



The endangered, rare and enigmatic Anjouan Scops Owl gave us stunning looks – a black owl, fantastic (János Oláh)!

THE COMOROS & NORTHERN MADAGASCAR

20 – 29 SEPTEMBER & 30 SEPTEMBER – 8 OCTOBER 2018

LEADER: JÁNOS OLÁH

This was our fourth tour to explore some of the more remote areas of Northern Madagascar and the Comoro Islands. We were pioneers in the area back in 2008 but even nowadays very few birders visit the Comoros, and even fewer birding companies offer such a comprehensive tour. After completing the first three tours we had plenty of experience to find the birds though the main concern on island-hopping tours is always the flights. We were pretty lucky this time and only had to modify our itinerary slightly due to flight changes. We had an unexpected short visit to Anjouan and had extended long stay on Mayotte. But overall this did not affect the final results! The Comoros has several endemic birds and certainly the four very different looking and sounding scops owls are major targets as well as the unique Humblot's Flycatcher, the distinctive Comoros Thrush and a good selection of drongos, white-eyes, sunbirds and brush warblers. We managed to see all our target species on the Comoros! We also tried hard to see all possible subspecies as well, and we did come close by only missing the *moheliensis* race of the Comoro Cuckooshrike and the Malagasy Brush Warbler. So it was a very successful tour to these islands! On the Madagascar leg of the tour (extension) we

target some special endemics in the remote corners of the island, which is not really possible to incorporate into our main Madagascar tour. The main targets are the Slender-billed Flufftail, Sakalava Rail, Red Owl and the critically endangered Madagascar Pochard and we saw them all on the tour. Depending on logistics some other goodies can be incorporated to the itinerary and this year we added Bernier's Teal, Meller's Duck, Humblot's Heron, Madagascar Fish Eagle, Torotoroka and Rainforest Scops Owls, White-breasted Mesite, Schlegel's Asity and Sickle-billed and Van Dam's Vangas to our fine list. In these remote places we had some rough travelling and also a few days camping, but overall, I think it's fair to say that the trip was a great success. We recorded a total of 172 species out of which 31 (18%) listed as globally threatened species. The Madagascar Pochard and the Madagascar Fish Eagle being listed as critically endangered while the Karthala, Anjouan and Mohéli Scops Owls have just been moved to endangered category (they were formerly critically endangered). We saw plenty of other great wildlife too including a few fabulous species of lemurs, reptiles and amphibians.



'Madagascar' Red Owl was bird of the trip on the Madagascar leg of the tour! Stunning bird! (János Oláh).

Our tour started on Grand Comoro, the largest island of the Comoros. Some of us arrived at Moroni airport in the late afternoon, where the first task was to negotiate the rather tedious immigration but finally we all got through and drove to our seaside hotel. We met some other clients at the hotel who arrived from the Seychelles tour or from other parts of the World. We discussed the plans for the next day and soon retired to bed. We were all mentally ready for the long (dreaded) trek up Mount Karthala. However, we heard some recent information about a new track through the forest and after a lengthy discussion with our local agent in the evening we were hopeful we could cut it shorter! The following day after a very early breakfast we met our local agent and he did managed to organize a suitable transport to attempt the new track up the mountain. So with high hopes we started our ascent in a cosy local vehicle. Indeed there was a new track all the way up to 1600m. We had a few brief stops when our car was struggling, or when we had a flat tyre, but we made it all the way to 1600 meters quite swiftly. What a change from previous tours when they had to climb 1550 meter up (in elevation) and then back down 600 to 1000 meter for camping. This time we only had to hike 400 meter up and about 1000 meter down. This allowed for more birding and less walking though by the end of the day we were still pretty exhausted. On the few brief stops we had to make on our drive up

we scored on Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, a male Cuckoo Roller (until recently it was split as Comoro Cuckoo Roller), Comoro Cuckooshrike, Grand Comoro Brush Warbler and the local form of Comoros Fody. From the end of the track we had to climb another 400 meters to reach the habitat of the Karthala White-eye and it did not take us long to find three of these perky little endemics. In this high elevation, grassy habitat with some forest patches of dwarfed trees we also had Malagasy Harrier and many African Stonechats of the local *voletzkwii* race. Overhead African Palm Swifts and Malagasy Black Swifts were seen. The lure of the view into the caldera was not enough to keep us going up, and with the lure of the white-eye now extinct, we turned back and headed down. We flushed a few Common Quails and saw many Kirk's White-eyes as well as our first Malagasy Turtle Dove. There were still plenty of goodies to find for the afternoon!



One has to get to cc 2000 meters above sea level on Mount Karthala to see this endemic Karthala White-eye (János Oláh).

We were already back down to 1600 meter for quick picnic lunch. Later we started to walk down on the jeep track looking for our remaining targets. The most wanted was definitely the unique Humblot's Flycatcher! It was sunny and midday so bird activity was not great. However we soon had good looks of both Comoros Blue and Comoros Olive Pigeons and stunning male Humblot's Sunbirds. As soon as cloud cover arrived the bird activity got better and we managed to find our first Humblot's Flycatcher and also a fine Comoro Thrush! The three forms of the Comoro Thrush are really distinctive and it's difficult to understand why they are not treated as distinct species (HBW suggest splitting them too!). The flycatcher took us some time to see well but eventually we all had crippling looks of this much sought-after endemic. This handsome bird made it to the top five birds on our Comoros part of the tour. A few Madagascan Spinetails were also seen flying just above the canopy and Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers as well as Grand Comoro Bulbuls also showed up. In the last hour of the day we saw a few more Humblot's Flycatchers and more Grand Comoro Brush Warblers too. We decided to stay at a certain elevation until dusk, and owl our way down to camp once it got dark. This was a good plan and we certainly positioned ourselves perfectly as right at dusk we heard the distinctive call of the Karthala Scops Owl and soon had fantastic views of this endearing owl in the spotlight. Quick success! It was not good for photography however as they were pretty mobile and stayed in the canopy of tall trees. Our mission was completed so we started to walk down to camp. It was still a fair way down and the track was not a very easy to walk. But this allowed us to find yet another pair of scops owls

and these two were slightly more approachable though still stayed high in the canopy. Finally when we arrived to our very basic camp we were certainly ready for the traditional Comoran barbecue, which we were hungry enough to eat. It was not a problem to fall asleep this evening despite the rather uneven terrain. The temperature was perfect however!



The endemic Humblot's Flycatcher (top) and Karthala Scops Owl (János Oláh).

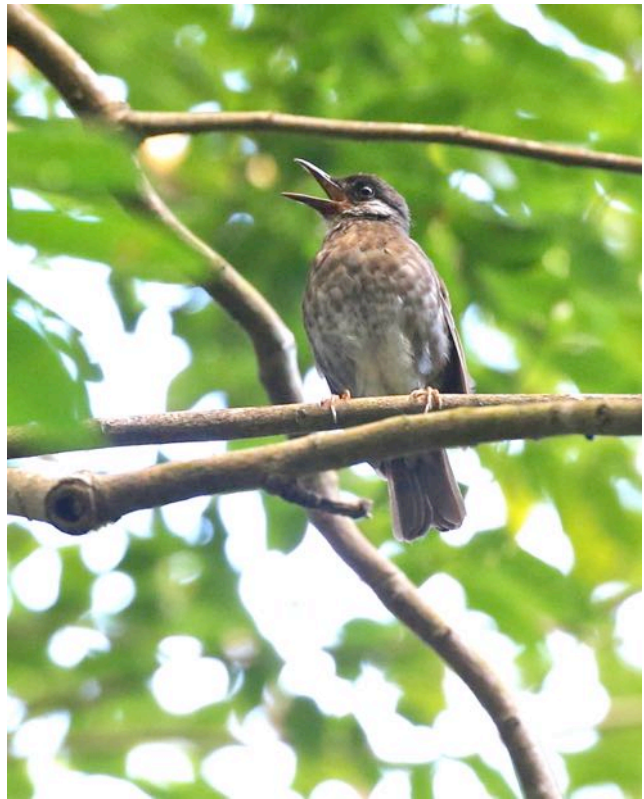
We woke up in the mountain forest and had breakfast in the camp. For the rest of the morning we were walking down the track to get more looks of the endemics we have already seen (almost all of them) and hoping to locate the local *griveaudi* race of the France's Sparrowhawk. The *bensoni* race of Blue Vanga

(HBW splits as Comoro Blue Vanga) has also been historically recorded on Mount Karthala but no recent sightings and is probably extinct. We had repeated great looks of Comoro Blue Pigeon, Comoro Cuckooshrike and the colourful Humblot's Sunbird. Finally we found a pair of France's Sparrowhawks allowing prolonged great looks, and we even saw them mating. In the afternoon we birded a different area quite close to our comfortable hotel. It was the endangered Grand Comoro Drongo that was our main target, and it did take some searching but we managed to find two birds and had excellent views. There were no other new birds for us in this area so we finished the day with an uneventful seawatching from the hotel garden in a lovely sunset with Seychelles Flying Foxes around.



The endemic Comoro Thrush on Grand Comoro – HBW suggest it might be a future split as 'Grand Comoro Thrush' (János Oláh).

We were back at Moroni Airport the following morning and had a short flight to Mohéli. Unfortunately Mount Karthala was shrouded in clouds so we could not glimpse the caldera from above. We arrived in Fomboni on the small island of Moheli and were greeted by our local agent and a rather slow immigration officer and somehow we had to register once again! Finally we were out and drove to our seaside hotel, which certainly had seen better days (probably 10 years ago). The location was fantastic but it was sad to see how tourism is fading away in such a beautiful island. We saw the *rhizophorae* race of Striated Heron from our dining table, while distant Masked Boobies were cruising by at sea. On the seashore Whimbrel and Common Sandpipers were new to us. After lunch we headed up to a small patch of forest above Fomboni and soon located the local form of Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Malagasy White-eye and Comoros Fody. In the late afternoon we also managed to find the different-looking local form of the Comoro Thrush, some electric-blue male 'Comoro' Blue Vangas, and several cooperative Mohéli (or Benson's) Brush-Warblers. Interestingly the brush warblers were mostly keeping rather high in the canopy unlike brush warblers usually do. A not very distinct Mohéli Bulbul was seen too. It was still daylight when we located a calling Mohéli Scops Owl. This amazing fellow has a distinct pearl-grey eye and a very different vocalisation. We enjoyed excellent looks and by the time we finished it was dark. We walked back to bus but on the way located two more scops owls allowing night time looks of these beauties too. It was a great first afternoon birding on the island!



Benson's Brush Warbler (top left) and the distinctive white-cheeked Comoro Thrush called 'Mohéli' Thrush by HBW (top right). But the undoubted star was the endemic Mohéli Scops Owl with its amazing pearl-grey eyes (János Oláh)!

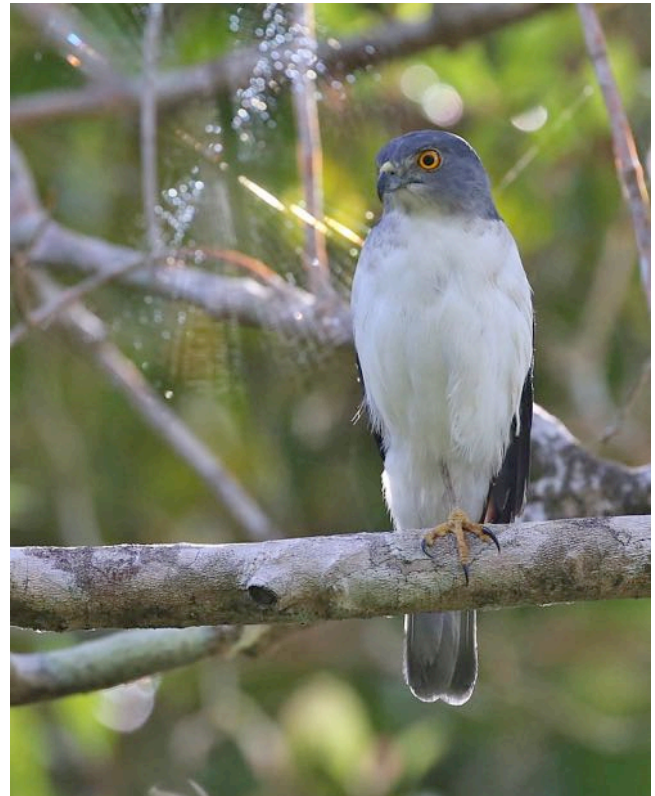
Early next morning we drove to the other side of the island stopping briefly in a headland area, but unfortunately with no results of finding a suitable seawatching location. Our target was to visit an area where the previous Birdquest tour located the endemic Comoro Green Pigeon. Now IOC recognize this as a full

species, and this one is certainly among the more difficult ones to find on the island. Once we got to the trail we started to hike to a certain elevation and spot. It was rather steep but we all made it up to the site, and with a bit of luck and some excellent spotting skills from Richard we managed to find a fruiting tree with several Comoros Green Pigeons. WOW! After this success some of us decided to try and climb even higher on the trail towards Chalet St Antoine. The trail was very overgrown and increasingly steeper but we made it to 515 meter above sea level – still a bit off the ridge. We were hoping to find the rare Mohéli race of Comoro Cuckooshrike or the even rarer Mohéli race of Malagasy Brush Warbler. We saw none of those but as usual the climb was still excellent, as we had first clas views of the ‘Comoro’ Blue Vanga again, several Mohéli Bulbuls and the *johannae* race of the Malagasy Kingfisher. Those who stayed behind saw a Cuckoo Roller. In the late afternoon we were back to our hotel for seawatching and managed to see a few Persian Shearwaters of the local *temptator* race, as well as Greater and Lesser Frigatebirds, more Masked Boobies and a few terns.



Blue Vanga male (top) and the distinctive female (right) on Mohéli. HBW already splits Comoro Blue Vanga because of its size and different female plumage but IOC still considers it as a race of Blue Vanga. The johannae race of Malagasy Kingfisher (János Oláh).

The flight to Anjouan was surprisingly almost on time, and half an hour later we arrived at the island and quickly headed to the hotel for lunch and little garden birding! We got White-tailed Tropicbird, Anjouan Sunbirds and Anjouan Brush Warblers in the hotel garden. We also got the sad news that our time is going to be limited on this island as we must fly out after lunch the next day otherwise we would be stuck here for 3 days. So after lunch we packed up and left for Moya on the other side of the island. We had to find the notoriously difficult Anjouan Scops Owl tonight – our only night in the island! After a very winding two-hours drive we arrived to our trail and started ascending. In the small patches of native forest we got lucky and found a fine male of the local *intermedius* race of Cuckoo Roller and the rare *pusillus* race of France's Sparrowhawk almost side by side! WOW! A few Mongoose Lemurs showed up and we also had two pairs of the rare local form of Crested Drongo and several Malagasy White-eyes. It was late afternoon when we arrived to a spot where we were about to attempt our luck with the scops owl. In the last 30 minutes of daylight we saw Comoros Blue and Olive Pigeons, Anjouan Brush Warbler and many Malagasy Bulbuls. We also had several sightings of the impressive Livingstone's Fruit-Bats! We then waited till dusk, with everything crossed. According to previous birders and Birdquest tour this owl can be very elusive and difficult. Bang on dusk, two Anjouan Scops Owls started to call and after just a couple of plays of the tape, one came in to the very spot we were expecting it, allowing excellent looks! It is an amazing almost black owl with an amazing call! Well it was not difficult, at least for us and all very happy walked back to the bus. Somehow we even survived the long tortures drive home with roadside electric pylons being actually in the middle of the road at some places!



Anjouan Scops Owl (left) and the rare *pusillus* race of France's Sparrowhawk on Anjouan (János Oláh).

We still had a morning on Anjouan but we still had some important birds to find! We were after the local Comoro Thrush and Comoros Fody. Our local guide suggested the habitat by Lake Dzianlandzé in the highlands has been destroyed by roadbuilding and suggested a different trail up the mountain near the airport. After breakfast we drove there and started to hiking from sea level. It was not promising at all looking at the steep hillsides and considering we had to get to certain elevation for the thrush. So after an hour when we located a Comoros Fody and a female Cuckoo Roller we turned back, and quickly drove to the highest spot above Mutsamudu what we could reach by car. It started to rain heavily but our strategy was working and finally we saw the fine 'scaly' local form of Comoro Thrush – called Anjouan Thrush by HBW is split. So our mission was almost completed and still had about 30 minutes of birding time left. We continued along the

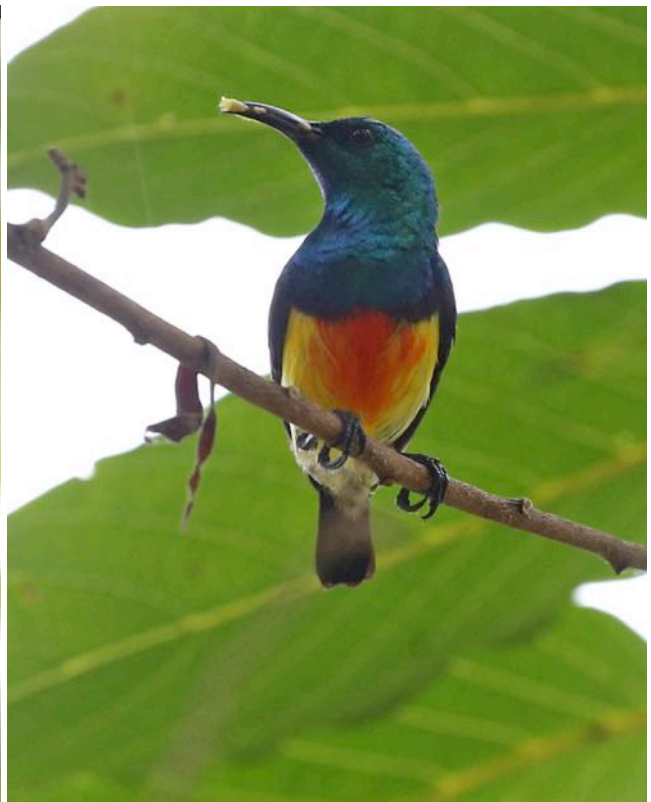
road and found the local form of the Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher too. So it was all done, and we were back for packing and lunch. We arrived to the airport in time and after a hectic check-in in a hugely crowded place we finally were on our way to Mayotte!



Anjouan Sunbird (top left), Comoro Thrush on Anjouan – HBW suggest it might be a future split as ‘Anjouan Thrush’ and both female (left) and male Cuckoo Roller of the intermedius race on Anjouan (János Oláh).

We arrived at Dzaoudzi airport on Mayotte – which is part of France and the EU – in the late afternoon, and took the obligatory ferry to Mamoudzou on the main island. The airport is located on ‘Petite-Terre’ off the east coast. We drove to the high parts of the island near Combani Peak and checked into our hotels. The temperature was far better in the mountains compared to the capital! Already on our drive in through the access road to the hotels we found the Mayotte Drongo and several Comoros Blue and Olive Pigeons. We used two hotels side by side and it was all surrounded by forest. At dusk we tracked down the fourth endemic scops owl of the Comoros, the Mayotte Scops Owl, so it was celebration time! We had plenty of time on this island – in fact way too much – as the time we lost on Anjouan had to be spent here. So we took it leisurely in the next 2,5 days – in fact 3 days for those continuing on the Madagascar leg of the tour – and spent most of the time in the higher areas in nice temperature. We also visited Lake Kariani on the west as well as one morning was spent at Mahabou point and we also made a visit to the mudflats of Petite-Terre. In the forest around the hotels we found the local *brutus* race of France’s Sparrowhawk, many Comoros Blue and Olive Pigeons, multiplied Mayotte Scops Owls even in daytime, Malagasy Black Swifts, Cuckoo Roller, Mayotte Drongos – even on the nest, Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers, a single Mayotte White-eye and many

Mayotte Sunbirds. Elsewhere tracked down the local orange Comoros Fody and got much better looks at the white-eye and tracked down a few waders including the fine Crab Plover. All in all our stay on Mayotte was very pleasant and we found all the birds we wanted while enjoying some excellent cuisine. This was the end of the Comoros tour and we said good-bye to some while waiting to meet others on Madagascar leg!



Mayotte Scops Owl (top), Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (left) and Mayotte Sunbird on Mayotte (János Oláh).



The brutus race of France's Sparrowhawk (left), Comoros Fody (right) and Mayotte White-eye on Mayotte (János Oláh).

We left the Comoros with a complete set of birds the following day and miraculously our flight was also on time. After a short hop we arrived to Mahajunga on Madagascar. In the evening we met with the newcomers and discussed the next day's plans. We certainly had some adventures lay ahead of us in some really remote parts of Madagascar. We were hoping to get some birding as well in between getting from one location to another!

Our first task was to reach Lake Kinkony to look for the rare Sakalava Rail. As our ferry across the Betsiboka estuary was scheduled for late morning, we decided to visit a nearby wetland before breakfast. This quick introduction to the birdlife of the eighth continent produced fine African Pygmy Geese, Madagascar Jacana, Malagasy Kingfisher, Common Jery, Madagascar Cisticola, Sakalava Weavers and Madagascar Mannikins. After a hearty breakfast we made our way to the port and after some delay we were on our way to the south side of the river. The ferry journey was interesting and rather slow to say the least but our vehicles were all right. Once we got to the other side we made a short visit to the Katsepy Lighthouse and tracked down a party of Crowned Sifakas. Later we had a brief stop when some Madagascar Sandgrouses flew over but by

the time all the cars were together and the dust was gone the birds were gone too. A quick picnic lunch was followed by a short stop at the Mahavavy River where we saw Madagascar Pratincoles, White-fronted Plover and some of us even a Chabert's Vanga. After Mitsinjo our drive was getting increasingly slow and the track was getting increasingly dusty. We had another ferry crossing closer to our camp and it was an experience on its own! In the very late afternoon we were close to the lake and had a brief stop in a forest patch, which produced a flock of superb Sickle-billed Vangas! Finally we reached our comfortable camp on the shores of Lake Kinkony and were soon sipping cold beer and thinking about the following morning! A fine Madagascar Nightjar by the dinner table rounded off the day nicely.



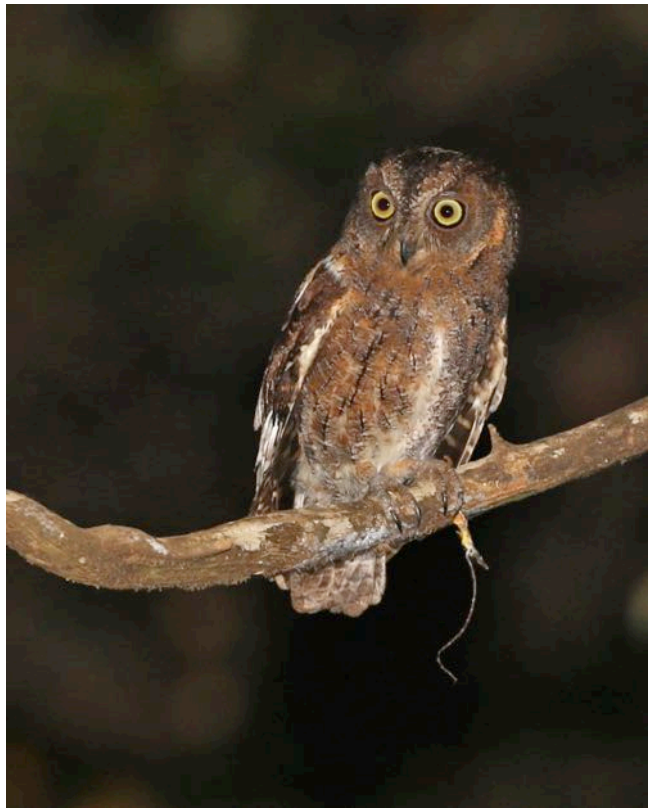
Crowned Sifaka (top left), Sickle-billed Vanga (top right), Madagascar Pratincoles (left) and different boats being used at the Betsiboka estuary (János Oláh).

We were out in pirogues early the next morning watching the numerous waterbirds. Thousands and thousands of whistling ducks, ibises, herons and egrets were flying out from the lake at dawn. Our boats were soon arriving and we embarked on the quest of finding the rare Sakalava Rail in reedbed of the lake. According to our local guide the rails are rather scarce and the locals only know a handful of sites within the vast vegetated part of the lakes where they can be seen. In recent years they do look out for new areas as it brings income to the village. We were slowly cruising along small channels and ponds in the extensive

habitat hoping that a rail will appear somewhere. First we found White-throated Rails and Malagasy Kingfishers and Madagascar Swamp Warblers were common. Finally coming around a corner we found a pair of Sakalava Rails. We stayed with the birds for over 30 minutes, busily taking pictures and enjoying the superb looks. On our way out of the vegetated part of the lake several Madagascar Jacanas were seen as well. Other interesting waterbirds included Yellow-billed and African Openbills, Little Bittern and Hottentott Teals. Back on the shore we drove to a nearby forest patch to look for Decken's Sifakas and birds. It was getting hot by now but we managed to find Madagascar Green Pigeons, Crested Couas, Chabert Vangas, Common Newtonias and Jerys and Malagasy Green Sunbirds. The best of all however was a party of seven Decken's Sifakas. In the soaring heat we returned for lunch and a bit of siesta. In the afternoon we were back in the forest, and got great looks of Red-capped and Coquerel's Couas, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Madagascar Hoopoe and excellent Mongoose Lemurs. We stayed out until dusk and we quickly scored on Grey Mouse-lemur and a fine pair of Torotoroka Scops Owls! It was a hot and sweaty day but we were very pleased with our success and certainly could not have hoped for better looks of the rail!



Sakalava Rail (top), Decken's Sifaka (left) and White-throated Rail (János Oláh).

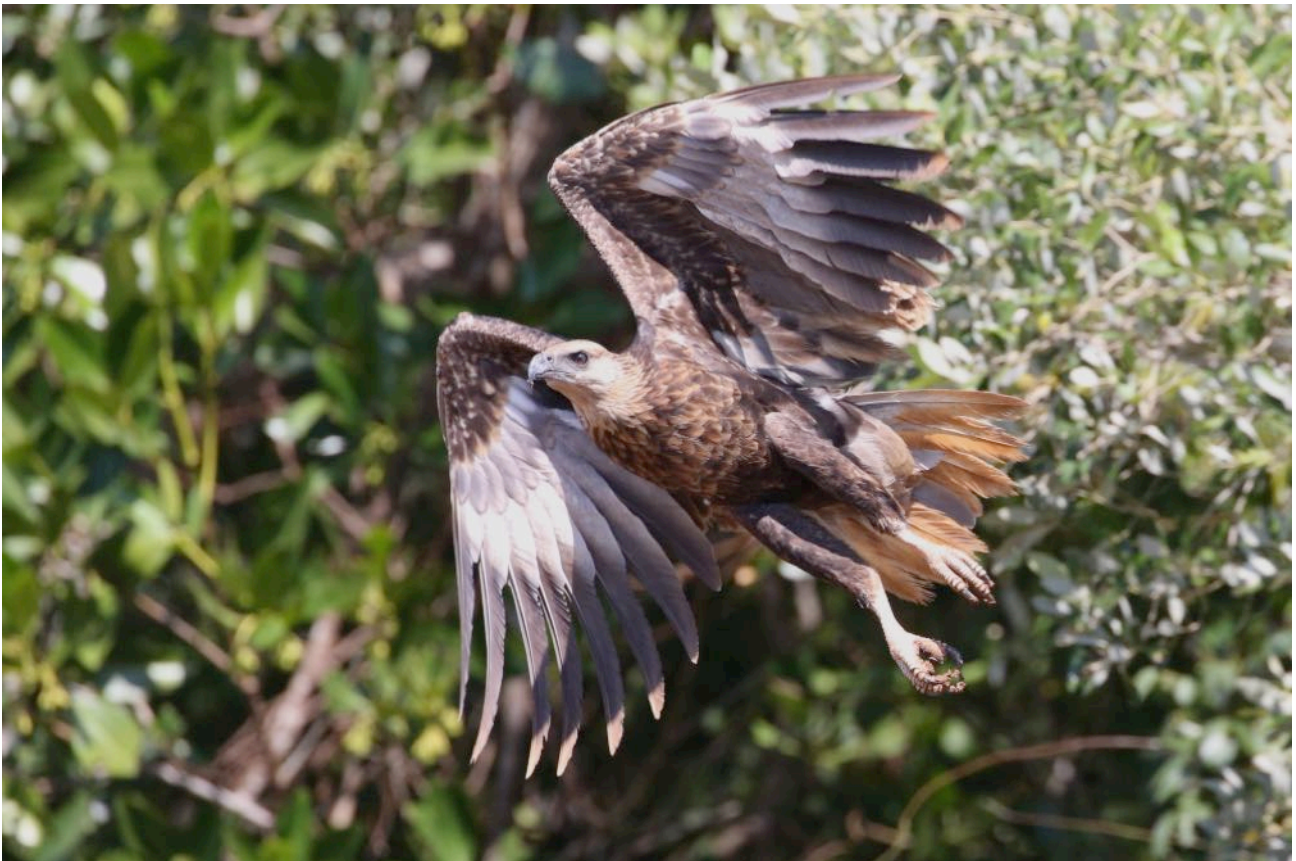


Grey Mouse-lemur (left) and Totoroka Scops Owl at Lake Kinkony (János Oláh).

The following morning we left very early as we wanted to have a slight detour before the ferry. We drove through some recently burnt area pre-dawn where some fallen tree had to be moved before we could continue on our way. We got to Mitsinjo and quickly arranged permits and some fishing boats to visit Ampitsompitsoka where the rare Bernier's (or Madagascar) Teal has been regularly seen recently. The boats were not very comfortable but within 30 minutes we were in good habitat and soon found a flock of teals along one of the sandbars. They were skittish and our boatmen were not really good in getting into position but we all saw the teals well. We continued a bit further to look for roosting waders in the hope of finding Madagascar Plover amongst them. Finally we got to a promising sandbar but only Kittlitz's, Three-banded, Common Ringed and White-fronted Plovers were spotted from the boat. Our attention was altered by a perched raptor which turned out to be an immature Madagascar Fish Eagle! WOW! This critically endangered species was not 'on our menu' and we were all happy with this surprise find! Looking at the images of the waders on the ferry, Rainer spotted two Madagascar Plovers on the images! It was somewhat frustrating to say the least! We drove back to the Betsiboka estuary having one more stop at a wetland where a fine Humblot's Heron was seen well.



Bernier's Teals (left) and an immature Madagascar Fish Eagle (János Oláh).



Madagascar Fish Eagle (top), ferry with cattle across the Betsiboka estuary (left, Werner Mueller) and a Humblot's Heron (János Oláh).

Our second ferry crossing was an adventurous one with many cattle brought onto the ferry as well. There was clearly no concept how to deal with cattle and cars at the same time. Needless to say it was an experience though not from a pleasant one. A bull even kicked one of us when trying to pass by. Somehow we survived and the shower was very welcome in Mahajunga after camping in sweaty conditions!

The next day was a very long one even by Birdquest standards. We had to reach Antsohihy by the end of the day, but of course we wanted birds too! So we had a very early start from Majunga and drove to the famous Ankarafantsika National Park. We still arrived in the cool morning hours at the Ampijoroa station and our local guides were already waiting for us to get started. We had three major targets in mind for the morning and wasted no time to get into the habitat and look for the amazing Schlegel's Asity. Our expert

guides were excellent and quickly located a singing bird, but somehow we could not get the group on it. Fortunately not much later we found a flowering tree and a pair of these special birds were feeding on it. We all got excellent looks of this amazing creature. The colourful wattles of the male are really amazing! We were all very happy and turned our attention towards a calling White-breasted Mesite. These terrestrial birds were very good in keeping away from us, but again our expert guides, finally gently pushed a foraging pair towards us and they crossed the trail right in front. WOW! It was a great morning and while looking for these goodies we also come across Coquerel's Coua, Long-billed Bernieria and many Souimanga Sunbirds.



Male Schlegel's Asity (left) and a White-breasted Mesite in Ankarafantsika NP (János Oláh).

For our last target of the morning we had to go to different habitat. While doing so, we bumped into another pair of White-breasted Mesites close to the headquarters. This time they allowed even better looks! Temperatures were rising now and by the time we climbed to a low ridge it was hot, we felt like it anyway! Coquerel's and Red-capped Couas showed well and a number of other dry forest species posed for us, giving us more chances to admire the unique Malagasy avifauna. Somehow the localised Van Dam's Vanga was not showing, and after a longish search we were about to give up when suddenly a female bird flew in while we were watching Rufous Vangas. It did not stay long however, and only some of us got brief looks. We decided to keep trying and after another 30 minutes we finally found a calling male as well. This time most people got on the bird but unfortunately not everybody and it disappeared without a trace. It was time for us to leave, we had a long journey ahead of us! On the walk back we had excellent looks of a male France's Sparrowhawk. Cold drinks and lunch were now calling!



Long-billed Bernieria (left) and Red-capped Coua in Ankarafantsika NP (János Oláh).



The France's Sparrowhawk in Ankarafantsika NP completed our set of seeing all races of this species on the tour (János Oláh).

Around the restaurant by the headquarters we saw a party of Coquerel's Sifakas and a Madagascar Cuckooshrike came to visit us at our dining table. It was hot so after lunch we were back to our airconditioned Landcruisers and waved good-bye to Ankarafantsika National Park! The rest of the day we were on the road towards Antsohihy with a few obligatory stops. We arrived in the evening and quickly retired for the night. More travelling and adventures were coming up the next day!



The track to Bemanevika was a 'camel-trophy' experience (János Oláh)!

Our night at Antsohihy was comfortable enough, and we left early the following morning. We knew the road is going to be rough after Bealanana and indeed it was! It took us almost twelve hours to get to Bemanevika,

the Madagascar Pochard site, and at times, we were barely on a road. We had a river crossings where the 'bridge' was missing and had to build our own. This place took us an hour and a half to get all three landcruisers across. It was late afternoon when we finally got to our campsite. Having organized where we would be camping, we headed to the forest, eager to get some birds in the bag! We had distant scope views of the critically endangered Madagascar Pochard first and as light was fading we quickly moved into the forest. We could still check two 'usual' roosting areas for the 'Madagascar' Red Owl in twilight, but none of them proved to be occupied. So we waited until after dark and the search for the enigmatic owl started. We soon heard a tyto-like screaming, and we knew we were on track. After some patience we felt a shadow above our heads and there it was, the mythical 'Madagascar' Red Owl in its full glory! The bird was very relaxed and we could watch it for a few minutes. WOW! All the difficulties getting to this far and remote location was forgotten! On the return walk to our cars we also nailed a Rainforest Scops Owl making it a two owl evening!



Rainforest Scops Owl and 'Madagascar' Red Owl at Bemanevika (János Oláh)!

We had another whole day and a morning to explore the Bemanevika area, with its unique wetlands and excellent forest. The following morning after a very chilly (mere 3C at dawn) night in our tents we had a walk around camp and got excellent looks of the smart Madagascan Partridges. After breakfast we embarked on the pochard experience and visited Lake Matsaborimena again. Properly this time, scanning from the lakeshore and even taking small canoe rides into the lake. We counted a total of 34 Madagascan Pochards including four downy ducklings. This was yet another tour highlight seeing this rare bird. It was rediscovered as recently as 2006 on this very lake with a population of nine adults and four ducklings. The fact that the pochards have survived is one of those strange quirks of nature: the crater lake is not suitable for rice cultivation and apparently has no fish! Quite how the crocodiles survive is another question, but what is for sure is that the lack of human disturbance has created a wetland paradise. After much conservation effort the population was up to 100 individual in 2018. This year is also a milestone in the conservation of the species as 21 juvenile birds (raised in captivity) were released on Lake Sofia in the hope of establishing a second breeding location for the World's rarest duck. So lets hope the project is going to be a continued success! Apart from the pochards we counted 17 Meller's Ducks and about 60 Madagascar Little Grebes. We also managed to find a singing Grey Emutail in the lakeside vegetation. Late morning we were back in

the forest, but we had less luck as Crossley's Vanga remained heard only and there was no sign of any ground-rollers anywhere. We had a nesting Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, a few Madagascar Blue Pigeons and Red-tailed Vanga. In the afternoon we visited different marshy habitats and managed to get some excellent birds such as Madagascar Crested Ibis, Slender-billed Flufftail and Madagascar Snipes! It was certainly a 'red letter' day for World birders!



Female and male Madagascar Pochard at their last known location in the wild (János Oláh).

The following day we said good-bye to our fantastic Peregrine Fund guide and left Bemanevika after breakfast. As usual we left a generous donation to their fund and for the local community in the hope that revenue raised through ecotourism can help convince the villagers to conserve the habitat. We still spent a little time birding on the forested part of the access track seeing Madagascar Cuckoo, Tylas Vanga, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Malagasy Paradise Flycatchers, Spectacled Tetraka, Dark Newtonia and Stripe-throated Jery. The rest of the day however was again spent in our Landcruisers navigating our way out. All left for us is travelling back to Antsohihy and to Mahajunga the next day where the tour ended.

It had been a remarkable trip in many aspects. It was a real travel experience with rough roads, long drives, camping in remote locations but in exchange seeing amazing places and most importantly all our major targets plus a respectable list of additions! I believe all Birdquesters had a great time and certainly will remember this tour!



Sakalava Rail was seen well at Lake Kinkony in Madagascar – a range restricted endemic (János Oláh).

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

CR = Critically Endangered, **E** = Endangered, **V** = Vulnerable, **NT** = Near Threatened

For polytypic species, the subspecies seen on the tour, where known, is placed in parentheses at the end of the species comment. Generally, species listed with trinomials are not currently split by the IOC.

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows **Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 9.1)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra (www.igoterra.com) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.

BIRDS

Total of bird species recorded: 172

White-faced Whistling Duck (W-f Duck) *Dendrocygna viduata* Common at Lake Kinkony on Madagascar.
Knob-billed Duck (Comb D) *Sarkidiornis melanotos* A few seen .
African Pygmy Goose (Pygmy G) *Nettapus auritus* Seen well near to Majunga and on the way to Lake Kinkony.
Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* A pair was seen at Lake Kinkony.
Meller's Duck ◊ *Anas melleri* Up to 17 were seen on Lake Matsiborimena at Bemanevika. **EN**
Bernier's Teal ◊ (Madagascar T) *Anas bernierii* A fine bonus for the tour. Eleven seen at Ampitsompitsoka. **EN**
Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* About 25 were seen on Lake Matsiborimena at Bemanevika.
Madagascar Pochard ◊ *Aythya innotata* Tour highlight! At least 34 were counted at Lake Matsiborimena. **CR**
Helmeted Guineafowl (introduced) *Numida meleagris* A group of feral individuals seen.
Madagascar Partridge ◊ *Margaroperdix madagarensis* Superb looks at Bemanevika but seen elsewhere too.



Madagascar Partridge is a smart endemic (János Oláh).

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* A few seen at Mt Karthala on Grand Comoro and one at Bemanevika.
Persian Shearwater ◊ (Arabian S) *Puffinus persicus* A total of 5 were seen from the hotel at Mohéli [*temptator*].
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Small numbers recorded.
Madagascar Grebe ◊ *Tachybaptus pelzelinii* At least 60 were seen well at the pochard lake. **EN**
White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* It was seen in Anjouan and Mayotte [*nominate*].
Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* A few seen around Lake Kinkony.
African Openbill (A O Stork) *Anastomus lamelligerus* Seen near Lake Kinkony [*madagascariensis*].
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Common in northern Madagascar. Up to a 1000 seen at Lake Kinkony.
Madagascar Ibis ◊ (M Crested I) *Lophotibis cristata* Two were seen at Bemanevika [*nominate*]. **NT**
African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* Four seen at Lake Kinkony.
Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Just one was seen at Lake Kinkony [*podiceps*].
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* It was noted at various wetlands [*nominate*].
Striated Heron (Green-backed H) *Butorides striata* Seen on the Comoros and Madagascar [*rhizopherae, rutenbergi*].

Squacco Heron (Common S H) *Ardeola ralloides* Fairly common at Lake Kinkony.

Malagasy Pond Heron (Madagascar P H) *Ardeola idae* Great views at Lake Kariani on Mayotte. **EN**

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Recorded at several wetlands [*firasa*].

Humblot's Heron (Madagascar H) *Ardea humbloti* One was seen on the way to Lake Kinkony. **EN**

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Fairly common [*madagascariensis*].

Great Egret (G White E) *Ardea alba* Common and widespread [*melanorhynchos*].

Black Heron (B Egret) *Egretta ardesiaca* Fairly common in northern Madagascar.

Dimorphic Egret (Madagascar H) *Egretta dimorpha* Just two were seen at Ampitsompitsoka.

Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor* Several seen from the hotel at Mohéli.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* Several seen from the hotel at Mohéli.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* Several seen from the hotel at Mohéli.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* Fairly common around Lake Kinkony.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* Three were seen at Lake Kinkony.

Madagascan Harrier-Hawk (Madagascar H) *Polyboroides radiatus* Several birds showed well during the tour.

Madagascan Cuckoo-Hawk (Madagascar H) *Aviceda madagascariensis* Bits were seen of an incubating bird at Bemanevika.

Frances's Sparrowhawk (Madagascar H) *Accipiter francesiae* We managed to see all races possible on the tour. See note

Malagasy Harrier (Madagascar H) *Circus macroscelus* Seen in the Comoros and at the Bemanevika. **EN**

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Common and widespread in Madagascar.

Madagascan Fish-Eagle (Madagascar H) *Haliaeetus vociferoides* An immature was a surprised find at Ampitsompitsoka. **CR**

Madagascan Buzzard (Madagascar H) *Buteo brachypterus* Fairly common in Madagascar.



Madagascan Buzzard (left) and Malagasy Harrier (János Oláh).

White-breasted Mesite (Madagascar H) *Mesitornis variegatus* Excellent views at Ampijoroa. A cracker! **VU**

Madagascan Flufftail (Madagascar H) *Sarothrura insularis* It remained heard-only near the pochard lake.

Slender-billed Flufftail (Madagascar H) *Sarothrura watersi* One seen well at Bemanevika. **EN**

White-throated Rail (Madagascar H) *Dryolimnas cuvieri* Great views at Lake Kinkony.

Sakalava Rail (Madagascar H) *Amaurornis olivieri* Excellent looks of a pair at Lake Kinkony. **EN**

African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis* (NL) A single at Lake Kinkony.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* We counted 76 on Lake Kariani, several seen elsewhere [*pyrrhorhoa*].

Madagascan Buttonquail (Madagascar H) *Turnix nigricollis* Just one seen in flight at Bemanevika.

Crab Plover (Madagascar H) *Dromas ardeola* Six were seen in Mayotte.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small numbers recorded on Madagascar.

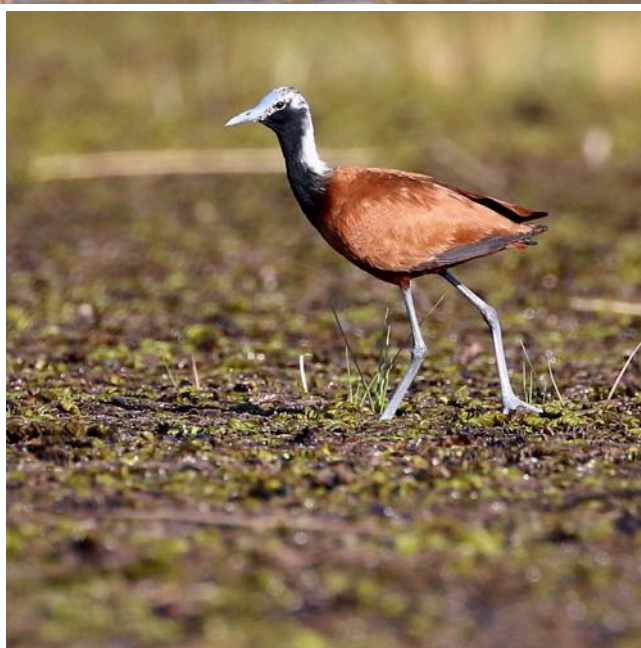
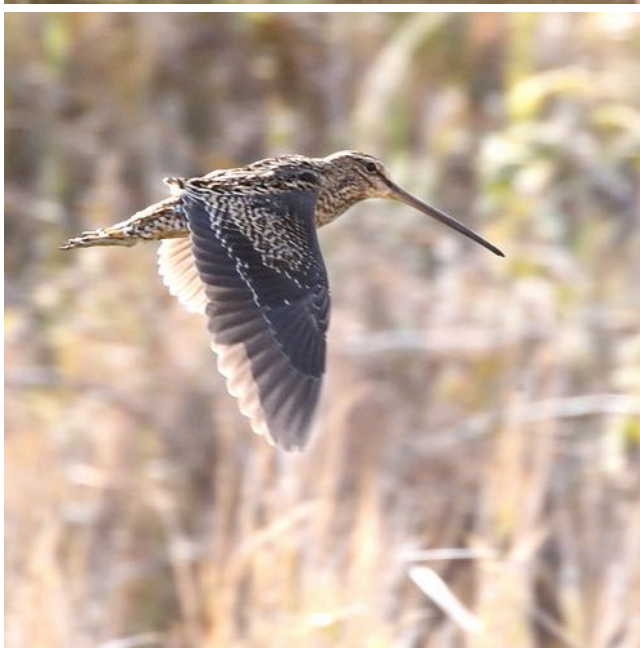
Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* Just a few on Mayotte.

Common Ringed Plover (R P) *Charadrius hiaticula* A few were seen at Ampitsompitsoka.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* Just a singleton at Ampitsompitsoka.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Two were seen at Ampitsompitsoka.

Madagascan Plover ◊ *Charadrius thoracicus* A pair was picked up only from our photos at Ampitsompitsoka. **VU**



Madagascan Plovers (top; Werner Mueller), Madagascan Snipe (left) and Madagascan Jacana (János Oláh).

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* One on the Mahavavy River and three at Ampitsompitsoka [*tenellus*].

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* One seen on Mohéli and four on Mayotte.

Madagascan Jacana ◊ *Actophilornis albinucha* Seven seen at Lake Kinkony and one near to Majunga. **NT**

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* It was seen on the Comoros and Madagascar too.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Just five seen on Mayotte.

Madagascan Snipe ◊ *Gallinago macrodactyla* Several flushed near the pochard lake. **VU**

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Three were seen at Ampitompitsoka.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers noted at several localities. Twenty seen at Ampitompitsoka.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* About eight were seen at Ampitompitsoka.

Madagascan Pratincole ◊ *Glareola ocularis* Just five were seen crossing the Mahavavy River. **VU**

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* About 65 were counted from our hotel in Mohéli.

Greater Crested Tern (Swift T) *Thalasseus bergii* A singleton see from our hotel garden at Grand Comoro.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Three were seen at Lake Kinkony.

Madagascan Sandgrouse ◊ *Pterocles personatus* (LO) A pair was seen in flight towards Lake Kinkony.

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) (introduced) *Columba livia* Common.

Comoros Olive Pigeon ◊ (Comoro P) *Columba polleni* Fairly common in the Comoros. **NT**



Comoros Blue (top left) and Comoros Olive Pigeons (top right), Malagasy Turtle Dove (left) and Madagascar Green Pigeon (János Oláh).

- Malagasy Turtle Dove** ♦ *Nesoenas picturata* Seen in the Comoros and Madagascar too [*nominata*, *comorensis*].
- Ring-necked Dove (introduced) (Cape Turtle D)** *Streptopelia capicola* Introduced to the Comoros.
- Tambourine Dove (introduced)** *Turtur tympanistria* (NL) Just one seen in the Comoros.
- Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Fairly common in the dry northern Madagascar [*aliena*].
- Madagascar Green Pigeon** ♦ *Treron australis* Seen at several places in Madagascar [*xenius*].
- Comoros Green Pigeon** ♦ *Treron griveaudi* Good looks of this hard-to-get endemic in Mohéli. Four were seen. **EN**
- Madagascar Blue Pigeon** ♦ *Alectroenas madagascariensis* Just a few seen in the Bemanevika area.
- Comoros Blue Pigeon** ♦ *Alectroenas sganzini* Seen well on four Comoros Islands. **NT**
- Malagasy Coucal** ♦ *Centropus toulou* Many great sightings in Madagascar [*nominata*].
- Crested Coua** ♦ *Coua cristata* Seen well at Lake Kinkony and Ampijoroa [*nominata*].
- Red-capped Coua** ♦ *Coua ruficeps* Great views at Ampijoroa [*nominata*].
- Coquerel's Coua** ♦ *Coua coquereli* Seen well at Lake Kinkony and Ampijoroa.
- Madagascar Cuckoo** ♦ (M Lesser C) *Cuculus rochii* Finally on was seen at the Bemanevika.
- Red Owl** ♦ (Madagascar R O) *Tyto soumagnei* Bird of the trip. Mega views of one at Bemanevika. **VU**
- Karthala Scops Owl** ♦ (Grand Comoro/Comoro S O) *Otus pauliani* Several good views at Mt Karthala. **EN**
- Anjouan Scops Owl** ♦ *Otus capnodes* Excellent looks of this black owl. **EN**
- Moheli Scops Owl** ♦ *Otus moheliensis* Superb looks of three on Mohéli. **EN**

Mayotte Scops Owl ◇ *Otus mayottensis* Many great views on Mayotte.
Torotoroka Scops Owl ◇ *Otus madagascariensis* Two were seen at Lake Kinkony.



Coquerel's Coua (top left), Red-capped Coua (top right; Werner Mueller) and Mayotte Scops Owl (János Oláh).

Rainforest Scops Owl ◇ *Otus rutilus* One was tracked down at Bemanevika.
Madagascan Owl ◇ *Asio madagascariensis* (H) Heard regularly at Bemanevika but only brief flight views for some.
Madagascan Nightjar ◇ *Caprimulgus madagascariensis* First seen at Lake Kinkony but several others elsewhere.
Madagascar Spinetail ◇ *Zoonavena grandidieri* Seen on Mount Karthala [*mariae*] and Madagascar [*nominate*].

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Fairly common both on the Comoros [*griveaudi*] and Madagascar [*gracilis*].
Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* A singleton seen at Bemanevika [*willsi*].
Malagasy Black Swift ◊ (Madagascar S) *Apus balstoni* It was seen on Grand Comoro and Mayotte [*mayottensis*].
Cuckoo Roller ◊ *Leptosomus discolor* Great views of all three races. Recently lumped. See note
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* Three were seen on our way to Bealanana.
Malagasy Kingfisher ◊ *Corythornis vintsioides* Seen on Mohéli [*johanna*] and in Madagascar [*nomiante*].
Olive Bee-eater (Madagascar B-e) *Merops superciliosus* Common on the Comoros and Madagascar [*nomiante*].
Madagascan Hoopoe ◊ *Upupa marginata* Several sightings in Madagascar.
Malagasy Kestrel ◊ (Madagascar K) *Falco newtoni* Widespread, small numbers seen regularly.
Grey-headed Lovebird ◊ *Agapornis canus* We had several sightings in Madagascar [*nomiante*].
Greater Vasa Parrot ◊ *Coracopsis vasa* It was seen on the Comoros [*comorensis*] and Madagascar [*drouhardi*].
Lesser Vasa Parrot ◊ *Coracopsis nigra* It was seen on the Comoros [*sibilans*] and Madagascar [*libs*].
Schlegel's Asity ◊ *Philepitta schlegeli* Great views of a male and two females in Ampijoroa. **NT**
Red-tailed Vanga ◊ *Calicalicus madagascariensis* Just one was seen at Bemanevika.
Van Dam's Vanga ◊ *Xenopirostris damii* After some effort, two rather brief sightings at Ampijoroa. **EN**
Sickle-billed Vanga ◊ *Falcula palliate* Fantastic looks of this cracking vanga at Lake Kinkony.



Sickle-billed Vanga (left) and Chabert Vanga (János Oláh).

White-headed Vanga ◊ *Artamella viridis* Seen at various locations.
Chabert Vanga ◊ *Leptopterus chabert* Three sightings in the Lake Kinkony area.
Blue Vanga ◊ *Cyanolanius madagascarinus* A cracker! Great looks on Mohéli [*comorensis*] and briefly at Ampijoroa.
Rufous Vanga ◊ *Schetba rufa* Three were seen at Ampijoroa [*occidentalis*].
Tylas Vanga ◊ (Tylas) *Tylas eduardi* Just two were seen in the Bemanevika area [*eduardi*].
Dark Newtonia ◊ *Newtonia amphichroa* A few seen at Bemanevika [*nomiante*].
Common Newtonia ◊ *Newtonia brunneicauda* Several seen at Ampijoroa [*nomiante*].
Crossley's Vanga ◊ *Mystacornis crossleyi* (H) A pair was heard very close at Bemanevika but refused to show.
Madagascan Cuckoo-Shrike ◊ (Ashy C-S) *Coracina cinerea* A few seen in Madagascar.
Comoros Cuckooshrike ◊ *Coracina cucullatus* Seen well on Mt Karthala [*nomiante*]. No joy on Mohéli. **VU**
Grand Comoro Drongo ◊ *Dicrurus fuscipennis* Great views close to Moroni. **EN**
Crested Drongo ◊ *Dicrurus forficatus* Common on Madagascar [*nomiante*], more scarce on Anjouan [*potior*].
Mayotte Drongo ◊ *Dicrurus waldenii* Regularly seen well on Mayotte. What a tail!
Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher ◊ *Terpsiphone mutata* Widespread, all possible subspecies seen. See note
Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Common.
House Crow *Corvus splendens* A bird was seen on Anjouan.



Comoros Cuckooshrike (top left), 'Mayotte' Crested Drongo (top right), Madagascan Lark (right; Werner Mueller) and Madagascan Swamp Warbler (János Oláh).

- Madagascan Lark** ◇ (M Bush L) *Eremopterix hova* Fairly common in dry areas.
- Malagasy Bulbul** ◇ *Hypsipetes madagascariensis* Commonly seen [*nomiante*].
- Grand Comoro Bulbul** ◇ *Hypsipetes parvirostris* Common on Mt Karthala at higher elevations. **VU**
- Moheli Bulbul** ◇ *Hypsipetes moheliensis* Seen on Moheli. Best looks on our climb towards Chalet St Antoine. **EN**
- Brown-throated Martin (Plain M)** *Riparia paludicola* A few seen on Madagascar. **EN**
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* (NL) Three seen on Grand Comoro.
- Malagasy Brush Warbler** ◇ *Nesillas typica* Several excellent looks in the Bemanevika area [*ellisii*].
- Anjouan Brush Warbler** ◇ *Nesillas longicaudata* Seen well on Anjouan despite our short stay. See note
- Grand Comoro Brush Warbler** ◇ (Comoro B W) *Nesillas brevicaudata* Seen very well on Mt Karthala.
- Moheli Brush Warbler** ◇ (Benson's B W) *Nesillas mariae* Seen very well on Mohéli.
- Madagascan Swamp Warbler** ◇ *Acrocephalus newtoni* Excellent looks at Lake Kinkoy and Bemanevika.
- Grey Emutail** ◇ *Amphilaus seebohmi* Seen well at the pochard site.
- Long-billed Bernieria** ◇ *Bernieria madagascariensis* A few seen at Ampijoroa [*incelebris*].
- Spectacled Tetraka** ◇ *Xanthomixis zosterops* Just two were seen on our way out of Bemanevika [*fulvescens*].
- Rand's Warbler** ◇ *Randia pseudozosterops* One seen at the pochard site.
- Common Jery** ◇ *Neomixis tenella* Common and widespread [*nomiante*].
- Green Jery** ◇ *Neomixis viridis* Just one seen at Bemanevika [*delacourii*].
- Stripe-throated Jery** ◇ *Neomixis striatigula* Seen well at the pochard site [*sclateri*].
- Madagascan Cisticola** ◇ *Cisticola cherina* Common.



Grand Comoro Brush Warbler (top), Kirk's White-eye (left) and Anjouan Sunbird (János Oláh).

Karthala White-eye ◊ *Zosterops mauroniensis* Excellent looks of three on the upper parts of Mount Karthala. **VU**

Kirk's White-eye ◊ *Zosterops kirki* Common on Grand Comoro, even to quite high altitudes.

Mayotte White-eye ◊ (Chestnut-sided W-e) *Zosterops mayottensis* Common on Mayotte.

Malagasy White-eye ◊ *Zosterops maderaspatanus* Three races seen. Potential future splits. See note

Common Myna (introduced) *Acridotheres tristis* Common.

Madagascan Starling ◊ *Hartlaubius auratus* It was seen on our journey to Bealanana.

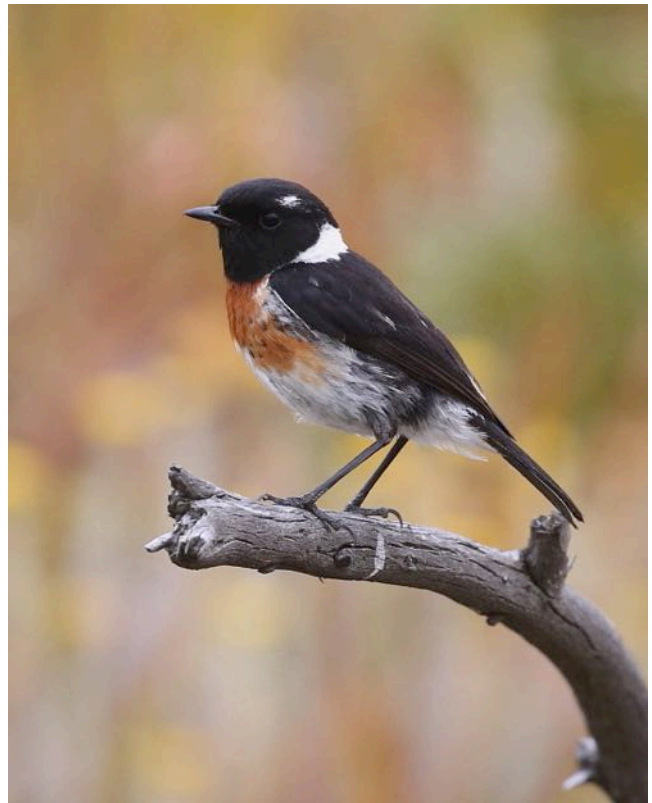
Comoros Thrush ◊ *Turdus bewsheri* All three races seen at Grand Comoro, Moheli and Anjouan. See note

Madagascan Magpie-Robin ◊ *Copsychus albospectularis* Several excellent looks [pica]. See note

African Stonechat ◊ *Saxicola torquatus* It was conspicuous on Grand Comoro and distinct [voeltzkowi]. See note

Madagascan Stonechat ◊ *Saxicola sibilla* Common at the pochard site [tsaratananae].

Humblot's Flycatcher ◊ (Grand Comoro F) *Humblotia flavirostris* Excellent views on Mt Karthala. Superb! **EN**



Madagascar Stonechat (left) and African Stonechat of the voeltzkowi race on Grand Comoro (János Oláh).

Souimanga Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris sovimanga* Common in Madagascar [*nominate*].

Malagasy Green Sunbird ◊ (Long-billed G S) *Cinnyris notatus* We saw three races seen on the tour. See note

Humblot's Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris humbloti* Seen on Grand Comoro and on Mohéli [*nominate, mohelicus*]. See note

Anjouan Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris comorensis* Common on Anjouan.

Mayotte Sunbird ◊ *Cinnyris coquerellii* Common on Mayotte.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Introduced in the Comoros and Madagascar.

Sakalava Weaver ◊ *Ploceus sakalava* Several seen on Madagascar.

Red Fody ◊ (Madagascar R F) *Foudia madagascariensis* Common and widespread.

Comoros Fody ◊ (Red-headed F) *Foudia eminentissima* Seen on Comoro, Mohéli, Anjouan and Mayotte. See note

Madagascar Mannikin ◊ (M Munia) *Lepidopygia nana* Several seen well on Madagascar.

Bronze Mannikin (introduced) *Lonchura cucullata* A few seen in the Comoros.

Madagascar Wagtail ◊ *Motacilla flaviventris* Several sightings on Madagascar.



Madagascar Wagtail (János Oláh).

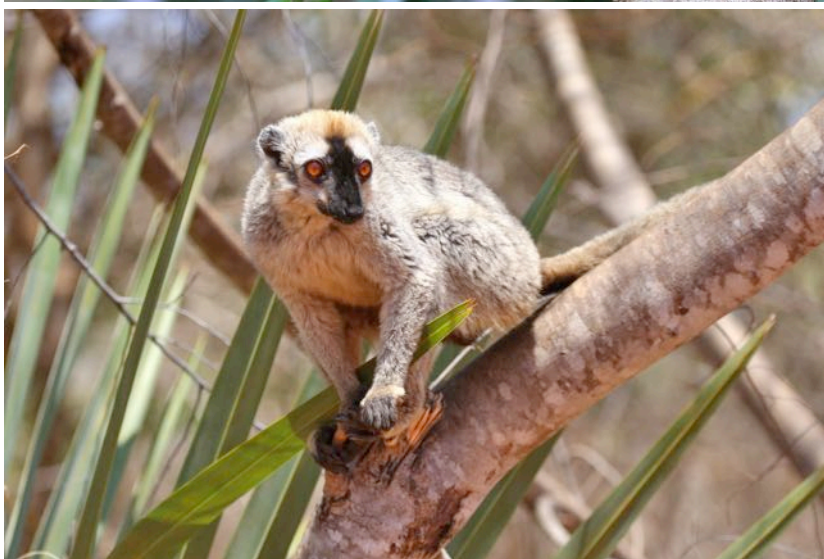
MAMMALS

Total of mammal species recorded: 14

Common Brown Lemur ◊ *Eulemur fulvus* Seen on Mayotte and Ampijoroa.

Mongoose Lemur ◊ *Eulemur mongoz* Seen near Lake Kinkony and at Anjouan - where introduced.

Red Brown Lemur (Red-fronted B L) ◊ *Eulemure rufus* Two were seen at Katsepy lighthouse.



Mongoose Lemur (top), Red Brown Lemur (left) and Common Brown Lemur (János Oláh).

Grey Mouse Lemur ◊ *Microcebus murinus* Two were seen near Lac Kinkony at night.

Greater Dwarf Lemur ◊ *Cheirogaleus major* It was seen in the Bemanevika area at night.

Crowned Sifaka ◊ *Propithecus coronatus* Seen at the Katsepy lighthouse.

Decken's Sifaka ◊ *Propithecus deckenii* Seen near Lake Kinkony.

Coquerel's Sifaka ◊ *Propithecus coquereli* Seen at Ampijoroa.

Javan Mongoose (introduced) *Herpestes javanicus* (NL) It was seen on Grand Comoro.

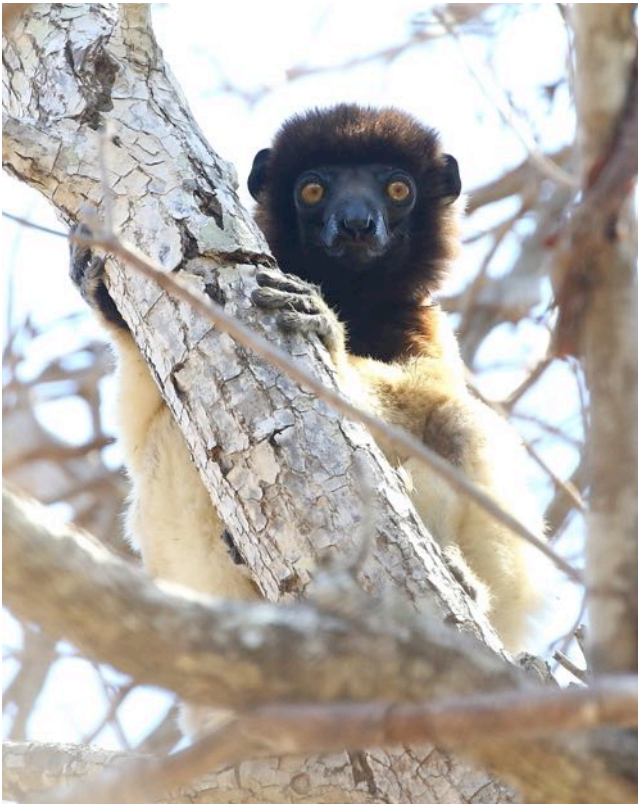
Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* One seen on Mayotte. Introduced.

Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* Seen from the hotel at Mohéli.

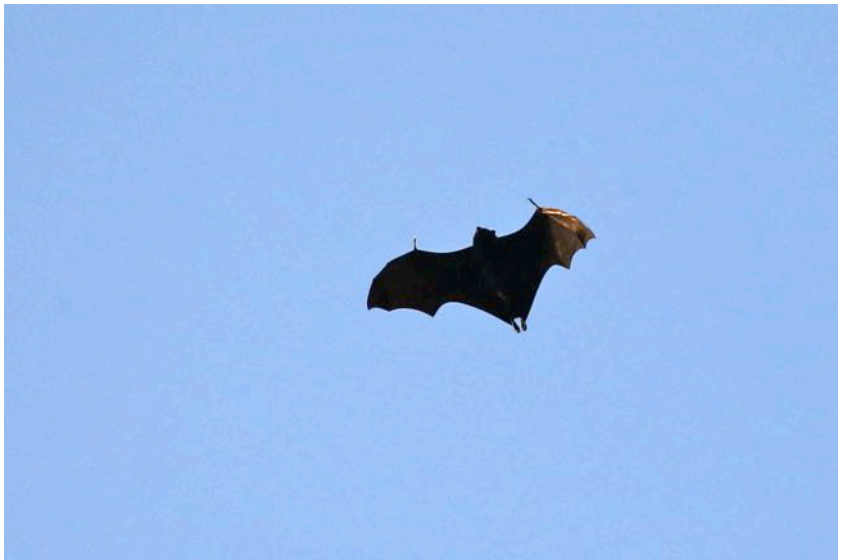
Indo-pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* Seen from the hotel at Mohéli.

Comoro Black Flying Fox (Livingstone's F F) ◊ *Pteropus livingstoni* Four were seen on Anjouan.

Seychelles Flying Fox ◊ *Pteropus seychellensis* Commonly seen in the Comoros.



Decken's Sifakas (top) – the left individual is melanistic form, similar to Crowned Sifaka for first look. Coquerel's Sifaka (left) and Crowned Sifaka (János Oláh).



Seychelles Flying Fox (left) on Grand Comoro and Livingstone's Flying Fox on Anjouan (János Oláh).

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Giant Hognose Snake *Leioheterodon madagascariensis* Seen by some on the way back from Bealanana.

Oustalet's Chameleon *Furcifer oustaleti* One was seen at Apmijoroa.

Mayotte Chameleon *Furcifer polleni* One was seen at our hotel garden in Mount Combani.

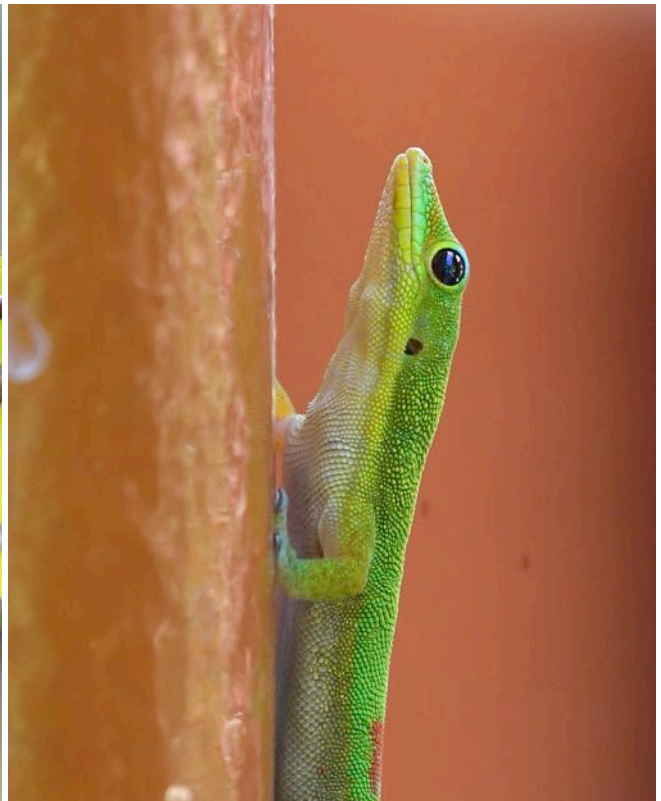
Chameleon sp. An unidentified chameleon was seen at our camp in Bemanevika (asl. 1570 meter). Image below.

Anjouan Day Gecko *Phelsuma v-nigra anjouanensis* Several seen at the hotel in Anjouan.

Grand Comoro Day Gecko *Phelsuma v-nigra comoraegrandensis* Several seen at Grand Comoro.

Red-headed Rock Agama *Agama agama* A few seen on Grand Comoro where it is introduced.

Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricate* A few seen from the hotel at Mohéli.



Mayotte Chameleon (left) and Anjouan Day Gecko (János Oláh).



Unidentified Chameleon at Bemanevika (top), Red-headed Rock Agama (left) and Oustalet's Chameleon (János Oláh).

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

The most up to date referenced taxonomic list referred to in the Tour Report is that of the IOC World Bird Names. Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2019. IOC World Bird List (v 9.1). Available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>

Frances's Sparrowhawk *Accipiter francesiae*

We managed to see all possible races on the tour. We saw the *griveaudi* race on Grand Comoro, the *pusillus* race on Anjouan, the *brutus* race on Mayotte and the *nominate* on Madagascar. IOC does not separate these races and HBW does not even suggest splitting any of the races.

Cuckoo Roller *Leptosomus discolor*

It has been recently lumped by IOC. The *garcilis* race used to be considered a distinct species under the name Comoro Cuckoo Roller. HBW suggests it might be a future split into three species: Grand Comoro Cuckoo Roller *L. gracilis*, the Anjouan Cuckoo Roller *L. intermedius* and the Madagascar Cuckoo Roller *L.*

discolour. We saw all three on the tour, the **Comoro Cuckoo Roller** on Grand Comoro, the **Anjouan Cuckoo Roller** on Anjouan and the **Madagascar Cuckoo Roller** on Mohéli and Mayotte.

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata*

HBW suggests Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher *T. mutata* might be a future split into into three species: Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *T. mutata* including the *singetra* and *pretiosa* races, the Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher *T. comorensis* and the Comoros Paradise Flycatcher *T. vulpina* which also includes the *voletzkowiana* race. We saw all three on the tour. The *singetra* and *pretiosa* races of **Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher** on Madagascar and Mayotte. The **Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher** on Grand Comoro and the *vulpina* and *voletzkowiana* races of **Comoros Paradise Flycatcher** on Anjouan and Mohéli.

Anjouan Brush Warbler *Nesillas longicaudata*

HBW still does not recognize this as a species however suggest it might be a future split from Malagasy (Madagascar) Brush Warbler. IOC does recognize it as a full species now.

Malagasy White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatanus*

HBW suggests Malagasy White-eye *Z. maderaspatanus* might be a future split into into four species: Aldabra White-eye *Z. aldabrensis* including the *menaiensis* race, the Moheli White-eye *Z. comorensis*, the Anjouan White-eye *Z. anjuanensis* and the Madagascar White-eye *Z. maderaspatanus* – currently nominate – which also includes the *voletzkowi* race. We saw the **Moheli White-eye**, the **Anjouan White-eye** and the **Madagascar White-eye** on the tour.

Comoros Thrush *Turdus bewsheri*

HBW suggests it might be a future split into three species: Grand Comoro Thrush *T. comorensis*, Moheli Thrush *T. moheliensis* and Anjouan Thrush *T. bewsheri*. We saw all three on the tour: the **Grand Comoro Thrush** on Grand Comoro, the **Moheli Thrush** on Mohéli and the **Anjouan Thrush** on Anjouan.

Madagascan Magpie-Robin *Copsychus albospecularis*

HBW splits Madagascan Magpie-robin *C. albospecularis* into Pelzeln' Magpie-Robin *C. pica* and Madagascar Magpie-robin *C. albospecularis*. We saw the **Pelzeln's Magpie-Robin** on the tour.



Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (left) and Madagascan Magpie-Robin or Pelzeln's Magpie-Robin according to HBW (János Oláh).

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

IOC treats the Gran Comoro *voeltzkowi* race as part of the African Stonechat complex. HBW treats the African Stonechat as only a possible future split of the entire Common Stonechat *S. torquatus* complex. But if it is split the *voeltzkowi* race still considered part of the African Stonechat group.

Malagasy Green Sunbird (Long-billed G S) *Cinnyris notatus*

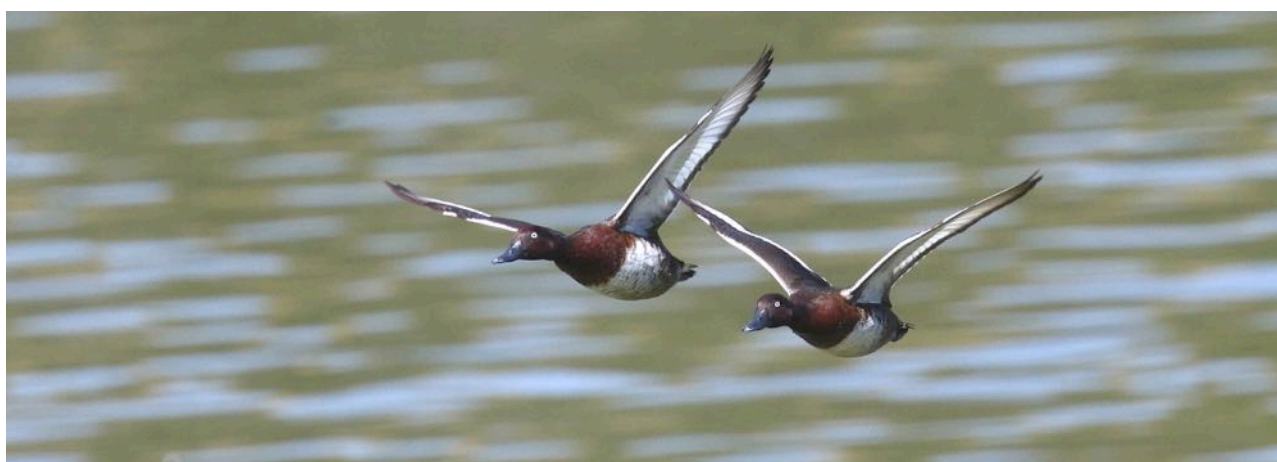
HBW splits Malagasy Green Sunbird *C. notatus* into Grand Comoro Sunbird *C. moebii*, Moheli Sunbird *C. voeltzkowi* and Long-billed Sunbird *C. notatus*. We saw all three on the tour. The **Grand Comoro Sunbird** on Grand Comoro, the **Moheli Sunbird** on Mohéli and the **Long-billed Sunbird** on Madagascar.

Humblot's Sunbird *Cinnyris humbloti*

HBW suggests it might be a future split into Humblot's Sunbird *C. humbloti* and Moheli Sunbird *C. mohelicus*. We saw **Humblot's Sunbird** on Grand Comoro and **Moheli Sunbird** on Moheli.

Comoros Fody *Foudia eminentissima*

HBW splits Comoros Fody *F. eminentissima* into Grand Comoro Fody *F. consobrina* and Red-headed Fody *F. eminentissima*. We saw the **Grand Comoro Fody** on Mount Karthala which is considered Near Threatened. We saw the nominate *eminentissima* race of **Red-headed Fody** on Mohéli, the *anjuanensis* race on Anjouan and the *algondae* race on Mayotte.



Male Madagascar Pochards (Werner Mueller).

APPENDIX 1: Overall results of the 'Bird of the tour' contest in the Comoros

	Species	Points	Nominations
1st	Cuckoo-Roller	50	7
2nd	Karthala's Scops Owl	36	5
3rd	Humblot's Flycatcher	32	5
4th	Anjouan Scops Owl	30	4
5th	Mayotte White-eye	18	5

APPENDIX 1: Overall results of the 'Bird of the tour' contest in Northern Madagascar

	Species	Points	Nominations
1st	Red Owl	50	6
2nd	Madagascar Pochard	44	5
3rd	Sakalava Rail	32	5
4th	Slender-billed Flufftail	28	5
5th	Schelegel's Asity	18	5