



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Madagascar, Mauritius & Reunion 2012**

Nov 10, 2012 to Dec 6, 2012

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*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*

This was my third run-through for this comprehensive tour of Madagascar, which Field Guides has been running since 1986, and the first time for Jesse, and again we had a great tour, albeit with lots of traveling on slow roads, the vagaries of Air Madagascar, and as always the unexpected, like two of the major bridges en route to Berenty being out of use and necessitating some rapid improvisation.

For the second time in recent years we offered an extension to the Masoala Peninsula in quest of Madagascar's icon bird, the Helmet Vanga, and boy did that pay off, with amazing views of one sitting on the same nest as in 2011, more or less at eye level, with another one nearby! Bernier's Vanga was tough and required a couple of hours walking and the wading of two shallow creeks, but this too paid off nicely with great views of at least 3 female birds and a brief look at a male, as well as another Helmet Vanga. We lost a night due to flight complications, and we had quite a bumpy and damp sea crossing, but the Masoala extension also included Collared Nightjar, Short-legged Ground-Roller, Red-breasted Coua, Red Ruffed Lemur, White-fronted Brown Lemur, and Weasel (Sportive) Lemur, all from a rustic but perfectly adequate lodge set right by the forest. Sure hope to run this again next time, it is really worth the effort with some of the most charismatic species of the tour.



*Easily one of Madagascar's most spectacular birds, the incredible Helmet Vanga is one of the main targets on the extension to the Masoala Peninsula. Our views this year certainly made the effort worthwhile!*

*(Photo by guide Jesse Fagan)*

Ankarafantsika had to be done without Gerard, whose brother had just died in Tana, but Guy was a good replacement and our full day proved terrific with a major clean up: White-breasted Mesite, Schlegel's Asity, then the endangered Van Dam's Vanga after a bit of a search, plus Red-capped and Coquerel's Couas -- our local guide Amedee sure knows his stuff. We abandoned lunch at the much improved park cafe to go get the rare Madagascar Fish-Eagle, and then scored the Madagascar Jacana too, which I feared had gone from this site.

The Betsiboka estuary boat ride saw all of us on the one boat, a big plus this time. We had great views of Bernier's Teal, but the Madagascar Sacred Ibis was a no show, as it turned out one of the few dips of the tour.

Next day we had a whole day spare as the Air Mad flight was delayed till 2000, so we hired the boat to take us across the estuary to Kapsedy lighthouse, a site for Crowned Sifaka. Landing was hard, but we got everyone ashore, albeit a tad wet. Regrettably, the first renovations of the cast-iron lighthouse since it was erected in 1901 were underway so there was a fearful cacophony of banging and scraping, not conducive to the sifakas staying around; I reckon ordinarily they would be a fair bet here, still it was an adventure and filled in the day. I climbed up inside the lighthouse amongst all the workmen in the noise, heat, and dust -- it was like a scene from one of the lower hells! A late afternoon trip to a small lake near the airport paid off nicely and got us the delightful African Pygmy-goose and the rare White-backed Duck, two very good trip additions.

Hubbing back to the oasis of the Carlton in Antananarivo is great, and from here we set off on the long and slow drive to Ambositre, where the local musicians, the Marolafy brothers and their sister, were once again performing for us.

Ranomafana was excellent again, and despite afternoon rain and even a hailstorm at one point we did very well. The first morning took in both the Golden and the rare Greater Bamboo Lemurs, then a fortuitous Madagascar Pygmy-Kingfisher, lovely Velvet Asity, and very nice looks at Madagascar Wood-Rail before the trek up to the Henst's Goshawk site where we scored not only a perched view of this rare species, but also Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs, a lifer for all. The afternoon saw us try a very wet marsh for Grey Emutail, getting sidetracked by brush warblers and ignoring the real thing which was calling close by, and everyone got wet feet! Angst about nocturnal lemurs was evident, but we wisely did it next night when there were far fewer lemur tourists at the narrow site by the road.

We got most folks onto most things as usual along the narrow forest trails, even the Madagascar Yellowbrow showed amazingly well, but only a few got the Brown Emutail. Luckily Jean-Chris had a nest site for Sunbird-Asity this year, so we nailed that nicely after a bit of a wait -- this was a species we

struggled for last time. Next day Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity proved easier at the second site we tried, coming in to pink Bakerella flowers, with a female showing really well, then a male coming in for most of us, a fantastic sight of a really rare species.

It was an uneventful long drive down to Isalo, arriving at dusk. The Benson's Rock-thrush was hard this year, but we eventually found a male after we had done a foray for Madagascar Partridge by the lake there. A pair crossed in front of us and Jesse, Lane, and I went in to try and make them show from the long dry grass, while as it turned out the rest were watching a male out on the plain!

Zombitse was very good despite the heat, and the guides eventually came through with the great prize here, the rare and incredibly restricted range Appert's Tetraka, plus Cuckoo-Roller a fine pair of White-browed Owls and a huge Oustalet's Chameleon.

A mid-afternoon stop at La Table at a new site of Gerard's got a fine male Red-shouldered Vanga -- good to get this one early on; then we went on up to Ifaty and got to the Bamboo Club at dusk, quite a good time to do that drive as the light was good and the temperatures more bearable, and with some highly entertaining taxi-brousse trucks en route, loaded to the hilt with colorful and good-humored passengers.

Just one night at Ifaty was a tad unnerving as we have to get everything in just one morning, but the guides were great and we duly notched Long-tailed Ground-roller, Thamnornis, Running Coua, a nesting Banded Kestrel, and Archbold's Newtonia. No sign of Lafresnaye's Vanga, but the rare Madagascar Plover showed very well at the saline flats nearby.

Back to Toliara, and a great fast-boat trip next day, getting out to Nosy Ve in about 45 minutes -- good Red-tailed Tropicbirds, luckily a single Crab Plover, then a fine male Littoral Rock-Thrush at the hotel at Anakao, really easy this year. Back in time for lunch at the Victory, then an afternoon foray which got both Verreaux's and Green-capped Coua at La Table, with a bonus pair of Lafresnaye's Vanga there, a new site for me.

Berenty was next, with some exciting times on the trip there as the two new bridges were both not yet in use, so we had to use a ferry -- of which more later -- then found the second earth bridge not too far out of the reserve had been washed out that night. A careful review of the options revealed that it was quite likely to be fixed within a few hours, but meantime the new bridge was potentially there for foot traffic, and this is what we did, walking over and getting the Berenty vehicle to pick us up on the other side, and we didn't have to wade the river after all. Our bags followed not long after when they fixed the earthen causeway.

Berenty itself was really good, we had fabulous Ring-tailed Lemurs and amazing encounters with the charismatic Verreaux's Sifakas, whilst the night walk was quite short and gave us White-footed Sportive Lemur and Gray-brown Mouse-Lemur, with Gerard briefly getting a few of us lost in the bush! Berenty also gave us wonderful close looks at Giant Coua, we eventually got Madagascar Sandgrouse and a bonus Sooty Falcon next morning, and the guide had a day roost for Torotoroka Scops-Owl as well as White-browed Owl, all very good. Sadly, what we thought was going to be Madagascar Sparrowhawk proves to be a Frances's Sparrowhawk; I wondered why all three birds were so close by, and Birdforum has given me the answer. The species is often misidentified as the field guides are so unhelpful, and many web photos are incorrectly labeled.

Coming back, we left in good time but got caught at a big truck bottleneck at the ferry, which eventually led us to offload our bags and get them and us ferried over, with the ferry guys being very helpful and Gerard then dashing ahead to the airport to get us all checked in, quite a tight schedule but it worked.

The finale at Andisibe/Mantadia was rewarding, nice to have 3 nights here so we are not too pushed for time. This year, after two very easy years, Scaly Ground-Roller was really hard, the morning we tried we had competition from a guy playing Creedence Clearwater Revival at top volume right by their habitat, and a wandering herd of zebu crashing about in there, as well as sundry other birding groups. Basically it fizzed and we consoled ourselves with Madagascar Grebe, missing a claimed Meller's Duck which our site guide then tried to attract by sitting on the bank quacking -- I swear he gets loopier every year, but he is good at getting the forest stuff. He proved this next day with Scaly Ground-Roller after quite a long effort. Meller's Duck was easy this day too, and Nancy found us two unhabituated Indri right by the road and giving strange mournful vocalizations, just marvelous to get this away from Indri ridge, and a great experience. Other stars were two lovely juvenile Madagascar Long-eared Owls, Madagascar Scops-Owl and Madagascar Nightjar at Feon Nyala for those who had not done the extension, the elusive Madagascar Rail at a new site, and then a brilliant male Madagascar Flufftail right by the lodge.

Our final morning got us a great experience with two family groups of Indri calling as we stood underneath one set, with the rare Diademed Sifaka nearby. Other great sightings here were a Madagascar Crested Ibis at nest with two grayish youngsters, after we'd had a brief flyby the day before out by the road, and two Collared Nightjars sat camouflaged at point blank range on the forest floor. Some brilliant work saw Nestor literally herding us a Red-fronted Coua as the last lifer of the trip. A fine leaf-tailed gecko, Uroplatus sikorae, as the last of the herps was neat too, what an extraordinary creature.

Back to Tana and the flight via Toamasina and Ste Marie to Reunion next day. Reunion worked out well with a fine experience of Barau's Petrel coming in at the Gol Estuary in the late afternoon, and a nice walk up through attractive native forest next day which gave us Reunion Harrier, Reunion Bulbul, Reunion Stonechat, and both endemic white-eyes, though sadly no sight or sound of the cuckooshrike this year.

Mauritius is a fairly gentle wind-down after the rigors of the trip, albeit with a very early start so we can get to the Mauritius Fody site in good time. It takes a morning to get the available endemics, and we had terrific looks at Mauritius Parakeet, Mauritius Kestrel, and Pink Pigeon, though I fear the days of the Mauritius Olive White-eye and Mauritius Cuckooshrike may now be highly finite as they seem to have gone from their former accessible sites, no doubt due to the macaque menace which is likely to render them extinct within a very short time, a sad state of affairs. Still, at least the rare non-passerines seem to be doing moderately well and things are not quite so bleak for them.

Overall, it was another great trip to the fantastic island-nation of Madagascar. If you did the extension to Masoala, then Helmet Vanga was the star bird, no contest, with Bernier's Vanga a close second as we worked so hard for it. As for the rest of the trip this would be very hard to decide: how do you choose from the mesites; some amazing vangas including the wonderful Sickle-billed, Blue Vanga, and Nuthatch Vanga and those big Xenopirostris jobs including the rare Van Dam's; great views of all five species of ground roller for most; the Cuckoo-Roller and its marvelous evocative voice; Velvet or Schlegel's Asity, and both Sunbird Asities; and Meller's Duck and Bernier's Teal, some of the rarest ducks in the world? The list goes on, even Barau's Petrel or two species of tropicbird might figure.

As for lemurs, well, all the sifakas are fantastic but Verreaux's and Ring-tailed Lemur were an incredible experience this year, mouse lemurs are cute, the sportive lemurs have great eyes, Red Ruffed and Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur were outstanding both vocally and to look at, the bamboo lemurs were unique and rare, and the Indri must have one of the greatest sounds in the animal kingdom besides being one cool-looking and large animal. Lemur tourism rules.

My thanks to Sharon at the FG office for great work with a very hard and demanding schedule, to Jesse for his assistance, scope carrying, and taping, to Gerard who was again a multi-skilled star who took remarkably good care of us, and to the many sharp-eyed and enthusiastic local guides who once again did such a fine job for us -- Joseph and Armand, Amedee at Ankarafantsika, Jean-Chris and Joe at Ranomafana, the lads at Mangily, Benoit at Berenty, Nestor and Laurent at Andisibe.

Why not join us for another adventure in 2013 with the marvelous birds, lemurs, herps, and people of this great island?

- Phil Gregory, Kuranda, Dec 2012

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## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna viduata*) – Good looks at this striking bird at Masoala, then near Ankarafantsika, on the Betsiboka estuary and at Lac Alarobia.

**WHITE-BACKED DUCK** (*Thalassornis leuconotus insularis*) – This was a terrific find at the lovely lily-covered lake near Mahajunga airport, where we saw some 4 very unobtrusive birds skulking among the lily pads. Rare and localized in Madagascar and of an endemic race too, this was Phil's first sighting here.

**COMB DUCK** (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) – A female at Lac Alarobia. Note the IOC split this as Knob-billed Duck, distinct from Comb Duck of South America.

**AFRICAN PYGMY-GOOSE** (*Nettapus auritus*) – The lily covered pond near the airport at Mahajunga held at least a dozen of this delightful colorful and uncommon duck, and we had some brilliant views.

**MELLER'S DUCK** (*Anas melleri*) – Two on the little pond at Mantadia, on the second attempt, it's a rare and declining endemic. [E]

**RED-BILLED DUCK** (*Anas erythrorhyncha*) – A few at various wetland sites, it seems to be the commonest of the Madagascar wildfowl.

**HOTTENTOT TEAL** (*Anas hottentota*) – Two at Lac Alarobia were a good trip bird.

**BERNIER'S TEAL** (*Anas bernieri*) – After a search of the nooks and crannies of the Betsiboka estuary we found 2 of this Endangered species, with a global population estimated at 1500. The white wing patch shows up well, and we got some really good looks at them, one of the main targets for the outing on the estuary. [E]

### Numididae (Guineafowl)

**HELMETED GUINEAFOWL** (*Numida meleagris*) – A few at Berenty, this is an introduction from Africa which was also seen near Maroantsetra. [I]

### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**GRAY FRANCOLIN** (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Good views at Bel Ombre on Mauritius, with a pair and later a tiny baby covering in the track, (which survived being stepped on by one of the group, so good was its camouflage!) [I]

**MADAGASCAR PARTRIDGE** (*Margaroperdix madagascarensis*) – Tough again this year, Phil and a couple of folks saw 2 near the pond at Isalo and most of the group saw a male whilst Jesse, Lane and I were out bashing through the scrub to try and flush them, just a shame no-one bothered to tell us! [E]

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**MADAGASCAR GREBE** (*Tachybaptus pelzelni*) – Three fine birds on the tiny pond at Mantadia, even heard calling this year- they sound like deeper and slower Little Grebes. Rare and endangered, due to hunting, disturbance and interbreeding with the new colonist Little Grebe. [E]

### Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

**GREATER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopus roseus*) – About 40 out in the bay near St Augustin and half a dozen in the estuary there.

**LESSER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopus minor*) – One very distant bird on the Betsiboka estuary was so small it had to be this species, which was a Mad tick for Phil.

### Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

**BARAU'S PETREL** (*Pterodroma barau*) – Another banner year for them, we had hundreds off the mouth of the Gol River on Reunion, I estimated over 400 which must be 5% of the world population. Great views of them wheeling and arcing offshore with some heading inland up the river valley. Reunion is the only breeding site.

**WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus pacificus*) – Nice looks at one en route to Masoala on both trips, which was a surprise, no doubt due to the rough weather. Also a couple off the Gol estuary on Reunion.

**TROPICAL SHEARWATER** (*Puffinus bailloni*) – One or two offshore at the River Gol estuary, but hard to get onto amongst all the Barau's. This is split from Audubon's Shearwater. Note that Mascarene Shearwater (*P. atrodorsalis* of the FG) is actually just the juv. plumage of Tropical Shearwater, it was described in error as a new species.

### Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

**WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (INDIAN OCEAN)** (*Phaethon lepturus lepturus*) – A nice one by the hotel at St Denis for most, then some distant

birds on Mauritius.

**RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (*Phaethon rubricauda rubricauda*) – One of the stars of our trip to Nosy Ve, where they were again nesting. We had terrific looks at a few adults flying, and a couple of juvs. sat under the bushes.

*Fregatidae (Frigatebirds)*

**LESSER FRIGATEBIRD** (*Fregata ariel*) – Two frigatebirds seen by some over the hotel at Maroantsetra were either Great or Lesser, but not seen long enough to be sure.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**LONG-TAILED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax africanus pictilis*) – Just a single in the estuary on the way back from Masoala, this is an endemic race and very sparse.

*Anhingidae (Anhingas)*

**AFRICAN DARTER** (*Anhinga rufa vulsini*) – Again just one at the lake at Ankarafantsika, of the endemic race.

*Scopidae (Hamerkop)*

**HAMERKOP** (*Scopus umbretta umbretta*) – Some 8 day records and good views, with a few of the big untidy nests also seen.

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**LITTLE BITTERN** (*Ixobrychus minutus podiceps*) – Carlos glimpsed one fly up near Perinet.

**GRAY HERON (GRAY)** (*Ardea cinerea firsas*) – A small scattering of records starting at Mahajunga, overall very scarce.

**HUMBLT'S HERON** (*Ardea humbloti*) – A good trip for this rare bird, we saw one from the boat en route both ways from Masoala, one very unexpectedly at Lac Alarobia, then another at Lac Ravelobe at Ankarafantsika and one at the St Augustin estuary. [E]

**PURPLE HERON** (*Ardea purpurea madagascariensis*) – A single near Maroantsetra then 4 or 5 at Lac Ravelobe and one on the pond at Mahajunga.

**GREAT EGRET (AFRICAN)** (*Ardea alba melanorhyncha*) – A scattering of records from the various wetlands, with most at Ankarafantsika.

**LITTLE EGRET (DIMORPHIC)** (*Egretta garzetta dimorpha*) – This interesting albeit taxonomically challenged rather long billed bird was widely distributed in small numbers, the most at Lac Alarobia. Both morphs occur, with the black being the commonest and an odd grey form being presumably an intermediate. They are nothing like Little Egret, links to Reef Heron seem more likely. The IOC split it, which seems like a sensible thing to do.

**BLACK HERON** (*Egretta ardesiaca*) – Seen in Tana, where we had about 30 at Lac Alarobia, and then about 30 on wetlands near Ankarafantsika, some doing the classic umbrella wing-shading pose.

**CATTLE EGRET (IBIS)** (*Bubulcus ibis ibis*) – Widespread in small numbers, this is the western nominate form.

**SQUACCO HERON** (*Ardeola ralloides*) – A few at Maroantsetra, then 80 or so at Lac Alarobia where they are breeding and look to be displacing the Madagascar Pond Heron which used to dominate there. About 30 on wetlands near Ankarafantsika also and odd birds in paddies at Tana.

**MADAGASCAR POND-HERON** (*Ardeola idae*) – Now an Endangered species with a population estimated at 2000-6000, declining due to hunting, wetland loss and competition with Squacco Heron which seems to have largely displaced it at the former strongholds of Lac Alarobia and Tana zoo. We saw just 4 adults of which 3 were in breeding dress, one at Tana wetlands on the first day, one at Lac Ravelobe and 2 at Lac Alarobia. I think there is reason to be very concerned about this species. [E]

**STRIATED HERON (OLD WORLD)** (*Butorides striata rutenbergi*) – Odd singles at various sites with 2 at Ankarafantsika, then one at Bassin Blanc on Mauritius.

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – 4 at Tana wetlands and 15 at Lac Alarobia.

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**GLOSSY IBIS** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Up to 30 at Lac Ravelobe.

**MADAGASCAR IBIS** (*Lophotibis cristata*) – Nestor flushed one in the forest at Andisibe and it flew by the group for a brief view, but next day he took us to its nest where an adult had just come in to feed 2 babies, so we had fantastic views of this rare bird. Great! [E]

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**BLACK KITE (YELLOW-BILLED)** (*Milvus migrans parasitus*) – Widespread, and yet another taxonomically challenged species which was split by the South Africans decades ago, then by Ferguson-Lees and Christie in Raptors of the World. I don't know why some major checklists ignore all this as it seems very unlike Black Kite and they don't intergrade.

**MADAGASCAR FISH-EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus vociferoides*) – This Critically Endangered species has a population of about 120 pairs and is one of the world's rarest raptors. We had a terrific look at one sat beside the marsh at Ankarafantsika on the second visit, with another nearby. Worth interrupting lunch for this one. [E]

**REUNION HARRIER (REUNION)** (*Circus maillardi maillardi*) – A distinctive insular taxon that resembles male Papuan Harrier more than anything else, and is split by Ferguson-Lees and Christie and the IOC. Steffi and a few others saw an adult male briefly on the first day, then we had a couple of female plumaged birds at La Roche Ecrite on the second day. The Madagascar taxon is also split by most but we did not see it this trip. [E]

**MADAGASCAR HARRIER-HAWK** (*Polyboroides radiatus*) – A fine view of a subadult at Masoala, then again at Ankarafantsika and Mantadia where adults were seen in flight. [E]

**FRANCES'S GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter francesii*) – A good trip for this species, with singles at Ranomafana, a pair at Berenty and two sightings from Andisibe, whilst a few saw one near Mahajunga. The male seems to be almost whitish beneath with little barring and no broad dark tail bars, and its small size surely makes this a sparrowhawk, not a goshawk. [E]

**HENST'S GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter henstii*) – Great sighting at Ranomafana, where a calling bird eventually came through then sat perched up for ages, allowing scope views of this big, rare and seldom seen species. It's a very large goshawk with close dark barring below, and was a BVD for me in 2011, great to get an upgrade. [E]

**MADAGASCAR BUZZARD** (*Buteo brachypterus*) – A few singles at various sites, starting at Masoala, and quite often heard calling. [E]

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**MADAGASCAR KESTREL** (*Falco newtoni*) – Quite common, the first nesting by the Carlton Hotel had two fledged juveniles which we monitored

over our stay, and it was seen most days. [E]

**MAURITIUS KESTREL** (*Falco punctatus*) – Great looks at a female that came out of her nestbox and sat on a branch for some super natural background shots, at our third and last site for it. This was formerly one of the world's rarest birds with just a handful of individuals left in the 1980's. Habitat conservation, predator control and captive breeding built up to over 1000 birds quite recently, now down to around 600-700, and sadly now likely to decline fast as the recent cessation of macaque control means more birds become monkey prey. [E]

**BANDED KESTREL** (*Falco zoniventris*) – Great looks at a pair of this rare species with a nest at Mangily again this year. The female's head was showing, then the male came in and sat nearby for tremendous views. [E]

**SOOTY FALCON** (*Falco concolor*) – A lot of folks saw this at Tana airport, then Phil found one perched on sisal at Berenty which allowed scope views. Once again there was no sign of Eleonora's Falcon which we have only seen once on this tour, they must be very thinly spread indeed.

**PEREGRINE FALCON (EURASIAN)** (*Falco peregrinus radama*) – One along a line of low hills not too far out from Tana as we headed for Antsirabe. This is the endemic race which seems to belong to the Eurasian group rather than the African ones according to Clements.

#### Mesitornithidae (Mesites)

**WHITE-BREASTED MESITE** (*Mesitornis variegatus*) – Once again nice looks at two calling birds at Ankarafantsika, herded into view by the guides and crossing the trail a couple of times, just fantastic. An endemic family too. [E]

**SUBDESERT MESITE** (*Monias benschi*) – This one was herded up by the young guides and froze in position on a spiny branch at Mangily, an astonishing but quite typical behavior and very fortunate from our perspective. The tail was held high in the typical mesite pose, and only a rapidly blinking eye and slightly quivering tail betrayed its presence. [E]

#### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**MADAGASCAR FLUFFTAIL** (*Sarothrura insularis*) – A lot of folks got glimpses of one en route to Andisibe in a small marsh there, then Phil was able to kleptoparasitize one of the local guides who'd just shown one to two birders right by Feon Ny'ala. He gave me a dirty look as we duly went in, but the bird was hot and came in right away, giving terrific views as it called very close to the tape. [E]

**MADAGASCAR WOOD-RAIL** (*Canirallus kioloides kioloides*) – A glimpse for the front of the line at Masoala, then a good look at one at Ranomafana which was calling quite well, and finally an adult with two chicks crossed the trail at Indri Ridge.

**MADAGASCAR RAIL** (*Rallus madagascariensis*) – Gerard had a new site for this elusive bird, which began calling back and circled round in deep cover, giving brief looks now and again. I think everyone eventually got a moderate to good look. Another was heard up en route to Mantadia. [E]

**WHITE-THROATED RAIL** (*Dryolimnas cuvieri cuvieri*) – A good trip for this very striking species, with lovely looks at several sites including Lac Ravelobe, Lac Alarobia, Feon Ny'ala and near Andisibe.

**ALLEN'S GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio alleni*) – One at Lac Ravelobe and another at the lake near Mahajunga airport, always elusive and easily missed.

**EURASIAN MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus pyrrhorhoa*) – Seen at Lac Alarobia and Lac Ravelobe as well as near Mahajunga airport, also on Reunion.

#### Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A single at Maroantsetra then 3 at Nosy Ve/Tolagnaro mudflats.

**LESSER SAND-PLOVER** (*Charadrius mongolus*) – A single on the Betsiboka estuary.

**GREATER SAND-PLOVER** (*Charadrius leschenaultii crassirostris*) – One near Maroantsetra then about 15 at Tolagnaro.

**KITTLITZ'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius pecuarius*) – Four en route to Ifaty, and 12 at St Augustin, a long-legged species with distinct orangey underparts

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Seen at Betsiboka, near Ifaty and then at Tolagnaro mudflats.

**MADAGASCAR PLOVER** (*Charadrius thoracicus*) – Great looks at one on the saline flats near the Nautilus at Ifaty, a rare and endangered species which I have still only ever seen at this one site! It has a rather long bill and thin white lower partial eye-ring as well as a broad black chest band, with shape quite like Kittlitz's Plover. [E]

**THREE-BANDED PLOVER** (*Charadrius tricollaris bifrontatus*) – Three at Tana wetlands were unexpected, then 3 at Lac Ravelobe, a couple near Mahajunga airport, at Vohiparara and finally near Ifaty.

**WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER** (*Charadrius marginatus tenellus*) – Five day records, seen at Betsiboka, Kapsedy lighthouse and Nosy Ve.

#### Dromadidae (Crab Plover)

**CRAB PLOVER** (*Dromas ardeola*) – Just a single on Nosy Ve, stood on the beach and boy was I pleased to find it! It's a monotypic family and by no means guaranteed on this tour, though I have a good record to date!

#### Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-WINGED STILT** (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Two at Maroantsetra and then 2 near Tulear on two days.

#### Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

**MADAGASCAR JACANA** (*Actophilornis albinucha*) – The very dry conditions had us worried and we dipped on day one, but Carlos picked one up at Lac Ravelobe next day and eventually we got great looks at what is quite a rare bird. I made the Danish group abandon their lunch when I told them we'd just seen it! [E]

#### Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**TEREK SANDPIPER** (*Xenus cinereus*) – Brief looks at Betsiboka, the short orange legs and upturned bill are very distinctive, and they run about like they are toppling forwards.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Scattered records from the wetland sites.

**COMMON GREENSHANK** (*Tringa nebularia*) – Likewise, a few were seen at the wetland sites.

**WHIMBREL (EUROPEAN)** (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*) – The nominate race, now split from Hudsonian Whimbrel by most, was widespread in small numbers and we had some 120 on the mud at Tulear.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** (*Numenius arquata*) – Jesse thought he saw one at Betsiboka but sadly all I saw was the disappearing rear end, they are quite rare in Madagascar.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – One at Maroantsetra and 4 at Nosy Ve.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Singles at Kapsedy and Nosy Ve.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Ten at Betsiboka, one near Tulear and 6 at Tolagnaro.

**MADAGASCAR SNIPE** (*Gallinago macrodactyla*) – A great job from Gerard here, he was able to drive one up and past us at small marsh near Antsirabe. It's a rare and tricky species to get so we were lucky. [E]

#### Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

**MADAGASCAR BUTTONQUAIL** (*Turnix nigricollis*) – A male and 3 juvs. on the track at Ankarafantsika were the best sightings, then a few folks got brief looks at Kapsedy lighthouse and Berenty. [E]

#### Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

**MADAGASCAR PRATINCOLE** (*Glareola ocularis*) – One on a rock off Nosy Mangabe seen from the boat, then a pair on a riverine rock en route to Andisibe, with a small greyish chick. Quite a rare bird, oddly enough this one winters on the coast in Kenya and Somalia. [E]

#### Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**SOOTY TERN** (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – Two seen on the boat trip to Masoala, driven in by choppy conditions, then a couple en route to Nosy Ve.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A single in the huge shallow bay south of St Augustin was a Madagascar tick for Phil.

**ROSEATE TERN** (*Sterna dougallii arideensis*) – At least 5 of this smart very white spiky tern were in the mainly Common Tern flocks en route to Masoala.

**COMMON TERN (COMMON)** (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*) – Around 150 in the Baie de Antongil going out, and 70 coming back.

**GREAT CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bergii enigmus*) – Small numbers from Maroantsetra, Betsiboka and the Tulear area.

**LESSER CRESTED TERN** (*Thalasseus bengalensis bengalensis*) – Two near Maroantsetra, one in the Betsiboka estuary and a sizeable flock on Nosy Ve.

#### Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

**MADAGASCAR SANDGROUSE** (*Pterocles personatus*) – I was getting worried, but we eventually flushed a flock of 12 in the sisal nursery at Berenty, with 5 others nearby, and had very good flight views. Elusive and readily missed. [E]

#### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Feral Pigeons were seen in many of the larger cities and towns. [I]

**PINK PIGEON** (*Nesoenas mayeri*) – Great looks at 4 of this large pinkish pigeon at Bel Ombre, back from the brink of extinction for the time being, with another at a reintroduction site at a park where we did lunch. [E]

**MADAGASCAR TURTLE-DOVE** (*Streptopelia picturata picturata*) – Widespread on Madagascar, and also a few seen on Reunion and Mauritius.

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – A handful were seen on Mauritius. [I]

**NAMAQUA DOVE** (*Oena capensis aliena*) – This was quite common in the dry areas of the south and north west, and we had some great views of this pretty little long-tailed dove.

**ZEBRA DOVE** (*Geopelia striata*) – Common on Mauritius and a few on Reunion. [I]

**MADAGASCAR GREEN-PIGEON** (*Treron australis*) – Uncommon, we saw a single at Masoala, a single at Ankarafantsika and 4 Berenty. [E]

**MADAGASCAR BLUE-PIGEON** (*Alectroenas madagascariensis*) – Uncommon, a couple at Masoala, one at Ranomafana and a couple at Andisibe, a very striking bird with its red tail. [E]

#### Psittacidae (Parrots)

**ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula krameri*) – A couple were seen in flight on Mauritius. [I]

**MAURITIUS PARAKEET** (*Psittacula echo*) – Fantastic views of 2 males and a female at the feeding site at Bel Ombre, with a flyover earlier as we walked into the site. The black beak of the female is distinctive and the call quite different to that of Ring-necked Parakeet. This bird has come back from a low of >10 wild birds but is again threatened by monkey predation.

**GRAY-HEADED LOVEBIRD** (*Agapornis canus*) – A few at Ankarafantsika, then some nice sightings at Ifaty. [E]

**VASA PARROT** (*Coracopsis vasa*) – They seemed scarce this trip, we saw it well at Masoala where the large size and big head was obvious in comparison with Lesser Vasa, and I think some folks saw it at Mangily in the spiny forest. [E]

**BLACK PARROT** (*Coracopsis nigra*) – This was again widespread and very vocal this trip, we had them at all the wetter forest sites, with some feeding at fruiting trees at Masoala and Mangily. Best called the Lesser Vasa as the Black Parrot is a Seychelles endemic cf. IOC, the Sinclair field guide etc. [E]

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**MADAGASCAR CUCKOO** (*Cuculus rochii*) – Seen very well at Kapsedy lighthouse, then at Ranomafana, and heard most days of the tour. [E]

**GIANT COUA** (*Coua gigas*) – Confiding and easy to see at Berenty, the largest of the genus and a striking bird. [E]

**COQUEREL'S COUA** (*Coua coquereli*) – Two fine adults at Ankarafantsika and one at Zombitse. [E]

**RED-BREASTED COUA** (*Coua serriana*) – A few folks got quick looks as one slipped across the narrow track at Masoala, where we heard it several times, and heard distantly at Mantadia. Always one of the hardest of the subfamily. [E]

**RED-FRONTED COUA** (*Coua reynaudii*) – The final lifer of the tour, one responded on my very last attempt at Andisibe and Nestor did a great job of herding it down through the dense forest and across a track so we could see it very nicely. Also heard up at Masoala and at Mantadia but did not respond. [E]

**RED-CAPPED COUA** (*Coua ruficeps*) – Great looks at Ankarafantsika, where one even sunned on the track in front of us once again. [E]

**RED-CAPPED COUA (GREEN-CAPPED)** (*Coua ruficeps olivaceiceps*) – We got a quick view of one on the track in the spiny forest at La Table, likely a good split from Red-capped too. [E]

**RUNNING COUA** (*Coua cursor*) – After hearing it calling in the spiny forest at Mangily, the guides finally got one perched up high in a tree as we worked back towards the entrance I [E]

**CRESTED COUA** (*Coua cristata*) – Great looks at this striking bird at Ankarafantsika, Ifaty, Berenty then Zombitse. [E]

**VERREAUX'S COUA** (*Coua verreauxi*) – This can be a tricky one, found only in the very dry coral rag scrub around La Table and elusive there. Our brought-in guide found us two birds eventually and we got a good view, with some seeing them mating as well. [E]

**BLUE COUA** (*Coua caerulea*) – This lovely bird is quite widespread and vocal in the wet forests, we saw it at Masoala then at Ranomafana and Andisibe. [E]

**MADAGASCAR COUCAL** (*Centropus toulou*) – Widespread and fairly common, we saw them quite a bit and heard them most days. [E]

#### Strigidae (Owls)

**MALAGASY SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus rutilus*) – Great views of one near the lodge at Masoala, then one at Andisibe on the last night there, which was seen by a select few, including those who had not been to Masoala. [E]

**TOROTOROKA SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus madagascariensis*) – A nice look at this relatively recently split species at Berenty, where the guide had one roosting in daylight, which was amazingly patient with the attentions of the photographers. Also heard on the night walk there. [E]

**MADAGASCAR LONG-EARED OWL** (*Asio madagascariensis*) – Two lovely big fledged juveniles at Andisibe which came in to playback, they have striking white underparts and white underwing coverts, and black face masks. Easily missed, I have yet to see an adult myself. [E]

**MARSH OWL** (*Asio capensis*) – Amazingly the Danish group had found two in the car park at Tana airport, which seemed to be feeding around the lights there. Bizarre, but great views!

**WHITE-BROWED OWL** (*Ninox supercilialis*) – Great views at Zombitse with a pair, then a single at Berenty, they sit out for ages in daylight. The genus *Ninox* is a SE Asian and Australasian radiation with this a far flung outlier here. [E]

#### Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**MADAGASCAR NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus madagascariensis*) – One in the departure lounge at Tana airport when we came back late from Masoala, a male too, and then Jesse and I got another spotlight hunting at Feon N'yala for those who did not do the extension. Also very vocal at Ifaty, but hard to see there this time. [E]

**COLLARED NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus enarratus*) – Amazing views at Masoala where we had two adults that had been found that very morning en route to the Helmet Vanga nest. Then another two were known at Andisibe and sat very well relying on their incredible camouflage to protect them. Striking, rare and little known and easily missed, with no known vocals. [E]

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

**MALAGASY SPINETAIL** (*Zoonavena grandidieri*) – The Sinclair & Langrand book describes this as common- we saw about 20 at Masoala, then just a couple at Mantadia and Andisibe, and that was it! The small white rump is quite hard to see but we got some terrific views. [E]

**MASCARENE SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus francicus*) – Fairly common on Reunion and Mauritius, mostly in the remnant forested areas.

**ALPINE SWIFT** (*Apus melba willsi*) – A couple of folks saw one over Ranomafana.

**MADAGASCAR SWIFT** (*Apus balstoni*) – This split from African Black Swift was seen at Masoala, over Tana, then again at Ranomafana and Ifaty. [E]

**AFRICAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*) – A few sightings from the drier areas, starting at Masoala and then Ifaty.

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**MALAGASY KINGFISHER** (*Corythornis vintsioides*) – We had multiple encounters with this lovely little relative of the Malachite Kingfisher, starting at Masoala then at Ankarafantsika, Berenty and Andisibe. [E]

**MADAGASCAR PYGMY-KINGFISHER** (*Corythornis madagascariensis*) – This was a lucky find perched in bamboo near the bamboo lemur site at Ranomafana, and it stayed sat for ages, the only one we saw. [E]

#### Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

**MADAGASCAR BEE-EATER** (*Merops superciliosus*) – Widespread in small numbers, with some great looks at them.

#### Coraciidae (Rollers)

**BROAD-BILLED ROLLER** (*Eurystomus glaucurus glaucurus*) – Also widespread, the cackling call was a regular sound of the tour starting at Masoala and Berenty, and we saw them really well on multiple occasions. They can be amazingly falcon-like in flight!

#### Brachypteraciidae (Ground-Rollers)

**SHORT-LEGGED GROUND-ROLLER** (*Brachypteracias leptosomus*) – This is often the toughest of the family to get, but we began well with great looks at 2 up at Masoala. None were at Mantadia this very dry year. [E]

**SCALY GROUND-ROLLER** (*Brachypteracias squamiger*) – Tough this year, we only heard it on the first attempt at Mantadia with competition from top volume Creedence Clearwater in the car park site, then a herd of zebu in the forest followed by herds of other birding groups, none of which was exactly helpful. Happily the situation was much better next morning and we got great looks at one thanks to very hard and skilful driving from the local guides. It's lucky these things sit still for ages is all I can say, they can be really hard to make out in the dark understory [E]

**PITTA-LIKE GROUND-ROLLER** (*Atelornis pittoides*) – Quite easy this year, we had fantastic looks at Ranomafana with multiple encounters, and again at Mantadia, it is one lovely looking bird. [E]

**RUFIOUS-HEADED GROUND-ROLLER** (*Atelornis crossleyi*) – Another tough one and it really made us work; our only sighting was good for many of the group, but then a ring-tailed mongoose came by and chased off the very skulking bird! No others were responsive sadly this year, though we could hear them 'booping' some way off. [E]

**LONG-TAILED GROUND-ROLLER** (*Uratelornis chimaera*) – The great prize down in the spiny forest, and boy do those guys have this one tagged, it was more or less the first bird we saw as we entered the forest there, showing well by the track. A great charisma bird, one of the Madagascar megas for sure. Years ago this used to take maybe a couple of days to find, using the local charcoal burners to go find them! [E]

#### Leptosomidae (Cuckoo-Roller)

**CUCKOO-ROLLER** (*Leptosomus discolor*) – Their wonderful mournful musical cry is a typical sound of the wet forests where they can be hard to see, but in the drier areas like Zombitse and Ankarafantsika they show well and we had lovely views both at rest and in flight.

#### Upupidae (Hoopoes)

**MADAGASCAR HOPOE** (*Upupa marginata*) – These were scarce this year, with just a few seen at Ankarafantsika and Berenty. [E]

*Philepittidae (Asities)*

**VELVET ASITY** (*Philepitta castanea*) – Wow, what a gem, that green facial skin just glows in the light and I love the way they sit so quietly in the dense tangles, they remind me of nothing so much as the Silktail in Fiji! We had terrific looks at a male at Ranomafana, and fine streaky females at both here and Andisibe. [E]

**SCHLEGEL'S ASITY** (*Philepitta schlegeli*) – A great prize from Ankarafantsika, the guides knew of a used nest site so we were able to stake this out and see both sexes very nicely. The quiet trilled call is a good indicator of its presence and this is one rare bird. [E]

**SUNBIRD ASITY** (*Neodrepanis coruscans*) – The amusingly named "Common" Sunbird Asity of Sinclair and Langrand should be renamed the Elusive and Downright Rare Sunbird Asity! Luckily our guide at Ranomafana knew of a nest, and by patiently waiting we got a fine male to come in which sat right over the track. Yay! [E]

**YELLOW-BELLIED ASITY** (*Neodrepanis hypoxantha*) – The first site fizzed, but luckily a second site where another group had just finished came good, with a fine female coming into feed quite low down in pink Bakerella flowers, with an amazing male coming later, the first time I have seen the male of this rarity. Sorry Jen, the damn thing came in right by the track just after we left apparently. [E]

*Vangidae (Vangas)*

**TYLAS VANGA** (*Tylas eduardi*) – A few saw this at Masoala, then we had a good one at Ranomafana then a couple at Andisibe, overall quite scarce this trip. [E]

**DARK NEWTONIA** (*Newtonia amphichroa*) – Good views at Ranomafana right by the roadside, where one was quite responsive; we had heard it that morning without it coming through. [E]

**COMMON NEWTONIA** (*Newtonia brunneicauda*) – Widespread, the clicking call is a give away and we saw it at each of the wetter forest areas starting at Mandraka on day one. Also somewhat to my surprise at La Table in the same habitat as Red-shouldered Vanga. [E]

**ARCHBOLD'S NEWTONIA** (*Newtonia archboldi*) – This was seen nicely in the spiny forest at Mangily, the only place we can see it on the tour. [E]

**CHABERT VANGA** (*Leptopterus chabert*) – Widespread and fairly common, we had some great looks at this stubby little vanga which is named after a place and not a person it seems.. [E]

**BLUE VANGA** (*Cyanolanius madagascarinus*) – Just a few sightings, starting at Masoala then at Ranomafana and Andisibe. A strikingly beautiful bird. [E]

**RED-TAILED VANGA** (*Calicalicus madagascariensis*) – The wolf whistle call was often heard and we had several nice looks at this chickadee-like species. [E]

**RED-SHOULDERED VANGA** (*Calicalicus rufocarpalis*) – Only formally described in 1997, it occupies that dry coral rag scrub around La Table mesa and is an elusive low density species, so we were very happy when we found a lovely male and had terrific views at a new site Gerard knew. Also heard there again next day when we were after the couas. [E]

**NUTHATCH-VANGA** (*Hypositta corallirostris*) – This seems to be to be a pretty scarce bird, the only place we saw it was at Ranomafana where a beautiful oily blue adult male and a duller female were foraging up trunks deep in the forest. The old name of Coral-billed Nuthatch fits it quite well, but it's much longer bodied and longer tailed, altogether very odd. This was my first Ranomafana sighting, and vangas overall were very reduced at Andisibe this year, maybe due to the dry conditions and the cyclone there earlier in the year which did a lot of damage. [E]

**HOOK-BILLED VANGA** (*Vanga curvirostris*) – Large, pied and strangely reminiscent of a butcherbird, we saw them nicely at Berenty, then at Mantadia. [E]

**HELMET VANGA** (*Euryceros prevostii*) – THE great Madagascar mega, one you can't see without a special effort, and even then by no means a slam dunk. We were lucky as our guide at Masoala again knew of a nest, so we trekked along a rough track for an hour then turned the corner and there not 25 yds away at eye level was the old nest from 2011, which I thought looked in very good condition, and sure enough not 5 minutes later a pair of Helmet Vanga showed up, with one sitting on the nest and another adding to it at times. The huge glowing black-tipped blue bill is unbelievable, we had fantastic looks then left it in peace. Another was seen by a few just before this, no doubt one of those birds, but a few minutes further up there was a second nest in the crown of a tree fern, which had an incubating bird sat glowering at us. Then on the Bernier's Vanga expedition most folks got nice looks at another Helmet Vanga in the mixed vanga flock there. It's clearly a rare and low density species and one of my top ten best birds ever for sure, it's definitely THE Madagascar charisma tick. [E]

**RUFOUS VANGA** (*Schetba rufa*) – Seen well at Masoala, we had 4 birds up at Ankarafantsika which seems to be a very good site for them, then there was a nest with an incubating female at Zombitse. [E]

**SICKLE-BILLED VANGA** (*Falcoea palliata*) – Another terrific showy vanga, this one with a huge decurved bill and white head. We had a very vocal one at Ankarafantsika sat high in a tree near the bus, then got some good looks down in the spiny forest at Mangily. [E]

**BERNIER'S VANGA** (*Oriolia bernieri*) – This is a really hard one and a Masoala special, easily missed. Happily our guides remembered how we struggled in 2011 and this time we checked out one area before going on a long walk with two creek wadings to reach an area where the forest type was rather different. This had lots of vines, pandanus and palms, and we heard the bird call as we arrived but had to go in after it. Happily I located my newly downloaded call, and we were able to lure in a mixed vanga flock which had Blue, White-headed, Helmet and at last Bernier's Vanga. They were hard to get onto but we persisted, and eventually everyone got to see them well, with at least 3 female plumaged birds zipping in and out. A male showed very briefly, really just flying through to check us out, but the long walk was well worth it for this great prize. [E]

**WHITE-HEADED VANGA** (*Artamella viridis*) – Ridiculously scarce this trip, some saw it at Masoala and one flew and perched right above us at Mangily, and that was it, Usually we see it at both Ranomafana and Andisibe but the vanga flocks at the latter were conspicuous by their absence this year. [E]

**LAFRESNAYE'S VANGA** (*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*) – None at Mangily where a nest had been destroyed recently, but Gerard was a star and had a site near La Table where he'd seen it recently. We trekked in and by playback got a pair to show quite well, though they came in almost silently. These big *Xenopirostris* vangas can be tough as they are low density things. [E]

**VAN DAM'S VANGA** (*Xenopirostris damii*) – This was a great prize at Ankarafantsika, where we walked for some time before we finally got a response, and a fine pair of this big, rare and restricted range vanga came in surprisingly low down for fine views. Great work from the guides, this one is easily missed. [E]

**POLLEN'S VANGA** (*Xenopirostris polleni*) – We heard this at Vohiparara but it was non-responsive, the only vanga of the trip we did not get to see. It's one of these big low-density *Xenopirostris* species, mimicked by Tylas Vanga, so I tried playback every time we encountered the latter without



result this time. [E\*]

**WARD'S FLYCATCHER** (*Pseudobias wardi*) – This is meant to be common, but we heard it at Ranomafana then got some good looks at Andisibe where one was right by the road, and at Mantadia. It looks like an odd batis, complete with black breast band, but is seemingly best allied with vangas it appears from genetic work. [E]

**CROSSLEY'S BABBLER** (*Mystacornis crossleyi*) – Another species now placed with vangas, it's a forest skulker which we saw really well at Ranomafana- a great spot from Dave, and heard at Andisibe. [E]

#### Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes)

**ASHY CUCKOO-SHRIKE** (*Coracina cinerea*) – This was widespread in the forest zones. [E]

#### Dicruridae (Drongos)

**CRESTED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus forficatus*) – One of the most widespread Madagascar endemics, we saw it most days. [E]

#### Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**MADAGASCAR PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone mutata*) – Also fairly widespread, we had some great views with a couple of nests seen where the female was incubating. The black and white morph males are very striking. [E]

**MASCARENE PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone bourbonnensis*) – This is a scarce one, but we saw it well at La Roche Ecrite on Reunion. The Mauritius taxon is rare and may well go extinct due to the monkey problem, we had no sign of it this year.

#### Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**PIED CROW** (*Corvus albus*) – Small numbers in Madagascar in a variety of sites.

#### Alaudidae (Larks)

**MADAGASCAR LARK** (*Mirafraga hova*) – Great looks at this small bushlark at Kapsedy lighthouse, then at Ankarafantsika, La Table and Berenty. [E]

#### Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**PLAIN MARTIN** (*Riparia paludicola cowani*) – Amazingly uncommon, we saw one at Mandraka, then a few around Ranomafana and a couple at Mantadia.

**MASCARENE MARTIN** (*Phedina borbonica madagascariensis*) – Widespread in small numbers, especially at Masoala. We saw it at Tana airport, then had great looks at Ranomafana, we could clearly see the streaked underparts which are not obvious in flight. One on Reunion but again none on Mauritius.

#### Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

**RED-WHISKERED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – A few on Reunion and depressingly common and invasive on Mauritius. [I]

**MADAGASCAR BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*) – Widespread, we got some great looks at this big straggly looking bulbul with the orange-red bill. [E]

**REUNION BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes borbonicus*) – We got good looks at a couple on the trail up La Roche Ecrite, the white eye is very distinctive. [E]

**MAURITIUS BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*) – Another hard one, we spent a while getting great looks near Bassin Blanc along the roadside, with it being heard at Bel Ombre. [E]

#### Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

**MADAGASCAR BRUSH-WARBLER** (*Nesillas typica*) – Some good views of this brush skulker, takking away in the undergrowth and first seen at Ranomafana, then very nicely at the pond at Mantadia and quite high in the forest there. [E]

**SUBDESERT BRUSH-WARBLER** (*Nesillas lantzii*) – Nice looks down at Ifaty and Tulear. [E]

**MADAGASCAR SWAMP-WARBLER** (*Acrocephalus newtoni*) – They showed well at Lac Alarobia, then seen alongside the Brush Warbler at a swampy area near Ambositre. [E]

#### Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

**BROWN EMU-TAIL** (*Dromaeocercus brunneus*) – This skulker was seen by a lucky few in the undergrowth along the Vohiparara Trail, but most of us only got to hear it. [E]

**GRAY EMU-TAIL** (*Dromaeocercus seebohmi*) – I actually think this was takking away quietly in that wet marsh at Vohiparara, but we got distracted by Brush Warblers and it got away. [E\*]

#### Bernieridae (Malagasy Warblers)

**WHITE-THROATED OXYLABES** (*Oxylabes madagascariensis*) – One of the last trip additions, we had a great look at Andisibe where one was quite tape responsive. [E]

**LONG-BILLED BERNIERIA** (*Bernieria madagascariensis*) – This is one strange bird, that great long bill is very distinctive. The one we saw at Zombitse had grey legs, seemed smaller than the ones at Ranomafana and Ankarafantsika, and the bills again appeared slightly decurved, all very odd. [E]

**CRYPTIC WARBLER** (*Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*) – Very good looks at Vohiparara, this is Field Guides very own discovery, first found by Bret Whitney and Jan Pierson some 22 years ago and picked up on the distinct call. We also heard it at Andisibe. [E]

**WEDGE-TAILED JERY** (*Hartertula flavoviridis*) – Good looks on two occasions in the forest mid-storey at Ranomafana, they are quite like Spectacled Tetraka but have this graduated tail, a narrow yellow eyestripe and smaller size, and these were the only ones we encountered. They need a new name as they are not a Jery any longer, but *Hartertula* somehow doesn't cut it! [E]

**THAMNORNIS** (*Thamnornis chloropetoides*) – This is one of my favorites, it's obscure, quite striking looking and little known. We saw them very well at Mangily in the spiny forest. [E]

**YELLOW-BROWED OXYLABES** (*Crossleyia xanthophrys*) – This was good one to get and I think most folks actually got a pretty good sighting of it as it skulked back and forth across a gully at Vohiparara, reminding me quite strongly of Neumann's Warbler in the Albertine Rift with its big eyestripe and short tail. This was the species the irate German lady was shouting at her guides to get for her- well good luck, it's a tough one. Madagascar Yellowbrow is the new name as it's not an Oxylabes. [E]

**SPECTACLED TETRAKA** (*Xanthomixis zosterops*) – This was seen at Ranomafana, quite a delicate bird with distinct spectacles, then nicely at Mantadia where a small family group of about 4 birds was hanging about in one small area. [E]

**APPERT'S TETRAKA** (*Xanthomixis apperti*) – Rare and very restricted range, luckily the guides at Zombitse are onto it even in the heat of the day and we eventually had great views of two keeping low in the undergrowth, a very smart looking little bird. The guides were on their hands and knees and flicked sand at the birds to nudge them towards us! [E]

**GRAY-CROWNED TETRAKA** (*Xanthomixis cinereiceps*) – One furtive bird was seen nicely along the Vohiparara Trail by most, and it was heard at Andisibe. [E]

**RAND'S WARBLER** (*Randia pseudozosterops*) – Seen at Ranomafana where one was again singing by the entry track, and then at Andisibe where they showed well in the mixed flock by the road. One curious feature was hearing the rising song phrase of Stripe-throated Jery, which would be answered two seconds later by the downslurred deeper song phrase of this species, almost as if the two species are singing antiphonally. What is going on here? [E]

#### Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

**COMMON JERY** (*Neomixis tenella*) – Widespread and fairly common, our first were at Mandraka, and the grey nape is a very good field character. [E]

**GREEN JERY** (*Neomixis viridis*) – Not as common, we saw this at Ranomafana and then at Andisibe, and it was more often heard than seen; it's smaller than the other jeries and lacks a grey nape or throat stripes. [E]

**STRIPE-THROATED JERY** (*Neomixis striatigula*) – Seen at Ranomafana and Andisibe where there seems to be a strong association with Rand's Warbler, the two singing often from the same perch and the jery singing the first phrase with Rand's Warbler replying! Also seen at Berenty where they do have striped throats and no grey nape, and may well be a distinct species of the dry thorny forest as the voice is a bit different. [E]

**MADAGASCAR CISTICOLA** (*Cisticola cherina*) – Quite common in the swampy parts of Ranomafana, and again at Andisibe, the "chik chik" call was often heard, also at Kapsedy Lighthouse. [E]

#### Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)

**MADAGASCAR WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops maderaspatanus*) – Widespread and fairly common in the forested areas, quite a nice looking white-eye. [E]

**MASCARENE WHITE-EYE (REUNION)** (*Zosterops borbonicus borbonicus*) – The Reunion Grey White-eye was quite common and has well marked pinkish flanks, quite different to the Mauritius birds. [E]

**MASCARENE WHITE-EYE (MAURITIUS)** (*Zosterops borbonicus mauritanus*) – The Mauritius Grey White-eye looks pretty different to the Reunion one and is split by the IOC, it was about the only endemic bird that was fairly widespread on Mauritius. The white rump is an unusual field character in this family, [E]

**REUNION WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops olivaceus*) – A striking white-eye with a dark face and slightly decurved bill, and olive back, it was quite vocal and widespread up the trail at La Roche Ecrute. Sadly the Mauritius species of Olive White-eye is very rare and now very hard to find, I fear it is oblivion-bound. [E]

#### Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

**MADAGASCAR MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus albospecularis*) – Quite widespread in the forests and gave some nice views. [E]

**FOREST ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola sharpei*) – One was singing by the roadside at Ranomafana and a few folks got to see it pop up late one afternoon before a stray laser pointer beam drove it off! The latest checklists lump this and Benson's Rock Thrush, which seems very odd to me given the habitat and plumage differences. [E]

**BENSON'S ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola bensoni*) – This is a dry rocky country taxon of uncertain status, one study lumps it with Forest Rock Thrush but seemingly the birds surveyed were not actually this taxon at all! The IOC has lumped them but Clements for once has the more radical (or outdated...) position. Anyway, we had nice looks at this bird at our beautiful hotel at Isalo. [E]

**LITTORAL ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola imerina*) – Found only in the coastal zone of the far south, we found it easily once again near Anakau where a fine male was sat on an aerial by the beach hotel as we arrived. [E]

**STONECHAT (MADAGASCAR)** (*Saxicola torquatus sibilla*) – Widespread in upland open habitats, this distinct taxon with the black upperparts is actually now split by the IOC as Madagascar Stonechat (from African Stonechat). [E]

**REUNION STONECHAT** (*Saxicola tectes*) – This was quite common and nesting right by the trail at La Roche Ecrute, it's a Reunion endemic too. [E]

#### Sturnidae (Starlings)

**MADAGASCAR STARLING** (*Saroglossa aurata*) – Low density and uncommon, we only saw this long-billed fork-tailed species at Masoala this trip. [E]

**COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Distressingly common throughout, the ultimate social gaffe was to be caught looking at one.... [I]

#### Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

**SOUIMANGA SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris souimanga*) – Common in the forested areas of Madagascar, its voice is a characteristic sound of the forest. [E]

**MADAGASCAR SUNBIRD** (*Cinnyris notatus*) – The attractive Madagascar Green Sunbird was much less common in the wetter forested areas. [E]

#### Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

**MADAGASCAR WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla flaviventris*) – This was first seen in Tana, and was common along the main road at Ranomafana, it's an attractive wagtail too. [E]

#### Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

**YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY** (*Serinus mozambicus*) – A couple were seen at Bel Ombre on Mauritius. [I]

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Quite common on the Mascarenes and some of us got to see a female at Toamasina during a layover there, where it was a Mad tick for Phil! [I]

### Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

**VILLAGE WEAVER** (*Ploceus cucullatus*) – A few on Reunion and various nesting colonies on Mauritius, with some breeding dress males at the lunch park site. Note these are one of the southern masked races, not the central and north African black-headed birds depicted in Sinclair and Langrand, they had me puzzled for a bit. [I]

**NELICOURVI WEAVER** (*Ploceus nelicourvi*) – Uncommon and low density in forests, we saw it at Masoala, Ranomafana and Andisibe and saw several of the nests which have distinctive long elongated spouts. [E]

**SAKALAVA WEAVER** (*Ploceus sakalava*) – Common in the dry country around Berenty and Ifaty, with various communal nesting colonies seen in villages, and the first were seen at Mahajunga by the sand artist's shop. [E]

**RED FODY** (*Foudia madagascariensis*) – Widespread, the male is an eye-catching red bird and the females look remarkably sparrow-like. Also common on the Mascarenes where it is meant to be an introduction, and the males look more orange somehow. [E]

**FOREST FODY** (*Foudia omissa*) – This is a tricky one, easily missed, though this year we had a good sighting of a fine adult male calling by the road at Vohiparara, the call sounds slightly deeper and buzzier to my ears and this is how I picked it. Beware as some moulting Red Fodies have pale bellies but the division between them and the red chest is always ragged, not neatly defined. Not only that the two species seem to hybridise here as we saw a couple of birds that looked very intermediate. [E]

**MAURITIUS FODY** (*Foudia rubra*) – This is a rare bird, now destined to get rarer, but happily we had very good looks at the striking red-headed male, good that they are still hanging on here and seem to tolerate exotic forest. [E]

### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**COMMON WAXBILL** (*Estrilda astrild*) – A few were seen on Mauritius. [I]

**MADAGASCAR MUNIA** (*Lonchura nana*) – This small, stubby finch was seen a few times, starting at Masoala, with some nesting at Ranomafana as well as at Andisibe. It is now moved out of *Lonchura* into a new genus *Lemuresthes* if you are collecting genera, and known as Madagascar Bibfinch. [E]

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## MAMMALS

**TENREC** (*Tenrec ecaudatus*) – A small tenrec crossing the road as we neared Mahajunga was presumably this species.

**LOWLAND STREAKED TENREC** (*Hemicentetes semispinosus*) – A couple up at Masoala included a very tiny juvenile that seemed to be abandoned beside the trail.

**MAURITIUS FRUIT BAT** (*Pteropus subniger*) – One flew over at Bassin Blanc and some saw one at Bel Ombre, a rare species with two of its congeners here now extinct.

**MADAGASCAR FRUIT BAT** (*Pteropus rufus*) – A colony at Berenty was well worth a visit, and they were the only ones we saw.

**EASTERN RUFOUS MOUSE LEMUR** (*Microcebus rufus*) – Called Brown Mouse Lemur in the two mammal field guides, we saw this at Ranomafana, where they come to honey and fruit smeared on roadside trees.

**GRAY-BROWN MOUSE-LEMUR** (*Microcebus griseorufus*) – These were common in the spiny forest at Berenty on our night walk, and they were also at the Bamboo Club.

**GREATER DWARF LEMUR** (*Cheirogaleus major*) – One was seen up at Masoala on our night walk there.

**FAT-TAILED DWARF LEMUR** (*Cheirogaleus medius*) – The species we saw running along the wires at Feon Ny'ala is actually Crossley's mouse lemur *C. crossleyi*, a split from Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur.

**BROWN LEMUR** (*Eulemur fulvus fulvus*) – Nice looks up at Ankarafantsika and then at Andisibe.

**RED-FRONTED BROWN LEMUR** (*Eulemur rufus*) – These are the ones introduced at Berenty and now common there, and also seen well at Ranomafana where they are wild and native.

**RED-BELLIED LEMUR** (*Eulemur rubriventer*) – This attractive pale-bellied species was seen very nicely at both Ranomafana and Mantadia.

**RING-TAILED LEMUR** (*Lemur catta*) – These are the stars at Berenty, showing off right by the restaurant this trip, an amazing little animal and so photogenic.

**GRAY BAMBOO LEMUR** (*Haplemur griseus*) – Great views of one by the roadside at Andisibe, with some folks seeing another next day en route to Indri Ridge.

**GOLDEN BAMBOO LEMUR** (*Haplemur aureus*) – This is the one whose discovery led to the creation of Ranomafana NP, and we had a really nice view of 2 in the bamboo there.

**GREATER BAMBOO LEMUR** (*Prolemur simus*) – Amazing, this is one of the rarest of the lemurs and just 2 remain in Ranomafana NP, a father and his daughter. Much to my delight we again got taken to see them this year, with nice looks at both high up in the bamboo, a mammal mega-tick. I can't understand why they are still hesitating about introducing potential mates.....what have they got to lose?

**VARIEGATED (RUFFED) LEMUR** (*Varecia variegata*) – We saw the Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra* up at Masoala, where they were vocal and fairly widespread, we got some great looks in the forest. Note this is split by the 2 Madagascar Mammal guidebooks, but not by the FG checklist. The species listed here is Black and White Ruffed Lemur, which we were lucky enough to see very well up by the Henst's Goshawk at Ranomafana. It was also heard at Mantadia but they are a higher altitude species and hard to get to see on the tour. This was a lifer lemur for Phil who had only heard them previously.

**WHITE-FOOTED SPORTIVE LEMUR** (*Lepilemur leucopus*) – This was quite common in the spiny forest at Berenty.

**WEASEL LEMUR** (*Lepilemur mustelinus*) – We saw Weasel Sportive Lemur on our night walk at Masoala, the grey face very distinctive, though apparently this is not actually this species but maybe Seal's Sportive Lemur or an as yet undescribed one- lemur taxonomy is in a state of flux!

**HUBBARD'S SPORTIVE LEMUR** (*Lepilemur hubbardi*) – This delightful little lemur was again peeking out at us from a tree hole at Zombitse.

**AVAHI (WOOLY LEMUR)** (*Avahi laniger*) – We saw Woolly Lemurs at Masoala, then 2 of them on Indri Ridge at Andisibe. Note there has been massive splitting of Woolly Lemurs now, I think we saw Masoala or Moore's Woolly (*A. mooreorum*) at Masoala and Peyrieras's Woolly (*A. peyrierasi*) at Andisibe.

**VERREAUX'S SIFAKA** (*Propithecus verreauxi*) – Just the best, this is the one that bounds sideways with its arms upraised. We again had a wonderful experience at Berenty with a troupe of them bounding across the track in front, just magical. It's a nice looking creature too, one of the mammal highlights. No wonder lemur tours are now such big business.

**COQUEREL'S SIFAKA** (*Propithecus coquereli*) – This is another very smart sifaka that showed very well at Ankarafantsika right by the restaurant area, and next day up along the ridge there.

**DIADEMED SIFAKA** (*Propithecus diadema*) – One of the most striking of the sifakas and that is saying something, also quite a rare one. They had a troupe at Indri Ridge that showed very nicely on our finale morning up there.

**INDRI** (*Indri indri*) – Ah, the star of the show, THE iconic Madagascar mammal, largest of the extant lemurs and what a voice, hearing that pre-dawn from the cabins is just fantastic. We were lucky this year as Nancy spotted one right beside the road as we came back from Mantadia, and we had wonderful looks at pair of them in what is apparently a newly established territory. We were seemingly the first group to get to see them here, nice to log them away from the habituated sites. The vocals were amazing. Our final morning was designed around going to see these, and they gave a terrific show, calling and sitting out in the open close by for wonderful views, an unforgettable experience.

**CRAB-EATING MACAQUE** (*Macaca fascicularis*) – Sadly one of these menaces was seen on Mauritius, now endangering all the rare birds thanks to the animal rights groups getting culling stopped. [I]

**RED FOREST RAT** (*Nesomys rufus*) – Great views of these at Ranomafana where they were remarkably tame.

**SPINNER DOLPHIN** (*Stenella longirostris*) – A few folks saw what was presumably this species off the Gol Estuary on Reunion.

**MALAGASY RING-TAILED MONGOOSE** (*Galidia elegans*) – Great looks at 2 of them at Masoala, the chestnut and black banded tail is very striking. The guides told us there was one near the Madagascar Wood Rails at Ranomafana, and unfortunately another one upset the Rufous-headed Ground-Roller that was showing quite well.

### Herps

**LINED DAY GECKO** (*Phelsuma lineata*) – This was the widespread green gecko at Ranomafana.

**PEACOCK DAY GECKO** (*Phelsuma quadriocellata*) – This was the beautiful green day gecko at the C'Entrest at Ranomafana.

**STANDING'S DAY GECKO** (*Phelsuma standingi*) – The large green day geckoes from the Zombitse picnic site, with the extraordinary yellow striped baby one.

**MADAGASCAR DAY GECKO** (*Phelsuma madagascariensis*) – Seen at Masoala and Ankarafantsika.

**MALAGASY GIANT CHAMELEON** (*Furcifer oustaleti*) – This was the largest chameleon of the trip, seen at Zombitse with a huge one some 2' long and estimated to be 16 years old.

**MADAGASCAR GIANT CHAMELEON** (*Furcifer verrucosus*) – Known as the Spiny-backed chameleon, we saw this on the night walk at Berenty.

**SHORT-HORNED CHAMELEON** (*Calumma brevicorne*) – This was the one we saw at Andisibe a couple of times, and also at Mandraka.

**GLAW'S FLAP-NECKED CHAMELEON** (*Calumma glawi*) – A fine female was at Ranomafana.

**PARSON'S GIANT CHAMELEON** (*Calumma parsonii*) – We saw a couple of these striking mid-size green guys at Feon Ny'ala.

**SOUTHERN LEAF-TAIL GECKO** (*Uroplatus sikorae*) – The guides found us one of these extraordinary creatures tucked away on a sapling trunk at Andisibe, and looking like a lichen blotch. They are easier at night when their eye-shine gives them away, and they are amongst the most bizarre creatures in Madagascar. I fear I could probably spend the rest of my life without finding one in daylight!

**AFRICAN HOUSE GECKO** (*Hemidactylus mercatorius*) – I think this is the one we saw at Ranomafana at the C'Entrest.

**MADAGASCAR GROUND BOA** (*Boa manditra*) – A few folks saw the tail of one at Vohiparara.

**MALAGASY GIANT HOGNOSE SNAKE** (*Leioheterodon madagascariensis*) – The single pale colored hognose snake we saw at Ankarafantsika was I think *L. modestus*, the Blonde Hog-nosed snake.

**COLLARED IGUANA** (*Oplurus cuvieri*) – Common at Ankarafantsika, some had one black nape of neck collar, whilst some had double collars.

**MADAGASCAR ZONOSAUR** (*Zonosaurus madagascariensis*) – This was the large stripey skink we saw at Masoala.

**JEWELLED ZONOSAUR** (*Zonosaurus ornatus*) – This was seen at Isalo.

**THREE-EYED LIZARD** (*Chalarodon madagascariensis*) – Quite common at Zombitse and Ifaty, where they call it the fierce lizard.

**NILE CROCODILE** (*Crocodylus niloticus*) – Several quite large ones were at Lac Ravelobe at Ankarafantsika.

**VARIEGATED GOLDEN FROG** (*Mantella baroni*) – A strikingly colored small *Mantella* species, this was the one Nestor caught for us at Andisibe.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

More herps

### FROGS

Tomato Frog - One of these amazing creatures was caught for us by a guy at the Maroantsetra Hotel, I quote from Wikipedia: "Three of the four species of tomato frogs are native to Madagascar. The common name comes from *Dyscophus antongilii*'s bright red color. When threatened, a tomato frog puffs up its body. If a predator grabs a tomato frog in its mouth, the frog's skin secretes a thick substance that gums up the predator's eyes and mouth, causing the predator to release the frog to free up its eyes. The gummy substance contains a toxin that occasionally causes allergic reactions in humans. The allergic reaction will not kill a human and the frog secretes it only when frightened."

Blue-spotted frog - *Iterixalis madagascariensis*. Seen at Andisibe.

*Blaisodactylus sahalava*, the Black-shouldered Sahalava, was the dull patterned nocturnal gecko we saw at roost at Zombitse.

*Lygodactylus tolanbyi* was a gecko we saw on the night walk at Berenty.

*Phelsuma cepediana* was the day gecko with the bluish tail at Bel Ombre, and there was an *Agamid* sp. nearby, presumably introduced?

SNAKES (or serpents....)

*Acrontophis dumereli*, Dumerel's Ground Boa, was the boa coiled up asleep in a tree at Berenty.

*Liophodophis lateralis* was the slender black and buff-lined snake at Andisibe.

*Stenophis citrilis* was the slender yellowish tree snake from Ankarafantsika and then Andisibe.

*Dromicodryas bernieri* was the striped snake at Andisibe.

#### CHAMELEONS

*Calumma nasutum*, Short-snouted Chameleon, was the tiny snub-nosed one found at Mandraka and Ranomafana.

*Calumma crypticum*, Blue-legged Chameleon, was a new species for me from Ranomafana.

*Calumma pardalis*, Panther Chameleon - One of this striking species was brought to us at the Maroantsetra Hotel.

Belted Chameleon, *Furcifer balteatus* - A male at the C'Entrest and then a female on the road at Ranomafana, another new one for Phil.

#### OTHER THINGS

The dead grey shrew at La Roche Ecrute was the introduced Asian House or Asian Musk Shrew (*Suncus marinus*).

The swollen trunk rather baobab-like trees growing on the dry hillside near Ste Augustin are *Moringa* sp.

We also saw several species of the 6 endemic Baobabs, including *Adansonia za* at Zombitse, *A. madagascariensis* at Mahajunga and *A. rubrostupa* at Ifaty.

Magnificent large orb spiders were seen at several spots, and the extraordinary giraffe-necked weevils at Mandraka.

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**Totals for the tour: 233 bird taxa and 28 mammal taxa**