



Field Guides Tour Report

Madagascar, Mauritius & Reunion 2013

Nov 9, 2013 to Dec 5, 2013

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

This was my fourth run-through for this comprehensive tour of Madagascar, which Field Guides has been running since 1986, and the eighth time for Jay, a late assignment to the tour when Megan was indisposed. We again had a great tour, albeit with lots of traveling on slow roads, the vagaries of Air Madagascar, and this year not too much of the unexpected (except on boat trips!).

For the third time in recent years we offered an extension to the Masoala Peninsula in quest of some of the most charismatic Madagascar species. This is not for the faint-hearted -- this year we had a very rough and wet 3-hour sea crossing (note to self -- overnight in Maroantsetra next year if we get in after noon, so we can get the calm seas of early morning!), and the walking is up and down on rough and sometimes slippery trails, so moderate fitness is required. That said, you get to see some wonderful birds -- the Helmet Vanga had a new nest site which took about 90 minutes of rough walking but paid off nicely, with the added incentive of Bernier's Vanga en route. Our guide spotted the spectacular Giant Leaf-tailed Gecko because it flicked its tongue over its eyeball as we passed, and we had a wonderful look at this weird, lichenous, crocodile-like beast as it sat on a tree trunk -- ll these Uroplatus are always a major bonus if we find them.



*This male Schlegel's Asity was one of many unforgettable highlights from our Madagascar adventure.
(Photo by participant Randy Siebert)*

Red-ruffed Lemurs were very vocal and showed well, and we had great looks at both the elusive Red-breasted and Red-fronted couas, Collared Nightjar, Madagascar Wood-Rail, and an obliging Short-legged Ground-Roller after a scramble down a slope, plus Scaly Ground-Roller for a few. Brown Mesite was very obliging, parading about on the trail for us this year; getting this one anywhere can be a real challenge. Madagascar Pratincole and Roseate Tern showed well by the beach, and we almost got to see Madagascar Ibis at nest after a couple of brief flight views as they flushed from trails.

Hubbing back to Tana we then set off south, getting Madagascar Snipe and bonus Eleonora's Falcon en route, then overnighting in Ambositre where the Marolefy family again entertained us nicely with their Madagascar music. A brilliant Madagascar Flufftail at a small marsh next day enlivened the bad road conditions as we journeyed down to Ranomafana for 3 nights and a whole swag of exciting rainforest specials -- Rufous-headed and Pitta-like ground-rollers, Sunbird Asity and for some Yellow-bellied Asity, a wonderful view of the rare Hensts's Goshawk, Cryptic Warbler and Wedge-tailed Jery, another very fortuitous encounter with Brown Mesite, plus Meller's Duck and Gray Emutail at the marsh. Lemurs were also great, with lovely looks at Golden and Greater Bamboo Lemur, Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, and the diminutive Brown Mouse-Lemur.

The long drive down to Ranohira took us through some striking rocky grasslands, where we got a pair of Madagascar Partridge and great looks at Alpine Swift. That beautiful hotel gave us the taxonomically challenged Benson's Rock-thrush in display, plus Madagascar Hoopoe, then it was onto the national park at Zombitse, which was very rewarding despite the heat. The guides eventually came through with the great prize here, the rare and incredibly restricted-range Appert's Tetraka, plus very vocal and showy Cuckoo-Rollers, a fine Torotoroka Scops-Owl, nesting Giant Coua, and an endearing Hubbard's Sportive-Lemur.

A mid-afternoon stop at La Table at a new site of Gerard's got a fine male Red-shouldered Vanga and a bonus Lafresnaye's Vanga -- great to get these early on; then we went on up to Ifaty and got to the Bamboo Club just after dusk, after a brief period stuck in a sand-drift!

A single 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 Gray-headed Lovebird, Long-tailed Ground-Roller, the bizarre Subdesert Mesite, Thamnormis, Running and Green-capped couas, Banded Kestrel, and Archbold's Newtonia. The rare Madagascar Plover showed very well nearby, then it was back to Tulare.

The boat ride next day was, as ever with boat rides, not without its challenges, this time being a falling and very low tide making beach access difficult and necessitating a transfer by pirogue at one point. Still, we got Humblot's Heron and Red-tailed Tropicbird very well, and Littoral Rock-Thrush and

Subdesert Brush-Warber were very obliging, making a rather spray-doused crossing back worthwhile.

An early morning foray back to La Table netted us Verreaux's Coua nicely, then it was time for the flight to Fort Dauphin and the bone-shaking but this year otherwise uneventful 4-hour ride (97 km) to Berenty, where Madagascar Sandgrouse and Madagascar Buttonquail were good compensation, as was a great show from Verreaux's Sifakas and Ring-tailed Lemurs. The night walk gave us Madagascar Nightjar and great views of White-footed Sportive and Gray-brown Mouse-Lemurs, plus Oustalet's Chameleon and Dumerel's Ground Boa for some.

Back to Fort Dauphin and then Tana next day, before flying up to Mahajunga and Ankarafantsika NP, with the journey in getting us a very lucky find of Madagascar Jacana at a small relict marsh, the only ones we saw. Ampijoroa was very nice, and a night walk gave us the newly described Golden-brown Mouse-Lemur and Western Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur. Next day Jay and I heard Madagascar Fish-Eagle as we emerged at dawn, but we had to go look for Schlegel's Asity and White-breasted Mesite, both of which were terrific -- what a bird that male Schelegel's Asity is, quite unbelievable. The walk later failed in the quest for Van Dam's Vanga, though we saw a newly abandoned nest, and the Madagascar Fish-Eagle then chose to take the day off, oh well!

Our final boating adventure saw us in two open boats going up into the Betsiboka estuary, where Bernier's Teal came good with 18 seen, and great views and photos of the rare Madagascar Sacred Ibis plus bonus Lesser Flamingos, before another spray-doused trip back, this time thankfully with waterproof jackets to cover us! A late-flight back to Tana left on time, and next day after a morning at Lac Alarobia with White-throated Rail, Madagascar Squacco, Squacco Heron, Dimorphic Egrets, and Black Herons, some of us went to the Tsimbazaza Zoo where we were lucky enough to go see the extraordinary Aye-ayes and a Fossa.

Our finale at Andisibe-Perinet is always pleasant. I love that lodge where you can hear the Indri from your room, and this year we actually saw 2 from the dining room! The road up to Mantadia is now really bad so it took forever, and Scaly Sparrowhawk was not in evidence despite the guides' best endeavours, but Forest Fody, Madagascar Grebe, and Meller's Duck were good. Small-bird numbers seemed down this year, and our lodge was actually one of the best spots -- we got Nuthatch Vanga, Blue Vanga, White-headed and Red-tailed vangas, plus Ward's Flycatcher (Vanga) right there.

We had an eventful trip going to see Madagascar Long-eared Owl in a torrential thunderstorm, and many of us went back next day for photos and dry viewing of a fine adult and a juvenile. Madagascar Scops-Owl showed beautifully, and the eccentric but gifted Nestor showed us a fabulous Madagascar Sparrowhawk, a lifer for Phil (excepting the still equivocal Masoala accipiter!). Lemurs were excellent, with great looks and sounds from Indri, a truly wonderful heart-stopping noise, and nice views of Diademed Sifaka, plus Crossley's Dwarf Lemur (Furry-eared on our checklist) congregating at a fruiting tree at the lodge and running down the power lines.

Our trip back to Tana coincided with the Tour de Madagascar so we we had to contend with errant cyclists all over the place, plus a huge storm, but departure next day to Reunion was straightforward, and we even squeezed in views of Barau's Petrel close to the capital city before dusk. Our morning birding at La Roche Ecrute got us more or less everything, though sadly being denied playback cost us the Reunion Cuckooshrike that was calling close by. Still, a fine male Reunion Harrier was great, and the eponymous Stonechat, Gray White-eye, Olive White-eye, Bulbul, and Paradise-Flycatcher all performed nicely.

Mauritius at long last gave us good calm and sunny weather for the first time in several trips, and this helped no end. We got great looks at Mauritius Fody and scored big with the rare Mauritius Olive White-eye and a very responsive Mauritius Cuckooshrike, whilst the Mauritius Bulbul also showed well and we lucked into a fine male Mauritius Paradise-Flycatcher, a proposed split too. Our site for the major non-passerine rarities came good for Pink Pigeon, in good light for once as well, and Jan luckily found us Mauritius Parakeet feeding by the entrance (we then learned the feeding program had stopped so seeing them was much harder). The Mauritius (Box) Kestrel was not at the customary nest boxes, but we were very lucky to get a female out hunting over the cane fields adjacent to the forest, and great to see one actually doing something!

Our final late-afternoon trip was down to La Roche qui Pleure for a seawatch (aka staring at distant dots), which gave us lots of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Bridled Tern, and Lesser Noddy plus a single Barau's Petrel and a far-distant Pterodroma that was probably "Round Island" Petrel but which we lost too soon to confirm. Phil went back on the next two afternoons post-trip for some 5 hours and got to see one "Round Island" Petrel late in the afternoon on the last day, so we may add this as an option for 2014.

My thanks to a very pleasant and good-humored group; it was fun taking you all round on what is quite a taxing trip. Particular thanks to the brilliant Gerard, our long-time local fixer and birder, to the various skilled and entertaining local guides, to Jay for a lot of scope carrying, much playback (complete with dodgy speakers) and useful Madagascar knowledge, and to Sharon in the Field Guides office for good logistics on a complex and difficult itinerary. Jay and I enjoyed sharing all these wonderful sightings in Madagascar and the Mascarenes with you, and we look forward to another chance to do the same in another part of the world. Safe travels, good birding, and Happy New Year to you all!

Phil in Antananarivo, Dec 2013

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

WHITE-FACED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna viduata*) – Very few, a flock of 20 flying high over the ocean in the Bay of Antongil were a surprise, otherwise only seen at Lac Alarobia and the Betsiboka estuary in numbers <20.

MELLER'S DUCK (*Anas melleri*) – The evening walk up to Vohiparara Marsh got us 2 then 3 flying by, with a total of 7 being seen. A rare bird, we saw a single later on the pond at Mantadia. [E]

RED-BILLED DUCK (*Anas erythrorhyncha*) – Six day records but the only big flock was 150 at Ambatofotsy south of Tana.

HOTTENTOT TEAL (*Anas hottentota*) – 6 at the Waterfront Shopping Centre marsh and 2 at Lac Alarobia were the only records.

BERNIER'S TEAL (*Anas bernieri*) – We did exceptionally well for them this year, beginning with 2 quite close then finding 16 on the Betsiboka mudflats later as the tide fell. Great views of yet another very rare bird, they seem to dabble in the mud with their rather narrow bills. [E]

Numididae (Guineafowl)

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL (*Numida meleagris*) – Seen at Jardin du Roy at Ranohira, then a few at Berenty. Also heard at Chez Aroll at Masoala. [I]

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – One from the bus en route to Flic en Flac, then two in the track at Bel Ombre. [I]

MADAGASCAR PARTRIDGE (*Margaroperdix madagascarensis*) – Just a single sighting of a pair that crossed the main road as we neared Ranohira late afternoon, flushed by Gerard and the busboy later. [E]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

MADAGASCAR GREBE (*Tachybaptus pelzelni*) – The pair on the pond at Mantadia had 3 stripey juveniles, when this pair disappear we are in trouble as we don't see it elsewhere these days! [E]

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

LESSER FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopus minor*) – Great looks on the Betsiboka estuary where there were at least 8 individuals.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

BARAU'S PETREL (*Pterodroma barau*) – We got in quite late to Reunion so only had time to go to a site near St Denis, where fortunately this rare species proved obliging and gave some nice close flight views. We saw over 100 birds here. We also saw one at La Roche qui Pleure on Mauritius, but sadly there was no sign of the rare Round Island Petrel here today.

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER (*Puffinus pacificus*) – Good views off La Roche qui Pleure with several hundred birds passing by late afternoon.

TROPICAL SHEARWATER (*Puffinus bailloni*) – A couple of distant dots way off on Reunion, barely worth recording as so far way and not seen by most.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (INDIAN OCEAN) (*Phaethon lepturus lepturus*) – Very nice ones on Reunion over St Denis, and then at Bassin Blanc and Bel Ombre, with 7 birds flying about by the latter site.

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon rubricauda rubricauda*) – Great views on Nosy Ve, with a couple of big juveniles sat under bushes there.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LONG-TAILED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax africanus pictilis*) – Only seen at Maroantsetra in the river there, just one or two birds only.

Scopidae (Hamerkop)

HAMERKOP (*Scopus umbretta umbretta*) – Small numbers in the interminable rice paddies, and a few of the huge untidy nests seen.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (GRAY) (*Ardea cinerea firsas*) – Just 3 day records, from Nosy Ve and Ankarafantsika.

HUMBLLOT'S HERON (*Ardea humbloti*) – A very nice one on Nosy Ve, then another in the marsh near Ampijoroa. A rare species, the pale bill is a useful field character. [E]

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea madagascariensis*) – Six day records, mostly singles with the most being 10 at Ampijoroa and nearby marshes

GREAT EGRET (AFRICAN) (*Ardea alba melanorhyncha*) – Small numbers were widespread.

LITTLE EGRET (DIMORPHIC) (*Egretta garzetta dimorpha*) – Quite distinct from Little Egret, being dimorphic, sometimes having pale legs and a longer heavier bill. White birds seemed commoner but both morphs were widespread in small numbers. The white wing flash showed very well on the dark birds at Betsiboka. We saw over 100 in the colony at Lac Alarobia.

BLACK HERON (*Egretta ardesiaca*) – Uncommon, we saw a few around Tana and had about 30 in the colony at Lac Alarobia, with a few doing the wing-shading hunting technique there.

CATTLE EGRET (IBIS) (*Bubulcus ibis ibis*) – Small numbers were widespread, this is the Western taxon, split by the IOC.

SQUACCO HERON (*Ardeola ralloides*) – Small numbers were widespread in the paddies, but overall scarce given the massive amount of habitat available. About 70 at the colony at Lac Alarobia included many well-grown nestlings.

MADAGASCAR POND-HERON (*Ardeola idae*) – Now a rare species, we saw a fine adult near Ambositre, then one at the Jardin du Roy and just two at the colony at Lac Alarobia. I think the Squacco is out-competing it and it is on the way out. [E]

STRIATED HERON (OLD WORLD) (*Butorides striata rutenbergi*) – Singles only on 8 days, and also seen on Reunion and Mauritius, the feet looked bright orange-red on the latter birds.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – One at Tana then a small colony at Lac Alarobia.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – About 10 at Lac Ravelobe and 90 in the nearby marsh.

MADAGASCAR IBIS (*Lophotibis cristata*) – Aaargh, this was frustrating as we flushed it twice from trails on Masoala, just seeing the white wings if you were at the front of the line. A nest was discovered but we scared the bird off as we approached, then unwisely went to look for Crossley's Babbler whilst the bird came back then went again as we returned. A nest at Andisibe was abandoned last week too, so no luck there. [E]

SACRED IBIS (MALAGASY) (*Threskiornis aethiopicus bernieri*) – Another rare ibis, this one was seen really well on the Betsiboka estuary, with its pale eye and white wings being very striking. Most authorities now split it, it is just or even more distinct as Black-headed and Australian White ibis. [E]

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MADAGASCAR HARRIER-HAWK (*Polyboroides radiatus*) – Just two records, a fine adult at Ifaty and then one perched on the endless way back from Mantadia. [E]

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO-HAWK (*Aviceda madagascariensis*) – I am pretty sure this flew over at Berenty, but it was too brief to be certain and we did not find any others, another rather rare and easily missed bird. [E]

REUNION HARRIER (REUNION) (*Circus maillardi maillardi*) – A fine male was soaring along the ridge lines at La Roche Ecrute, there are about 200 pairs on the island it seems, perhaps more than the totals for the congener on Madagascar which is now very rare. [E]

FRANCES'S GOSHAWK (*Accipiter francesii*) – A good trip for them, with 5 day records and great looks on some 3 occasions, notably at Andisibe and Berenty. There is huge confusion with Madagascar Sparrowhawk on the web photos, but the males of this species are often almost white below and they have a thin mesial throat stripe. Not sure why this is a Frances's Goshawk in Clements, customarily that is used for the larger accipiters. [E]

MADAGASCAR SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter madagascariensis*) – An object lesson in the identification of little known species, that bird at Masoala sure looked very like the one at Andisibe I must say, I want to have a look at *Birds of Africa Vol 7 (Madagascar)* when I get home to see if that helps. Anyway, Nestor came good and got us a definitive Madagascar Sparrowhawk perched atop a tall forest tree, and unperturbed by us crashing about below. The skinny legs and long toes were noteworthy, but the finely streaked throat was very hard to discern and could look whitish or even with a mesial patch. A lifer for Phil, who is favouring this species for the Masoala bird as well..... [E]

HENST'S GOSHAWK (*Accipiter henstii*) – This was fabulous, Jean-Chris knows where the nest is and by waiting nearby we heard the bird calling loudly, then got it sat atop a dead snag for ages for wonderful views of this large and rare raptor. One of my birds of the trip for sure, being very poorly known and seldom seen well. [E]

BLACK KITE (YELLOW-BILLED) (*Milvus migrans parasitus*) – Widespread but very local with no big numbers seen. Yellow-billed Kite was split by the South Africans decades back and most other authorities are now adopting this treatment.

MADAGASCAR FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus vociferoides*) – Oh dear, Jay and I heard it calling by our rooms at Ampijoroa, but we had to get going for the Asity so we left it, and sadly our time waiting by the lake later drew a blank. There is a pair of this very rare species here, which had fledged a youngster back in June, we were unlucky they did not show when we were there. [E*]

MADAGASCAR BUZZARD (*Buteo brachypterus*) – 9 day records with one or 2 seen each time, quite a vocal species, first seen at Masoala. [E]

Mesitornithidae (Mesites)

WHITE-BREASTED MESITE (*Mesitornis variegatus*) – They began calling, and we tracked the vocals, finding one perched up in a low bush at the Jardin Botanique for outstanding views. This is a species we usually see being herded across tracks, we were lucky it decided to sit up. [E]

BROWN MESITE (*Mesitornis unicolor*) – Amazingly we had two very good encounters with this, the most elusive of the mesites, with 2 coming in to a tape at Chez Aroll and walking about on the track for some time, then literally bumping into two at Ranomafana which were duly herded about for nice looks. A species that is easily missed, this one took Phoebe Snetsinger 5 visits to get. [E]

SUBDESERT MESITE (*Monias benschi*) – Great looks at a male frozen on a branch at Parc Mosa, the lads had been tracking them for ages and finally got one to perform. I've never actually seen this species doing anything other than sit frozen, such a bizarre behaviour! [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

MADAGASCAR FLUFFTAIL (*Sarothrura insularis*) – What a star, he came right in from across the stream near Ambositre, and showed very close by, a fabulous look. Then we had another at Andisibe that ran across the gap, then sat calling under a lantana branch for another nice view. Also heard at Ranomafana. [E]

MADAGASCAR WOOD-RAIL (*Canirallus kiolooides kiolooides*) – Two up at Chez Aroll, one of which had big white spots on the shoulders, then another at Andisibe which showed very well and had a reddish tail with only small shoulder spots, a very different plumage to the Masoala birds and a good catch up for those who did not do the walk that afternoon.

MADAGASCAR RAIL (*Rallus madagascariensis*) – We lucked in on this one at the site we had it last year, with a nice responsive bird that came in to check us out then flew right past! The long bill has a reddish base with dark outer half, and the eye is red. [E]

WHITE-THROATED RAIL (*Dryolimnas cuvieri cuvieri*) – They proved elusive this trip, the birds at Jardin du Roy had young so called but stayed out of sight. Happily those at Lac Alarobia and then Feon N'y ala were quite obliging, it's a spectacular species.

ALLEN'S GALLINULE (*Porphyrio alleni*) – One at Lac Ravelobe was a good trip bird, the bluish frontal shield is very distinctive as are the red legs.

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus pyrrhorhoa*) – 3 near Lac Ravelobe, 6 at Lac Alarobia and one at Bassin Blanc on Mauritius.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Up to 4 en route to and from Mangily, and one at Betsiboka.

GREATER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii crassirostris*) – Just 2 on the Betsiboka estuary.

KITTLITZ'S PLOVER (*Charadrius pecuarius*) – Small numbers en route to and from Ifaty, we had 10 on the second day. A long-legged species with distinctive peachy wash beneath.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – A handful on the way to and from Ifaty with 3 by the Bamboo Club the most, and 5 on the Betsiboka estuary.

MADAGASCAR PLOVER (*Charadrius thoracicus*) – Once again, only seen on the salt pans near Mangily where we had great looks at two adults, with White-fronted and Kittlitz's for comparison. Yet another very rare species. [E]

THREE-BANDED PLOVER (*Charadrius tricollaris bifrontatus*) – 2 birds en route to Ifaty were the only ones of the trip.

WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER (*Charadrius marginatus tenellus*) – Singles en route to Ifaty and some saw it at Betsiboka.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Just singles en route to Ifaty, amazingly scarce.

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

MADAGASCAR JACANA (*Actophilornis albinucha*) – Boy this was lucky, we had an adult and a presumed immature with a blackish head at the marsh at Marokaso, not seen next day either and absent from Lac Ravelobe this year. A rare species, one we could very easily dip. [E]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

TEREK SANDPIPER (*Xenus cinereus*) – 3 on the mudflats of the Betsiboka estuary.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Seen en route to Ifaty, and at Betsiboka.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Six day records, most being 20 at Tulear, and a few at Berenty on the river there.

WHIMBREL (EUROPEAN) (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*) – About 70 on the sandflats at Tulear when we came back from Anakau, and 20 along the coast to Ifaty. Also 20 at Betsiboka. Now split from Hudsonian Whimbrel, this form has a white rump but sure sounds similar.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Six near the Bamboo Club.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – 12 on a sandbar off Nosy Ve, and some saw it at Betsiboka.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Two or 3 seen on the roadside ponds en route to Mangily, and a couple at Betsiboka.

MADAGASCAR SNIPE (*Gallinago macrodactyla*) – Two fine birds at Ambatofotsy south of Tana, with excellent close flight views of this big and very elusive species, easily missed on a tour. [E]

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

MADAGASCAR BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix nigricollis*) – Some folks glimpsed them at Ifaty, but the only good sightings came from Berenty where we flushed a couple on the sandgrouse trek. [E]

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

MADAGASCAR PRATINCOLE (*Glareola ocularis*) – Very good looks on rocks off Chez Aroll with about 10 birds in the area and near the Helmet Vanga site. Also 4 on the Mangoro River en route to Perinet, the usual site. [E]

Rostratulidae (Painted-Snipes)

GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE (*Rostratula benghalensis*) – Bad views of a couple flushed up far away in the wet grassland near Ampijoroa, a shame they were so inaccessible.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus pileatus*) – A flock of a dozen or so off La Possession on Reunion, and a couple seen off La Roche Qui Pleure.

LESSER NODDY (*Anous tenuirostris*) – Quite good looks at this small lightly built noddy off La Roche qui Pleure, where we must have seen over 100 going E. They look very like Black Noddy in structure. A couple of smaller noddies in with the Brown Noddy off Reunion were presumably also this species.

SOOTY TERN (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) – Jay and maybe some others saw these way off La Roche qui Pleure, too far for me.

BRIDLED TERN (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – A few flocks passed by off La Roche qui Pleure, looking small and brown above.

SAUNDERS'S TERN (*Sternula saundersi*) – 5 of this tiny tern were on the mud at the Betsiboka estuary.

ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna dougallii arideensis*) – Great looks at 6 of them perched on rocks off Chez Aroll, they have short red legs and red bills with dark tips in this race. One was seen on the trip back.

COMMON TERN (COMMON) (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*) – About 60 on Nosy Ve.

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii enigmus*) – Amazingly few, just 2 on Nosy Ve and seen by some off Maroantsetra.

LESSER CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bengalensis bengalensis*) – Seen off Maroantsetra then on Nosy Ve and near Tulear.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

MADAGASCAR SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles personatus*) – We did the trek across the steppe type grassland remnant in the sisal nursery at Berenty, and flushed two groups of 4 sandgrouse for nice flight views. The only place on the tour we see it as ever. [E]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Small numbers in the urban centres in each country. [I]

PINK PIGEON (*Nesoenas mayeri*) – Great looks at these large pigeons at Bel Ombre, in good light they really are a fetching shade of delicate rosy pink below. Once down to 10 birds in the wild and now doing better thanks to intensive predator control, without which they are gone. [E]

MADAGASCAR TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia picturata picturata*) – Small numbers in Madagascar in the forested areas, also seen in Mauritius where introduced.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Common in Mauritius with big numbers in the cane fields. [I]

NAMAQUA DOVE (*Oena capensis aliena*) – Quite common in the dry areas of S. Madagascar.

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

MADAGASCAR GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron australis*) – We almost muffed this one, with a couple of folks seeing it in flight at Berenty, then none till we got a couple of sightings at Perinet, with one in a fruiting tree at Feon N'y Ala being a welcome surprise. [E]

MADAGASCAR BLUE-PIGEON (*Alectroenas madagascariensis*) – Very sparse, we saw a handful at Masoala and then one or two at Andisibe/Perinet, much scarcer than usual. [E]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO (*Cuculus rochii*) – Heard on most days, but the 2 we saw right at the start were the only sighting until some saw one at Andisibe! [E]

GIANT COUA (*Coua gigas*) – This huge coua was on a nest at Zombitse, so you could see the head and tail, but happily we got a fine responsive bird at Berenty. [E]

COQUEREL'S COUA (*Coua coquereli*) – Two performed well for us at Ankarafantsika. [E]

RED-BREASTED COUA (*Coua serriana*) – This one is always hard, so getting it well at Masoala was a bonus, and then Dan was lucky enough to catch up with it at Andisibe as well. [E]

RED-FRONTED COUA (*Coua reynaudii*) – Seen very well by the beach at Chez Aroll and heard at Ranomafana. [E]

RED-CAPPED COUA (*Coua ruficeps*) – Great looks at Ankarafantsika, where there was a nesting bird then two interacting with each other by the trail later. [E]

RED-CAPPED COUA (GREEN-CAPPED) (*Coua ruficeps olivaceiceps*) – Seen nicely on a nest at Parc Mosa, Sinclair splits it from Red-capped Coua which is probably sensible. [E]

RUNNING COUA (*Coua cursor*) – This is one of the more elusive ones, but we got one very well at Parc Mosa, complete with lilac cheek patch. Also heard at La Table. [E]

CRESTED COUA (*Coua cristata*) – Four day records and some good looks, the best at Berenty where we saw 4 birds. [E]

VERREAUX'S COUA (*Coua verreauxi*) – A rather rare, restricted range dry country small coua, I think we were lucky to get it as it was barely vocalizing at La Table where we eventually got good looks early morning. Lacks any colour below and has a thinner more vertical crest than Crested Coua. [E]

BLUE COUA (*Coua caerulea*) – This is one striking bird and was quite widespread and vocal in all the wet forest zones, we had at least 6 sightings and several more heard only. [E]

MADAGASCAR COUCAL (*Centropus toulou*) – This small coucal was widespread and showed nicely, also very vocal. [E]

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – One roosting at Berenty was a nice trip bird, and the whole complex is being broken up so this is now Western Barn Owl, distinct from both North American and Australian birds.

Strigidae (Owls)

MALAGASY SCOPS-OWL (*Otus rutilus*) – Laszlo and I saw one well at Masoala, then we got tricked into spending ages tracking down a piping frog, realization dawning when it sounded really low down..... We redeemed ourselves at Andisibe however, where a calling bird showed beautifully and was joined by another, what a shame I'd left my camera on the bus! [E]

TOROTOROKA SCOPS-OWL (*Otus madagascariensis*) – The guides at Zombitse showed us a beauty roosting high up in tree hole, and the folks who did the hot later walk at Berenty saw a couple more there. Oddly not split in the Sinclair guide update, weird as everyone else splits the two taxa and he is an arch-splitter! [E]

MADAGASCAR LONG-EARED OWL (*Asio madagascariensis*) – Another adventure, this time in torrential rain at Andisibe where Nestor insisted we had to go as the birds were moving about and might not be there next day. So, we splashed along the trail cringing from the thunder and lightning, and got to the spot which meant a short steep muddy scramble uphill. I was just about to lead my somewhat damp troops up when Birding Ecotours from South Africa (hi guys!) suddenly appeared and cut straight in front of us, then made a hell of a lot of noise upslope. Great, but luckily the birds were too wet to want to move and those who ventured up got nice views of an adult and a juv, though latecomers like me only saw the adult. Happily we went back a day later in dry weather, and got great looks and decent photos of both adult and juvenile. The adult is a huge great thing a bit like an eagle owl, and reminding me very much of Abyssinian Long-eared Owl, I'd seen juvs. before but not the adult. [E]

WHITE-BROWED OWL (*Ninox supercilialis*) – Great views at Berenty, and heard at Jardin du Roy where Laszlo saw one on the cottage roof. [E]

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COLLARED NIGHTJAR (*Gactornis enarratus*) – One of the most striking of all nightjars, and still vocally undescribed. We saw a beauty sat under a pandan at Masoala, and another at Andisibe that was still there next day for those of us who'd stayed with the Indri the day before. Some toadstools right by it really broke up the outline and from 10' away it was almost invisible. [E]

MADAGASCAR NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus madagascariensis*) – Very vocal at the Bamboo Club, and then seen at Berenty on the night walk and then again at Ampijoroa at dusk, hawking with Broad-billed Rollers. [E]

Apodidae (Swifts)

MALAGASY SPINETAIL (*Zoonavena grandidieri*) – Described as common in Sinclair which is always way too sanguine with its abundance estimates, as we saw the bird only at Masoala, and then a single at Mantadia. [E]

MASCARENE SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus francicus*) – A few on Reunion and Mauritius, Laszlo got a nice photo too.....

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus melba willsi*) – Great looks by a huge inselberg as we came near to Ranohira, right over the road. Also a couple over Zombitse.

MADAGASCAR SWIFT (*Apus balstoni*) – This split from African Black Swift was seen on some 4 days, with vocal and close birds at Ranomafana being the first. [E]

AFRICAN PALM-SWIFT (*Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*) – Widespread in small numbers, with a minute nest under a palm frond at Ranomafana.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

MALAGASY KINGFISHER (*Corythornis vintsioides*) – Ten day records of singles, first at Masoala, then from Tulear and Betsiboka. Great hairstyle on some! [E]

MADAGASCAR PYGMY-KINGFISHER (*Corythornis madagascariensis*) – A tough one, one flew into the Centr'est at Ranomafana and was duly rescued and released, then we had another calling in the forest there the same day which showed nicely. Jay and a few folks also saw one en route to Mantadia, it's a species that is easily missed on a tour. [E]

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

MADAGASCAR BEE-EATER (*Merops superciliosus*) – Widespread in small numbers.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

BROAD-BILLED ROLLER (*Eurystomus glaucurus glaucurus*) – Widespread in small numbers, and very vocal, showed well at Masoala, Berenty and Ampijoroa, this race is really quite purple below.

Brachypteraciidae (Ground-Rollers)

SHORT-LEGGED GROUND-ROLLER (*Brachypteracias leptosomus*) – A great bird at Masoala, calling quietly and requiring a steep scramble to access it but then showing very nicely for ages. [E]

SCALY GROUND-ROLLER (*Brachypteracias squamiger*) – We spent quite a time on this at Masoala and eventually got 2 calling quietly, but seeing them was very hard and all except Lisa (who was in the right spot) really only got flight glimpses and a tubby shape running uphill. None at Mantadia where it had been very dry. [E]

PITTA-LIKE GROUND-ROLLER (*Atelornis pittoides*) – The easiest of the family, seen very well at Ranomafana and Mantadia with a nest hole at the former site. [E]

RUFOUS-HEADED GROUND-ROLLER (*Atelornis crossleyi*) – I always regards this one as the most challenging of the family, and again this year

we had quite a duel with it at Ranomafana, I think everyone eventually got decent views but it took a while, they call from one spot and you have to locate them in the undergrowth. A terrific bird. [E]

LONG-TAILED GROUND-ROLLER (*Uratelornis chimaera*) – One of the great charisma birds, endemic to the spiny forest and now thankfully kind of nailed down at Parc Mosa, where the lads herded a fine adult into view for us. [E]

Leptosomidae (Cuckoo-Roller)

CUCKOO-ROLLER (*Leptosomus discolor*) – That call is one of the great sounds of the wet Madagascan forests, we saw them at Masoala and had brilliant views at Zombitse, including a female for some (we generally only see the males). Endemic family too.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

MADAGASCAR HOOPOE (*Upupa marginata*) – Sen at Jardin du Roy, Parc Mosa and Ampijoroa, where a very sick bird was trying to feed by the café. The call is quite distinct to the other hoopoes. [E]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MADAGASCAR KESTREL (*Falco newtoni*) – Seen on many days starting at the Carlton Hotel in Tana, this one seems to be quite adaptable. [E]

MAURITIUS KESTREL (*Falco punctatus*) – A struggle this year, none of the 3 nest boxes at Bel Ombre was active this year- we usually see the Box Kestrel which I have always suspected is flightless- so a long drive to Black River gorges was looming. Happily we dawdled out in case, and amazingly a fine female Mauritius Kestrel flew over, and came back later for an encore, with a final view of it hovering over a cane field. I had not seen one fly since my first trip in 1988, great to see the small size and rather short relatively broad wings of this forest adapted species, once down to half a dozen in the wild but doing better now with intensive management of predators. [E]

BANDED KESTREL (*Falco zoniventris*) – A great stroke of luck was one appearing as we were trying for the mesite, and we had lovely looks at it sat atop a spiny tree. One that is rare and potentially easily missed. [E]

ELEONORA'S FALCON (*Falco eleonora*) – Yay! my strategy worked, I took it off the checklist with no records from the past 3 tours, so this year we got to see 2 at Ambatofotsy south of Tana, and a fine dark bird south of Ambositre next day. An African continent tick for me, it's a Mediterranean basin breeder that winters mainly in Madagascar where it is darn hard to find.

SOOTY FALCON (*Falco concolor*) – A couple seen at Tana airport, which is a great site for it though you have to be wary and can't use a camera. Jay saw one at Ampijoroa too. It's a rare breeder from the Near and Middle-east that winters mainly in Madagascar.

PEREGRINE FALCON (MALAGASIAN) (*Falco peregrinus radama*) – A fine adult right over the bus as we neared La Table, this race is quite small and pale but the barring below and the hood are quite distinct. We seem to get one somewhere each trip, but never the same place!

Psittacidae (Parrots)

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Some nice sightings of this pale green introduced bird in Mauritius. [H]

MAURITIUS PARAKEET (*Psittacula echo*) – We have to thank Jan for this one. Our guides did not tell us the feeding program has been stopped at Bel Ombre where we had been expecting it to be easy. I overheard Jan talking about a parakeet but thought she was looking at a captive in the building, only realizing later that she was watching one in the flowering tree above, and that it was this rare species! The black bill showed it to be a female, and there was another bird buried in the leaves with it. Thankfully most folks saw it, but sorry Dan, who was preoccupied with Pink Pigeon nearby and oblivious to the rest of us. [E]

GRAY-HEADED LOVEBIRD (*Agapornis canus*) – Nice looks at Parc Mosa, and 4 in flight near Fort Dauphin were all we saw, though it was heard at Berenty. [E]

GREATER VASA-PARROT (*Mascarinus vasa*) – Just 3 day records of 2 birds, seen at Masoala, Ifaty and Ampijoroa and heard at Mantadia. It's a larger much heavier bird than the Lesser Vasa, with a big fat head and large bill. [E]

LESSER VASA-PARROT (*Mascarinus niger*) – Quite common and very vocal in all the wet forest areas, seen nicely at Masoala and also Ankarafantsika. [E]

Philepittidae (Asities)

VELVET ASITY (*Philepitta castanea*) – Very few this trip, two fine males at Ranomafana were seen nicely but that was it. I love that emerald green facial wattle. A nest was also seen near the river. [E]

SCHLEGEL'S ASITY (*Philepitta schlegeli*) – Wow, this was one of the birds of the trip for sure, we had brilliant views of a male and a female near their nest, and what an amazing creature it is, that warty psychedelic facial skin is just extraordinary. The guides know of just 5 territories here, it's a pretty rare bird and great to see it so well. [E]

SUNBIRD ASITY (*Neodrepanis coruscans*) – Again, just one sighting from Ranomafana, I always seem to struggle for this species, though this one did sit for ages in fairly poor light unfortunately. [E]

YELLOW-BELLIED ASITY (*Neodrepanis hypoxantha*) – The trek up to the usual ridge got us to the nest site, but the nest was not in use. We did have a male come in right over us but in difficult circumstances, so really only a couple of folks got a decent view, some only heard it and some of us just saw it flit. A very rare species of the higher elevations, always a big challenge. [E]

Vangidae (Vangas)

TYLAS VANGA (*Tylas eduardi*) – Seen at Masoala, Ranomafana and Andisibe, usually as singles, and mimicked by the cuckooshrike here. [E]

DARK NEWTONIA (*Newtonia amphichroa*) – Nice looks and good vocals at Ranomafana, an uncommon and quite elusive bird. [E]

COMMON NEWTONIA (*Newtonia brunneicauda*) – Widespread, the clicking call is a typical sound of the forests. [E]

ARCHBOLD'S NEWTONIA (*Newtonia archboldi*) – Good views and vocals at Parc Mosa. [E]

CHABERT VANGA (*Leptopterus chabert*) – 9 day records in ones and twos, the commonest vanga. [E]

BLUE VANGA (*Cyanolanius madagascarinus*) – Widespread this trip, the first at Masoala then seen well at Andisibe but with no really vivid blue ones this year. [E]

RED-TAILED VANGA (*Calicalicus madagascariensis*) – This chickadee-like bird was seen and heard well in the wet forest zones. [E]

RED-SHOULDERED VANGA (*Calicalicus rufocarpalis*) – Only described in 1997 and restricted to that horrid dry scrub habitat in the SW, it's always a relief to find this. The dark eye and distinctive voice identify it, we saw a male very nicely. [E]

NUTHATCH-VANGA (*Hypositta corallirostris*) – This is always tough, but this year we got one at Feon N'y Ala amazingly enough, which took a

- while for everyone to get onto, before a nice look at a female in the forest at Indri Ridge next day, with male briefly there too. [E]
- HOOK-BILLED VANGA** (*Vanga curvirostris*) – Seen well at Masoala, Ampijoroa and Berenty, they remind me so much of Butcherbirds from Australia. [E]
- HELMET VANGA** (*Euryceros prevostii*) – THE star of the show, fortunately the guides had another nest site this year and after a bit of a trek we got on site and waited for the bird to come back to the large mossy cup nest. Great views, and when it flies it goes straight and fast with that huge blue bill stuck out, very odd. There were 2 nestlings that would crane up begging with big fat wide bills, an extraordinary species. We heard it on two other days but this was the only sighting this trip. A megatick for sure. [E]
- RUFOUS VANGA** (*Schetba rufa*) – A fine nesting pair at Masoala, and seen again at Ampijoroa, with some folks seeing it at Zombitse as well. [E]
- SICKLE-BILLED VANGA** (*Falcoea palliata*) – Showy, noisy and quite confiding, we saw them from the road at Ifaty and again at Ampijoroa, a great bird. [E]
- BERNIER'S VANGA** (*Oriolia bernieri*) – Boy this was again hard, we got a female to show quite well eventually en route to the Helmet Vanga nest, but she was very flighty and did not settle for long, and it was the only encounter with this very rare species. Much the same area as in 2012, the forest here is a bit different with more vines and ferns, maybe a microhabitat niche is required? [E]
- WHITE-HEADED VANGA** (*Artamella viridis*) – Widespread and seen at all the wet forest sites, often in pairs. [E]
- LAFRESNAYE'S VANGA** (*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*) – Another tough one, this time we again had pair out in the dry scrub at La Table, calling quite well and sitting up nicely. [E]
- POLLEN'S VANGA** (*Xenopirostris polleni*) – These big *Xenopirostris* vangas are hard, it was a great relief to get this one by the road at Ranomafana, the big thick pale bill is diagnostic but it is otherwise very like *Tylas Vanga*. [E]
- WARD'S FLYCATCHER** (*Pseudobias wardi*) – A good trip for them, seen very well at Ranomafana and Andisibe, they look remarkably like *Batis* but have a dry trilling call. Now classed as a *Vanga*, should be renamed *Ward's Vanga* I suppose. [E]
- CROSSLEY'S BABBLER** (*Mystacornis crossleyi*) – A few folks saw this at Masoala when we got lured away from the ibis nest- bad move as it turned out- then we had fantastic looks at Ranomafana, the bird walking like a jewel-babbler on the forest floor, and having an amazingly long bill. Now seemingly a *vanga* too, which is unexpected to say the least. [E]

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

- ASHY CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Coracina cinerea*) – A handful of sightings at Ranomafana and Andisibe, this striking bird is a mimic of *Tylas Vanga* for some strange reason. [E]
- REUNION CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Lalage newtoni*) – Hmm, we need to change our strategy here, this bird was calling really close by and a very quick tape burst would have got it, but we are not supposed to use playback and being law-abiding citizens we didn't and dipped again. There are about 34 pairs left, restricted to a small area, and this pair has a nest with 2 young, sadly totally inaccessible for us. [E*]
- MAURITIUS CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Lalage typica*) – Much better, no sign in the morning but some playback after lunch in good conditions got a response. Tim and I actually saw it across the lake, then amazingly it flew out and came across to sit up right by us for fantastic views, photos and tape. A very rare species, i am not optimistic that this one will survive given the predation levels in Mauritius. I had quite forgotten they have big white wing patches and white tail tips, not shown or mentioned in the Sinclair guide for some bizarre reason. [E]

Dicruridae (Drongos)

- CRESTED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus forficatus*) – Widespread in small numbers in the forest regions. [E]

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

- MADAGASCAR PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone mutata*) – Also widespread in the forests and a couple of lovely small cup nests seen, plus striking black-and-white or rusty plumaged long-tailed males. The females are none too shabby either, being russet with black caps. [E]
- MASCARENE PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone bourbonnensis bourbonnensis*) – Nice looks at this very scarce species along the Roche Ecrite trail, the male lacks any long tail and has a smart black cap. Proposed as a split from the brighter plumaged and much rarer Mauritius bird on genetic grounds.
- MASCARENE PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** (*Terpsiphone bourbonnensis desolata*) – This was an excellent find at Pigeon Wood where a male called and showed quite well, it is far rarer than the Reunion taxon and may well be a split.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

- HOUSE CROW** (*Corvus splendens*) – Jay and Lisa had a brief look at one from the bus on Mauritius, where it is thankfully very localised. [I]
- PIED CROW** (*Corvus albus*) – Seen on most days in the drier areas, with over 40 in the sisal nursery at Berenty the most.

Alaudidae (Larks)

- MADAGASCAR LARK** (*Mirafra hova*) – Good views on the tracks at La Table and near Ranohira, also seen at the sisal nursery. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

- PLAIN MARTIN** (*Riparia paludicola cowani*) – This was seen briefly at the snipe marsh south of Tana, I always find them very local and this year was no exception.
- MASCARENE MARTIN** (*Phedina borbonica madagascariensis*) – Small numbers in Madagascar but wonderful views at Lac Ravelobe where we got some great shots at rest. A few on Reunion and seen by a few on Mauritius where it seems very scarce.
- BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – A couple were seen on the two days as we neared Tulear, a rare but regular migrant here,

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

- RED-WHISKERED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – Common invasive in the Mascarenes. [I]
- MADAGASCAR BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*) – Quite common in the Madagascan forests, a large untidy looking bird with dark cap and red bill. [E]
- REUNION BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes borbonicus*) – Uncommon along the Roche Ecrite Trail but seen nicely and also taped. The pale eye is very distinctive. [E]
- MAURITIUS BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*) – Very sparse, but 3 were vocal and taped at Bassin Blanc and seen again at Bel Ombre. [E]

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

MADAGASCAR BRUSH-WARBLER (*Nesillas typica*) – Nice looks at the flufftail marsh near Ambositre and at Lac Alarobia and Andisibe, odd to see it in forest there. [E]

SUBDESERT BRUSH-WARBLER (*Nesillas lantzii*) – Great views at La Table, then at Anakau where one was quite photogenic. [E]

MADAGASCAR SWAMP-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus newtoni*) – Seen well at the flufftail marsh and then at Lac Alarobia. [E]

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

GRAY EMU-TAIL (*Dromaeocercus seebohmi*) – The effort up at the marsh at Vohiparara paid off and we got great looks at this epic skulker, without getting wet feet. Looks like there were some good photos too, which is quite something. [E]

Bernieridae (Malagasy Warblers)

WHITE-THROATED OXYLABES (*Oxylabes madagascariensis*) – Seen very well at Andisibe where we eventually got everyone onto them coming in quite high in the subcanopy, an odd behaviour for what is more usually a lower level species. It was also seen at Ranomafana by most of us. The immatures are frequently misidentified as other species, and I think the weird short-tailed dull brown job at Indri Ridge was a young one of these. [E]

LONG-BILLED BERNIERIA (*Bernieria madagascariensis*) – The scolding call is useful and that amazing long beak really shows up, we saw them well at Masoala, Zombitse, Ranomafana and Andisibe this trip. [E]

CRYPTIC WARBLER (*Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*) – We seem to get on this at Ranomafana and nowhere else, this year being no exception. A nice view was had of one close by along the Vohiparara Trail, this being a species discovered by Bret Whitney and Jan Pierson of Field Guides, picked up on the different call. Aptly named. [E]

WEDGE-TAILED JERY (*Hartertula flavoviridis*) – Another oddity, now placed in Bernieridae, Malagasy Warblers and actually not a Jery, I want to call it Wedge-tailed not a Jery but I don't suppose I'll succeed in getting Clements to adopt it. It's quite big, very yellow below and has a longish slightly rounded slender tail. We saw it well at Vohiparara. [E]

THAMNORNIS (*Thamnornis chloropetoides*) – This Bernieridae grouping has lots of oddities, here's another one, the Thamnornis or Subdesert Tetraka of Sinclair's book. Seen and heard very well at Parc Mosa, the pale tip to the tail is very striking and it's really quite large. [E]

SPECTACLED TETRAKA (*Xanthomixis zosterops*) – Good looks at them in the wet forests, especially at Andisibe where we saw a nest. They have a quiet ticking call. [E]

APPERT'S TETRAKA (*Xanthomixis apperti*) – A great bird, restricted to just two small forest sites, the Zombitse guides know exactly how to find them and they did well again this year, getting us terrific close views. [E]

GRAY-CROWNED TETRAKA (*Xanthomixis cinereiceps*) – Heard at Ranomafana but not interested in Jay's quite good recording, and we could not find them at Andisibe. [E*]

RAND'S WARBLER (*Randia pseudozosterops*) – Seen very well at Andisibe this year, where one was creeping along a branch, peering alternately up and down as we looked for Nuthatch Vanga. The first was at Ranomafana where one was sat up singing. The big wide supercilium and habits tell it from a jery. [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

COMMON JERY (*Neomixis tenella*) – Often heard, a quiet sibilant call, and seen at most forest sites. [E]

GREEN JERY (*Neomixis viridis*) – A good trip for them, one was singing right by Chez Aroll each morning, and we had them at both Ranomafana and then Andisibe, working in flocks of 4 or 5 at the latter site, a bit like *Phylloscopus* warblers. [E]

STRIPE-THROATED JERY (*Neomixis striatigula*) – Good looks and very vocal at Ranomafana and Andisibe, and also the dry country form out at Ifaty and Berenty which has different vocals and is a potential split. [E]

MADAGASCAR CISTICOLA (*Cisticola cherina*) – Widespread, often heard, seen well at the snipe marsh south of Tana for the first sighting. [E]

Zosteropidae (Yuhinas, White-eyes, and Allies)

MADAGASCAR WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops maderaspatanus*) – Widespread and vocal in the wet forests, the first being up at Masoala. [E]

MASCARENE WHITE-EYE (REUNION) (*Zosterops borbonicus borbonicus*) – Reunion Grey White-eye was common in the forest there, with pinkish flanks and a different voice to those on Mauritius, obviously a different species and split by most. [E]

MASCARENE WHITE-EYE (MAURITIUS) (*Zosterops borbonicus mauritianus*) – The only fairly common Mauritius endemic, lacks the pink flanks of the Reunion birds and sounds different, and neither have a white eye-ring. Again, split by most. [E]

REUNION WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops olivaceus*) – Quite vocal in the forest with a clipped call, and the dark face and big white eye-ring easily tell it from Reunion Grey White-eye. [E]

MAURITIUS WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops chloronothos*) – We were very lucky with this critically endangered species, one responded immediately and we got great looks and some good photos, nice calm weather really helps. It has a curiously long decurved bill and has been rare for decades due to invasive species predation and habitat loss. [E]

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

MADAGASCAR MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus albospectularis*) – Quite common, all we saw had white bellies, and they have a nice musical song. [E]

FOREST ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola sharpei*) – A single male was found in the forest at Vohiparara, a good pick up as this can be a tough one. We heard it the day before along the road but it stayed hidden. [E]

FOREST ROCK-THRUSH (BENSON'S) (*Monticola sharpei bensoni*) – Great looks at this odd taxon at Jardin du Roy, in display flight too. I can't believe this is the same as the Forest Rock Thrush, I made some tape and I hope the group will be re-evaluated at some point, the habitat is just so different. [E]

LITTORAL ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola imerina*) – Great looks at Anakau where we saw a couple of males of this quite restricted range species, song-fighting too, what a shame I did not bring my tape. [E]

AFRICAN STONECHAT (MADAGASCAR) (*Saxicola torquatus sibilla*) – Widespread in small numbers, this group is being split out and the IOC now separate them as Madagascar Stonechat, with more to come! [E]

REUNION STONECHAT (*Saxicola tectes*) – Good looks along the trail at La Roche Ecrute. [E]

Sturnidae (Starlings)

MADAGASCAR STARLING (*Saroglossa aurata*) – Uncommon as always, we saw a couple at Masoala and then again at Ranomafana and Mantadia. [E]

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common invasive in the dry areas and a major pest in the Mascarenes. [I]

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

SOUIMANGA SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris souimanga*) – The common Madagascar sunbird. [E]

MADAGASCAR SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris notatus*) – Less common, but seen nicely in the wet forest zones, just single males for the most part. [E]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

MADAGASCAR WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flaviventris*) – The first endemic for most, seen in Tana and then tame at Ranomafana and Feon N'y ala. [E]

Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY (*Serinus mozambicus*) – Nice looks at La Roche qui Pleure on Mauritius, probably a harmless introduction. [I]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – None in Madagascar, but common in the urban area of the Mascarenes. [I]

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

VILLAGE WEAVER (*Ploceus cucullatus*) – One of the black masked southern African races is quite common on Mauritius, and may be a problem for the endemic Mauritius Fody. [I]

NELICOURVI WEAVER (*Ploceus nelicourvi*) – Small numbers in the wet forest zones, they make a solitary nest amazingly like that of a malimbe, with long pendulous spouts. A striking bird. [E]

SAKALAVA WEAVER (*Ploceus sakalava*) – Common in the dry SW at La Table, Ifaty and Berenty, they nest colonially in villages like regular weavers, not solitarily like the Nelicourvi. [E]

RED FODY (*Foudia madagascariensis*) – Common in Madagascar, the incisive voice is a typical sound even in the towns, and also common in the Mascarenes where it is introduced. [E]

FOREST FODY (*Foudia omissa*) – A female fody in the forest at Vohiparara was thought by Jay and I to be this heavy-billed species, but the Cryptic Warbler interrupted. Happily we saw what looked like a good male at Mantadia, with a female up by the grebe pond too. [E]

MAURITIUS FODY (*Foudia rubra*) – A rare and declining bird, the Village Weaver now seems to be a problem for them. Happily we got a nice male at Pigeon Wood. [E]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

COMMON WAXBILL (*Estrilda astrild*) – Common on Mauritius, and probably harmless as in rubbish habitats. [I]

MADAGASCAR MUNIA (*Lonchura nana*) – Now placed in a monotypic genus *Lemuresthes*, and sometimes called Madagascar Bibfinch as it is not congeneric with the *Lonchura munias*/mannikins. Small numbers and good views were had in Tana, Masoala, Ranomafana and Andisibe, it is a tiny bird. [E]

MAMMALS

TENREC (*Tenrec ecaudatus*) – One adult was in the forest on our second (dry) trip to the Madagascar Long-eared Owls, quite a large tubby animal, a lucky find as we don't often see this one.

LOWLAND STREAKED TENREC (*Hemicentetes semispinosus*) – Great views of one at Masoala on the trail, and Gaylan and Jan had one by their cabin, a very striking animal with its yellow erectile spiny crest.

SMALL MADAGASCAR HEDGEHOG (*Echinops telfairi*) – This was the lovely little hedgehog type we saw at Berenty, exceedingly cute.

MAURITIUS FRUIT BAT (*Pteropus subniger*) – A dead one on the wires at Bassin Blanc.

MADAGASCAR FRUIT BAT (*Pteropus rufus*) – Seen at Berenty as usual, the only site we get it.

GRAY MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus murinus*) – Some of us saw them at the Bamboo Club, where Phil and Jay had one in their roof!

BROWN MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus rufus*) – This was the cute little guy licking honey by the roadside at Andisibe, and beset by hordes of lemur tourists each night.

REDDISH-GRAY MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus griseorufus*) – The Grey-brown Mouse Lemur (see the scientific name) was seen very well on the night walk at Berenty.

GOLDEN-BROWN MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus ravelobensis*) – This was seen very well at Ampijoroa, the first one vanishing before most of us saw it, but then a second being found and showing well for all. They really are golden-brown in color, and it is newly described species with a very limited range. A lifer for Phil.

FURRY-EARED DWARF LEMUR (*Cheirogaleus crossleyi*) – Usually called Crossley's Dwarf Lemur, I don't know why the FG mammal checklist is so confusing. Anyway, this newly split species is the common one at Feon N'y ala, we had up to 7 in the fruiting tree, and they run down the power lines to get there!

FAT-TAILED DWARF LEMUR (*Cheirogaleus medius*) – Good looks at Ampijoroa where they seem quite common, and do indeed have fat tails.

COMMON BROWN LEMUR (*Eulemur fulvus*) – Seen at Ankarafantsika where they were right by the restaurant, then at Andisibe, where we had some good viewing of them right by the road.

WHITE-FRONTED BROWN LEMUR (*Eulemur albifrons*) – This is restricted to the NE and we had brief looks in the forest before two decided to appear right by the track as we were walking to the boats.

RED-FRONTED LEMUR (*Eulemur rufifrons*) – Usually called Red-fronted Brown Lemur, they are the introduced one at Berenty, and we saw wild ones at Ranomafana.

RED-BELLIED LEMUR (*Eulemur rubriventer*) – Nice looks at Ranomafana, the males have white spots by the eyes and dark tails.

RING-TAILED LEMUR (*Lemur catta*) – The other star at Berenty, and with the cessation of water points the introduced Red-fronted Brown Lemurs seem to have declined and the Ring-tails are looking healthier. They raid the restaurant and the staff have to be vigilant! A delightful animal, worth

the horrible road trip for this one alone.

EASTERN LESSER BAMBOO LEMUR (*Hapalemur griseus*) – Usually called Grey Bamboo Lemur as per the scientific name, we saw it nicely at Andisibe.

GOLDEN BAMBOO LEMUR (*Hapalemur aureus*) – Lovely clear views this time of 3 animals at Ranomafana, this rare species is the reason the park was established.

GREATER BAMBOO LEMUR (*Prolemur simus*) – Amazing good views this year of the remaining male and his daughter at Ranomafana, a very rare species. They can eat bamboo shoots that contain high levels of cyanide it seems!

BLACK-AND-WHITE RUFFED LEMUR (*Varecia variegata*) – Heard at Ranomafana but down in a valley and out of sight. [*]

RED RUFFED LEMUR (*Varecia rubra*) – Fantastic up at Masoala, they are very raucous and you hear them miles away. We got some very nice looks in the forest here.

WHITE-FOOTED SPORTIVE LEMUR (*Lepilemur leucopus*) – The common sportive lemur at Berenty, we saw them very well on the night walk and at rest next day.

SMALL-TOOTHED SPORTIVE LEMUR (*Lepilemur microdon*) – This was the sportive lemur we saw on the Vohiparara Trail at Ranomafana, peering out of a hollow tree.

HUBBARD'S SPORTIVE LEMUR (*Lepilemur hubbardorum*) – This was the fetching little guy in the tree hollow at Zombitse,

EASTERN WOOLLY LEMUR (*Avahi laniger*) – Jay and a few folks saw some at night across the creek at Feon N'y ala, we usually see them in daylight but not this year.

WESTERN WOOLLY LEMUR (*Avahi occidentalis*) – A nice look at two in daylight on the longer walk at Ankarafantsika, they huddle together most endearingly and this was I think a new one for me.

VERREAUX'S SIFAKA (*Propithecus verreauxi*) – This is the star of Berenty, that amazing sideways bounce across the tracks is fabulous and we had a great experience with them again this year, seeing several big troupes in action.

COQUEREL'S SIFAKA (*Propithecus coquereli*) – Nice looks at them in the mangoes at Ampijoroa, but not as confiding as in previous years.

DIADEMED SIFAKA (*Propithecus diadema*) – Very good looks at 5 animals on Indri Ridge, their introduction here may not be such a good idea however, it will be interesting to see how it develops.

INDRI (*Indri indri*) – Wonderful as ever at Andisibe, we hear them daily from our lodge, one morning being at 0428, and this year we actually saw 2 from the dining room, feeding on fruits across the creek. The news from Indri Ridge is not so good, as here 2 troops have moved away leaving one still there and 2 newly arrived males which we saw. It may be that the introduction of the Diademed Sifaka here has upset the equilibrium. We got some nice looks and heard them at very close range so it's still a nice experience with a spectacular lemur.

CRAB-EATING MACAQUE (*Macaca fascicularis*) – Lisa saw this on Mauritius where it is a serious invasive menace to the native birds. [I]

RED FOREST RAT (*Nesomys rufus*) – A couple were seen well at Ranomafana.

Herps

LINED DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma lineata*) – Seen up at Masoala and then at Perinet.

PEACOCK DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma quadriocellata*) – Seen at Ranomafana and Andisibe, this one has black spots near the hind legs and goes darker when stressed, a bit like some tour guides.

STANDING'S DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma standingi*) – This was the very striking quite large *Phelsuma* at Zombitse.

MADAGASCAR DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma madagascariensis*) – This was seen at Fort Dauphin.

MAURITIUS DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma cepediana*) – This rather striking day gecko was seen at Bel Ombre, the blue tail is very fetching. [E]

CARPET CHAMELEON (*Furcifer lateralis*) – Seen at Ranomafana and Berenty.

MALAGASY GIANT CHAMELEON (*Furcifer oustaleti*) – This is the common chameleon in the dry areas, seen well at Ankarafantsika and near Ranohira where the horrible kid knocked one out of a tree.

HORNED LEAF CHAMELEON (*Brookesia superciliaris*) – The tiny *Brookesia* chameleon the guides found us at Masoala is seemingly something called *B. peyrierasi minima*, one of the smallest of this bizarre genus which are always very hard to find.

SHORT-HORNED CHAMELEON (*Calumma brevicorne*) – Several sightings from Andisibe.

SHORT-NOSED CHAMELEON (*Calumma nasuta*) – Seen at Masoala and then at Ranomafana.

O'SHAUGNESSY'S CHAMELEON (*Calumma oshaugnessyi*) – This was the big green one that changed to much darker in the forest at Ranomafana.

PANTHER CHAMELEON (*Calumma pardalis*) – Seen a couple of times up at Masoala.

PARSON'S GIANT CHAMELEON (*Calumma parsonii*) – This was the lovely orangey one at Feon N'y ala.

GIANT LEAF-TAIL GECKO (*Uroplatus fimbriatus*) – This was a great find up at Masoala, when the local guide spotted it as its tongue flicked out over its eye! It is a handspan across and looks kind of like a miniature crocodile, beautifully camouflaged on a sapling trunk.

AFRICAN HOUSE GECKO (*Hemidactylus mercatorius*) – Seen or heard at Ranohira.

MADAGASCAR TREE BOA (*Sanzinia madagascariensis*) – One at Andisibe.

DUMEREL'S GROUND BOA (*Acrotrophis dumereli*) – One at Berenty on the night walk was eating some kind of rat, but disappeared before everyone saw it.

MALAGASY GIANT HOGNOSE SNAKE (*Leioheterodon madagascariensis*) – One was seen at Ankarafantsika as usual, quite a spectacular creature that eats lizard eggs as a big part of its diet.

BERNIER'S STRIPED SNAKE (*Dromicodryas bernieri*) – This may have been the striped snake at Jardin du Roy?

PERINET NIGHT SNAKE (*Ithycyphus perineta*) – Jay and I saw a large one with reddish rear end at Feon N'y Ala, going up a tree across the creek.

COLLARED IGUANA (*Oplurus cuvieri*) – Good looks up at Ampijoroa.

GRANDIDIER'S MADAGASCAR SWIFT (LIZARD) (*Oplurus grandidieri*) – Also seen at Zombitse.

MADAGASCAR ZONOSAUR (*Zonosaurus madagascariensis*) – Seen at Masoala and Zombitse.

BROAD-TAILED ZONOSAUR (*Zonosaurus laticaudatus*) – Seen at Ankarafantsika and Mahajunga.

THREE-EYED LIZARD (*Chalarodon madagascariensis*) – This odd lizard was seen at the Jardin du Roy.

NILE CROCODILE (*Crocodylus niloticus*) – A large one was cruising Lac Ravelobe.

VARIEGATED GOLDEN FROG (*Mantella baroni*) – This was the beautiful multi-colored small frog en route to Vohiparara, accounts as to whether or not they are toxic seem to differ! The local guides say non-poisonous.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

OTHER HERPS

Boophis sp. frogs at Ranomafana

Mimophis mafaliensis was a snake at Berenty.

Madagascarophis colibrinus, a snake from Ankarafantsika, by the road at night

Mantidactylis sp. geckoes at Fort Dauphin

BUTTERFLIES

Papilio antenor is the large spectacular swallowtail from Parc Mosa.

We saw a range of others, but Madagascar butterflies seem to be very active and it was hard to get at-rest shots; I think Gaylan and Dan may have done quite well here.

Comet moth (*Argema mittrei*) -- a fine large adult was at Feon N'y Ala.

STAR BIRDS

Many choices, but Helmet Vanga is obviously the star being spectacular, bizarre, rare, hard-to-get-to and hard-to-find AND a lifer for Jay.

Ground-Rollers have to figure as well; all 5 species were again seen on the trip and 4 of them very nicely indeed.

Schlegel's Asity was outstanding this year.

All 3 mesite species performed really well, an unusually good trip for them with some nice photos out there.

Cuckoo Roller for wonderful vocals and some great views.

Eleonora's Falcon making a welcome reappearance on the checklist after a very long absence.

Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis showing so well on the Betsiboka estuary.

That amazing Henst's Goshawk seen so well at Ranomafana.

The identification puzzles over Madagascar Sparrowhawk vs Frances's Sparrowhawk.

That wonderful responsive Mauritius Cuckooshrike, especially ironic after we had heard the Reunion one calling so close.

Those marvellous owls at Andisibe with the pair of Madagascar Scops sat side by side and the adventure with the Madagascar Long-eared Owls.

Totals for the tour: 243 bird taxa and 32 mammal taxa