



**BIRDING
AFRICA**
THE AFRICA SPECIALISTS

Madagascar

2017 Tour Report



Collared Nightjar

*Text by tour leaders Michael Mills and Gabriel Jamie
Photos by tour participant Mick Dryden*

SUMMARY

Our comprehensive 2017 Madagascar Tour once again showcased Madagascar's best birds and wildlife in just 15 days, with an optional week spent at Masoala at the start. During this time we enjoyed good views of almost all available endemic birds. Among the 189 species logged were all five species of ground roller, all three mesites, all species of vanga and all ten couas.



Short-legged Ground Roller

The most enjoyed birds and birding experiences of the trip were close-up views of the impressive Hens's Goshawk in tenth, prolonged and unobstructed views of a lovely male Madagascar Flufftail in ninth, a flock of fourteen Crab Plovers on Nosy Ve in eighth, unbeatable views of a pair of Madagascar Yellowbrow in seventh and closer-and-closer views of the delightful White-browed Owl in sixth. The top five were a less-than-impressed Giant Coua in fifth, incredible views of Crossley's Vanga and the intricately-marked Scaly Ground Roller in a tie for third, exceptional views of two gorgeous male Schlegel's Asity in second, and the incomparable Collared Nightjar in top spot. Other favourites nominated included Red-tailed Tropicbird, Madagascar Cuckoo, Baillon's Crake, Madagascar

Pygmy Kingfisher, White-throated Rail, Velvet Asity, Long-tailed Ground Roller, Pitta-like Ground Roller, Short-legged Ground Roller, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, White-breasted Mesite, Grey Emutail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Hoopoe, Torotoroka Scops Owl, Brown Emutail, Cuckoo Roller, Nuthatch Vanga, Madagascar Nightjar, Verreaux's Coua, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk and the endemic subspecies of Little Bittern. Unbelievably Helmet Vanga, seen on day two, didn't get a single nomination despite the excellent views – how quickly it was forgotten! We also recorded 27 lemur species, two tenrecs, four leaf-tailed geckos, more than ten chameleons, several different day geckos, a beautiful painted frog, giraffe-necked weevil and lots of other great critters.

ESSENTIAL DETAILS

DATES

1-7 November 2017 (Masoala extension)

7-23 November 2017 (Main tour)

LEADER

Michael Mills assisted by Gabriel Jamie

PARTICIPANTS

Roger Ward

Katherine Ward

Mick Dryden

Lynne Dryden

Martie Krone

Bernie Krone

Ian Packer

Peter Osborn

Mary Swanton

Bob Zook

ITINERARY

1 Nov: Arrive Antananarivo.

2 Nov: Fly by private charter from Antananarivo to Maroansetra.

3 Nov: Maroansetra to Masoala.

4 Nov: Masoala.

5 Nov: Masoala.

6 Nov: Masoala.

7 Nov: Masoala to Sambava (should have been to Antananarivo, but Air Madagascar let us down). Main tour participants arrive in Antananarivo.

8 Nov: Masoala group fly to Antananarivo. The rest fly Antananarivo to Mahajanga.

9 Nov: Masoala participants fly by private charter (a Citation!) from Antananarivo to Mahajanga to unite with the rest of the group. Betsiboka Delta boat trip, then to Ankarafantsika.

10 Nov: Dry forest birding at Ankarafantsika.

11 Nov: Long drive from Ankarafantsika to Tana.

12 Nov: Antananarivo to Andasibe via Lake Alarobia.

13 Nov: Day trip to eastern rainforests of Mantadia.

14 Nov: Andasibe.

15 Nov: Andasibe to Antsirabe.

16 Nov: Antsirabe to Ranomafana.

17 Nov: Full day at higher altitude at Vohiparara.

18 Nov: Birding wetlands and higher forests of Ranomafana.

19 Nov: Birding the lower slopes at Ranomafana.

20 Nov: Ranomafana to Isalo via Anja Ring-tailed Lemur sanctuary.

21 Nov: Isalo to Ifaty via Zombitse and coral rag scrub near Toliara.

22 Nov: Morning in Spiny Forest at Ifaty. Afternoon near Toliara.

23 Nov: Outing to Anakao and Nosy Ve, before flight to Antananarivo.



Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher

REPORT

Deservedly called the eighth continent, Madagascar is among the most unusual and spectacular wildlife hotspots on the globe. With more than 120 endemics bird species, several endemic bird families and a great diversity of unique mammals and habitats, it is quite simply a must-visit destination for birders and wildlife enthusiasts alike.

The early arrivals for the trip met up at our comfortable hotel-base in Antananarivo, exhilarated at what the coming weeks held in store for us. The remote rainforests of Masoala in the north-east of the country provided the first stop on our route. A short stint of birding in our hotel gardens produced

Madagascar Nightjar on its day roost and tickled our taste buds before we enjoyed our first of many scrumptious meals together. As is now becoming routine, Air Madagascar let us down right from the start and cancelled our flight to Maroanetra, so we instead chartered a small plane and arrived well in time for a stint of afternoon birding at Maroanetra, which included several waders and herons, the only **Reed Cormorant** | **Long-tailed Cormorant** of the trip and a hunting **Peregrine Falcon**. The next morning the stormy weather had only subsided very slightly so it was a rather bumpy boat ride across to Masoala. We were more than relieved to set foot on



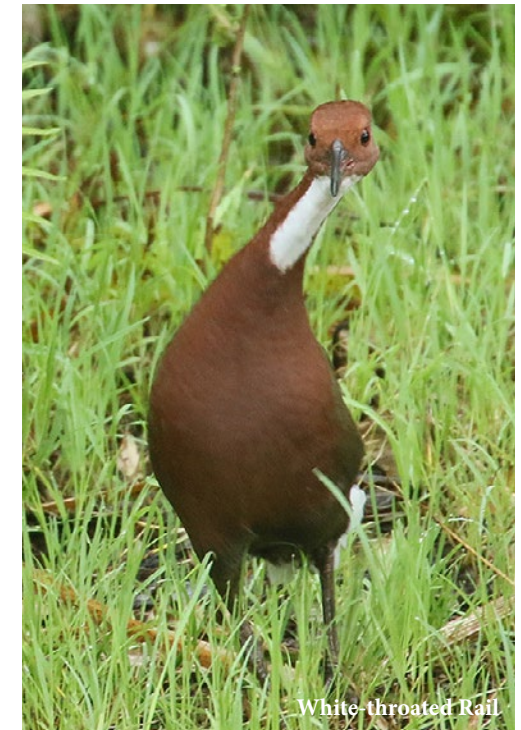
Blue Vanga

the beach below the Lahatrousa trail head for our first forest walk. The overcast conditions meant that things happened slowly during our entire visit, but our first walk produced some excellent views of *Red-ruffed Lemur* and **Helmet Vanga**. Fortunately **Bernier's Vanga** was not too tricky this year, and we spent some time watching a pair foraging in some *Pandanus* palms at the end of our first full day. This meant there was plenty of time to look for other specials and we also found **Short-legged Ground Roller**, **Brown Mesite**, **Madagascar Crested Ibis** (perched in a tree for good views), **Madagascar Starling**, **Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher** (well done Lynne!), **Madagascar Spinetail**, **Madagascar Pratincole**, **Blue Vanga**, **White-headed Vanga**, **Crossley's Vanga** and **Rufous Vanga**. Mammals were represented by *Lowland Streaked Tenrec* and *White-fronted Brown Lemur*. The return boat trip to Maroanetra was much smoother, but Air Madagascar deserted us again, this time in Sambava for 24 hours, requiring yet another charter flight to get us back on schedule!

In Mahajanga we met up with the rest of the group that had arrived for the main tour, starting off with a boat trip to the Betsiboka Delta. Although the tides were not ideal and temperatures has soared before the first mudflats were exposed, several **Madagascar Sacred Ibis** were seen feeding at close range. We found our only **Sooty Falcon** of the trip, which perched for excellent views, plus **Greater Sand Plover** and **Terek Sandpiper** among the more common waders and a young **Madagascar Harrier-Hawk** on a nest, nearly ready to fledge, while its parents circled nearby.

Back on shore we wasted no time in heading for the dry forests of Ampijoroa in Ankarafantsika National Park. As the afternoon cooled we spent some time along the shores of Lac Ravelobe watching **Madagascar Jacana**, and found a few noteworthy birds in the car park, including **Sickle-billed Vanga**. The following morning we struck out early into the forest, our first walk producing the goods in record time; perched **Madagascar Green Pigeons**, fantastic views of **White-breasted Mesite** and two incredible male **Schlegel's Asities** at eye level. We enjoyed great views of **Coquerel's Coua** and **Madagascar Hoopoe** before making our way to search the best area for Van Dam's Vanga. En route we paused to admire **Red-capped Coua**

and **Rufous Vanga**, before being led to a raptor nest which we were told belonged to Banded Kestrel. All that could be seen of the incubating bird was a banded tail, although a **Banded Kestrel** did briefly pass overhead above the forest canopy and was seen briefly by some. We continued on to look for the aforementioned vanga. By now it was heating up and activity was dropping rapidly, and we'd not heard a peep from the vanga. So, it was with some relief that a male **Van Dam's Vanga** suddenly appeared beside the trail and gave prolonged views. Returning to the raptor nest, the bird had now changed position and after some manoeuvring we managed to get the head of the bird in the scope – it was a **Madagascar Sparrowhawk** and not the hoped for kestrel. Back at the park headquarters we paused to admire some *Mongoose Lemurs* and *Western Woolly Lemurs*, and also found *Coquerel's Sifaka* and *Common Brown Lemur*. The afternoon was spent on and around Lac Ravelobe where we located a lovely **Madagascar Pond Heron**, a single **Humblot's Heron** and enjoyed close-up views of a pair of **Madagascar Fish Eagle**.



White-throated Rail

The next morning we set off straight after breakfast, having seen **Eleonora's Falcon** from our hotel garden. We had a long drive ahead of us back to 'Tana, but what a rewarding day it was. The first stop produced several **African Pygmy Goose** and some **Allen's Gallinules** while a second stop at the Betsiboka River **Madagascar Pratincole** put on a fine show, at lunch we managed to flush a couple of **Madagascar Buttonquail**, in the early afternoon a very fine **Madagascar Harrier** was seen well and in the later afternoon a pair of **Madagascar Partridge** scurried across the road and were flushed for flight views.

Before leaving 'Tana the next day a short visit to Lac Alarobia was in order. The numbers of ducks and herons were impressive, with hundreds of **Red-billed Teal**, **Dimorphic Egret**, **Squacco Heron** and **Western Cattle Egret** creating quite a spectacle. We took our time to pick out **Meller's Duck** and **Madagascar Little Grebe** for a detailed study, saw another **Madagascar Pond Heron**, enjoyed our best views of the trip of **Black Heron**, and found **Hottentot Teal** and **White-throated Rail** before making our way to Andasibe for our eastern



Schlegel's Asity



Pitta-like Ground Roller

rainforest introduction. During lunch we watched **Chabert Vanga**, **Ward's Vanga** and **Madagascar Starling**, followed by a short but productive walk in the reserve to admire **Collared Nightjar** on its day roost, plus **Nuthatch Vanga**, **Indri** and **Eastern Woolly Lemur**. After gate closing we found **Madagascar Long-eared Owl** and **Rainforest Scops Owl** on their day roosts before the rain set in and we headed for our lodge.

Our first full day in the eastern rainforest was spent at Mantadia, for which we made a very early start. Not long after arriving we were rewarded with excellent views of a pair of **Short-legged Ground Rollers**, followed by **Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher** and **Scaly Ground Roller**. With all the biggies in the bag we could now focus our attention on other birds. These included **Red-fronted Coua**, **Blue Coua**, **Madagascar Starling**, **Madagascar Spinetail**, another pair of **Madagascar Grebe** and lovely male **Madagascar Flufftail**. The rain came even earlier that afternoon, and we were driven back to our lodge without having the chance to look for

Red-tailed Tropicbird



Madagascar Rail. Our second full day was spent at Andasibe where, after some effort, we tracked down a lovely **Red-breasted Coua**, **Madagascar Wood Rail**, **Crossley's Vanga** and male **Velvet Asity**. In the late afternoon we returned to the entrance of Mantadia, this time finding a lovely **Madagascar Rail** that scurried back and forth and found a bonus **Little Bittern**.

Continuing our exploration of the eastern rainforests, we made the long drive south to Ranomafana National Park, broken with an overnight stay at a very comfortable hotel in Antsirabe. Early the next morning a stint of birding near Antsirabe produced several **Madagascar Partridge** and excellent views of **Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo**, **Peregrine Falcon**,

Madagascar Black Swift and **Marsh Owl** on the ground. Later that day, our lunch spot brought good flight views of a pair of **Madagascar Snipe**, whilst a **Baillon's Crake** was lured from the dense reed beds for great views. Energised by the day's sightings we rolled on to Ranomafana, arriving in the late afternoon.

With three full days at Ranomafana National Park we had plenty of time to track down all the tricky understorey skulkers for which this reserve is so well known. A pair of **Brown Mesite** was ushered into view with ease this year, **Pitta-like Ground Roller** performed beautifully, a pair of **Pollen's Vanga** were tracked down quickly, **Common Sunbird-Asity** showed well on two occasions, **Henst's Goshawk**

perched near its nest for great views, and **Rufous-headed Ground Roller** was coaxed into the open for the best views I have ever had. A bright male **Forest Fody** perched up nicely above our heads and great views were obtained of **Cryptic Warbler** moving below eye-level. **Grey-crowned Tetraka** was watched foraging over some mossy boughs and **Brown Emutail** was observed creeping mouse-like back and forth through the undergrowth. Two incredible male **Velvet Asity** showed remarkably well while **Grey Emutail** proved no challenge in its preferred swamp habitat. **Forest Rock Thrush** was lured into view and **Madagascar Yellowbrow** gave an astounding display for a bird that is usually so shy. Lemurs played along nicely too, with highlights including three species of bamboo lemur in a single morning (*Golden Bamboo Lemur*, *Greater Bamboo Lemur* and *Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur*) along with *Milne-Edward's Sifaka*, *Red-fronted Brown Lemur*, *Red-bellied Lemur*, and the diminutive *Rufous Mouse Lemur*.

It was now time to move on to the drier habitats of the south. We first paused at Anja Lemur Reserve where we spent an hour with a family of *Ring-tailed Lemurs* and found a flock of **Grey-headed Lovebird** for a great views, before continuing on to Isalo where we were welcomed by an almighty rain storm. Fortunately the rain stopped by the end of dinner and we quickly tracked down both **White-browed Owl** and **Torotoroka Scops Owl** for incredible views. Early the next morning **Forest Rock Thrush** (here called **Benson's Rock Thrush**) was found near our accommodation before we moved on to Zombitse Forest for a few hours. At Zombitse the highlights were close views of **Appert's Tetraka**, a perched female **Frances's Sparrowhawk**, a fantastic encounter with **Giant Coua** and good views of the local race of **Crested Coua** (split by BirdLife as Chestnut-vented Coua). Two *Verreaux's Sifaka* were enjoyed close to the main road and a sleepy *Hubbard's Sportive Lemur* peered from its roosting spot before it was time to move on. As we drove away a low-circling **Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk** caused much excitement as we all piled out the bus to enjoy this distinctive yet elusive raptor.

After Zombitse National Park, we stopped beyond the village of Sakahara to look for **Madagascar Sandgrouse**. Soon after arriving we were admiring a group of 11 sandgrouse on the deck. Entering the

coral rag scrub habitat near Toliara we found **Red-shouldered Vanga** without any trouble, and also spotted our first **Subdesert Brush Warblers**, **Green-capped Coua**, **Running Coua** and **Lafresnaye's Vanga**. In the late afternoon, as we neared Ifaty, we spotted **Madagascar Plover** beside the road and all alighted from the bus for some good views before moving onto our beach-side hotel.

Up early the next morning, we were out in the incomparable Spiny Forest as the sun was rising. Our first stop was to admire the localised **Subdesert Mesite** that had been treed by our guides, before we were whisked off to see **Long-tailed Ground Roller** at close range. Marching on, **Madagascar Sparrowhawk** was seen beside its nest and yesterday's views of **Running Coua** and **Green-capped Coua** were improved on. **Thamnornis** and **Archbold's Newtonia** took a bit longer to track down than normal but showed well in the end, and the final bird for the morning was a lovely female **Madagascar Buttonquail** seen well on the ground, before we headed back to the beach for breakfast. Mammals included *Black-shouldered Sportive Lemur* and a rather sleepy *Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec*. After a bit of down time at the hotel we headed towards Toliara, pausing for some wader watching en route with another **Madagascar Plover**, **Kittlitz's Plover** and **Three-banded Plover**. In the late afternoon a return visit to the coral rag scrub near Toliara finally produced excellent views of **Verreaux's Coua** which perched up beautifully for us all to admire.

The final day had now come, and with our return flight to Antananarivo schedule for just before midday we needed to make an especially early start for Anakao and Nosy Ve. It took all of 60 seconds to find **Littoral Rock Thrush** at Anakao, and we admired both a male and female at close range before skipping across to the nearby island. A much-celebrated flock of 14 eccentric **Crab-Plover** were found on arrival, before we spent some quality time with **Red-tailed Tropicbird**. The boat trip back to Toliara was rather uneventful, and by midday we were back in Antananarivo! A final meal together that evening gave us a chance to reflect on some of the fantastic sightings of the past few weeks before saying our goodbyes and getting our respective flights from Tana back home. Thank you to all the clients and local guides for helping to make this such a fun and productive tour!



ANNOTATED SPECIES LIST

Ducks, Geese & Swans Family Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* – Seen a few times

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* – At least 10 were seen at the wetland stop during the drive from Ankarafantsika and Antananarivo

Meller's Duck *Anas melleri* – Excellent views of 8 at Lake Alarobia, and three seen in flight at Ranomafana

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* – Most numerous at Lake Alarobia

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* – Seen well at Lake Alarobia

Guineafowl Family Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* – Seen at Isalo and Masoala (*mitratus*, introduced)

Pheasants, Fowl & Allies Family Phasianidae

Madagascar Partridge *Margaroperdix madagarensis* – Seen crossing the road north of Antananarivo, and at least 8 flushed near Antsirabe

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* – Heard north of Antananarivo (*africana*)

Grebes Family Podicipedidae

Madagascar Little Grebe *Tachybaptus pelzelinii* – First seen at Lake Alarobia, with further great views obtained of a pair at the nest at Mantadia

Storks Family Ciconiidae

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* – One subadult seen at the Betsiboka Delta

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus* – One seen in Mahajanga (*madagascariensis*, endemic)

Tropicbirds Family Phaethontidae

Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* – Fantastic views on Nosy Ve (*rubricauda*)

Ibises, Spoonbills Family Threskiornithidae

Madagascar Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis bernieri* – Good views of at least 5 at the Betsiboka Delta (*bernieri*, endemic)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* – Seen at Ankarafantsika

Madagascar Crested Ibis *Lophotibis cristata* – Seen well at Masoala and briefly at Andasibe (*cristata*)

Hérons, Bitterns Family Ardeidae

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* – A lovely male was seen well near Mantadia (*podiceps*, endemic)

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* – Seen a few times (*nycticorax*)

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* – Several sightings (*rutenbergi*, regional endemic)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* – Most common at Lake Alarobia

Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae* – Seen well at Lake Alarobia and Ankarafantsika; also at Isalo

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – Common and widespread

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* – Seen at Ifaty and Nosy Ve (*firasa*, region endemic)

Madagascar Heron *Ardea humbloti* – Just a single bird seen at Ankarafantsika

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* – Most common at Ankarafantsika (*madagascariensis*, endemic)

Great Egret *Ardea alba* – Widespread sightings, especially in highland rice paddies (*melanorhynchos*)

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* – Our best views were at Lake Alarobia

Dimorphic Egret *Egretta dimorpha* – Widespread and common, with both white and black morph birds seen well

Hamerkop Family Scopidae

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* – Several sightings around wetlands and rice paddies (*umbretta*)

Cormorants, shags Family Phalacrocoracidae

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus* – Seen at Maroanetra (*pictilis*, endemic)

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Family Accipitridae

Madagascar Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides radiatus* – Seen at Masoala, Betsiboka Delta, Mantadia and Ranomafana

Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk *Aviceda madagascariensis* – Fantastic flight views of one at Zombitse

Frances's Sparrowhawk *Accipiter francesiae* – Great looks at a female at Zombitse; males seen at Ankarafantsika and Maroanetra (*francesiae*)

Madagascar Sparrowhawk *Accipiter madagascariensis* – Brilliant views at Ifaty; also seen in flight at Vohiparara and on the nest at Ankarafantsika

Henst's Goshawk *Accipiter henstii* – An excellent encounter at Ranomafana

Madagascar Harrier *Circus macroscelus* – Good and very welcome views of a male north of Antananarivo

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* – Fairly common and widespread (*parasitus*)

Madagascar Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides* – Fantastic views of a pair at Ankarafantsika

Madagascar Buzzard *Buteo brachypterus* – Seen regularly throughout the tour

Mesites Family Mesitornithidae

White-breasted Mesite *Mesitornis variegatus* – Amazing views of a pair at Ankarafantsika

Brown Mesite *Mesitornis unicolor* – This year they came easily and were seen well at Masoala and Vohiparara

Subdesert Mesite *Monias benschi* – Seen well at Ifaty

Flufftails Family Sarothruridae

Madagascar Wood Rail *Canirallus kioloides* – Seen well at Andasibe and Masoala (*kioloides*)

Madagascar Flufftail *Sarothrura insularis* – Good views of a male at Mantadia and absolutely amazing views of another at Ranomafana

Rails, Crakes & Coots Family Rallidae

Madagascar Rail *Rallus madagascariensis* – Seen at close range near Mantadia, but the bird was always in a hurry; also seen briefly at Ranomafana

White-throated Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri* – Seen well a few times (*cuvieri*)

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* – Brilliant views at our lunch-time stop en route to Ranomafana

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* – Good views on the drive from Ankarafantsika to Antananarivo

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – A few good sightings (*pyrrhorhoa*, regional endemic)

Buttonquail Family Turnicidae

Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigricollis* – First seen when flushed north of Antananarivo, and followed up with excellent views of a female at Ifaty

Crab-plover Family Dromadidae

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* – A flock of 14 were seen well at Nosy Ve

Stilts, Avocets Family Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* – Seen in the Ifaty area

Plovers Family Charadriidae

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* – Seen along the coast

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* – Seen at the Betsiboka Delta

Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus* – Seen at close range at Ifaty, on two occasions

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* – Seen at Ifaty

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* – Seen at Ankarafantsika and Toliara (*bifrontatus*, endemic and split by BirdLife)

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* – Good views at Nosy Ve, Maroansetra and Ifaty (*tenellus*, endemic)

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* – Several seen at the Betsiboka Delta

Pained-snipes Family Rostratulidae

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis* – Two females and a male seen well at the wetland stop during our drive from Ankarafantsika to Antananarivo

Jacanas Family Jacanidae

Madagascar Jacana *Actophilornis albinucha* – A single bird was seen well at Ankarafantsika and another on the drive from Ankarafantsika to Antananarivo

Sandpipers, Snipes Family Scolopacidae

Madagascar Snipe *Gallinago macrodactyla* – Seen well en route from Antsirabe to Ranomafana, and again at Ranomafana

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* – Seen at Maroansetra

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* – Seen along the coast

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* – Seen mostly along the coast

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* – Quite numerous at the Betsiboka Delta

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* – Several sightings

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* – Seen along the coast

Sanderling *Calidris alba* – Seen at Nosy Ve

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* – Seen along the coast

Courasers, Pratincoles Family Glareolidae

Madagascar Pratincole *Glareola ocularis* – Fantastic views between Mahajanga and Antananarivo, and at Masoala

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Family Laridae

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* – Seen along the coast

Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* – The most numerous tern

Sandgrouse Family Pteroclididae

Madagascar Sandgrouse *Pterocles personatus* – Good views of 11 during the drive from Zombitse to Toliara

Pigeons, Doves Family Columbidae

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* – Feral Pigeon was common in towns and villages

Madagascar Turtle Dove *Nesoenas picturatus* – Several good sightings (*picturatus*)

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* – Most numerous in the Toliara area (*aliena*, endemic)

Madagascar Green Pigeon *Treron australis* – Seen at Masoala, Andasibe and Ranomafana (*australis*) and Ankarafantsika (*xenius*)

Madagascar Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas madagascariensis* – Good views at Mantadia and Ranomafana

Cuckoos Family Cuculidae

Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou* – Heard and seen almost daily

Crested Coua *Coua cristata* – Seen at Zombitse and Ifaty (*pyropyga*, split as **Chestnut-vented Coua** by BirdLife) and Ankarafantsika (*dumonti*)

Verreaux's Coua *Coua verreauxi* – Very good views near Toliara

Blue Coua *Coua caerulea* – Observed regularly in the eastern forests

Red-capped Coua *Coua ruficeps* – Good views at Ankarafantsika

Green-capped Coua *Coua [ruficeps] olivaceiceps* – Brief views near Toliara and excellent views at Ifaty

Red-fronted Coua *Coua reynaudii* – Seen at all eastern forest sites, with the best views at Mantadia

Coquerel's Coua *Coua coquereli* – Nice looks at Ankarafantsika

Running Coua *Coua cursor* – Seen well at Ifaty and near Toliara

Giant Coua *Coua gigas* – Exceptional views at Zombitse

Red-breasted Coua *Coua serriana* – Seen at Andasibe, but our best views were at Masoala

Madagascar Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii* – Several good sightings and heard almost daily

Barn Owls Family Tytonidae

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* – Heard in Antananarivo (*hypermetra*, regional endemic)

Owls Family Strigidae

Torotoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis* – Brilliant views at night at Isalo

Rainforest Scops Owl *Otus rutilus* – Seen on the day roost at Andasibe, and briefly at night at Masoala

White-browed Owl *Ninox superciliosus* – Very memorable views at night at Isalo

Madagascar Long-eared Owl *Asio madagascariensis* – Good day-time views at Andasibe

Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* – Excellent day-time views near Antsirabe (*hova*, endemic)

Nightjars Family Caprimulgidae

Collared Nightjar *Gactornis enarratus* – Excellent views on the roost at Andasibe

Madagascar Nightjar *Caprimulgus madagascariensis* – Our best views were of a bird on a day roost in Antananarivo

Swifts Family Apodidae

Madagascar Spinetail *Zoonavena grandidieri* – Seen well at Mantadia and Masoala

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* – Seen regularly in the lowlands (*gracilis*, endemic)

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* – Seen on the drive to Isalo

Madagascar Black Swift *Apus balstoni* – Several excellent sightings (*balstoni*, endemic)

Little Swift *Apus affinis* – Seen well in Antananarivo

Cuckoo Roller Family Leptosomidae

Cuckoo Roller *Leptosomus discolor* – We enjoyed some excellent views at Zombitse, in display flight and perched (*discolor*, endemic)

Rollers Family Coraciidae

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* – Several good sightings (*glaucus*, endemic breeder)

Ground Rollers Family Brachypteraciidae

Short-legged Ground Roller *Brachypteracias leptosomus* – Excellent views at Masoala and Mantadia

Scaly Ground Roller *Geobiastes squamiger* – A fantastic encounter at Mantadia

Pitta-like Ground Roller *Atelornis pittoides* – Excellent views at Ranomafana

Rufous-headed Ground Roller *Atelornis crossleyi* – Exceptional views at Vohiparara

Long-tailed Ground Roller *Uratelornis chimaera* – Seen at close range at Ifaty

Kingfishers Family Alcedinidae

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher *Corythornis madagascariensis* – Two good encounters, at Masoala and Mantadia

Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis vintsioides* – Seen regularly around wetlands (*vintsioides*, endemic)

Bee-eaters Family Meropidae

Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* – Seen regularly (*superciliosus*)

Hoopoes Family Upupidae

Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa marginata* – Several good sightings in the west

Falcons Family Falconidae

Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni* – Seen regularly throughout the tour (*newtoni*)

Banded Kestrel *Falco zoniventris* – Brief flight views at Ankarafantsika

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* – One was seen at Ankarafantsika

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* – Just one sighting, but it was a good one at the Betsiboka Delta

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* – One seen at Maroanetra and another near Antsirabe (*radama*, regional endemic)

Old World Parrots Family Psittaculidae

Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa* – Our best views were at Ankarafantsika (*drouhardi*) and Ranomafana (*vasa*)

Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra* – Seen at Ankarafantsika, Zombitse and Ifaty (*libs*) and regularly in the eastern forests (*nigra*)

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canus* – Seen at Anja and Ifaty (*ablectaneus*), and Ankarafantsika (*canus*)

Broadbills Family Eurylaimidae

Velvet Asity *Philepitta castanea* – Incredible views of males at Ranomafana, although first seen at Andasibe

Schlegel's Asity *Philepitta schlegeli* – Fantastic views of two males at Ankarafantsika

Common Sunbird-Asity *Neodrepanis coruscans* – Two males were seen well at Vohiparara

Vangas Family Vangidae

Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalicus madagascariensis* – Several good sightings

Red-shouldered Vanga *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* – Great views of a pair near Toliara

Hook-billed Vanga *Vanga curvirostris* – Great views at Masoala, Ankarafantsika and Ranomafana (*curvirostris*)

Bernier's Vanga *Oriolia bernieri* – Excellent views of a pair at Masoala

Lafresnaye's Vanga *Xenopirostris xenopirostris* – A great sighting near Toliara

Van Dam's Vanga *Xenopirostris damii* – Great views of a male at Ankarafantsika

Pollen's Vanga *Xenopirostris polleni* – Seen well at Ranomafana

Sickle-billed Vanga *Falcoelea palliata* – Super views at Ankarafantsika, and also seen at Ifaty

White-headed Vanga *Artamella viridis* – Several good sightings, the best at Ankarafantsika (*annae*) and Masoala (*viridis*)

Chabert Vanga *Leptopterus chabert* – Seen several times in the east (*chabert*), and also at Ifaty (*schistocercus*)

Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascarinus* – Several good sightings (*madagascarinus*, endemic)

Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa* – Seen at Ankarafantsika (*occidentalis*), and Ranomafana and Masoala (*rufa*)

Helmet Vanga *Euryceros prevostii* – Two good encounters at Masoala

Tylas Vanga *Tylas eduardi* – Several seen in the eastern forests (*eduardi*)

Nuthatch Vanga *Hypositta corallirostris* – Great views at Andasibe

Dark Newtonia *Newtonia amphichroa* – Seen well at Vohiparara

Common Newtonia *Newtonia brunneicauda* – Seen regularly (*brunneicauda*)

Archbold's Newtonia *Newtonia archboldi* – Good looks at Ifaty

Ward's Flycatcher *Pseudobias wardi* – Our best views were at Vohiparara

Crossley's Vanga *Mystacornis crossleyi* – Point-blank views of this great bird at Masoala and seen again at Andasibe

Cuckooshrikes Family Campephagidae

Madagascar Cuckooshrike *Coracina cinerea* – Several good sightings in the east (*cinerea*) and west (*pallida*)

Drongos Family Dicruridae

Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus* – Common and widespread (*forficatus*, endemic)

Monarchs Family Monarchidae

Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata* – Common and widespread (*mutata* and *singetra*)

Crows Family Corvidae

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* – Common and widespread

Larks Family Alaudidae

Madagascar Lark *Eremopterix hova* – Seen very well in open habitats

Bulbuls Family Pycnonotidae

Madagascar Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis* – Common and widespread (*madagascariensis*)

Swallows, martins Family Hirundinidae

Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica* – Seen regularly (*madagascariensis*)

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* – Regular around wetlands in the highlands (*cowani*, endemic)

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – Seen in the Toliara area

Reed warblers and allies Family Acrocephalidae

Madagascar Brush Warbler *Nesillas typica* – Common in the highlands (*typica*)

Subdesert Brush Warbler *Nesillas lantzii* – Seen well in the Toliara area

Madagascar Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus newtoni* – A few good sightings, the first at Lake Alarobia

Grassbirds and allies Family Locustellidae

Brown Emutail *Bradypterus brunneus* – Two quite good sightings at Vohiparara

Grey Emutail *Amphilais seebohmi* – Seen very well near Ranomafana

Malagasy warblers Family Bernieridae

White-throated Oxylabes *Oxylabes madagascariensis* – Good views at Ranomafana

Long-billed Bernieria *Bernieria madagascariensis* – Seen regularly throughout the tour (*madagascariensis* in the east, *inceleber* in the west)

Cryptic Warbler *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi* – Excellent views at Vohiparara

Wedge-tailed Jery *Hartertula flavoviridis* – Good views at Vohiparara

Thamnornis *Thamnornis chloropetoides* – Good views at Ifaty

Spectacled Tetraka *Xanthomixis zosterops* – Several good sightings; we probably saw *andapae* at Masoala and *zosterops* at Andasibe and Ranomafana

Appert's Tetraka *Xanthomixis apperti* – Close views of a pair at Zombitse

Grey-crowned Tetraka *Xanthomixis cinereiceps* – Seen well at Vohiparara

Madagascar Yellowbrow *Crossleyia xanthophrys* – Quite incredible views at Vohiparara

Rand's Warbler *Randia pseudozosterops* – Seen very well at Andasibe; also seen at Ranomafana

Cisticolas and allies Family Cisticolidae

Common Jery *Neomixis tenella* – Common and widespread, with *tenella* at Masoala, *decaryi* at Ankarafantsika, *orientalis* at Ranomafana and *debilis* at Ifaty

Green Jery *Neomixis viridis* – Seen at Masoala, Andasibe and Ranomafana (probably *viridis*)

Stripe-throated Jery *Neomixis striatigula* – Seen well at Andasibe (possibly *sclateri*) and Ranomafana (possibly *striatigula*); good views at Ifaty, where birds have quite a different song (*pallidior*, split as Southern Jery)

Madagascar Cisticola *Cisticola cherina* – Several good sightings

White-eyes Family Zosteropidae

Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatanus* – Seen regularly in the east (*maderaspatanus*)

Starlings Family Sturnidae

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* – Common indeed (introduced)

Madagascar Starling *Hartlaubius auratus* – Seen at Andasibe and Ranomafana, and in larger numbers at Masoala

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Family Muscipidae

Madagascar Magpie-Robin *Copsychus albospectularis* – Common and widespread; *albospectularis* at Masoala, *pica* in the west and in Antananarivo and *inexpectatus* at Andasibe and Ranomafana

Littoral Rock Thrush *Monticola imerina* – Great looks at a pair at Anakao

Forest Rock Thrush *Monticola sharpei* – Seen well at both Ranomafana (*salomonseni*) and Isalo ("Benson's Rock Thrush", *bensoni*)

Madagascar Stonechat *Saxicola sibilla* – Fairly common in the highlands (*sibilla*)

Sunbirds Family Nectariniidae

Souimanga Sunbird *Cinnyris sovimanga* – Many great views (*sovimanga*), with white-bellied birds confined to the south (*apolis*)

Madagascar Green Sunbird *Cinnyris notatus* – Several good sightings (*notatus*, endemic)

Old World Sparrows Family Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – A couple were seen in Mahajanga

Weavers, Widowbirds Family Ploceidae

Nelicourvi Weaver *Ploceus nelicourvi* – Seen at all eastern forest sites

Sakalava Weaver *Ploceus sakalava* – Seen well in the west (*sakalava* at Ankarafantsika, *minor* at Ifaty)

Red Fody *Foudia madagascariensis* – Common and widespread

Forest Fody *Foudia omissa* – Just one good sighting of a lovely male at Vohiparara

Waxbills, Munias & Allies Family Estrildidae

Madagascar Mannikin *Lepidopygia nana* – Several good sightings

Wagtails, Pipits Family Motacillidae

Madagascar Wagtail *Motacilla flaviventris* – Common and widespread



Long-tailed Ground Roller

Ring-tailed Lemur

