



The stunning Schlegel's Asity showed very well at Ampijoroa. (Dani Lopez-Velasco)

ULTIMATE MADAGASCAR

31 OCTOBER – 19/24 NOVEMBER 2015

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This year's Ultimate Madagascar tour delivered once again an impressive selection of Malagasy specialities including excellent views of all of the Ground Rollers, Asitys, Couas and Mesites plus the spectacular Cuckoo Roller and, for those who undertook the extension to the Masoala Peninsular where we saw Helmet and Bernier's Vangas, all of the Madagascar Vangas too. Aside from the birds we found a fine selection of Lemurs – no less than 23 species- and some cracking reptiles too. Despite some hassles, especially concerning Air Madagascar, the tour logistics ran relatively smoothly, at least for Madagascar standards, and the weather throughout was generally fine and sunny.



The incomparable Helmet Vanga was definitely the highlight of the Masoala extension. (DLV)

The tour began with a long drive south from the capital, Antananarivo, towards our base at Ranomafana. We made a couple of stops on the journey, which gave us excellent views of our target Madagascan Snipe – sitting in the open, thanks to Werner-, as well as Grey Emutail, and had our first taste of common malagasy birds such as Malagasy Brush Warbler, Malagasy White-eye, Madagascan Stonechat, Madagascan Cisticola, Common Jery and Red Fody. We eventually made it to our hotel, had a late dinner and quickly went to sleep.

Our first full day at Ranomafana commenced with a visit to the main reserve, with various targets in mind. The birding was memorable, and thanks to our great local guides we saw all of our hoped-for species. From the parking lot we had good scope and side-by-side views of both Rand's Warbler, with its Greenfinch-like song, and Stripe-throated Jery, as well as Green Jery, Madagascan Magpie-Robin and Souimanga Sunbird. A flock of Spectacled Tetrakas was seen as we entered the trails, while a calling Crossley's Vanga was only seen well by James. Soon afterwards, we heard the calls of the skulking Madagascan Wood Rail, and after choosing a good spot, we enticed a pair to cross the trail in front of us, giving excellent views. Minutes later, we were watching a cracking male Velvet Asity, very well behaved and sitting eye-level and just a couple feet from us. Excellent! Not far from there, we came across a group of the critically endangered Golden Bamboo Lemur, but we were soon distracted by the calls of a Pitta-like Ground Roller. After some positioning, I played the tape, the bird responded and soon we were watching it walking on the ground around us and sitting in nearby branches, giving great views. One of those most-wanted species when anyone comes to Madagascar, and already in the bag! There sure was no time to rest here, with specialities all coming thick and fast. Our first coua came in form of a showy Red-fronted Coua that crossed the path a couple of times, and not far from there, a pair of flighty Common Sunbird-Asities gave us a hard time until most of us got reasonable views of the male perched. A group of stunning Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs was watched at length, and some very rare Greater Bamboo Lemurs obliged as well, even on the ground. After some walking, we visited the traditional nesting location of a pair of Henst's Goshawks, and waited for them to show up. We also looked for them in the nearby trees, but couldn't find them, until suddenly one flew off from one of the trees we had been looking at, and was quickly out of sight. Not very satisfactory views, so

we would have to try for it later on... The show was far from over on this epic day though. While walking down, we heard Brown Mesites,- one of the stars of the reserve, that can sometimes be difficult to track down-, calling in the distance and after a circuitous and steep, cross-country hike, which ended up on the trail where we had been (!), found ourselves overlooking it. Our “herders” then gently ushered a pair of mesites into view and we watched them on and off for 15 minutes. Very happy with our success, we went back to the bus. Back in the parking lot we saw our first Madagascan Starlings of the trip. A short drive then took us up to Vohiparara National Park, where we managed to get decent and very close views of the tiny Madagascan Flufftail, as well as White-throated Rail. We also heard the calls of the uncommon Pollen’s Vanga, and after following them for a while, we eventually tracked it down and enjoyed point blank views before it got dark. At dusk we had brief views of a Ward’s Flycatcher and also saw a pair of Brown Mouse Lemurs by the road.



We had great views of the world’s five ground rollers, including this Pitta-like Ground Roller. (DLV)

Next morning we visited Vohiparara again, with just a handful of targets in mind. One of the first birds seen as we entered the forest was a Pitta-like Ground Roller, perched quietly in the mid storey. The ground roller we were after today was not this one though, but the scarce Rufous-headed. We tried at various places, but we didn’t get a response. Moving further on, we checked a well-known stake out for Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, one of the other targets for the morning, but they didn’t seem to be around. A flock of electric colored Blue Vangas here was most welcome though. Not far from there, we finally heard the calls of a Rufous-headed Ground Roller, and went straight for it. It took a while to reach the spot once we left the trail, but eventually we got to a place with decent visibility in the forest. We started playing the tape, and the bird came close, but despite all of our efforts, it remained hidden. While waiting for it to show up, we had good views of Cryptic Warbler and a brief Dark Newtonia. As the ground roller didn’t seem to move closer, we decided to go down to the gully and wait there. That proved to be a good move, as within seconds the bird slowly walked towards us. After circling us for a while, it then started preening, and we enjoyed terrific views. Excellent! We returned to the trail, where a Madagascan Yellowbrow was coaxed into view. We kept walking until we found a flowering tree, where, luckily, three stunning Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asities were coming to feed on the flowers. We admired them for a while, took some photos in the difficult light, and then moved on.

Next on the agenda was the retiring Brown Emutail, which proved much easier to see than usual, even sitting briefly on a rock in the middle of the trail. Supporting cast seen during our stay in Vohiparara included Madagascan Blue Pigeon, Madagascan Cuckoo, Wedge-tailed Jery and Grey-crowned Tetrakas –our only ones of the trip-, as well as a brief White-throated Oxylabes. In the late afternoon we went for a walk, highlighted by some Chabert Vangas and a cracking *Mantella baroni*, a tiny brightly colored endemic frog. A pair of Cuckoo Rollers was seen briefly in flight by some – our battle with this widespread bird began...!



A cracking male Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity and a confiding Brown Mesite. (DLV)

With a couple of hours available before we began the long drive west to Isalo we returned to the Henst's Goshawk nesting site in Ranomafana. However, by the time we reached it, the mist had built up and it started to rain, so after an hour waiting under the rain, with little to be seen, we decided to return to the vehicle. The rest of the day was spent driving to Isalo, a long journey punctuated by impressive landscapes. However, the weather started to seriously deteriorate, and instead of the usual clear skies here, we drove directly into a big storm, and experienced heavy rain and strong winds. We tried to look for Malagasy Harrier at Horombe Plateau, but given the awful weather it was a nearly impossible task. No harriers were obviously in the air, although 2 brief Marsh Owls came as consolation price. We eventually reached our fancy hotel, and after a good dinner we went to sleep, hoping for better weather the following day.



Mantella baroni, a cute endemic frog, and a Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur. (DLV)

A search of the surrounding area for Madagascan Partridge early the next morning was successful, as within half an hour of leaving our rooms we had found a pair of them. Also in the same area we flushed our first Madagascan Buttonquail of the trip. After some time looking for Benson's Rock Thrush (now considered to be a subspecies of Forest R T, according to a recent paper) near the hotel, in very windy conditions, we diverted to the Isalo Museum to look for them, and it didn't take long to find a pair, which gave excellent views amidst some spectacular scenery. Pleased with our success, we were soon on our way east towards

Zombitse Forest. Once on the main trail system it didn't take long to find some inquisitive Verreaux's Sifakas and shortly afterwards our main target, Appert's Tetraka was on view. A pair of Giant Couas showed nicely, and further exploration gave us a single Coquerel's Coua and nesting Hook-billed and Rufous Vangas. We saw our first Madagascan Spinetails here, while some saw a Cuckoo Roller in flight. The usual roosting White-browed Hawk-Owls were nowhere to be found, but thankfully our skilled local guide went off the trail in search for them, and after 15 minutes he told us he had found one, far from the usual stake outs. We followed him and were soon watching one of these beautiful owls. Having seen all of our targets here, we continued our journey eastward, seeing nesting Olive bee-eaters on the way, and reached the coast at Tulear a couple of hours later. After dropping off our bags and freshening up for a few minutes we visited the nearby tablelands where a hike through the scrub produced fine views of a pair of Red-shouldered Vangas that our local guides herded towards us. Our remaining top target, Verreaux's Coua, took a bit of time to find, but eventually, after some flight views, it popped up on a nearby bare treetop and performed nicely. Although widespread, Sickle-billed Vanga is always a great bird to see, especially for the first time, so we were more than happy when a pair came straight to us and gave great views. What a bill! Our guide took us to a Brown-capped Coua nest, but the adult wasn't on show. After a bit of searching we eventually coaxed one into view. Madagascan Larks were present in numbers, and we had our first looks at Subdesert Brush Warbler here.



A showy female Madagascan Buttonquail. (DLV)

After a good nights sleep, we went to the harbour, where Zebu carts were waiting to transport us to a waiting boat which then took us to the island of Nosy Ve. Due to strong winds, the seas were very choppy and it took almost two hours to reach the island. As soon as we disembarked, I put the scope on a flock of Crab Plovers that were roosting at the north end of the island in the company of a few Greater and Lesser Crested Terns. We then walked to the south end of the island where there is a famous colony of Red-tailed Tropicbirds. These stunning birds showed to perfection, both in flight, where they put on some amazing aerial displays, and under the bushes where they were nesting. We spent a couple of very enjoyable hours admiring and photographing these truly elegant white birds. A short boat ride then took us to the village of Anakao where our target bird, Littoral Rock Thrush, was found. First, a singing male not far from the beach, and later, while sipping cool drinks at a hotel bar, we watched a female bringing food to its nest (an endemic Large-eared

Tenrec in fact). After returning to Tulear we ate lunch and waited for the temperature to subside a little before driving north towards Ifaty. We reached the favoured area of the rare Madagascan Plover on the desiccated salt flats south of Ifaty and were soon enjoying excellent, up-close views of one adult. Good numbers of Curlew Sandpipers and Kittlitz's Plovers were present, and a pair each of White-fronted and Three-banded Plovers, of the endemic subspecies, were also seen in the scope. Afterwards we drove a short distance to our wonderful hotel, located by the ocean, for a two-night stay. Madagascan Nightjars were very vocal as we ate dinner with one seen exceedingly well in the spotlight.



Red-tailed Tropicbird checking us out... (DLV)

At dawn next morning we were already in the incredible spiny forest, with a select set of mouth-watering species in mind. The birding was unbelievably good, and thanks to our local guides we had cleaned up –no less than 10 targets - by 7:30 am! Definitely amongst my most successful two hours of birding ever. Lifers kept coming hot on the heels of each other. First up was a Running Coua by the path, followed by a pair of Archbold's Newtonias that eventually settled down and gave fine views. Next, a cracking Banded Kestrel, a species that can play hard to find, that sat up on a Euphorbia tree for as long as we wanted, in the low sunrise light. Minutes later, we were all watching a Long-tailed Ground Roller (our third ground roller of the trip) at close quarters. What a great bird! Then, a Thamnornis (Warbler) was tracked down singing from top of a Didiera tree. Next, a female Subdesert Mesite sitting motionless for a long time and giving great photo opportunities. Both a Madagascan Harrier-Hawk and a Lafresnaye's Vanga were easy addition to our lists, sitting on theirs nest. Vocal Crested Couas obliged at length, and we also enjoyed fantastic views of White-headed and more Sickie-billed Vangas. Our final target, the uncommon Madagascan Sparrowhawk, was easily found perched on a tree not far from the nest, and we were lucky to witness some fine aerial display when the female passed to the male a prey item in flight. Outstanding! This impressive list was tallied before we returned to our hotel for breakfast, the time still only 7.30 but the temperature rising rapidly. Another visit in mid morning produced sightings of most of the previously seen birds, as well as an up-close encounter with a pair of Madagascan Buttonquails, and we spent some more time with the Long-tailed Ground Roller, while at the parking lot we saw our first Madagascan Green Pigeon. We then returned to the hotel for lunch

and a siesta, and some of us even went on a snorkelling trip to a nearby reef.

In the mid afternoon we returned to the spiny forest, where we improved our views of Lafreasnaye's Vanga, outside of the nest, and also saw a flock of Grey-headed Lovebirds, while a Malagasy Coucal posed nicely for photos. A night walk produced a cracking Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec, White-footed Sportive Lemur, an adult Madagascan Nightjar with a chick, and some reptiles, including several Big-headed Geckos.



Typical Malagasy scenery with Baobabs in the southwest. (DLV)

Our plane to Tana and then on to Fort Dauphin departed mid morning next day. Having seen all of our targets in Ifaty, I decided to leave very early and head towards a spot not far from Tuléar where Madagascan Sandgrouse regularly comes to drink. No sandgrouse came to drink though in a 2-hour vigil, but we were more than pleased to see a Baillon's Crake out in the open! A pair of Madagascan Swamp Warblers showed nicely too, before we had to return to the airport. After the usual long delay, the typical problems with Air MADagascar began, this time the ground staff saying one of us couldn't get on the plane, for some unknown reason. After some hassling, we eventually got on board, and made it first to Tana and then southwards to Fort Dauphin. The grassy areas by the airstrip have been reliable recently for Madagascan Partridge, and James had a pair very close to the airplane. Once we got to Fort Dauphin, we visited the headland in search of Madagascan Gull. No gulls appeared for us though, the only birds of note being some distant Greater Crested Terns. We then drove on the bumpy road to Berenty. After dinner we went owling and eventually got good views of a Torotoroka Scops Owl on the spotlight.

Madagascan Sandgrouse was our priority bird number one next morning, and we devoted the first hours of daylight searching for it. A long walk hoping to flush them in some nearby fields proved fruitless, so we headed to another spot. And as luck would have it, as soon as we arrived we saw two birds, a male and a female, sitting on the ground very close to the vehicle, and allowing for great and prolonged views. We then went back for breakfast, and spent the rest of the morning exploring the gallery forest trails at Berenty where we saw a Madagascan Cuckoo-Hawk, our last main target here. Giant Couas were common here, and we had walk-away views of several birds, which could almost be touched. Also seen were a Western Barn Owl, another White-browed Hawk-Owl and both Frances's and Madagascan Sparrowhawks, plus numerous Lemurs, that included lots of inquisitive Ring-tailed Lemurs with babies. After lunch we returned to Fort

Dauphin, where this time we succeeded in getting good views of Madagascan Gull in flight, close to shore. Red-necked Phalaropes and some terns were seen out in the sea, but not much else apart from that.



The two most sought-after spiny forest specialties: Long-tailed Ground Roller and Subdesert Mesite at Ifaty. (DLV)



Very early next morning we headed to the Andohahela NP, in search of Red-tailed Newtonia. The original plan was to have at least one full day here, to secure the newtonia, but of course Air Madagascar ruined it with a cancelled flight. Thus, and with very short notice, we had to change to another private airline and get on a mid morning flight back to Tana. That, together with a highly incompetent and severely drunk local, who took us in the dark to the wrong sector of this very large park, spoiled our chances of seeing the bird. Once it was light and I realized we weren't at the usual spot, it was already too late to drive there. After an angry argument with the guy, we decided to spend the remaining time here, the highlight being several nice flocks of Madagascan Sandgrouse coming to drink. We then had to hurry to get back to the airport in time, and once in Tana we undertook the drive eastwards towards Perinet, where we arrived by dinnertime.



Ring-tailed Lemur at Berenty. (DLV)

After an early breakfast we were on our way to Mantadia NP, arriving there a couple of hours later. Once in the forest we soon found a pair of Scaly Ground Rollers, which were nesting close to the trail. After playing hide and seek for a while, eventually we all enjoyed great views of this cracking species. Not far from there we all caught up with a very obliging Crossley's Vanga. Next on the agenda was Short-legged Ground Roller, so we set off in pursuit of one. It ended up being quite an adventure, that included a strenuous hike up a steep forested hill and a piggy-back ride across a river on the way back, but it was well worth it, as we finally enjoyed fabulous views of this excellent species – and our last of all five world's ground rollers! Also in

the same area we connected with Nuthatch Vanga, while several Nelicourvi Weavers were seen as well. Tired, but well satisfied with our success, we headed back to the road for lunch, seeing Forest Fody – surprisingly our only one of the trip- and Madagascan Grebe and Meller's Duck, picked out by Alan, on a tranquil forest pool on the way. After lunch we were taken to a roosting site of a Collared Nightjar and enjoyed stunning views of the bird at just a few metres range. The return journey to our lodge was punctuated by stops to view a sneaky Madagascan Rail, which showed nicely in the open on our second attempt, as well as a roosting adult Madagascan Owl not far from the road. A short evening outing produced brief views of a young Madagascan Owl and the recently described Goodman's Mouse Lemur, although a calling Rainforest Scops Owl refused to show.



Collared Nightjar at Mantadia. Surely one of the most strikingly beautiful nightjars in the world.(DLV)

Next morning we woke up to the amazing cries of some close Indris, which were later seen from the dinning room. What a good alarm clock! We were now left with just a small list of targets for the morning. First one was Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher, which was found straight after getting out of the vehicle. The bird certainly obliged and posed for photos at close range. Next was Madagascan Ibis, and we walked a short distance to an active nest. As luck would have it, one of the adults flew out and landed in a very close tree in front of us, allowing for excellent views. Afterwards we visited the VOI Reserve, in search of just two remaining species. We walked briskly towards a Henst's Goshawk territory, and after an hour or so we reached the place. It took a bit of time but we eventually found it perched and calling loudly from a bare tree, resulting in more than satisfactory views. Good stuff! Also in the same place we improved our views of Dark Newtonia, and also found a group of Diademed Sifakas. On the way back, a short diversion first saw us watching a family group of Indris, and then the hoped-for Red-breasted Coua was eventually coaxed into view. Having cleaned up here in less than day and a half, we happily returned to our accommodation for lunch. The rest of the day was taken up with a drive via to Tana, stopping en route to watch a pair of Madagascan Pratincoles sitting on rocks in a river, as well as a nice male Malagasy Green Sunbird.

Next morning we took another Air Mad flight to Majunga. After a 2-hour delay, we eventually made it to the city, and drove straight to the coast where a boat was waiting to take us to the Betsiboka Estuary. An hour later we were watching both of our top targets there as a couple of pairs Bernier's Teal and the first of several Malagasy Sacred Ibises were found on the muddy fringes of mangrove covered islands. Dimorphic Egrets were abundant and shorebirds were also numerous, with many Terek and Curlew Sandpipers and

Greater Sand Plovers feeding on the mudflats. On the way we also saw a couple of Saunders's Terns, as well as many Lesser Crested Terns. We were back on shore by midday, and enjoyed a sumptuous seafood lunch by the coast. In the afternoon we visited a nearby lake where unfortunately most of the water lilies that used to cover the surface – which hosted White-backed Ducks in the past- were gone. Somehow a few African Pygmy Geese managed to hang on, and not far from there we also saw a Madagascan Plover.



Madagascan Plover near Tulear. (DLV)

Next morning saw us travelling southwards to Ampijoroa. On the journey we made a couple of stops, which gave us a single Madagascan Pratincole found by Charles, a soaring Yellow-billed Stork, some Glossy Ibis and a distant Malagasy Pond Heron. We reached our destination at mid morning, and after dropping our bags at our accommodation, we drove a short distance to a small lake. Here, the hoped-for Madagascan Jacana –just the one though- was easily seen. After lunch, we began our exploration of the forest at Ampijoroa. We tried for the rare Van Dam's Vanga without luck, but on the other hand, both Coquerel's and Red-capped Couas –the latter being our very last coua in the world! - showed well. Our last mesite, the retiring White-breasted Mesite, also occurs in these dry forests. After responding to my tape, we managed to bring them out to the open, slowly crossing the trail in front of us, and giving great views. Excellent! The next good bird came while we were sitting down in a viewpoint, enjoying the sunset, and suddenly Werner called out a flying Madagascan Fish Eagle –a critically endangered species, with less than 240 adults left in the wild-. The bird landed in a tree, and was soon joined by its mate. They started calling, and then flew off over us towards their usual home in the nearby lake. A great way to end the day.

We were back in the forest very early next morning. Our first big target, the stunning Schlegel's Asity, gave itself up quite quickly and we enjoyed absolutely mega views of a pair attending a partly built nest. What an incredible bird, the electric color of its bare face skin being really out of this world! Also in the same patch of forest we got excellent looks at a trio of White-breasted Mesites. Even better, at least for some, especially Alan, was the perched Cuckoo Roller that, after so many days empty-handed, we eventually saw in the scope, feeding in a chameleon. Later, we got to see several more here, including some very close ones. Other species included Long-billed Bernieria, Blue Vanga, Malagasy Turtle Dove and Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher. After breakfast back at the research station, during which Coquerel's Sifakas, Broad-billed Rollers, Madagascan Hoopoes and lots of Lesser Vasa Parrots performed nicely, we set off to explore

another area of forest in search of Van Dam's Vanga, our remaining target. After an hour or so, we heard one calling, and in no time we were watching a pair of these endangered vangas with its powerful bills. We followed them for a while, and they sure proved very obliging. Pressure off after seeing our last target, we decided to walk back. A roosting Torotoroka Scops Owl showed at close range, and we also found a roosting Milne-Edwards Sportive Lemur. We had lunch and after a rest, we boarded a small boat for a very pleasant afternoon cruise around Lac Ravelobe. A single Humblot's Heron performed superbly in the evening light, and we had excellent views of several Allen's Gallinules as well, together with one Madagascan Jacana and several Glossy Ibis. After dark we went on a short night walk, which produced good views of Golden-brown Mouse Lemurs and Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemurs and a couple of big Oustalet's Chameleons.



One of the 15 (!!) White-breasted Mesites seen at Ampijoroa. Weren't they supposed to be difficult to see? (DLV)

Next morning we visited the same Schlegel' Asity forest patch, and were again rewarded with brilliant, up-close views of them, including a feeding flock low down in a tree. Several Cuckoo Rollers were also seen, and we had more quality time with White-breasted Mesites. One of the highlights of the morning was seeing a Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko, a master of camouflage, in a tree trunk that Jackie found for us. Later on we went to the other forest patch, where, apart from more or less the same species seen before, including quite a few Red-capped and Coquerel's Couas, we also saw our only Sooty Falcon of the trip. After lunch and a siesta, we paid another visit to the lake. The star attraction here is the resident pair of Madagascan Fish Eagles, which weren't on show the previous day, but which were seen very well this time, perched up in a tree.

The following morning was spent driving south towards our hotel in Tana. In the late afternoon we paid a visit to Lac Alarobia where masses of waterfowl were gathered and the heronry was in full swing. Amongst the numerous Red-billed Teals and White-faced Whistling Ducks we found several Hottentot Teals but the real prize were several Meller's Ducks, an infrequent visitor to this urban site. The heronry held several smart Malagasy Pond Herons plus lots of Squacco and Black Herons, Western Cattle and Dimorphic Egrets. Other birds seen here included White-throated Rail, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Mascarene Martin and Red Fody.

Those undertaking the tour extension went to the airport at Tana first thing in the morning. We were the first ones in queue, but that doesn't mean much to the ground staff in Air Mad, who said, again, that the plane was overweight and that, for some reason, it was me this time who wasn't allowed to board the plane. After almost an hour of furious negotiation, and when I had pretty much lost all hope, I got to speak to the pilot of

our aircraft, who eventually let me in. Close call. Eventually, we all made to Maroansetra, and after dropping off our bags we set off on a short boat trip through the local backwaters where a female Great Frigatebird was a big surprise find, and White-fronted Plovers and several other waders were also notable.



A pair of White-throated Rails. (DLV)

The next morning we set off early by motor launch and reached our lodge on the Masoala Peninsular a couple of hours later. Highlight of the journey was a pair of Arctic Skuas flying low over the water. After leaving our bags we quickly set off on the trails to look for our priority target, the incomparable Helmet Vanga. The chicks of the nest that our local guide knew had just fledged, so it was all about finding an adult in the forest. This is usually not too difficult, but for some reason this time they proved hard to find, and it took a couple of hours -by then some of us were getting a bit nervous! - before we eventually found a pair. They weren't on show for long, but nevertheless we enjoyed nice views. Pressure off, we carried on, and after a while we found another full adult Helmet Vanga, which was sitting quietly on a very low branch right next to the trail. Walk-away views for as long as we wanted, the glowing blue bill being out of this world! Excellent stuff. We also hit a couple of mixed flocks in the forest, containing various species, including Spectacled Tetraka, Long-billed Bernieria, Madagascar Cuckooshrike and Rufous Vanga. We photographed an interesting-looking tetraka, very much resembling the illustrations available for the very rare Dusky Tetraka. After some discussion and email exchange, it seemed no one had seen such a dark looking underneath Spectacled before, but it also became clear that, although unpublished, Dusky in fact looks more like a Madagascar Yellowbrow. So although further research is needed to establish the identification of some small and dark tetrakas in Masoala, it's best to leave this one as a presumed Spectacled. Fascinating stuff! In the afternoon we visited the trails behind the lodge but it was fairly quiet. Before dusk we all assembled in the beach and I was glad to see large numbers – many hundreds- of terns sitting in some offshore rocks. Seeing all these terns -mostly Roseates and Lesser Crested- flying and calling around as the sun set down was a great end to the day. After dinner we went in search of Rainforest Scops Owl, which in the end was seen very well under the torch beam.

After breakfast and a short boat ride we set off inland along the trails near Tampolo. In the forest itself we all caught up with some well-behaved White-throated Oxylabes, and after about an hour or so we reached a small clearing where we settled down to wait for Bernier's Vangas to appear. About half an hour later we heard the calls of Bernier's and after some playback we brought them up to a treetop, where we enjoyed good scope views of two females. Nearby a small flock of turaco-like Blue Couas performed. While the return walk to our waiting boat gave us a nice mixed flock containing Blue and Rufous Vangas. In the early afternoon we visited the trails close to our lodge, seeing a Panther Chameleon, and then went for a very pleasant late afternoon boat trip to get closet to the roosting terns. The evening light was wonderful and we spent an enjoyable hour photographing large numbers of Roseate and Lesser Crested Terns.



The arboreal Short-legged Ground Roller. (DLV)

Our final day at Masoala commenced with a return visit to the forest behind our accommodation. Short-legged Ground Rollers seemed to be everywhere here, and we had great views of two different pairs. We also encountered a couple of showy Red-breasted Couas. Regarding mammals, both Red Ruffed Lemurs and White-fronted Brown Lemurs showed well on a couple of occasions. In the afternoon we went on another boat trip to watch the terns. However, just after leaving the beach, an incident happened. We found a tern sitting in the water that couldn't take off. We stopped and caught it, and soon realized the bird was full

of some sort of sticky glue attached to its feathers, and thus couldn't fly at all. At least two dead terns were seen in the rocks and another one still alive but also glued up, that couldn't fly. We then realized some local boys in their canoes who were in the rocks earlier on were the ones responsible, leaving the natural glue on the rocks to later grab the terns, unable to escape. We got back to our cabins with the poor tern, and together with Jim and James, who did a terrific job (thanks guys!), spent two hours trying to clean up the bird, carefully removing all the glue of its feathers. However, the key thing was not just try to save this tern, but tell the local community how bad these actions were for them, as, being in a national park, they could also affect their income. We went to speak with the local head of the village, as well as with the teacher, explaining what had happened and that they should seriously tell the kids to stop doing this. They seemed genuinely worried and promised us they would take action...



Male Velvet Asity. (DLV)

Very early next morning we released the tern, now doing much better and all cleaned up, in some offshore rocks. After breakfast we returned to Maroansetra, seeing a big feeding frenzy of terns and tunas that included a nice adult Bridled Tern, some Common Terns and an adult Arctic Skua. Our flight to Tana was cancelled, so we had to take it easy and just relax in our fancy hotel by the beach.

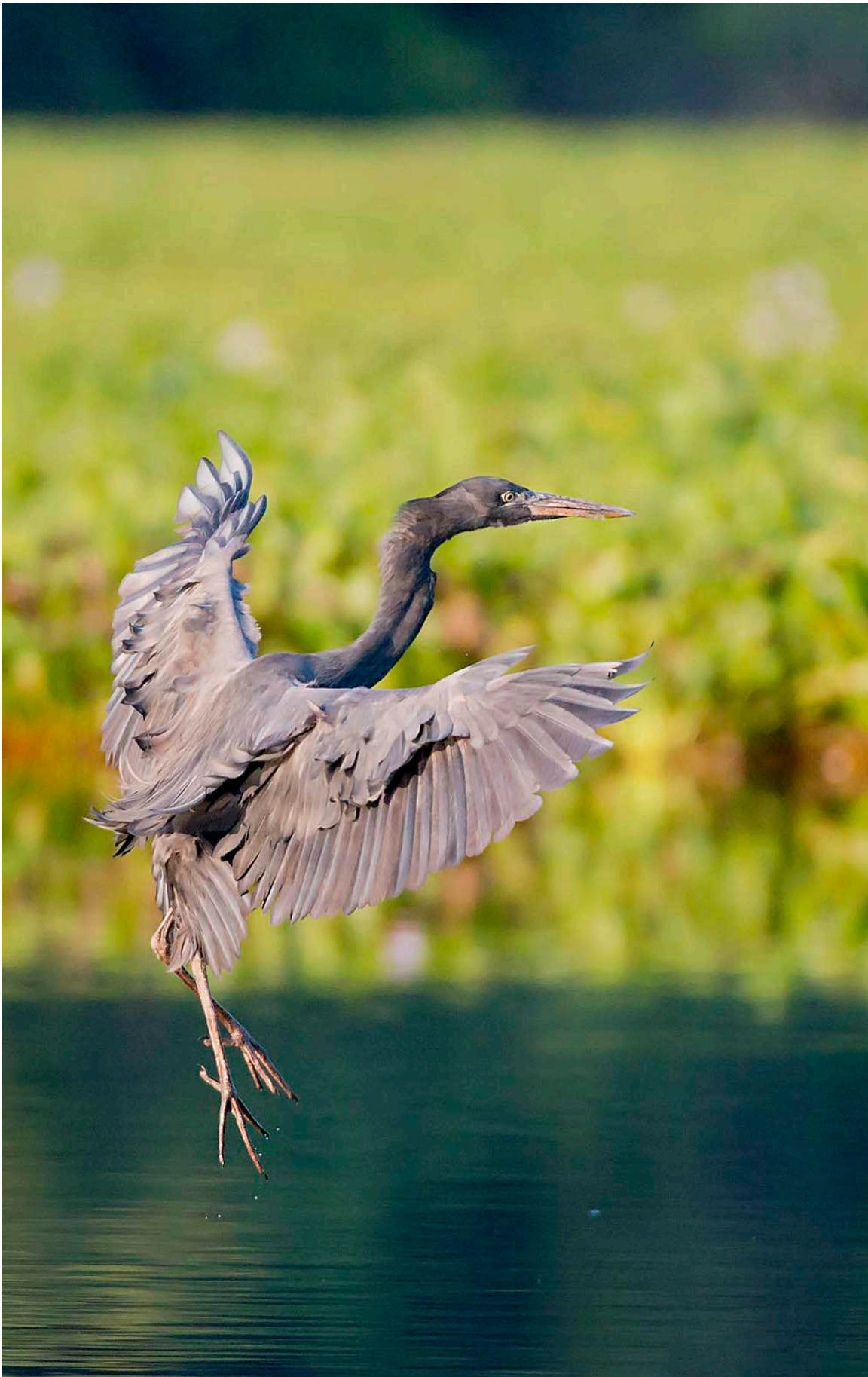
Our flight was scheduled to leave next morning, so we still had one more time to deal with useless AirMad. At first, everything seemed to be going smoothly, they issued our plane tickets, and we were about to get on the plane, when suddenly they announced overweight (not surprising) and said our group would be the lucky one to be left behind on the ground. That wasn't our plan though, so after a lot of arguing, we persuaded them to let us board the aircraft. And finally it was all over, we arrived to Tina in time for all our international flights back home, and said goodbye to each other. I want to say a big thank you to our Madagascar experts, Chris Kehoe and Pete Morris, for their advice.



An inquisitive Verreaux's Sifaka. (DLV)



The turaco-like Blue Coua above, and a tame Giant Coua below. (DLV)





Humblot's Heron, Sickle-billed Vanga and the uncommon Banded Kestrel. (DLV)



Red-shouldered and Helmet Vangas. (James Weis and DLV)



Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher. (DLV)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

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).

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* Several at Berenty.

Madagascan Partridge ◊ *Margaroperdix madagarensis* A pair at Isalo.

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* Widespread, large numbers at Lac Alarobia.

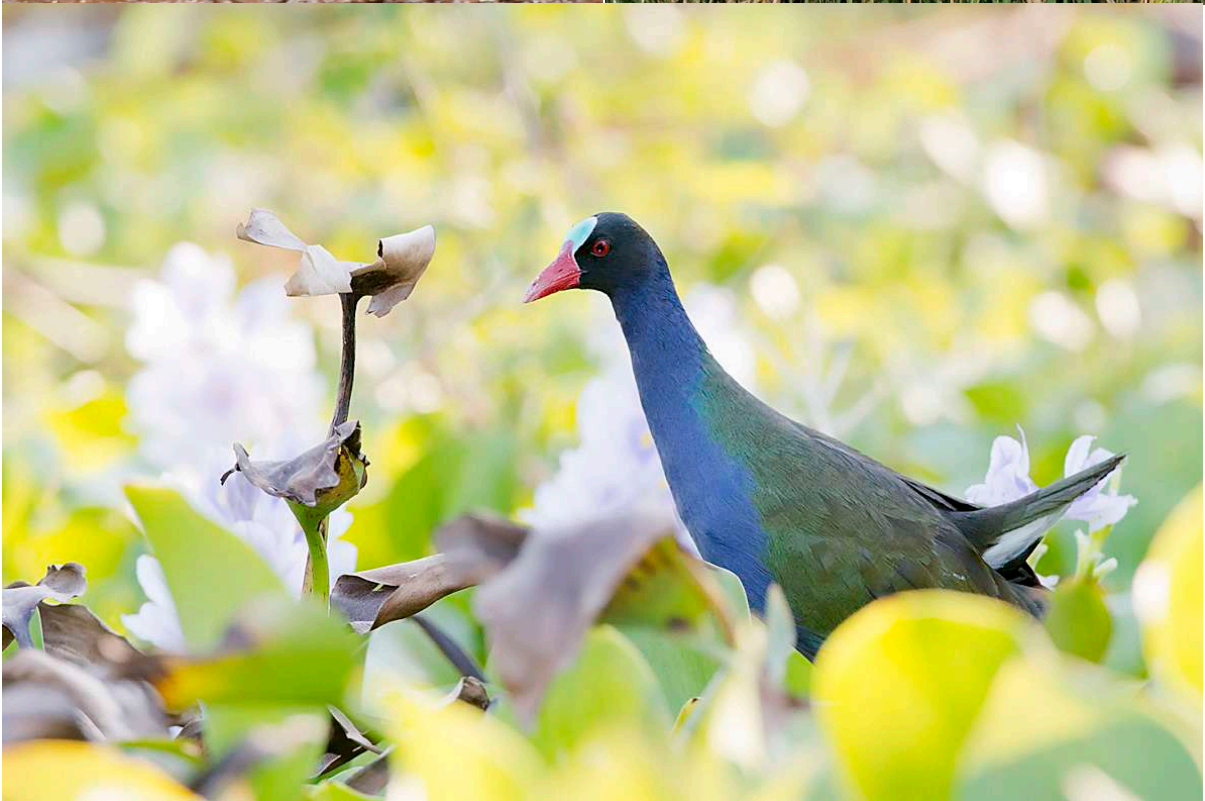
African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus* Several near Majunga.

Meller's Duck ♦ *Anas melleri* Up to eight at Lac Alarobia and two at Mantadia.

Bernier's Teal ♦ (Madagascar T) *Anas bernieri* Four at the Betsiboka Estuary.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha* Present on several wetlands, sometimes numerous.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota* Several at Lac Alarobia.



Malagasy Sacred Ibis, Malagasy Pond Heron and Allen's Gallinule. (DLV)

Madagascan Grebe ♦ *Tachybaptus pelzelinii* Two at Mantadia and a single at Alarobia.

Red-tailed Tropicbird ♦ *Phaethon rubricauda* Great views on Nosy Ve where about 20 were seen.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* One on the way to Ampijoroa.

Malagasy Sacred Ibis ♦ *Threskiornis bernieri* About 15 at the Betsiboka Estuary.

Madagascan Ibis ♦ (M Crested I) *Lophotibis cristata* A pair showed very well at Perinet.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Seen a couple of times.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Two seen well at Lac Ravelobe.

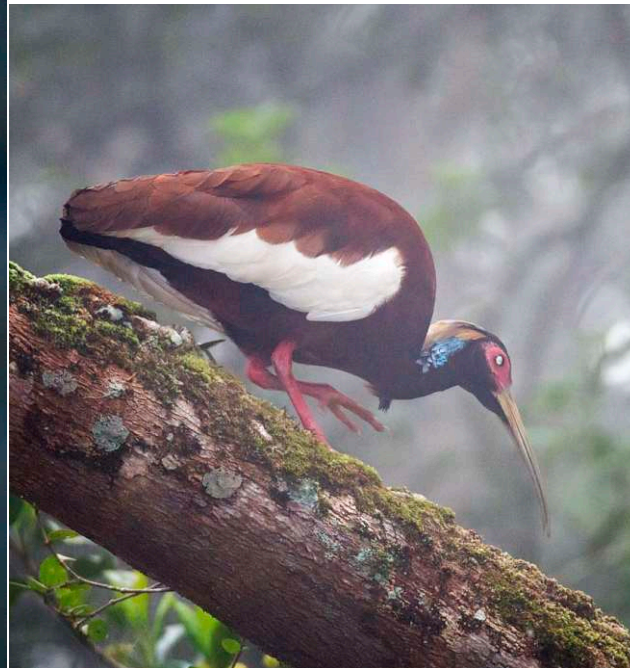
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Many at Alarobia, a few elsewhere.

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* Widespread in small numbers.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Locally common.

Malagasy Pond Heron ♦ *Ardeola idae* One near Ampijoroa and several breeding birds at Lac Alarobia.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Widespread except in more arid country, sometimes common.



Western Cattle Egret, Madagascar Ibis and Humblot's Heron. (DLV)

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* A few sightings.

Humblot's Heron ♦ *Ardea humbloti* One at Lac Ravelobe.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Several at Lac Ravelobe, a few elsewhere.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* Widespread in small numbers.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca* Present at several wetlands.



Frances's and Madagascan Sparrowhawks. (DLV)

Dimorphic Egret ♦ *Egretta dimorpha* Widespread, locally common.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* A few sightings.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* One female seen at Maroantsetra.

Reed Cormorant (Long-tailed C) *Microcarbo africanus* One near Maroantsetra.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa* One at Lac Ravelobe.

Madagascan Cuckoo-Hawk ♦ *Aviceda madagascariensis* Good views at Berenty.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius* Locally common in the south with a few elsewhere.

Madagascan Fish Eagle ♦ *Haliaeetus vociferoides* Two adults at Lac Ravelobe.

Madagascan Harrier-Hawk ♦ *Polyboroides radiatus* One in Ifaty showed very well, a few more elsewhere.

Frances's Sparrowhawk ♦ *Accipiter francesiae* One at Berenty, two at Ampijoroa and one at Masoala.

Madagascan Sparrowhawk ♦ *Accipiter madagascariensis* Great views Ifaty and Berenty.

Henst's Goshawk ♦ *Accipiter henstii* Seen very well at Perinet.

Madagascan Buzzard ♦ *Buteo brachypterus* Several seen.

Malagasy Kestrel ♦ *Falco newtoni* Common and widespread.

Banded Kestrel ♦ *Falco zoniventris* One seen very well at Ifaty.

Sooty Falcon ♦ *Falco concolor* Seen at Ampijoroa.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Seen over Ampijoroa.

White-breasted Mesite ♦ *Mesitornis variegatus* No less than 15 (!) seen at Ampijoroa, both pairs and trios.

Brown Mesite ♦ *Mesitornis unicolor* Great views at Ranamofana.

Subdesert Mesite ♦ *Monias benschi* Seen well at Ifaty.

Madagascan Flufftail ♦ *Sarothrura insularis* Seen well at Ranamafana.

Madagascan Wood Rail ♦ *Canirallus kiolooides* A pair showed well at Ranamafana.

Madagascan Rail ♦ *Rallus madagascariensis* One showed well near Mantadia gate.

White-throated Rail ♦ *Dryolimnas cuvieri* Seen well at various places.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* One showed nicely near Tulear.



Madagascan Harrier-Hawk, Henst's Goshawk and critically endangered Madagascan Fish Eagle- (DLV)

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* Four at Lac Ravelobe.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Noted at several locations.

Madagascan Buttonquail ♦ *Turnix nigricollis* Great views at Ifaty and Ampijoroa.

Crab-plover *Dromas ardeola* A flock of 15 at Nosy Ve and two at Tulear.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Several near Tulear.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied P) *Pluvialis squatarola* A few at the coast.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Several on the Betsiboka Estuary and near Tulear.

Madagascan Plover ♦ *Charadrius thoracicus* One adults near Ifaty and another near Majunga.

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* Common in the Tulear/ Ifaty area.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris* Seen several times. See note.

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus* Noted a few times at coastal sites.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* A few at the Betsiboka Estuary, near Ifaty and Maroansetra.

Madagascan Jacana ♦ *Actophilornis albinucha* Two near Ampijoroa.



Madagascan Sandgrouse. (DLV)

Madagascan Snipe ♦ *Gallinago macrodactyla* Two seen well near Ambositra.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* A few at Tulear.

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Several at the Betsiboka Estuary and on the west coast.



White-browed Hawk Owl, Madagascan Owl and Torotoroka Scops Owl. (DLV)

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Present at several coastal sites.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Numerous at the Betsiboka Estuary.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Present at several wetlands.
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Several on the west coast.
Sanderling *Calidris alba* Two on Nosy Ve and two at Maroantsetra.
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Numerous at the Betsiboka Estuary and near Tulear.
Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Seen off Forth Dauphin.
Madagascan Pratincole ♦ *Glareola ocularis* Two near Mangoro and several at Masoala.
Madagascan Gull ♦ *Larus (dominicanus) melisandae* Two in flight at Fort Dauphin at the second attempt.



Madagascan Nightjar. Adult and chick. (DLV)

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* Seen well in the Masoala.
Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* A few at Nosy Ve, several at Fort Dauphin and Masoala.
Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* Several at the Betsiboka Estuary and hundreds at Masoala.
Saunders's Tern ♦ *Sternula saundersi* Seen at the Betsiboka Estuary.



Malagasy Turtle Dove and Malagasy Coucal. (DLV)

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* One adult at Masoala.
Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* Hundreds at Masoala.
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* A few at Masoala.
Madagascan Sandgrouse ♦ *Pterocles personatus* Two at Ifaty and up to 30 at Andohahela.
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* Present in some urban areas.
Malagasy Turtle Dove ♦ *Nesoenas picturata* Regularly seen in various forested areas.
Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Common in arid country.
Madagascan Green Pigeon ♦ *Treron australis* Noted at several locations.



Broad-billed Roller, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Crested Drongo and Cuckoo Roller. (DLV)

Madagascan Blue Pigeon ♦ *Alectroenas madagascariensis* Seen well a few times.
Grey-headed Lovebird ♦ *Agapornis canus* Fairly common in the west, at Berenty and around Ampijoroa.
Greater Vasa Parrot ♦ *Coracopsis vasa* Seen a couple of times.
Lesser Vasa Parrot ♦ *Coracopsis nigra* Widespread.
Malagasy Coucal ♦ *Centropus toulou* Fairly common and widespread.
Crested Coua ♦ *Coua cristata* Widespread and noted at various locations. See note.

Verreaux's Coua ♦ *Coua verreauxi* Excellent views of one at Tulear tablelands-

Blue Coua ♦ *Coua caerulea* Several excellent encounters in the rainforest.

Red-capped Coua ♦ *Coua ruficeps* Several seen at Ampijoroa.



Red-fronted, Red-breasted and Running Couas. (DLV)

Brown-capped Coua ♦ (Green-c C) *Coua olivaceiceps* Great views at Tulear tablelands and Ifaty.

Red-fronted Coua ♦ *Coua reynaudii* Seen at Ranomafana, Perinet and Masoala.

Coquerel's Coua ♦ *Coua coquereli* Many seen well at Ampijoroa and Zombitse.

Running Coua ♦ *Coua cursor* Seen well at Ifaty.

Giant Coua ♦ *Coua gigas* Excellent views at Zombitse and Berenty.

Red-breasted Coua ♦ *Coua serriana* Two at Perinet and three at Masoala.

Madagascan Cuckoo ♦ *Cuculus rochii* Often heard, occasionally seen.

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba* One roosting at Berenty and another on the way to Perinet.

Torotoroka Scops Owl ♦ *Otus madagascariensis* One at night at Berenty, day roosting there and at Ampijoroa.

Rainforest Scops Owl ♦ *Otus rutilus* Seen well at Masoala.

White-browed Hawk-Owl ♦ *Ninox superciliaris* One roosting at Zombitse and another at Berenty, others heard.
Madagascan Owl ♦ (M Long-eared O) *Asio madagascariensis* A roosting adult and 2 fledglings at night at Perinet.
Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* Seen in the Horombe plateau.
Madagascan Nightjar ♦ *Caprimulgus madagascariensis* Numerous at Ifaty, a handful elsewhere.



Crested, Verreaux's, Red-capped and Coquerel's Couas. (DLV and James Weis)

Collared Nightjar ♦ *Caprimulgus enarratus* Exceptional views of one at Perinet.
Madagascan Spinetail ♦ *Zoonavena grandidieri* A handful at Mantadia, Zombitse and Ifaty, several at Masoala.
African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* Widespread in mostly small numbers.
Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* A couple of sightings.
Malagasy Black Swift ♦ *Apus balstoni* A few sightings.
Cuckoo Roller ♦ *Leptosomus discolor* Eventually seen very well at Ampijoroa and Masoala.
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus* Fairly widespread, especially common at Ampijoroa.
Short-legged Ground Roller ♦ *Brachypteracias leptosomus* Great views at Mantadia and Masoala.
Scaly Ground Roller ♦ *Geobiastes squamiger* Two seen well at Mantadia and one at Masoala.
Pitta-like Ground Roller ♦ *Atelornis pittoides* Great views at Ranamofana and Vohiparara.
Rufous-headed Ground Roller ♦ *Atelornis crossleyi* Excellent views of one at Vohiparara.
Long-tailed Ground Roller ♦ *Uratelornis chimaera* Superb views of this iconic species at Ifaty.
Madagascan Pygmy Kingfisher ♦ *Corythornis madagascariensis* Singles at Mantadia and Perinet.

Malagasy Kingfisher ◇ (Mad. Malachite K) *Corythornis vintsioides* Widespread encounters on nine dates.
Olive Bee-eater (Mad. B-e) *Merops superciliosus* Widespread, often common, especially in the west.
Madagascan Hoopoe ◇ *Upupa marginata* Several at Ampijoroa and in the west.
Velvet Asity ◇ *Philepitta castanea* A male and a female at Ranomafana, males at Perinet and Masoala.



Close up of a male Schlegel's Asity and Malagasy Kingfisher. (DLV)

Schlegel's Asity ◇ *Philepitta schlegeli* Cracking views of up to eight birds at Ampijoroa.
Common Sunbird-Asity ◇ *Neodrepanis coruscans* Seen at Ranomafana and Perinet.
Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity ◇ *Neodrepanis hypoxantha* Excellent views at Vohiparara.
Red-tailed Vanga ◇ *Calicalicus madagascariensis* Seen a handful of times, including nice males.
Red-shouldered Vanga ◇ *Calicalicus rufocarpalis* Great views of a pair at Tulear tablelands.
Hook-billed Vanga ◇ *Vanga curvirostris* Several sightings.
Bernier's Vanga ◇ *Oriolia bernieri* Two showy females at Masoala on one date.
Lafresnaye's Vanga ◇ *Xenopirostris xenopirostris* A pair attending a nest at Ifaty.
Van Dam's Vanga ◇ *Xenopirostris damii* Excellent views of a pair at Ampijoroa.
Pollen's Vanga ◇ *Xenopirostris polleni* Great views at Vohiparara.
Sickle-billed Vanga ◇ *Falculea palliata* Great views at Ampijoroa and Ifaty.
White-headed Vanga ◇ *Artamella viridis* Encountered at Ifaty, Ampijoroa and Masoala.
Chabert Vanga ◇ *Leptopterus chabert* Widespread.
Blue Vanga ◇ *Cyanolanius madagascarinus* Stunner! Seen well many times, first at Vohiparara.
Rufous Vanga ◇ *Schetba rufa* Good views at Ampijoroa, Zombitse and Masoala.
Helmet Vanga ◇ *Euryceros prevostii* At least five at Masoala. What a cracking bird!
Tylas Vanga ◇ *Tylas eduardi* Seen best at Vohiparara and Masoala.
Nuthatch Vanga ◇ *Hypositta corallirostris* Good views at Mantadia and Perinet.
Dark Newtonia ◇ *Newtonia amphichroa* Seen well at Vohiparara and Perinet.
Common Newtonia ◇ *Newtonia brunneicauda* Common in wooded areas.
Archbold's Newtonia ◇ *Newtonia archboldi* Good views of four at Ifaty.
Ward's Flycatcher ◇ *Pseudobias wardi* Seen well at Ranomafana and Perinet.
Crossley's Vanga ◇ (C Babbler) *Mystacornis crossleyi* Two at Ranomafana and a showy one at Mantadia.
Madagascan Cuckooshrike ◇ *Coracina cinerea* Several sightings.



Blue, Helmet and Chabert Vangas. (DLV)

Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus* Often common and very widespread.

Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher ♦ *Terpsiphone mutata* Common in wooded areas.



Male and Female Van Dam's Vanga. Pollen's Vanga and Tylas Vanga. (DLV)

Pied Crow *Corvus albus* Common in arid country.

Madagascan Lark ♦ *Mirafrha hova* Common in arid country.

Malagasy Bulbul ♦ *Hypsipetes madagascariensis* Fairly common and widespread.

Mascarene Martin ♦ *Phedina borbonica* Widespread encounters.

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* A few sightings.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A few records.

Malagasy Brush Warbler ♦ *Nesillas typica* Often heard and regularly seen except in the arid southwest.

Subdesert Brush Warbler ♦ *Nesillas lantzii* Often heard with a few seen well in the arid southwest.

Madagascan Swamp Warbler ♦ *Acrocephalus newtoni* Noted at Tulear Lakes and Alarobia.

Brown Emutail ♦ *Bradypterus brunneus* Quite good views of this notorious skulker at Vohiparara.



Rufous and white morphs of Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher. (DLV)

- Grey Emutail** ♦ *Amphilais seebohmi* Seen on the way to Ranomafana.
- White-throated Oxylabes** ♦ *Oxylabes madagascariensis* Seen briefly at Vohiparara and much better at Masoala.
- Long-billed Bernieria (L-b Greenbul)** ♦ *Bernieria madagascariensis* Seen quite regularly.
- Cryptic Warbler** ♦ *Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi* Good views of a singing bird at Vohiparara.
- Wedge-tailed Jery** ♦ *Hartertula flavoviridis* Seen well at Ranomafana, Vohiparara and Mantadia.
- Thamnornis** ♦ (T Warbler) *Thamnornis chloropetoides* Great views at Ifaty.
- Spectacled Tetraka** ♦ (S Greenbul) *Xanthomixis zosterops* Noted at Mantadia, Perinet, Vohiparara and Masoala.
- Appert's Tetraka** ♦ (A Greenbul) *Xanthomixis apperti* A pair at Zombitse.
- Grey-crowned Tetraka (G-c Greenbul)** *Xanthomixis cinereiceps* A couple at Vohiparara.
- Madagascan Yellowbrow** ♦ *Crossleyia xanthophrys* One seen very well at Vohiparara.
- Rand's Warbler** ♦ *Randia pseudozosterops* Several at Mantadia, Perinet and Ranomafana.
- Common Jery** ♦ *Neomixis tenella* Widespread and common.
- Green Jery** ♦ *Neomixis viridis* Several encounters.
- Stripe-throated Jery** ♦ *Neomixis striatigula* Ifaty, others heard.
- Madagascan Cisticola** ♦ *Cisticola cherina* Fairly common in arid brush country.
- Malagasy White-eye** ♦ *Zosterops maderaspatanus* Widespread encounters.
- Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Common and very widespread.



Wedge-tailed Jery, Long-billed Bernieria, Souimanga Sunbird and Madagascan Mannikin. (DLV)

Madagascan Starling ♦ *Hartlaubius auratus* A handful at Ranomafana and Masoala.

Madagascan Magpie-Robin ♦ *Copsychus albospectularis* Fairly common and widespread.

Madagascan Stonechat ♦ *Saxicola sibilla* Scattered records in the highlands.

Littoral Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola imerina* A showy pair at Anakao, viewed from the bar!

Forest Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola sharpei* (H) Heard at Vohiparara.

Benson's Rock Thrush ♦ *Monticola (sharpei) bensoni* A cooperative pair at Isalo.

Souimanga Sunbird ♦ *Cinnyris sovimanga* Common and widespread.

Malagasy Green Sunbird ♦ (Long-billed G S) *Cinnyris notatus* A handful at various sites.

Nelicourvi Weaver ♦ *Ploceus nelicourvi* Noted at Perinet, Mantadia, Ranomafana and Masoala.



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Littoral Rock Thrush, above, and Benson's Rock Thrush, below. Crossley's Vanga, top right. (DLV and James Weis)

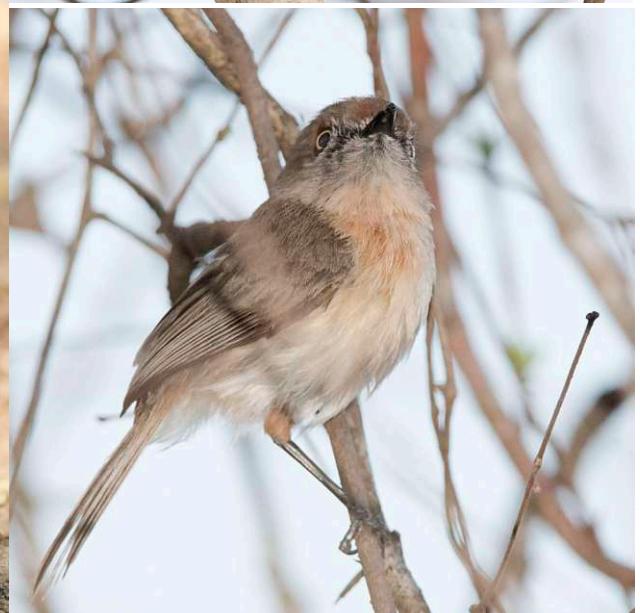
Sakalava Weaver ♦ *Ploceus sakalava* Common in the southwest, a few elsewhere.

Red Fody ♦ *Foudia madagascariensis* Fairly widespread, sometimes common, mostly female-like birds.

Forest Fody ♦ *Foudia omissa* Only one male seen well at Mantadia, scarcer than usual this year.

Madagascan Mannikin ♦ *Lemuresthes nana* Noted at several sites.

Madagascan Wagtail ♦ *Motacilla flaviventris* Common in the east.



Assortment of endemics. Madagascan Jacana, Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Common Jery, Archbold's Newtonia, Madagascan Wagtail and Stripe-throated Jery. (DLV)



Madagascan Swamp Warbler, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Thamnomis, Roseate Tern and Subdesert Brush Warbler. (DLV)

MAMMALS

Lowland Streaked Tenrec *Hemicentetes semispinosus* Singles at Perinet and Maroantsetra.

Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec *Echinops telfairi* Seen at Ifaty.

Madagascar Flying Fox *Pteropus rufus* Many at Berenty.

Commerson's Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros commersoni* Seen at Ampijoroa.

Grey Mouse Lemur *Microcebus murinus* Seen at Ampijoroa.

Golden-brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus ravelobensis* Seen at Ranomafana.



Four rare lemurs: CR Greater and Golden Bamboo Lemurs. Red Ruffed Lemur. Goodman's Mouse Lemur. (DLV)

Grey-brown Mouse Lemur (Reddish-grey M L) *Microcebus griseorufus* Seen at Ifaty.

Goodman's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus lehilahytsara* Seen at Perinet at night.

Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus crossleyi* Seen at Mantadia.

Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius* A few at Ampijoroa.

Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi* One at Ampijoroa.

White-footed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur leucopus* Seen at Ifaty and Berenty.

Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur (Grey B L) *Hapalemur griseus* Seen at Perinet and Masoala.

Golden Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur aureus* Seen very well at Ranamofana.

Greater Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur simus* Seen very well at Ranomafana.

Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta* Common at Berenty.



Ring-tailed Lemur. Female and baby. (DLV)

Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer* A handful at Ranamofana.

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus* A few at Ampijoroa and Perinet.

White-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur albifrons* Seen at Masoala.

Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur rufus* Seen at Ranamofana.

Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur *Varecia variagata* Good views at

Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra* Good views at Masoala.

Eastern Avahi (Eastern Woolly Lemur) *Avahi laniger* Three at Perinet.

Diademed Sifaka *Propithecus diadema* Great looks at Perinet.

Verreaux's Sifaka *Propithecus verreauxi* Close encounters at Zombitse and Berenty.

Coquerel's Sifaka *Propithecus coquereli* Great views at Ampijoroa.

Milne-Edwardes's Sifaka *Propithecus edwardsi* Seen at Vohiparara.

Indri *Indri indri* Several at Perinet.

Ring-tailed Mongoose *Galidia elegans* Seen at Masoala.
Lowland Red Forest Rat *Nesomys audeberti* One at Masoala.



Red-bellied Lemur and Lowland Streaked Tenrec. (DLV)



Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec- (DLV)

NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Madagascan Gull *Larus (dominicanus) melisandae*

This taxon has a complex taxonomic history that is still not fully resolved. Traditionally, one species, Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus*, has been considered to account for all of the black-backed gulls breeding in the southern hemisphere. More recently some authors have separated southern African populations, including those in Madagascar, as Cape Gull *L. vetula* based mainly on the somewhat different appearance of mainland African birds from those in South America. However, birds from Madagascar are still very poorly known, few specimens are available for study and their genetic profile has not yet been assessed. It is increasingly clear though that they look distinctly different from birds in southern Africa, being relatively small and slim-billed, in having yellower (sometimes bright yellow, not greyish-green) legs and pale eyes. In many regards some look much more like a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* than *vetula*. Support for their recognition as a separate taxon is strong and they are now widely recognised as the endemic form *melisandae*; some (including IOC) treating this as a race of the enlarged Kelp Gull *L. dominicanus*, some as a race of Cape Gull *L. vetula* and, more recently, as a separate species altogether. We provisionally follow this latter treatment pending further research on the entire complex. Madagascar Gull breeds only in southern and southwestern Madagascar, where it appears to be rather scarce (the largest flock ever recorded only contained 90 birds) and very localised.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

The form concerned is endemic *bifrontatus* which some recent authors, including the recent Birdlife/IBW Checklist, split as Madagascar Three-banded Plover *C. bifrontatus* on the basis of several small differences in head and breast pattern and colour.

Brown-capped Coua (Green-c C, Olive-c C) *Coua (ruficeps) olivaceiceps*

IOC and some others lump this form which is found in the southwest (in the Tulear area) in Red-capped Coua *C. ruficeps*. The name Brown-capped seems preferable as there is only the faintest hint of an olive tone in the crown.

Benson's Rock Thrush *Monticola (sharpei) bensoni*

Recent papers do not support previous splits of Amber Mountain Rock Thrush or Benson's Rock Thrush, now included in Forest Rock Thrush (Outlaw et al. 2007, Zuccon and Ericson 2010)

Crested Coua *Coua cristata*

The recent Birdlife/IBW checklist splits the rufous-vented form of the southwest (which we saw at Zombitse, Ifaty and

Berenty) as Chestnut-vented Coua *C. pyropyga*.



Male Giraffe Weevil (*Trachelophorus giraffa*) above, and Panther Chameleon, below.





Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko (Uroplatus sikorae). A master of camouflage! (DLV)



Green Bright-eyed Frog (Boophis viridis)