



Field Guides Tour Report

Madagascar, Mauritius & Reunion (with Masoala Peninsula extension)

Nov 2, 2015 to Dec 3, 2015

Phil Gregory & local guides

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



Helmet Vanga is one of the "holy grail" birds of Madagascar, found only in a few remnant patches of prime forest. We watched this beauty on the Masoala Peninsula extension. Photo by guide Phil Gregory.

Madagascar is an extraordinary place, though what was once the Great Green Island of the 16th century is now the Great Red Island, due to the rampant deforestation that has destroyed most of the country's forest cover. Traveling around, you almost get the feeling that you're in the future, with few birds and huge areas of manmade habitats and villages -- but then you come to the precious fragments of the reserves and national parks. Here, the wonders still exist and you will see something marvelous at every site: one of the 100+ endemic birds, mammals, chameleons, insects, plants or the very friendly local people.

This was my sixth Field Guides tour (and my seventh Madagascar tour overall), in what proved to be an odd year; due to the effects of the current, massive El Nino, it was unusually dry in some places but unusually wet in others. Madagascar Air also proved more than usually chaotic this year, canceling our flight to Maroantsetra and then canceling its replacement the next day. We improvised with a visit to Lac Alarobia in Tana, and saw one of our very few Madagascar Pond Herons, the tour's only Black Egrets, and two very unexpected Meller's Ducks, plus White-throated Rail-- and we timed our leaving very nicely, just as a storm came in!

We devised the strategy of turning up at the airport very early the following day, and acting surprised when told of the cancellation, playing the old "stranded international tourists" card. Amazingly, this worked, and we were soon on our very own Twin Otter, which took us to Tamatave and then on up to Maroantsetra. Our troubles were not over, however, as a huge storm had dumped tons of rain on the area, and the Bay of Antongil was much too rough for us to attempt a crossing to Masoala; even the fishing pirogues were grounded.

We spent the night at the Maroantsetra Resort (now well past its best), and were able to come up with a backup plan: going to a new site at the Parc Naturelle at Makira. This involved a 4-hour boat ride, then a 3-hour trek up into the hills to stay at a research station, which had two chalets and tents for the rest of us. The group was up for it, and we set off like some Victorian exploration expedition, with 22 porters, 2 local guides, 4 cooks, 2 boatmen and 2 watchmen along.

The weather gods did not smile on us the next day either, with quite heavy rain overnight and in the morning, but we had a good walk along a track through great forest, seeing Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher and hearing both Helmet and Bernier's vangas, while the rare Silky Sifaka showed very nicely. A night walk near the camp gave us a marvelous close Giant Leaf-tailed Gecko (*Uroplatus fimbriatus*), two lovely Greater Dwarf Lemurs and a sportive lemur of what may be a new taxon (given the adoption of the phylogenetic species concept for all the various taxa in this family).

Happily, the following day dawned fine and clear, and we went up onto the ridge right by camp, getting great views of two Helmet Vangas, with Bernier's Vanga also showing briefly and Short-legged Ground-Roller very nicely. We even saw the Helmet Vangas later from the camp itself -- a nice pickup for those who had not done the trek. This new reserve is a great spot and has much the same avifauna as Masoala does, so it is a viable alternate if required.

Andasibe/Perinet/Mantadia came next. This is always a lovely spot and we had wonderful views of Indri on several occasions, away from the tourist

mecca at Indri Ridge too, which was even better. We also saw the rare Diademed Sifaka up at Mantadia, and were treated to an Indri chorus right at the lodge on our last morning. Laurent did well to get us fine views of the rare Scaly Ground-Roller at Mantadia; this species had not been seen at the park for some time, and we'd only heard it at Makira, so it was a great catch-up, with the first of several Pitta-like Ground-Rollers also showing very well here. Nuthatch Vanga was a good bonus, and the rare Madagascar Grebe was on its usual pond, with Meller's Duck again for company.

Vanga activity again seemed low this year, but we did see Blue Vanga nicely, and the guides had a staked out Madagascar Scops-Owl that sat stoically as dozens of gawking passing tourists peered up at it. I must check that the coast is clear before we go in next time! A nest of Madagascar Crested Ibis was a fantastic find (and right by the road!); this can be a tough species to see well. The guides once again had Collared Nightjar staked out atop a tree-fern nest. Madagascar Long-eared Owl was elusive, but we did get a brief flyover and heard an adult call back a couple of times, while a lucky few got views of Madagascar Flufftail on the first of many efforts; they seemed oddly unresponsive this year. As we left the park, Madagascar Pratincole showed nicely when viewed from someone's yard overlooking the river, and we had the unexpected bonus of a Madagascar Partridge nearby.

To break up the long drive to Ranomafana, we overnighted at Ambositre as usual, with the Marolefy family musicians playing some very pleasant Malagasy songs for us as we ate our meal. A check of a small marsh the next day brought us the rare Madagascar Snipe, then it was down to Ranomafana for three nights.

Highlights here were varied, as ever, but the park was very dry and lemurs seemed scarcer than usual -- we saw Golden Bamboo Lemur but then got Jean-Chris's son soundly told off for losing track of the Greater Bamboo Lemur as we dallied with a Brown Mesite instead! A tiny and feeble-looking Brookesia Chameleon was a nice find here too, as was an astonishing pair of the positively psychedelically colored O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon.

A Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity pair had a nest, but there was no activity there and I think it was abandoned. Happily, some flowering Bakerella nearby yielded two adults -- a great rarity we have done well with of late. The marsh at Vohiparara gave us good looks at vocal Gray Emutail and more Meller's Ducks, while the colorful Mantella frogs were diverting. A late afternoon storm washed out our walk along the trail, but (happily) we had seen Rufous-headed Ground-Roller that morning -- barely vocalizing this year and hard to find, but eventually showing very well; I even managed a photo at last!

Another very long drive down to Isalo and the simply gorgeous Jardin du Roy Hotel yielded little in the way of birds, but Benson's Rock-Thrush at the lodge was good next day.

Zombitse NP was very good, with nice cloud cover so it was not too hot. The local guides got us nesting Appert's Tetraka and Rufous Vanga, plus Coquerel's Coua, Cuckoo Roller and White-browed Ow. On then to Toliara, and then 90 minutes on a rutted gravel road north to arrive at Ifaty/Mangily by late afternoon. The following day is always one of my favorites, as the spiny forest at Parc Mosa is always outstanding. Once again, the local lads did a fantastic job of reeling in the endemics, beagling out to find each target and whistling when they had them lined up -- the fifth and final ground-roller of the trip showed beautifully, with great views of a Long-tailed. In addition, a Subdesert Mesite sat on a nest, as did a Lafresnaye's Vanga, Madagascar Sparrowhawk and Banded Kestrel showed very well, the elusive Running Coua came good, Green-capped Coua showed for most, and the amazing Sickle-billed Vanga sat up nicely. Thamnornis showed well early on, and the lads even corralled an Archbold's Newtonia for us, so it was an extraordinary couple of hours, a wonderful experience.

The very rare Madagascar Plover was obliging on the usual salines, and late that afternoon, we went out to the arid thorn scrub at La Table, where Freddy had Verreaux's Coua on a nest, and then -- even better -- a Red-shouldered Vanga doing the same, with a changeover of the sexes incubating as we watched. Green-capped Coua also had a nest, and eventually showed very well for us all.

Our boat trip to Nosy Ve next day was calm and dry, and we had great looks at Crab Plover, Red-tailed Tropicbird and Littoral Rock-Thrush. That afternoon, most of us went to the local markets and saw the Aepyornis eggs, plus shopped for assorted local crafts -- a fun visit.

The flight back to Tana late mid-afternoon the next day was one to forget, as a thunderstorm near the city meant a rough flight and a divergence. After refueling at Tamatave along the coast, we tried again, and conditions were much better.

The journey down to Tolagnaro/ Fort Dauphin the next day was mercifully straightforward, then we had the usual interminable four hours on the awful road to Berenty, arriving in time for lunch and the first of many Ring-tailed Lemurs. An afternoon walk was dominated by massing clouds, but we dodged the raindrops and had great looks at Giant Couas stalking along the forest floor, and a nesting Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk. A night walk in the spiny forest gave us White-footed Sportive Lemurs, a Madagascar Nightjar singing atop an octopus tree, and fantastic views of calling Torotoroka Scops-Owls, plus assorted chameleons, a scorpion, and a roosting Crested Coua.

The next day dawned very threatening (though I'd told the group I'd never had rain at Berenty), and sure enough heavy rain commenced by mid-morning. Gerard has visited the area for 35 years, and this was the first time he'd had rain in the daytime at this time of year. The only compensation was that the usual baking heat was alleviated and the remains of the Berenty road when wet were quite a sight! We did manage to see roosting Barn Owls, Madagascar Flying-Foxes and some amazingly tame Madagascar Nightjars roosting in the spiny thickets, plus Gray-brown Mouse-Lemurs, and a spider tortoise. Verreaux's Sifakas also danced very nicely for us, and we watched them feeding for ages, a major trip highlight.

After a surprisingly routine flight to the north, we had a terrific visit to Ankarafantsika NP. Yet again, we had an atypically wet early morning, but we saw the stars of the show very well in spite of it: Schlegel's Asity, Van Dam's Vanga, White-breasted Mesite, Madagascar Fish-Eagle, and Madagascar Jacana. A male Rhinoceros Chameleon was a great find on the night walk too, the eleventh chameleon species for the trip!

This year, we even managed to squeeze in an afternoon boat trip on the Betsiboka River for the rare Madagascar (Sacred) Ibis and Bernier's Teal, both seen nicely, and with the tide just barely low enough to still give us a shot at seeing them. A fine adult Yellow-billed Stork was an unexpected addition too.

Next came Mauritius, thankfully with good weather this year, and it all went quite smoothly -- except for our unusually protracted arrival, when we got to immigration just behind another jet-load of passengers! A stop at Pigeon Wood got us very nice Pink Pigeons in a natural setting, and a fine male Mauritius Fody, while Bassin Blanc produced two of the rare Mauritius White-eyes, and a distant hearing of the now critically endangered Mauritius Cuckooshrike. Bel Ombre was very good, producing a great view of a female Mauritius Kestrel, and some very active and noisy Echo (Mauritius) Parakeets, which really posed for photos. Sadly, we were not able to go to Ile aux Aigrettes, so a substitute sea-watch involved a scenic tour of half the island, then quite good looks at Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and a couple of Barau's Petrels, plus distant Bridled Terns and Lesser Noddy.

Reunion was not too rushed this year, so we did a scenic tour of the island and saw the drolly named Cascade Niagara, the quite extensive lava flows, and two very nice pairs of Reunion Harrier, then went to the Etang du Gol to see the Barau's Petrels readying themselves to fly in to their montane nest sites. The next day at La Roche Ecrite was a good finale too, with a fine start and the rain only coming in as we left, though the trail there was the wettest and most slippery I have ever seen it due to heavy rain the day before. Happily we were well-trained for it, and saw all of the remaining endemics very well, with the Reunion Paradise-Flycatcher and Reunion Cuckooshrike showing very nicely -- the latter my first sighting since 2010, and an excellent finale to the tour.

Favorite sightings from this tour are remarkably hard to do as there is just so much, Amongst birds the Helmet Vanga is an obvious standout, but the Sickie-billed Vanga runs it close, the various couas, ground-rollers and the mesites are pretty darn amazing, and both Velvet and Schlegel's Asity were stars.

Lemurs were a big hit of course and the sifakas, ring-tails and mouse-lemurs were delightful, with the Silky Sifaka being a new one for the tour. Chameleons were also unusually well-represented with 11 species seen, and the tour had so many marvels it is invidious to single things out!

Itinerary

Nov 5 Lac Alarobia after cancelled flight to Masoala

Nov 6 Maroantsetra river trip due to rough conditions precluding crossing to Masoala

Nov 7 River trip and trek to Antsahabe Research site at Makira Parc Naturelle

Nov 8 Antsahabe Ridge

Nov 9 Antsahabe camp area then back to Maroantsetra

Nov 10 Maroantsetra to Tana, then down to Andasibe

Nov 11 Mantadia am and Andasibe pm

Nov 12 Andasibe Indri Ridge and roadsides

Nov 13 Andasibe/ Tana/ Ambositre

Nov 14 Ambositre-Ranomafana

Nov 15 Vohiparara Trail and marsh

Nov 16 Ranomafana Park HQ trails and Vohiparara pm

Nov 17 Ranomafana to Fianarantsoa and then to Isalo

Nov 18 Jardin du Roy area, then to Zombitse NP, then on to Toliara and Mangily

Nov 19 Parc Mosa, Mangily salines and then to La Table and Toliara

Nov 20 Nosy Ve and Anakau, then Toliara markets

Nov 21 Toliara to Tana via Tamatave

Nov 22 Tana to Tolagnaro and then Berenty

Nov 23 Berenty, then to Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin)

Nov 24 Tolagnaro to Tana with Madgasikara Airways Embraer turboprop.

Nov 25 Tana to Majunga and then Ankarafantsika/Ampijoroa

Nov 26 Ankarafantsika area and Lac Ravelobe

Nov 27 Ankarafantsika early morning then to Mahajunga and the Betsiboka estuary early pm

Nov 28 Mahajunga to Tana, then shopping at two sites

Nov 29 Departure pm for Mauritius

Nov 30 Mauritius Black River Gorges area and Ile aux Aigrettes pm

Dec 1 Mauritius to Reunion, then lava flows and Gol estuary

Dec 2 La Roche Ecrite trail, Reunion, then assorted departures home late pm

My thanks again to a very pleasant and good-humored group, which included sundry stone egg collectors (which may now include me among their number, all Steve's fault), bulbous-plant experts (note the hyphen here), photographers, and a very varied knowledge and skill set which made for an extra dimension to the tour; it was fun taking you all round on what can be a long and taxing trip, made extra vexing this year by odd weather and the vagaries of Air Mad. I was really pleased that we were all able to do the extra trek to save the extension; not every group would have been up for this

and everyone did really well.

Particular thanks to the brilliant Gerard, our long-time local fixer and birder, and to the various skilled and entertaining local guides: Armand, Olivier, Nestor and Laurent, Jean-Chris, Freddy and the lads, Benoit, and Ndrema and his wife, plus Jean-Claude on Mauritius and Frederic on Reunion. Special thanks to Sharon in the Field Guides office for good logistics on such a complex and difficult itinerary. I enjoyed sharing all these wonderful sightings in Madagascar and the Mascarenes with you, and 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

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*) – 30 at Lac Alarobia were the only sighting, though it was heard at Ankarafantsika at night.

MELLER'S DUCK (*Anas melleri*) – Two at Lac Alarobia, 2 at Mantadia and 4 up at Vohiparara, plus two at the marsh not far from Ambositre, it was a very good trip for this rare bird. [E]

RED-BILLED DUCK (*Anas erythrorhynchos*) – About 70 at Lac Alarobia and 40 at the marsh near Ambositre.

HOTTENTOT TEAL (*Anas hottentota*) – Just 2 at Lac Alarobia this trip.

BERNIER'S TEAL (*Anas bernieri*) – The Betsiboka boat trip came good at the very last moment, with 2 of this rare bird on a mud bank, showing very nicely. Odd to see a teal out on this habitat, and at the only reliable site for bird tour sightings. [E]

Numididae (Guineafowl)

HELMETED GUINEAFOWL (*Numida meleagris*) – 3 at Jardin du Roy and one at Zombitse, before a few from Berenty. [I]

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

MADAGASCAR PARTRIDGE (*Margaroperdix madagarensis*) – A fine and very unexpected male at a small marsh near Andasibe, then Gerard flushed two singles up from long grass near the sapphire town at Sakharana for brief flight views. [E]

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Good views at Bel Ombre on Mauritius, we saw a pair with 2 juvs here, and one from the bus later out in the canefields. [I]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

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

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

BARAU'S PETREL (*Pterodroma baraui*) – A couple off La Roche Qui Pleure, then nice looks as they circled offshore at Etang du Gol, with several hundred birds there. Reunion is the primary breeding site for this rare species, and one of the few places where you can see a *Pterodroma* well from the land.

WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER (*Ardenna pacifica*) – Nice looks at these as they were heading N past La Roche qui Pleure late pm, then good views off Etang du Gol as well.

TROPICAL SHEARWATER (*Puffinus bailloni*) – I saw 5 of these diminutive black and white shearwaters off Etang du Gol, singles were going by occasionally with the Wedgetails but were hard to pick up, though most folks succeeded eventually.

Phaethontidae (Tropicbirds)

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (INDIAN OCEAN) (*Phaethon lepturus lepturus*) – Distant birds at Bel Ombre, then very good looks on Reunion on our island circumnavigation, with over a dozen seen.

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon rubricauda rubricauda*) – Great views as always on Nosy Ve where they were flying about and calling nicely, with several very vocal juveniles calling from under the bushes. Cut posted to IBC and XC.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

YELLOW-BILLED STORK (*Mycteria ibis*) – One adult was feeding on a mudbank on the Betsiboka River, a new species for me in Madagascar despite it being described as widespread in the west in the field guide!

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LONG-TAILED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax africanus pictilis*) – Only a couple seen on the river at Maroantsetra, it is very scarce in Madagascar.

Scopidae (Hamerkop)

HAMERKOP (*Scopus umbretta umbretta*) – Very few this tour, just a handful of singles and one or two huge untidy nests seen.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (MALAGASY) (*Ardea cinerea firsas*) – Just 2 of this pale race seen on the Betsiboka River trip. though some saw one on Nosy Ve.

HUMBLT'S HERON (*Ardea humbloti*) – A fine dark single bird was on Lac Ravelobe, the yellow eye showing well and a neat size comparison with the much smaller Purple Heron beside it. It was the only sighting of the trip. [E]

PURPLE HERON (PURPLE) (*Ardea purpurea madagascariensis*) – Small numbers from Maroantsetra, Ranomafana and Lac Ravelobe.

GREAT EGRET (AFRICAN) (*Ardea alba melanorhynchos*) – Very few, seen at Lac Alarobia, Maroantsetra and Lac Ravelobe.

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 very much commoner this year but both morphs were widespread in small numbers. We saw over 100 in the colony at Lac Alarobia and 30 or so dark morph birds on the Betsiboka River.

BLACK HERON (*Egretta ardesiaca*) – Very uncommon, we saw a few around Tana and had about 50 in the colony at Lac Alarobia, with a few doing the wing-shading hunting technique there. I get the feeling this bird is in decline here. Also one at Lac Ravelobe and 5 at the rice paddies en route to Mahajunga.

CATTLE EGRET (WESTERN) (*Bubulcus ibis ibis*) – A good and noisy colony at Berenty and also at Lac Alarobia, but very few otherwise.

SQUACCO HERON (*Ardeola ralloides*) – Small numbers 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*) – We had just 2 day records of single breeding dress adults, starting at Lac Alarobia, then one near Mangily. I think the Squacco is out-competing it and it is on the way out. [E]

STRIATED HERON (OLD WORLD) (*Butorides striata rutenbergi*) – One or 2 on some 8 days, starting at Lac Alarobia, near Maroantsetra, and also on the Betsiboka River. Then one at Bassin Blanc and one at Etang du Gol in the Mascarenes.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A few at Lac Alarobia and 2 as we came near Tolagnaro.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – A few seen at Lac Ravelobe.

MADAGASCAR IBIS (*Lophotibis cristata*) – Amazing views of 2 at a nest at Andasibe, actually very close to the road but amazingly discreet, very nice to see this strange and rare bird so well. [E]

SACRED IBIS (MALAGASY) (*Threskiornis aethiopicus bernieri*) – One of the prizes on the Betsiboka boat trip, we had a good view of just a single on a mudbank. A rare and endangered species, split by many checklists as the plumage is quite distinct, with white wing tips and a pale blue eye. [E]

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

MADAGASCAR HARRIER-HAWK (*Polyboroides radiatus*) – Great views of an adult by a nest at Parc Mosa, with another seen later in display. [E]

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO-HAWK (*Aviceda madagascariensis*) – Benoit showed us a nest at Berenty that had an adult sat beside it, and several juveniles moving about inside the nest. We have missed this on the past couple of tours so good to get it again. [E]

REUNION HARRIER (REUNION) (*Circus maillardi maillardi*) – Nice looks at pair at the Cascade Niagara, then again at the lave flows, it seems much more widespread than its Malagasy sibling and is usually split these days as a separate species. [E]

REUNION HARRIER (MALAGASY) (*Circus maillardi macroscelus*) – I think some folks saw this up on the plateau late afternoon as we neared Isalo, nothing else here has white under primaries, but sadly it was not easy to stop and I got to hear of it a tad late. This is one very rare bird, I suspect CR status (Critically Endangered) if it is split as most checklists now do. [E]

FRANCES'S GOSHAWK (*Accipiter francesiae*) – A female at Andasibe, then another by the river at the pratincole site, before a male at Berenty. Being so small, Frances's Sparrowhawk is much more appropriate than goshawk. [E]

MADAGASCAR SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter madagascariensis*) – A fine female by a nest at Parc Mosa, clearly showing the lack of mesial stripe on the throat and the heavier legs and build than Frances's with which it is so often confused. It is quite a rare bird overall, sadly I missed getting a tape of the call. [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*) – Two sightings of adults from Lac Ravelobe, the first a distant scope view, then a fine adult close by next day. Another CR status species, with maybe 150 pairs in existence. [E]

MADAGASCAR BUZZARD (*Buteo brachypterus*) – Very sparse this time, we saw it at Makira and near Ambositre, with one of two from Ranomafana. [E]

Mesitornithidae (Mesites)

WHITE-BREASTED MESITE (*Mesitornis variegatus*) – The wet early morning at Ankarafantsika made getting this hard, as though we could hear them calling the guides could not track them by hearing the leaves rustling! Happily we later got 2 fine birds up in the sandy ridge country, nice to complete the set of mesites. [E]

BROWN MESITE (*Mesitornis unicolor*) – A great and eventually responsive bird at Andasibe, lured in and seen nicely in thick forest cover. This is the toughest to see of this ancient family, a species that the late Phoebe Snetsinger made 5 trips before she nailed it. I have to say I do think mesites are remarkably dumb, this bird walked right by us and then just stood for ages! [E]

SUBDESERT MESITE (*Monias benschi*) – A fine adult sat on a nest at the spiny forest, but yet again I did not get to see it move, I now have an ambition to see one do something other than blink! [E]

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

MADAGASCAR RAIL (*Rallus madagascariensis*) – Heard in the marsh near Mantadia but again unresponsive this year. [E*]

WHITE-THROATED RAIL (*Dryolimnas cuvieri cuvieri*) – Great looks at 2 Lac Alarobia on the first day, a large and striking rallid. Heard at Lac Ravelobe too.

ALLEN'S GALLINULE (*Porphyrio alleni*) – Ndrema pointed out the call of this species once at Lac Ravelobe, but none came visible. [*]

AFRICAN SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio madagascariensis*) – A single perched up atop aquatic plants along the Maroantsetra river was actually a Madagascar tick for Phil, the only one of the trip! Good to see Purple Swamphen at long last split up into component species too.

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus pyrrhorhoa*) – A couple at Lac Alarobia, Mantadia and then Lac Ravelobe.

Sarothruridae (Flufftails)

MADAGASCAR WOOD-RAIL (*Canirallus kioloides kioloides*) – Seen twice at Andasibe, giving a very good look on the second occasion.

MADAGASCAR FLUFFTAIL (*Sarothrura insularis*) – Quite a few folks got looks at Andasibe at two different birds, and we tried many times to lure one out for everyone but they were very unresponsive this year. [E]

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – A couple of singles at and near the salines at Mangily.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – One at Maroantsetra and 10 on Nosy Ve.

GREATER SAND-PLOVER (*Charadrius leschenaultii scythicus*) – One at Maroantsetra and about a dozen on the Betsiboka River.

KITTLITZ'S PLOVER (*Charadrius pecuarius*) – Good looks on the salines at Mangily, and with its endangered sibling species there too.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – 4 birds at Mangily.

MADAGASCAR PLOVER (*Charadrius thoracicus*) – This rare bird was again at the saltflats at Mangily, still the only site where I have seen it, and just 2 birds. Great views, I wonder if Kittlitz's Plover is displacing it? [E]

THREE-BANDED PLOVER (*Charadrius tricollaris bifrontatus*) – 3 on a pond not far from Ifaty, after 1 at a small wetland near Ambositre.

Interestingly this taxon is rather different to African birds, with a greyish not white forehead, and it is split by the latest HBW/BirdLife review as Madagascar Three-banded Plover *C. bifrontatus*. Note the Sinclair & Langrand guide depicts the white forehead of the African race.....

WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER (*Charadrius marginatus tenellus*) – A couple at Maroantsetra were unexpected, then we had one at the salines at Mangily and 2 on Nosy Ve, with a single on the Betsiboka River.

Jacaniidae (Jacanas)

MADAGASCAR JACANA (*Actophilornis albinucha*) – One fine adult showed very well at Lac Ravelobe, another CR status species. [E]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

TEREK SANDPIPER (*Xenus cinereus*) – About 5 on the Betsiboka River trip, running about actively on the mudflats.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – Six day records of one or two from scattered sites including the river en route to Makira and at Betsiboka.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – One near Ifaty and 5 at Tulear mudflats, then 1 at Betsiboka River.

WHIMBREL (EUROPEAN) (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*) – One at Maroantsetra, 2 near Ifaty and about 150 on the flats at Tulear which is an important wintering site for this species, then 3 or 4 on the Betsiboka River. Some saw it along the Salt Cost in Mauritius too.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – One at Maroantsetra, and 5 at Mangily salines then 12 on Nosy Ve.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – Two birds on the saltflats near Ifaty and a flock of 5 flying through at Maroantsetra. Also a couple on the Betsiboka River.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – 7 birds on a sandbar off Nosy Ve were a good trip bird.

MADAGASCAR SNIPE (*Gallinago macrodactyla*) – A single in small marsh not too far from Ambositre was nice, as the marshes nearer Tana were way too wet for them this year [E]

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

MADAGASCAR BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix nigricollis*) – Two flushed up in tall grassland at Isalo, then 2 in the road at La Table for some, and a couple of singles flushed as we came out from Berenty. [E]

Dromadidae (Crab Plover)

CRAB PLOVER (*Dromas ardeola*) – A big bonus was a flock of 42 sat on a sandbar off Nosy Ve, with about 16 juveniles amongst them. This extraordinary bird breeds in burrows on desolate islands in the Red Sea and migrates down the coast of E Africa, a monotypic family too.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

MADAGASCAR PRATINCOLE (*Glareola ocularis*) – 4 or 5 along the river en route to Makira, then a good look at two birds that looked to be nesting on a rock in the Mangoro river near Andasibe. This species winters in East Africa, mainly in coastal Kenya, and is overall pretty scarce. [E]

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

LESSER NODDY (*Anous tenuirostris*) – Small flocks off la Roche Qui Pleure late pm looked slightly built and were I thought this species.

BRIDLED TERN (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) – Flocks were heading N off la Roche qui Pleure, we saw about 50+ in total but all quite distant.

SAUNDERS'S TERN (*Sternula saundersi*) – Two on the sandbar off Nosy Ve were unexpected.

COMMON TERN (HIRUNDO) (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*) – A few at Maroantsetra and two off Nosy Ve.

GREAT CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bergii enigma*) – A couple at Maroantsetra and similarly off Nosy Ve, then one at Betsiboka.

LESSER CRESTED TERN (*Thalasseus bengalensis bengalensis*) – A dozen at Maroantsetra and similarly off Nosy Ve, the orange bill showing nicely.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – A few seen in Tana and then common on Mauritius and Reunion, just about all the others were racing or domestic pigeons. [I]

PINK PIGEON (*Nesoenas mayeri*) – A very good trip for them, seen at Pigeon Wood and then at Bel Ombre, a total of 6 including 2 flying overhead at the former site on our second visit. Nice not to see them tied to feeders, the numbers look to be increasing from a historic low of >10 in the wild and there are now about 400 birds. [E]

MADAGASCAR TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia picturata picturata*) – Small numbers, starting with a single at Ranomafana then seen well at Berenty and Andasibe. Introduced birds seen on Mauritius and Reunion.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Common on the Mascarenes. [I]

NAMAQUA DOVE (*Oena capensis aliena*) – Quite good numbers from Berenty and the spiny forest, with a flimsy nest seen at the former site. Also seen at Lac Ravelobe and near Mahajunga.

ZEBRA DOVE (*Geopelia striata*) – Quite common on the Mascarenes. [I]

MADAGASCAR GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron australis*) – Four were seen at Makira and then some saw one at Andasibe, remarkably very few overall. [E]

MADAGASCAR BLUE-PIGEON (*Alectroenas madagascariensis*) – This striking bird showed well at Makira and then at Andasibe, but again only very small numbers, max 5 birds. [E]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

MADAGASCAR CUCKOO (*Cuculus rochii*) – Common by voice, the "Mad-a-cuc-koo" call was heard at most sites, and we saw it at Antsahabe Ridge, (Makira) and at La Table. [E]

GIANT COUA (*Coua gigas*) – Great views at Berenty, a spectacular bird. [E]

COQUEREL'S COUA (*Coua coquereli*) – One at Zombitse, then several lovely looks and recordings from Ankarafantsika. [E]

RED-BREASTED COUA (*Coua serriana*) – Heard at Makira then a quick look at one that was herded past us by Nestor at Andasibe. This is one of the hardest to see of all the couas. [E]

RED-FRONTED COUA (*Coua reynaudii*) – A terrific bird sat out at Andasibe, the only one we saw. [E]

RED-CAPPED COUA (*Coua ruficeps*) – Very good views of 3 birds at Ankarafantsika, but sadly not able to be recorded, barely vocalizing this trip. Very different to Green-capped Coua and split by the Sinclair & Langrand guide and HBW/BirdLife. [E]

RED-CAPPED COUA (GREEN-CAPPED) (*Coua ruficeps olivaceiceps*) – The spiny forest was the site where most folks saw one, and then happily Freddy got us a beauty at La Table, with a nest containing 2 juveniles nearby, and I got a photo this year! This is split from Red-capped by Sinclair & Langrand and Lynx/BirdLife. [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, then another on the road as we came out from Berenty in the spiny forest section of Andohahela NP. [E]

CRESTED COUA (*Coua cristata*) – One up at Makira was a surprise and must be of the nominate race, a shame it was just a flyby at the camp. Then seen nicely a couple of times at Berenty, with a roosting bird as well. [E]

VERREAUX'S COUA (*Coua verreauxi*) – A rather rare, restricted range small coua of the very dry country, I think we were lucky to get it as it was not vocalizing at La Table, where we got good looks late one afternoon at a bird sat quite well hidden in its stick nest 5' up in a thorn tree. It has a thinner more vertical and dark-tipped crest than Crested Coua. [E]

BLUE COUA (*Coua caerulea*) – Very nice looks from Makira in particular, also seen at Andasibe and Ranomafana. [E]

MADAGASCAR COUCAL (*Centropus toulou*) – This small coucal was widespread and showed nicely, also very vocal, my 2014 cut of the duet at Berenty is posted on the Internet Bird Collection (IBC). [E]

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – Two roosting at Berenty showed well and were a nice trip bird. The whole complex is being broken up so this is now Western Barn Owl, distinct from both North American and Australian birds. This taxon is hypermetra, endemic to Madagascar and the Comoros.

Strigidae (Owls)

MALAGASY SCOPS-OWL (*Otus rutilus*) – A beautiful roosting bird at Andasibe, sat low down in a thick cypress and remarkably tolerant of noisy tourists who barged in to see it as well. Photo on IBC. [E]

TOROTOROKA SCOPS-OWL (*Otus madagascariensis*) – Excellent at the spiny forest at Berenty, where two birds called and sat for ages for photos and tape- see cuts on IBC and xenocanto. Oddly this is not split in the Sinclair & Langrand guide update, weird as everyone else splits the two taxa and they split just about everything else! The cal is very distinct to the eastern wet forest birds and is a major specific indicator in this genus. [E]

MADAGASCAR LONG-EARED OWL (*Asio madagascariensis*) – One heavy-set adult flew out and across the road at Andasibe late one afternoon, and we heard it calling a couple of times, but no baby was staked out this year. [E]

WHITE-BROWED OWL (*Ninox supercilialis*) – The local guides at Zombitse did well to locate one adult sat out on a large branch for us, I even got a video of it giving a call, see the Smugmug page for this tour. Also seen nicely at Berenty peeking out of a split trunk. [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 that was nesting atop a small tree fern at Andasibe and remarkably difficult to distinguish from the dead leaves, they seem to really like this plant for this purpose. [E]

MADAGASCAR NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus madagascariensis*) – The best came from Berenty where we saw one singing atop an octopus tree, then 2 very tame daylight roosting birds. Singles seen in flight near Andasibe and Ambositre, also at Ankarafantsika, and the voice is a common sound of the drier areas at dusk. I have posted a Berenty cut on XC and the IBC. [E]

Apodidae (Swifts)

MALAGASY SPINETAIL (*Zoonavena grandidieri*) – Described as common in Sinclair & Langrand, always way too sanguine with abundance estimates, as we saw the bird only at Makira max. 2 birds, and some saw singles at Andasibe. [E]

MASCARENE SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus francicus*) – Four birds by our hotel at Flic en Flac early morning, then a couple at Bassin Blanc, it is an uncommon species. Then about 15 at Cascade Niagara on Reunion, the most I have ever seen, and a couple up at La Roche Ecrite next day. [E]

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus melba willsi*) – A single from Ranomafana, well picked up by Steve R.

MADAGASCAR SWIFT (*Apus balstoni*) – Seen at Ranomafana this trip with about 6 birds, then dozens over the plateau near Isalo in humid conditions late afternoon. [E]

AFRICAN PALM-SWIFT (MADAGASCAR) (*Cypsiurus parvus gracilis*) – Widespread in small numbers, the most at Ranomafana and Isalo.

Leptosomidae (Cuckoo-Roller)

CUCKOO-ROLLER (*Leptosomus discolor*) – That call is one of the great sounds of the wetter Madagascan forests. We heard it at Makira, most us saw a subadult male with a spotted front at Vohiparara, and then had brilliant views at Zombitse of this truly strange bird. An endemic family, and one of the most ancient of all bird lineages. They dine mainly on chameleons it seems.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

MADAGASCAR HOOPOE (*Upupa marginata*) – Two fine birds at Berenty, then a tame juvenile in the spiny forest there. We also heard the very distinctive dove-like purring call here, sadly too far away to tape. [E]

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

MALAGASY KINGFISHER (*Corythornis vintsioides*) – 6 day records of this diminutive kingfisher, the first from Maroantsetra then Lac Alarobia with some good views, this taxon seems to like to be near water. [E]

MADAGASCAR PYGMY-KINGFISHER (*Corythornis madagascariensis*) – A fine bird in the forest during the wet morning at Makira, then 2 birds from 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 (MADAGASCAR) (*Eurystomus glaucurus glaucurus*) – Widespread in small numbers, and very vocal, they showed well at Makira, Berenty and Ampijoroa, this nominate race is really quite purple below. It winters in East Africa.

Brachypteraciidae (Ground-Rollers)

SHORT-LEGGED GROUND-ROLLER (*Brachypteracias leptosomus*) – A fine bird at Makira on the last morning, eventually coming in and sitting on a branch for ages. [E]

SCALY GROUND-ROLLER (*Brachypteracias squamiger*) – A hard one, it was heard giving an alarm call at Makira, then Laurent excelled and got us a terrific bird at Mantadia, where they had not been seen for a while. Steve R. got a great shot. [E]

PITTA-LIKE GROUND-ROLLER (*Atelornis pittoides*) – Fine looks at Mantadia and then at Andasibe, they showed very nicely this tour, it was also seen at Ranomafana and I finally got a modest shot of one. [E]

RUFIOUS-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 where there was almost no calling. Gerard walked into one here and 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 and at long last I got a photo! [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. Again we got all 5 ground-roller species on the tour, something unheard of just a few years back when this bird was amazingly hard to find. [E]

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

MADAGASCAR KESTREL (*Falco newtoni*) – Just a few birds at various sites, including the Carlton Hotel again. [E]

MAURITIUS KESTREL (*Falco punctatus*) – Great views of a female which flew out of a nest box and sat preening in the sun for us under the forest canopy. Great to see the small size and rather short relatively broad wings of this forest adapted species, once down to just 4 in the wild but doing better now with intensive trapping of predators, although still heavily management dependent. [E]

BANDED KESTREL (*Falco zoniventris*) – A fine perched bird in the spiny forest at Parc Mosa, a rare species that is easily missed on a tour. [E]

SOOTY FALCON (*Falco concolor*) – Just one at Ranomafana for the group, soaring high over before stooping low across the forest, though various folks saw odd ones at other places early in the tour. A rare bird that nests only on small islands in the middle-east and migrates to East Africa for the winter, spread out very thinly over a huge area.

PEREGRINE FALCON (MALAGASY) (*Falco peregrinus radama*) – One bird soared quite high over the sandy ridges at Ankarafantsika, this race always looks lightly built to me and we have seen it here several times.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

GREATER VASA-PARROT (*Mascarinus vasa*) – A couple seen and heard up at Makira but once again very scarce this tour, seems to be greatly outnumbered by Lesser Vasa. Often now treated as a separate family the Psittichasidae, very ancient parrot stock. The birds at Ankarafantsika gave great views as they fed on mangoes, and two were playing together with one laying on its side against a trunk as another bird nibbled its feet! Good to get recordings of the calls too, now posted to IBC and XC. [E]

LESSER VASA-PARROT (*Mascarinus niger*) – The common Vasa parrot, seen at many sites and very vocal. May also be part of a newly recognized but ancient family, the Psittichasidae. [E]

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Both Steves saw this on Mauritius out in the canefields. [I]

ECHO PARAKEET (*Psittacula eues*) – Excellent this year, with 6+ seen, including a fine male and 5 females coming in by the feeders but staying mainly up in the palms. The females are readily told by their dark bills but the males are more problematic, call is actually one of the best ways, with this species having a harsh quacking call not a shrill screech like Ring-necked. At one time there were >10 birds left in the wild, but now numbers are over 600. Mauritius Parakeet is a better name as the scientific name is no longer *Psittacula echo*!!

GRAY-HEADED LOVEBIRD (*Agapornis canus*) – We struggled for this bird in the south and eventually got on to a few in the spiny forest at Berenty in very dull conditions. Ankarafantsika proved better and we had fine views of a couple of pairs at Lac Ravelobe where they were feeding in the rice stubble. Also seen briefly at Mahajunga and our lodge near Ankarafantsika. [E]

Philepittidae (Asities)

VELVET ASITY (*Philepitta castanea*) – A marvellous male was out on the forest edge at Andasibe and gave great views, the first time I have seen the species here. Also seen at Ranomafana where a couple of males showed briefly in deep shade, and a couple of females proved more obliging. [E]

SCHLEGEL'S ASITY (*Philepitta schlegeli*) – A highly unusual wet early morning at Ankarafantsika made locating this bird hard, we heard it calling a couple of times without seeing it, and eventually went back to the nest site and waited until we saw a juvenile with an orangey gape and then a lovely adult male nearby. One of the most striking birds of the trip, and a must-see here, one of the few sites for it. [E]

SUNBIRD ASITY (*Neodrepanis coruscans*) – Heard along the Vohiparara Trail but a looming storm sabotaged our chances. [E*]

YELLOW-BELLIED ASITY (*Neodrepanis hypoxantha*) – A nest looked to be abandoned, but fortunately the guides knew of a flowering Bakerella nearby and we got pretty good views of a pair of this rare species feeding there. Tape cut posted to IBC and xenocanto. [E]

Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)

ARCHBOLD'S NEWTONIA (*Newtonia archboldi*) – The guides at Parc Mosa corralled one for us very successfully! [E]

COMMON NEWTONIA (*Newtonia brunneicauda*) – Widespread in most forests. [E]

DARK NEWTONIA (*Newtonia amphichroa*) – Some folks saw a vocal birds at Makira but most of us left to go see Silky Sifaka, but then later two more Dark Newtonia showed well by the roadside at Andasibe. [E]

TYLAS VANGA (*Tylas eduardi*) – Seen at Andasibe and Ranomafana but scarce this trip. [E]

RED-TAILED VANGA (*Calicalicus madagascariensis*) – Vocal and heard much more than seen, we encountered them at Andasibe and Ranomafana. [E]

RED-SHOULDERED VANGA (*Calicalicus rufocarpalis*) – Freddy had a nest staked out, and we saw the female incubating, to be replaced by the male shortly afterwards, great to get this hard to find and quite recently described bird relatively easily. [E]

NUTHATCH-VANGA (*Hypositta corallirostris*) – Great views of two at Mantadia, this is one tricky bird to find, the old name of Coral-billed Nuthatch was quite descriptive. [E]

CHABERT VANGA (*Leptopterus chabert*) – The widespread vanga but numbers seemed down on previous years. [E]

CROSSLEY'S VANGA (*Mystacornis crossleyi*) – Heard at Andasibe, then a fine male at Ranomafana with another in looming darkness at Vohiparara

the same day. Formerly classed as a babbler and now the only terrestrial vanga. [E]

BLUE VANGA (*Cyanolanius madagascarinus*) – This beautiful species showed well for all at Ranomafana in a mixed flock there, and some saw it at both Andasibe and Makira. Also seen at Ankarafantsika. [E]

HOOK-BILLED VANGA (*Vanga curvirostris*) – Our first vanga, seen at the camp at Makira, and then again at Zombitse, they are remarkably reminiscent of the butcherbirds of Australia. [E]

WARD'S FLYCATCHER (*Pseudobias wardi*) – Seen well at Makira and again at Andasibe, this was formerly classified as a flycatcher but is now seemingly a vanga. This is not so baffling if you also include Batis in that group, to which this species bears some resemblance. [E]

RUFOUS VANGA (*Schetba rufa*) – Wilbur saw one at Makira, and we had a fine female on a nest at Zombitse and then a pair at Ankarafantsika. [E]

HELMET VANGA (*Euryceros prevostii*) – Once more the star of the show, with a desperate last minute salvage operation thanks to a combination of Mad Air and bad weather sabotaging us getting to Masoala. Anyway, we heard it the forest afternoon at Makira, heard it again next day in poor conditions, and finally got great views and photos of 2 of them next day on the ridge by the camp. They posed out beautifully and even showed for Janet and Wilbur back at the camp later. One of the great Madagascar icon birds and definitely in my top 10 ever, this is a must-see! [E]

BERNIER'S VANGA (*Oriolia bernieri*) – This is always hard and once again proved to be so, for we heard it on the first full day at Makira and narrowly missed seeing a female that was calling close by. Next day a male flew along the ridge by the camp and gave poor flight views, and some if us got a good look at a female up on the ridge whilst chasing up the Helmet Vanga. [E]

SICKLE-BILLED VANGA (*Falcula palliata*) – This one is a star, one of the most amazing of the vangas, and a single bird posed quite well but all too briefly atop at octopus tree at Parc Mosa. Then a pair were nesting at Ankarafantsika and showed very nicely, with another in the forest later. Just great. [E]

WHITE-HEADED VANGA (*Artamella viridis*) – Good looks at Makira and Andasibe and some folks saw it at Ankarafantsika. [E]

POLLEN'S VANGA (*Xenopirostris polleni*) – Wilbur saw this at Vohiparara but everyone else got sidetracked by Tylas Vangas, though we could hear it calling; these big *Xenopirostris* vangas are all tricky and this one especially can be hard. [E]

LAFRESNAYE'S VANGA (*Xenopirostris xenopirostris*) – One on a nest at Parc Mosa, the big blue-grey bill showing well, another rather rare and elusive vanga. [E]

VAN DAM'S VANGA (*Xenopirostris damii*) – This one is usually hard to get, but this year we were on it within 10 minutes when we heard one call quietly, and the female came in really close and hung around vocalizing for some time! I recorded at least 3 calls and have posted some to the sites at IBC and XC. Ndrema tells me there are just 4 pairs here, and it known from very few other sites, with massive habitat damage ongoing. [E]

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)

ASHY CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina cinerea*) – Seen up at Makira, then at Andasibe and Ranomafana. Madagascar Cuckooshrike is a much better name..... This one seems to be a mimic of Tylas Vanga for some strange reason. [E]

REUNION CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Lalage newtoni*) – Amazing, having really downplayed our chances, one began calling and Kathleen spotted the male sneaking in in dense cover where a few of us got brief looks. It began to rain, but happily just after it stopped the bird called again and eventually hopped up onto a sapling for good views and even some photos! I had not seen this since 2010, though I heard it in 2011 and 2013. Another rare and problematic cuckooshrike, with about 30 pairs and 10 unattached males in a tiny area of higher altitude forest on the Plaine des Chicots at La Roche Ecrite, so we were very lucky to get this as the final endemic of the trip, a neat finale. At least Reunion does not have macaques and mongoose to contend with, though rats are seemingly the big issue here. [E]

MAURITIUS CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Lalage typica*) – We got a distant calling bird but it did not come in this year despite two attempts at the site. A very rare species, now the world's rarest Cuckooshrike with <30 pairs, I am not optimistic that this one will survive given the predation levels in Mauritius. [E*]

Dicruridae (Drongos)

CRESTED DRONGO (*Dicrurus forficatus*) – Widespread in small numbers in the forest regions and several nests seen, as at Berenty. Also heard mimicking Pollen's Vanga at Ranomafana. [E]

Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

MASCARENE PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone bourbonnensis bourbonnensis*) – Two at Cascade Niagara were a surprise but did not show well, then a couple up at La Roche Ecrite next day, with these showing very nicely too. Usually split as an endemic these days, pity we did find the Mauritius one which is a much harder prospect. [E]

MADAGASCAR PARADISE-FLYCATCHER (*Terpsiphone mutata*) – Just small numbers in the wetter 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 a black cap. [E]

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*) – David saw one at Flic en Flac, then we had 3 flying high away as we neared the airport next day. They try to control the numbers as this has the potential to be a major pest species. [I]

PIED CROW (*Corvus albus*) – Seen on most days in the drier areas, with a couple of nests at Berenty. Drongos give this species a very hard time there.....

Alaudidae (Larks)

MADAGASCAR LARK (*Mirafraga hova*) – Just a few as we came near Isalo, then seen well at La Table and briefly near Berenty. Genetic studies indicate this should be placed in *Eremopterix* with the sparrow-larks, which is very bizarre as it nothing like them. [E]

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

PLAIN MARTIN (MADAGASCAR) (*Riparia paludicola cowani*) – Some good views at Ranomafana this year, it is an uncommon species.

MASCARENE MARTIN (*Phedina borbonica madagascariensis*) – Small numbers in Madagascar, especially at Tana airport and then at Ranomafana. Seen by Steve G on Mauritius, where it seems very scarce.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – All too common on the Mascarenes where it is a competitor with native species for food and nest sites. A shame as it's an attractive species, just in the wrong place! [I]

MADAGASCAR BULBUL (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*) – Quite common in the Madagascan forests, a large untidy looking bird with dark cap and red bill, and seemingly quite a good mimic, they appeared to be mimicking the lovebirds at Berenty. One was on a nest at Zombitse. [E]

REUNION BULBUL (*Hypsipetes borbonicus*) – Initially quiet, but became quite vocal later and we got good views of a couple of birds up at La Roche Ecrite as usual. The white eye is very distinct, as is the voice. [E]

MAURITIUS BULBUL (*Hypsipetes olivaceus*) – A fine bird at the picnic site, then another at Bassin Blanc which was very co-operative, this can be a difficult one to find so we did well this year. [E]

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

MADAGASCAR BRUSH-WARBLER (*Nesillas typica*) – Nice looks at the flufftail marsh near Ambositre and at Lac Alarobia and Andasibe, a very long-tailed species with a distinctive dry takking call. [E]

SUBDESERT BRUSH-WARBLER (*Nesillas lantzii*) – Seen well at La Table. [E]

MADAGASCAR SWAMP-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus newtoni*) – Seen very nicely when we tried for the Madagascar Rail at Mantadia, and heard at most wetlands. [E]

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

BROWN EMU-TAIL (*Bradypterus brunneus*) – I tried calling one in and it succeeded after a fashion, as a few folks got so see it sneaking silently through the undergrowth; it shot across the track and never made a sound, this is one of the hardest to see birds on the tour. Now placed in *Bradypterus* brush warblers, which is a bit of a surprise. [E]

GRAY EMU-TAIL (*Amphilais seebohmi*) – Good looks at the marsh at Vohiparara, where it was quite vocal. [E]

Bernieridae (Malagasy Warblers)

WHITE-THROATED OXYLABES (*Oxylabes madagascariensis*) – Steve R saw one with Gerard, and the rest of us heard it at Ranomafana at two sites, but never got a view. [E]

LONG-BILLED BERNIERIA (*Bernieria madagascariensis*) – One up on Antsahabe Ridge at Makira is of the northern taxon inceleber, now being mooted as a split (Pale Bernieria) from the nominate birds of the east and west, which do look rather different to my eyes. We saw one of this taxon at Andasibe and another at Zombitse. 2 birds were at Ankarafantsika also. [E]

CRYPTIC WARBLER (*Cryptosylvicola randrianasoloi*) – Tough this trip, we finally got it at the last stop we made at Ranomafana whilst en route to Isalo, with one coming in to the tape. A family group of Green Jery then followed it in but this one lacks any yellow below, is pale brown above and has a bit of a supercilium. This is a species discovered by our very own Bret Whitney and Jan Pierson of Field Guides, picked up on the different call and aptly named. [E]

WEDGE-TAILED JERY (*Hartertula flavoviridis*) – Great views of a family group at Ranomafana, with a couple of juveniles that were lacking tails. Now placed in Bernieridae and not a jery at all, the narrow yellow supercilium is a useful field character and they are much more like tetraks than a jery. [E]

THAMNORNIS (*Thamnornis chloropetoides*) – Now boringly named Subdesert Tetraka in the field guide, but Thamnornis is far more memorable! We got one singing and perching up for scope views early on at Parc Mosa, the only place we get to see it. [E]

SPECTACLED TETRAKA (*Xanthomixis zosterops*) – Very scarce this trip, we got just one small group of 3 at Ranomafana, they are usually much more in evidence than this in the wet forests. [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 of a bird that hopped up onto a nest. [E]

GRAY-CROWNED TETRAKA (*Xanthomixis cinereiceps*) – A fine bird at Ranomafana creeping along mossy trunks, the most difficult of the former greenbuls (now tetraks) that we regularly see and easily missed on a tour. [E]

RAND'S WARBLER (*Randia pseudozosterops*) – Seen well at Andasibe, they counter-sing with Stripe-throated Jery, quite why I know not! [E]

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

COMMON JERY (*Neomixis tenella*) – A small foraging group at Lac Alarobia showed nicely, and also seen at Zombitse, we tend to overlook them once initially seen! [E]

GREEN JERY (*Neomixis viridis*) – Heard at Makira, and seen well at Andasibe, in the scope briefly there, before we saw one at Ranomafana and then next day a foraging group with 2 juveniles that came in with the Cryptic Warbler. The greyish head is distinctive, plus the very green back. [E]

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

MADAGASCAR CISTICOLA (*Cisticola cherina*) – Widespread, often heard, seen well at Jardin du Roy where they were displaying. [E]

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

REUNION WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops olivaceus*) – The Reunion Olive White-eye was quite vocal at La Roche Ecrite and we got some good views, but nowhere near as common as the Reunion Grey White-eye. [E]

MAURITIUS WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops chloronothos*) – Great looks at 2 at Bassin Blanc, coming in to feed in a Ficus by the road and quite vocal; this is one rare bird, one of the rarest Zosterops, and usually called the Mauritius Olive White-eye to pair with the commoner sibling on Reunion. [E]

REUNION GRAY WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops borbonicus*) – Common at La Roche Ecrite, they have rufous flanks and white rumps, an attractive little bird. [E]

MAURITIUS GRAY WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops mauritanus*) – Quite common, the only common endemic in fact, we saw it by our hotel and then again at Bassin Blanc, and with good numbers of very vocal birds at La Roche qui Pleure in the introduced Casuarinas there. [E]

MADAGASCAR WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops maderaspatanus*) – Widespread and vocal in the wet forests, the first being up at Makira. [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. Seen well at the Centrest at Ranomafana and at Berenty. [E]

FOREST ROCK-THRUSH (BENSON'S) (*Monticola sharpei bensoni*) – Great looks at this odd taxon at Jardin du Roy, a male was singing on a rooftop and up on the cliff there, and a juvenile came to it. I can't believe this is the same species as the Forest Rock Thrush, I made some recordings 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 male of this quite restricted range species, the untidy cup nest was again on the rafters inside the bar! Gerard thinks they are declining, maybe due to Myna predation. [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*) – Great looks at males and females up at La Roche Ecrute, and a nest right by the trail with a couple of tiny fluffy juveniles. [E]

Sturnidae (Starlings)

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

MADAGASCAR STARLING (*Hartlaubius auratus*) – Just one up at Makira, then another seen at Mantadia, they were scarce this trip. [E]

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)

SOUIMANGA SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris souimanga*) – The common Madagascar sunbird, seen well at many sites. [E]

MADAGASCAR SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris notatus*) – Far less common, but seen nicely in the wet forest zones at Makira and then at Mantadia, Andasibe, Ranomafana and Ankarafantsika, just single males for the most part. Madagascar Green Sunbird is a much better name for it, as per the field guide. [E]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

MADAGASCAR WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flaviventris*) – The first endemic for many, seen in Tana and then tame at Ranomafana and Feon' Ny Ala. [E]

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY (*Serinus mozambicus*) – One at Bassin Blanc. [I]

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Phil saw a couple during a stopover at Tamatave en route to Maroantsetra, it is very restricted in its range in Madagascar. Then common in the towns on the Mascarenes. [I]

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

VILLAGE WEAVER (*Ploceus cucullatus*) – One of the black masked and yellow-crowned southern African races is quite common on Mauritius, and may be a problem for the endemic Mauritius Fody. Also seen at Cascade Niagara on Reunion. [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 and also at Ampijoroa. They nest colonially in villages like regular weavers, not solitarily like the Nelicourvi. The eggs are a bright plain mid-blue color, we saw 4 of them beneath a colony at Berenty. [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. The birds on Reunion are a brilliant vermilion red, much brighter than the Madagascar ones! [E]

FOREST FODY (*Foudia omissa*) – Several of the group saw this at Ranomafana, with a male by the park HQ where it was calling (and I was unsighted!) and then one from the bus as we were leaving Vohiparara. Quite scarce and very much a wet forest species. [E]

MAURITIUS FODY (*Foudia rubra*) – A fine male at Pigeon Wood, quite a rare species that is suffering from introduced predators and competitors. [E]

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

COMMON WAXBILL (*Estrilda astrild*) – A small flock at Pigeon Wood, and probably harmless here as in rubbish modified habitats. Some also saw it Cascade Niagara. [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 Makira, Ranomafana and Andasibe, and John saw it at Berenty and Ankarafantsika, it is a tiny bird. [E]

MAMMALS

TENREC (*Tenrec ecaudatus*) – A dead one in the road up to La Roche Ecrute, seen by some and highly prized for the meat. It is introduced in the Mascarenes for this purpose.

LOWLAND STREAKED TENREC (*Hemicentetes semispinosus*) – Great views of one of these extraordinary creatures at Makira on the trail in the camp, a very striking animal with its yellow erectile spiny crest; Also then seen at Mantadia.

SMALL MADAGASCAR HEDGEHOG (*Echinops telfairi*) – One at Berenty was a nice find, it duly curled up under a log and we left it in peace.

MAURITIUS FRUIT BAT (*Pteropus subniger*) – A few at Bassin Blanc and near La Roche Qui Pleure, apparently now the government wants to control this rare species as it damages fruit crops.....

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

GRAY MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus murinus*) – A fabulous show by several of these endearing creatures at the Bamboo Club by the restaurant during our dinner there.

BROWN MOUSE LEMUR (*Microcebus rufus*) – This was the cute little guy licking honey by the roadside at Andasibe, and usually 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 well hiding in Euphorbia on the spiny forest walk at Berenty. None seen that night due to the bright moon.

GREATER DWARF LEMUR (*Cheirogaleus major*) – Great views of 2 at Makira on the night walk there, a very cute beast indeed.

FURRY-EARED DWARF LEMUR (*Cheirogaleus crossleyi*) – Great looks at one at Feon' Ny Ala, where an irate German had staked out one with banana and waited an hour for it to arrive, just as we did!

FAT-TAILED DWARF LEMUR (*Cheirogaleus medius*) – One up near our lodge at Ankarafantsika, but very high up and hard to discern clearly.

COMMON BROWN LEMUR (*Eulemur fulvus*) – Very scarce this trip, just a couple of singles at Andasibe was it.

WHITE-FRONTED BROWN LEMUR (*Eulemur albifrons*) – A couple seen nicely at Makira.

RED-FRONTED LEMUR (*Eulemur rufifrons*) – Usually called Red-fronted Brown Lemur, they are the introduced one at Berenty. We usually see wild ones at Ranomafana, but not this year due to the dry conditions there.

RED-BELLIED LEMUR (*Eulemur rubriventer*) – Two up at Mantadia were the only ones we saw, and they did not linger.

RING-TAILED LEMUR (*Lemur catta*) – The other star at Berenty, and with the cessation of providing 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, they have strange birdlike calls too.

GOLDEN BAMBOO LEMUR (*Haplemur aureus*) – Very good views of 2 at Ranomafana this year, this rare species was the main reason the park was established.

RED RUFFED LEMUR (*Varecia rubra*) – Heard distantly up at Makira, the river apparently forms the boundary for the range of this striking species, which we usually see at Masoala. [✱]

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, looking a bit damp!

MOORE'S WOOLLY LEMUR (*Avahi mooreorum*) – A striking grey headed sportive lemur at Makira resembles this newly described species, but has a blackish dorsal stripe, it may be yet another of these phylogenetic species they are so fond of erecting.

VERREAUX'S SIFAKA (*Propithecus verreauxi*) – We saw them really well at Zombitse, then this is the star of Berenty, that amazing sideways bounce across the tracks is fabulous. We had a great experience with them again this year, seeing several big troupes in all kinds of action.

COQUEREL'S SIFAKA (*Propithecus coquereli*) – One of the most beautiful of this group, they showed very well at Ankarafantsika this year, a really lovely animal.

DIADEMED SIFAKA (*Propithecus diadema*) – Great looks at 2 up at Mantadia, of the wild population too, not the ones that have been perhaps unwisely put up on Indri Ridge for the lemur-loving public.

INDRI (*Indri indri*) – A great experience with them up at Mantadia, where we saw a single, then 2 animals before a very fine group of 3 down at Andasibe where the mum was nursing a baby and fell endearingly asleep as we watched quietly. Also heard marvellously, up at Mantadia and then from Feon' Ny Ala where I got a lovely tape of 3 animals calling at 0520.

RED FOREST RAT (*Nesomys rufus*) – Seen well at Ranomafana.

Herps

LINED DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma lineata*) – One up at Makira.

PEACOCK DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma quadriocellata*) – Quite common at Andasibe and Ranomafana, these jewel-geckoes are very striking creatures.

STANDING'S DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma standingi*) – Nice looks at Zombitse, Bamboo Club and Berenty.

MADAGASCAR DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma madagascariensis*) – One from Ankarafantsika.

MAURITIUS DAY GECKO (*Phelsuma cepedianana*) – Nice looks at one with a damaged tail at Bel Ombre.

CARPET CHAMELEON (*Furcifer lateralis*) – Steve found this striking green one at the Victory Hotel in Tulear.

MALAGASY GIANT CHAMELEON (*Furcifer oustaleti*) – Oddly this year we only saw 2 as we stopped for lunch en route to Isalo, and then again up at Ankarafantsika. The reddish animal spotted on the school fence near Ankarafantsika by Steve G was particularly memorable. This is usually the common dry country species and get can get quite large. More usually called Oustalet's Chameleon.

MADAGASCAR GIANT CHAMELEON (*Furcifer verrucosus*) – This was seen very well in the spiny forest at Berenty and Steve R saw it at Parc Mosa too, usually called the Warty or Spiny-backed Chameleon.

HORNED LEAF CHAMELEON (*Brookesia superciliaris*) – This amazingly feeble-looking little horned beast was shown to us at Ranomafana, the limbs are like matchsticks and I can't imagine how they survive!

SHORT-HORNED CHAMELEON (*Calumma brevicorne*) – Seen at Andasibe and Ranomafana.

SHORT-NOSED CHAMELEON (*Calumma nasuta*) – Nice looks at Feon' Ny Ala.

O'SHAUGNESSY'S CHAMELEON (*Calumma oshaugnessyi*) – One of the stars of the tour from Ranomafana, the female is orange with small green dots on the limbs, whilst the much larger male has big protuberant orangey horns and is vividly colored like something by Jackson Pollock, just astonishing. See the photo in the gallery.

PANTHER CHAMELEON (*Calumma pardalis*) – This one was seen a couple of times at Maroantsetra, the first of eleven species of chameleon on the tour, which was a record for this trip.

BLUE-LEGGED CHAMELEON (*Calumma crypticum*) – A single from Ranomafana, one of the less common ones.

PARSON'S GIANT CHAMELEON (*Calumma parsonii*) – Nice looks from Andasibe.

GIANT LEAF-TAIL GECKO (*Uroplatus fimbriatus*) – A star find from Makira, Armand saw it sat right by the trail and looking much like a curled dead leaf, the camouflage is astonishing and this is one really bizarre genus.

AFRICAN HOUSE GECKO (*Hemidactylus mercatorius*) – Quite common in the hotels at several sites.

GECKO SP. (*Blaesodactylus sakalava*) – This is the fairly large dark-colored nocturnal gecko we saw at Berenty, and I think also at Zombitse earlier.

MADAGASCAR GROUND BOA (*Boa manditra*) – A dead one on the road at Ranomafana was all we saw.

MALAGASY GIANT HOGNOSE SNAKE (*Leioheterodon madagascariensis*) – One seen briefly at Maroantsetra, then great views of 2 large vividly patterned ones up to 5' long at Ankarafantsika, with one digging its snout into the leaf litter as per the name!

BERNIER'S STRIPED SNAKE (*Dromicodryas bernieri*) – I think this was the small striped one at the snipe marsh near Ambositre.

COLLARED IGUANA (*Oplurus cuvieri*) – Common at Ankarafantsika, a striking creature.

GRANDIDIER'S MADAGASCAR SWIFT (LIZARD) (*Oplurus grandidieri*) – Seen at Ranomafana.

MADAGASCAR ZONOSAUR (*Zonosaurus madagascariensis*) – One at Maroantsetra.

BROAD-TAILED ZONOSAUR (*Zonosaurus laticaudatus*) – Fine views of two of this broad-backed and long-tailed species at Ankarafantsika.

THREE-EYED LIZARD (*Chalarodon madagascariensis*) – Quite common in the dry areas, the odd vestigial eye shows well on the head top.

MALAGASY GOLDEN FROG (*Mantella madagascariensis*) – Jean-Chris showed us one of these tiny gems en route to Vohiparara, the colors both above and below are amazing.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

We had numerous other sightings of interest:

A rat from the mouse lemur feeding site at Ranomafana is apparently something called *Eliurus tanala*, the Tanala tufted tailed-rat.

An amazing pale colored Vespertilionid bat found by Steve and Sharon at the Bamboo Club looks to be Commerson's Leaf-nosed bat *Hipposideros commersoni*.

HERPS

Trachylepis sp. (*Mabuya*) was a skink we saw at Andasibe.

The Rhinoceros Chameleon *Furcifer rhinocerotus* was seen very nicely as we ended our night walk near Ankarafantsika, the eleventh species of the trip and actually a new one for Phil too. It has the most bizarre head shape with a serrated and rather blunt horn poking out laterally from the forehead. Endemic to the dry western forests and a very good find

The big-eyed snake *Mimophis* sp. with a small one in the riparian forest then an adult later.

Trachylepis (*Mabuya*) was a skink we saw at Berenty.

The Spider Tortoise (*Pyxis arachnoides*) is a species of tortoise in the Testudinidae family. We were lucky enough to see 1 at Ifaty spiny forest and another at Berenty; it is endemic to Madagascar and one of only two species in the genus *Pyxis*. Very little is known about the life cycle of this endangered tortoise, which is believed to live for up to 70 years. The remaining tortoises are found only in south western Madagascar, where they inhabit the spiny vegetation of the sandy coastal areas. They feed on young leaves, insect larvae, and even the droppings of larger animals.

Frogs

Quite a good tour for them, we saw what I think is *Boophis bottae* at Mantadia, being small and green with red eyes.

A striking bluish-white frog with orange feet was seen at Maroantsetra.

A small green frog with a white facial V stripe and small dark dots on a pale green background was seen at the Croix du Sud Hotel, one I had never seen before for sure.

A dark brown one with a reddish face stripe and short legs was on the track near Ankarafantsika on the night walk.

OTHER CREATURES

Other oddities include the hissing cockroach we saw at Ifaty, which I duly tape recorded, and a couple of small yellowish-grey scorpions at Berenty.

An amazing red and orange ferocious looking robber fly with an imposing set of mandibles was at Ankarafantsika, quite daunting I must say!

Flatid leaf bug *Phromnea rosea* is a member of the planthopper family and endemic to Madagascar, we saw the extraordinary white flower-like nymphs at several dry sites, with some folks seeing the rose-colored adults too.

Giant land snails were also seen at Ranomafana, Andasibe and Ankarafantsika, they are native here.

BUTTERFLIES

I can find nothing accessible in the way of books on Madagascar butterflies, and they again proved particularly vexatious to photograph on this trip, though I did manage a few and have put some on the Smugmug website for this tour. We did see the spectacular *Papilio antenor* at the spiny forest, and a beautiful black and blue swallowtail at puddles at Mantadia.

Two lovely moths were the reddish and purple large-sized *Antherina suraka* at Ankarafantsika, and the very beautiful sunset moth *Chrysiridia rhipheus* from Makira, endemic to Madagascar and much prized by collectors.

Many of the photos are on the Internet Bird Collection (IBC), a free access site via Lynx Edicions (publishers of the classic Handbook of Birds of World). It is a superb collection of videos, photos and sound cuts and I usually post pictures and sound cuts from the tours here, as well as on the Field Guides gallery for that particular tour.

I also recommend the xeno-canto website which has cuts of almost all the world's bird species, I contribute cuts from most tours and the Torotoroka Scops and Madagascar Nightjar cuts are uploaded.

Folks were also asking about the IOC World Checklist of Birds, a free access downloadable Excel file that gets updated every 4 months, version 5.4 has just been published. Go to worldbirdnames.org or google IOC and ignore the Olympics stuff!

Totals for the tour: 211 bird taxa and 25 mammal taxa