

# Madagascar

**Thursday 23 September - Saturday 9 October 2010**

## **Leaders:**

Principal leader: Tim Earl

Local leader: Mamy Randriamanantena

Local guides: Olivier Rahanitriniaina (Berenty)

Mosa's family: Jean-Marie and Relax (Ifaty)

Lucien and Zafy (Zombitse)

Stephan Rafidison and Seraphin Rakotoariuanana (Ranomafana)

John Andriamamony (Périnet)

## **Highlights**

- Black Egrets fishing under their own umbrellas.
- Using two zebu carts to go birding – and the leader's face when he realised they were not 4x4's.
- Five Sifakas dancing in front of the cabin as guests opened their door; and another troop dancing down the road towards us.
- The Great Coua with its neon eye-patches at Berenty.
- Lemurs sunning on a branch – the female pushed off leaving her mate looking surprised. Ringtailed Lemurs being chased by the leader after stealing breakfast.
- Several White-browed Owls seen well on a night walk in Berenty.
- Vast zebu herds crossing the mountains.
- The funerals we saw – people dancing, running and singing as the shrouded body was carried along.
- A Red-footed Sportiv Lemur looking out from a roost hole.
- A stunning Blue Coua seen through a 'window' in the rainforest canopy.
- Extraordinary Giraffe Weevils and their 'rolled-carpet' nest.
- The tiny Painted Frog – a really smart animal on a par with Birdwing Butterflies and a 'weatherforecasting' chameleon.
- Madagascar Plovers with balls-of-fluff chicks.
- The amazing valley at Ranomafana with its gushing torrent river which contrasted with the dry spiny forest.
- Wild orchids growing in all the rainforests.
- The incredible rock formations at Isalo.
- The push-push Grand Prix.
- Unbelievable camouflage used by a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko and the two Collared Nightjars which rendered them invisible.
- Lemur Island at Périnet with its friendly occupants which posed for photographs.
- Hearing the haunting calls and later seeing a family of Indri.
- The walks (and route-march) in several jungles.
- Parsons Chameleons each more than 18 inches long.

This was an outstanding tour with a great group who enjoyed Madagascar, its birds, lemurs and other life-forms, the countryside, travelling and each other's company. For the record, we saw 83 endemic species of birds, 16 endemic mammals of which 15 were lemurs, 14 endemic reptiles and amphibians, and 16 species with madagascariensis in their scientific names, quite a haul! This was my fifth group taken to Madagascar and one of the best for results, companionship and fun. I hope that everyone enjoyed it and that I will meet some of you again when we put on 'Madagascar for Addicts' in the near future.

## **DAILY DIARY**

### **Saturday 23 September**

#### **To Paris (CDC airport)**

It was a happy group who met either at Heathrow or the Ibis Hotel at Charles de Gaulle airport, Paris. We had arrived from the Channel Islands, mainland UK and Brussels, to enjoy our first dinner together in an anticipatory mood for Madagascar tomorrow.

### **Friday 24 September**

#### **To Antananarivo, Madagascar**

7am Back into the vast, idiosyncratic, (hated by some) airport for our 10:35am flight, delayed as usual by 45min – actually an improvement on last year. The uneventful flight produce good food but also a particularly noisy child which cried for 10 hours.

Immigration and baggage reclaim was slower than ever as the Boeing 777 aircraft was packed. The job got done and after meeting Mamy we bought Malagasy currency and drove to the Royal Palisandre Hotel arriving at 1am. Check-in was efficient and we retired to bed grateful for a free morning ahead.

### **Saturday 25 September**

#### **Tana, Tsarasaotra and Fort Dauphin**

##### **Weather: Sunny, clear and warm 23°C**

What a gentle start to our Madagascar adventure – we met over breakfast and spent the morning on foot in Tana. Our aim was Lake Anousy which we reached after seeing a wedding or two, walking through a colourful street market and braving wild traffic. The reward was to watch several Black Egrets forming ‘umbrellas’ with their wings and jabbing fish attracted to the shade. Cunning. A few Great Egrets were seen and one of a small flock of Madagascar White-eyes.

We were accompanied by Brown-throated Martins over a delicious lunch on the hotel terrace. Even the zebu stakes were tender.

Mamy joined us at 1:30pm and we left for the Tsarasaotra reserve which had an immediate ‘wow’ factor – the lake was packed with ducks while its island and surrounding trees held egret colonies.

Dimorphic, Black and Great Egrets, Squacco Herons and Black-crowned Night-herons were all present. The ducks included hundreds of Red-billed Teal and White-faced Whistling-ducks. Gradually we teased out the less common Knob-billed Ducks and a few pretty, blue-billed Hottentot Teal, the first we had ever seen on this tour.

Walking around the lake revealed poor views (for some) of Madagascar Coucal. A bathing Malagasy Brush-Warbler was more cooperative and a rare (for Madagascar) Moorhen even more so.

The ducks flushed several times, possibly due to Yellow-billed Kites which passed over. Our visit ended with three goodies – Madagascar Kingfisher, Madagascar Little Grebe, and a lone Madagascar Pond Heron – what a great afternoon! The afternoon finished with a trip to the airport, flight down to Fort Dauphin and a good meal in the Dolphin Hotel.

### **Sunday 26 September**

#### **To Berenty and our first lemurs**

##### **Weather: Sunny, clear and hot 30°C**

The road to Berenty gets worse annually which is great for us. It is impossible to travel at speed and we are thus able to take in the sights, sounds and wildlife of the areas through which we pass.

Our guide Olivier Rahanitriniaina had come to Fort Dauphin to meet us and we stopped to admire weird-looking Hamerkops in paddyfields and a Stripe-throated Jery singing high in a tall eucalyptus.

We stopped to buy water, tiny sweet bananas and hand-crafted souvenirs from a roadside stall next to a vast baobab tree. In passing we saw Dark Newtonia, Madagascar Bee-eater and Crested Drongo. And a comfort stop gave great views of a Golden-orb Spider in her amazingly strong web.

People were going about their daily lives, or deaths in one case when we overtook a vast funeral procession. In Madagascar the dead are buried secretly in woodland while their lives are marked elsewhere by great white monuments. The funeral processions are accompanied by scores of people running and dancing in the roads as they carry the deceased to his or her final resting place.

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 crossed the mighty River Mandrare, reduced to a trickle due to the lack of rain, in which people were bathing – themselves and their zebu cattle, washing clothes and collecting drinking water!

On arrival at Berenty we had lunch followed by a siesta to prepare us for a fantastic walk through the gallery forest with Olivier pointing out animals, birds and insects from the first to last moment.

A Lesser Vasa Parrot posed for the group but our attention was drawn to a mixed troop of Brown and Red-fronted Lemurs which were passing through. Colourful Madagascar Paradise Flycatchers were next up followed by extraordinary Flatid Leaf-bugs waiting in the wings to be admired.

But it was our introduction to lemurs which was outstanding. Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas had been seen around the camp, while some of us were woken from our siestas by Brown and Red-fronted Lemurs landing on our roofs. Olivier could see sleeping nocturnal lemurs as if they were wearing Day-glo orange coats! He pointed out several White-fronted Sportiv Lemurs which were sleeping deep in tangled vines.

We stopped to watch a baby Verreaux's Sifaka making short but challenging leaps away from its mother as other members of the troop looked on. Suddenly their mood changed and the animals started to move off. Another troop has come up and a territorial dispute took place. Animals leaped from tree to bush to vine chasing each other for some time. We were told that on occasions they come to blows and even kill members of competing troops, such is the law of the lemur jungle.

We moved off to the riverbed looking for Madagascar Sandgrouse without success although a Greenshank was found.

On our way back to the camp Olivier heard the twin note call of Madagascar Scops Owl and found a pair roosting in thick vines – a difficult bird to find at any time. Owls continued to entertain with several pairs of White-browed seen during the evening.

We drove to the entrance gate at 6:30pm by which time Jupiter and its moons, Venus and the Southern Cross could be seen. Scorpio was also visible and by the time we returned from our night walk the Milky Way was like a great storm cloud across the sky. Peering out from inside the great Polo-mint of our galaxy we could make out the Large Magellanic Cloud, one of the closest galaxies to our own at 180,000 light years away! Magellan used the LMC to navigate his way around the southern seas in 1509.

The walk was fascinating. We saw eight each of White-footed Sportiv Lemurs and Grey Mouse-lemur, a fantastic number of animals in just one hour. A Madagascar Scops Owl was watched in torchlight as it sang its double hoot love song. We agreed over dinner (zebu again) that this had been a most interesting and wonderful day.

## **Monday 27 September**

### **Berenty explored**

#### **Weather: Sunny, clear and very hot 36°C**

Getting up at 5am is not easy but the rewards were plentiful. We had coffee or tea before setting off to watch Berenty's day-shift animals and birds. (Our rustic cabins had made noisy night birds and animals seem as if they were inside living with us.) Highlights included seeing Verreaux's Sifakas sunning their black bellies to warm up in the early morning rays.

We had good views of Hook-billed and White-headed Vangas, lots of Grey-headed Lovebirds, plus both white- and red-tailed phases of Madagascar Paradise Flycatchers. A Francis's Sparrowhawk, the first of three, was much admired as were a few Common Newtonias.

An extremely rare Black Kite was found perched on the dead snag giving us excellent views of its black (not yellow) bill. We ended in a clearing overlooking the river where a pair of distant Madagascar Sandgrouse were seen flying. Here we had good looks at Madagascar Turtle-dove, a super Madagascar Hoopoe and a couple of diminutive Madagascar Kestrels (from every possible angle except above). Our breakfast was an up-and-down event as we were forced to chase off (several times) persistent, begging Ring-tailed Lemurs - good photographic subjects but not to be encouraged as table guests. Our amble through the forest afterwards was quieter. Even at 9:30am the heat was rising. Another roosting White-browed Owl was admired before we quietly slipped into dense cover which brought us to a colony of roosting Madagascar Fruit Bats. One or two moved perch showing their huge wingspan. Babies were seen clinging to and suckling from their mums. More Lovebirds were seen near a captive breeding enclosure for Radiated Tortoises as was a Sakalaver Weaver and two nests. The museum proved interesting for most folk. I remained outside and found a few Alpine Swifts which was seen by one or two of the group My siesta was a two-hour snooze as the temperature was so high even note-writing was impossible. We met at 4pm to look for Madagascar Sandgrouse which were seen immediately in flight by Olivier and watched by us all. How he saw them drop into a field near the airstrip we will never know but his amazing reputation was further enhanced. A walk-through the spiny forest we visited last evening was delightful and fascinating – the habitat is so different from all others worldwide and the ambience was delightful. Our day in Berenty was bountiful and it was a happy group who celebrated during the evening.

## **Tuesday 28 September**

### **Berenty early and then to Fort Dauphin and Tulier via Tana**

**Weather: Overcast, sunny later, breeze 30°C**

Another early rise saw us exploring the gallery forest close to Berenty's museum – a good start to an otherwise wildlife-free day as we travelled to Tulier.

Verreaux's Sifakas were sunning themselves and eating the flowers of their roost-tree. Ring-tailed Lemurs were doing the same, the first time I had seen this species warming up in the sun.

At last a Madagascar Coucal posed for us giving good views, as did a Souimanga Sunbird which was feeding happily with Common Jerys and a Sakalaver Weaver.

Olivier ripped bark of every dead tree he saw until a couple of Hissing Cockroaches were found. Sadly the Madagascar endemic insects failed to live up to their name remaining silent.

We had great views of another Black Kite and a male Francis's Sparrowhawk we were admiring was joined by his mate, an unusual occurrence. The walk ended at the captive-tortoise breeding site where both Radiated and Spider Tortoises were admired.

Leaving Berenty on time we endured rather than enjoyed the drive to Fort Dauphin. Our comfort stop was uneventful, except for one Ring-tailed Lemur and her baby which were spotted.

This year's flight to Tulier was via Tana, a rather inconvenient departure from our usual itinerary which had resulted in just one night at Ifaty. The arrangement went like clockwork, however, and we arrived at our Tulier hotel at 7pm complete with luggage.

## **Wednesday 29 September**

### **La Table, Ifaty Road and the spiny forest**

**Weather: Sunny, hot and breezy 34°C**

We were getting used to early starts and those that wanted met at 5am for breakfast followed by a trip to La Table to the south of Tulier. Here we walked through dense Euphorbia brush while Relax and Jean-Marie called the monotonous song of Red-shouldered Vanga. They were eventually answered and we followed the calls to find a shy male which put in an appearance before flitting off.

Madagascar Black Swift, Souimanga Sunbird, common Newtonia and Madagascar Bee-eater were seen as we searched. A pair of Madagascar Larks was spotted on the way back to the bus.

Taking Jean-Marie and Relax with us, we returned to the Hotel Victory for comfort and coffee before setting out on the slightly improved Ifaty Road. Stops were made to watch Kittlitz's Plovers, a couple of Madagascar Kingfishers, a Wood Sandpiper and a fly-past of four Curlew Sandpipers.

Stopping to look at the vast sandbar near the Hotel Nautilus we saw Grey Heron, Curlew, plus lots of Whimbrels and Greenshanks roosting near the water, White-faced Whistling Ducks and Sanderlings. Grey Plovers were also plentiful and we ended with distant views of roosting Common and Lesser Crested Terns.

Our last stops were to admire Three-banded and Madagascar Plover, a great find. There were two pairs of these rare waders and while watching the second two newly-hatched chicks appeared. They were enchanting.

A delicious lunch preceded a shorter than usual siesta after which we drove to Mr Mossa's spiny forest. It was with sadness that we noted further encroachment of human habitation in the 'Baobab Reserve'. Areas were being cleared for further housing. It did not diminish the success of our visit, however, with a Madagascar Buttonquail (we kept quiet about four seen on the way down) noted almost immediately. This was followed soon afterwards by a great view of Madagascar's answer to the Road-runner (beepbeep), a Long-tailed Ground-roller. This charismatic species is one of the highlights of our visit to Ifaty and I for one was thrilled. Seeing several Chabert's Vangas, Archbold's Newtonia and brilliant views of a Running Coua (sitting in a tree, actually) were a bonus.

The object of our search had been Banded Kestrel but there was no sign until we left the forest and saw one perched distantly. We closed the gap and had great views before it swooped and snatched a Cockroach from the ground. Jean-Marie found another 'roach, flicked it onto the path and, blow-me, the bird snatched and ate that one too. A Madagascar Nightjar was seen as we parked the bus, a splendid end to our day's activities.

## **Thursday 30 September**

### **Spiny forest, Zombitse Forest and on to Isalo**

#### **Weather: Sunny, some cloud and a breeze 32°C**

Using zebu carts as transport to go birding was a novel and quite relaxing experience. I had promised 'two 4x4's' which would take us into the spiny forest having misunderstood Mamy's suggestion to beat a long trudge through the soft red sand. Instead, two carts drawn by oxen were waiting.

We had a good time in the forest too – Running Coua was first up, this time on the ground unlike yesterday's. It was the Vanga family that stole the show, however. Chabert's was followed by Lafresney's before a whole flock of noisy Sickle-billed Vangas appeared. A Red-tailed Vanga was the last bird seen in the forest but three Blue Vangas appeared in the Nautilus Hotel car park to bid us farewell.

A Green-capped Coua demonstrated the difference between it and a Running Coua – no red eye-spot, plain grey cheeks and neck, and a much chunkier size and shape.

The zebu carts returned us to our bus and off we went to Tulier via the Nautilus Hotel for breakfast.

The journey down Madagascar's second worst road was slow but fine – we saw several plovers, a Black-winged Stilt and suddenly, over a marsh, a stunning black and white male Madagascar Harrier put in an exciting appearance.

We passed La Table and after leaving Tulier with a (rather poor) picnic lunch made good time reaching Zombitsie Forest. A Madagascar Buzzard was seen while eating the picnic and three noisy Madagascar Cuckoo-rollers flew over our heads calling wildly, an exciting start to the visit.

Guides in each reserve are expert specialists – within a few minutes of starting our walk Lucienne and Zafa changed direction to follow calls they had heard which led us straight to a small flock of Appert's Greenbuls. We watched these charismatic birds picking around in the leaf-litter but gradually the flock moved away.

The guides were onto our next treat almost immediately as we watched a Coquerel's Coua skulking in dense undergrowth. We had now seen 70% of the world's Coua species!

Red-footed (Red-tailed) Sportiv Lemur, a brilliant Sportiv Green Day-gecko, timid Verreaux's Sifakas and many wonderful trees including 600-year-old Baobabs entertained us on the walk through this drydeciduous

forest. An impressive Oustalet's Chameleon was the last find to get our attention – the second largest chameleon in the world.

Another 90 minutes saw us arrive at the modern Hotel de la Reine at Isalo where we enjoyed good food and a comfortable night.

## **Friday 1 October**

### **Isalo and on to Ranomafana**

**Weather: Sunny, some cloud and surprise rain 30°C**

The Hotel de la Reine was designed superbly to fit snugly into Isalo's strange rock formations. We spent a pleasant hour birding the grounds and climbing to get a view of the area. Benson's Rock Thrush is a speciality of the area and a male posed for us as we assembled at 6:30am. Another appeared soon afterwards and something of a dispute between them allowed us great views.

African Palm Swifts, Madagascar Manakins, Bulbuls and Souimanga Sunbirds were our main bird species seen while among plants seen, 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*. We left at 8:30am for the long drive to Ranomafana arriving at 6:30pm. 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 was nesting in a house opposite our morning coffee stop. Our only spectacular bird was a Sooty Falcon which flew over our heads just after lunch. This was eaten at Ambalavao where we visited a papermaking workshop and bought prettily decorated souvenirs. We decided later that the Sooty Falcon was an immature bird which had 'over-summered' in Madagascar.

## **Saturday to October**

### **Ranomafana forests and road**

**Weather: Sunny, some cloud later, humid 30°C**

Ranomafana lived up to its reputation for great birds and rare lemurs today as we had our first taste of Madagascar rainforest wildlife.

The group eased into the day enjoying the luxury of a 6:30 breakfast before which some people spent a few minutes around the grounds watching Madagascar Wagtails on chalet roofs, Palm Swifts around the, er, palm trees and a stunning pair of blue-eyed Chabert's Vangas.

Our guide Stephan and his spotter Seraphim came with us in the bus, pointing out a Rand's Warbler as we drove up to the entrance of Ranomafana national park. Another pair was seen in the scope as we waited for Mamy to sort out the entrance fees. Madagascar Starling was also scoped and enjoyed in excellent light. Madagascar Cuckoos were calling their somewhat corrupted songs as we walked down towards the River Namorona which was thundering through a gorge below, the amount of water was stark contrast to the streams dribbling through vast riverbeds elsewhere in Madagascar.

One of the trip highlights (simple but delightful) was watching Mascarine Martins picking up nesting material from a rock in the gorge. They looked brilliant through the scope – dark wings folded, pale undersides heavily streaked – as each bird ran around on short legs, a complete contrast to their normal aerial lives.

We continued into the forest with Stephan receiving information about birds and lemurs from spotters who refrained from shouting the news, as was the method when I first brought groups to the park, but sent him text messages instead!

The information was just as good – we were shown all sorts of animals and birds. Most importantly our group was first to arrive at and enjoy watching Golden Bamboo Lemurs feeding happily above us. They were leaping around the bamboo stand, climbing down close to us and giving a superb views. Other groups of people gradually arrived, however, and the experience became something of a bunfight so we retreated and left the lemurs looking down on humanity which was not at its best. Once alone again Stephan

told us how rare the Golden Bamboo Lemur is (about 250 animals in 50 groups across the park which was set up specifically to protect the species after it was discovered in the 1980s) and a little of their biology. The lemurs feed exclusively on bamboo, ingesting enough cyanide in an hour to kill everyone in the group! Our morning activity continued with serious exercise for us as we walked the steep trails, slippery from the previous day's rain, looking at Velvet and Sunbird Asities, Blue and Red-tailed Vangas, Nelicourva Weaver and Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike.

Groups of local schoolchildren started to arrive, their noise scaring off a Brown Mesite we were looking for, and after a rest at Beau Sejour viewpoint we set off back to the bus. The spotters found a Pitta-like Ground Roller but the bird flew before we reached it. A diversion was made to see the nest of a Crossley's Babbler on which, to our delight, the male was sitting quite unperturbed while its picture was taken. Mamy found a Red-fronted Coua as we climbed back towards the bus, our last 'goodie' of the morning seen well as it ate a huge slug. The bird's bill was quite gummed up with slime during the process.

Our afternoon outing was up the valley onto the main Antananarivo road which is not used due to the poor surface. Here we parked the bus and watched birds: a male Cuckoo-shrike which became scopeshy, a dazzlingly blue Blue Coua which was framed by white jungle branches, and a Madagascar Brush Warbler which flitted around a cliff face in Stag's Horn Ferns.

Seraphim, meanwhile, had been searching for a Painted Frog which he caught and brought to us. What a creature: it's black body had green blotches, the 'trousers' were yellow with black spots while its belly had blue polka dots on a black background. Much admired and photographed the small frog was returned carefully to its home.

We return to the park and stopped at a viewpoint overlooking Ranomafana's rapids which were duly photographed. Orchids and Sundews on a wet cliff face were examined as was a brown, bird-beaked, frog (Brown Leaf-litter Frog) which sat under an overhang, croaking at us occasionally. Mamy found a Short-horned Chameleon before we drove down to our last stopping place where two Green Jerys were seen.

Two Brown Mouse Lemurs appeared as darkness fell, attracted by offerings of banana rubbed onto branches. They were lively and charming although someone thought they were 'mice being lemurs rather than mouse-like lemurs'. We returned to the hotel in a party mood after a delightful though tiringly nergetic day.

### **Sunday 3 October**

#### **Paddyfields, hot springs, rainforest and more**

**Weather: Sunny, some cloud, warm 30°C**

Even with a 5:30am start we were beaten to the Sahamalaotra Trail by another group. Fortunately a Cryptic Warbler was singing at the start of the trail and by the time we had seen it and our first Stonechat of the trip the other group was well along the path ahead of us.

They cannot have fared any better than we. Our group enjoyed a super walk seeing Diademed Sifakas and Red-fronted Lemurs superbly well. Both species are stunning creatures and the walk was a trip highlight just to see them. Birds were a little more difficult as everything seemed to be the canopy today. Views were had of Pollen's, White-headed and Blue Vangas, Tylas and Wedge-tailed Jery, although nobody saw everything.

We returned to the area after breakfast and walked along paddyfield dykes in serch of birds. (There were several 'one-foot' soakings but I managed to go right in – up to both knees!)

Two Madagascar Snipe and a male Painted Snipe were flushed by Stephan, Seraphim and Mamy giving us good flight views but Grey Emu-tail could not be located. Mascarene Martins were buzzing over the flooded fields, while a male Madagascar Buzzard tried to impress its mate with with a display flight high above. Great views of a Madagascar Cisticola were enjoyed and another beautifully marked male Stonechat was seen.

Some paddyfields were teeming with tadpoles and there were Mascarine Grass Frogs all over the place. Our time ran out, however, and we squelched back to the bus for a trip down to Ranomafana town centre which was in full Sunday swing.

The centrepiece was a children's roundabout surrounded by (busy) betting stalls and accompanied with loud music. We visited the thermal swimming pools and a former hotel which was being used as a hand-weaving workshop.

The disappointing birding of the morning continued in the afternoon when we returned to the Sahamalaotra Trail looking for Pitta-like and Rufous-headed Ground-rollers without success. Once again, birds seen were high and in thick foliage so it was everyone for themselves when spotting.

Long-billed and Grey-headed Greenbuls, Pollen's Vanga, Dark Newtonia and White-throated Oxalabes were all seen by some but not very well.

Emerging from the forest on dusk, we had brief views of Collared and Madagascar Nightjars before returning to the hotel. There we said goodbye to Stephan and Seraphim who had been such excellent and eager guides.

## **Monday 4 October**

### **Two Antsirabe via a blacksmiths' village**

**Weather: Overcast, warm, dry but humid 29°C**

A little birding around the hotel produced the best views yet of Green Sunbird perched for a while in a bare tree. Madagascar Coucal was also seen well.

An 8am start was followed by three stops – one impromptu for a basking Madagascar Ground Boa, the second to get a group picture at the lower viewpoint and lastly to visit the blacksmiths' village of Ambohimaha. Here all Madagascar's hand-tools are made in filthy, hot smithies using charcoal furnaces with hand-operated bellows. Crowds of children gathered as we watched heavy scrap iron being turned into the country's agricultural equipment.

The village of Ambohimahasoa has a large egret colony and we stopped to watch Cattle and Dimorphic Egrets building nests and feeding young. A few Black-crowned Night-herons in the trees seemed to be roosting.

Lunch was at a noisy tourist-trap hotel in Ambositra with rather false Malagasy dancers outside and 'musicians' inside where we chose to eat. Mamy took us to a woodcarving shop just outside the town where a few souvenirs were bought. The journey was just getting tiring as we arrived at Antsirabe after seeing only a few egrets and Madagascar Kestrels in the fields.

## **Tuesday 5 October**

### **Two Périnet via Tana**

**Weather: Sunny, clear and a light breeze 30°C**

Some of Antsirabe's push-push drivers recognised me and were keen to see the Travelling Naturalist's La Gare Grand Prix run again. (Some said they had been training over the last two years for the event!) Off we set to the beautiful train station where the rickshaws stopped for a minute or two before adopting a Le Man's start for the race back.

Confusion led to the front runners shooting past the hotel giving Jane the opportunity to snatch the lead, cross the line and collect the coveted trophy.

We drove to Antananarivo through fascinating, ever-changing countryside, and had a good lunch before continuing to Périnet. We arrived at the Vakôna Lodge at 5:30pm.

We stopped for coffee in the morning and drove up to the Queen's Palace for a view of the city of Antananarivo before lunch. The view was spectacular especially when a Madagascar Kestrel flew past below us.

Our afternoon stop was at a bridge over the River Mangoro where we watched two Madagascar Pratincoles on the rocks below and in flight – our only planned birding stop of the day. A Common Sandpiper was also seen and lots of Brown-throated Martins were swarming near their colonial nest holes. It was our longest drive of the tour at 310km but we agreed that the day had been fascinating.

## **Wednesday 6 October**

### **Périnet explored – Indri and nightjars**

**Weather: Sunny, clear, warm 28°C**

Several of Périnet's many jewels were seen this morning as we explored Madagascar's premier national park. Indris were heard frequently and one family group was watched well. Diademed Sifakas and Eastern Woolly Lemurs were also found and admired. Not even the most brilliant camouflage could beat John's eyes – we were shown a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko hiding on a stick and two Collared Nightjars roosting with their heads touching.

The day started well as we watched two Madagascar White-eyes and a Forest Fody near the bus. They were flitting around a bottlebrush tree, the fody feeding on its nectar.

A walk along the Périnet road gave us an inkling of John's abilities – he immediately found a Nosehorned Chameleon clinging to a dead twig. The tiny animal looked like a caterpillar – actually, it looked like a thin twig and was smaller than most caterpillars. Its cryptic markings were a complete disguise. This species is Périnet's smallest chameleon and how John spotted it none of us knew. He did say that finding them at night was easier!

He took us straight to the Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko – its daytime sleeping place was clearly known – but even knowing where the animal was still made finding it an achievement. Cryptic and camouflage are words which do not do the gecko justice.

It was Indri which stole the show, however, and we shivered with excitement as their early-morning calls echoed around the jungle. Indri are the largest living lemurs. They have evolved into the niche taken by Howler Monkeys in Central and South America. Their loud calls are haunting and atmospheric and we all had a huge grin (I checked) as we listened to competing troops as they wailed out their territorial claims. Other more familiar sounds were also heard – a Madagascar Cuckoo and several Cuckoo-rollers were calling loudly.

Three or four family groups of Indri could be heard as we walked through the reserve in the company of singing Rand's Warblers and a Green Sunbird. A raptor displaying close by was identified as Henst's Goshawk and watched until it disappeared behind trees.

We left the main trail and started two hours of hard walking through secondary forest. Our first find was a brown ball of fur which eventually became three adult Eastern Woolly Lemurs (Avahi). They are normally nocturnal and these clearly had sleep in mind. They did a bit of mutual grooming, stared down at us and one revealed that she was looking after a baby.

John led us onwards looking for Indri but found three Diademed Sifakas instead. These most beautiful creatures were timid and moved off while we were watching but not before we had appreciated their subtle markings.

John's next find was Indri No2 troop, thus avoiding some of the other groups of people in the area who went to No1 troop. We were right underneath the family which took no notice of us. We watched them feeding and moving around the trees but did not hear them call despite other groups in the area wailing away.

We did not notice that John had slipped off for a while. On his return he promised us a goodie and led us quite a distance to see a pair of Collared Nightjars roosting together on the ground. Once again we were treated to a masterclass of camouflage. It was difficult to make out the two birds' heads let alone their bodies, so leaf-litter-like was their plumage. Some rows of feathers looked like tiny bracket fungi growing along a stick and even through the scope at a distance of 12m the birds were invisible. I'm sure that the right-hand bird even have a rather smug 'you can't see me' look on its face!

These two wonderful experiences, the time with Indri and seeing (or not seeing) the nightjars, left us amazed. We returned to the bus slowly, watching more of Madagascar's birds and insects including another Giraffe Weevil and left the park enchanted.

Our afternoon walk was less exciting – how could it match the morning's? We visited a new 'community forest' reserve which has been set up close to the village of Périnet. Here we walked new trails watching Ward's Flycatchers, White-headed Vangas and our second Parson's Chameleon. The first was a female spotted under the Indri family and this was even larger, a male close to the path. We had seen the largest and almost the smallest chameleons in the same day.

Three Blue Pigeons were pointed out to us. These had some importance as they are members of a group found in the Indian Ocean islands which are used as further support to Darwin's evolutionary theory. Several of the islands have their own Blue Pigeon which is slightly different from the others.

Our evolution had not included the ability to cross a deep, fast running stream by walking along a fallen tree. We were forced to turn back at this point rather than follow a route popular with the villagers.

Four Eastern Woolly Lemurs, one with a baby, were clinging to a thin tree watching us as we returned. We could not work out how we had missed them on the way out but decided that these nocturnal animals had just emerged for their evening's activity.

Darkness was falling and I took everyone to the 'Chinese restaurant' where we enjoyed a cuppa or stronger drink before going out on a darkness walk.

Two Horned-nosed (Elephant Ear) Chameleons and another eastern Woolly Lemur (the only nocturnal member of the Indri family) with a baby were seen by torchlight. Our walk was illuminated by fireflies and stars. The eyes of a Goodman's Mouse Lemur were pointed out to us (but could have been fireflies or even falling stars).

We were late returning to Vakôna Lodge and even later sitting down to dinner, but it had been a wonderful wildlife day for us.

## **Thursday 7 October**

### **Mantadia explored**

#### **Weather: Sunny, clear and warm, some rain in the evening 29°C**

Our last proper day's wildlife watching was spent in Mantadia – an hour's slow drive away – and Périnet N.Ps. The day was less successful than yesterday but we did see some major species such as Pygmy Kingfisher and Eastern Rainforest Scops Owl.

An early start saw us bumping and grinding along a difficult road to Mantadia national park with brief stops to see Rand's Warbler and Madagascar Kestrel. John took us along a riverside trail looking for Pitta-like Ground-Roller without success. We stopped dead in our tracks as someone found a Pygmy Kingfisher perched on a twig low down in the forest. It was easily visible and apart from turning round once, posed for us and other passing birdwatchers for several minutes. We had wonderful views of its bright orange upper parts and white underparts. Pictures were taken, 'ooohs and ahhs,' were exclaimed but the bird continued to pose. It was later voted bird of the trip.

A feeding flock of vangas was found towards the end of our walk and we had an exciting ten minutes or so sorting them out. Included in the 'purple patch' were White-headed, Blue and Nuthatch Vanga, the old name of which was Coral-billed Vanga. These were charismatic birds, behaving like small woodpeckers but with the Nuthatch's habit of going down the trunks of trees head first.

A snake was seen darting through the clear water of a stream we were about to cross. It almost seemed to leap up onto the bank but a frog was even faster, changing places with the thin dark snake and flattening itself on the sandy stream bed. It was one lucky frog.

Streaks of graphite dust marked a disused road which once led to a mine. It is used now only by naturalists who check out a small pond for Madagascar Little Grebes. Two were in residence, to our delight, and as a bonus we found a Moorhen too.

We dozed in the bus on the return to the lodge. I was sufficiently awake to spot a distant Madagascar Kingfisher at the Mantadia exit, our second kingfisher species of the morning and a full set (of two). Amazingly, Michael spotted another Pygmy Kingfisher in the lodge grounds as we drove in (I've seen only two in my life!).

Plans for the afternoon were switched and we went for quite a hike in Périnet N.P. finding several by now familiar favourites, another Moorhen (pass the smelling salts, Alice – Ed!) and a pair of roosting Eastern Rainforest Scops Owls. These were much browner than the subspecies at Berenty.

Nipping into the Orchid Park by the back entrance (it was closed for the night) we were greeted by a troop of Brown Lemurs playing chasy through the trees before settling down for the night. A walk around the lake was interesting from the point of view of orchids, some of which were in flower. All had been rescued when forest trees had fallen or were chopped down.

We returned to the Vakôna Lodge for an early supper.

**Friday 8 October****To Tana and away****Weather: Sunny, overcast, warm and humid 30°C**

A treat was in store when we spent our last hour in Périnet visiting the lemur sanctuary on an island near the lodge. We were surrounded by the rescued animals which were eager for breakfast. Some even sat on people's shoulders posing for pictures. This was a super visit, voted one of the trip's highlights. We watched a Ward's Flycatcher sitting on its nest high in a eucalyptus tree before returning to the lodge to load up the bus. Considerable time had been allowed for bad traffic in Antananarivo but it was not needed and Jan was able to have lunch with the rest of us before going to the airport for his flight to Cape Town. I bought vanilla for the group and we settled into our day rooms to pack before meeting Hanta from our ground agents. All agreed it had been a well-organised trip and a few expressed interest in another to the north of Madagascar.

We left for the airport at 9:30pm after a good dinner and flew back to London via Paris without incident.

Tim Earl, Guernsey, October 2010

**ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES**

**E = endemic to Madagascar; BE = breeding endemic**

**BIRDS**

<b>GUINEAFOWL</b>		<b>Family Numididae</b>
1	Helmeted Guineafowl	Numida meleagris
		A few groups of this introduced species seen around Berenty.
<b>WILDFOWL</b>		<b>Family Anatidae</b>
2	White-faced Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna viduata
		Hundreds at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo; about 40 roosting on Ifaty sand-bar.
3	Knob-billed Duck	Sarkidiornis melanotos
		Several at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
4	Red-billed Teal	Anas erythrorhyncha
		Many at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
5	Hottentot Teal	Anas hottentota
		Four or five remaining from the winter visitors at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
<b>GREBES</b>		<b>Family Podicipedidae</b>
6	Madagascar Grebe E	Tachybaptus pelzelinii
		One immature at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo; a pair at the 'graphite' pond in Mantadia N.P.
<b>HERONS, BITTERNES</b>		<b>Family Ardeidae</b>
7	Black-crowned Night-heron	Nycticorax nycticorax
		A few around Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo; several in a mixed colony on the way to Antsirabe.
8	Squacco Heron	Ardeola ralloides
		Scores nesting at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo; a few in paddyfields.
9	Malagasy Pond Heron E	Ardeola idae
		Just one seen at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo; one in a paddyfield near Périnet.
10	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis
		Common, seen almost daily; hundreds nesting at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Tana; many in a mixed colony on the way to Antsirabe.

11	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	Two seen on the sand-bar near Ifaty.
12	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea	One on our first Perinet walk.
13	Black Heron	Egretta ardesiaca	At least seven fishing under their own parasols at Anousy Lake (our first Malagasy birds); several breeding at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo.
<b>HAMERKOP</b>			
14	Hamerkop	Scopus umbretta	<b>Family Scopidae</b> A few in the paddyfields.
<b>FALCONS</b>			
15	Malagasy Kestrel E	Falco newtoni	<b>Family Falconidae</b> Common, seen almost daily.
16	Banded Kestrel E	Falco zoniventris	One seen eating cockroaches at Ifaty.
17	Sooty Falcon	Falco concolor	One at our lunch stop on the way to Ranomafana. This was probably an immature bird which had 'over-summered' in Madagascar.
<b>RAPTORS</b>			
18	Black Kite	Milvus migrans	<b>Family Accipitridae</b> Common, seen almost daily. Most were 'yellow-billed' but one at Berenty was of black-billed subspecies.
19	Malagasy Marsh Harrier	Circus maillardi	A superb male seen at a marsh on the road to Ifaty.
20	Madagascar Harrier-Hawk E	Polyboroides radiatus	Two seen on both days at Ifaty.
21	Frances's Sparrowhawk E	Accipiter francesii	Seen on two days at Berenty (maximum three on the first day); one at Ifaty.
22	Madagascar Sparrowhawk E	Accipiter madagascariensis	One seen by a briefly at Berenty.
23	Henst's Goshawk E	Accipiter henstii	One seen distantly but well in Périnet N.P.
24	Madagascar Buzzard E	Buteo brachypterus	Seen on only seven days.
<b>RAILS, CRAKES &amp; COOTS</b>			
25	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	<b>Family Rallidae</b> Singles at Tsarasaotra Park lake, Antananarivo, the 'grebe-pond' in Mantadia NP and at Vacona Lodge.
<b>BUTTONQUAIL</b>			
26	Madagascar Buttonquail E	Turnix nigricollis	<b>Family Turnicidae</b> Four near the Nautilus Hotel, one in Ifaty spiny forest.
<b>STILTS, AVOCETS</b>			
27	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	<b>Family Recurvirostridae</b> A few seen along the road to Ifaty.
<b>PLOVERS</b>			
28	Grey Plover	Pluvialis squatarola	<b>Family Charadriidae</b> At least 25 on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
29	Madagascar Plover E	Charadrius thoracicus	Two pairs, one with two chicks, near Ifaty.
30	Kittlitz's Plover	Charadrius pecuarius	Five along the road to Ifaty.
31	Three-banded Plover	Charadrius tricollaris	Two along the road to Ifaty; one in the paddyfields above Ranomafana.
<b>PAINTED SNIPES</b>			
32	Greater Painted Snipe	Rostratula benghalensis	<b>Family Rostratulidae</b> A male seen in Ranomafana.
<b>SANDPIPERS, SNIPES</b>			
33	Madagascar Snipe E	Gallinago macrodactyla	<b>Family Scolopacidae</b> Two seen in the Ranomafana rice fields.
34	Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus	Lots on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
35	Eurasian Curlew	Numenius arquata	One or two on a sand-bar near Ifaty.
36	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia	Recorded on four days with good numbers (more than 10) on the sand-bar near Ifaty.
37	Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos	One on the River Mangoro.
38	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	One on a marshy pond along the road to Ifaty.
39	Sanderling	Calidris alba	About 25 roosting on the sandbar near Ifaty.
<b>COURSERS &amp; PRATINCOLES</b>			
40	Madagascar Pratincole BE	Glareola ocularis	<b>Family Glareolidae</b> Two on cue at the River Mangoro, near Périnet N.P.
<b>GULLS &amp; TERNS</b>			
41	Lesser Crested Tern	Sterna bengalensis	<b>Family Laridae</b> Three roosting on the Ifaty sandbar.
42	Common Tern	Sterna hirundo	Several roosting on a sandbar near Ifaty.
<b>SANDGROUSE</b>			
43	Madagascar Sandgrouse E	Pterocles personatus	<b>Family Pteroclididae</b> Three picked up brilliantly by Olivier near the airstrip at Berenty. Two were watched feeding.

<b>PIGEONS &amp; DOVES</b>			
44	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	
45	Malagasy Turtle Dove E	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>	
46	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	
47	Mad'car Green Pigeon E	<i>Treron australis</i>	
48	Madagascar Blue Pigeon E	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>	Five seen over two days at Périnet.
<b>PARROTS</b>			
49	Grey-headed Lovebird E	<i>Agapornis canus</i>	<b>Family Psittacidae</b> Seen in the south on four days with a maximum of 15 at Berenty.
50	Greater Vasa Parrot E	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>	Two at Ifaty and a raucous bird (one of a pair) in Mantadia N.P.
51	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
<b>CUCKOOS</b>			<b>Family Cuculidae</b>
52	Malagasy Coucal E	<i>Centropus toulou</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
53	Crested Coua E	<i>Coua cristata</i>	Common, seen at Berenty and Ifaty.
54	Blue Coua E	<i>Coua caerulea</i>	Singles seen daily in Ranomafana and Périnet N.P.
55	Red-fronted Coua E	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>	One seen well eating a slug in Ranomafana.
56	Coquerel's Coua E	<i>Coua coquereli</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
57	Green-capped Coua E	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>	One seen at Ifaty.
58	Running Coua E	<i>Coua cursor</i>	Singles seen on both days in the Ifaty spiny forest.
59	Giant Coua E	<i>Coua gigas</i>	Two seen at Berenty.
60	Madagascar Cuckoo E	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>	Many heard daily in rain-forest but finally several seen in Ranomafana.
<b>OWLS</b>			<b>Family Strigidae</b>
61	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>	Three of the western race seen roosting at Berenty; two of the eastern race seen at Périnet N.P.
62	White-browed Owl E	<i>Ninox superciliaris</i>	Seen at night commonly and two pairs roosting at Berenty.
<b>NIGHTJARS</b>			<b>Family Caprimulgidae</b>
63	Madagascar Nightjar E	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>	Heard or seen on six nights with good numbers at the Nautilus Hotel.
64	Collared Nightjar E	<i>Caprimulgus enarratus</i>	One in flight at the end of the S trail, Ranomafana; two roosting in Périnet (amazing camouflage).
<b>SWIFTS</b>			<b>Family Apodidae</b>
65	Madagascar Spinetail E	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>	Three seen at Berenty.
66	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	A few daily after Ifaty.
67	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	Three distantly at Berenty.
68	Malagasy Black Swift E	<i>Apus balstoni</i>	Seen at La Table, Tulier, and in Périnet N.P.
<b>GROUND ROLLERS</b>			<b>Family Brachypteraciidae</b>
69	Long-tailed Ground Roller E	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>	One seen well at Ifaty.
<b>CUCKOO ROLLER</b>			<b>Family Leptosomatidae</b>
70	Cuckoo Roller E	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>	Seen and the distinctive call heard on six days.
<b>KINGFISHERS</b>			<b>Family Alcedinidae</b>
71	Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher E	<i>Ispidina madagascarensis</i>	One seen brilliantly at Mandia N.P. was voted bird of the trip; one at Vakôna Lodge.
72	Malagasy Kingfisher E	<i>Alcedo vintsioides</i>	This brilliant jewel was seen on six days with three at Ifaty.
<b>BEE-EATERS</b>			<b>Family Meropidae</b>
73	Olive Bee-eater E	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
<b>HOPOES</b>			<b>Family Upupidae</b>
74	Madagascar Hoopoe E	<i>Upupa marginata</i>	A maximum of three seen on six days.
<b>ASITIES</b>			<b>Family Philepittidae</b>
75	Velvet Asity E	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>	Two females and a male in Ranomafana.
76	Common Sunbird-asity E	<i>Neodrepanis coruscans</i>	A female seen in Ranomafana.
<b>VANGAS</b>			<b>Family Vangidae</b>
77	Red-tailed Vanga E	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>	Recorded on four days.
78	Hook-billed Vanga E	<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>	Singles on two days in Berenty.
79	Lafresnaye's Vanga E	<i>Xenopirostris xenopirostris</i>	Two seen in the spiny forest at Ifaty.

80	Pollen's Vanga E	<i>Xenopirostris polleni</i>	Three seen on one day in Ranomafana.
81	Sickle-billed Vanga E	<i>Falcolea palliata</i>	Five of these charismatic birds seen in the spiny forest at Ifaty.
82	White-headed Vanga E	<i>Artamella viridis</i>	A maximum of three seen on four days in Berenty, Ranomafana and Périnet N.P.
83	Chabert's Vanga E	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>	Seen commonly on five days.
84	Blue Vanga E	<i>Cyanolanius madagascarinus</i>	Seen on three days at Ifaty, Rano-mafana and three in Périnet N.P.
85	Tylas E	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>	Seen on three days with a maximum of two at Périnet N.P.
86	Nuthatch Vanga E	<i>Hypositta corallirostris</i>	A small flock of these charismatic and lively birds seen in Périnet N.P.
87	Dark Newtonia E	<i>Newtonia amphichroa</i>	Singles in Berenty and Ranomafana on three days.
88	Common Newtonia E	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>	Common in the south and at Ranomafana.
89	Archbold's Newtonia E	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>	Three seen in the Ifaty spiny forest.
90	Ward's Flycatcher E	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>	A pair in Ranomafana; seen on three days at Périnet N.P. with a pair nesting near the 'lemur lake'.
91	Crossley's Babbler E	<i>Mystacornis crossleyi</i>	A male on its nest in Ranomafana.
	<b>CUCKOO-SHRIKES</b>		<b>Family Campephagidae</b>
92	Madagascar Cuckooshrike E	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>	Three seen at Ranomafana.
	<b>DRONGOS</b>		<b>Family Dicruridae</b>
93	Crested Drongo E	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>MONARCH FLYCATCHERS</b>		<b>Family Monarchidae</b>
94	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher E	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>CROWS, JAYS</b>		<b>Family Corvidae</b>
95	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>SWALLOWS, MARTINS</b>		<b>Family Hirundinidae</b>
96	Mascarene Martin E	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	Common in the uplands.
97	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	A few seen in Antananarivo, a colony on the River Mangoro.
	<b>LARKS</b>		<b>Family Alaudidae</b>
98	Madagascar Lark E	<i>Mirafra hova</i>	Fairly common in the south. None after Isalo.
	<b>CISTICOLAS &amp; ALLIES</b>		<b>Family Cisticolidae</b>
99	Madagascar Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>	Heard or seen in all the major sites. Brilliant views in the Ranomafana paddyfields.
	<b>FAMILY UNCERTAIN</b>		<b>Family uncertain</b>
100	Common Jery E	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
101	Green Jery E	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>	Two in Ranomafana.
102	Stripe-throated Jery E	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>	Seen best on the way to Berenty but recorded on four days.
	<b>BULBULS</b>		<b>Family Pycnonotidae</b>
103	Malagasy Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>OLD WORLD WARBLERS</b>		<b>Family Sylviidae</b>
104	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>	Common, seen almost daily.
105	Subdesert Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas lantzii</i>	A few seen at Ifaty.
106	Madagascar Swamp Warbler E	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>	Seen at Ifaty and Ranomafana.
107	Long-billed Bernieria E	<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>	Seen on three days with a maximum of six in Rano-mafana.
108	Cryptic Warbler E	<i>Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi</i>	One seen singing at the top of a tree in Ranomafana.
109	Thamnornis E	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>	One seen at the Nautilus Hotel, Ifaty.
110	Spectacled Tetraka E	<i>Xanthomixis zosterops</i>	Seen on four days with a maximum of six in Périnet N.P.
111	Appert's Tetraka E	<i>Xanthomixis apperti</i>	Two or three in the leaf-litter in Zombitse Forest.
112	Grey-crowned Tetraka E	<i>Xanthomixis cinereiceps</i>	Seen on four days with a maximum of four in Ranomafana.

113	Rand's Warbler E	Randia pseudozosterops	Seen on four days with a maximum of five in Périnet.
	<b>WHITE-EYES</b>		<b>Family Zosteropidae</b>
114	Madagascar White-eye E	Zosterops maderaspatanus	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>STARLINGS</b>		<b>Family Sturnidae</b>
115	Madagascar Starling E	Saroglossa aurata	One scoped well in Ranomafana; two in Périnet.
116	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	Common, seen almost daily.
	<b>THRUSHES</b>		<b>Family Turdidae</b>
117	Benson's Rock Thrush E	Pseudocossyphus bensoni	Two males and a female at Isalo.
	<b>FLYCATCHERS</b>		<b>Family Muscicapidae</b>
118	Madagascar Magpie-Robin E	Copsychus albospecularis	Common, seen almost daily.
119	African Stonechat	Saxicola axillaris	Fairly common, seen almost daily in Ranomafana and Périnet N.Ps.
	<b>SUNBIRDS</b>		<b>Family Nectariniidae</b>
120	Souimanga Sunbird E	Cinnyris souimanga	Common, seen almost daily.
121	Malagasy Green Sunbird E	Cinnyris notatus	Seen on only four days in Ranomafana and Périnet.
	<b>WEAVERS</b>		<b>Family Ploceidae</b>
122	Nelicourvi Weaver E	Ploceus nelicourvi	Fairly common in Ranomafana and Périnet.
123	Sakalava Weaver E	Ploceus sakalava	Common in the south with a colony at the Nautilus Hotel.
124	Red Fody	Foudia madagascariensis	Seen in the south on six days.
125	Forest Fody E	Foudia omissa	One seen at Vakôna Lodge, Périnet.
	<b>WAXBILLS, MUNIAS &amp; ALLIES</b>		<b>Family Estrildidae</b>
126	Madagascar Mannikin E	Lemuresthes nana	Our best year ever for this species with small flocks seen on five days.
	<b>WAGTAILS &amp; PIPITS</b>		<b>Family Motacillidae</b>
127	Madagascar Wagtail E	Motacilla flaviventris	Common, seen almost daily once we reached the rainforest.

#### MAMMALS

	<b>MICE, RATS &amp; GERBILS</b>	<b>Family Muridae</b>	
1	Brown Rat	Rattus norvegicus	Oh dear! Both these species seen as 'pancake' roadkills
2	House Rat (Black Rat)	Rattus rattus	
	<b>FRUIT BATS</b>		<b>Family Pteropodidae</b>
3	Madagascar Flying Fox E	Pteropus rufus	A large colony in its daytime roost at Berenty.
	<b>SHEATH-TAILED BATS</b>	<b>Family Emballonuridae</b>	
4	Mauritian Tomb Bat	Taphozous mauritanus	Several which could have been of this species around the lights at Antananarivo airport.
	<b>LEMURS</b>		<b>Family Lemuridae</b>
5	White-footed Sportive Lemur E	Lepilemur leucopus	Common on night walks and a few in the day at Berenty.
6	Red-tailed Sportive Lemur E	Lepilemur ruficaudatus	Two seen peeking out of their Zombitse Forest roost-holes.
7	Golden Bamboo Lemur E	Haplemur aureus	Three seen well in Rano-mafana N.P.
8	Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemur E	Haplemur griseus	Four in the lemur sanctuary in Périnet N.P.
9	Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur E	Varecia variegata	Six in the lemur sanctuary in Périnet N.P.
10	Ring-tailed Lemur E	Lemur catta	Common at Berenty where some have become a nuisance raiding dining areas.
11	Common Brown Lemur E	Eulemur fulvus	Common in Berenty where they were introduced; about 10 in Périnet N.P.
12	Red Lemur E	Eulemur rufus	Common in Berenty where they were introduced. Some in the lemur sanctuary in Périnet N.P.
	<b>DWARF &amp; MOUSE LEMURS</b>		<b>Family Cheirogaleidae</b>
13	Grey Mouse Lemur E	Microcebus murinus	Eight seen on a night walk in Berenty.
14	Brown Mouse Lemur E	Microcebus rufus	Two seen on a night walk in Ranomafana N.P.
15	Goodman's Mouse Lemur E	Microcebus lehilahytsara	One seen on the night-walk at Périnet N.P.

	<b>INDRI &amp; SIFAKAS</b>		<b>Family Indriidae</b>
16	Indri E	Indri indri	Six in one troop in Périnet N.P.; at least three troops heard calling in Périnet N.P. and another in Mantadia N.P. Their calls were voted sound of the trip.
17	Diademed Sifaka E	Propithecus diadema	Three seen well in Périnet N.P.
18	Milne-Edwards' Sifaka E	Propithecus edwardsi	Good views of one in Ranomafana.
19	<b>Verreaux's Sifaka E</b>	Propithecus verreauxi	Seen 'dancing' on several occasions at Berenty, a family group in Zombitse Forest; voted mammal of the trip.
20	Eastern Woolly Lemur E	Avahi laniger	One in Ranomafana N.P.; eight with three babies in Périnet N.P.

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

	<b>TREE FROGS</b>		<b>Family Hylidae</b>
1	Green Tree Frog	Boophis viridis	One on the Sahamalaotra trail, Ranomafana; two in Périnet N.P.
2	Madagascar Leaf-litter Tree Frog E	Boophis madagascariensis	One in a Ranomafana ditch.
	<b>FROGS</b>		<b>Family Ranidae</b>
3	Mascarene Grass Frog	Ptychadena madagascariensis	Lots in the Ranomafana paddyfields with some ponds teeming with tadpoles.
	<b>MANTELLA FROGS</b>		<b>Family Mantellidae</b>
4	Madagascar Golden Frog E	Mantella aurantica	One in Ranomafana N.P.
5	Painted Mantella Frog E	Mantella madagascariensis	One in Ranomafana.
	<b>TORTOISES</b>		<b>Family Testudinidae</b>
6	Spider Tortoise	Testudo marginata	A few in a captive breeding programme at Berenty.
7	Radiated Tortoise E	Geochelone radiata	Lots in a captive breeding programme at Berenty.
	<b>GECKOES</b>		<b>Family Gekkonidae</b>
8	Madagascar Day Gecko E	Phelsuma madagascariensis grandis	Common throughout.
9	Moreau's House Gecko	Hemidactylus maboui	Common throughout.
10	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko E	Uroplatus sikorae	One in Périnet N.P. could hardly be seen its camouflage was so good.
	<b>CHAMELEONS</b>		<b>Family Chamaeleontidae</b>
11	Nose-horned Chameleon E	Calumma nasutus	One seen in Périnet N.P.
12	Oustalet's Chameleon E	Furcifer oustaleti	One large specimen in Zombitse Forest.
13	Warty Chameleon E	Furcifer verrucosus	Two on a night walk at Berenty.
14	Short-nosed Chameleon E	Calumma gastrotaenia	One in Ranomafana N.P.
15	<b>Parson's Chameleon E</b>	Calumma parsoni	Two in Périnet N.P. were voted reptile of the trip.
	<b>TYPICAL LIZARDS</b>		<b>Family Lacertidae</b>
16	Three-eyed Lizard E	Chaladron madagascariensis	Singles seen on three days in Berenty and Ifaty.
17	Plated Lizard E	Zonosaurus laticaudatus	Two fighting in the Ranomafana paddyfields.
	<b>BOAS</b>		<b>Family Boidae</b>
18	Malagasy Ground Boa E	Acrantophis madagascariensis	One beside the road in Ranomafana N.P.
	<b>TYPICAL SNAKES</b>		<b>Family Colubridae</b>
19	Dark un-named snake	Liopholidophis sp	One hunting frogs in Mantadia N.P.

**FISH**

1	Tilapia	Tilapia sp.	Seen in several pools.
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**FLUTS**

<b>SWALLOWTAILS</b>		<b>Family Papilionidae</b>	
1	Madagascar Citrus Swallowtail E	<i>Papilio demooocus</i>	Common.
2	Madagascar Birdwing E	<i>Atrophaneura anterior</i>	Lots at Ifaty this year.
<b>MONARCH BUTTERFLIES</b>		<b>Family Danainae</b>	
3	African Monarch	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Common throughout Madagascar this year.

**OTHER TAXA**

1	Pill Millipede E	<i>Sphaerotherium</i> sp.	Lots seen in Mantadia N.P.
2	Madagascar Orbweb Spider E	<i>Nephilia madagascariensis</i>	Seen on the road to Berenty and in Ranomafana.
3	Flatid Leaf-bug E	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>	A colony seen in Berenty.
4	Giraffe-necked Weevil E	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>	Seen in Ranomafana and Périnet N.Ps.
5	Madagascar Hissing Cockroach E	<i>Gromphadorrhina portentosa</i>	Olivier went to great lengths to find a pair in Berenty;
6	V-horn Hissing Cockroach E	<i>Elliptorhina laevigata</i>	One found dead at La Table.

**HEAVENLY BODIES**

1	Orion: Rigel, Betelguise, the Orion Nebula	Seen on arrival and several times afterwards.
2	Scorpio	Seen on a night walk in Berenty,
3	Jupiter with its moons Io, Europa, Callisto and Ganymede	Seen on most clear evenings.
4	Venus, the evening star	Seen on most clear evenings.
5	Crux, the Southern Cross with the Pointers	Seen on most clear evenings.
6	The Milky Way	Seen on most clear evenings – how insignificant are we?
7	Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC)	Seen on the night-walk at Berenty.