

# Madagascar

## Land of the Lemurs

**Thursday 27 September - Saturday 13 October, 2007**

**Principal leader:** Tim Earl

**Local leader:** Mamy Ramarolahy

**Local guides:** Mbola Manarivo (Berenty)  
Mossa and family (Ifaty)  
Flaubert Randrianarolahy (Zombagie)  
Theodore Farafidison, Eddy Andry and Merina  
Randojamihanta (Ranomafana)  
Maurice Ratsisakanana and Julien Ramaroko (Périnet)

**Highlights:**

- Indri calling was a thrill for all of us, especially while in our rooms at the Voice of the Forest Lodge. But for Bill it led to the sighting, albeit briefly, of two Indri ‘bouncing around the trees’ close to him in Périnet.
- Berenty Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux’s Sifakas near the hotel.
- Mamy’s face when a Red-fronted Coua walked out of the Périnet forest in front of him.
- White-fronted Sportive Lemur peeking out of its daytime roost hole in a tree.
- Two Collared Nightjars snuggled up together using amazing camouflage to avoid detection.
- Being waved through Malagasy Security despite setting the metal detector off.
- Brilliant views of a Madagascar Long-eared Owl which came down to investigate Maurice who was imitating its call effortlessly.
- Verreaux’s Sifakas leaping through the trees like ghosts in Berenty.
- Velvet and Common Sunbird-activity seen so well.
- The walk through Ifaty spiny forest, now protected by Mossa and his family, which produced great views of Sub-desert Mesite, Long-tailed Ground Roller and Banded Kestrel among many other goodies.

This was a tiring and at times difficult tour with ‘traveller’s tummy’ affecting everyone at some time during the trip. The travelling was hard work rewarded by wonderful insights into Madagascar, its people and animals. We enjoyed near-perfect weather plus considerable good fortune when looking for birds and animals. Some of our sightings were firsts for me and this was my fifth visit to Madagascar. Fellowship was excellent and we all benefited from the discoveries of some exceptional spotters in the group.

I enjoyed leading everyone around Madagascar and hope that some of you will join me on other Travelling Naturalist tours soon.

**Tim Earl**

## DAILY DIARY

### Thursday 27 September

We all assembled at the Ibis Hotel (well, one of the three) at Charles de Gaulle Airport, after various routes to Paris (including flights from Heathrow, Manchester and Southampton). None of us had fallen in love with the idiosyncratic airport which is one of the most unpopular in Europe, but a new train shuttle made getting to the hotel much easier. Judy spotted European Rabbits, a Carrion Crow, Magpie and a few Starlings on the airfield – evidence of Rabbits’ presence was seen from the new train,

### Friday 28 September

Drizzle 13°C in Paris, cold but clear Antananarivo 12°C

A fairly early start saw us snatch a coffee, check-out and leave on time at 7.30am. We were checked in by 8.45 and eating breakfast soon after. The Air France flight took off an hour late and we arrived after a good flight at 10.15pm.

Immigration and baggage claim were painfully slow but Mamy Ramarolahy was waiting for us and after changing money in the airport we arrived at the Hotel Louvre at 12.45am.

### **Saturday 29 September**

Overcast 12°C warming to clear sun 24°C

A leisurely but cold start saw us leave the hotel at 8.30am for a quick tour of Antananarivo, stopping for a stunning view at the Queen's Palace where a Madagascar Kestrel perched on a rooftop for us and a pair of African Stonechats also posed (the male was particularly well marked in fresh breeding plumage). We enjoyed the architecture – almost like London might have been before the Great Fire.

Egrets had been seen on the city's main lake (Anosy Lake) and we went down to investigate. At least two Alpine Swifts were found on arrival quickly followed by a few Madagascar White-eyes which eventually dropped into a flowering Bottlebrush bush where their green and yellow plumage contrasted with the red flowers – delightful. Black Egrets were forming their enchanting parasols to lure Sticklebacks and baby Tilapia into the deadly shade while Brown-throated Martins were hawking close to the lake with one or two Mascarene Martins for good measure.

A couple of Common Sandpipers fed happily on the bank with Mynas for company, Pied Crows were nesting in Jacaranda trees, the blue flowers of which were just appearing, where hung several webs of the huge Madagascar spider.

A stop for water and other essentials at a supermarket produced Madagascar Wagtail and Madagascar Mannikin for some.

Our main birding stop of the morning was at Tsarasaotra Park where there were hundreds of nesting egrets of several species in reeds around Alarobia Lake and on an island in the middle. We spent time sorting out Madagascar and Common Squacco Heron, white-phased Dimorphic Herons, Cattle and Little Egrets, and a nesting colony of Black-crowned Night Herons.

Star bird for most was an Open-billed Stork, a rare species for Madagascar, which was roosting on the island. It took off and flew away a few minutes after we found it, phew! Waterfowl on the lake included hundreds of White-faced Whistling Ducks and Red-billed Teals with a few Knob-billed Ducks for variety. Everything was close and used to humans so we enjoyed superb views of them all.

Another star species was Madagascar Grebe, a pair of which were diving for food close to the island. A Madagascar Coucal was heard by most but only a few of us gained a glimpse. Moorhen was probably the least exciting addition to the list although they did look particularly smart with huge red pates and bright yellow tips to the beaks.

Lunch at the Relais des Plateaux Hotel was a pleasant affair with excellent food and a few birds in the garden afterwards – two Madagascar Bee-eaters were the tops.

Checking in for our flight to Fort Dauphin was farcical but we eventually caught the 3.30pm plane arriving at the hotel in time for a leisurely shower before the call over and an excellent dinner. Several Moreau's Tropical House Geckos were seen around the buildings and Norman took a great picture of a late-to-bed Day Gecko, an iridescent jewel of Madagascar.

### **Sunday 30 October**

Sunny all day 30°C strong wind at the coast

The day could not have started better than it did: we found a Ring-tailed Lemur in the grounds of the hotel, sunning itself to warm up. In addition, the first of several Warty Chameleons, a huge animal, was found, and all before breakfast.

We left the hotel at 7.30am accompanied by our guide Mbola who had come down to meet us. We took our time along the journey to Berenty with lots of stops, the first of which was to buy water and bananas for the journey.

A Crested Drongo (said to be the king of all creatures because they duped God into believing they had put out a great fire – the real heroes were fruit bats) and Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher were watched from the bus but we got out to scope Hamerkop, Grey-headed Lovebird and Sakalava Weaver. A stop to buy souvenirs (this was important as they support people who would otherwise cut down the spiny forest) produced Green and Souimanga Sunbird.

I found Claudine, a little girl I had photographed last year, and gave her a print of the picture plus some school books and pencils. There was some mirth at lunch when Mamy informed me that a small spear I had been given in return meant that we were betrothed and I should bring her parents a Zebu cow next year. Ah well, another port another mother-in-law...

As we approached Berenty reserve the beautiful spiny forest gave way to sisal plantations that stretched as far as the horizon. Thank goodness for the reserve, we all thought. A Madagascar Buzzard and a flock of Madagascar Black Swifts were seen as we entered Berenty.

A delicious lunch was followed by a stroll back to our cabins for a siesta (for some, chores for others). Even that proved productive with our first Verreaux's Sifakas resting in a tree which hosted a Crested Coua (the first of four seen during the day) too. A short detour through the forest resulted in great views of two Malagasy Hoopoes and a troop of at least 15 Brown Lemurs. Ring-tailed Lemurs were seen a few moments later.

We set off at 3.45pm on a short ramble led by Mbola. Great views of Giant Coua were enjoyed by all and a pair of White-browed Owls became candidates for Bird of the Trip. Two Verreaux's Sifakas danced from one tree to the next effortlessly and seemingly without catching hold once. A second walk in the spiny forest at 4.30pm started with an excellent Three-eyed Lizard and hit its first peak with super white-phased Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher. The second peak was watching oh-so close Verreaux's Sifakas warming up for the night in the rays of the sinking sun. We saw more doing their classic dance as a troop crossed the road in front of us a few minutes later.

Returning to the spiny forest after dark was another peak. Madagascar Flying Foxes were wheeling around overhead while we heard Madagascar Nightjar, Madagascar Scops and White-browed Owls. Entering the forest, we were shown four White-footed Sportiv Lemurs. Madagascar Nightjar and Madagascar Scops Owl were also calling but unfortunately another party scared the owl before we could see it. I made up for the loss by finding one back at the camp. One or two of us also saw another White-browed Owl by torchlight after an excellent dinner.

Pitch darkness and the absence of a moon which rose later in the evening gave us unparalleled views of the stars. Indeed, the Milky Way was so bright it looked like a grey cloud and there were so many stars visible that we had difficulty in finding the constellations. The Southern Cross was clear, however, as was Jupiter and its four moons. Gemini, the Twins, was brilliant too.

It was with some satisfaction that we retired to bed in time to snatch a few pages of our field guides before the generator was turned off at about 10pm.

### Monday 1 October

Sunny all day 32°C strong wind at the coast

Our star gazing continued as we gathered at 5.30 for a cuppa before setting off into the gallery forest. Venus was showing well long after the calls of nightjars and owls had been replaced by those of Madagascar Bulbul and Common Jeeries.

Our first birds of the morning were a pair of Madagascar Cuckoo-hawks which were prospecting Acacia trees looking for a nest sight. A Crested Coua, the first of several, was being admired when a female Frances's Sparrowhawk flew into a tree above our heads and posed, despite loud oohs and ahs.

Our walk was down to a cliff overlooking the river which supports Berenty's gallery forest. Here, after the local women had finished their morning ablutions, we settled down to watching birds come in to drink. Grey-headed Lovebirds looked stunning against the sandy shores, Madagascar Turtle Doves were common and a flock of Knob-billed Ducks numbered at least 40.

Three Kittlitz's Plovers were chasing each other around in preparation for nesting and a Madagascar Kingfisher posed nicely on a tree stump. A flock of seven Greenshanks flew over noisily and a few Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found. Sadly, however, our main target species, Madagascar Sandgrouse, did not appear.

We cut our losses and headed back for breakfast... it was a long time coming as we stopped to get super views of two Sickle-billed Vangas, Giant Couas and glimpses of Common Newtonias.

We were heading for a special treat but kept being thwarted by wildlife such as a Verreaux's Sifaka baby making its first explorations away from mum. It made heart-stopping but tiny leaps from her to nearby branches before returning safely to her care. It was endearing. So too was the view of a White-footed Sportive Lemur which should have been asleep but popped its head out of a hold in a tree to look us up and down. Satisfied that we were harmless it remained, framed by the hole, orange eyes glowing until we moved off.

Some folk managed to watch a couple of Madagascar Buttonquails in the deep dark undergrowth while others enjoyed a fly-past Madagascar Sparrowhawk.

Finally we reached the roost of about 60 Madagascar Flying Foxes which also had a bout of insomnia. They were chattering and squeaking to each other loudly. One or two even flew to different perches. It was extremely entertaining. Our last bird before breakfast was a White-browed Owl which joined the ranks of the sleepless to pose for us.

Did I say last? Time constraints (ie catching a plane) meant that we had to finish breakfast by 9.15am and head off for the airport by 9.30. As always happens we kept on seeing birds – two Green Pigeons and a small flock of Lesser Vasa Parrots (identified by size and the lack of pink skin around the eyes).

We did leave on time, following the pick-up which was carrying our luggage by 15 minutes. A picnic was eaten in the bus after we checked in and Air Madagascar got us to Tulear on time at 2.30pm. The next phase of our Madagascar adventure was starting.

After buying lots of water we drove through busy Tulear and out onto the bumpy road to Ifaty. We stopped to watch lots of Madagascar Larks, Three-banded and Kittlitz's Plovers, a Black-necked Stilt and three Curlew Sandpipers before completing the journey to Ifaty at 5pm. Madagascar Magpie Robins, Brush-warbler and Madagascar Nightjars were seen around the hotel before we retired for an early night in preparation for tomorrow's pre-breakfast exploration of the spiny forest after another excellent dinner.

And what an adventure... the trip to Ifaty was broken by two people becoming ill. We had stopped to watch lots of Madagascar Larks, Three-banded and Kittlitz's Plovers, a Black-necked Stilt and three Curlew Sandpipers, when suddenly down they went. Happily a good night's sleep put them right although they were deprived of Madagascar Magpie Robins, Brush-warbler and Madagascar Nightjar sightings around the hotel. The rest of us retired for an early night in preparation for tomorrow's pre-breakfast exploration of the spiny forest after another excellent dinner.

### Tuesday 2 October

Sunny all day 32°C light coastal breeze

A day of mixed fortunes with illness hitting some and great birding in the spiny forest for the rest. Our 5.30am departure was preceded by welcome tea and coffee and by 6.00 we were at the home of Mosa and his family. The great man and his bother Regila led us into the spiny forest he is trying to set up as a reserve and the excitement began.

Our first stop was for a smart Banded Kestrel sitting on one of the cactus-like plants, *Didierea madagascariensis*. It obliged as we circled the bird trying successfully to get views of its banded front. Suddenly it swooped off, snatched something from the forest floor and flew off with it, returning a few moments later.

Birding with Mosa and his brothers is an extraordinary experience. They seem half asleep but talk incessantly, except for the occasional cough. Suddenly one or other will stop and say something, they turn and there, often at a distance is a bird, identified with no binoculars.

Thus our first Hook-billed Vanga was spotted, scoped and admired, during which event a Chabert's Vanga appeared also to pose well. Off we went again still with the chatter. The next stop was to point out a Madagascar Buttonquail's nest with three eggs close to the path. Clearly they knew it was there but how had they first found the cryptic nest?

We enjoyed the early morning walk through the forest stopping frequently to admire the many Baobab trees (Madagascar has eight species as compared with the two found in the whole of Africa) and spiny plants. The spiny forest is one of the most amazing, unique and threatened habitats on Earth and we could only wish Mosa luck in his attempts to set up a reserve at Ifaty.

He and his bother kept on pointing out birds – like the Thamnomis Warbler and a Lafresnaye's Vanga sitting on its beautifully constructed nest which seemed woven together with cobwebs, despite the bird's size.

The pace and excitement started to pick up a little as Mosa's brother sprang forward – he was on the trail of something. We were told to stand in a clearing and they men disappeared into the bush. Eventually they came back towards us slowly herding a Long-tailed Ground-roller. After trotting past us it froze behind a bush, we were placed in position, able to study it for several minutes before it suddenly blinked and disappeared into the forest. Broad grins split every face. This was fabulous, if unconventional, birding. Mosa's techniques may be odd, we decided, but without them the birders would stop coming and the forest destroyed for charcoal production.

The heat was beginning to build and our walk had been quite long through soft sand most of the way so we turned back and headed for the bus. The Mosa clan had one more treat for us – they disappeared for a while and then led us through almost impenetrable scrub to a tree on which a Sub-desert Mesite was perched motionless. To our amazement it remained there as we crashed around getting good vantage points.

Mesites are a strange family of birds found only in Madagascar. Their lack of calls and habit of freezing when disturbed make them extremely difficult to find and we enjoyed the time with this brilliant find.

Our return to the bus was broken by a photo-stop with a family collecting meagre amounts of water from the bottom of an eight-foot well dug in soft sand, a dangerous and labour-intensive task.

Returning to the hotel we admired the colony of Sakalava Weavers in a small tree at the car park before heading off to walk around the area after breakfast. Grey Plovers, Turnstones and Sanderling were on the beach with the occasional Whimbrel flying past. We also found a Greater Sandplover to remind us this was not home. Brush-warblers were common in the scrub along with more familiar species. We called it a day after the heat really built and had a siesta after lunch.

Organised birding activities were dropped for the rest of the day as I had to take a sick guest and his wife to the clinic in Tulear where he was dosed with pills and pronounced fit for travel the following day, to the relief of all of us. We left them in an hotel there and returned along one of the world's worst roads to the hotel arriving after dark to find that Charles has spotted a flock of Flamingos flying past, and then back. Who needs leaders, eh?

The day ended with an impromptu gentle walk to watch wonderful hawking Madagascar Nightjars, This ended as a star-gazing event. We found Jupiter and its four moons and a stunning cluster in the Milky Way which was eventually pinned down as either M7, the Ptolemy Cluster, or M8 the Butterfly Cluster. Whichever, they were brilliant.

### Wednesday 3 October

Sunny all day 34°C

Travelling days are rarely that productive but we managed to have fun and birds on our long, tiring journey to the Isalo Mountains. A couple of stops were made along the bumpy road from Ifaty to examine the shore-line, a job we had missed due to yesterday's dramas. We found lots of White-faced ducks, waders which had made the long journey south for the winter, and a couple of Grey Herons.

We chose a village for our second stop where more of the same were seen in the company of scores of happy little children who thronged around us.

After picking our much improved invalid we headed north enjoying the unfolding scenery of Madagascar's interior as we climbed into the highlands. A picnic lunch was eaten at the Zombitse National Park interpretation centre before head warden Flaubert and his wife Celine took us out on a 90-minute walk through the forest.

Once again we were treated to the display of a true expert in his element as he stopped firstly to point out Flatid Leaf-bugs which look like hairy aphids. In fact, they are nimble insects able to hop like a flea but they excrete a waxy substance which 'grows' into fronds so that if a predator takes hold of one it comes off in their mouths and the leaf-bug hops away unharmed. They also excrete a sugary substance much liked by mouse lemurs.

Flaubert used a superb combination of talents to pish-and-point to birds he had found, starting with the nest of a Madagascar Ibis. Coquerel's Coua was the first bird-gem, a deep forest skulker which was difficult to see (forest birding can be frustrating). Two were seen on the hike. A Madagascar Cuckoo-roller flew over and gave difficult views for most once I trained the scope on it.

Our main target was Appert's Greenbul, a confiding small bird which lives in the dense forest understorey. Three were found eventually and seen well by all although there was a complaint at they were too close for binoculars to focus upon. Sorry folks.

Only recently described, this was a great find, although maybe not so impressive as the 500-year-old Baobabs, *Andersonia za*, which grow in the forest. Their enormous roots stretch for many metres, We had seen them standing in isolated grassland just after entering the park, a stark reminder of how Madagascar's forests are being destroyed. Another amazing tree was a species of Mangrove, *Pandaneuse xeophita*, found in dry forest.

We did well with lemurs too – a Red-tailed Sportive investigated us from a hole in a tree where it was roosting for the day, a Brown Lemur was seen briefly and Judy found a Verreaux's Sifaka for us, a good tally. We were shown a tree which had been excavated to catch a sportive lemur for food, further evidence of the pressure an ever-expanding population is putting on the frail wildlife of this country.

I had learned that Flaubert and Celine had been at a relative's funeral in a nearby town the previous day. He had received a phone call at 3am to say that their house had been burned down. All their belongings except a metal bed-frame and cooking pot were lost – which explained why he was not wearing his smart warden's uniform I had seen the previous year. We had a collection to help them repair their loss, a generous and much appreciated act by the group.

We continued the long journey arriving at the Hotel Relais de la Reine at the same time as a pair of African Palm Swifts. There was a great shock as the beautiful reception area and restaurant had burned down in July and was being rebuilt. We had to drive to the sister hotel five-minutes away to register and for our meals. The rooms were good, however, with Benson's Rock Thrush on several of the roof-tops. It was great to enjoy a shower, swim and excellent meal after the day's rigours.

### Thursday 4 October

Hot and sunny but pleasant in the highlands 34°C

A day spent travelling with little wildlife to admire although the rolling scenery and dramatic rock formations were impressive. It was fascinating to see Madagascar life as we drove through canyons and rolling grassy plains, villages and small cities, saw paddy fields, Zebu cattle being herded to market in towns miles away. Children appeared from nowhere when we stopped to take pictures but they were polite and pestered us very little. One school had all its children in lines outside, each with his or her right hands on the shoulder of the child in front.

A flock of Alpine and Malagasy Black Swifts appeared overhead when we stopped to take pictures of the 'Bishop's Hat' rock formation and a pair of Madagascar Kestrels were nesting in a house opposite our morning coffee stop.

The day had started with a pre-breakfast walk around the grounds on which we saw a couple of Benson's Rock Thrushes, two Madagascar Spinetails and several other species we knew. The strange Elephant's Foot plant, *Pachypodium rosaleum*, was in bloom and we also found Feather Palm, *Chrysalidocarpus isaloensis*, and the localised Isalo Aloe, *Aloe isaloensis*.

It ended at Ranomafana where we were pleased to check in at the SETAM Lodge. A delicious, if somewhat chewy zebu-steak dinner was enjoyed before turning in ready for an early morning walk around the hotel.

### Friday 5 October

Overcast to start, sunny most of the day with some drizzle 27°C

A brilliant day with six species of lemur and some impressive bird-names among the wide-ranging wildlife seen. A 6am birding session at the hotel produced three Madagascar Cuckoo-shrikes and a few Nelicourvi Weavers, a small flock of Dark Newtonias, a couple of Chabert's Vangas and, amazingly, a Purple heron perched atop a tree in the jungle. Lesser and Greater Vasa Parrots were seen flying over and a male white-phase Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher was paired with a red female.

Our main outing of the day was into the busy Ranomafana forest where we had a brilliant time. Our main guide was Tao Randriamifidy who was helped by two 'spotters' in the forest: communication was with two-way radios. Eddy Andry accompanied us.

By 10.30am we had seen most of the birds and mammals recorded in two days the previous year. A singing Rand's Warbler at the entrance was joined by a second bird (success there then – Ed) and a fruiting mulberry bush had Long-billed Greenbul, Madagascar White-eye and Common Newtonias in it.

Our lemur tally began with Red-fronted Brown Lemur swiftly followed by two Golden Bamboo Lemurs, the species which prompted the establishment of Ranomafana on their discovery. This sighting was fraught as several other groups arrived to see the animals and a Fred Carnot's Circus atmosphere resulted.

Leaving the hoards to it we stopped for an talk on the lemurs by Tao who stopped short when a female Sunbird Asity was discovered feeding from the nectar of flower right above our heads. This was great luck as this family are difficult birds to see. Her curved bill was perfectly adapted for the job it was doing.

A family of Red-bellied Lemurs were the next quarry, found by the spotters and admired by us until the crowds arrived once more. We moved on to watch the largest and rarest lemur in Ranomafana, Greater Bamboo lemur which was living up to its name by chmping through bamboo stems. Each animal eats enough cyanide in a day to kill the whole Travelling Naturalist group, we learned.

Searching for a calling Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo led us to the second great bird of the day, a male Velvet Asity which posed obligingly for at least five minutes before disappearing. Wow! And what a bird – all black except for yellow crescents (it was in non-breeding plumage) and a green flash of bare skin above the eye. It had a perfectly formed bill too – this time for eating fruit as it demonstrated a couple of times with red berries.

A nesting Spectacled Greenbul was ignored by all of us and saved from a swinging when Eddie noticed it in a tiny tree by the side of the path which was just about to be used as a support by one of the group. This was certainly our (and its) lucky day.

The spotters had found a roosting Small-toothed Sportive Lemur which studied us with great interest for several minutes before returning to its day-time occupation of sleeping when a group of Italian tourists arrived.

Tylas and Pollen's Vangas were seen by some as they called high in the canopy and a Red-fronted Coua stayed on its perch just over the path long enough for the first five to see it. A Red Forest Rat (Island Mouse) was spotted and admired by some as we were heading back to the car park. Others could not see it despite the fact that the animal was just three feet in from the path... great camouflage.

A siesta after lunch (we enjoyed super food, service and kindness at the Setam Lodge) was followed by a walk to the 'view point' where we were to wait for sunset and nocturnal creatures. Five displaying Cuckoo-rollers flew over the river as we crossed its bridge.

A Falanouc (Spotted Civet) had already emerged and was snuffling around looking for tit-bits but other tourists were there too. Others arrived by the minute until more than 60 people were crowded into a small area looking for animals. Few had binoculars and the hopefuls had cameras despite a notice that said 'no photos of nocturnal animals should be taken'.

Some of our group went on to the view point where Blue Vanga was added to the growing list of this family's members. Back at the nocturnal stake-out a female Velvet Asity again posed for us making this group the most fortunate to Madagascar so far.

Eventually Brown Mouse Lemurs appeared but were immediately harassed by some in the crowds of onlookers. We had good views of the fast-moving but timid creatures but the behaviour of the other primates became unbearable and I finally remonstrated with a man who shone a photographic spotlight on the animals while taking pictures.

The park charges people to enter but provides no wardens to supervise, or better still, to act as guides. As a result the only people who might object to tourists' behaviour are the guides whose hands are tied as they are being paid by the tourists. It is time Ranomafana employed the guides, gave them uniforms, and trained them in how to approach animals and birds.

Our walk back to the bus was in pitch darkness as the lemurs had made a late appearance (who can blame them?). It was punctuated by some of the most remarkable night-spotting I have seen with Tao finding Common and Madagascar Leaf-litter Tree Frogs, Leaf-tailed Gecko, the tail of which was 'just a bud' as it had been shed previously, and Nose-horned Chameleon. It was a remarkable performance. We enjoyed another splendid meal and retired to bed early.

### **Saturday 6 October**

Sunny and warm all day, cooling breeze 28 °C

Coffee and tea were provided before we set off for the forest at 6am. A few steps after leaving the car park Theo found a Pitta-like Ground-roller which some managed to see, but not everyone by a long mark. This was the start of a sometimes frustrating but eventually rewarding search for this bird.

Soon afterwards a pair of White-throated Oxylabes were found but they too proved elusive and it was Crossley's Babbler which finally gave the group great views as it picked around in the leaf-litter a few feet away from us. A stunning bird with a white line through its bluish face and a white spot on the eye, this was one of the best birds of the trip. Our fourth Velvet Asity, a male in full breeding plumage, put in an appearance at an unproductive Pitta-like Ground-roller's site, much to my amazement. Judy spotted a couple of distant Blue Couas and three Blue Vangas were also seen briefly.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast followed by a trip up the hill to a new trail I discovered last year. After quite a walk we heard the distinctive calls of a Pitta-like Ground-roller and eventually two were found. One sat up on a branch in full view affording great views for the whole group. We watched it for at least 10 minutes.

Elated we returned to the bus by the same route as new development had seen our old path destroyed when a foot-bridge was removed. A Blue Coua was seen briefly on the way back but a Yellow-browed Oxylabe (Madagascar Yellowbill) failed to give good views despite flying close to my left ear. It had been a good outing but we had dropped some good species.

The late afternoon outing to look for Parson's Chameleon was a disappointment as it was not expected. We were shown a huge individual kept in semi-domestication which was terrific but would have preferred a wild one. A couple of stops were made to listen for Flufftails but without success. And we returned to the hotel for a leisurely shower before dinner.

### **Sunday 7 October**

Sunny all day, hot afternoon 31°C

A 7.30am start was delayed so that we could visit a lookout just below the hotel. It has superb views of the valley and its many waterfalls. We then headed up the road to walk looking for birds and plants (there were some beautiful orchids).

One of the amazing characteristics of Malagasy bird guides is their ability to whistle up things we want to see. So, when we pulled up on the main road through Ranomafana and Theo started whistling it came as no surprise that a Forest Rock-thrush eventually appeared to investigate. We had excellent views with a little help from Judy and her scope. Whistling is far less dangerous to birds than playing a tape which they hear as a competitor in their territory. Whistling never fools the birds but does make them curious – they often continue feeding while responding to the guide.

A Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo was found calling from the top of a dead tree down in the valley and a persistent wolf-whistle was identified as a Red-tailed Vanga, although we did not see one. One of the pair of Madagascar Buzzards we had seen previously gave close views but two calling Red-fronted Couas on either side of us remained hidden, to our frustration.

We drove on up to the start of yesterday's morning walk but again were unable to locate a Cryptic Warbler – the first time we have missed this species. Compensation came in the form of several Giraffe-necked Weevils, one of the most extraordinary insects in the world. It is worth mention here of the many spectacular moths (several were in the Hawkmoth family) attracted to the lights of the Setam Lodge. Most left for their jungle homes at daybreak but a wide range stayed on to give us spectacular (but as yet unidentified) pictures.

We said farewell to Theo and his spotters and drove out of the park, making a stop immediately to visit a blacksmith's forge where old iron railway sleepers were being turned into spades, sickles and ploughs. The work was filthy and hot with boys taking turns to operate the hand-bellows. All the

children and their clothes were blackened by the charcoal but the craftsmanship was indisputable and we admired the blacksmiths' skills.

The rest of the journey was uneventful – a few dark-phased Dimorphic Herons were seen in the paddy fields as were a couple of Hamerkops. A huge egret colony was admired in the middle of a village – Black-crowned Night-herons, Dimorphic and Cattle egrets in a single tree – as I searched unsuccessfully for a loo. Today we relied on bush comfort stops. Lunch was at a rustic Malagasy restaurant where we had a choice of local or European dishes. The town of Ambositra is famous for its woodcarving and a little souvenir shopping followed. We arrived at Antsirabe just as darkness was falling.

### Monday 8 October

Sunny all day, warm in Antananarivo 28°C

Not many people get to ride on a 'push-push' man-powered rickshaw on their birthdays but for one of the group this was how the day started. Actually, seven of us went out to the railway station and back on the now traditional Travelling Naturalist La Gare Grand Prix. I won (hoorah!) but was helped by being the fee-holder.

We called in at 'Chez Joseph' to buy semi-precious stones and fossils, also a favourite activity for this tour, before setting off for Antananarivo. The four-hour drive was broken 25km away to watch a flock of about 70 Red-billed Ducks on a small lake and before we knew it the hustle and bustle of Antananarivo surrounded us.

A frustrating time was spent after lunch trying to find a bank which would change money. We finally opted for a bureau d'change which gave us very good rates. A little souvenir shopping was completed before we returned to the Hotel du Louvre for a rest before dinner.

### Tuesday 9 October

Sunny becoming threateningly overcast in Périnet NP 28°C

A leisurely start saw us leave the hotel at 9am, heading off to Périnet. Our first stop was at a rice paddy to watch a Madagascar Kingfisher as it firstly caught and devoured a small fish and then started bathing by diving into the water and flying straight back to its perch. A pair of Hamerkops provided the next entertainment although we had to look away until the male had lit a cigarette afterwards. They were being watched by a stunning adult Striated Heron.

A stop at the River Mangoro to look for Madagascar Pratincoles was unsuccessful but we did have the rare sight of a train crossing the bridge taking freight from the port of Toamasina to Antananarivo. After a great but slow lunch in a nearby restaurant we continued to the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park where our brilliant guide Maurice Ratsisakanana was waiting at the entrance to the Périnet section. After checking in to the Vakôna Lodge we drove out towards Mantadia, the second part of the national park.

Night was falling as we entered good forest so we left the bus to walk down the road. Our reward was wonderful views of Madagascar (Long-eared) Owl. Sadly it took Mali 40 minutes to find a turning place and get back to pick us up. We were relieved to see him but late back to the comfortable hotel and a delicious dinner.

### Wednesday 10 October

Sunny becoming overcast in Périnet NP 28°C

Breakfast at 6am was followed by a repeat drive to Mantadia stopping to call up a Madagascar Rail which gave reasonable views although the sight of Swamp-warblers buzzing around was just as good. The next stop was to admire two Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemurs which were feeding ... on bamboo. They are timid creatures, however, and soon retreated into the undergrowth.

A walk along the road saw us watching all sorts of familiar birds, most found by Maurice but quite a few by our now expert group members. Only Maurice and Mamy knew the call of a Pygmy Kingfisher, however, and we froze while the bird was looked for. Suddenly, it flew out of the undergrowth and perched for a few seconds on a tree fern giving some a brief view. This was a real find as they are difficult birds to locate.

After watching a Madagascar Starling we set off into the jungle and up a steep hill. Amazingly, nothing was moving or calling – we suspected that another group had been through the area playing bird-tapes which tend to silence the forest species.

All was not lost as a feeding flock of birds was found towards the end of the walk and in a furious flurry of sightings Ward's Flycatcher, Red-tailed and Nuthatch Vangas and a stunning day-gecko were added to the list before we returned to the lodge for lunch and a rest.

Some skipped the rest to visit a lemur sanctuary nearby where pictures of animals on shoulders were gleefully obtained. The bus picked up those who had decided to come out again and drove us to the entrance of Périnet where we set off into the forest once more.

A bridge marked the start of a purple patch – well, blue actually, with great views of Blue Pigeon, Blue Coua, a blue-backed Madagascar Kingfisher and a singing Green Jery. Grey-fronted Brown lemurs were feeding, happy that we look at them.

Maurice took us to a spot where a Collared Nightjar was roosting but we could not see it, only a pile of leaves. Well, that's what the Collared Nightjar looked like. Examination in the 'scope revealed a head, buff collar and half-closed eyes on top of exquisitely marked feathering, although the shape was impossible to make out. We returned to the park entrance, gaining brief views of White-headed Vangas and a Tylas (now classified as an Oriole) on the way.

A cuppa was called for and the nearby Voice of the Forest Lodge (and Chinese restaurant) was chosen. There we sat on the veranda watching at least one Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur using an electricity cable to get to a Travellers' Palm which had a little banana dabbed on it... yummy.

A walk in darkness with Maurice pointing out Short-horned Chameleons, Fireflies and the calls of Eastern Rainforest Scops Owl was a delightful end to the day.

### Thursday 11 October

Sunny with a few clouds, 28°C

Maurice could not guide us today so we met Julien Ramaroko at the entrance to Périnet instead. His proved equal to Maurice's skills. The sounds of calling Indri greeted us almost immediately and we set off in high hopes of seeing them. A different trail from yesterday's was followed.

Indri take some time to warm up and early morning visits are out so we spent a couple of hours filling time... er, no. A singing Stripe-throated Jery started the list of new birds. Its song and delivery are similar to Rand's Warbler which was also present. We were able to compare and contrast, as they say.

A beautiful lake held Snake-nosed Fish (we were to learn later that they were introduced from Japan, make journeys overland in wet weather like eels, and are threatening to wipe out local fish like 'Pink Perch' or Marakely. Great views were had of Nelicourvi Weavers and more Chabert's Vangas before we continued along the path, only to be pulled up short when a line of huge dark-green woodlice-like creatures was found. These turned out to be a form of millipede but they behaved like woodlice, rolling into balls when touched.

Julien went off to look for a roosting owl and came back with news of a great find, a pair of feeding Diademed Sifakas. It was a tough trek to reach their tree but we had the beautiful creatures to ourselves, watching them feeding on fig-like fruit for 50 minutes or so. One even let loose a stream which happily missed us. At least three groups of Indri were calling in succession as we watched the Sifakas. Bill had been unable to join us but saw two Indri during a particularly loud spell of calling.

The wait was finally over and at 9am we set off up a slight hill following the calls of Indri. For a couple of minutes we had the animal found by Julien to ourselves but this did not last long as groups of tourists started to arrive after their guides spotted us. The Indri was quite low in its chosen tree and good pictures were obtained before we left the area. More than 100 people had booked in on walks to see Indri that morning so we thanked our luck that more people had not turned up under 'our' Indri.

Some of the group had not seen the nightjars yesterday, choosing to rest instead so we returned to their roost spot where an amazing sight greeted us. Two Collared Nightjars were sleeping together with their feathers entwined and heads touching. They looked like a larger pile of leaves this time. It was a touching scene made the more amazing when we learned that a chick was probably under the pair.

Walking back to the entrance, a snake was spotted on the path in front of us. While we were admiring it Norman and Mamy, who had lagged behind, watched a Red-fronted Coua walk in front of them and then found two Grey-fronted Brown Lemurs. Judy spotted a pair of Green Pigeons, rare birds in Périnet. Our final find was a small party of Eastern Woolly Lemurs (Avahi) which included a female with her baby.

Our afternoon walk started at a small pond where we were told Madagascar Crested Ibis might be found. After a short wait and to our astonishment, two birds emerged from the forest and began feeding in the soft mud at the side of the pond, their crests flopping from one side to the other. It was an amazing sight as these birds are notoriously timid. They finally crept back to the edge of the forest before flying off into the trees.

As if that were not enough, a pair of Grey-fronted Brown Lemurs was found nearby, carrying a baby. This did not stop them from trying to enlarge their family before bounding off into the trees (not the cigarette joke again, please – Ed).

We took our bus to the Périnet railway station and wandered back along the road listening to Madagascar Flufftail, admiring the 'cactus orchid' Rhipsalis sp. And enjoying the falling darkness.

Another night road walk started after we had seen two Furry-eared Dwarf Lemurs at the Voice of the Forest Lodge.

**Friday 12 October**

Sunny with a few clouds, 28°C

An optional 5.30am start saw us retrace our steps of the night before seeing a number of birds already recorded, but with better views. These included Hook-billed Vanga, Green Jery and Tylas. A pair of Nuthatch Vangas performed well for us and two displaying Cuckoo-rollers flew over us calling wildly. Chabert's, Red-tailed and Blue Vangas were also seen well as three Madagascar Starlings and a couple of Cuckoo-shrikes.

Our final bird of the trip was a calling Madagascar Nightjar at the comfortable hotel in Tana where we had day rooms prior to leaving for Paris and London on an uneventful series of flights.

**ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES**

Species marked with (E) are endemic, (BE) breeding endemic to Madagascar.

**BIRDS**

<b>GUINEAFOWL</b>		<b>Family Numididae</b>	
1	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	A few groups of this introduced species seen throughout the trip.
<b>WILDFOWL</b>		<b>Family Anatidae</b>	
2	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	Seen on three days: at Alarobia Lake, Berenty and Ifaty.
3	Knob-billed Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Seen on two days: at Alarobia Lake and Berenty.
4	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	Seen on four occasions throughout Madagascar.
<b>GREBES</b>		<b>Family Podicipedidae</b>	
5	Madagascar Grebe (E)	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>	Seen only once, a pair on Alarobia Lake in Tana.
<b>FLAMINGOS</b>		<b>Family Phoenicopteridae</b>	
6	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopus roseus</i>	A flock of about 40 passed the beach at Ifaty and then came back.
<b>STORKS</b>		<b>Family Ciconiidae</b>	
7	African Openbill	<i>Anastomus lamelligeris</i>	One at the Alarobia Lake in Tana. This is a rare bird for eastern Madagascar.
<b>IBISES, SPOONBILLS</b>		<b>Family Threskiornithidae</b>	
8	Madagascar Ibis	<i>Lophotibis cristata</i>	One in the Zombitse Forest was seen by me only but two at a pond in Périnet were a real bonus. We had great and prolonged views of this most timid species.
<b>HERONS, BITTERNES</b>		<b>Family Ardeidae</b>	
9	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	One in a marsh along the road from Ifaty.
10	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Colony at Alarobia Lake, Tana; another five pairs in a colony on the way to Antsirabe.
11	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	One at Alarobia Lake, Tana; four seen over three days on paddyfields near Tana.
12	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Lots breeding at Alarobia Lake, Tana; four seen over three days elsewhere.
13	Malagasy Pond Heron (E)	<i>Ardeola idae</i>	Two pairs breeding at Alarobia Lake, Tana.
14	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
15	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Two seen on the coast at Ifaty.

16	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Seen quite widely: one at Ranomafana N. P. was standing on top of a tree in the rain forest.
17	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Common in paddyfields .
18	Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	One of our first birds in Madagascar - the first three were forming 'umbrellas' over Lake Anosy, Tana; one on the same lake when we returned; several breeding at Alarobia Lake.
19	Dimorphic Egret	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	Common in paddyfields .
	<b>HAMERKOP</b>	<b>Family Scopidae</b>	
20	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Quite common on the paddyfields.
	<b>FALCONS</b>	<b>Family Falconidae</b>	
21	Malagasy Kestrel (E)	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
22	Banded Kestrel (E)	<i>Falco zoniventris</i>	One watched for some time in Ifaty spiny forest.
	<b>KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES</b>	<b>Family Accipitridae</b>	
23	Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (E)	<i>Aviceda madagascariensis</i>	Three seen along the Ifaty coast.
24	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
25	Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (E)	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>	One in the Zombitse forest.
26	Frances's Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter francesii</i>	Two females and a male at Berenty; a female at Périnet.
27	Madagascar Sparrowhawk (E)	<i>Accipiter madagascariensis</i>	Singles seen on three days.
28	Madagascar Buzzard (E)	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>MESITES</b>	<b>Family Mesitornithidae</b>	
29	Subdesert Mesite (E)	<i>Monias benschi</i>	One in Ifaty spiny forest.
	<b>RAILS, CRAKES, COOTS</b>	<b>Family Rallidae</b>	
30	Madagascar Rail	<i>Rallus madagascariensis</i>	One called up at Périnet.
31	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Five in Alarobia Lake, Tana; three at Périnet.
	<b>BUTTONQUAIL</b>	<b>Family Turnicidae</b>	
32	Madagascar Buttonquail (E)	<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>	At least eight over three days; a nest with three eggs in Ifaty spiny forest.
	<b>STILTS, AVOCETS</b>	<b>Family Recurvirostridae</b>	
33	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	A few seen in the marshes along the Ifaty coast road.
	<b>PLOVERS</b>	<b>Family Charadriidae</b>	
34	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	At least 30 over-wintering along the Ifaty coast.
35	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>	Five on the coast and in marshes at Ifaty.
36	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	A pair in a coastal marsh at Ifaty.
37	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	A total of three on beaches at Ifaty.
	<b>SANDPIPERS, SNIPES</b>	<b>Family Scolopacidae</b>	
38	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	A few wintering on beaches at Ifaty.
39	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Seven in the river at Berenty; at least 25 on a sand bank near Ifaty.
40	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common, seen on most rivers.
41	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	A few wintering on beaches at Ifaty.
42	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	About 18 wintering on beaches at Ifaty.

43	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Nine wintering on beaches near Ifaty.
	<b>GULLS, TERNS, SKIMMERS</b>	<b>Family Laridae</b>	
44	Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Four birds showing characteristics of the southern African subspecies <i>L.d. vetuala</i> in the river at Berenty.
45	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	One on a sand bank near Ifaty.
46	Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	One on a sand bank near Ifaty.
	<b>PIGEONS, DOVES</b>	<b>Family Columbidae</b>	
47	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
48	Malagasy Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>	Common, recorded on six days.
49	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
50	Madagascar Green Pigeon (E)	<i>Treron australis</i>	Two at Berenty; a pair in Périnet N.P. where this is a rare species.
51	Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>	A total of 12 over three days at Périnet N.P.
	<b>COCKATOOS, PARROTS</b>	<b>Family Psittacidae</b>	
52	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>	Common: recorded on at least six days.
53	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>	A few seen in Ifaty spiny forest and at Périnet N.P.
54	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>CUCKOOS</b>	<b>Family Cuculidae</b>	
55	Malagasy Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
56	Crested Coua (E)	<i>Coua cristata</i>	At least eight seen in Berenty.
57	Blue Coua (E)	<i>Coua caerulea</i>	A few seen in Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
58	Red-fronted Coua (E)	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>	Singles at Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
59	Coquerel's Coua (E)	<i>Coua coquereli</i>	Two in Zombitse forest.
60	Giant Coua (E)	<i>Coua gigas</i>	Common at Berenty.
61	Madagascar Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>	Common, heard almost daily but rarely seen.
	<b>OWLS</b>	<b>Family Strigidae</b>	
62	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>	Eastern and Western species heard; Western seen at Berenty.
63	White-browed Hawk-Owl (E)	<i>Ninox superciliaris</i>	Heard and seen well at Berenty.
64	Madagascar Owl (E)	<i>Asio madagascariensis</i>	Brilliant views of this species at Périnet N.P.
	<b>NIGHTJARS</b>	<b>Family Caprimulgidae</b>	
65	Madagascar Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>	Heard and seen commonly around Ifaty; two seen at dusk in Périnet N.P.; one calling as we left on the last evening.
66	Collared Nightjar (E)	<i>Caprimulgus enarratus</i>	Two roosting together in Périnet N.P.
	<b>SWIFTS</b>	<b>Family Apodidae</b>	
67	Madagascar Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>	Recorded on three days.
68	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	Seen on four days.
69	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	Seen in the highlands on three days.
70	Malagasy Black Swift (E)	<i>Apus balstoni</i>	Widespread - seen on five days.

	<b>GROUND ROLLERS</b>	<b>Family Brachypteraciidae</b>	
71	Pitta-like Ground Roller (E)	Atelornis pittoides	Brilliant views of this normally skulking species in Ranomafana N.P.
72	Long-tailed Ground Roller (E)	Uratelornis chimaera	One rounded up for us in Ifaty spiny forest.
	<b>CUCKOO ROLLER</b>	<b>Family Leptosomatidae</b>	
73	Cuckoo Roller (E)	Leptosomus discolor	Common, seen on six days often calling in flight.
	<b>KINGFISHERS</b>	<b>Family Alcedinidae</b>	
74	Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (E)	Ispidina madagascariensis	One briefly in Mantadia N.P.
75	Malagasy Kingfisher	Alcedo vintsioides	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>BEE-EATERS</b>	<b>Family Meropidae</b>	
76	Madagascar (Olive) Bee-eater	Merops superciliosus	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>HOOPOES</b>	<b>Family Upupidae</b>	
77	Madagascar Hoopoe (E)	Upupa marginata	Five seen over four days in the south.
	<b>ASITIES</b>	<b>Family Philepittidae</b>	
78	Velvet Asity (E)	Philepitta castanea	A brilliant result with males in non-breeding and breeding plumage and a female in Ranomafana N. P.
79	Common Sunbird-asity (E)	Neodrepanis coruscans	Female seen in Ranomafana N. P.
	<b>VANGAS</b>	<b>Family Vangidae</b>	
80	Red-tailed Vanga (E)	Calicalicus madagascariensis	Heard here and there but seen only in Périnet N.P.
81	Hook-billed Vanga (E)	Vanga curvirostris	Seen in Ifaty spiny forest and Périnet N.P.
82	Lafresnaye's Vanga (E)	Xenopirostris xenopirostris	One on a nest in Ifaty spiny forest.
83	Pollen's Vanga (E)	Xenopirostris polleni	Three in two days at Ranomafana N. P.
84	Sickle-billed Vanga (E)	Falcolea palliata	Two in Berenty, one the following day in Ifaty.
85	White-headed Vanga (E)	Artamella viridis	Seen on three days but only briefly in flight.
86	Chabert's Vanga (E)	Leptopterus chabert	Common, seen almost daily.
87	Blue Vanga (E)	Cyanolanius madagascarinus	A few seen in Ranomafana N.P. and Périnet N.P.
88	Nuthatch Vanga (E)	Hypositta corallirostris	One in Mantadia N.P.; two at Périnet N.P.
89	Dark Newtonia (E)	Newtonia amphichroa	Three at the Setam Lodge.
90	Common Newtonia (E)	Newtonia brunneicauda	Common, seen almost daily.
91	Archbold's Newtonia (E)	Newtonia archboldi	Four in Ifaty spiny forest.
92	Ward's Flycatcher (E)	Pseudobias wardi	One in Mantadia N.P.; three in Périnet N.P.
93	Crossley's Babbler (E)	Mystacornis crossleyi	A brilliant bird seen closely in Ranomafana N.P.
	<b>CUCKOOSHRIKES</b>	<b>Family Campephagidae</b>	
94	Madagascar Cuckooshrike (E)	Coracina cinerea	Recorded on four days in Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
	<b>FIGBIRDS, ORIOLES</b>	<b>Family Oriolidae</b>	
95	Tylas (E)	Tylas eduardi	Six seen over three days at Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
	<b>DRONGOS</b>	<b>Family Dicruridae</b>	
96	Crested Drongo	Dicrurus forficatus	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>MONARCH FLYCATCHERS</b>	<b>Family Monarchidae</b>	
97	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher(E)	Terpsiphone mutata	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>CROWS, JAYS</b>	<b>Family Corvidae</b>	

98	Pied Crow <b>SWALLOWS, MARTINS</b>	<i>Corvus albus</i> <b>Family Hirundinidae</b>	Common, seen almost daily.
99	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
100	Brown-throated Martin <b>LARKS</b>	<i>Riparia paludicola</i> <b>Family Alaudidae</b>	Common, seen almost daily.
101	Madagascar Lark (E)  <b>CISTICOLAS &amp; ALLIES</b>	<i>Miraфра hova</i> <b>Family Cisticolidae</b>	Common along the Ifaty road, a few elsewhere.
102	Madagascar Cisticola <b>FAMILY UNCERTAIN</b>	<i>Cisticola cherina</i> <b>Family ?</b>	Widespread.
103	Common Jery (E)	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
104	Green Jery (E)	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>	Six over three days at Périnet N.P.
105	Stripe-throated Jery (E) <b>BULBULS</b>	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i> <b>Family Pycnonotidae</b>	Two singing in Périnet N.P.
106	Malagasy Bulbul <b>OLD WORLD WARBLERS</b>	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i> <b>Family Sylviidae</b>	Common, seen almost daily.
107	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>	Common in Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
108	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>	Almost overlooked at the Ifaty hotel where they were common.
109	Madagascar Swamp Warbler (E)	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>	Common in swamps at Périnet N.P.
110	White-throated Oxylobes (E)	<i>Oxylobes madagascariensis</i>	Brief views of two at Ranomafana N.P.
111	Thamnornis (E)	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>	Just two in Ifaty spiny forest.
112	Spectacled Tetraka (Greenbul) (E)	<i>Xanthomixis zosterops</i>	Common in the rainforests.
113	Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul) (E)	<i>Xanthomixis apperti</i>	Three of this highly restricted species in Zombitse Forest.
114	Madagascar Yellowbrow (Yellow-browed oxylobes) (E)	<i>Crossleyia xanthophrys</i>	One at Ranomafana N.P.
115	Rand's Warbler (E)  <b>WHITE-EYES</b>	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i> <b>Family Zosteropidae</b>	Common in Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
116	Madagascar White-eye <b>STARLINGS</b>	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i> <b>Family Sturnidae</b>	Common, seen almost daily.
117	Madagascar Starling (E)	<i>Saroglossa aurata</i>	Just a few in Mantadia and Périnet national parks.
118	Common Myna <b>OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS</b>	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i> <b>Family Muscicapidae</b>	Common, seen almost daily.
119	Madagascar Magpie-Robin (E)	<i>Copsychus albospecularis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
120	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola axillaris</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
121	Forest Rock Thrush (E)	<i>Pseudocossyphus sharpei</i>	Singing male along the road in Ranomafana N.P.
122	Benson's Rock Thrush (E) <b>SUNBIRDS</b>	<i>Pseudocossyphus bensoni</i> <b>Family Nectariniidae</b>	At least one pair at Isalo.
123	Souimanga Sunbird (E)	<i>Cinnyris souimanga</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
124	Malagasy Green Sunbird (E)	<i>Cinnyris notatus</i>	Less common, but seen almost daily.
	<b>WEAVERS</b>	<b>Family Ploceidae</b>	
125	Nelicourvi Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>	Seen on four days at Ranomafana and Périnet national parks.
126	Sakalava Weaver (E)	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>	A few in Berenty and a colony at the Ifaty hotel.
127	Red Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	A few throughout the tour.
128	Forest Fody (E) <b>WAXBILLS, MUNIAS &amp; ALLIES</b>	<i>Foudia omissa</i> <b>Family Estrildidae</b>	Three at Ranomafana N.P.
129	Madagascar Mannikin (E)	<i>Lemuresthes nana</i>	A few at Berenty and Périnet N.P.

<b>WAGTAILS, PIPITS</b>		<b>Family Motacillidae</b>	
130	Madagascar Wagtail (E)	Motacilla flaviventris	Common, seen almost daily.
<b>MICE, RATS &amp; VOLES</b>		<b>MAMMALS</b>	
		<b>Family Muridae</b>	
131	Island Mouse (E)	Nesomys rufus	Two in the forest at Ranomafana N.P.
<b>GENETS &amp; CIVETS</b>		<b>Family Viverridae</b>	
132	Fanaloka (Malagasy Civet) (E)	Fossa fossana	One on the night-walk in Ranomafana NP.
<b>MONGOOSES</b>		<b>Family Herpestidae</b>	
133	Ring-tailed Mongoose (E)	Galidia elegans	One seen briefly in Ranomafana N.P.
<b>OLD WORLD FRUIT BATS</b>		<b>Family Pteropodidae</b>	
134	Madagascar Flying Fox (E)	Pteropus rufus	A roost of 60 in Berenty reserve, some in flight the evening before.
<b>LEMURS</b>		<b>Family Lemuridae</b>	
135	White-footed Sportive Lemur (E)	Lepilemur leucopus	Five in Berenty reserve.
136	Small-toothed Sportive Lemur (E)	Lepilemur microdon	One at Ranomafana N.P.
137	Red-tailed Sportive Lemur (E)	Lepilemur ruficaudatus	One in Zombitse N.P.
138	Golden Bamboo Lemur (E)	Haplemur aureus	Two in dense bamboo at Ranomafana.
139	Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemur (E)	Haplemur griseus	Two in Périnet N.P.
140	Greater Bamboo Lemur (E)	Prolemur simus	Three at Ranomafana N.P.
141	Ring-tailed Lemur (E)	Lemur catta	Lots at Berenty reserve; one pictured reading a Travelling Naturalist luggage label.
142	Brown Lemur (E)	Eulemur fulvus	Red-fronted at Berenty reserve; two in Ranomafana N.P. Four Grey-fronted at Périnet, two the following day .
143	Red-bellied Lemur (E)	Eulemur rubriventer	Two in Ranomafana N.P.
<b>DWARF &amp; MOUSE LEMURS</b>		<b>Family Cheirogaleidae</b>	
144	Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur (E)	Cheirogaleus crossleyi	One, possibly two at the 'Chinese Restaurant', Voice of the Forest, Périnet
145	Brown Mouse-Lemur (E)	Microcebus rufus	Three on the crowded night-walk in Ranomafana N.P.
<b>INDRI &amp; SIFAKAS</b>		<b>Family Indriidae</b>	
146	Indri	Indri indri	One male seen in Périnet N.P. but the sounds of groups 'singing' to each other was a highlight of our tour.
147	Diademed Sifaka	Propithecus diadema	A pair in Périnet N.P.
148	Verreaux's Sifaka (E)	Propithecus verreauxi	Many at Berenty reserve; one in Zombitse N.P.
149	Eastern woolly lemur (Avahi)	Avahi laniger	One with baby Périnet N.P.
<b>APES</b>		<b>Family Hominidae</b>	
150	Human	Homo sapiens	Super abundant: one of Madagascar's greatest assets and problems.

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

<b>TREE FROGS</b>		<b>Family Hylidae</b>	
151	Yellow Leaf-litter Tree Frog (E)	Boophis luteus	Ranomafana N.P.
152	Madagascar Leaf-litter Tree Frog (E)	Boophis madagascariensis	Ranomafana N.P.

<b>TORTOISES</b>		
153 Flat-tailed Tortoise	<b>Family Testudinidae</b> <i>Pyxis planicauda</i>	Mr Joseph's stone emporium (captive)
154 Radiated Tortoise (E)	<i>Geochelone radiata</i>	Berenty reserve (captive)
<b>GECKOES</b>		
155 Lineated Day Gecko (E)	<b>Family Gekkonidae</b> <i>Phelsuma lineata</i>	Ranomafana N.P.
156 Madagascar Day Gecko (E)	<i>Phelsuma</i> <i>madagascariensis grandis</i>	Common throughout.
157 Four-starred Day Gecko (E)	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>	One in Périnet N.P.
158 Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko (E)	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>	Two at Ranomafana N.P.
159 Moreau's Tropical House Gecko (E)	<i>Hemidactylus maboui</i>	Common in Ranomafana N.P.
<b>CHAMELEONS</b>		
160 Nose-horned Chameleon (E)	<b>Family Chamaeleontidae</b> <i>Calumma nasutus</i>	Ranomafana N.P.
161 Warty Chameleon (E)	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>	Ranomafana N.P.
162 Stump-tailed Chameleon (E)	<i>Brooksia sp</i>	Mantadia night walk.
163 Short-horned Chameleon (E)	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>	Périnet N.P.
164 Short-nosed chameleon (E)	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>	One seen at the entrance to Périnet N.P.
165 Parson's Chameleon (E)	<i>Calumma parsoni</i>	Ranomafana N.P.
<b>TYPICAL LIZARDS</b>		
166 Plated Lizard (E)	<b>Family Lacertidae</b> <i>Zonosaurus laticaudatus</i>	Ranomafana N.P.
<b>TYPICAL SNAKES</b>		
167 Spear-nosed snake	<b>Family Colubridae</b> <i>Langaha madagascariensis</i>	A snakes thought to be of this species hunting a skink in Ifaty spiny forest almost ran over our boots.
168 Dark un-named snake	<i>Liopholidphis sp</i>	One crossing the path in Périnet N.P.
<b>FISH</b>		
169 Small Snakehead	<i>Channa asiatica</i>	Three large specimens of this introduced Japanese species in a lake at Périnet N.P.
170 Tilapia	<i>Tilapia sp.</i>	Lots in lakes at Périnet N.P.
171 Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Lots in the lake at Vakôna Lodge.
172 Marakely (Black fish) (E)	<i>Paratilapia polleni</i>	Two in a pond at Périnet N.P.
<b>FLUTS</b>		
173 African Monarch	<i>Dananus chrysippus</i>	Common throughout.
174 Madagascar Birdwing	<i>Atrophaneura anterior</i>	Common throughout, Madagascar's largest flut.
175 Citrus Swallowtail	<i>Papilio demodocus</i>	Common throughout.
176 African white	<i>Belenois creona</i>	Common throughout.
177 Hawkmoth sp		Several species found at the Setam Lodge.
178 Comet Moth (E)	<i>Argema mitteri</i>	One at the entrance to Ranomafana.
<b>OTHER TAXA</b>		
179 Pill Millipede (E)	<i>Sphaerotherium sp.</i>	A train of green woodlice-like millipedes seven yards long seen in Périnet N.P.
180 Flatid Leaf Bugs (E)	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>	A bush full of the nymphs with their weird waxy growths was pointed out to us in the Zombitse forest.

181 Giraffe-necked Weevil (E)	Trachelophorus giraffa	Several seen this year on Dichaetanthera cordifolia leaves.
182 Firefly sp.	Lampyridae sp.	Several along the road at Périnet on our night-walks.
183 Golden Orb-web Spider	Nephila madagascariensis	A feature of many town, villages, glades and forests.

## **HEAVENLY BODIES**

The following were seen over a number of nights: Venus, Jupiter and its four moons, Gemini, the Milky Way, Crux – the Southern Cross – Butterfly Cluster, Ptolemy Cluster, Large Magellanic Cloud, Small Magellanic Cloud, Orion and the Orion Nebula and the Andromeda Galaxy.

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**Tim Earl**

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