

Madagascar's Lemurs

Naturetrek Tour Report

14 - 28 October 2016



Baby Ring-tailed Lemur



Diademed Sifaka



Indri



Lowland Streaked Tenrec

Report and images by Ed Drewitt



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Summary

Being cryptic is the name of the game in Madagascar and during our two week stay, exploring the southern-central parts of the country from east to west, we encountered a whole host of lemurs, birds, invertebrates and other animals that have the most remarkable markings, colours and postures to eat or avoid being eaten. We encountered a huge variety of lemurs including the critically endangered Greater Bamboo Lemurs and Golden Bamboo Lemurs in the rainforest at Ranomafana, Ring-tailed Lemurs in the hot, dry central woodland, and the cuddly-looking Indris at Andasibe. Tiny mouse lemurs came out at dusk while sifakas, including Diademed, Verreaux's and Milne-Edwards', all gave stunning views in their remaining wild habitat. With some patience various endemic birds to Madagascar were spotted, from the Sickle-billed Vanga to cryptic nightjars, including young of Madagascar and Collared Nightjars. Throughout, we were astonished by the sheer evolution of camouflage in the chameleons, frogs, and insects such as the Flatid Leaf Bugs and stick insects. In the spiny forest, unique and xerophytic plants adapted to the heat were enjoyed, from the baobabs to *Euphorbias*, and the exquisite octopus trees, this year in leaf and flower.

Day 1

Friday 14th October

London to Paris

Our first day for most of the group involved travelling to Paris for an overnight stay, ready for the flight to Madagascar from France in the morning. We had a quick flight from London Heathrow to Paris, arriving to an autumnal, rainy city. A few White Wagtails were running around the tarmac. We transferred to our hotel just a few stops away on the shuttle and gathered again at 7.30pm for dinner where we met with Jane who had travelled from Bristol on a separate flight, and Allan and Sharon who had flown over from Ontario, Canada. We headed to bed at a reasonable time, ready for our long flight to Madagascar the next morning.

Day 2

Saturday 15th October

Paris to Antananarivo, Madagascar

The next day, our group of 12 met together at the hotel at 8am and headed for Terminal 2E, a quick two-stop journey on the shuttle. It was just getting light and Starlings were appearing from their overnight roost. After enjoying delicious breakfasts and with time to spare we boarded our plane at 10.45am and left, a little delayed, at 12.15pm.

We headed south-east across a cloudy France, west of the coast of Croatia and Albania before over the sun-scorched Greek islands, and across the Mediterranean Sea into northern Africa. Here, the terrain below became very hot, sandy and rugged; we passed over Egypt and the Nile River, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, before crossing over Zanzibar and descending down towards Madagascar mid-evening, landing at around 11.20pm. Tana had received some earlier rain; the air carried the distinctive smell of wood smoke from people's homes and brick kilns. We spent some time working our way through security, getting our visas, and collecting our luggage before meeting our guide Parson at arrivals. We picked up our currency, met our driver Fonjy, and

then, with the bus packed, headed down the road to a nearby luxury hotel, grabbing some well-earned sleep at just after 2.45am.

Day 3

Sunday 16th October

Lemur's Park and Antsirabe

We awoke to a bright sunny morning and views out across rice paddies, with people hoeing and maintaining their crops early on this Sunday morning. From the room balconies some spotted Red (Madagascar) Fodies, Madagascan Wagtail and Malagasy Bulbul. Out on the rice paddies a variety of egrets were foraging.

We all met for breakfast at 9am and, as we gathered by the bus to leave, everyone got to see their first chameleon, a female Oustalet's Chameleon. She was bright green and stood on the roof of a white van. Parson managed to move her to a nearby tree branch. We headed out at just before 9.45am on a bright sunny day to the Lemurs' Park just outside Tana. Due to a marathon on the main road promoting Madagascar we took a detour, passing along narrow lanes and rich, colourful market stalls. Freshly washed vegetables were laid out on tarpaulin in beautiful bright green and red piles, sacks of dried beans, nuts and seeds sat bursting, and hanging cuts of zebu and sausages hung from small, wooden butcher shops. On the 80-minute drive there we passed rice paddies where goats, zebu (cows), lots of Great Egrets and a few Dimorphic Egrets, Common Mynas, and plenty of domestic ducks and geese fed. We saw do-it-yourself brick kilns, some smoking away as fires inside cooked the clay bricks, and lots of people by the riverside washing their clothes or collecting clay soil. The kilns have become an important part of the house-building industry now there are so few trees left to cut down. We stopped briefly to pick up water bottles and continued on, passing a cart being led by zebu, and sweet potatoes being sold by the side of the road.

At the lemur park we had the chance to see semi-wild lemurs up close and to get our eye in on what to look for when we explored the forests later in the week. For many city dwellers in Tana this is the closest they ever get to seeing a lemur. A variety of lemur species have been saved from the pet industry and we were able to explore the area for lemurs, birdlife, insects, and xerophytic plants (including the Elephant Foot plant) - many have been planted to show visitors the unique botanical species that live in the hot environments further south of the country. During our visit we saw various groups of eight species of lemur, many found in the north of the country where we wouldn't be visiting, so it was a good chance to see them for real. Before we had even started, a few Coquerel's Sifakas were sat in a nearby tree. Rosty was our guide - she works here at the sanctuary on the weekends. As we headed down the path Rosty was soon to point out an Oustalet's Chameleon in a tree above, followed by another a little further along at eye level - it had distinctive small diamond white shape in a line along its flank. In the larger trees nearby a pair of Common Brown Lemurs were sleeping. As we headed along further, Rosty pointed out some of the xerophytic plants that have been especially planted. A male Souimanga Sunbird came close, singing a little like a Wren. Overhead a few Mascarene Martins and Malagasy Black Swifts flew, joined shortly by a pair of Olive (Madagascar) Bee-eaters. At our next pause a small young family of Ring-tailed Lemurs was quietly resting together on the ground. In a bush near the group a much larger male Oustalet's Chameleon was strutting his stuff.

Our next stop was to admire and watch the behaviour of small family of Crowned Sifakas. Here were mum, dad, teenager (a year old and seen by our groups last year) and a baby, just beginning to leave mum for short moments. The older youngster and dad both 'danced' along the ground in the only way sifakas can really move -

their long limbs adapted for jumping through the trees make for difficult walking on the ground. After nibbling some leaves, they both paused to 'play' and scrabble with each other. Meanwhile, mum was quiet and gradually brought her baby down the ground where it peeked out from her back with its big wide eyes and curled tail. Occasionally, amongst the odd yawn, it would reach out and leave mum before jumping back on her. The family was metres away, allowing us to appreciate their fur, skin and large, forward-facing eyes with wrinkled eyelids. Next we walked up to visit a small group of Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs, hanging out on branches with their limbs hanging down like belly-full Leopards or Cheetahs. Nearby a Malagasy Brush Warbler, large like a Great Reed Warbler with a long tail, was scolding and occasionally showing itself. In the background a Madagascan Cuckoo, fresh in from eastern parts of Africa, and a Malagasy Coucal (a large type of cuckoo) both bubbled away.

We nipped back down to the main path to spot a single snoozing Coquerel's Sifaka and a fine Madagascan Stonechat perched on the top of a tree - the coucal was hiding close by. Walking along the lower track, we encountered a group of Coquerel's Sifakas feeding on freshly cut branches given to them by the carers. They have clean white fur with contrasting red-brown patches on their shoulders.

Rosty showed us three endangered tortoises which are held in a pen for their safety and security - the large Radiated Tortoise, the medium-size Hinge-backed Tortoise and the palm-size Spider Tortoise. In an adjacent enclosure a female Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur was housed with her baby to avoid the infant being attacked by other Lemurs at such a young age. Her mate was keeping watch, and at one point he placed himself on a strategic branch and was barking and shrieking with his head held down.

Another enclosure revealed sleeping Crossley's Dwarf Lemur, Greater Dwarf Lemur and Brown Mouse Lemur. The Greater Dwarf Lemur poked its head out to see what all the fuss was about showing its diminutive size, large eyes and soft grey fur.

As we headed back for lunch, we passed a second family of Ring-tailed Lemurs sat together on the branch of a pine tree. Two Mascarene Martins perched in a small tree further back and a small flock of Malagasy White-eyes passed through another pine standing above us.

Lunch was a relaxed affair; the temperature was pleasant after yesterday's rains had cooled the soil. The nearby river, normally calm and slow, was fast and rushing; the orange-brown water looked like hot, silky chocolate flowing over the rocks. With a delicious salad and cooked vegetables for starter, coconut chicken or a pork pea dish with rice for main and delicious light desserts, we were on our way by 3pm, though not before a few had spotted a Spiny-tailed Iguanid with a black collar on its neck. African Monarch Butterfly and a brightly coloured grass yellow butterfly species were also seen along with a potter wasp guarding its small mud nest attached to a *Euphorbia*. A Hamerkop, its head shape resembling a hammer or chisel, flew in to a huge stick nest in a tree just outside the restaurant - it stopped to drop a few bits of nest material before flying off again.

We headed in sunny spells back towards Tana and then south to Antsirabe on the number 7 road. We passed many more paddy fields, some with almost luminous green rice shoots. Tens of Great Egrets, Dimorphic Egrets and Squacco Herons were feeding amongst them along with plenty of domestic ducks, Feral Pigeons and Common Mynas. We drove south up into the hills along windy roads with incredible views across the dramatic rocky landscape, now deforested and scattered with pine trees introduced from Mexico. Rice paddy fields were

positioned all along the road network, most recently ploughed and mixed with cow dung waiting for the rains to sow another rice crop. We stopped high above a lake looking down towards at least 100 Red-billed Teal. Further along tens of Cattle Egrets were gathering in a stand of trees. As the light faded we were treated to an intense crimson sun against a mauve background. We then continued on into the dusky and moody evening - flashes of lightning caught our gaze as it flickered against the dark clouds.

We reached the town of Antsirabe, our stop for the night, around 7.10pm. The name, Antsirabe, means the 'the place of much salt', relating to local springs bringing concentrated minerals to the Earth's surface. We settled in to the Flower Palace Hotel before sitting for dinner at 7.30pm - tonight a choice of fillet of fish or chicken in a delicious soy sauce, vegetables and nuts.

Day 4

Monday 17th October

Ialatsara Forest Camp and Ranomafana

Sunrise was around 4.30am and by the time we rose for the day it was a bright morning. Common Mynas were commonly singing and squawking nearby. We met at 6am, enjoying a breakfast of croissants, toast, fruit and yoghurt. We were in the north of Antsirabe and headed through the centre of town towards the south. It is home to some 200,000 people and the town is well known for the country's gemstones, where they are brought for polishing.

At 7am when we left, the town was busy and bustling as children went to school, on Rickshaws or walking, and people were already selling groceries and meats on their stalls. After passing parched grassland, some of it burnt ready for the rainy season and new growth for zebu cattle, we passed many more acres of rice paddies. It was a far cry from the once-forested landscape that would have existed here thousands of years ago. A Malagasy Kingfisher caught Parson's sharp eye. We stopped to watch as the bird flew to a small island of bamboo. Another was nearby on a post. Out in one paddy field a line of women was walking in a line bent over; they were picking out any weeds or poor rice shots. Farmers were out with their pairs of Zebu ploughing their own paddy fields, often surrounded by Cattle Egrets. In the hazy sunshine we passed neatly shaped paddy fields, some luminous green, others dark green. Many are terraced and incorporate an intricate arrangement of water management so that some fields have just the right amount of water and others are dry, awaiting planting. This rice of high quality is exported out of Madagascar and local people eat a far lower quality of rice that they import.

We passed acres and acres of rice paddies while the granite mountains, the 'backbone' of Madagascar, were ever-present and impressive to our right-hand side. During our morning journey we saw Malagasy Kestrels, a Yellow-billed Kite, Common Mynas, a stunning male Madagascan Stonechat, a Helmeted Guineafowl, four Hamerkops, Great Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Dimorphic Egrets and Mascarene Martins.

We passed areas of native trees, Tapia, which have thickened bark to withstand natural fires on the sun-baked Madagascan countryside. The trees are used for firewood and the berries sold. Locals are encouraged to plant Tapia trees and to leave this native woodland; by encouraging the native silk worm caterpillar, women's groups are set up to develop local silk-weaving. Some particular orchids in Madagascar also only grow on certain Tapia trees. Being resilient against bush fires, if their resistant bark doesn't do the trick they ooze a red sap that acts as a fire retardant.

We stopped briefly at an old bridge at Fatyita, toppled by supporters of the losing political party in 2002 after the then elections. At least three Madagascan Cisticolas were singing and one was spotted with a feather as nest material. A Madagascan Wagtail was feeding and flying around the rocks down by the river. A few Mascarene Martins were flying overhead and a Malagasy Kestrel was calling and flying around the modern road bridge that we walked across. A number of African Monarch Butterflies were also flying around.

At 10.15am we stopped in the town of Ambositra, meaning 'woodcarving'. We visited the toilets via a wood-carving shop where some bought local souvenirs; the town was full of people, many selling fresh vegetables, fruits such as mangoes, and fresh chicken and zebu meat.

We continued to travel throughout huge swathes of countryside subject to burning by man, grazing by Zebu and shaping into a stepped watery landscape for rice paddies. Small groups of Pied Crows were catching the thermals above the paddy fields, along with the odd Yellow-billed Kite and Malagasy Kestrel.

Of particular interest was the number of burning brick kilns: bricks are cut by spade out of the clay mud, often by the side of the road or as part of a paddy field. The bricks are piled high into a huge oblong block. Gaps remain at the bottom where logs are inserted and burn. The heat from this slowly cooks and bakes the bricks.

We passed through small roadside hamlets where corn was being laid out to dry, school children were making their way home, and in one village, huge piles of processed Geraniums were giving out an aromatic fragrance - the oils from the plants are used in the perfume and massage industry in Europe.

We came to some semi-natural woodland, a refuge from the slash-and-burn habitat and rich iron-red soil we had been passing. It was time to turn off the road and stop for lunch. We walked 150 metres along a path through trees to the Ialatsara Forest Camp. Along the way we stopped to watch a pair of Hook-billed Vangas - one of the birds flew to a nest in the fork of a eucalyptus tree leaving just its tail sticking up. Parson pointed out a Parson's Chameleon, aptly named and with beautiful shades of green and yellow, including bright green skin around the eyes. We had a delicious hot lunch with goat's cheese tart for starters, chicken with rice and vegetables, all homegrown, and a physalis tart. After, we went for a little walk with the gardeners. They had a surprise for us - a short way along the garden/woodland amongst the bamboo was a group of four Red-bellied Lemurs and a little baby. With some tempting banana, the lemurs grunted their way down to some trees where we were standing. We had superb views of the different individuals just a metre or two away, including the baby which was clinging to its mother with its tail wrapped right round her abdomen.

We left the lemurs and, before we headed off, we watched a Parson's Chameleon and a Short-horned Chameleon, both in a patch of shrubby trees. Both were slowly moving their legs backwards and forwards before edging further forward. Their eyes were rotating up, down and all around. The vangas were together on a tree branch again before one returned to the nest. As we got to the bus, some nearby lily ponds were home to a Malagasy Kingfisher, a Madagascan Wagtail and, on a tree branch, a Forest Rock Thrush. The latter moved around before perching on a tree facing us showing of its blue-grey head and orange breast while flicking its orange-and-dark-brown tail.

We left just after 3pm, stopping in a nearby village, Ambohimahasoa, to see a large heronry containing tens of Dimorphic Egrets (both the white and black-blue colour forms) with their splendid feathery 'aigrettes', nesting

and sleeping Black-crowned Night Herons, and over 100 sitting Cattle Egrets incubating eggs. One blue-phase Dimorphic Egret was tending its three white chicks, just growing their wing feathers. Another white adult was regurgitating food to its chicks. Many of the egrets were courting and flying in with sticks. The egret colony is based in a number of trees, including oak, within a walled garden at the mayor of the town's offices. For five minutes there was no traffic and we just heard the regular gurgles of the egrets calling.

Carrying on, we stopped after an hour at a viewpoint at Aiakamisinambohimaha, looking out across the valleys and extensive rice paddies below us. Two dark-phase Malagasy Kestrels were flying around and one perched on a pylon.

We headed for another hour to our hotel at Ramanofana. Just before we arrived, we stopped at some impressive waterfalls over huge boulders in the river. Nearby on the dripping limestone cliff wall we admired bright pink orchids and looked for Madagascar Bright-eyed Frogs that were already singing with a distinctive creaking croak. We arrived around 6.30pm and settled into our rooms at dusk beforehand dinner and the checklist an hour later.

Day 5

Tuesday 18th October

Ranomafana

After breakfast at 6.15am we set out at 7am, having already spotted a Madagascan Wagtail, Madagascan Mannikins, Malagasy Kestrels and African Palm Swifts around the hotel. The star of the morning was a huge Golden Orb-web Spider devouring a large hawk dragonfly it had caught in its extensive web. We headed 10 minutes up the road to the Talataky part of the Ranomafana National Park and spent the morning looking for lemurs and birds with our local guide Jean Chris. We were joined by his son Ju and another spotter Barku who both went ahead looking for lemurs.

The air was filled by the song of a Rand's Tetraka, a warbler-like bird perched at the top of the tallest tree in the river valley - it sounds similar to a European Greenfinch. At the beginning of our walk a male Malagasy Green Sunbird was singing and feeding in a nearby tree, showing off its markedly down-curved bill. We heard the calls or songs of Common Newtonia, Souimanga Sunbird, Common Jery, Malagasy Bulbul, Malagasy White-eye, Red-tailed Vanga, Tylas Vanga, Lesser Vasa Parrot and Madagascan Cuckoo. Towards the start of our walk a few Long-billed Tetrakas and a family of Spectacled Tetrakas were playing hide and seek - a few managed to spot two fledgling tetrakas together on a branch. A large, dark leaf-shape was in fact a male Velvet Asity, Starling-like in shape and size and keeping very still. At least two Cuckoo Rollers called like hawks overhead and flew with their broad, exaggerated wing beats. Towards the end a very cryptic Red-fronted Coua revealed itself to a few people.

Jean Chris got the call of a lemur on his hotline so we headed through the forest and encountered our first lemurs, at least two Golden Bamboo Lemurs. This species is increasing here at the reserve and they showed briefly in the tops of bamboo before slipping away. As we headed back to the main path, a male white-phase Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher was singing above our heads.

We trekked on for half an hour to the call of another bamboo lemur, in fact some of Madagascar's rarest lemurs, two Greater Bamboo Lemurs, a father and daughter. They are the only two left here in the national park and are of only 160 remaining in the wild in the whole country. They were resting up in the bamboo on branches with clumped dead leaves looking very cryptic - they looked a little like Koalas. Through the binoculars their hairy

ears and bushy tails were dead giveaways. Occasionally a head popped up showing a distinctive, slightly flattened, cat-like lemur face. After some chattering one of the lemurs had a stretch, a lick of its fur and a yawn before moving through the bamboo to feed on fresh leaves above us.

We moved back down the paths, passing a valley where the barking calls of Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs were echoing across from some way away. We passed some Fossa poo, old and full of lemur fur, their favourite food. Jean Chris pointed out Madagascar's only cactus, a mistletoe-like plant dangling from a tree. As we headed back down we paused to watch some Common Brown Lemurs feeding in the trees, some with babies. They were hard to see as they moved through the dense vegetation, and we had to shimmy down a short slope to see them.

We paused to look out across a wonderful viewpoint looking down the valley towards the village of Ranomafana. While having a sit down we admired a stunning Four-eyed Emerald Day Gecko (or Peacock Day Gecko as it is also called) clinging vertically on the wooden frame of our cover. An inquisitive and perhaps hungry Ring-tailed Mongoose sneaked around on the edge of the trees, stopping to lie down and lick its rich red-brown banded tail. Common butterflies included a tail variety, a forest species known as *Siribia tepahi*.

We arrived back at the hotel at 12.10pm. We met for a delicious three-course lunch at 12.45, entertained by a wagtail and another Four-eyed Emerald Day Gecko. While resting after arriving back, Jane enjoyed a Belted Chameleon that the gardeners were feeding, and photographed an Ornate Girdled Lizard.

After a two-hour break we headed out at 4pm with Jean Chris, Barku and Ju, 20 minutes up the road to the waterfall where we had stopped on arrival yesterday. After taking a few photos, we spent an hour and a half slowly walking down the road examining the wet moss-, sundew- and liverwort-clad rocks for frogs and other animals. First up were a variety of frogs, superbly cryptic against the moss and twigs. One had a cream stripe down its back and from a distance looked like a dead, yellow blade of grass. A flattened, road-kill Gold-collared Snake had a striking Barbie-pink belly and a line of black and rich-brown scales on its back. Heidi found an incredibly well-camouflaged Stump-tailed Gecko, only a few inches long with tiny nose horns and the pattern and colour of the mottled, wet rocks. Up in the trees a pair of Pied Flycatcher-like Ward's Flycatcher (also known as Ward's Flycatcher-Vanga) was feeding, followed by a few Chabert Vangas, one showing its bright blue eye skin. At least two Madagascan Cuckoos were calling around while 20 Malagasy Black Swifts screamed around overhead. A few magpie-robins started to sing their evening chorus.

As we walked further down, chameleons stole the show, including a pair of Nose-horned Chameleons. The female was a multitude of green shades while the male was orange-brown. However, a closer view revealed bright red veins and tiny green spots on his side, and a nose-horn like that of the Proboscis Monkey. Its nose scales were bright blue. What a chameleon!

This pair was followed by a small, young Belted Chameleon, a large Blue-legged Chameleon and an O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon with its tail curled up for the night. Before the light disappeared we enjoyed seeing an insect unique to Madagascar, a male Giraffe-necked Weevil, sporting its long 'neck' and extended head. As the light faded we carried on down the road and stopped by some bushes. Just after 6pm two Brown Mouse Lemurs were visiting to feed on some banana smeared onto the bark of a tree. They were small and with large eyes ideal for night vision - under a red headlamp their eyes looked like mini red car headlights moving together as each animal scuttled around.

Just before we got back on the bus we saw a semi-live Malagasy Cat-eyed Snake that had sadly just been run over by a car; a beautiful creature nonetheless. We got back on the bus at 6.30pm, getting back in time for a short break before dinner at 7.30pm; a delicious carrot soup and a main of mushroom chicken or pork cooked together with finely chopped cassava leaves, followed by papaya in a honey sauce.

Day 6

Wednesday 19th October

Ranomafana

After breakfast we were out at 6.45am to another part of the reserve known as Vohiparara, Park Sahamalotra. It was misty and drizzly to begin with, but soon cleared up. Due to illness, Ed came back to the hotel and spent the day recovering. However, for the group the morning was very successful, seeing the Milne-Edwards' Sifakas (four) and Red-bellied Lemur (one). Ranomafana is one of the best places for seeing the Milne-Edwards' Sifakas and many are used to people and carry on feeding without any bother. There were a few birds around too including Pollen's Vanga, a White-headed Vanga, a pair of Madagascan Cuckooshrikes, two Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers, Blue Coua and Red-fronted Coua. A highlight was disturbing a nesting Collared Nightjar - the adult bird was nesting near the path and flew away in a diversionary flight, crash-landing close by. Not too far away the group found its nest, nestled on the ground by tree, with one white egg with tiny black spots and a young chick. This is was unusual location – more often Collared Nightjars nest in trees, often in the middle of Bird's Nest Ferns.

We arrived back to our hotel around 12.15pm and, after lunch at 12.45pm, had a few hours to relax. Some of the group opted to stay at the hotel for the afternoon. A select group went back to the Talatahely reserve and climbed the steps back up the viewpoint. Highlights included a Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Eastern Red Forest Rat, two Golden Bamboo Lemurs, a Spearpoint Leaf-tailed Gecko and a Madagascan Cuckoo, an elusive bird, seen by Jeremy and Parson. The leaf-tailed geckos have the most remarkable camouflage - their skin mimics the mossy strands and lichens of the trees where they lay sprawled out, surprisingly difficult to see. An O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon was also admired.

We met for the checklist and dinner at 7.20pm, enjoying leek soup, fried fish (Tilapia) or zebu steak, and banana flambé with flaming spirits poured over. We headed off to bed around 9pm ready for an early start.

Day 7

Thursday 20th October

Enja and Isalo

Up early, we had breakfast at 5.45am and headed off in the bus at 6.30am. As we came out of the park we stopped to watch a Blue Coua in the top of a tree. A few Crested Drongos flew over the road. We headed on our journey south, passing many more paddy fields and dramatic scenery, and seeing a Dimorphic Egret, a Hamerkop, a few Yellow-billed Kites and Pied Crows.

We stopped briefly at a fuel station in Madagascar's second largest city Fianarantsoa and continued on through much hotter, granitic landscape with huge boulder outcrops. Along the way we paused to watch a Madagascan Hoopoe feeding and a Yellow-billed Kite that flew past at bus level.

At 10.30am we stopped to visit a paper-making factory in Ambalavao where local people hand-make paper from the local Avoha tree bark. Parson talked us through how the women make the paper, and afterwards we were able to buy the card, place mats and photo albums made from their handiwork. Early lunch was down the road at a lovely restaurant, with delicious food such as zebu kabob, chicken coquette and potato salad in a rewarding airy, cool grand room.

By 12.30pm we were on the road and travelled 20 minutes to our next destination. Our next stop was Enja, a locally community-run woodland managed for the lemurs. In front of us was the imposing scenery of granite mountains known as the 'inselbergs'. In 15 years the population of the near-threatened Ring-tailed Lemurs has risen from 100 individuals to 1200 and, now more tourists are visiting, the money can be invested back in the area for the lemurs and infrastructure such as a school for the local village.

We met our guide Daniel and, with his spotters running ahead, our first animal in a bush was a very large male Oustalet's Chameleon, superbly camouflaged with his grey-and-black markings. On our way back he was venturing to the outer branches to feed.

A short way along our star lemur at this site, the Ring-tailed Lemur, appeared. Two were sat hanging out in a tree. A short distance further we encountered a whole troop - most were walking away from us across a field to other woodland, all with their black-and-white fluffy tails stuck up in the air. Half-a-dozen mothers, all with babies and some with twins, stayed behind feeding on figs in a tree and from the ground below it. The babies were six to eight weeks old, some venturing just a few feet away from their mothers. We could hear the meowing of the lemurs, hence their name *Lemur catta* because they sound so cat-like. They also made some grunts. This group also moved away across the field - we followed them to the woodland where they drank at a water trough amongst the trees before resting.

Other wildlife included Pied Crows, Yellow-billed Kites, Souimanga Sunbird, bulbul and bee-eater.

We headed on for another four hours and arrived at our luxury hotel, Le Jardin du Roy, near the Isalo National Park, around 6.40pm. We stopped in the nearest village to say hello to our guide for tomorrow, Roland. On our journey this afternoon we passed through breath-taking granite mountains and vast grassy plains, although tragically the majority had been burnt to encourage plant growth for the zebu. The result is a devastating desertification of the land. The main birds over these areas were Yellow-billed Kites, Malagasy Kestrels, Pied Crows and Madagascan Lark. We stopped a few times to photograph the intense orange sun as it set behind the sandstone mountains. As the light faded a group of 20 Madagascan Sandgrouse flew low over the desert and road.

After a refreshing welcome drink and towel we met for a delightful three-course meal and headed off to bed after a long day.

Day 8

Friday 21st October

Isalo

After a good night's sleep we headed out at 6am, before breakfast, where it was cool, sunny and bright. A Forest Rock Thrush was singing beautifully from one of the lodges near the centre building while bulbuls and mynas dashed around and at least three Common Jerys, little Chiffchaff-like birds, gleaned insects from the trees. As we headed down to some horse fields another, or the same, rock thrush was singing from the rocks. A Madagascan Hoopoe was also singing and sounded like a Turtle Dove. As it sang it bowed its head and vibrated. A male kestrel swooped down to the ground to snatch some food and pulled it apart up on the rocks. Another kestrel was perched half way up a palm. A newly arrived migrant, a Broad-billed Roller, was calling from the top of a rock with a Pied Crow close by, seemingly unhappy at the roller's presence. A male Namaqua Dove flew down to one of the sandy paddocks amongst a family of chickens. A distinctive Crested Drongo with its long, forked tail and crest flew around, occasionally perching. Palm swifts, bee-eaters and a few Grey-headed Lovebirds also flew overhead. Just before we turned back, a pair of hoopoes fed together on the grass, probing with their down curved bills. One, perhaps the male, had his stunning crest raised. As we walked back two Four-lined Iguanids were camouflaged on the rocks.

We met for breakfast at 7am, for a delicious mix of toast, cake, fruit and spreads. Just before heading off for the morning, we watched a Madagascan Hoopoe feeding just outside the front of the hotel; John also found a Four-lined Iguanid on the rocks. Marian had seen a hoopoe and a Benson's Rock Thrush, special for this region, in a tree near her room.

At 8am we headed to the Namaza Canyon in the Isalo National Park and surrounded by the impressive Isalo massif, Jurassic sandstone that has been carved by the wind and rain into spectacular gorges and gullies. We picked up our guide Roland in Isalo on the way. During the 20 minutes to the car park, Roland explained more about the reserve, the wildlife we hoped to see and about the local tribe people.

There was so much to see along the hot and slow walk to a camp - Roland had an incredibly sharp eye. We saw four tiny Yellow-striped Frogs on low vegetation followed by a pair of Lynx Spiders, the male a little smaller and green. Stick insects were incredibly cryptic - they looked just like the branches of the tree they were in. Madagascan Cisticolas called from the grassland, occasionally flying up and Olive Bee-eaters swooped overhead. A Chabert Vanga fed in a tree before flying off like a House Martin. Other species along the walk included: Spiny-tailed Iguanid (Peter described it as having a tail like a pine cone); a very cryptic net-casting spider with its legs stretched forward and back to look like part of the tree bark (they throw a net of web over prey); a few praying mantises; a black hornet; a snoutbug (or flat-back weevil); a cicada; a young scorpion; and various yellow grass butterflies, Brilliant Blue butterflies and African Wood White butterflies. The highlight for many was seeing Flatid Leaf Bugs. The larval forms look like the white blossom of trees while the adults resemble flower petals. We saw two species, larger adults with orange wings and smaller adults with pink wings. Where both larvae and adults were together they simply looked like a bunch of flowers. As we neared the camp a male Madagascan Buttonquail, a diminutive, compact bird, came very close, enticed by some calls Parson was playing. Forest Rock Thrush, drongos, bulbuls and a male Madagascan Stonechat were also spotted. At the camp we heard the very vocal White-throated Rails. After a little patience and scrambling we caught sight of at least two. These Coot-size birds have a dark-green back, camouflaging them against the algae-coated rocks they move around amongst. Their white throats and Water Rail-like calls were also distinctive.

Around the camp we enjoyed watching one of the troops of Ring-tailed Lemurs that live here, some with young. Roland had been searching for another special lemur without any luck. However, Claire found it and we quickly walked over to see a lone female Verreaux's Sifaka, resting on a tree branch. After nibbling and preening her tail, she leapt for a remarkable distance and disappeared into the trees. A few interesting reptiles were also here including the Madagascar Girdled Lizard, the Thick-tail Day Gecko (two) and the Dwarf Plated Lizard.

We headed back in the hot sunshine and bought some clay model lemurs that had been freshly painted by a local group of boys earning some money for school equipment - we checked with Roland that it was an ethical thing to be doing. We got back to the hotel for 12.45pm, where we had a delicious, one- to three-course lunch together at 1pm.

Many of us met again at 4pm and headed out behind the hotel through some stream woodland and along the ancient sandstone cliffs up close. We could see the layers of sand and stones laid down over millions of years. The rock was pitted with holes where small pebbles had dislodged and weather had opened up where they had been sitting. As we walked, a Malagasy Turtle Dove dashed along the opening at the speed of a hawk. On some of the trees shield bugs were packed in like ladybirds - most were bright shiny-orange adults, with a few larval forms coloured like the bark of the stem. Flowering plants were in abundance, including those of the Madagascan variety of Periwinkle, *Cathanthus ovalis* var. *grandiflora* which has bright pink flowers. The Elephant Foot plants, a specialist xerophytic plant here in the hot dry environment, were also sporting their sulphur-yellow flowers. Other birds included a Purple Heron, Crested Drongo, Malagasy Bulbul, Yellow-billed Kites, Madagascan Hoopoe, Olive Bee-eater and Malagasy Coucal. Kestrels were perching around the estate, and as we finished up, two mated on one of the lodges.

We enjoyed another delicious dinner at 7pm, paid our final bills and headed for bed, ready for an early night and a 4.30am start.

Day 9

Saturday 22nd October

Zombitse National Park and Antsokay Arboretum of Toliara

We set off at first light at 5am, just as dawn was beginning to break and the birds started to sing. While the White-throated Rails were calling throughout the night, the drongos were the first to sing, stimulated by the lights around the lodges. A Madagascan Nightjar sang in the backdrop followed by bulbuls, a cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, coucal and Souimanga Sunbird. As we headed west it was light enough to see the sandstone ridges before we drove through open, hilly plateaus.

We passed expanses of open land where the woodland has been removed for firewood, slash-and-burn for Zebu, and mining for sapphires. Just naturally occurring fire-resilient palms remained, salvaged amongst the charred vegetation. Villages have turned into large, poor conurbations as people have flocked to the areas to be part of the business. Standing out in the middle of nowhere were baobab trees, once surrounded by scrub and other trees. As we came over the brow of a hill (with some low mist) the sterile land suddenly became good quality dry deciduous forest, known as the Zombitse National Park (and where the baobab trees were more naturally nestled amongst natural vegetation).

We slowed down as we drove alongside the forest, stopping to watch up to five sooty-black Lesser Vasa Parrots feeding on small berries. Through the binoculars you could see glossy iridescent on their wings. Two Madagascan Green Pigeons flew into another tree - bizarre green Pigeons with red-brown vents and grey webs to some of their inner wing feathers. A Madagascan Spinetail was also flying low over the trees.

We met our guides and wandered in to this special woodland, looking at a variety of trees, including baobabs and a tree with thin, peeling bark known as the Tourist Tree (as its skin peels like sunburnt western tourists!). There were ant-lion burrows all over the path - the soil made from very coarse quartz grains. Common Jerys called all around us and one gave very good views. A flock of birds revealed jerys, Common Newtonia and a Red-tailed Vanga. A few paradise flycatchers and a magpie-robin were also spotted while Cuckoo Rollers called all around. A highlight was seeing the very rare Appert's Tetraka - two birds low down on the leaf litter looked a little like juvenile Grey Wagtails in colour. This location is one of only three sites where they are found in Madagascar (and the world). As many watched a Rufous Vanga, Ed and Peter found a Malagasy Hog-nosed Snake peeping out of a burrow. The rest of the group was ushered over and we watched as the snake came out a few inches tasting the air with its forked tongue. It had large scales on the top of its head and its underside was lemon yellow.

Our first mammal of the day was a single Hubbard's (or Zombitse) Sportive Lemur at its roost tree, sat right in the V of a tree with a hole below. About the size of a small cat, this nocturnal lemur was sandy brown with large big eyes; it stared straight at us, licked its fur and looked seemingly relaxed before hunkering down into its hole. This species is unique to this national park.

A lovely dangling orchid with feelers tightly wrapped around the tree had long white flowers while another orchid revealed its thick green pseudo-bulbs, water storage organs for surviving the dry season.

A little further along we were watching a pair of Coquerel's Couas sliding in and out of the foliage before a Verreaux's Sifaka came over to see what the fuss was all about. Further along the path another four or five were in the trees including a mum with a baby. We watched as they swung through the trees with such ease. We walked on a little while and came across another sifaka family feeding on the leaves at the top of a tree. There are around 15 families in this area.

It was a good walk for reptiles and we also saw a huge Oustalet's Chameleon, Grandidier's Dwarf Gecko, Standing's Day Gecko and Giant Madagascan Velvet Gecko.

When we came out of the forest we crossed the road back to the bus and stopped by a food hut where two Pheasant-size Giant Couas were feeding on scraps. Related to cuckoos, they have two toes pointing forward and toes pointing backwards. Their head is masked with a stunning sky- and ultramarine-blue fading into bright purple, like a sunset without all the red colours. They have an olive-green back, a bright cream-white breast and orange belly. Great birds to see out in the open.

Passing baobab trees looking very lonely without their accompanying forest, we headed further west towards the coast, past cotton fields, stands of cashew nut trees and degraded grassland that used to be woodland. We passed very poor villages with simple wattle-and-daub huts - in the west they have the least rainfall in the whole country. After a few hours drive we arrived at Antsokay Arboretum of Toliara. After lunch and our guide Jeanto showed us a whole selection of local spiny forest trees including xerophytic plants such as *Kalanchoe*, *Pachypodium* and

Euphorbias. It was a great opportunity to see how these xerophytic plants have adapted to the hot, dry environment by developing thick, succulent leaves and a bulb-like root system that stores water. Meanwhile, birdlife included singing magpie-robins and a pair of territorial kestrels. In one bush we were shown the nest of a Common Jeri - a tiny dome-shaped white nest made out of fluffy flower seed heads. At least three Spiny-tailed Iguanids were resting on tree branches and another above the toilet sign! A large Spiny-backed Chameleon was resting up in a *Euphorbia* tree. Further along we just managed to make out the small, curled form of a Grey-brown (Reddish-grey) Mouse Lemur, fast asleep amongst the tangle of branches of another *Euphorbia* which resembled Medusa's wrangling snakelocks. At the end of the walk Jeanto pointed us to a sleeping adult Madagascan Nightjar resembling broken branches and leaves, with two half-grown chicks snug together in front of her. What perfect camouflage. As we left a Green-capped Coua was hiding in the undergrowth and revealed itself to most. A Subdesert Brush Warbler made a brief appearance too.

We left the gardens at 3.30pm and headed for our coastal hotel along the main road Number 9. We stopped at an open salt-marshy pool, finding two Black-winged Stilts and a few Curlew Sandpipers.

We arrived at 4.45pm at our beach hotel and quickly settled into our separate beach cabins before meeting for dinner at 7pm. The sea was calm with a beautiful sunset. A few Ringed Plovers and a Whimbrel from Northern Europe or Russia were feeding on the tide line. Alan caught sight of a flock of 12 Curlew Sandpipers.

We met for dinner at 7pm; before our food came, a local band and dancers performed in the restaurant. We headed off for bed around 9pm ready for an early start.

Day 10

Sunday 23rd October

Ifaty

Today we met at 5am and enjoyed a morning cup of tea or coffee from some flasks that had been left out for us. Madagascan Nightjars were still calling as the light came up and Madagascan Cuckoo had been calling during the night; it was still going. A large bat flew down to the swimming pool for a drink.

Twenty minutes along the now-Tarmac road we arrived at Reniala spiny forest reserve to admire both the plant and bird life. The sun rose, with baobab trees in the foreground creating a very Madagascan landscape. As we walked along the sandy track to the reserve, we had a quick look in the rotting hole of a baobab tree. A Hissing Cockroach was just visible.

As we entered into the reserve we were surrounded by various baobab trees including the oldest which was huge; it measures 13 metres in circumference and is 1200 years old. There were also false baobab trees and many different xerophytic trees with leaves, stems and roots very well adapted to the hot environment. The main plants that dominated here were the spiny octopus trees. Unlike the previous two Octobers, recent rain meant the octopus trees were all in leaf. Their thin, long leaves poke out between the porcupine-sharp spines that cover these plants. Many were covered in lichens. Others were covered in creamy, yellow confetti-like flowers - something that wasn't present in recent previous seasons.

As we walked along the sandy track surrounded by fascinating xerophytes including many shrub and tree size *Euphorbias* various birds were singing all around, such as Stripe-throated Jerys, Madagascan Turtle Doves and

Souimanga Sunbirds. Two male Madagascan Cuckoos were also calling while a Malagasy Coucal showed well in a tree.

One of the local stars was the Sickie-billed Vanga - one was bringing twigs to a nest while another was preening in the sunshine. Their down-curved bills are ideal for probing amongst the baobab fruits and bark looking for invertebrates. A few Chabert Vangas and a calling Lafresnaye's Vanga were also spotted.

Our next treat was seeing a group of six roosting Subdesert Mesites - these Jay-size birds were all huddled together in a line on the branch of a *Euphorbia* tree. The males had white breasts with black spots like a thrush while the females had brown spots that merged together to form splotches. The group of mesites stayed very still in the hope we hadn't spotted them. Through the binoculars we could make out their bright red eyes.

A long-tailed brush-warbler-like *Thamnornis* sang from a tree, and another came very close when tempted with a little playback.

Our next bird was another along one of our key target species, a Magpie-size Long-tailed Ground Roller. Two were hiding in the undergrowth. One flew and the other remained six metres away, showing off its beautiful patterns and colours - almost nightjar-like colours with a blue wing patch and black-and-white throat/neck markings. When it flew it revealed its striking long white outer tail feather. The two male Madagascan Cuckoos flew overhead while we were watching.

We then had a run of couas, either on the ground or perched including Crested Coua, Green-capped Coua and Running Coua, all with their distinctive bright blue facial skin. In the Running Coua, the blue skin appeared to 'bleed' into the colour of the bill.

A male Madagascan Nightjar was sitting just metres away while near the oldest baobab tree on the reserve two female or perhaps juvenile nightjars were sat on the edge of the leaf litter, one less than a metre from us! The sunlight was glinting off its stiff bristles that form a deadly net for any moth or beetle that happens to be in the bird's flight path at night.

A male paradise flycatcher was sitting on three eggs - with the bird sitting still, we could make out the subtle blue colour of its bill. A female magpie-robin was carrying food for young.

While Common Newtonias sang all around and remained difficult to see, an obliging Archbold's Newtonia came out in a bush showing its striking washed-out lime-yellow eye and flush of red-brown on its breast feathers. Other birds included a fly-over Greater Vasa Parrot, a hoopoe, drongo, Madagascan Spinetail, Red Fody and turtle doves dashing past. As we headed out a Madagascan Giant Swallowtail was fluttering around and yellow-headed Sakalava Weavers were attending their nests. Some trees had small masses of webbing, a little like weaver nests; however, these were the nursery webs of moth caterpillars. The white- and black-spotted wings of a moth or two lay on the sandy paths, probably from a bat dinner. Some red-and-black beetles were stuck back to back in copulation, and termites had been busy building tunnels leaving behind a hole surrounded by a shallow circular dune of sand.

We arrived back at the bus at 9am after an amazing morning exploring what is hidden amongst the spiny forest. After a late breakfast of fresh fruit, pastries and tea or coffee, we had the rest of morning to explore the beach or rest before meeting for lunch at 12.30pm. A few of us had seen Three-eyed Lizards and Peters' Dwarf Plated Lizards during the afternoon, the latter only found in this particular area of Madagascar.

At 4pm six of us met together and headed out to the nearby brackish pools and salt pans, finding at least five Kittlitz's Plover, two Three-banded Plovers, three Greenshanks, a Whimbrel, Turnstones and a few Curlew Sandpipers. A small group of white Dimorphic Egrets was resting in the distance and a flock of Great Egrets flew over us. We had fun looking at the sheep (that look just like goats) and the goats - we learned that the sheep have their long tails down and the goats have their short tails sticking up! While watching for waders, a Madagascan Cuckoo was calling in the nearby woodland. Meanwhile, on the beach at low tide, a Whimbrel, seven Turnstones, a Ringed Plover and a Grey Plover were seen.

At 6.30pm we met with the security and gardeners for a walk around the hotel grounds as it got dark, catching up with three different Grey-brown Mouse Lemurs. They were very obliging and, despite our torchlights, remained remarkably calm and stayed around for us to admire. They had grey fur, white underneath, with large, pinkish ears, big forward-facing eyes and long orange-brown tails. After this success we got ready for dinner at 7.15pm. A few male Madagascan Nightjars were feeding over the swimming pool after the walk ended.

We finished off the day in the restaurant for dinner and headed for bed at 9.15am ready for another early start back to the nature reserve.

Day 11

Monday 24th October

Reniala; Transfer to Tana and on to Andasibe

Eight of us met at 5am for coffee and headed out to Reniala for a slower-paced walk, looking at the plants and other wildlife. We saw a huge variety of spiny-forest trees including impressive baobabs, native *Aloes*, *Euphorbias*, Octopus Trees (*Didierea madagascariensis*) and false baobabs (with long seed pods rather than ball-shaped ones). Local trees such as *Cordia madagascariensis* are used for charcoal, while *Tetrapterocarpum georgii* is used to make masts and paddles for fishing boats, and there is one where the sap has been used to kill fish in the water (*Euphorbia laro*). *Zanthoxylum decoryi* starts as a very spiny tree and loses then spines once it matures. The tourist tree (*Commiphora mahafaliensis*) is named after the Mahafali tribe and has paper-thin bark that is green - it contains chlorophyll and photosynthesises sugars just like leaves do. We had seen the small elephant foot trees in the desert. Here we saw a five-metre giant *Pachypodium* (*Pachypodium geayi*). We admired the oldest tree in the woodland, the 1200-year-old baobab that is 9m in height, 12m in circumference and takes seven people joining hands to hug it all the way round.

Along the walk there was plenty of wildlife to see too. We watched a group of captive Ring-tailed Lemurs that have been rescued as pets - they plan to release them on a larger nature reserve. A Radiated Tortoise was nearby in its own pen.

Birds included hoopoe, turtle dove, cuckoo, Chabert Vanga, Greater Vasa Parrot, magpie-robin, Common Jery, Stripe-throated Jery and Souimanga Sunbird. A lovely male Red Fody in his red breeding attire was feeding on the flowers of an octopus tree, and a group of eight to 10 male Sakalava Weavers were busy tending their nests.

Some had nests well made and were adding finishing touches such as green vegetation to impress females; others were just beginning to start weaving the first strands of dried grasses. They have custard-yellow heads, bare, pink skin between their eyes and bill, and sparrow-like bodies.

Reptiles were out and about towards the end of the walk, including the Three-eyed Lizard, the Spiny-tailed Iguanid, the Standing's Day Gecko, Thick-tail Day Gecko and Gold-spotted Trachylepis. A kestrel flew into a baobab tree with a dead Three-eyed Lizard. Calling to each other, its mate came off the nearby nest and the two flew out of view, exchanging the lizard as a nuptial gift.

We also saw a Madagascan Hissing Cockroach squeezed between the two trunks of a baobab tree, Madagascan Giant Swallowtail, scarab beetles and millipedes.

We arrived back around 8.15am, and after breakfast packed, ready to leave at 11am. By midday we were at the Victoria Hotel near the airport where we stayed for a few hours for lunch and rest. On display and to touch were two eggs of the extinct Elephant Bird, a bird that once lived in Madagascar, 300 years ago. The eggs, as big as dinner plates, have been pieced together from fragments found together.

We later caught the 3.35pm flight to Tana via Tolanaro. Along the way the flight took us over mountains, dried rivers, and open country. We arrived just after 6pm and spent the night in the Combava Hotel where we had stayed on the first night.

Day 12

Tuesday 25th October

Tana; Andasibe

Today we met for breakfast at 8am and left at 9am to do the four-hour journey to Andasibe, the village where our hotel lodge is based and we have access to the forest reserves. We left Alan and Heidi in Tana, due to illness, and met up with them on our return a few days later. We travelled slowly through Tana due to traffic and were able to take in the sights of the markets, paddy fields, brick kilns and road building that were happening all around us. Above the groups of domestic ducks and geese preening and dabbling in the paddies, a mixed flock of Malagasy Black Swifts and white-rumped Little Swifts were foraging for aerial plankton. Once on the highway 2 road we headed out north-east, back into rural country, spotting a few Hamerkops, Dimorphic Egrets and a Green-backed Heron along the way. After picking up Morris, our guide for the next few days, in Andasibe at 1.15pm we continued on to our hotel lodge, the Vakona, a few kilometres further on. We went straight for lunch before having a few hours to rest before a night walk.

We met again at 5.45pm and headed on to our night walk back in Andasibe on the edge of the national park for 6.15pm. It was dark when we arrived and, as we walked through the woodland, our first animal was a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko still sitting vertical on a tree stump, about to go foraging. They spend all day lying cryptic against the bark. This was one slightly standing and pulsing its throat. Next up was a stick insect munching on the stem of a plant, followed by a Short-horned Chameleon clinging on towards the end of a branch with its tail curled.

A little further on, we stopped for some lemurs - two Peyrieras' Woolly Lemurs were just stirring and climbing trees. Occasionally they looked right at us. As they emerged further, we could see the distinctive white patches

on their thighs. Before we turned back, we spent five minutes with a Goodman's Mouse Lemur. This species was only discovered in 2005 and is only known from this particular national park (Andasibe-Mantadia). As we walked back Morris found one of our tiniest chameleons, a Nose-horned Chameleon, only a few inches long with its tailed curled and perched at the end of a branch. It was incredible how Morris even spotted it.

We arrived back for dinner at just before 8pm and went straight to the restaurant, retiring for bed an hour later ready for an early start.

Day 13

Wednesday 26th October

Andasibe-Mantadia

After breakfast at 6am we headed off at 7am in four-wheel-drives for 70 minutes driving along a bumpy track to Analagodri, part of the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, gradually venturing further into good quality primary forest.

On arrival a Giant Black Millipede was walking along the track, its tiny legs moving like a Mexican wave. Half a kilometre before, one of the vehicles stopped to view three Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs that were feeding in trees on the side of the road. A cuckoo, a Common Newtonia and a Rand's Warbler were singing nearby, and in the distance we could hear our first Indri - everyone described it as sounding like Humpback Whale song. As we jumped back in the vehicle, a small group of white-eyes were moving through the trees.

We made our way through the forest admiring the Bird's Nest Ferns, the array of fungi including a bracket fungus that is bright orange, mature large trees with flattened buttress roots, screwpine trees, tree ferns, and arboreal ant nests hanging from tree branches like a bunch of bananas to prevent the ants drowning during heavy rain. Our walk highlight was a Lowland Streaked Tenrec, a hamster-size and hedgehog-like insectivorous mammal with contrasting black and blonde streaks along its spiny body and long Mohican-style head spines. It had tiny ears, pink round ears and a pig-like snout for sniffing out earthworms. Our spotter was plucking the animal's spines from his hand - they have tiny barbs that lodge in the skin. Tenrecs talk to each other by vibrating their spines at a very high frequency.

We walked on to the songs of Stripe-throated Jerys, Red-tailed Vangas and squawking Greater Vasa Parrots overhead. We paused to watch two Common Brown Lemurs huddled together on a tree branch. A Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher was seen by a few though, despite hearing its fluty whistle, it was difficult to find in the foliage. In the background we heard the raucous barking of lemurs, and walked up and down the forest paths to find two Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs resting up in a tree. They suddenly started yelling at each other again, bodies up and tails wafting around. The sound could be heard a long distance away, no doubt. They then settled back down, their thick, black and white, panda-like fur coat easily hidden against the trees and branches breaking up their profile.

As we walked towards the end of the trail we finally had good views of a male Madagascan Cuckoo sat up in a tree - they look very much like a Common Cuckoo.

We headed on to a small lake, ten minutes walk away for lunch. These forest lakes are very rare and the water-life that inhabits them is endangered, so it was a relief to see a pair of Meller's Ducks surviving and living here. There

are thought to be only between 2,000 and 5,000 left in the wild. They are dark brown ducks with no sexual dimorphism, so both the males and females look like a female duck. They have light blue-grey bills, orange legs and shiny green secondary feathers.

While we ate lunch we watched a pair of striking Madagascan Little Grebes diving and taking nest material to their already well-built nest. At one point the two 'whinnied' just like Little Grebes do in the UK. A Moorhen stayed at the back on the lilies and several Madagascan Swamp Warblers with long tails foraged around the bushes and lily pads. Bright red darter dragonflies and one black-blue sat perched like a fisherman on their favourite branch. A huge Madagascan Harrier-Hawk circled overhead with two Broad-billed Rollers in hot pursuit. A Blue Coua purred behind us, its call a little like a Moorhen, and a Madagascan Spinetail flew down to the water to drink. On the ground club-mosses were abundant as were Madagascan Girdled Lizards.

We arrived back around 2.15pm after a long bumpy ride back and had four hours to relax. We met again at 6.15pm for a night walk, exploring around the lodges. Lots of creaking sounds were being emitted by various frogs. A Traveller's Palm tree was home to a Crossley's Dwarf Lemur feeding on the nectar of its flower. Another lemur was spotted by its eye shine in a eucalyptus tree, perhaps a bamboo lemur or woolly lemur. Towards the end, while White-throated Rails called around the pond, we had a frog fest with four species of frog being spotted on the elephant-ear-shaped leaves of an aquatic plant, on tree branches and on the ground.

We met for dinner at 7.30pm and then caught up with the checklist for the past three days.

Day 14/15

Thursday 27th / Friday 28th October

Andasibe-Mantadia and transfer back to Tana; flight back to France and the UK/Canada

We met for breakfast at 7am, and headed out with our luggage packed on the bus at 8am. We headed just down the road to the entrance of Analamazaotra nature reserve, part of the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, and met our guide Morris and his assistant Mascelen. Before we got out Morris took us down the road to spot a roosting Madagascan Owl. It sat on a branch towards the back of a stand of pine trees preening and sunning itself, revealing its long ear tufts and feathery talons.

We walked into the reserve to the call of a Madagascan Cuckoo and a singing Rand's Warbler. We paused and invited the group two at a time to step into a pine copse. There, a metre away, was a pair of Rainforest Scops Owls. One was awake looking at us through half-open eyes. The owls were masters of disguise, their plumage a mosaic of every shade of brown and black you can imagine. In the background the spine-tingling howls of the Indri started up.

As we headed up the steep steps to the top of the reserve, Parson pointed out three woolly lemurs huddled in the tree trying to sleep. One or two stirred and looked down at us.

At the top we had the animal everyone had wanted to see, a small family of Indris. These medium dog-size lemurs are the largest species alive today, their coats an infusion of white, blacks and soft grey, hiding these animals in the trees amongst the lichens, tree barks and branches. There was mum, dad and a youngster sitting up in the trees. One was closer than the other, looking out with its black, slightly wrinkled, dog-like muzzle and

large, watery-lime-coloured eyes. The ears were especially black and furry. After this delight we paused to admire a small Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko, black with the odd white speck to hide it amongst dead leaf litter.

We then headed back down the hill, passing a Joy Beetle on the path and a female Giraffe-necked Weevil on a leaf, and entering into the undergrowth to stop for a family of beautiful honey-yellow Diademed Sifakas. We enjoyed watching at least three adults and a baby sifaka as they climbed and swung between the trees while reaching out to munch on leaves. As we began to leave we spotted one adult feeding on the ground a few metres in front of us; you could hear the nuts it was finding and eating cracking as the sifaka bit hard. A Blue Coua purred in the background.

As we made our way back out and along the path to the car park we passed a few Common Brown Lemurs relaxing in the trees. Common Newtonias were calling nearby. In the car park we had stunning views of a pair of Cuckoo Rollers, oddly shaped birds with heads almost too big for their body. The male had a gorgeous blue-green sheen across his back and short red-pink legs. He flew out on his broad, hawk-like wings to snatch a large grub from the tree it was in. Nearby, the female was spotted just like a Mistle Thrush. The two flew off together across the road. A fluty Lesser Vasa Parrot was calling nearby - they sound more like a songbird - before flying overhead.

We arrived back to the car park at 11am and headed for our lunch spot down the road. Madagascan Blue Pigeons were flying to and fro from a nearby fruiting tree. As they flew away they revealed a bright scarlet rump. Alan spotted one pigeon very close, metres away, feeding on the elderberry-size fruits on lower branches. The bird had bright pink skin around the eyes, deep blue plumage and a grey-blue frill around its neck. Meanwhile, two bright yellow-green Madagascan Green Pigeons sat in a tree in the valley resting up. As we were getting ready to leave Indri were calling loudly in the background.

We set off back for Tana at 12.45pm, spending five hours on the road with stops, passing through a range of habitats and settlements along the way. We stopped in Tana at an artisan shop to buy souvenirs and then headed through the city centre to our hotel. We had fascinating views of a busy, bustling city as it wound down for the day. Cars, people, bikes, carts, foods, BBQs outside the front of tiny off-street restaurants - the streets were a hive of activity as people were heading home or off out for the evening.

We spent a few hours at our hotel, enjoyed a final dinner together and gave a vote of thanks to our guides. We headed off to the airport at 10pm ready for our 1.45am flight. Check in and security were relatively quick, and we boarded our plane back to the UK, lifting off the airway at around 2.15am. As we left Italy we had stunning views of the snow-covered Italian Alps. We transferred at Paris and headed on to our different parts of Britain or Canada. A huge thanks to everyone for your wonderful and diverse contributions, interests and company!

Plants

RE = Reniala, M = Mantadia, I = Isalo, Z = Zombitse, RF = Ramanofana, AG = Analagodri, J = Jardin de Roy.

Scientific name	Common name	Location
LYCOPODIOPSIDA	CLUBMOSES & QUILLWORTS	
Lycopodiaceae	Clubmoss Family	
<i>Lycopodium</i> sp	-	✓
Selaginellaceae	Lesser Clubmoss Family	
<i>Selaginella</i> sp	-	RF
PTERIDOPHYTES	FERNS & ALLIES	
Adiantaceae	Maidenhair Fern Family	
<i>Adiantopsis linearis</i>		RF, AG, M
Aspleniaceae	Spleenwort Family	
<i>Asplenium nudis</i>		RF, AG, M
Blechnaceae	Hard Fern Family	
<i>Blechnum</i> sp	A Hard Fern	RF, AG, M
Cyatheaceae	Tree Fern Family	
<i>Cyathea</i> sp	A Tree Fern	Three species RF, M, AG
Dennstaedtiaceae	Bracken Family	
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken	RF, AG, M
Schizaeaceae	Climbing Fern Family	
<i>Lygodium</i> sp	-	RF, M
MAGNOLIIDAE (Dicotyledons)	FLOWERING PLANTS	
Anacardiaceae	Sumac Family	
<i>Operculicarya pachypus</i>	Elephants Skin	✓
<i>Protorhus abrahainia</i>	"Coffin" Tree	✓
Apocynaceae	Periwinkle Family	
<i>Pachypodium rosulatum</i> ssp. <i>gracilis</i>	an Elephant's Foot	J
<i>Pachypodium rosulatum</i> ssp. <i>rosulatum</i>	an Elephant's Foot	J
<i>Petchia erythrocarpa</i>	-	J
<i>Pachypodium geayi</i>	-	RE
Asclepediaceae	Milkweed Family	
<i>Folotsia madagascariensis</i>		RE, AG, M
<i>Pervilia veninata</i>		J
Asteraceae	Daisy Family	
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	-	RM
<i>Ageratum</i> sp		T, M, AG, RM
<i>Psiadia altissima</i>	-	RF, AG, M
<i>Psiadia angustifolia</i>	-	RF, AG, M
<i>Dicoma incarna</i>		I

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Bombacaceae	Baobab Family	
<i>Adansonia rubrostipa</i>	Red-stipuled Baobab	RE
<i>Adansonia za</i>	-	RE
Boraginaceae	Borage or Forget-me-not Family	
<i>Cordia madagascariensis</i>	-	RE
Buddlejaceae	Butterfly-bush Family	
<i>Buddleja madagascariensis</i>	-	RM, AG
Burseraceae	Torchwood Family	
<i>Commiphora mahafaliensis</i>	Tourist Tree	RE, Z
Cactaceae	Cactus Family	
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	Barbary Fig	RF, AG, M
<i>Rhipsalis baccifera</i> subsp. <i>mauritiana</i>	Mistletoe Cactus	RF, M
Campanulaceae	Bellflower Family	
<i>Lobelia</i> sp	-	RM
Capparaceae	Caper Family	
<i>Maerua caffra</i>	-	A
Clusiaceae	St.John's-wort Family	
<i>Harunga madagascariensis</i>	-	RM
<i>Symphonia fasciculata</i>	-	RM, AG, M, X
Combretaceae	Comberetum Family	
<i>Terminalia matey</i>	Check so	X, RM
Crassulaceae	Stonecrop Family	
<i>Kalanchoe</i> sp		RM, AG, M
Cunoniaceae	Weinmannia Family	
<i>Weinmannia</i> sp		RM, AG
Didiereaceae	Octopus Tree Family	
<i>Alluaudia procera</i>	-	RE
<i>Didierea madagascariensis</i>	Octopus Tree	RE
<i>Didierea trollii</i>	-	RE
Droseraceae	Sundew Family	
<i>Drosera madagascariensis</i>	Sundew	RM
Euphorbiaceae	Spurge Family	
<i>Alchornea greveana</i>		M
<i>Euphorbia stenoclada</i> (<i>E. famata</i>)	-	RE
<i>Uapaca bojeri</i>	Tapia	I
<i>Euphorbia</i> sp	Balsa Tree	I
<i>Euphorbia largo</i>	-	RE
<i>Givotia madagascariensis</i>	-	RE

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Fabaceae	Pea Family	
<i>Albizia gummifera</i>	-	J
<i>Crotalaria</i> sp (Yellow)	-	I
<i>Dalbergia baronii</i>	Yellow Flame Tree	I
<i>Delonix decaryi</i>	-	RE
<i>Indigofera</i> sp	-	RF
<i>Sesbania</i> sp	-	I
<i>Chadsia grivi</i>	-	I
<i>Tetrapterocarpum geoyi</i>	-	RE
Loranthaceae	Mistletoe Family	
<i>Bakerella</i> sp	-	RM, AG, M
Lauraceae	Laurel Family	
<i>Cassytha filiformis</i>	-	I
Melastomataceae	Melastoma Family	
<i>Clidemia hirta</i>	-	RM, AG, M
Meliaceae	Mahogany Family	
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	Persian Lilac	A
Mimosaceae	Acacia Family	
<i>Mimosa delicatula</i>	-	I
Monimiaceae	Schrameckia Family	
<i>Tambourissa</i> sp	-	RM, AG, M
Moraceae	Fig Family	
<i>Ficus pyrifolia</i>	Strangler Fig	RF, M
<i>Ficus</i> sp	-	RF, M, AG
<i>Ficus grevei</i>	-	I
Myrtaceae	Myrtle Family	
<i>Eugenia jambos</i>	-	RF, Z, AG
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	-	RF
<i>Psidium catalinum</i>	Chinese Guava	RM, AG, M
<i>Psidium guavanua</i>	-	RM, AG, M
Oleaceae	Olive Family	
<i>Jasminum</i> sp	Jasmine	RF
Passifloraceae	Passion Flower Family	
<i>Adenia olaboaiensis</i>	-	RE
<i>Passiflora</i> sp	-	AG, M
Pedaliaceae	Uncarina Family	
<i>Uncarina liandri</i>	-	Z
Proteaceae	Protea Family	
<i>Grevilla</i> sp	-	RM, AG, M

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Ptaeroxylaceae		
<i>Cedrelopsis grevei</i>	-	RE
Rosaceae	Rose Family	
<i>Rubus moluccanus</i>	-	RM, AG, M
Rubiaceae	Bedstraw Family	
<i>Psycotria</i> sp.	-	I
Rutaceae	Rue or citrus family	
<i>Zanthoxylum decoryi</i>	-	RE
Scrophulariaceae	Figwort Family	
<i>Scrophularia</i> sp.	-	RE, J, I
Solanaceae	Nightshade Family	
<i>Datura stamonium</i>	Thorn Apple	I
Sphaerosepalaceae	Rhopalocarpus Family	
<i>Dombeya laurifolium</i>	-	J, M, RM
<i>Dombeya</i> sp	-	RM, M
Strelitziaceae	Strelitzia Family	
<i>Ravenala madagascariensis</i>	Traveller Palm	RM
Verbanaceae	Verbena Family	
<i>Verbena beneriensis</i>	-	M
LILIIDAE (Monocotyledons)		
Arecaceae	Palm Family	
<i>Baccariophoenix madagascariensis</i>	Marula Palm	I
<i>Bismarkia nobilis</i>	-	I
<i>Ravenea rivularis</i>	-	J, M
Cyperaceae	Sedge Family	
<i>Cyperus papyrus</i>	Papyrus	I, X, RM
Liliaceae	Lily Family	
<i>Aloe cortinqua</i>	-	J
<i>Dracaena</i> sp	-	I
Orchidaceae	Orchid Family	
<i>Oeonia rosea</i>	-	RM, AG, M
<i>Vanilla madagascariensis</i>	a Vanilla Orchid	
<i>Cynorchis purpurescens</i>	Dancing Ladys	RM
Pandanaceae	Pandanus Family	
<i>Pandanus pucher (Branched)</i>	Screwpine	I, M, RM, AG
<i>Pandanus</i> sp 1	Spiral Screwpine	I, M, RM, AG
<i>Pandanus xerophyta</i>	Screwpine	Z
<i>Pandanus</i> sp	-	3 Species RM

<i>Scientific name</i>	<i>Common name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Phormiaceae	New Zealand Flax Family	
<i>Dianella ensifolia</i>	-	AG
Poaceae	Grass Family	
<i>Phragmites</i> sp	a Reed	A, I, RM
<i>Cathariostachys madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Giant bamboo	RM
<i>Pennisetum</i> sp	-	RM, AG, M

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Ring-tailed Mongoose



Zombitse Sportive Lemur



Verreaux's Sifaka feeding in tree canopy

Species Lists

Lemurs (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; C= Captivity/semi-wild; H = Heard)

	Common name	Scientific name	October												
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
1	Grey-brown Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus griseorufus</i>							1	3					
2	Goodman's Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus lehilahytsara</i>										1			
3	Brown (Rufous) Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus rufus</i>	C		2										
4	Greater Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus major</i>	C												
5	Crossley's (Furry-eared) Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus crossleyi</i>	C										1		
6	Hubbard's (Zombitse) Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur hubbardorum</i>							1						
7	Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur griseus</i>											4		
8	Golden Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>			2	1									
9	Greater Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur simus</i>			2										
10	Ring-tailed Lemur	<i>Lemur catta</i>	C				40	8							
11	Common Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>	C		5								2	3+	
12	Red-bellied Lemur	<i>Eulemur rubriventer</i>		5		1									
13	Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur	<i>Varecia variegata variegata</i>	C		H								2		
14	Crowned Sifaka	<i>Propithecus coronatus</i>	C												
15	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>						1	12						
16	Diademed Sifaka	<i>Propithecus diadema</i>												4+	
17	Milne-Edwards' Sifaka	<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>				4									
18	Coquerel's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus coquereli</i>	C												
19	Peyrieras' Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi peyrierasi</i>										2		3	
20	Indri	<i>Indri indri</i>												3	

Other Mammals

1	Lowland Streaked Tenrec	<i>Hemicentetes semispinosus</i>											1	
2	Ring-tailed Mongoose	<i>Galidia elegans</i>			1									
3	Eastern Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys rufus</i>				1								

	Common name	Scientific name	October											
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27

Birds

1	Meller's Duck	<i>Anas melleri</i>											2	
2	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	100											
3	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>		1										
4	Madagascar Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>											2	
5	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		4										
6	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>				1						1		
7	Common Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	10+											
8	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	50+	100+				10	6					
9	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>						1						
10	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	50+	20+			✓			8	8	6		
11	Dimorphic Egret	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	20+	100+			1			4		10		
12	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1	7			1					2		
13	Madagascan Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>											1	
14	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptus</i>		4			6		8	1				
15	Madagascan Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>						H						
16	Malagasy Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>		4	1	H	6	4	4	2	2	1		
17	Madagascan Buttonquail	<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>						1						
18	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>						2				H		
19	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>											1	
20	Madagascan Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>											H	
21	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>							2		3			
22	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>							1	1	1			
23	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>							1		1			
24	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>								6				
25	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>							1	2				
26	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>								2	1			
27	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>								3				
28	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>										1		
29	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>								10	1			
30	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								1	1			

	Common name	Scientific name	October											
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
31	Curllew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>							15	6				
32	Kelp (Madagascan) Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus melisandae</i>									1			
33	Madagascan Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles personatus</i>					20							
34	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
35	Malagasy Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>						1		4	2			
36	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>						2	2	1	6			
37	Madagascan Green Pigeon	<i>Treron australis</i>							2					2
38	Madagascan Blue Pigeon	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>												10
39	Malagasy Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>	1			H	1	4	1	2	H			H
40	Crested Coua	<i>Coua cristata</i>								1				
41	Blue Coua	<i>Coua caerulea</i>				1	1						1	
42	Green-capped Coua	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>							1	1				
43	Red-fronted Coua	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>			1	1								
44	Coquerel's Coua	<i>Coua coquereli</i>							2					
45	Running Coua	<i>Coua cursor</i>								1				
46	Giant Coua	<i>Coua gigas</i>							2					
47	Madagascan Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>	H	H	1	1			H	2	1		1	H
48	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>												2
49	White-browed Owl	<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>						H						
50	Madagascan Owl	<i>Asio madagascariensis</i>												1
51	Collared Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus enarratus</i>				2								
52	Madagascan Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>							3	4	H			
53	Madagascan Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>							1	2	8		1	
54	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>			8	✓	✓	8				4		
55	Malagasy Black Swift	<i>Apus balstoni</i>	2	6	20							10		
56	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>										2		
57	Cuckoo Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>			2	H			H				H	2
58	Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>				H			H				2	
59	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>								2				
60	Malagasy Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis vintsioides</i>		4			1						1	
61	Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx madagascariensis</i>											1	
62	Olive Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	2	4			✓	6	6	8	2			

	Common name	Scientific name	October												
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
63	Madagascan Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>					1	4		1	1				
64	Malagasy Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>		4	1	H	6	4	4	2	2	1			
65	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>								1	1		H		
66	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>			H				5				H	1	
67	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>						2							
68	Velvet Asity	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>			1										
69	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>			H				1		H		H		
70	Hook-billed Vanga	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>		2							1				
71	Lafresnaye's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>								1					
72	Pollen's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris polleni</i>				1									
73	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falculea palliata</i>								2+					
74	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>				1									
75	Chabert Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>			1			1		1	1	1	H		
76	Rufous Vanga	<i>Schetba rufa</i>							1						
77	Tylas Vanga	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>			1										
78	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>			H				2	1			H	H	
79	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>								1	H				
80	Ward's Flycatcher	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>			2								1		
81	Madagascan Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>				2									
82	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>					1	2	1	2		✓	1		
83	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>			1	2			2	1		2			
84	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		8			60+	6		4	10	✓			
85	Madagascan Lark	<i>Mirafr hova</i>					2+		✓						
86	Malagasy Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	4+	2	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
87	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	2+	6+	10+	✓	✓					20	20		
88	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>	1									H			
89	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>							1	H	1				
90	Madagascan Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>											2		
91	Long-billed Bernieria (Tetraka)	<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>			1	1			1						
92	Wedge-tailed Jery	<i>Hartertula flavoviridis</i>											1		
93	Thamnornis	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>								2	H				
94	Spectacled Tetraka	<i>Bernieria zosterops</i>			4										

	Common name	Scientific name	October											
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
95	Appert's Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis apperti</i>							2					
96	Rand's Warbler	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>			1	H								H
97	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>			H	H		4	4	✓	2			
98	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>								6	4		H	
99	Madagascan Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>		1				1	✓	H	H			H
100	Malagasy White-eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	6		H								✓	H
101	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
102	Madagascan Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus albospecularis</i>			1	1	2	2	4	4	4	1	2	2
103	Forest Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei</i>		1	H			2						
104	Madagascan Stonechat	<i>Saxicola sibilla</i>	1	1								2		
105	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia sovimanga</i>	✓	H	✓	✓	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	2	1
106	Malagasy Green Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia notata</i>			1	H		1			1			
107	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>										Nest		Nest
108	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>								6	10			
109	Red Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	2+					1		2	✓			
110	Madagascan Mannikin	<i>Lonchura nana</i>			2						✓		2+	
111	Madagascan Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	1	2	2	1						1	2	3
112	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>											2	

Reptiles & Amphibians (C = Captivity/in pen D = Dead)

1	Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>		1	1								1	
2	Mascarene Grass Frog	<i>Ptychadena mascareniensis</i>			1									
3	Ambatolahy Madagascar Frog	<i>Gephyromantis enki</i>			1	1								
4	Frog	<i>Mantidactylus opiparis</i>												1
5	Frog	<i>Guibemantis tornieri</i>												6
6	Frog	<i>Gephyromantis thelenae</i>												1
7	Yellow-striped Frog	<i>Heterixalis luteostreatus</i>					4							
8	Broad-browed Chameleon	<i>Brookesia superciliaris</i>			1									
9	O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>			1	1								
10	Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>		1								1		
11	Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii</i>		2										
12	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>			2							1		

	Common name	Scientific name	October												
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
13	Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>			1										
14	Spiny-backed Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>					1		1						
15	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>	1						1						
16	Belted Chameleon	<i>Furcifer balteatus</i>			1										
17	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chalerodon madagascariensis</i>								6+	3+				
18	Spiny-tailed Iguanid	<i>Oplurus cyclurus</i>	2					1	4		2				
19	Four-lined Iguanid	<i>Oplurus quadrimaculatus</i>						3							
20	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>												1	
21	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>													
22	Spearpoint Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus ebenau</i>				1									
23	Dwarf Plated Lizard	<i>Tracheloptychus madagascariensis</i>						1					✓		
24	Peters' Dwarf Plated Lizard	<i>Tracheloptychus petersi</i>								2+	1+				
25	Gold-spotted Trachylepis	<i>Trachylepis aureopunctata</i>									1				
26	Elegant Trachylepis	<i>Trachylepis elegans</i>												1	
27	Lined Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata bifasciata</i>											✓		
28	Four-eyed Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>			2										
29	Standing's Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>							4						
30	Thick-tail Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>					2				2				
31	Common House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>			2	2									
32	Grandidier's Dwarf Gecko	<i>Lygodactylus tolampyae</i>							1						
33	Big-headed Gecko	<i>Paroedura pictus</i>								2					
34	Giant Madagascar Velvet Gecko	<i>Blaesodactylus sakalava</i>							1						
35	Ornate Girdled Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus ornatus</i>			1										
36	Madagascar Girdled Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus madagascariensis</i>						1					✓		
37	Common Big-eyed Snake	<i>Mimophis mahfalensis</i>								1					
38	Malagasy Cat-eyed Snake	<i>Madagascarophis colubrinus</i>			1										
39	Gold-collared Snake	<i>Liophidium rhodogaster</i>			D										
40	Malagasy Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leiheterodon madagascariensis</i>							1						
41	Madagascar Lined Snake	<i>Bibilava lateralis</i>												1	
42	Bell's Hinged Tortoise	<i>Kinixys belliana</i>	C												
43	Radiated Tortoise	<i>Geochelone radiata</i>	C							C					
44	Spider Tortoise	<i>Pyxis arachnoids</i>	C												

Butterflies

African Swallowtail, *Papilio dardanus*

Madagascar Giant Swallowtail, *Pharmacophagus antenor*

Orange species of butterfly, *Acraea zitja*

Angled Grass Yellow, *Eurema desjardinsii*

African Wood White, *Leptosia alcesta*

Citrus Swallowtail, *Papilio demodocus*

Brilliant Blue, *Junonia rhadema*

Small Yellow Grass, *Eurema brigitta*

Brown species of butterfly, *Strabena sp*

Swallowtail sp., *Papilio epiphorbas*

African Monarch, *Danaus chrysippus*

Malagasy Grass Yellow, *Eurema floricola*

Forest species of butterfly, *Saribia tepahi*

Other Invertebrates

Red Darter Type Dragonfly, *Trithemis selika*

Emperor Dragonfly, *Anax imperator*

Stick Insect, *Acripta impennis*

Giant Black Millipede, *Archispirostreptus sp*

Golden Orb-web Spider, *Nephila madagascariensis*

Lynx Spider, *Heterixalis luteostreatus*

Cryptic spider, *Dinopsis sp.*

Joy Beetle, -

Red Darter Type Dragonfly, *Crocothermis sp.*

Locust, *Locusta*

Giraffe-necked Weevil, *Trachelophorus giraffa*

Madagascar Fire Millipede, *Aphistogoniulus sp*

Orb-web Spider, *Nephila sp*

Scorpion, *Opisthacanthus madagascariensis*

Snout Bug or Flat-backed Weevil, *Zara tenebrosa*

Skimmer Type Dragonfly, *Orthetrum azureum*

Praying Mantis, *Mantis sp*

Flatid Leaf-bug, *Phromnia rosea*

Centipede, *Scolopendra sp*

Thorn or Kite Spider, *Gasteracanthinae sp*

Hermit Crab, *Coenobita sp*

Plataspid Shield Bugs, *Libyaspis coccinelloides*



Madagascan Nightjar



Giant Coua