								2	1			
29	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>							3	1				
30	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>							3		1	3		
31	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
32	Malagasy Turtle Dove	<i>Nesoenas picturatus</i>					2	1	2	1				
33	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>					1	2	4	4	2			
34	Madagascan Blue Pigeon	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>				3						3		1
35	Malagasy Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>			1			2		2	1			
36	Crested Coua	<i>Coua cristata</i>							1	4	4			
37	Blue Coua	<i>Coua caerulea</i>			H	3								1
38	Green-capped Coua (ssp. of Red-capped)	<i>Coua ruficeps olivaceiceps</i>								1	1			
39	Running Coua	<i>Coua cursor</i>								4	2			
40	Red-fronted Coua	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>										1	H	1
41	Coquerel's Coua	<i>Coua coquereli</i>							1					
42	Madagascan Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>		H	H	H							H	
43	White-browed Hawk-Owl	<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>							1					
44	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>										H	H	2
45	Madagascan Owl	<i>Asio madagascariensis</i>			H							H		
45	Collared Nightjar	<i>Gactornis enarratus</i>											2	
46	Madagascan Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>							2	8	1			
47	Madagascan Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>								4			✓	
48	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓						
49	Malagasy Black Swift	<i>Apus balstoni</i>		7										
50	Cuckoo Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>		H	H	1		H	2					1
51	Scaly Ground Roller	<i>Geobiastes squamiger</i>				1								
52	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>								1	1			
53	Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis madagascariensis</i>											2	
54	Malagasy Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis vintsioides</i>	1				1					1	1	2
55	Olive Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	2					3	4		1		2	

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October											
			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
56	Madagascan Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>												
57	Malagasy Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	4	8		1	2	8	4	1	1			
58	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>						1						
59	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>			1	1		1	3	1				
60	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>				1						1	H	
61	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>						6						
62	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>				H				1			H	
63	Hook-billed Vanga	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>									1			
64	Lafresnaye's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>									1			
65	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falco p. palliata</i>								6	4			
66	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>								3	1			
67	Chabert Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>			1			1			1		2	
68	Blue Vanga	<i>Cyanolanius madagascariensis</i>				1			2					
69	Tylas Vanga	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>				1								
70	Nuthatch Vanga	<i>Hypositta corallirostris</i>												H
71	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>			H	1				2	10			
72	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>									1			
73	Crossley's Vanga	<i>Mistacornis crossleyi</i>				2								
74	Madagascan Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>		2		1								
75	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>			2		1	6	4	6	4	1	1	
76	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>		1				4	2	1	1	1	2	1
77	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
78	Madagascan Lark	<i>Ermopterix hova</i>					✓	✓	✓					
79	Malagasy Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	✓	4	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	2
80	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
81	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>		H	H	H								2
82	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>								1				
83	Madagascan Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>											2	
71	Long-billed Berniera (Tetraka)	<i>Berniera madagascariensis</i>							2				1	
72	Thamnornis	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>								2				
73	Spectacled Tetraka	<i>Berniera zosterops</i>				1								
74	Appert's Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis apperti</i>							2					

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			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6
75	Rand's Warbler	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>			H									1
76	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>		6		✓		1	4	✓	✓		✓	
77	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>			1	1				4	1			1
78	Madagascan Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>						2						
79	Malagasy White-Eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	5	1	1	✓		4	2			1	✓	✓
80	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
81	Madagascan Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus albospectularis</i>	2	2	1	1	1		3	4	2	1	1	
82	Forest Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei</i>						4						
83	Madagascan Stonechat	<i>Saxicola sibilla</i>	2				1	1				2		
84	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris sovimanga</i>	4	1	4	4	1	2	4	8	10	10	8	8
85	Malagasy Green Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris notatus</i>	2		2	2					1	1	1	1
86	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>											1	1
87	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>							4	✓	✓			
88	Red Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	✓					4		1	2	✓		1
89	Madagascan Mannikin	<i>Lonchura nana</i>			10								2	
90	Madagascan Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	3	2	1	1		1	1			1	2	

Butterflies

1	Madagascar Giant Swallowtail	<i>Pharmacophagus antenor</i>							✓	✓	✓			
2	Green Lady	<i>Graphium cyrnus</i>										1		
3	Citrus Swallowtail	<i>Papilio demodocus</i>		1	1	4	2	✓	✓			✓		
4	Spotted Blue Swallowtail	<i>Papilio epiphorbas</i>										1		
5	Brilliant Blue	<i>Junonia rhadama</i>						1		1				
6	Yellow Pansy	<i>Junonia hierta paris</i>						1						
7	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>						1						
8	Red Clearwing	<i>Acraea</i> sp.			1	1	1							
9	African Monarch	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	4				6		1	1				
10	Madagascar Forest Nymph	<i>Aterica rabena</i>											1	
11	Clouded Mother of Pearl	<i>Protogoniomorpha anacardii duprei</i>						1						
12	A Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema</i> sp.				1								
13	Madagascar Dotted Border	<i>Mylothris phileris</i>					1							
14	A Metalmark	<i>Saribia</i> sp.				✓								

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			25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Moths

15	Owl Moth	<i>Erebus walkeri</i>			1									
16	A Moth	<i>Unknown</i>										1		

Other Invertebrates

17	Dragonfly (Red)	<i>Trithemis selika</i>						1						
18	Dragonfly (Emperor type)	<i>c.f. Anax imperator</i>		1				1				1		
19	Dragonfly (Blue)	<i>Orthetrum julia</i>				1								
20	Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis</i> sp.						1				1		
21	Hissing Cockroach	<i>Gromphadorhina portentosa</i>								1	1			
	Bush Cricket	<i>Tettigoniidae</i> sp.										1		
22	Cricket	<i>Gryllidae</i> sp.								1				
23	Cicada	<i>Tibicinidae</i> sp.						1						
24	Stick Insect	<i>Phasmatodea</i>		20				1						
25	Giraffe-necked Weevil	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>			3	1								
26	White-spotted Iridescent Beetle	<i>Polybothis pyropyga</i>			1									
27	Scorpion	<i>opisthacanthus madagascariensis</i>								1				
28	Snout Bug	<i>Zana tenebrosa</i>						4						
29	Plataspid Shield Bug	<i>Libyaspis coccinnelloides</i>						✓						
30	Flatid Leaf-bug	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>						✓	✓					
31	Firefly	<i>Lampyridae</i> sp.		✓							1			
32	Giant Black Millipede	<i>-Unknown</i>			1									
33	Madagascar Fire Millipede	<i>Aphistogoniulus</i> sp.				1				✓				2
34	Small Black Millipede	<i>Unknown</i>								✓				
35	Black & Yellow Millipede	<i>Unknown</i>								1	2			
36	Madagascar Golden Orb-web Spider	<i>Nephila madagascariensis</i>			2									
37	Orb-web Spider	<i>Nephila</i> sp.				✓								
38	Thorn Spider (orange)	<i>Gasteracanthinae</i>		1							1			
39	Land Crab	<i>Unknown</i>								1				
40	Terrestrial Hermit Crab	<i>Coenobitidae</i>								4				