

Madagascar's Lemurs

Naturetrek Tour Report

25 September – 9 October 2015



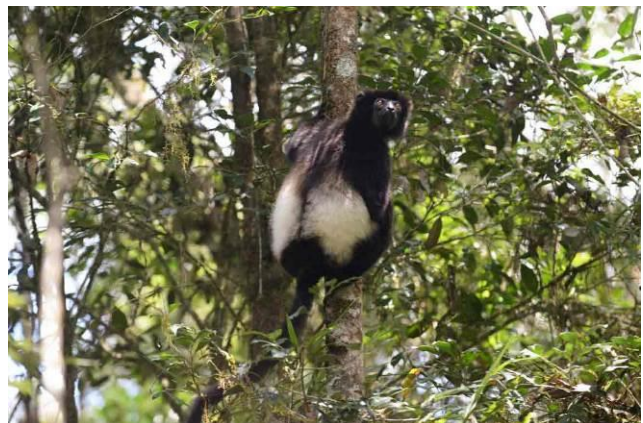
Diademed Sifakas at Mantadia



Standing's Day Gecko at Zombitse



White-browed Owl



Milne-Edwards Sifaka

Report & images compiled by Cathy Harlow



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Participants: Cathy Harlow (leader) with six Naturetrek clients
Desire Rajery – Local guide

Introduction

Day 1

Friday 25th September

Five group members met up with Cathy at London Heathrow for the short flight to Paris. We took the free rail shuttle to the Ibis Hotel, where we were joined by Patrick, who had flown in from Birmingham. Over dinner at the hotel, Cathy gave a briefing on the tour schedule and what might lie ahead on our journey through Madagascar. It didn't take long to establish that our group of well-travelled, like-minded wildlife enthusiasts shared a further valuable attribute – a great sense of humour.

Day 2

Saturday 26th September

Paris to Antananarivo

We made our way back to the airport where we checked in, and settled down to breakfast in a café before boarding the flight. The 10-hour flight was uneventful and we arrived on time at Antananarivo. Immigration is always a slow business, but finally everyone was through and, thankfully, all bags were off the belt. We passed through customs to meet our local guide Desi. After changing money, we were whisked off to the nearby Relais des Plateaux Hotel for the night.

Day 3

Sunday 27th September

Tana to Antsirabe

Weather: cloudy and cool in the morning; warm and sunny in the afternoon. After a good night's sleep and a copious breakfast buffet, we set off for the Lemur Park, a private zoo, west of Antananarivo. We skirted Madagascar's colourful and chaotic capital, a city of almost two million. It sprawls over a chain of hills rising from a patchwork of rice paddies, where we observed Great Egret, Dimorphic Egret, Black Egret and Squacco Heron. Arriving at the Lemur Park, we learned of the role it plays in introducing local schoolchildren to the island's lemurs. Mostly containing animals rescued from the pet trade, the Lemur Park's diurnal lemurs roam freely in the reserve, which is bounded on one side by a stream. As we wandered along its wooded trails we met Coquerel's Sifaka, Crowned Sifaka, Common Brown Lemur, Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur, Mongoose Lemur and Ring-tailed Lemur. The Crowned Sifakas had a three-month old baby, clinging warily to its mother's back. The Coquerel's Sifakas were busy feeding on the 'shaving brush' flowers of *Syzygium* (formerly *Eugenia*) *jambos*, while the Common Brown Lemurs tucked into Guava flowers. Another plant we admired was a purple-flowering shrub *Vernonia appendiculata*. In the noctarium, Grey Mouse Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur and Greater Dwarf Lemur stirred briefly at our intrusion. Now that tortoises are getting hard to observe in the wild, we were pleased to see two native captive species here: the large Radiated Tortoise and smaller Spider Tortoise. We also stopped to admire a young Oustalet's Chameleon. Also worthy of mention was a Brown Rat by the stream.

Over lunch at the Lemur Park, we saw a Hamerkop fly overhead, perhaps heading for the huge nest we had seen earlier. The park offered an introduction to some common birds: Souimanga Sunbird, Malagasy White-eye, Red

(Madagascan) Fody, Common Jery, Mascarene Martin, Malagasy Coucal, Common Myna, Malagasy Brush Warbler and Malagasy (Malachite) Kingfisher and a couple of surprises – a Madagascan Hoopoe in flight and a pair of Madagascan Partridge, skulking in the leaf litter. Brown-throated Sand Martins were also noted.

After lunch at the Lemur Park, we set off back towards the capital to join the RN7, the main road winding south through the backbone of the island's mountainous interior. We paused by a lake to observe a large flock of Red-billed Teal, a few White-faced Whistling Duck, a Madagascan Stonechat and Malagasy Kestrel. Soon, we were enjoying the sweeping vistas typical of Madagascar's high plateau region. Smooth granite inselbergs formed a backdrop to the fertile rice paddies. We passed roadside stalls where locals skilfully crochet hats and bags from raffia. We arrived just before dark at Antsirabe, the 'Place of Big Salt', where we checked into the Soa Guesthouse, a comfortable family-run lodging whose hostess made us welcome and cooked a sumptuous dinner for the group. After dinner we debated the viability of witnessing the lunar eclipse – in the event it was cloudy.

Day 4

Monday 28th September

Antsirabe to Ranomafana

Weather: warm and sunny. We were on the road by 7.30 to continue the drive south. The mountain scenery was punctuated by changing scenes from village life. Zebu cattle, important symbols of wealth, were ploughing and softening the hard-baked clay of the rice paddies, prior to the planting out of rice seedlings. The Indonesian origin of Madagascar's highland people is evident in the way the paddies are stacked up the hillsides in terraces. We stopped by a village and were joined by a gaggle of children, who came to check out the 'vazaha', the Malagasy name for foreigners.

Next we stopped at a forest of native *Tapia* trees (*Uapaca bojeri*). Madagascar's native silk worm feeds on the leaves of this fire-resistant tree, which also produces an edible fruit. This was a good place to break the journey and taking a short walk we spotted a pair of Stonechat, a flock of Common Jery and a Souimanga Sunbird male, showing off his iridescent head and neck. We heard our first Madagascan Cuckoo but failed to locate it. Continuing south, Desi pointed out the bridge that was bombed during the 2001 political crisis. Arriving at the historic town of Ambositra, we stopped to watch skilled wood carvers at work and several of the group bought souvenirs.

Still journeying south, we stopped by a fragment of rainforest and a small pond and marsh with a handful of shy Red-billed Teal. Here we observed Stripe-throated Jery, Madagascan Stonechat, Madagascan Buzzard, Malagasy Kestrel, Madagascan Cisticola and Madagascan Wagtail.

After lunch at the rustic Ialatsara Forest Lodge, we watched several spectacular Citrus Swallowtail butterflies flitting to and fro. A small brown Dwarf (Day) Gecko and a handsome Lined Day Gecko kept us entertained over lunch, which included goats cheese made on site. We got a brief view of a Malagasy Green Sunbird and a pair of Madagascan Cuckooshrike and Chabert's Vanga. Desi and Paul glimpsed a Cuckoo Roller in flight. One of the restaurant staff took us to admire three splendid Blue-legged Chameleons – while some of the group were photographing the male, the female unrolled her long tongue, grabbing an insect with a suction-cap tip.

Continuing the journey, we passed Ambohimahaso (meaning: 'the place that brings good things'), where we watched hundreds of Dimorphic Egret, Cattle Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron roosting and nesting on

some trees in the village. Purple Heron, Sooty Falcon and Olive Bee-eater were also noted by members of the group.

The last stage of the journey brought us down the escarpment to the village of Ranomafana (meaning: 'hot water') and the Centrest Hotel. After dinner, some went straight to bed, while Cathy and others in the group went in search of the hotel's garden nightlife with a cute little White-spotted Tree Frog, a large moth with red spots and a half-dozen Stick Insects.

Day 5

Tuesday 29th September

Ranomafana National Park

Weather: cloudy in the morning; sunny in the afternoon. After an early breakfast, we gathered in the car park where Desi and Mark spotted a pair of Lesser Vasa Parrots and some African Palm Swifts. We were joined by National Park guide Jean-Chry who started the day's wildlife sightings with a very obliging Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher, perched by the side of the road. This is a forest kingfisher, usually quite confiding though often a difficult bird to find. We drove to the Talatakely (translates as 'Little Tuesday') entrance to Ranomafana National Park. While Desi was sorting out tickets for the reserve, Jean-Chry sent lemur spotters Bako and Ju ahead, and the group took advantage of the open views around the car park to look for birds. A pair of Madagascan Starlings perched for us, a flock of Malagasy White-eye were feeding while restless Malagasy Bulbuls moved from tree to tree. Madagascan Magpie-Robin, Common Newtonia and Rand's Tetraka were also noted.

We descended on a steep trail to the Namorona River, and crossed the torrent by a new footbridge, the previous one having been taken out during a cyclone. From the bridge we could make out the silhouette of a pair of Madagascan Blue Pigeon on a dead branch of a distant tree. Here too, we found a Nose-horned Chameleon, a diminutive species, and a spectacular orchid *Oenea rosea*. Nearby, Jean-Chry produced a tiny Brown Leaf Chameleon, superbly camouflaged against a tree trunk. Without the knowledge and experience of the reserve guides, we'd have no hope of spotting this species. Waiting for the lemur spotters to report, we watched a Red-tailed Vanga and Madagascan Cuckooshrike in action. Soon we were off at speed in search of a group of Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur that Bako had found. I could barely conceal my excitement as it would be the first time I'd see this species at Ranomafana. The National Park's steep mountain slopes are clad in mid-altitude rainforest and, as Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs are a canopy species, finding them is often down to luck. This lethargic group of three were draped over the boughs of a tree high in the canopy. As they stirred from time to time for a scratch, a spot of grooming or a shift in posture, we got glimpses of their faces and prominent, almost dog-like, noses.

There's only so much neck-craning you can do, and our cue to move on was the raucous call of a Blue Coua gliding from tree to tree in search of insects and small reptiles. Nearby, an even noisier pair of Lesser Vasa Parrots were intent on mating. Jean-Chry suggested we continue the search for Ranomafana's signature species, Golden Bamboo Lemur and, as we walked back along the path, we stopped to watch a Crossley's Vanga foraging in the leaf-litter below a tangle of twigs. Jocelyn had misheard the name and thereafter we referred to it as the 'Crossed-legs Vanga'! Most of us got decent views of a Pollen's Vanga on its nest and Ward's Flycatcher as we approached a thicket of bamboo, the habitat for Golden Bamboo Lemur, a new species recognised by scientists in 1986. Madagascar's seven types of bamboo can contain up to 16% cyanide, yet are the preferred food for at least three lemur species – it is believed that they ingest soil to help deal with the toxins. And there in front of us,

perched on a branch, was a Golden Bamboo Lemur whose celebrity status had attracted rather a crowd of admirers. As word came in that our lemur spotters had also found the rarer and more-diffcult-to-see Greater Bamboo Lemur, we were off once again along Ranomafana's roller-coaster trails to where they were resting in a bamboo thicket. This was a father and daughter couple so not a viable breeding pair, which is of great concern to the park's staff. Several attempts had been made to introduce a new mate but without success. It was now time to return to the Golden Bamboo Lemurs, where all three of the family group were now in view, among them a playful youngster.

Other highlights of this busy morning were a large white Swallowtail butterfly, and two frogs: Madagascar Jumping Frog and a Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog. To round off this fantastic and varied morning of wildlife, Jean-Chry found a Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko, a perfect dead-leaf mimic and master of deception. How do the guides spot them? we all wanted to know. It was now time to return to the hotel for a late lunch and a bit of relaxation.

Later in the afternoon, we drove to the Vohiparara entrance to the park where the terrain is easier, which we welcomed after the exertions this morning. We stopped by the road to watch a mixed feeding flock of Red-fronted Coua, Nelicourvi Weaver, Green Jery, Blue Vanga, Malagasy Bulbul and Chabert's Vanga. Once on the trail, we spotted four Giraffe-necked Weevil including a pair mating on a *Dichaetanthera cordifolia* (Melastomataceae family). Pausing to check movement in a distant tree, Mark found a family group of Red-bellied Lemur – well done Mark! We approached quietly and enjoyed a wonderful encounter as the group of four, plus a baby, who foraged, groomed and then settled down in a group huddle. The males have distinct white tear-drop patches below the eye while the females are paler on the belly but both are a glorious chestnut colour overall. We also spotted two further bird species, a Forest Rock Thrush male perched on a branch and a Madagascan Cuckoo Hawk in flight.

On our way out of the park, trainee lemur spotter Sylvia slipped and fell. Clearly she was in a lot of pain and had to be carried out of the park, so we decided our driver should take her back to the village as soon as possible so she could get examined by a doctor. The driver dropped us by the waterfall on the edge of the escarpment, where we looked at plants growing on a damp cliff-face by the road: a native *Bryophyllum (Kalanchoe) peltatum*, Dancing Ladies Orchid (*Cynorkis purpurescens*), a purple-flowering *Streptocarpus hilsenbergii*, an orange Tasselflower (*Emilia citrina*) and a Madagascan Sundew (*Drosera madagascariensis*). Here too we found several very vocal Madagascar Bright-eyed Frogs – fascinating to watch their vocal sacs inflating. A Nelicourvi Weaver darted in and out of its nest suspended over the road and we photographed another Forest Rock Thrush. Suspended above the road, we found Mistletoe Cactus (*Rhipsalis baccifera*), Madagascar's only native cactus. From the waterfall, we walked slowly downhill and, as dusk fell, began to look for nocturnal Brown Mouse Lemurs by torchlight. These tiny tea-cup-sized primates are among the smallest on earth and they are Madagascar's most abundant lemurs. Yet, they can be annoyingly difficult to observe as they scurry at speed along the branches of the understorey and, moreover, are capable of spectacular leaps. In no time at all, we had clocked up eight of them, but getting a half-decent photograph was another matter. Everyone agreed that chameleons are more cooperative – at night some species sleep on spindly branches overhanging the road, where they roll up their tails and turn ghostly pale. O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon and Blue-legged Chameleon were much admired and photographed, along with a more discreet Nose-horned Chameleon. Back at the hotel car park, fire-flies were dancing and we found a spectacular large moth.

Over dinner we took time to go over all we had seen during this fantastic first day in Ranomafana's forests.

Day 6

Wednesday 30th September

Ranomafana National Park

Weather: sunny in the morning; cloudy in the afternoon. After breakfast, we decided to head for Vohiparara for the best chance of seeing Milne-Edwards' Sifaka. It was a fine morning, with any threads of mist soon dispersing as we drove up the valley to the park entrance. While Bako and Ju went ahead to look for lemurs, we ambled along the flat paths, enjoying a variety of bird species: Blue Coua, Cuckoo Roller, Common Newtonia, Red-tailed Vanga, Nelicourvi Weaver and Wedge-tailed Jery. We took time over a rewarding encounter with Spectacled Tetraka and Long-billed Bernieria as they combed the trunk and branches of a small tree, looking for insects. A Henst's Goshawk flew overhead calling and we half hoped that lemurs might respond with their alarm call but no, the forest was eerily silent. Locating lemurs is more challenging in Vohiparara because there are far fewer visitors, fewer trails and a lower canopy, with correspondingly denser understorey growth. And furthermore, mobile phone signals are very patchy here, meaning that our lemur spotters would have to run to find us to let us know of any sightings. But this is all part of the chase and challenge of wildlife viewing in Madagascar and I, for one, prefer it that way. Meanwhile, we'd had great views of two Eastern Red Forest Rats scuttling along the path ahead of us. Sometimes shy, sometimes confiding, these native rodents are commonly seen at Ranomafana. We'd also marvelled at the clear-running streams, lined with Screw-pines *Pandanus* (Madagascar has 26 species) and Tree Ferns (*Cyathea*), of which the island has 49 endemic species! In a slow-flowing stretch of water, we found a large brown Grandidier's Brook Frog. Even though we hadn't yet seen a lemur this morning, everyone was enjoying just being there and taking in the other amazing and often quirky rainforest flora and fauna that Jean-Chry and his helpers were showing us.

Just as we were convinced that the lemurs were on strike and out to avoid us, a group of seven Milne-Edwards' Sifakas came into view close to the path. Joint holders of the 'Largest Lemur' title, with Indri and Diademed Sifaka, the sight of a Milne-Edwards' Sifaka's orange-red eyes peering down at you is thrilling. The juveniles in the group were curious, even audacious, coming to within a few yards of us. The adults were more interested in foraging, using their long hindlimbs for grip, and stretching out their forelimbs to snatch clusters of leaves. Then, exhausting the potential of one tree, they'd bound to the next, in acrobatic leaps of many metres, landing vertically on the trunk.

After this memorable encounter, everyone was ready to return to the village for lunch. As we left the reserve we came across Pollen's Vanga, Blue Vanga, Blue Coua and a female Velvet Asity. We made a short detour to look at the brightly coloured Baron's Painted Mantella frog. After lunch and a short rest, we drove to Talatakely to explore further the main section of the park, stopping en route to rescue a young female Two-banded (Belted) Chameleon crossing the busy road. Once inside the National Park, we started with some excellent views of a White-throated Oxylabes pair in the undergrowth by the path, and a Spectacled Tetraka foraging for insects. We examined Giraffe-necked Weevil egg parcels, carefully rolled up, sealed and dropped at the foot of their food shrub *Dichaetanthera cordifolia*. We encountered a small group of resting Red-fronted Brown Lemur huddled on a branch, and several Lowland Forest Rats foraging among the leaf litter. Arriving at Bellevue, we admired the panoramic view over the rainforest canopy, where a couple of Blue Pigeons were perched. Some Emerald Day Geckos were still active around Bellevue. As the light was fading, our lemur spotters appeared in great excitement with news of a Striped Civet nearby. This was quite unusual as these nocturnal mammals, about the

size of a cat, are usually wary. As it peered out at us from the safety of the undergrowth, I had the feeling it was expecting food.

On our way out of the park, Patrick, Desi and Cathy saw Madagascar Wood Rail, while the rest of the group were detained by another Lowland Forest Rat. It was now time to start the night walk and, once again, we were exceptionally lucky with our sightings: Glaw's Chameleon, Deceptive Chameleon, Blue-legged Chameleon and Nose-horned Chameleon; Madagascar Tree Frog, White-lipped Tree Frog and two Brown Mouse Lemurs.

Our group had made a collection of money for Sylvia, the trainee lemur spotter who had fallen and injured herself. It was clear she would not be walking for a while and we wanted to make sure that her medical costs were covered. Desi and Cathy visited her at the family home, a tiny one-room wooden house on the outskirts of Ranomafana village to hand over this group's most generous collection, for which she was hugely grateful.

Day 7

Thursday 1st October

Ranomafana To Isalo

Weather: cloudy, then hot and sunny, ending cloudy at Isalo. Another early rise this morning, though I think we're getting used to dawn starts. Leaving the rainforest, we saw evidence of *Tavy* – the slash and burn that is fragmenting Madagascar's forests at an unsustainable rate. *Tavy* tends to be most evident along the road sides as this is where local people want to farm, to be able to sell any surplus produce for cash to passing traffic. Desi explained how local communities help one another at key times of year, working together during the different stages of labour-intensive rice cultivation. This explains why we would see dozens of people all working together planting out rice seedlings.

At Madagascar's second highland city Fianarantsoa, the drivers took on fuel, while we used the facilities at the Soafia Cafe. Back on the move, we passed the taxi brousse (bush taxi) station, where throngs of overlaid minibuses were preparing to depart, their roof racks piled high with anything from bicycles and sofas to hens and ducks. Leaving the city, many of the rice paddies had been turned to brickworks, and huge smoking brick ovens lined the road. We passed herds of Zebu cattle on a long slow march north to the capital to be sold – in some parts of Madagascar a family's wealth is measured by the size of their herd and Zebu take the place of money.

We passed fields of *Artemisia*, a plant used to treat fever and malaria, but also grown as bio-fuel. In the rice paddies we noticed dark-phase Dimorphic Egrets and stopped to admire a Malagasy Kingfisher. Paul pointed out our first Namaqua Dove, a typical bird of the drier south of Madagascar, which we were now entering. Arriving at the town of Ambalavao, Desi showed us around the Antaimoro paper workshop, where beautiful flower-impregnated paper is made by hand from the pulp of the *Avoha* shrub, following a technique developed by Arab settlers on the coast.

We collected our picnic lunch and drove the short distance to the community reserve at Anja, where a lush forest pocket is sited among granite boulders at the foot of monumental granite domes, reminiscent of those of Yosemite. The forest supports a healthy population of Ring-tailed Lemurs and, at this time of year, they are easy to find as they feed on the flowers of Indian Lilac (*Melia azedarach*), whose heady scent was in the air. Anja is a community reserve, set up by local villagers and benefiting local communities. I've seen huge changes here in the ten years since the reserve began, and the village now has its own school and health post. The local guides led us

to the first of several family groups of Ring-tailed Lemur, where we enjoyed quietly observing them at rest in the boughs of a Fig (*Ficus*). These are social lemurs and grooming and scent-marking, to define their territory and leave messages for one another, are all part of the daily routine. Unlike most of the lemur species we'd observed in Ranomafana, Ring-tails form larger groups and here we were seeing up to 15 adults and juveniles headed by a dominant female. There were also many new-born babies, the youngest clinging to their mother's belly, older ones riding pillion. What makes Anja a particularly rewarding place to see the Ring-tails are the large granite boulders that make a natural adventure playground for these agile and acrobatic lemurs, who are as comfortable on the ground as they are in trees. Moving on to look at a second group, we got superb photo opportunities as several adventurous youngsters began to engage in bouts of arboreal rough-and-tumble.

After viewing the lemurs, we climbed to a viewpoint over the area, following a rocky trail weaving among the giant boulders. At one point we dropped down into a cave, where the lemurs sleep at night. We saw a flock of Grey-headed Lovebirds, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Lark and numerous Pied Crows. The reserve guides showed us a male and female Oustalet's Chameleon – along with Parson's Chameleon, these are the world's largest. A down-turned mouth makes them look rather grumpy – the males are grey-brown but the females more colourful.

Once we'd all reassembled, we enjoyed our picnic lunch under a shady straw canopy but, all too soon, it was time to move on with still several hours' drive ahead of us. Around us, the coarse dry grass, which Zebu find unpalatable, was being burned off to encourage new shoots – this introduced grass has largely replaced the original savannah. We saw flocks of Yellow-billed Kites and Pied Crows around the fires, snatching the insects trying to escape the flames. Patrick pointed out an Olive Bee-eater and Paul noted Madagascar Spine-tails in flight.

After a short stop at Ihosy, the centre for the Bara people, we tackled the long climb to the Horombe Plateau. Soon Isalo's sandstone massif appeared ahead of us in the fading evening light. We arrived at the well-appointed Hotel Jardin du Roi, where we checked into spacious rooms and enjoyed an excellent choice on the dinner menu. Madagascar Nightjar were calling on the path to our rooms.

Day 8

Friday 2nd October

Isalo National Park

Weather: cloudy in the morning, hot and sunny in the afternoon. After the long hot drive yesterday, Linda and Jocelyn opted for a lie-in but Clive, Mark, Patrick, Desi and Cathy were up at sunrise to look for birds by the small lake behind the hotel. It is magical to be there at dawn, watching the sandstone change from purple to pink to orange. Numerous birds were active around the lake: Purple Heron, Squacco Heron, Malagasy Coucal, Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Cisticola, Common Quail, Souimanga Sunbird and Malagasy Kingfisher. Yellow-billed Kites and Malagasy Kestrels were in flight along with Pied Crows and Palm Swifts. A male Benson's Rock Thrush called from the eaves of the hotel Kitchen, giving us our first good views, and a Crested Drongo held forth from the top of a dead tree.

We all met up at breakfast and then set off for the town of Ranohira, which means 'watering place for Ring-tailed Lemurs', which sounded promising. There we picked up our National Park guide Parson and set off for the short drive on a much improved road to the foot of Isalo's sandstone cliffs. We passed yellow-flowering

Acridocarpus excelsus, used to make the face-mask beauty treatment popular with local women, and the fire-resistant *Bismarkia (Medemea) nobilis* palm. A small flock of Olive Bee-eaters overtook us in flight. In the trees shading the car park, Madagascan Magpie-Robin, Madagascan White-eye, Common Jery and Malagasy Bulbul were noted. We set off on foot at a slow pace towards the canyon.

Parson pointed out Flatid Leaf Bugs, that come in candy colours – the juveniles are green and adults pink, while the nymphs are clad in fluffy-white secretions. We admired a Snout Bug and orange and black Plataspid Shield Bugs feeding on an *Albizia gummifera* (Leguminosae). Isalo is famous for its flora with over 1200 plant species found there, of which 15% are endemic to the park and 40% are medicinal. Among the species Parson identified for us were the parasitic vine Laurel Dodder (*Cassytha filiformis*, Lauraceae); a *Lycopodium* sp Clubmoss (Lycopodiaceae); an orange-flowered endemic shrub *Chadsia grevei* (Leguminosae) attracting Souimanga Sunbirds to its nectar; a purple-flowering shrub *Pemphis madagascariensis* (Lythraceae); a *Hibiscus ferrugineus* (Malvaceae) and a pink-flowered *Dendroportulaca mirabilis* (Portulacaceae) mixed with other plants by shamans and burned to keep away malevolent spirits. In the warm sunshine, numerous butterflies were flitting to and fro, a Brilliant Blue, an African Monarch, and a yellow butterfly with black tips (Pieridae).

Arriving in the shade of the forest surrounding the campsite, we encountered a group of Ring-tailed Lemurs, lethargically sprawled over the tree-boughs. While we spent time watching and photographing them, Parson took off to look for other wildlife returning with news of a roosting pair of Torotoroka (Madagascan) Scops Owl in a *Pandanus pulcher*. In this shady spot, we also admired a Broad-tailed Girdled Lizard and three lethargic Red-fronted Brown Lemurs resting in the heat of the day. Continuing the walk further into the gorge, we now descended to a clear-running stream, flanked by the palms *Dyopsis onilabiensis* and *Dyopsis descipiens*. Following the stream, we observed a beautiful blue Emperor dragonfly and a pink dragonfly. Climbing a rocky path with steps cut into the boulders, we arrived at Cascade des Nymphes and its refreshing pool. Clive and Cathy did the honours of being nymphs by taking a dip in the deliciously cool pool, fed by a small waterfall. We noted more unusual plant species: a purple carnivorous bladderwort *Utricularia bisquamata*, a *Drosera* sp, and numerous *Cyathea* tree ferns. We had stunning views of Benson's Rock Thrush by the pool. On the walk back to the bus Paul and Desi saw Peregrine Falcon and a female Madagascan Partridge with two chicks. Cathy and others in the group stopped to admire a Madagascan Buzzard, which flew off down the canyon and tried hard to photograph a restless Brilliant Blue butterfly, its iridescent blue/mauve wings a little worse for wear.

Returning to the hotel for lunch, we then had time for a rest and a swim and then set out late afternoon to explore the hotel grounds and network of canyons and sandstone bluffs behind the hotel. We admired the bulbous water-storing trunks of Elephant's Foot *Pachypodium rosulatum* ssp. *gracilis*, an endemic Aloe *Aloe isaloensis*, Rosy Periwinkle *Catharanthus roseus* (Apocynaceae) and Salotse (*Ischnolepis graminifolia*), the plant that gives Isalo its name. We heard the call of White-throated Rail, a notoriously 'difficult' bird.

We gathered after sundown for drinks in the hotel's bar before dinner. With an early rise scheduled for the morning, everyone turned in straight after dinner.

Day 9

Saturday 3rd October

Isalo to Zombitse National Park & Ifaty

Weather: a cool start to the day, then hot and sunny, humid near the coast. After breakfast in our rooms, we were on the road by 5am, enjoying sunrise over the savanna grasslands. We passed the sapphire mining town of Ilakaka, which exploded from a hamlet to a city in the early years of the recent sapphire boom. As mining operations shift to elsewhere in the region, it is beginning to take on the look of an abandoned shanty town. En route to Zombitse, we stopped by some rice paddies and a stream, where dozens of Malagasy Coucals were sunning themselves perched on the reeds. We spotted a distant Green-backed Heron, several Squacco Herons and African Palm Swift in flight.

The main road cuts through Zombitse National Park, a pocket of dry deciduous forest, sharing some characteristics of rainforest and known as a transitional forest. Not many people bother to stop as isolation and lack of accommodation mean that most visitors arrive during the heat of the day. With an early start, we were there by 7am. From the road, we noted a Crested Coua and Greater Vasa Parrot perched on a dead tree. We started the visit with a couple of roosting White-browed Owls, which got a huge thumbs-up for cuteness. Our guides pointed out a couple of interesting plants: a yellow-flowered *Uncarina decaryi* (Pedaliaceae) whose leaves make a natural shampoo and the seeds are used to trap mice, *Euphorbia enterophora* and *Kalanchoe varenensis*.

On the north side of the park, we explored along a network of easy flat trails, where our guides led us to Hubbard's Sportive Lemur, a nocturnal species that spends the day holed up in a tree cavity or wedged in the fork of a tree, looking far from sportive, it has to be said. After watching a Giant Coua amble across the path, we found a Standing's Day Gecko playing hide-and-seek between the boughs of a baobab. We also noted an Oustalet's Chameleon. Next up was a playful group of seven Verreaux's Sifakas. Vertically clinging and leaping, these gorgeous creamy white lemurs sport dark faces and are sometimes called 'dancing sifakas'. Short forelimbs and long hindlimbs make it impractical for them to walk on all fours so when they need to cross open ground they hop sideways in a quasi-comical 'dancing' motion. Two males in the group were engaged in a tear-away game of tag, leaping from bough to bough. A Lesser Vasa Parrot launched into its liquid song from a high perch, while a Madagascar Cuckoo Roller was spotted in flight overhead. Mark got a quick view of Sickle-billed Vanga but soon our guides had us peering through the undergrowth, where four Appert's Tetraka, a highly localised endemic bird were hopping from branch to branch.

Continuing the journey, we passed rolling hills, dotted with statuesque baobabs and the highly decorative roadside tombs of the Mahafaly people. On the approach to Toliara, we crossed an ancient coral rag plateau, whose scrub vegetation was dominated by *Alluaudia comosa*, a species endemic to the area.

We took lunch and a guided walk at the Antsokay Arboretum, set up by a Swiss botanical enthusiast. Covering four hectares, the reserve boasts 90% regional endemic species and 85% have medicinal properties. For the first-time visitor, walking among these weird and wonderful trees is a lesson in the extremes to which plants will go to adapt to hostile conditions. Fara, the guide, pointed out some of the specialities of the reserve: a natural bonsai *Operculicarya pachypus* (Anacardiaceae); a *Delonix floribunda* (Leguminosae) which photosynthesises on the trunk and is used to make musical instruments as the timber has good resonance; *Euphorbia tirucalli* (formerly *E.laro*), with a sticky white sap, a characteristic of many of that family; *Commiphora aprevalii* (Burseraceae) whose peeling bark gives it the name 'Vazaha (foreigner)' tree; the False Baobab (*Moringa drouhardii*, Moringaceae); *Pachypodium lamerei*

(Apocynaceae) whose trunk can attain a circumference of 2m; *Cyphostemma montagnacii* (Vitaceae) with a flattened bulbous water-storing trunk; the Lala Palm (*Hyphaena coriacea*, Arecaceae) whose leaves are used for thatching and basket-weaving; *Jatropha mabafalensis* (Euphorbiaceae) a tree whose seeds produce biodiesel; the deciduous 'Compass Tree' (*Alluandia montagnacii*, Didieraceae) with heart-shaped leaves that looks more like a cactus; *Euphorbia allaudii* subsp. *onoclada* (formerly *E. onoclada*) which photosynthesises through its sausage-shaped branches – it doesn't even bother to produce any leaves; Katrafay (*Cedrelopsis grevei*, Meliaceae), with a common cure for backache and rheumatism in its leaves; *Pluchea grevei* (Asteraceae) – a cure for the common cold!

In spite of the mounting heat, Sakalava Weavers were collecting nest material and we noted Magpie-Robin, Subdesert Brush Warbler, Souimanga Sunbird and a Malagasy Kestrel admiring its reflection in a window. Fara also showed us a pair of Madagascan Nightjar with two babies, perfectly camouflaged in the leaf-litter, a Changeable Day Gecko, a Spiny-tailed Iguanid and a Gravenhorst's Skink. Over lunch, we watched Olive Bee-eaters swoop down to drink from the swimming pool.

After lunch, we passed the bustling city of Toliara, then headed north on the somewhat improved dirt road to Ifaty. We stopped by a pond to observe Black-winged Stilt, White-fronted Plover, Kittlitz's Plover, Three-banded Plover, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Dimorphic Egret and Whimbrel. Along the way we passed the fishing villages of the Vezo people, their reed huts scattered over the sand dunes. Arriving at the seaside Hotel Paradisier, we checked in and had a rest and swim, some of the group electing to take a stroll on the beach. At dusk we went to look for Grey-Brown Mouse Lemurs emerging from their daytime roost. Wide-eyed and wary, these diminutive primates are most active at dusk and we watched as they leapt away and, in a flash, disappeared from view.

Day 10

Sunday 4th October

Ifaty

Weather: hot and breezy. We were up at first light for pre-breakfast bird watching at the Reniala private reserve, a 20-minute drive north of our hotel. Adjacent to the village of Ifaty, visitors can explore a small pocket of protected spiny forest, where the guides are expert at finding Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert Mesite, two local rarities confined to this corner of the island. Abundant leaf litter forms an ideal foraging ground for these ground-dwelling birds, both of which are under threat because of habitat loss. Also typical of this forest are *Givotia madagascariensis*, used to make dug-out canoes, and red-barked *Adansonia rubrostipa* baobabs and we noted that several of the larger examples had hand-holds cut into their huge swollen trunks allowing locals to climb and pick the fruits.

We walked along a sandy track to the entrance to the reserve, where local guide Vongy was waiting for us. We observed terrestrial Running Coua foraging among the leaf litter and, because the forest isn't yet in leaf, the birds are much easier to observe. Soon one of Vongy's helpers called us and we set off at speed through the thorny scrub (long-sleeves essential!) to view a local endemic of the area, Subdesert Mesite. And, not one but 10 of these magnificent birds, roosting in a row on an eye-level branch. Obliging, they allowed us to photograph them at will and in stunning early morning light. Then, in a flash, they were gone, flying off in all directions to begin foraging. This was an unforgettable moment and even our guides were impressed. Later we found two of the group of 10 perched in sunshine on a branch.

Next up was an equally scarce Long-tailed Ground Roller, ambling among the leaf-litter, showing its splendid blue feathers and incredibly long tail. Adding to a rewarding morning of bird watching were Thamnornis, Archbold's Newtonia, Common Newtonia, Common Jery, Crested Coua, White-headed Vanga and a pair of wailing Sickle-billed Vanga chased off by a Malagasy Kestrel. Just when we thought we'd seen everything, Vongy pointed to a Banded Kestrel perched in beautiful light on the top of a spiny Didieraceae branch – another scoop of the day. We'd been so busy with the birds that we'd hardly spared a thought for the spiny forest itself with numerous Octopus Trees (*Didierea madagascariensis*), tree-sized Aloes (*Aloe divaricata*) and statuesque Elephant's Foot (*Pachypodium geayi*). We noted a large-eyed nocturnal Bark Gecko skulking under a shard of bark, a Spiny-backed (Warty) Chameleon, and a Clearwing Butterfly (*Acraea* sp).

After a late breakfast at the hotel, we had time to relax and watch the constant parade of birds along the shore: Greater Sand Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Ringed Plover, Kittlitz's Plover and Little Stint. In the afternoon, we explored the grounds of the hotel and an adjacent pond where we found Namaqua Dove, Souimanga Sunbird, Madagascar Lark, Malagasy Kestrel, Crested Drongo, Malagasy Bulbul, Three-banded Plover, Common Greenshank and Common Sandpiper. At nightfall, some of the group again witnessed Mouse Lemurs emerging from their daytime roosts. Over dinner, there was a flurry of excitement when a Madagascar Ground Boa crossed the hotel reception.

Day 11

Monday 5th October

Ifaty to Tana and on to Andasibe

Weather: hot and sunny, cooler in the highlands. After an early breakfast, we gathered in the car park and luggage was loaded on the bus ready for our departure. We watched a Madagascar Hoopoe and Crested Coua sunning themselves, and a flock of Grey-headed Lovebirds landed in a tree overlooking the swimming pool. During the journey to the airport, a pair of Hoopoes flew in front of the bus and we passed several Yellow-billed Kites warming up in the sun. We said our farewells to our very amenable and competent driver, who now had a long solo drive back to the capital. During the flight we looked down on Madagascar's parched southern interior and the many soil-laden rivers draining to the Mozambique Channel.

After collecting bags at Antananarivo, we loaded the luggage onto the bus and set off heading east on a winding road. We passed endless Eucalyptus groves, coppiced to produce charcoal, and we noted smoke rising where charcoal ovens had been dug. We passed a steady stream of Great Egret, Cattle Egret and Dimorphic Egret feeding in the rice paddies. At Manjakandriana, we broke the journey and Desi identified a small frog we found as a Mascarene Rocket Frog. We stopped again at the bridge over the River Mangoro, where a Common Sandpiper was bobbing on the rocks and we observed both Mascarene and Brown-throated Sand Martins in flight, with a brief flash of a Malagasy Kingfisher. We passed a Famadihana 'Turning of the Bones' procession, in which the bones of departed relatives are exhumed from their tombs and placed in a clean shroud. They are then taken on a tour of the village and their land before being re-interred. This is a mostly happy celebration to which all relatives are invited and attend a feast.

Late in the afternoon we arrived at Vakona Lodge, where we checked into comfortable lodge-style rooms. After recent rainfall, we hoped for a productive night walk and, at dusk, Cathy and most of the group explored the hotel grounds, spotting numerous *Guibemantis timidus* Pandanus Frogs, an Owl Moth, a cricket and a centipede. Paul surprised a snake on a tree trunk by the path, which proved to be a Lined Forest Snake.

After today's long journey, most of the group were ready for an early night.

Day 12

Tuesday 6th October

Andasibe Mantadia National Park

Weather: warm and sunny. We woke to a fine, clear morning and, after an early breakfast, assembled in the car park where we watched Mascarene Martins collecting nesting material. We heard our first Indri call, surely one of Madagascar's most evocative rainforest sounds. At the entrance to Analamazaotra Indri Reserve, we met our guide Maurice who, together with Desi, would spend the next days showcasing the rainforest flora and fauna of the park. If our first morning's sightings were anything to go by, we would not be disappointed.

We started with a succession of good bird sightings: Rand's Tetraka calling from a tree-top perch, Rainforest Scops Owl roosting under a fern, a flock of restless Madagascan White-eyes flitting from tree to tree, a pale phase male Paradise Flycatcher, Malagasy Coucal, a Red-fronted Coua crossing the path ahead of us, Blue Vanga and a Lesser Vasa Parrot perched in the open. Soon Maurice had located a family of very sleepy nocturnal Eastern Woolly Lemurs to show us, followed by our first sighting of Indri, a family group of two with a baby, which we were all able to observe as they fed on leaves, before they bounded away in spectacular leaps from trunk to trunk. We followed them for a while but then got waylaid by a playful group of six Diademed Sifaka grouped together on a broad horizontal branch. From a respectful distance, we observed these most strikingly coloured lemurs grooming, socialising and resting. Finally, we stumbled on a young Common Brown Lemur feeding low down but the rest of his group nowhere to be seen. At Lac Vert, we found iridescent green damselflies flitting over the water, a stunning Banded Blue Swallowtail butterfly, a Kite Spider on its web spanning the path and a Madagascar Tree Boa sunning itself. We also enjoyed photographing a splendid male Parson's Chameleon and a Praying Mantis.

After lunch some went to the swimming pool, while others to Lemur Island, to experience an 'in your face' encounter with Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs, Grey Bamboo Lemurs and Red-fronted Brown Lemurs rescued from the pet trade.

At dusk we gathered for a night walk at the Mitsinjo Reserve. Mitsinjo is a community association that manages a tract of rainforest and engages in reforestation with tree nurseries and replanting among its projects. With recent rainfall we anticipated a good variety of nightlife. Maurice started with a young female Parson's Chameleon shedding its skin – a process that takes several weeks. Maurice explained that this species can live to be five or six years old. Next we saw a shrub *Harungana (Haronga) madagascariensis* being devoured by an army of stick insects. We admired a splendid Jewel Beetle. Maurice and Desi have amazing eyes and soon we were gazing at a Stump-tailed Brown Leaf Chameleon, almost indistinguishable from the leaf litter until it moved. Next we observed a tiny frog *Mantidactylus* sp, a White-bellied Chameleon and three Dumeril's Bright-eyed Frogs perched on leaves. Finally, we were treated to a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko, a nocturnal species that during the day makes itself invisible against the mossy bark of a tree trunk, where it rests upside down. We enjoyed good views of two nocturnal lemurs spotted by Desi: a family of three Woolly Lemurs high in the canopy and a Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur, foraging. Not a bad haul for a 90-minute nocturnal amble!

Day 13

Wednesday 7th October

Andasibe Mantadia National Park

Weather: cloudy in the morning, then hot and sunny. After an early breakfast, we set off by 4WD jeeps to Mantadia National Park for a full morning in a primary rainforest reserve. The dirt track to access the park is rutted and the slow speed meant good opportunities to look for wildlife along the way. Our first sighting was a pair of Pygmy Kingfishers perched on a branch overhanging the road and those ready with cameras got great photos. The recent rainfall had encouraged a mass emergence of green Pill Millipedes along the road – when disturbed they roll into a tight ball, indeed their scientific order *Sphaerotheriida* means 'ball'.

From the car park we entered Mantadia's primary rainforest along a valley-floor trail, flanked by huge buttressed trees festooned with epiphytic *Asplenium* ferns and orchids. Giant stands of *Pandanus*, a tangle of lianas and many tree ferns lined the forest floor. Early October is not the season for tenrecs, yet Maurice had found one for us just by the path – a Lowland Streaked Tenrec. Nearby, we noted a *Jumellea punctata*, a delicate white epiphytic orchid with a long nectary, and a clubmoss *Lycopodium* sp, which Maurice assured us would alleviate asthma! We paused to admire a large Black Millipede while Maurice went in search of a group of Red-bellied Lemur, but they'd moved off before we arrived on the scene. While waiting for news of lemurs, we enjoyed some spectacular bird sightings as a mixed flock passed over: Tylas Vanga, Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Blue Vanga and Nuthatch Vanga. We also got close views of a delightful male Madagascan Flufftail, a secretive but not uncommon rail.

Mantadia, meaning 'tough walking', lives up to its name when you ascend the steep ridges on either side of the valley. Fortunately, Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs prefer the valley, where large mature trees offer their preferred diet of fruit and flowers. Maurice and Desi are expert at locating them, as they know where to find their feeding sites, and soon we were craning necks to the canopy, where a pair of these stunning lemurs were feeding on a *Mammea bongo* (Calophyllaceae). We watched as they climbed in and out of view, feeding and then pausing to rest. As one of the pair moved into view lower down, we were able to get good photographs. Continuing our forest walk, we found a group of six very acrobatic Diademed Sifakas, whose antics kept us enthralled. Dropping to the forest floor they appeared to be eating soil, perhaps to neutralise toxins, then embarking on a high-speed chase from trunk to trunk, stopping to groom and socialise. You know you've witnessed something extraordinary when there's total silence and no one says a word.

Eventually we emerged from the forest close to the former graphite mine, where a secluded pond is home to a pair of Madagascan Little Grebe and their chick and a pair of Common Moorhen. Skulking at the rear of the pond we also noted four Meller's Duck, a threatened species and usually quite shy. We found a shady spot to eat our picnic lunch, prepared by the hotel. Over lunch, we observed Nelicourvi Weaver, Madagascan Starling, Madagascan Spine-tail and Paul spotted a rare Yellow-browed Oxylobes. Back at the car park, we observed many butterflies including a yellow/green with red markings *Graphium cyrnus*, a rather scruffy brown and white butterfly, a black and white butterfly with a prominent red spot, an orange and brown one and a yellow one, all of which Patrick and Cathy attempted to photograph with limited success. On our drive back some of the group got a fleeting glimpse of Grey Bamboo Lemur.

Returning to the hotel, we had some down-time to rest and reflect, before we gathered for a night walk at the Andasibe Community Reserve with Desi and Maurice. Again, we benefited not only from the knowledge of our

two very experienced guides, but also their incredible skills as spotters. We started with a huge Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog on the path, a young female Parson's Chameleon, a Lion Moth and a 10cm long Pill Millipede – apparently they are long-lived though ones this size are seldom seen. On the lemur front, we did exceptionally well with lovely views of Goodman's Mouse Lemur, a Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur feeding on the fruits of an *Anthochysta* sp and a very unusual sighting of Weasel Sportive Lemur, a species that is difficult to observe at Andasibe. We also photographed an *Aeranthus* sp orchid.

Day 14

Thursday 8th October

Andasibe Mantadia National Park

Weather: warm and sunny. We elected for another early rise to make the most of our last morning in the Analamazaotra Indri Reserve, and once the bags were loaded on the coach, we were off. There was still one lemur species we had not yet observed: Grey Bamboo Lemur, though widespread, can be puzzlingly elusive and we knew that Paul would not be going home until he'd seen at least one! To increase our chances and cover more ground we opted to divide into two groups.

The morning's bird sightings were good: Madagascan Cisticola, Magpie-Robin, Bulbul, Green Sunbird, Cuckooshrike, Long-billed Tetraka collecting nesting material, Crested Drongo, Nelicourvi Weaver displaying, Nuthatch Vanga, Paradise Flycatcher devouring a cricket, Blue Coua, Common Moorhen and, at last, a sighting of White-throated Rail.

Climbing to the plateau area, we found a group of five Indri feeding in the canopy. After a while they launched into their unforgettable symphony of piercing territorial calls, audible over a mile away and at close range almost deafening. As more and more people gathered to observe the Indri, we felt it appropriate to move off in search of other species and soon Maurice had located a very sleepy family of Woolly Lemurs, followed by a group of Common Brown Lemurs on the move. We also photographed an iridescent blue Damselfly and an *Angraecum* orchid. Patrick pointed out a black butterfly and a white butterfly and we photographed a brown butterfly with an orange spot. A snake *Liopholidophis* sp was also noted.

By now, time was running out and Maurice's group were about to leave the reserve when we were distracted by movement in the shrubs to our left. And there at the eleventh hour was a group of Grey Bamboo Lemur, feeding just yards from the path. While Maurice phoned Desi, the rest of us got wonderful views of what are arguably one of the cutest lemurs and Clive, Patrick and Mark did the honours with the photography. Shortly, we were joined by Paul and Desi who had passed by the same spot just minutes earlier. Everyone agreed this was a fitting finale to a Naturetrek Lemurs Tour.

Over lunch at Feony'Ala Restaurant, we saw Purple Heron and a spectacular Leaf Moth fell from the rafters onto Jocelyn, then dropped to the ground. After lunch we shopped for vanilla and rum, then all too soon it was time for the long, winding journey back to Tana. We made a quick stop at the craft market before a rest and dinner at Combava. Then it was time to say goodbye to Desi, who'd worked tirelessly to ensure the smooth-running of the tour, and generously shared so much of his knowledge of Madagascar's wildlife with us.

Day 15

Friday 9th October

Flying home

With thanks to a truly delightful group of wildlife enthusiasts: Paul, Jocelyn, Clive, Linda, Mark and Patrick. Your enthusiasm for searching out, spotting, identifying and appreciating Madagascar's wildlife was unsurpassed!

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Verreaux's Sifaka at Zombitse

Species Lists

Lemurs (✓ = recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October													
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	Grey-brown Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus griseorufus</i>								2	2					
2	Brown (Rufous) Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus rufus</i>			8	2										
3	Goodman's Mouse Lemur	<i>Microcebus lehilahytsara</i>											1			
4	Crossley's /Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur	<i>Cheirogalus crossleyi</i>										1	1			
5	Weasel Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur mustelinus</i>											1			
6	Hubbard's Sportive Lemur	<i>Lepilemur hubbardorum</i>								3						
7	Eastern Grey (Lesser) Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur griseus</i>											1	3		
8	Golden Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>			3											
9	Greater Bamboo Lemur	<i>Hapalemur simus</i>			2											
10	Ring-tailed Lemur	<i>Lemur catta</i>					25+	15								
11	Common Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>										1		5		
12	Red-fronted Brown Lemur	<i>Eulemur rufus</i>				6		3								
13	Red-bellied Lemur	<i>Eulemur rubriventer</i>			5+1											
14	Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur	<i>Varecia variegata variegata</i>			3											
15	Southern Black-and-white Ruffed L.	<i>Varecia variegata editorum</i>											2			
16	Eastern Woolly Lemur	<i>Avahi laniger</i>										6		3		
17	Verreaux's Sifaka	<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>								7						
18	Diademed Sifaka	<i>Propithecus diadema</i>										6+1	10			
19	Milne-Edwards' Sifaka	<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>				8										
20	Indri	<i>Indri indri</i>											2+1	H	5	

Other Mammals

1	Fanaloka (Striped Civet)	<i>Fossa fossana</i>				1										
2	Lowland Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys audeberti</i>				4										
3	Eastern Red Forest Rat	<i>Nesomys rufus</i>			1	4										
4	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	1													
5	Lowland Streaked Tenrec	<i>Hemicentetes semispinosus</i>											1			

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October												
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

1	Madagascar Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus pelzelinii</i>						1	1							
2	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	1						1				1			
3	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		6												
4	Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>							1							
5	Great (White) Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	15	1							10			1		
6	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓				✓			✓			✓		
7	Black Egret	<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i>	1													
8	Dimorphic Heron	<i>Egretta dimorpha</i>	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓					
9	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		1			1	1							1	
10	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1													
11	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	✓	10												
12	Meller's Duck	<i>Anas melleri</i>												4		
13	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	10						20	8						
14	Henst's Goshawk	<i>Accipiter henstii</i>				1							H	H		
15	Madagascar Harrier- Hawk	<i>Polyboroides radiatus</i>					1									
16	Madagascar Buzzard	<i>Buteo brachypterus</i>		1				1					H	1		
17	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptus</i>		10			✓	✓	✓	✓	1					
18	Madagascar Cuckoo Hawk	<i>Aviceda madagascariensis</i>			1											
19	Banded Kestrel	<i>Falco zoniventris</i>								1						
20	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>						1								
21	Malagasy Kestrel	<i>Falco newtoni</i>	3	2			2	10	2	3						
22	Sooty Falcon	<i>Falco concolor</i>		1												
23	Madagascar Partridge	<i>Margaroperdix madagascariensis</i>	2					1+2								
24	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>						1								
25	Madagascar Wood Rail	<i>Canirallus kioloides</i>				1										
26	Subdesert Mesite	<i>Monias benschi</i>								10						
27	White-throated Rail	<i>Dryolimnas cuvieri</i>						H				H		1		
28	Madagascar Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura insularis</i>												1		

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October													
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
29	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>												2	2	
30	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>									10					
31	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>								8						
32	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			1						1					
33	Kittlitz's Plover	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>								8	2					
34	White-fronted Plover	<i>Charadrius marginatus</i>								1						
35	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>								2	4					
36	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>								4	2					
37	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>								3	1					
38	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		1						1	1	1				
39	Greater Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>									1					
40	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>									1					
41	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
42	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>						2		2	6					
43	Madagascar Blue Pigeon	<i>Alectroenas madagascariensis</i>			2	1										
44	Madagascar Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia picturata</i>							1		1					
45	Grey-headed Lovebird	<i>Agapornis canus</i>						2		10	2	20				
46	Greater Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis vasa</i>							2							
47	Lesser Vasa Parrot	<i>Coracopsis nigra</i>			4	H	2		2							
48	Malagasy Coucal	<i>Centropus toulou</i>				1			2	10	3		3	H		
49	Madagascar Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus rochii</i>		H	H	H							H	H		
50	Green-capped Coua	<i>Coua olivaceiceps</i>								1	2					
51	Running Coua	<i>Coua cursor</i>									2					
52	Red-fronted Coua	<i>Coua reynaudii</i>			1								1			
53	Blue Coua	<i>Coua caerulea</i>			2	4	1						1	H		
54	Crested Coua	<i>Coua cristata</i>								1	2	1				
55	White-browed Owl	<i>Ninox superciliaris</i>					H			2						
56	Rainforest Scops Owl	<i>Otus rutilus</i>											1			
57	Torotoroka Scops Owl	<i>Otus madagascariensis</i>							2							
58	Madagascar Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>					H			2+2						

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			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
59	Madagascar Spine-tail	<i>Zoonavena grandidieri</i>					✓	✓					✓		
60	African Palm Swift (Madag. ssp)	<i>Cypsiurus parvus gracilis</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓						
61	Brown-throated Sand Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	✓	2								✓			
62	Mascarene Martin	<i>Phedina borbonica</i>	1									✓	✓	✓	
63	Malagasy Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo vintsioides</i>		1			2	1				1	2		
64	Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ceyx madagascariensis</i>			1									2	
65	Olive Bee-eater	<i>Merops superciliosus</i>		2			2	✓	12	2		2			
66	Cuckoo Roller	<i>Leptosomus discolor</i>		2					4			H			
67	Pitta-like Ground Roller	<i>Atelornis pittoides</i>				H									
68	Long-tailed Ground Roller	<i>Uratelornis chimaera</i>								1					
69	Velvet Asity	<i>Philepitta castanea</i>				1F									
70	Malagasy Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	H	H	4	2		✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓		
71	Appert's Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis appertii</i>							4						
72	Long-billed Bernieria (Tetraka)	<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>				2								2	
73	Spectacled Tetraka	<i>Xanthomixis zosterops</i>				2									
74	Thamnornis (Subdesert Tetraka)	<i>Thamnornis chloropetoides</i>								1					
75	Yellow-browed Oxylabes	<i>Crossleyia xantrophrys</i>												1	
76	White-throated Oxylabes	<i>Oxylabes madagascariensis</i>				1									
77	Crossley's Vanga	<i>Mystacornis crossleyi</i>			1										
78	Madagascar Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus albospecularis</i>			1		1	2	6	4	2	1		1	
79	Madagascar Hoopoe	<i>Upupa marginata</i>	1					2	1		1				
80	Forest Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei</i>			2										
81	Benson's (Forest) Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola sharpei bensoni</i>						8							
82	Madagascar Stonechat	<i>Saxicola sibilla</i>	1	2			1	1						2	
83	Madagascar Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	3	1	4	2	2				2	8	8		
84	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>				1		3	1			3	3	2	
85	Ward's Vanga	<i>Pseudobias wardi</i>			1	`									
86	Common Newtonia	<i>Newtonia brunneicauda</i>		H	1	1			1	1			5	4	
87	Archbold's Newtonia	<i>Newtonia archboldi</i>								1					
88	Dark Newtonia	<i>Newtonia amphichroa</i>				1									

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			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
89	Madagascan Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cherina</i>		1				3	5	1		6		1	
90	Madagascan Lark	<i>Eremopterix hova</i>					2		✓	1	✓				
91	Subdesrt Brush Warbler	<i>Nesilla lantzii</i>							2	4					
92	Madagascan Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus newtoni</i>	H										4		
93	Malagasy Brush Warbler	<i>Nesillas typica</i>		H	2	H			8						
94	Common Jery	<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	2	6				6	✓	✓				1	
95	Green Jery	<i>Neomixis viridis</i>			2			6							
96	Stripe-throated Jery	<i>Neomixis striatigula</i>		1		1							H		
97	Wedge-tailed Tetraka	<i>Hartertula flavoviridis</i>				1									
98	Rand's Tetraka	<i>Randia pseudozosterops</i>			1							1			
99	Malagasy White-eye	<i>Zosterops maderaspatanus</i>	4		✓		H	1				✓	✓		
100	Malagasy Green Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris notatus</i>		1	1	1			4					1	
101	Souimanga Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris sovimanga</i>	6	4	4	1	1	2	1	4	1	2	2	2	
102	Nuthatch Vanga	<i>Hypositta corallirostris</i>											2	2	
103	White-headed Vanga	<i>Artamella viridis</i>								1					
104	Chabert's Vanga	<i>Leptopterus chabert</i>		1	1	2				1					
105	Blue Vanga	<i>Cyanolanius madagascarinus</i>			1	1						1	1		
106	Sickle-billed Vanga	<i>Falculea palliata</i>							1	4					
107	Rufous Vanga	<i>Schetba rufa</i>											H		
108	Red-tailed Vanga	<i>Calicalicus madagascariensis</i>		1	2							H			
109	Pollen's Vanga	<i>Xenopirostris polleni</i>			1	1									
110	Tylas Vanga	<i>Tylas eduardi</i>			H								1		
111	Madagascan Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina cinerea</i>		2	1	1							1		
112	Madagascan Starling	<i>Hartlaubius auratus</i>			2								3		
113	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
114	Crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>			1	2		2	2	4	1	2	4	1	
115	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	2			✓	
116	Red Fody	<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	4	✓	✓			✓		✓				✓	
117	Sakalava Weaver	<i>Ploceus sakalava</i>							✓	✓					
118	Nelicourvi Weaver	<i>Ploceus nelicourvi</i>			2	1							1		

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October													
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
119	Madagascan Mannikin	<i>Lepidopygia nana</i>						10								

Frogs

1	Madagascar Jumping Frog	<i>Aglypodactylus madagascariensis</i>			1											
2	Mascarene Ridged / Rocket Frog	<i>Ptychadena mascareniensis</i>									1					
3	Madagascar Bright-eyed / Tree Frog	<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>		2	4	2							1			
4	Dumeril's Bright-eyed Frog	<i>Boophis viridis</i>										3	1			
5	White-lipped Bright-eyed (Tree) Frog	<i>Boophis albilabris</i>				1										
6	Baron's Painted Mantella	<i>Mantella baroni</i>				1										
7	A Pandanus Frog	<i>Guibemantis timidus</i>									10					
8	White-spotted frog	<i>Heterixalus alboguttatus</i>			1											
9	A Frog	<i>Mantidactylus sp</i>											1			
10	Grandidier's Madagascar / Brook Frog	<i>Mantidactylus grandidieri</i>			1	1										

Chameleons

1	Brown Leaf / Broad-browed Chameleon	<i>Brookesia superciliaris</i>			1							1				
2	O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>			1											
3	Blue-legged Chameleon	<i>Calumma crypticum</i>		3	1	1										
4	Short-nosed/White-bellied Chameleon	<i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i>										1				
5	a Parson's Chameleon	<i>Calumma parsonii cristifer</i>										2	1			
6	Glaw's Flap-necked Chameleon	<i>Calumma glawi</i>				2										
7	Nose-horned Chameleon	<i>Calumma nasuta</i>		1	2	1										
8	Deceptive Chameleon	<i>Calumma fallax</i>				1										
9	Spiny-backed Chameleon	<i>Furcifer verrucosus</i>									1					
10	Oustalet's Chameleon	<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>	2				3		1							
11	Two-banded / Belted Chameleon	<i>Furcifer balteatus</i>				1										

Lizards, Geckos & Skinks

1	Three-eyed Lizard	<i>Oplurus (Chalarodon) madagascariensis</i>									4					
2	Spiny-tailed Iguana	<i>Oplurus cyclurus</i>		1						1						

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October												
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3	Madagascar Clawless Gecko	<i>Ebenavia inunguis</i>											1		
4	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>			1										
5	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>											1		
6	Madagascar Velvet / Bark Gecko	<i>Blaesodactylus sakalava</i>								1					
7	Lined Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma lineata bifasciata</i>		1	4	1									
8	Peacock /Four-eyed Emerald Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>			2										
9	Standing's Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma standingi</i>								1					
10	Thick-tail / Changeable Day Gecko	<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>								1					
11	a House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>			✓								✓		
12	A Dwarf Gecko	<i>Lygodactylus sp</i>		1											
13	Gravenhorst's Mabuya / Skink	<i>Trachylepis gravenhorstii</i>							1	1					
14	Broad-tailed Girdled Lizard	<i>Zonosaurus laticaudatus</i>							1						

Snakes

1	Lined Forest Snake	<i>Compsophis infralineatus</i>											1		
2	Madagascar Ground Boa	<i>Acrantophis madagascariensis</i>										1			
3	Madagascar Tree Boa	<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>												1	
4	A Snake	<i>Liopholidophis sp</i>													1

Butterflies

1	Madagascar Giant Swallowtail	<i>Pharmacophagus antenor</i>						3		✓	✓				
2	Green & Red butterfly	<i>Graphium cyrnus</i>													1
3	Citrus Swallowtail	<i>Papilio demodocus</i>		✓								✓	✓		
4	Brilliant Blue	<i>Junonia rhadama</i>					1	2							
5	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		1											
6	Red Clearwing	<i>Acraea sp.</i>								1		1	1		
7	African Monarch	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>					1			1					
8	Common Commodore	<i>Precis pelarga</i>			1										
9	Banded Blue Swallowtail	<i>Papilio oribazus</i>											1	1	
10	A Swallowtail (white)				1										

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October													
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
11	A Swallowtail (white & brown)													1		
12	A Butterfly	<i>Salamis anteva</i>												1		
13	A Butterfly	<i>Saribia tepahi</i>				✓						1				
14	A Butterfly (yellow with black tips)	<i>Pieridae sp</i>						1								
15	A Butterfly (yellow)													1		
16	A Butterfly (black with yellow & purple)	<i>Euphaedra sp. (Nymphalidae)</i>						1								
17	A Butterfly (brown with orange spot)	<i>Anthene rubricinctus (Lycaenidae)</i>												1		

Moths

1	Large moth at Centrest gardens	<i>Saturnidae sp</i>			1											
2	Owl Moth	<i>Erebus walkeri</i>									1	2				
3	A moth (red spots)			1												
4	A moth (brown with purple spots)				1											

Other Invertebrates

1	Dragonfly (Red)	<i>Trithemis selika</i>						✓								
2	Dragonfly (Emperor type)	<i>c.f. Anax imperator</i>						1								
3	Dragonfly (Blue)	<i>Orthetrum julia</i>											2			
4	Green Damselfly (iridescent)											1				
5	Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis sp.</i>						1								
6	Cricket										1					
7	Stick Insect	<i>Phasmatodea sp.</i>		6	✓							✓				
8	Giraffe-necked Weevil	<i>Trachelophorus giraffa</i>			4	✓										
9	Rhinoceros Beetle	<i>Oryctes. sp</i>											1			
10	Whirlygig beetle	<i>Gyrinidae</i>											4			
11	Jewel Beetle		1					2				1	1			
12	Snout Bug	<i>Zana tenebrosa</i>						1								
13	Plataspid Shield Bug	<i>Libyaspis coccinnelloides</i>						✓								
14	Flatid Leaf-bug	<i>Phromnia rosea</i>						✓	✓							
15	Firefly	<i>Lampyridae sp.</i>			1	3										

	Common name	Scientific name	September/October													
			27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
16	Giant Black Millipede	-			1	1								1		
17	Madagascar Fire Millipede	<i>Aphistogoniulus sp.</i>				1									2	
18	Pill Millipede	<i>Sphaerotheridae</i>											✓			
19	Madagascar Golden Orb-web Spider	<i>Nephila madagascariensis</i>			✓											
20	Kite / Thorn Spider (orange)	<i>Gasteracanthinae</i>										1				
21	Darwin's Bark Spider	<i>Caerostris darwini</i>			1											
22	Crab										1					



Grey Bamboo Lemur



Hubbard's Sportive Lemur



Indri