

Madagascar

Land of the Lemurs

Thursday 25 September - Saturday 11 October, 2008

Principal leader:	Tim Earl
Local leader:	Mamy Ramarolahy
Local guides:	Mbola Manarivo (Berenty) Mosa's family: Freddie and R (Ifaty) Flaubert and Celine Randrianarolahy (Zombitse) Stephan Rafidison and Seraphin Rakotoariuanana (Ranomafana) Luke Ratsisakanana (Périnet)

Highlights

- Our first lemurs on arrival at Berenty followed by 'dancing' Verreaux's Sifakas and sunbathing Ring-tails the following morning.
- The whole Berenty experience was a delightful introduction to the fascination of Madagascar. Lemurs, birds, spiny forest, flying foxes and insects all made up the varied wonders of this extraordinary land.
- The adventure of getting to Ifaty through sand-swamped patches of dreadful road.
- Sickle-billed Vanga feeding from a Baobab fruit in Ifaty.
- Groves of the most fantastic Baobab trees in the spiny forest, Ifaty. We just had to hug some of them.
- Relaxing on the coast at Ifaty after quite a strenuous start to the holiday.
- The wonderful Zombitse Forest walk in the company of Flaubert and Celine Randrianarolahy who were such expert guides.
- Seeing the architecture, agriculture and commerce of Madagascar as we drove from Tulear in the south to Antananarivo.
- Mamy imitating dancing sifakas at Berenty.
- A Madagascar Nightjar responding to a waved handkerchief at the Nautilus Hotel.
- The carnival atmosphere after the bus became stuck in sand on the Ifaty road – playing with the children was great fun.
- Crowds of people returning from church in the village with the egret colony.
- Jim pulling his rickshaw and driver.
- Tea and the drinks party in the Cocoon Inn gardens.
- The night walk in the spiny forest at Berenty.
- Rice fields in amazing terraces which cascaded down the hillsides. How did the people get water to the top?
- Indri howling in the early morning.
- Diademed Sifakas dancing through the trees.
- The Ring-tailed Mongoose, Civet and Mouse Lemurs at Ranomafana.

This was a super visit to a fascinating island-continent. The vast range of experiences, birds, lemurs and other wildlife was extraordinary. It was a tough trip with long days in the saddle but the rewards were well worth the effort.

Some of our sightings were firsts for me and this was my sixth visit to Madagascar. Fellowship was excellent and we all benefited from the discoveries of some exceptional spotters in the group.

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

Tim Earl

DAILY DIARY

Thursday 25 September

To Paris (CDG Airport)

We all assembled at the Comfort Hotel 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 we assembled successfully eventually. Among the birds seen were Stonechat and Kestrel, a marked improvement on last year's tally. In fact, Jim Fowler, who arrived earlier than the rest of us, had built up quite a list of birds and butterflies, including Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat and Speckled Wood, around the local village. There was a party atmosphere over a good dinner as we looked forward to arriving in Madagascar.

Friday 26 September**To Antananarivo (Tana)**

Sunny 18°C in Paris, cool but clear Antananarivo 12°C

A fairly 6.45 start gave us time for breakfast, check-out and leave on time at 7.25am. We had dropped off our cases and cleared security by 9.00, and having a coffee soon after. The Air France flight took off 90 minutes late (a recurring theme with this service it seems) and we arrived after an uneventful flight at 11pm.

Immigration and baggage claim were painfully slow, as ever, but Mamy Ramarolahy was waiting for us and after changing money in the airport we arrived at the Tana Plaza Hotel at 1.00am.

Saturday 27 September**To Berenty**

Antananarivo: sunny 15°C warming to clear sun 24°C; Berenty:

Little sleep as we met at 6.45am for a reasonable breakfast and drive straight back to the airport for the 10am flight to Fort Dauphin. Birds were seen from the hotel: a couple of Madagascar Wagtails, Brown-throated Martins and egrets in the paddyfields. Bird of the day for some was a Hamerkop which fed happily as we gazed down on it from the bus. A Malagasy Pond Heron (Malagasy Squacco Heron) was interesting as its plumage was between immature and adult.

A stop was made to buy souvenirs and look up a young girl-friend of mine. She was at school and I left a few presents for her before buying up some of the increasingly improved souvenirs from her family.

We arrived at Berenty in time for a night-walk through the spiny forest.

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 top part of the Southern Cross was clear, however, as was Jupiter and its four moons.

Sunday 28 September**Berenty**

Sunny and clear, light breeze, 34C

Berenty is a magical place on a good day and our visit was exceptional. The first night-walk produced Grey and Brown Mouse Lemurs, White-footed Sportive Lemurs and a sleeping Madagascar Magpie-robin.

We were up at 5.30 and rewarded with super views of 'dancing' Verreaux's Sifakas, sunbathing Ring-tailed Lemurs (warming up in the morning rays), Barn Owl, and a pair of White-browed Owls roosting. The Sifakas were a real highlight for many in the group. Good positioning by Mbola ensured we were in the right place for views and pictures as they sprang past. The Ring-tailed lemurs were quite content warming up in the morning sunshine, arms and legs akimbo exposing the black skin of their bellies.

Warmth achieved they got up and gently started to walk towards us. We stood stock still and on they came, banded tails held erect. A slight pause to sum us up and they came through the group and on down the path behind us as if we were some slightly different species of lemur. It was a super moment. Led by Mbola we slipped gently from one highlight to the next: the White Browed Owls were straight out of a picture book, Giant Couas looked as if they had blue neon lights somehow shining from their foreheads, Greenshanks and Madagascar Bee-eaters were watched along the river and a Madagascar Sandgrouse flew overhead.

Later in the morning we returned to the owls for a second look and caught our first views of the Madagascar forms of Paradise Flycatcher (a juvenile male), White-eyes and Turtle Doves. Highlight was a visit to a roost of at least 100 Madagascar Flying Foxes, huge bats hanging from branches, some flitting from one tree to another, squeaking loudly.

A strange highlight was the discovery of two colonies of Flatid Leaf-bugs. These amazing insects 'grow' white waxy protuberances which look like feathers. When little groups cuddle together the extra bits form a mass which is similar in appearance to some fungal infections, and thus avoid detection.

The walk ended with a visit to a captive breeding programme for Radiated Tortoises (and I was later to discover, a few Spider Tortoises).

Our afternoon siesta was welcome following three days of travel but the fun was not over: we went out to the spiny forest where Mbola told us a little of the history and ecology of Berenty. We were able to see spiny trees in flower following recent rains, had poor views of Grey-headed Lovebirds, and the most endearing White-footed Sportive Lemur which seemed to be wedged into a crevice.

Moving to a different section of the forest we were taken to see three roosting Madagascar Scops Owls which looked for the world like bits of bark off the trees they were in. Our hosts were armed with spears (to prevent people from stealing their owls, we were told) so it was an obvious exchange to get pictures of me holding a spear while its owner stood next to me holding my telescope (and looking more than a little bemused). His companion gave a demonstration of using a sling which sent a medium-sized pebble far into the distance with a loud crack of the sling.

An evening walk through the gallery forest was largely unproductive although it is always special to be in deep forest after dark with the sounds of the night-shift and smells of flowers starting their night's moth-attracting.

Monday 29 September

To Ifaty

Sunny and clear, light breeze, 34C

We were up early again – this time to pack. An unfortunate power-cut the evening before put paid to stuffing suitcases. A prompt start saw us on the road at 6.45am heading for the airport. It was well timed. With just one stop, we arrived 25minutes early. That meant a wait of 2hrs 25mins until the announcement that the plane would be late stretched it to 3hrs 25mins.

A little birding around the airport was easy to fit in but the notorious sea-wind at Fort Dauphin stopped small bird activity (not to mention the heat at high-noon) and the big stuff was miles away.

Perseverance paid, however, and we did manage poor views of Zitting and Madagascar Cisticolas plus a distant Madagascar Buzzard.

The flight was uneventful arriving just 30 minutes late but a search for torches and water after a quick lunch in Tulear put us back and it was 4pm when we set off along the terrible sandy road to Ifaty. A recent sandstorm had made it almost impassable and we became stuck twice. Only good driving and the concerted help of many villagers got us through.

We saw lots of Madagascar Larks on the way down and one of the hold-ups gave time to watch White-headed Whistling Ducks, Turnstones, Sanderlings and Grey Plover roosting on a distant sand-bar. Four Curlew flew in while we were watching.

We stopped to scope waders feeding around a shallow pool and found several Curlew Sandpipers, Ringed and Kittlitz's Plovers, a Black-winged Stilt and a possible Wood Sandpiper.

Darkness was falling as we arrived at the comfortable and accommodating Nautilus Hotel where we enjoyed a delicious dinner, washed down with a few well-earned beers and accompanied by the calls of Madagascar Nightjars in the sand dunes.

Tuesday 30 September

Ifaty

Sunny and clear, light breeze, 32C on the coast, 36C in the spiny forest

What a reward for our difficult adventure yesterday. Up with the (Madagascar) Lark, we enjoyed singing Subdesert Brush Warblers and Madagascar Nightjars as the day-shift took over from the night birds. After a cuppa we set off to meet the Mosa-family representatives R and Freddie (who was just a boy when we first started coming to Madagascar) who guided us through the spiny forest.

A White-headed Vanga was first to be admired as it flitted around trees in one of the local compounds. We could compare it with Chabert's Vanga which was seen soon afterwards.

Comparisons continued with Madagascar Kestrel and Banded Kestrel which was distinctly different even in silhouette. A small flock of Common Jerys included Archbold's Newtonia but views of this tricky species were poor.

A Green-capped Coua was next to be found and admired through the scope. This was a new bird for the Madagascar tour. By now the day was warming and we were pleased to take shelter when possible. Happily this was provided by Baobab trees of all shapes and sizes.

The boys were searching for Long-tailed Ground-roller and left us in a clearing where Lafresnaye's Vanga showed quite well although it avoided all but one scoping attempt. We also had good views of several Grey-headed Lovebirds, Madagascar Coucals and Souimanga Sunbirds.

A double shout went up – Freddie had found a Subdesert Mesite while R was onto a pair of ground-rollers. We went to the latter and eventually had superb views of this extraordinary species. In appearance it looks like a colourful version of the American Road-runner.

The birds trotted off into the scrub and so did we – 15minutes of it as we followed the sound of Freddie's voice. Happily the Subdesert Mesite was still in position (their response to alarm is to freeze in a tree) and we enjoyed excellent scoped views of this extremely difficult species.

Elated, we asked if it was possible to see Sickie-billed Vanga: half way back to the bus a bird was heard squawking and we had to go back. The hike was worth doing as a bird was found using its long sickle bill to tease out the flesh of a Baobab fruit.

We were tuckered out though. Walking through sand in high temperatures takes some effort. The discovery of a Thamnornis Warbler thus involved another burst of energy, this time for a small brown-green job that hugs the floor and flits around. Most of us had reasonable views before I called a halt to the twitching extravaganza and we returned to the bus and onwards to the Nautilus for a well-earned breakfast.

A walk along the beach afterwards produced good views of Madagascar and White-fronted Plovers, Whimbrel, Sanderling and Turnstones, with just one Greenshank to keep them company. What a contrast the Arctic breeders have between their nesting temperatures and the hot tropical beaches. Not wanting to risk the bus in the sand again (until tomorrow at least) we set off in the afternoon to explore beyond Ifaty. About 20 Kittlitz's Plovers were feeding on insects in a field as we left the Nautilus.

Mamy picked up R and we drove about 10km where we disembarked and walked up a sandy track through scrub. We saw Red-tailed Vanga and heard Running Coua but little else.

Wednesday 1 October

To Isalo via the Ifaty sand-bars and mangroves, and Zombitse

Clear and sunny 34C

Our return to Tulear was with mixed feelings: apprehensive about the journey and getting stuck in sand, excited at the prospect of watching birds on the sand bars and in mangrove stands. In the end, we found few birds except waders (Common Sandpiper and Grey Heron were all we added to the tally) and the road seemed easier in this direction. As a result we were at the Tulear marsh by 9.30 and the town itself by 10.15 due to short stops to admire a Hamerkop and a Squacco Heron. A group of Buttonquails flew in front of the bus causing quite a stir.

After shopping for stamps, water and sandwiches we set off for the superb Zombitse Forest. We approached with trepidation as a large fire was burning at one end of it. The forest had caught light when one of the many grass fires we had seen had spread. Happily for us it had not affected the main part of the park which we reached with some pleasure. It was late for our picnic. Here we were guided once again by old friends park ranger Flaubert and his wife Celine.

Our main target was Appert's Greenbul, a confiding small bird which lives in the dense forest understorey. Flaubert led with confidence and great knowledge pointing out a large Oustalet's Chameleon which looked exactly like the dead branch along which it lay. A giant Coua was gently herded towards us by the couple, an unnerving sight until we noticed it continued to feed as it approached.

A Madagascar Buttonquail was the next bird found and pointed out to us – it and its many relatives had been at work scraping the leaf litter. Red-tailed Sportive Lemurs are normally nocturnal but Flaubert found one peeping out of its roost-hole.

We jumped at a loud wailing call and looked up to see a Madagascar Cuckoo-roller displaying above our heads. Imitating the call, Flaubert kept its interest up for several minutes as we muttered "oh" and "ahs" below.

A few Verreaux's Sifakas were seen distantly but we were to catch up with them again when the trail circled back towards the car park when they were watched watching us – especially the female which had a baby peering at us over her shoulder. Their leaps through the trees were breathtaking and it was a joy to see them this wild.

Appert's Greenbuls had still not been located although huge Baobabs with their resident Madagascar Day Geckos were good compensation. The 500-year-old Baobabs, *Adansonia za*, which grow in the forest, are impressive. 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.

We were only a few metres from the start when Celine heard a greenbul. Once again she and Flaubert did a little encouraging and the rare and diminutive bird approached us. It fed close by for a few seconds before flitting off into deep cover. Only recently described, this was a great find, as it is in only two small reserves on Madagascar.

It was with gratitude that we said goodbye to Flaubert and Celine. We were at the luxurious Jardin du Roy Hotel just over an hour later enjoying Madagascar Long-eared Owls and White-browed owls soon afterwards as darkness fell.

Footnote: Flaubert and Celine were homeless when we met them in 2007 as their hut had been torched the night before. They still showed that year's group the birds and animals of Zombitse National Park and we helped them by having a collection to raise funds towards the cost of a new home.

They were delighted to report this year that the small hut has been built and furnished (they lost all their possessions in the blaze) and kindly presented me with a Zombitse Forest sarong as a thank-you present.

Thursday 2 October**To Ranomafana**

Clear, sunny, 34C

A day spent travelling with little wildlife to admire although the rolling scenery and dramatic rock formations were impressive. We started with a ramble around the hotel and its neighbouring sister seeing Benson's Rock Thrushes, a couple of Madagascar Wagtails and a male Madagascar Kestrel feeding its mate a Hissing Cockroach. (I'll bet hissing was not all it was doing before meeting its end.)

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*.

Travelling northwards, it was fascinating to see Madagascar life as we drove through canyons and rolling grassy plains, villages and small cities, saw paddyfields and Zebu cattle being herded to market in towns miles away. (The long walk might explain the challenging nature of some Zebu steak.)

A pair of Madagascar Kestrels were nesting in a house opposite our morning coffee stop. 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 yomping the countryside: we wondered if they were on a midday nature walk.

The drive ended at Ranomafana where we had enough time to walk a couple of the road sections down through the reserve. We admired a vast waterfall on the River Namorona and found some dark, almost black, frogs in a roadside drain. Orchids were blooming above their damp homes adding to the romance of the frogs' courtship calls. A Blue Coua was found, several Madagascar Black Swifts seen and several Madagascar Lesser Cuckoos heard.

We were pleased to check in at the SETAM Lodge with time for a shower before a delicious Malagasy-style meal.

Friday 3 October**Ranomafana explored**

Clear, sunny 34C

This was a superb day with some exceptional birds and mammals. We started at 6am with a sunrise watch from the top chalets which produced lots of confusing song but good views of Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Mascarene Martin and Blue Vanga. Madagascar Wagtails were playing on the rooftops.

Arriving at the entrance to Ranomafana national park after breakfast we were greeted by excellent views of Madagascar Green Sunbird and a pair of Rand's warblers which was joined by a couple of Madagascar Starlings. It was an auspicious start.

Ranomafana was in terrific form: it looked pristine despite being hit by several cyclones which had knocked out the old metal bridge, was dry and we had good guides. Within a short distance a Red-bellied Lemur was spotted high in a bamboo stand. It obligingly gazed down upon us showing its white eyebrows.

A Tylas Vanga was heard and searched for during which we discovered a Velvet Asity female. The Tylas was located and it too was seen well by most. A ground-dwelling Stump-tailed Chameleon was pointed out to us just before a pair of Golden Bamboo Lemurs was located by our spotter.

These beautiful lemurs intersperse the odd bout of feeding with long periods spent digesting bamboo leaves and stems. Luckily for us the pair were feeding and gave us wonderful views bettered only by a young male which dropped down low to pose (or so it seemed) for pictures.

A small party of Spectacled Tetrakas (Greenbuls) were found feeding as we were taken to see a Short-toothed (Eastern) Sportive Lemur which was peering down from its roost hole. My scope gave wonderful views which we also enjoyed by a party of French tourists prompting several "oh la las". (I had always thought this expression to be a British invention.)

Stephan announced that Seraphin, his spotter, had found Pitta-like Ground-roller and it was with excitement we went off to see. Sure enough a pair had been found and we all enjoyed wonderful views of this common but difficult species.

There was a problem, however. A pair of Crossley's Babbler was also in the area and we were torn as to which to study. It too is a stunning species and we all had great views of both.

Eventually we arrived at the lookout high on a hill opposite the car park where a most obliging Ring-tailed Mongoose was sniffing around looking for scraps. It was a fabulous maroon colour, its coat shining in the sunlight, big ears tipped with cream.

Returning to the bus, a party of Red-fronted Brown Lemurs slowly passed in front of us (inches away from Sue), one with a baby on her back and a male which was busily marking his territory. It was as if we were invisible and a delightful end to the morning.

The afternoon walk, as always, was quieter but no less exciting. It started just below the car park when a group of Red-fronted Brown Lemurs came towards us. Like the morning's animals (on the other side of the river) this had a pair with a baby clinging to the female and one other. We were suddenly aware

of two more: One was dancing on an electricity pole while the other came towards us clinging to the power cable. Some wag said that one was a pole dancer while tight-rope walker fitted the other. Encounter over, we walked directly to the lookout stopping only to admire Nelicourvi Weaver, Forest Fody and for a breather when a Long-billed Greenbul hopped past us.

The Ring-tailed Mongoose was still investigating people at the lookout but we hardly had time to admire it when a Madagascar Civet was spotted in the bushes. Like the mongoose, this animal was looking for tidbits and seemed quite unconcerned about the presence of people.

It was soon deserted when three Brown Mouse Lemurs appeared and started jumping around the bushes, stopping occasionally to lick at banana morsels rubbed on some of the branches. They were most endearing animals and we were delighted to get such wonderful views. Our strategy of an early start for the 'nocturnal visit' had paid great dividends.

Our return to the bus was with one stop to gaze in wonder at a Green Jery.

Our first day in Ranomafana had been a great success and we returned to the lodge in high excitement.

Saturday 4 October

Rice fields and even Greater Bamboo Lemurs

Clear and sunny, refreshing breeze, 28C

A 6am start followed tea and coffee left out for us. We were driven right up the valley to rice fields on the summit where a trek to find marsh birds began. The timing was excellent with Madagascar Swamp warbler showing immediately along with Stonechat and the local wagtail.

A small flock of Madagascar Mannikins flew into a tall shrub and posed briefly before we set off again.

Most of us had passed the Greater Painted Snipe before Colin flushed it as he put down his tripod. The bird, a rather dull male, flew around us and away over several fields. It was flushed later, once by accident the other to give us one last view. In doing so we found a Three-banded Plover standing on a recently ploughed paddyfield.

Stephan and Seraphin walked across a small marsh and flushed two Madagascar Snipe which showed well before they dropped into another marshy area. They seemed larger and long-billed than our snipe. A couple of Grey Emutails were found in the same small piece of marsh (these guides really do know what they are doing) before we returned to the bus.

A stop down the road, at the start of the Sahamalaotra trail, saw us searching for Cryptic Warbler which, happily, was found singing atop a tree. This species was discovered only in 1995 and we were delighted to add it to our ever increasing list.

A Giraffe-necked Weevil attracted more attention, however, as it was probably top of the weevil request list. The extraordinary creature was much photographed.

A Madagascar Buzzard was displaying as we re-entered the forest after breakfast and a Chabert's warbler perched in a nearby tree giving excellent views. There then followed a very long walk. Passing Madagascar Brush Warbler, getting a view of a Madagascar Cuckoo (at last) and watching Ward's Flycatcher (the island's equivalent of Pied Flycatcher) we finally came to a site where the last three Greater Bamboo Lemurs were rather somnolently sitting in... bamboos. One was actually chewing on a bamboo leaf but it was rather in the manner of some old-timer in a spaghetti western chewing a wad of 'bacci. I expected the animal to spit, roll over and return to sleep at any moment. A pair of Red-tailed Vangas was seen well on the way back to the bus and a Liopholidophis snake slithered across the path after we disturbed it.

We returned to the Sahamalaotra trail after lunch where Stephan soon found us a Green Tree frog hiding in the bole of a Vakôna plant. We walked a short way looking unsuccessfully for lemurs before heading back to a spot (which seemed like any other part of the trail) where Rufous-headed Ground Rollers were suppose to breeze out into full view between 4.30 and 5.30pm.

That was the theory.

We waited from 4.50 to 5.40pm without a sniff, except the explanation that two could be heard some distance away. We were rewarded with reasonable views of Grey-crowned Greenbul, a little party of Yellow-browed Oxylobes which everyone saw, more or less. It did show that by staying on one place we can still see birds which come to us, however.

Rather disconsolately we slowly started to walk back to the bus when Stephan stopped us dead in our tracks.

"There it is," he exclaimed under his breath. We all gazed at the shadowy bird which was poking around under the foliage opposite our waiting place. It was a Rufous-headed Ground Roller, the first ever recorded on this trip (although they have been heard).

We think there were two as the sightings seemed a fair way apart. And everyone had good views of the bird(s) which did as predicted, breezing out onto the path occasionally and even eating a worm Mamy had jokingly thrown down for them an hour earlier.

With a combination of relief and delight we walked back to the bus stopping only to search for a Madagascar Harrier-hawk which was calling in trees just down the bank from the path, without luck. A

Madagascar Pratincole was calling as we reached the bus and a few of it got views in the falling light as it hawked moths around the forest.

The recording ended with a Western Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur which ran across the road as we drove back to the lodge.

Sunday 5 November**To Antsirabe**

Clear and sunny,

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 although new electricity pylons were being installed and the impact may be lost in future. We said goodbye to Stephan and Seraphin who had been so brilliant as guides and drove on up the valley.

A search for Forest Rock Thrush was frustrating as a singing bird could be heard but not enticed down to see us but we did get great views of Pollen's Vanga chomping on caterpillars and a flock of Madagascar Mannikins, our last Ranomafana birds.

We 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 – and letting me have a go. 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 and Cattle Egrets were seen in the paddy fields. A huge egret colony was admired in the middle of a village – Black-crowned Night-herons, Dimorphic and Cattle Egrets nesting in a couple of trees. Lunch was at a tourist-trap restaurant where we had a pretty poor time but an interesting half-hour was spent in central Ambositra which is famous for its woodcarving. A little souvenir shopping followed. We arrived at Antsirabe at 5pm and enjoyed a happy evening at the Cocoon Inn Guest House.

Monday 6 October**To Antananarivo**

Clear and sunny, good breeze 28C

The exclusive Travelling Naturalist 'Push-push' Club increased by seven this morning as we raced eight rickshaws down the main promenade to Antsirabe railway station and back in the traditional La Gore Grand Prix. Charmian won with Sue and me tying for second place. Everyone had a great laugh and Jim go to pull his rickshaw with the driver sitting in the back.

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. A short comfort stop was made and we were soon surrounded by the bustle of Antananarivo.

Four Black Egrets were fishing together, text-book style, forming umbrellas under which to spear their prey, as we arrived at Anosy Lake in the middle of the city. This was a great find for some and we returned to the Tana Plaza Hotel for a quick lunch followed by a visit to our favourite bureau d'change which gave us very good rates.

Our birding stop of the afternoon 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 Egrets, and a nesting colony of Black-crowned Night Herons. A few more Black Egrets were there for good measure.

Star bird for most was a Moorhen, a rare species for Madagascar, until we realised there were several. Attention then switched to Madagascar Grebe - a male I finally managed to scope was a grand find. 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.

A Madagascar Coucal was heard by most but only a few of us gained a glimpse. The same happened with a scolding Madagascar Brush Warbler.

We dropped Mamy at home and returned to the hotel to find a friend of his waiting to sell us some finest quality vanilla pods. This was to save us time later in the trip and also to ensure we bought the best quality.

An early supper was followed by a good night's sleep ready for our trip to Périnet in the morning.

Tuesday 7 October**To Périnet**

Increasingly cloudy and cool, heavy rain by lunch, drizzle in the afternoon 18C

A sharp start saw us leave the hotel at 7.30am, heading off to Périnet via the Queen's palace where Mamy gave us a brief history of the country and the building. Our first stop was at a rice paddy to watch a Madagascar Kingfisher bathing by diving into the water and flying straight back to its perch.

A stop at the River Mangoro to look for Madagascar Pratincoles was unsuccessful but we did see two more Madagascar Kingfishers. We continued to the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park where we stopped and met our brilliant guide Luke Ratsisakanana.

After checking in to the Vakôna Lodge and a delicious lunch we drove back to the Périnet entrance where Luke led a walk along the road as entrance to the park has been stopped after 4pm (a bad move by the park authorities).

This was a little disappointing, partly due to the lack of birds which could be attributed to drizzle which fell. We did see our first Madagascar Cuckooshrike and an amazing Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko which was found 10 minutes after we started looking for it – most of that time was spent admiring a cryptic, open-mouthed dead leaf.

A party of at least 10 Common Brown Lemurs was entertaining as they charged through trees next to the road.

We retired to the Chinese Restaurant for a cuppa while darkness fell and enjoyed watching a Nose-horned Chameleon and several Madagascar Nightjars which flew over on their way to hunting grounds.

Once it was dark a walk along the road failed to achieve our main objective – to see Madagascar Owls. But another Nose-horned, a Short-horned Chameleon (also known as Elephant-ear Chameleon) and several Goodman's Mouse Lemurs (split from Rufous Mouse Lemur) were ample reward for our labours.

A good but rather slow dinner was followed by an early night for most.

Wednesday 8 October

Mantadia N.P. and Périnet N.P.

Cloudy, mist and overcast, clearing to sun and clouds 19C

This was the start of a two-day lemur spectacular. We spent three-quarters of an hour watching Diademed Sifakas feeding, socialising and moving from one site to another. A baby made its first tentative but increasingly bold moves away from its mum. An Indri sat and looked down at us from its (rather lonely) perch in a tree while groups of its kind howled their territorial claims. And four Common Brown Lemurs snuggled down together on a branch with a baby's tail dangling below them.

We drove the 17km down to Mantadia national park stopping to watch birds along the way. Our first stop was for a party of Lesser Bamboo Lemurs which were extremely skittish, perhaps because local people hunt them.

Stops allowed us to reacquaint ourselves with Rand's Warblers, Stripe-throated Jery and Madagascar Cuckoo-roller.

A climb up into the forest, off-piste, brought us close to a group of Diademed Sifakas which we watched for three-quarters of an hour. They were eating the flowers of a tree above our heads and gave wonderful and enchanting views.

Moving off, they demonstrated great skills jumping from one tree to another, settling still quite close to us.

Other attractions were good views of a Dark Newtonia and a pair of Madagascar Paradise Flycatchers. The birding highlight of the day came when we stopped to watch a Pitta-like Ground Roller which gave all of us a great chance to study its wonderful plumage.

Last onto the wildlife stage was a lone Indri sitting in a tree gazing down at us with that wonderful expression which makes this animal so popular. It was yet another 'Oh la la' moment.

Other Indri were heard calling and also a group of Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs but we could not find them. Pauline and Mamy saw a Madagascar Harrier-hawk on the way back to the lodge.

Our afternoon walk was along the Périnet Road, this time in dry conditions. We enjoyed good views of Red-tailed Vanga, a female Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Green Jery and an immature Madagascar Harrier-hawk.

An after-hours trip into the Orchid Gardens failed to get the hoped-for Madagascar Ibis but we had wonderful views of a family of Common Brown Lemurs snuggling down together.

Thursday 9 October

Périnet N.P. and Mantadia N.P.

Sunny start but clouding up by the evening 20C

We entered Périnet national park early after a 6.30 departure from the lodge (Jim had already seen a White-throated Rail by this time). Luke soon located a Hook-billed Vanga and called it up expertly. Good scope views were obtained eventually and all saw the vicious-looking tip to its beak.

Another group had found a male Frances Sparrowhawk and kindly shared the experience with us before we split up leaving them to visit a nearby Indri group while we looked for more birds.

Blue Coua, Long-billed Greenbul, and an interesting Thorn Spider were observed before we took our turn to approach the Indri.

Before we could reach them a pair of Diademed Sifakas was found and we watched enchanted as they chased each other around the tress, coming onto the ground on occasions. It was like an aerial ballet performed at high speed for our delight.

Another brilliant half-hour was spent watching and listening to the Indri group as they too moved around the trees, unconcerned by our presence.

These two species were so entertaining that there was great difficulty in sorting out which was the mammal of the trip.

We eventually moved on to be shown a pair of roosting Rain-forest Scops Owls of the eastern race, more rufous than those we had seen at Berenty. They were tucked up in the leaves of a palm tree and took some finding.

Red-bellied Lemurs and a family of sleeping Woolly Lemurs were also seen well although their snoozing was not quite so entertaining.

A final highlight was a sleeping Tree Boa (on the ground, sadly) which allowed us a close approach relying on its cryptic colour.

We returned to the lodge for lunch and a snooze before setting off down the road towards Mantadia national park. Once again the bus was unable to enter due to the new closing times but we walked into the park where Luke finally taped out a Madagascar Rail after a great deal of effort. The event did nothing to endear any of us to the use of tapes to see birds.

A Purple Heron was spotted by Julie. Other unusual birds included four Red-billed Teals, a pair of Madagascar Cuckoo-rollers and a flock of Madagascar Fodys.

A drinks party before supper marked the end of a wonderful tour – tomorrow we return to Antananarivo before catching the flight to Paris just after midnight.

Friday 10 October

To Antananarivo and home

Rain early, clearing to sunny later

We did a little birding around Vakôna Lodge, enjoying close views of Madagascar Kingfisher, Mascarene Martin and Madagascar Mannikins. Feeding the fish with bread produced good views of Tilapia and Carp. We walked down the valley to visit Lemur Island, a sanctuary for orphaned lemurs and those rescued as pets.

A Short-horned Chameleon was found as we started and close views of Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Nelicourvi Weaver and Ward's Flycatcher were enjoyed. A White-throated Rail I flushed shot off before anyone else saw it.

The island visit was surprisingly successful. We enjoyed close encounters with several species of lemur and the photographers managed to get some pictures of them in a natural setting – useful for slide shows and presentations.

The journey to Antananarivo was uneventful with a picnic lunch and no Madagascar Pratincoles at the River Mangoro.

We checked in to the Relais des Plateaux Hotel close to the airport for a few hours rest and final dinner before leaving for home.

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES

Bird of the trip was Pitta-like Ground Roller – Hamerkop, Long-tailed Ground Roller and Green Sunbird were second equal.

Mammal of the trip was Indri with Mouse Lemur second and Diademed Sifaka third.

(E) = Endemic to Madagascar

(BE) = breeding endemic

BIRDS

	GUINEAFOWL	Family Numididae	
1	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	Groups of this introduced species seen twice.
	WILDFOWL	Family Anatidae	
2	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	About 60 roosting on a sand-bar near Ifaty; hundreds at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
3	Knob-billed Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Several at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
4	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	Scores at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
	GREBES	Family Podicipedidae	
5	Madagascar Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>	A pair at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
	HERONS, BITTERNs	Family Ardeidae	
6	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Several in a mixed colony on the way to Antsirabe; many pairs around Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
7	Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	A few seen throughout the trip.
8	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Two seen in the marsh outside Tulier; scores nesting at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
9	Malagasy Pond Heron (E)	<i>Ardeola idae</i>	One seen on the way to Berenty; several pairs nesting at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
10	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Common, seen almost daily; many in a mixed colony on the way to Antsirabe; hundreds nesting at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
11	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Two on the way from Ifaty to Tulier.
12	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	One on our last Mantadia walk.
13	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	Common in paddyfields .
14	Black Heron	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	Four fishing under their own parasols at Anosy Lake, several breeding at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
15	Dimorphic Egret	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	Common in paddyfields; many in a mixed colony on the way to Antsirabe; lots breeding at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.

	HAMERKOP	Family Scopidae	
16	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Quite common on the paddyfields.
	FALCONS	Family Falconidae	
17	Malagasy Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
18	Banded Kestrel	<i>Falco zoniventris</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
	KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES	Family Accipitridae	
19	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
20	Madagascar Harrier-Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>	One heard calling along the Sahamalaotra trail; adult seen in Mantadia N.P., immature in Périnet N.P.
21	Frances's Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter francesii</i>	Female at Berenty; male perched in Périnet N.P.
22	Henst's Goshawk	<i>Accipiter henstii</i>	One flew up the valley at Ranomafana; one heard in Périnet N.P.
23	Madagascar Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	MESITES	Family Mesitornithidae	
24	Subdesert Mesite	<i>Monias benschi</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
	FLUFFTAILS, RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS		Family Rallidae
25	Madagascar Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>	One taped out in Périnet N.P.
26	Madagascar Rail	<i>Rallus madagascariensis</i>	One derailed by a tape on our walk at Mantadia N.P.
27	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>	One at the Vakona Lodge, Périnet N.P.
28	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Five at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
	BUTTONQUAIL	Family Turnicidae	
29	Madagascar Buttonquail	<i>Turnix nigricollis</i>	Three on the Ifaty road; one in Zombitse Forest.
	STILTS, AVOCETS	Family Recurvirostridae	
30	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	One in a pool near Ifaty.
	PLOVERS	Family Charadriidae	
31	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	One roosting on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
32	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Several around a small pool near Ifaty.
33	Madagascar Plover (E)	<i>Charadrius thoracicus</i>	Two on the beach at Ifaty.
34	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>	Several around a small pool near Ifaty.
35	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	One at the paddyfields, Ranomafana.
36	White-fronted Plover (E)	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>	Two on the beach at Ifaty.
	PAINTED SNIPES	Family Rostratulidae	
37	Greater Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	A male seen in the Ranomafana rice fields.
	SANDPIPERS, SNIPES	Family Scolopacidae	
38	Madagascar Snipe (E)	<i>Gallinago macrodactyla</i>	Two seen in the Ranomafana rice fields.
39	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	One on the coast at Ifaty.
40	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Ten or more seen on the beach at Ifaty.
41	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Four roosting on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
42	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Several in the river at Berenty; one at a pool near Ifaty.
43	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common, seen on most rivers.
44	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Several roosting on a sand-bar near Ifaty.

45	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Several roosting on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
46	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Several around a small pool near Ifaty.
COURSERS & PRATINCOLES			Family Glareolidae
47	Madagascar Pratincole (BE)	<i>Glareola ocularis</i>	One at the end of the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
SANDGROUSE			Family Pteroclididae
48	Madagascar Sandgrouse (E)	<i>Pterocles personatus</i>	One overhead at Berenty.
PIGEONS & DOVES			Family Columbidae
49	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
50	Malagasy Turtle Dove (E)	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>	A few at Berenty.
51	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
52	Madagascar Green Pigeon (E)	<i>Treron australis</i>	One in Zombitse Forest.
53	Madagascar Blue Pigeon (E)	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>	One from the cabins at Ranomafana, two seen beautifully in Mantadia N.P.
COCKATOOS & PARROTS			Family Psittacidae
54	Grey-headed Lovebird (E)	<i>Agapornis canus</i>	Two briefly at Berenty; two pairs or more at Ifaty.
55	Greater Vasa Parrot (E)	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>	One in Zombitse Forest; two in Mantadia N.P.
56	Lesser Vasa Parrot (E)	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
CUCKOOS			Family Cuculidae
57	Malagasy Coucal (E)	<i>Centropus toulou</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
58	Crested Coua (E)	<i>Coua cristata</i>	Several at Berenty.
59	Verreaux's Coua (E)	<i>Coua verreauxi</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
60	Blue Coua (E)	<i>Coua caerulea</i>	One seen, lots heard at Ranomafana.
61	Green-capped Coua (E)	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>	One seen at Ifaty was a new bird for this tour.
62	Running Coua (E)	<i>Coua cursor</i>	Heard outside Ifaty.
63	Giant Coua (E)	<i>Coua gigas</i>	A pair at Berenty, one in Zombitse Forest.
64	Madagascar Cuckoo (BE)	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>	Many heard but finally a male seen in Ranomafana.
BARN OWLS			Family Tytonidae
65	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	One seen at night, one roosting at Berenty.
OWLS			Family Strigidae
66	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>	Heard and three of the western race seen roosting at Berenty; two of the eastern race seen at Périnet N.P.
67	White-browed Hawk-Owl	<i>Ninox supercilialis</i>	Heard and two seen roosting at Berenty.
68	Madagascar Owl	<i>Asio madagascariensis</i>	Heard and seen at Le Jardin de la Roy.
NIGHTJARS			Family Caprimulgidae
69	Madagascar Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>	Heard and seen at Berenty, the Nautilus, Ifaty, Périnet and was our last bird calling as we left for the airport.
SWIFTS			Family Apodidae
70	Madagascar Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>	Seen at Antananarivo, Berenty.
71	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	A few daily after Ifaty.
72	Malagasy Black Swift	<i>Apus balstoni</i>	Several on our arrival at Ranomafana.
GROUND ROLLERS			Family Brachypteraciidae
73	Pitta-like Ground Roller	<i>Atelornis pittoides</i>	A pair in the forest at Ranomafana.

74	Rufous-headed Ground Roller	<i>Atelornis crossleyi</i>	One, possibly two, on the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
75	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>	A pair seen at Ifaty.
	CUCKOO ROLLER family	Family Leptosomatidae	
76	Cuckoo Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>	One displaying spectacularly in Zombitse Forest; one at Ranomafana.
	KINGFISHERS	Family Alcedinidae	
77	Malagasy Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo vintsioides</i>	One from the bus on our way back to Fort Dauphin; several on the trip down to Périnet N.P.
	BEE-EATERS	Family Meropidae	
78	Olive Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	HOOPOES	Family Upupidae	
79	Madagascar Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>	Common in the south, heard and seen at Berenty and Ifaty spiny forest.
	ASITIES	Family Philepittidae	
80	Velvet Asity	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>	A female in the forest at Ranomafana.
	VANGAS	Family Vangidae	
81	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>	A pair seen outside Ifaty; a pair in Ranomafana.
82	Hook-billed Vanga	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>	One heard at Ifaty; one seen at Périnet N.P.
83	Lafresnaye's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
84	Pollen's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris polleni</i>	One as we were leaving Ranomafana.
85	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falcolea palliata</i>	One seen feeding from a baobab fruit at Ifaty.
86	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
87	Chabert's Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
88	Blue Vanga	<i>Cyanolanius madagascarinus</i>	Three from the cabins at Ranomafana.
89	Dark Newtonia	<i>Newtonia amphichroa</i>	One in Mantadia N.P.
90	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
91	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>	Two seen at Ifaty.
92	Ward's Flycatcher	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>	A male seen in Ranomafana; one at the Vakona Lodge and one close to Lemur Island.
93	Crossley's Babbler	<i>Mystacornis crossleyi</i>	A pair in the forest at Ranomafana.
	CUCKOOSHRIKES	Family Campephagidae	
94	Madagascar Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>	One seen rather badly in Périnet N.P.
95	Tylas	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>	One singing at Ranomafana.
	DRONGOS	Family Dicruridae	
96	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	MONARCH FLYCATCHERS	Family Monarchidae	
97	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	CROWS, JAYS	Family Corvidae	
98	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	SWALLOWS, MARTINS	Family Hirundinidae	
99	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	Common, at Ranomafana; over Anosy Lake, Antananarivo.
100	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	LARKS	Family Alaudidae	
101	Madagascar Lark	<i>Mirafra hova</i>	One or two on the road to Berenty, common on the Ifaty road.

	CISTICOLAS & ALLIES	Family Cisticolidae	
102	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	One at Fort Dauphin airfield; one on the Ifaty road. Heard at Berenty.
103	Madagascar Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>	
	FAMILY UNCERTAIN	Family	
104	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
105	Green Jery	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>	One in Ranomafana.
106	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>	One heard and seen singing on the road to Berenty.
	BULBULS	Family Pycnonotidae	
107	Malagasy Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	OLD WORLD WARBLERS	Family Sylviidae	
108	Grey Emutail	<i>Amphilais seebohmi</i>	Two seen in the Ranomafana rice fields.
109	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>	Several seen in Ranomafana.
110	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>	Common at Ifaty.
111	Madagascar Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>	Two or three seen in the Ranomafana rice fields.
112	Long-billed Bernieria	<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>	One in Ranomafana.
113	Cryptic Warbler	<i>Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi</i>	A male seen near the Ranomafana rice fields.
114	Thamnornis	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>	One at Ifaty in the spiny forest.
115	Spectacled Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis zosterops</i>	Common in the rainforests.
116	Appert's Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis apperti</i>	One in Zombitse Forest.
117	Grey-crowned Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis cinereiceps</i>	One on the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
118	Yellow-browed oxylabes	<i>Crossleyia xanthophrys</i>	A feeding party on the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
119	Rand's Warbler	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>	Two at the entrance to Ranomafana.
	WHITE-EYES	Family Zosteropidae	
120	Madagascar White-eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	STARLINGS	Family Sturnidae	
121	Madagascar Starling	<i>Saroglossa aurata</i>	A pair at the entrance to Ranomafana.
122	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	CHATS, OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS	Family Muscipidae	
123	Madagascar Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus albospecularis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
124	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola axillaris</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
125	Forest Rock Thrush	<i>Pseudocossyphus sharpei</i>	One heard as we left Ranomafana.
126	Benson's Rock Thrush	<i>Pseudocossyphus bensoni</i>	A male and a female at La Jardin de Roy Hotel.
	SUNBIRDS	Family Nectariniidae	
127	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris souimanga</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
128	Malagasy Green Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris notatus</i>	Less common, but seen almost daily.
	WEAVERS, WIDOWBIRDS	Family Ploceidae	
129	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>	A nest and one female in Ranomafana forest.
130	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>	Nests seen hanging from a Baobab tree on the road to Berenty; a colony at the Nautilus, Ifaty.
131	Red Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	Several at the lunch stop in Tulear.
132	Forest Fody	<i>Foudia omissa</i>	A female in Ranomafana.
	WAXBILLS, MUNIAS & ALLIES	Family Estrildidae	
133	Madagascar Mannikin	<i>Lemuresthes nana</i>	A flock of four in the Ranomafana rice fields.

	WAGTAILS & PIPITS	Family Motacillidae	
134	Madagascar Wagtail	Motacilla flaviventris	Common, seen almost daily.
		MAMMALS	
	MICE & RATS	Family Muridae	
1	Brown Rat	Rattus norvegicus	One seen near the Queen's Palace, Antananarivo, leader only.
	GENETS & CIVETS	Family Viverridae	
2	Fanaloka (Malagasy Civet)	Fossa fossana	One in Ranomafana.
	MONGOOSSES	Family Herpestidae	
3	Ring-tailed Mongoose	Galidia elegans	One at the look-out in Ranomafana forest.
	OLD WORLD FRUIT BATS	Family Pteropodidae	
4	Madagascar Flying Fox	Pteropus rufus	A large colony at Berenty.
	SHEATH-TAILED BATS	Family Emballonuridae	
5	Mauritian Tomb Bat	Taphozous mauritanus	One over the dunes at Ifaty.
	LEMURS	Family Lemuridae	
6	White-footed Sportive Lemur	Lepilemur leucopus	Three on the night-walk, one roosting, Berenty.
7	Small-toothed Sportive Lemur	Lepilemur microdon	One roosting in the forest at Ranomafana.
8	Red-tailed Sportive Lemur	Lepilemur ruficaudatus	Three seen well in Zombitse Forest.
9	Golden Bamboo Lemur	Hapalemur aureus	A pair in thick bamboo at Ranomafana.
10	Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemur	Hapalemur griseus	Three seen in Mantadia N.P.
11	Greater Bamboo Lemur	Prolemur simus	Three females seen, the rarest lemurs in Ranomafana.
12	Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur	Varecia variegata	A howling group heard in Mantadia N.P.
13	Ring-tailed Lemur	Lemur catta	Common at Berenty.
14	Common Brown Lemur	Eulemur fulvus	Common at Berenty; three in Zombitse Forest; a group of three with a baby in Ranomafana.
15	Red-bellied Lemur	Eulemur rubriventer	One in the forest at Ranomafana; two in Périnet N.P.
16	Red-fronted Lemur	Eulemur rufifrons	Several seen at Berenty, Zombitse and Ranomafana.
	DWARF & MOUSE LEMURS	Family Cheirogaleidae	
17	Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur	Cheirogaleus crossleyi	The eyes of one seen on the night-walk at Périnet N.P.
18	Western Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur	Cheirogaleus medius	One ran across the road in Ranomafana.
19	Grey Mouse Lemur	Microcebus murinus	Three seen on a night-walk at Berenty.
20	Brown Mouse Lemur	Microcebus rufus	One seen on a night-walk at Berenty.
21	Goodman's Mouse Lemur	Microcebus lehilahytsara	Three seen on the night-walk at Périnet N.P.
	INDRI & SIFAKAS	Family Indriidae	
22	Indri	Indri indri	One seen in Mantadia N.P.; two groups watched for some time in Périnet N.P.
23	Diademed Sifaka	Propithecus diadema	A family group watched for 45mins in Mantadia N.P.; two individuals performed an aerial ballet for us in Périnet N.P.

24	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>	Seen 'dancing' on several occasions at Berenty, a 'wild' family group in Zombitse Forest.
25	Eastern Woolly Lemur (Avahi)	<i>Avahi laniger</i>	Two or three with a baby in Périnet N.P.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

TREE FROGS		Family Hylidae	
1	Green Tree Frog	<i>Boophis viridis</i>	One on the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
2	Madagascar Leaf-litter Tree Frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>	Several in a ditch at the road-side in Ranomafana .
TORTOISES		Family Testudinidae	
3	Spider Tortoise	<i>Testudo marginata</i>	A few in a captive breeding programme at Berenty.
4	Radiated Tortoise	<i>Geochelone radiata</i>	Lots in a captive breeding programme at Berenty.
GECKOES		Family Gekkonidae	
5	Madagascar Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma madagascariensis grandis</i>	Common throughout.
6	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>	One in Périnet N.P.
CHAMELEONS		Family Chamaeleontidae	
7	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasutus</i>	Two seen in Périnet N.P.
8	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>	Two large specimens in Zombitse Forest.
9	Warty Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>	Three on a night walk at Berenty, one the next day in the spiny forest.
10	Stump-tailed Chameleon	<i>Brooksia</i> sp	Two in the forest at Ranomafana.
11	Short-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma brevicornis</i>	One (aka Elephant-eared) on our night-walk in Périnet N.P.
TYPICAL LIZARDS		Family Lacertidae	
12	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Chaladron madagascariensis</i>	One at Berenty; several at Ifaty.
BOAS		Family Boidae	
13	Madagascar Tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>	One seen coiled asleep at Périnet N.P.
TYPICAL SNAKES		Family Colubridae	
14	Dark un-named snake	<i>Liopholidophis</i> sp	One in Ranomafana.
15	Malagasy Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i>	One at Berenty.

FLUTS

SWALLOWTAILS		Family Papilionidae	
1	Madagascar Citrus Swallowtail	<i>Papilio demooocus</i>	Common.
2	Madagascar Birdwing	<i>Atrophaneura anterior</i>	One at the lunch stop in Tulear; common at the Nautilus and along the Ifaty road.

FISH

1	Tilapia	<i>Tilapia</i> sp.	Seen in several pools, fry in the Orchid Garden pond.
2	Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Lots including some large mirror carp in the lake at Vakona Lodge.

OTHER TAXA

1	Huntsman Spider sp		One in a room at Berenty.
2	Madagascar Orbweb Spider	<i>Nephilia madagascariensis</i>	Common in Berenty.
3	Madagascar Thorn Spider sp	family Gasteracanthinae	One in Périnet N.P.
4	Flatid Leaf-bug	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>	A colonies at Berenty and in the Zombitse forest.
5	Giraffe-necked Weevil	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>	One near the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana.
6	Jewel Beetle	family Buprestidae	One in Ranomafana looked like a Firefly but is named after the glowing underside.
7	Madagascar Hissing Cockroach	<i>Gromphadorrhina</i> sp	One moribund, another being fed by a male Madagascar Kestrel to its mate, Isalo.

HEAVENLY BODIES

1	Orion: Rigel, Betelgeuse, the Orion Nebula	On arrival at Antananarivo.
2	Jupiter with Io, Europa, Callisto and Ganymede	Seen at Berenty.
3	Mars	Seen at Berenty.
4	Venus, the evening star	Seen at Berenty.
5	Crux, the Southern Cross	Seen at Berenty.
6	Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, in Canui Major.	On arrival at Antananarivo.

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