

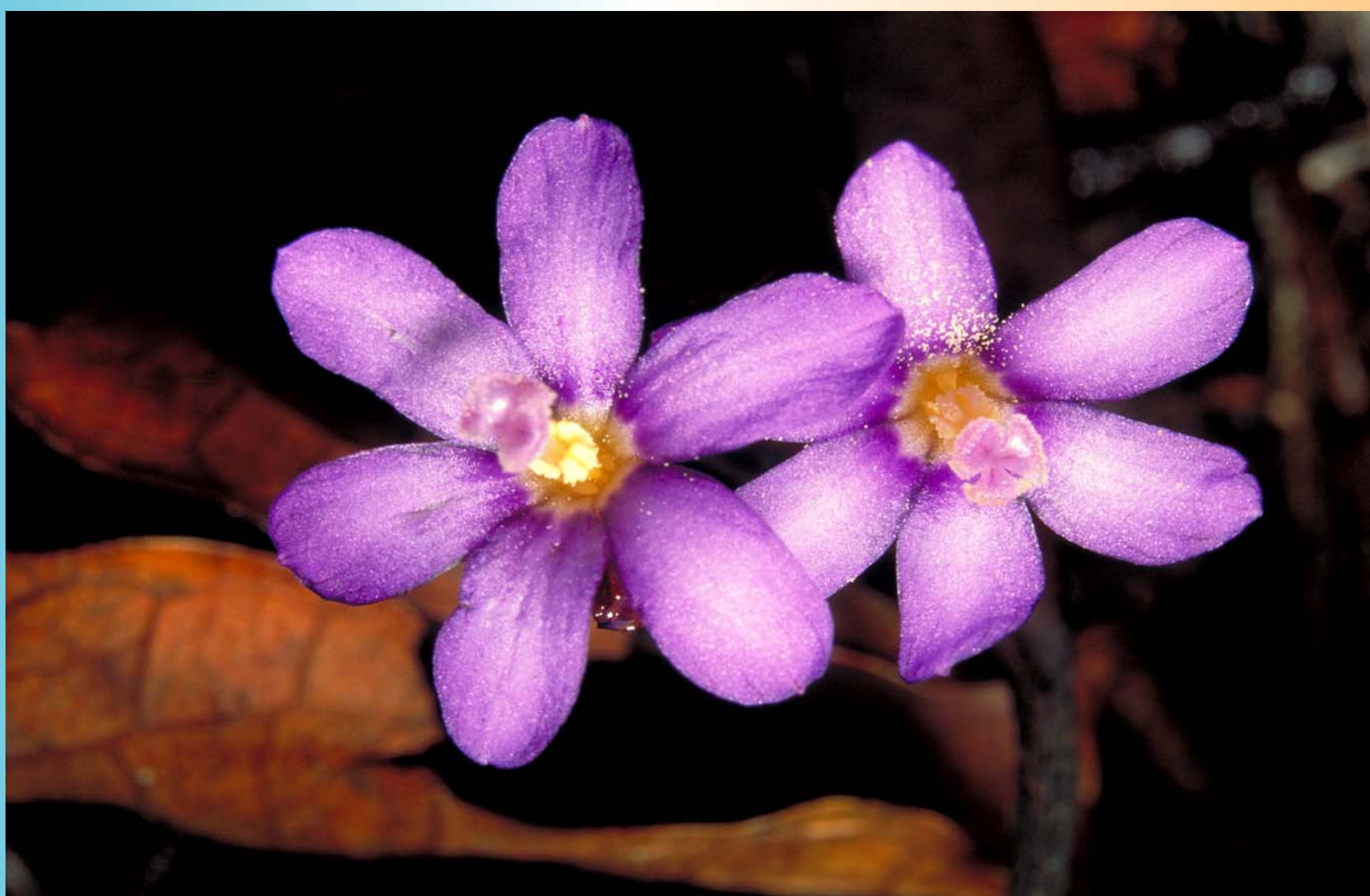
# Madagascar for Real



Pond in the Perinet-Analamazoatra Reserve. (David Parks photo)

Madagascar's flora is one of the world's richest, with tremendous numbers of species found nowhere else. Of its 12,000 to 14,000 plant species, 90% are endemic (including more than 1000 species of orchids). Six plant families are found nowhere else in the world.

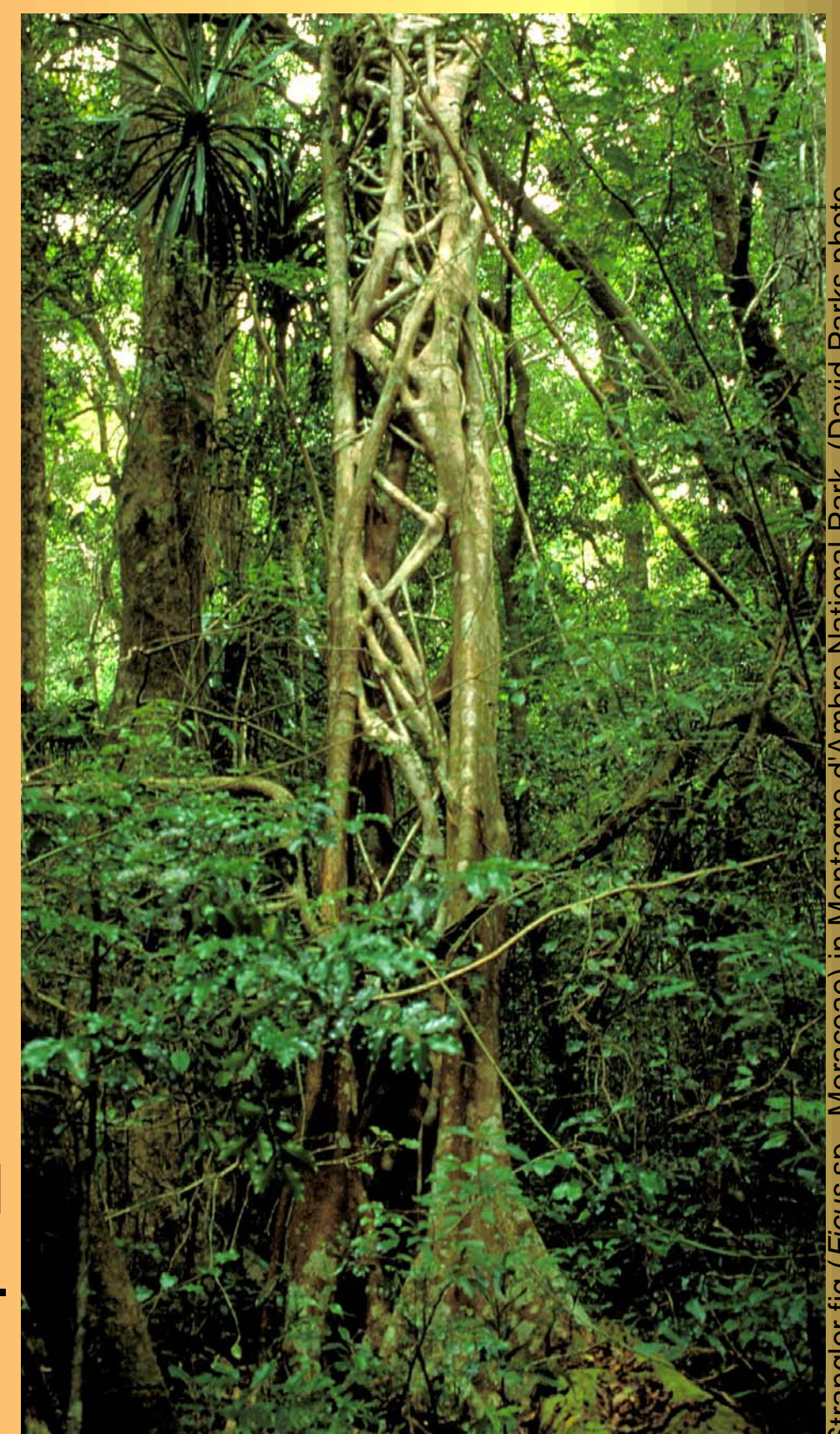
Less than 15% of the original native forest remains; the rest has been cleared by people or transformed by cattle and fire. In general the land in Madagascar has been cleared from the central region outward; remaining natural areas are found mostly near the perimeter. Only about 2% of the total area is in parks or reserves.



*Geosiris aphylla* (Iridaceae) near Ambohitsitondroina on the Masoala Peninsula ridge. (David Parks photo)

A relative of Irises, the forest floor plant *Geosiris aphylla* (above) has no chlorophyll and draws its nourishment from decaying vegetation

Germinating from a seed in bird droppings on a tree branch, a strangler fig seedling sends roots to the ground and eventually encases the host tree in a lattice of stems. Here (right) the host tree has decayed leaving the open lattice as the lower trunk of the fig tree.



Strangler fig (*Ficus* sp., Moraceae) in Montagne d'Ambre National Park. (David Parks photo)