



Trip Report
Madagascar 15-day Birding and Wildlife Tour
14 – 28 October 2024
Text & images by Sean Braine



Introduction:

This tour started in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. We then travelled south to the spiny dry forests of the southern coastline where we searched for the endemic fauna and flora of this area. We then travelled further north through Zombitse reserve and to the sandstone massif of Isalo. We then headed into the eastern rainforests of Ranomafana National Park and onward to Andasibe National Park. We then returned to Antananarivo and flew north to the dry deciduous forests around Mahajanga and Ankarafantsika National Park. A boat cruise on the Betsiboka Delta closed the tour and we then flew back to Antananarivo for our flights back home.



Madagascar is a large island situated on the eastern side of Southern Africa, it is the fourth largest island in the world and holds a population just shy of 30 million people. Our tour focuses on the remnant forest patches and reserves which holds the most biodiversity. Madagascar is referred to as the eighth continent due to its high volume of endemism on the island. Around 75 percent of the diversity found here is unique to the country including all the Lemurs, which the island is famous for. The highest biodiversity is held in the eastern rainforests of the island. Madagascar should be a priority on any naturalist's agenda as the remaining habitats are unfortunately vanishing at a spectacular rate. The importance of tourism in the country is understated as its importance in protecting the remaining natural history in Madagascar.

Day 1:

Arrival in Antananarivo and transfer to hotel. Due to late arrival some time was spent in the gardens of the hotel in search of a few species.

Key Birds: *Malagasy green Sunbird, Madagascar Wagtail, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Madagascar Bee-eater, Red Fody, Malagasy White-eye, Madagascar Magpie-robin and Madagascar Stonechat.*

Other Key Species: None



Madagascar Wagtail



Madagascar Magpie Robin

Day 2:

An early morning start to the airport to fly to Toliar on the south coast. After arrival and breakfast, we did a drive to a site for several key bird species. Lunch at our hotel and an afternoon hike in the spiny forests in the area.

Key Birds: *Verreaux's Coua, Red-shouldered Vanga, Thamnornis Warbler, Madagascar Buzzard, Malagasy Kestrel, Chabert Vanga, Souimanga Sunbird, Dimorphic Egret, Madagascar Lark, Madagascar Cisticola, Crested Drongo, Malagasy Coucal, Malagasy Bulbul, Common Jery, Madagascar Nightjar, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Hook-billed Vanga, Crested Coua, Madagascar Hoopoe, Madagascar Harrier-hawk, Red-capped Coua, Long-tailed Ground Roller, Malagasy Black Swift, Madagascar Plover.*

Key Species: *Madagascar Keeled Plated Lizard, Three eyed Lizard, Octopus tree (Didiereaceae), Western Baobab, Fony Baobab.*



Long-tailed Ground Roller



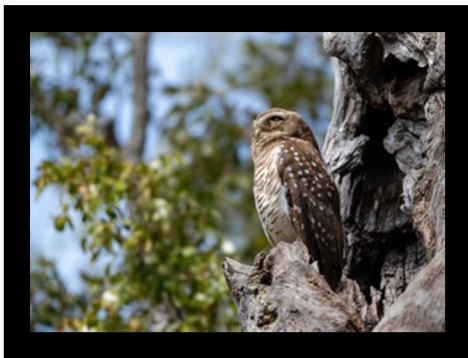
Red-shouldered Vanga

Day 3:

We travelled northwards towards Isalo National Park. En route we had a productive stop at Zombitse National Park.

Key Birds: *Malagasy Green Pigeon, Coquerel's Coua, Giant Coua, White-browed Hawk-Owl, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Archbold's Newtonia, Stripe-throated Jery, Common Newtonia, Greater Vasa Parrot, Cuckoo Roller, Torotoroka Scops Owl, Madagascar Plover.*

Key Species: *Verreaux's Sifaka, Zombitse Sportive Lemur, Oustalet's Chameleon, Standing's Day Gecko, Grey's House Gecko, Common House Gecko.*



White-browed Hawk-Owl



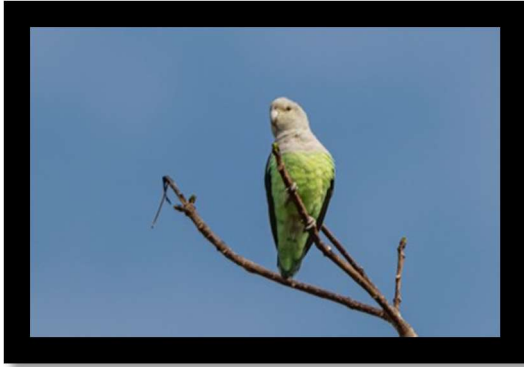
Giant Coua

Day 4:

We spent the day in Isalo National Park.

Key Birds: *Grey-headed Lovebird, Benson's Rock Thrush, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher, White-throated Rail, Malagasy Turtle Dove, Madagascar Lark, Malagasy Coucal, Malagasy Green Sunbird, Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Common Jery, Madagascar Cisticola, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Malagasy Magpie-robin.*

Key Species: *Ring-tailed Lemur, Verreaux's Sifaka, Jeweled Chameleon, Oustalet's Chameleon, Thicktail Day Gecko, Grey's House Gecko, Madagascar Cat-eyed Snake, Pachypodium rosulatum.*



Grey-headed Lovebird



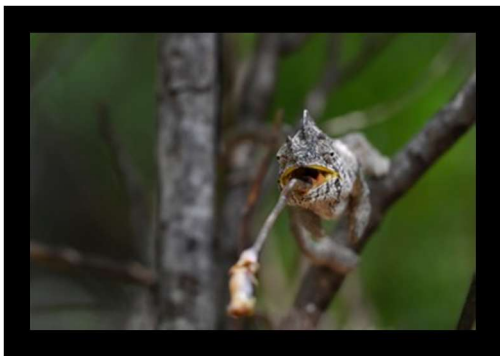
Ring-tailed Lemur

Day 5:

Today was largely a travel day to get to the eastern rainforests of Ranomafana National Park. We did a short stop at a community reserve, called Anja Reserve, to view the local Ring-tailed Lemurs and other fauna.

Key Birds: *Malagasy Magpie-robin, Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher.*

Key Species: *Ring-tailed Lemur, Oustalet's Chameleon, Grandidier's Madagascar Swift, Dumeril's Madagascar Swift.*



Oustalet's Chameleon



Malagasy Brush Warbler

Day 6:

Today was spent exploring the productive rainforests in Ranomafana National Park. A morning walk followed by lunch and then an afternoon walk in another area of the forest. We also did a pre-dinner night-walk looking for nocturnal species.

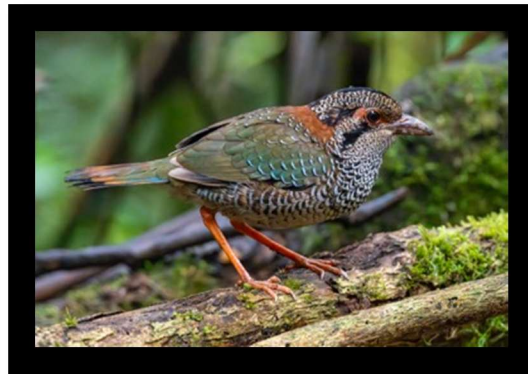
Key Birds: *Scaly Ground Roller, Mascarene Martin, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Madagascar Mannikin, Tylas Vanga, Blue Vanga, Long-billed Bernieria, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Common Sunbird Asity, Velvet Asity, Green Jery, Madagascar Turtle Dove, White-throated Rail, Madagascar Buzzard, Madagascar Bee-eater, Pitta-like Ground Roller, Madagascar Kestrel, Crested Drongo on nest, Hook-billed Vanga on nest, Chabert Vanga, Souimanga and Green Sunbird,*

Nelicourvi Weaver, Madagascar Wagtail, White-throated Oxylabes, Malagasy Magpie-robin, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar White-eye.
We also heard Madagascar Flufftail, Blue Coua, Red-fronted Coua and Madagascar Cuckoo, Cuckoo Roller, Crossley's and Red-tailed Vanga.

Key Species: *Red Forest Rat, Hairy-eared Dwarf Lemur, Northern Rufous Mouse Lemur, Golden Bamboo Lemur, Greater Bamboo Lemur, Cryptic (Blue Legged) Chameleon, Nose-horned Chameleon, Oshaughnessy's Chameleon, Tuberculate Leaf Chameleon, Satanic leaf-tailed Gecko, Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko, Giraffe-necked Weevil, Water snake Sp. (the local guide also wasn't sure of the species), Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog.*



Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher



Scaly Ground Roller

Day 7:

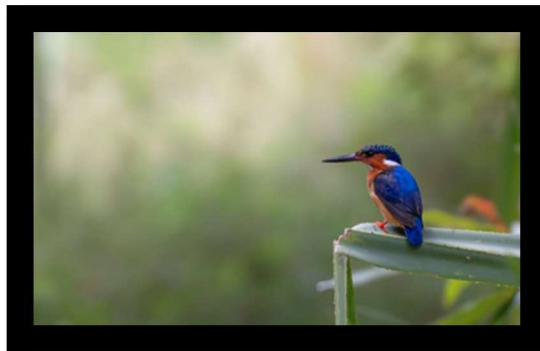
Today was another long travel day to Andasibe National Park, another section of the eastern rainforest belt.

Key Birds: *Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Bee-eater, Malachite Kingfisher, Malagasy Kestrel, Blue Vanga, Red Fody, Madagascar Mannikin, Madagascar Wagtail, Mascereene Martin, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar Stonechat and all the common roadside species seen most days ie. Little, dimorphic, Cattle and Great Egrets, Hamerkop, Black-crowned night and Squacco Heron, Reed Cormorant, Common Myna, Mallard and Yellow-billed kite.*

Key Species: *Lined Day Gecko*



Madagascar Mannikin



Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher

Day 8:

Today was spent wandering the trails in the rainforests in Andasibe National Park. A pre-dinner night walk was quite productive even though it rained a bit.

Key Birds: *Madagascan Starling, Rainforest Scops Owl, Spectacled Tetraka, Henst's Goshawk, Ward's Flycatcher, Rand's Warbler, Madagascan Spinetail, Madagascan Wood rail, Red-tailed, Tylas, Chabert and blue Vanga, Broad-billed roller, Forest and Red Fody, Nelicourvi Weaver, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Malachite Kingfisher, Paradise Flycatcher, Crested Drongo, Madagascan Wagtail, Madagascar Mannikin, Long-billed Bernieria, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Madagascar Bulbul, Madagascar White-eye, Magpie Robin, Stonechat, Turtle dove, Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Nightjar, Blue coua and Souimanga Sunbird.* Also heard and had fleeting glimpses of *Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Long-eared Owl, Cuckoo Roller, Short-legged Ground Roller, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher.*

Key Species: *Hairy-eared Dwarf Lemur, Goodman's Mouse Lemur, Eastern Woolly Lemur, Diademed Sifaka, Indri, Common Brown Lemur, Eastern Lesser (Grey) Bamboo Lemur, Short-horned Chameleon, Cryptic Chameleon, Parson's Chameleon, Superciliary leaf Chameleon, Tree Boa, Mossy leaf-tailed Gecko, Lined Day Gecko, Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog, Bright eyed frog sp., Tree Frog sp.*



Red-fronted Coua



Madagascar Wood Rail

Day 9:

Spent the entire morning in the rainforests in Andasibe and departed to Antananarivo after lunch.

Key Birds: *Crossley's Vanga, Nuthatch Vanga, Red-fronted Coua, Red-breasted Coua, Madagascar Ibis, Madagascar Wood Rail, Blue Pigeon, Madagascar Spinetail, Blue Coua, Madagascar Cuckoo, Madagascar Coucal, Madagascar Bee-eater, Pygmy and Malachite Kingfisher, Malagasy Kestrel, Tylas, Blue, Red-tailed and Chabert Vanga, Paradise flycatcher, Malagasy Green Sunbird, Nelicourvi Weaver, Red Fody, Madagascar Wagtail, Long-billed bernieria, Madagascar Bulbul, White-eye, Magpie Robin and Stonechat.*

Key Species: *Indri, Common Brown Lemur, Easter lesser (Grey) Bamboo lemur, Lined day Gecko.*



Nuthatch Vanga



Madagascar Crested Ibis

Day 10:

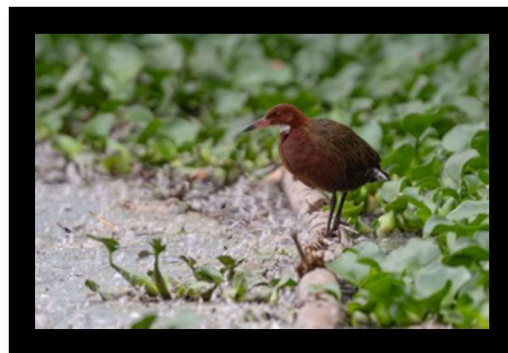
Due to a late flight change to Mahajanga we had some time to burn in Antananarivo, so we birded the small Parc Tsarasaotra in the city centre, which proved quite productive. We then had a late flight and arrival to our accommodation in Ankarafantsika National Park.

Key Birds: *Meller's Duck, White-throated Rail, Red-billed and Blue-billed Teal, Black, Squacco, Striated and Black-crowned Night Heron, Knob-billed and Fulvous Whistling Duck, Little, Dimorphic, Cattle and Great Egret, Palm and Little Swift, Madagascar Coucal, Common moorhen, Yellow-billed Kite, Madagascar Hoopoe, Madagascar Bee-eater, Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Green Sunbird, Madagascar Wagtail, Malagasy Brush Warbler, Plain Martin, Common Myna, Madagascar Bulbul, White-eye and Magpie robin.*

Key Species: *Lined Day Gecko*



Meller's Duck



White-throated Rail

Day 11:

An early start into Ankarafantsika National Park. We walked the trails with our guides until lunchtime. After Lunch we continued searching for a few key species by boat.

A pre-dinner night walk gave us a good spread of species.

Key Birds: *Sickle-billed, Chabert, Blue and Rufous Vanga, Coquerel's, Crested and Red-capped Coua, Madagascan Cuckooshrike, White-breasted Mesite, Madagascan Fish Eagle, Purple Heron, Madagascan Jacana, France's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar*

Cuckoo, Madagascar Buzzard, Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Bee-eater, Madagascar Hoopoe, Malachite Kingfisher, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Common Newtonia, Crested Drongo, Paradise Flycatcher, Souimanga Sunbird, Common Jery, Long-billed Bernieria, Mascerene Martin, Madagascar Bulbul, Magpie Robin.

Key Species: *Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, Coquerel's Sifaka, Common Brown Lemur, Rhinoceros Chameleon, Ambonihavo Velvet Gecko, Spearpoint Leaf-tailed Gecko, Western Dwarf Gecko, Gunther's Leaf-tailed Gecko, Koch's and Thicktail Day Gecko, Common House gecko, Cuvier's Madagascar Swift, Western Plated Lizard, Tree Boa.*



Blue Vanga



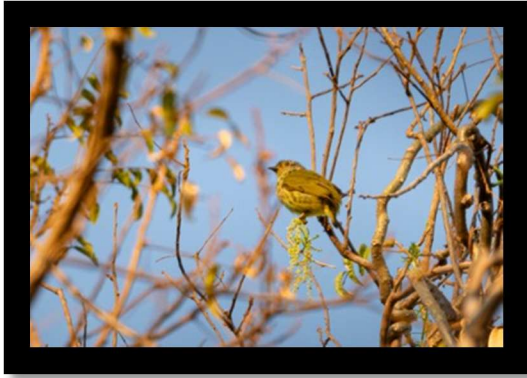
Madagascar Fish Eagle

Day 12:

We spent the entire morning in Ankarafantsika NP in search of a few key species in different area. After lunch we then travel to Mahajanga for the night.

Key Birds: *Schlegel's Asity, France's Sparrowhawk, Crested, red-capped and Coquerel's Coua, Madagascar Cuckoo hawk, Van Dam's, Blue, Sickle-billed, Rufous and Hook-billed Vanga, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Namaqua Dove, Madagascar Black Swift, Madagascar Cuckoo, Madagascar Bee-eater, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Common Newtonia, Paradise Flycatcher, Crested Drongo, Red Fody, Souimanga Sunbird, Long-billed Bernieria, Magpie Robin and Madagascar Bulbul,.*

Key Species: *Western Dwarf Gecko, Thicktail day Gecko, Common House gecko, Western Plated Lizard, Cuvier's Madagascar Swift, Tree Snake (Stenophis granuliceps)*



Schlegel's Asity (Female)



Van Dam's Vanga

Day 13:

An early morning boat cruise into the Betsiboka Delta in search of Madagascar Sacred Ibis and Bernier's Teal. A late afternoon flight back to Antananarivo.

Key Birds: *Bernier's Teal, Madagascar Sacred Ibis, Crab Plover, Saunder's Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Terek Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, White-faced Whistling Duck, Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Dimorphic Egret, Grey Plover, Siberian Sand Plover, Common Sandpiper, Caspian Tern, Madagascar Bee-eater, Red Fody, Madagascar Wagtail, Magpie Robin.*

Key Species: *Common House gecko*



Bernier's Teal



Madagascar Sacred Ibis

Day 14:

We visited the Lemurs Park outside of Antananarivo for the morning then did some craft shopping around town before heading back to the hotel to pack.

Key Birds: *Malagasy Green Sunbird, Western Marsh Harrier, Madagascar Wagtail, Red Fody, Magpie Robin, Malagasy Brush warbler.*

Key Species: *Ring-tailed lemur, Coquerel's and Verreaux's Sifaka, Black and white Ruffed Lemur, Grey Bamboo Lemur, Black Lemur, Radiated Tortoise, Lined Day Gecko.*



Coquerel's Sifaka



Madagascar Blue Pigeon

Day 15: Departure