

A mammal, bird, reptile, orchid and people-watching trip to -

Madagascar

(and a very short stay in Mauritius)

18-10-98 to 21-11-98

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“weird (verb) – Madagascar”

When our first guide, Patrice Rabearisoa, asked us what we wanted to see, he went white (not easy) at our reply – “we want to see all the birds, mammals, reptiles, orchids and everything else of interest in the forest, in no particular order.” He showed us all these things and more in the paradise that was, and still is, in parts, Madagascar.

Outline of Trip

“Madagascar” I said to Dave, and his eyes lit up. Five weeks later we were looking at lemurs. Our advice was that there was no safe or even practical way to visit a country populated by thieves, thugs and other human detritus of the worst order. There was said to be no usable public transport and if the food or the locals didn’t kill you, the insects most definitely would. So Dave and I set out to test these propositions.

Madagascar is renowned for its wildlife, political instability and not much else. Our mission was to see as much of the native fauna and flora as possible during a five-week stay. We used public transport at all times and hired local guides at every location (this is generally compulsory anyway). We scattered ourselves widely throughout the country as the habitats are extremely varied, boasting rainforest, semi-desert, the so-called spiny forest and anything in between.

Our expectations for the trip were not high given that we had little prior information and fully expected to be roasted slowly over a kitchen fire somewhere if we had managed to avoid perishing in a traffic accident. The reality was that Madagascar blew us away. It was sensational – the gorgeous and accommodating people, the wildlife of course, and the wonderful feeling you get when you get home and eat proper food.

What follows are some general observations, a diary, and a bird, mammal and reptile list.

(We also spent a night both ways in Mauritius - my diary reflects this)

Sites visited:

Mahebourg in Mauritius, 2 nights – one each way from Australia

Perinet (Andasibe) area, including Mantadia National Park, 6 nights

Berenty Reserve (near Fort Dauphine), 3 nights

Toliara (Tulear) area, including Mora Mora and Le Mangrove, 5 nights

Ranomafana National Park (including two nights at Fianarantsoa), 7 nights

Antananarivo (“Tana”), 3 nights

Ampijoroa Forest Station, 5 nights

Mahajunga, 2 nights

Our itinerary allowed for all kinds of horrible holiday things to happen that simply didn't - things like crap weather, transport dramas, riots, and above all, elusive wildlife. Except for the occasional riot, none of these things were realised, so we had more time than was necessary in each location. This compounded to the point where we set a record for the longest stay of any tourists at Ampijoroa. We simply had nowhere else to go given our flight schedules. This was not a bad result, all things considered, as we had a chance to relax with the locals and soak in the island lifestyle. Some of my best memories are of days where virtually no wildlife spotting was done, but rather spent observing and chatting.

Some observations

Malagasy People

The island of Madagascar was settled by Malays. Arriving later were the Bantu people from Africa. Counter-intuitively the Malays are more likely found in the higher (central) parts and the Bantu around the coast. French colonists are quite rare, but their presence is manifest in the ability of the locals to make good quality bread, and just as well too, as most other things make you sick, if eaten.

The demeanor of the Malagasy is one of fatalistic good cheer. I cannot get the image of a banana salesman in Fianarantsoa out of my mind. I bought his entire stock – one large hand of bananas – for about ten cents, and he was cock-a-hoop. He went home (I guess) sporting a huge grin! Almost all people we met were helpful, accommodating and genuinely pleased to meet travellers. Amazingly, many knew quite a bit about Australia and its animals. They could identify koalas and kangaroos and other Oz images. Apparently they learnt about the previous connection with Australia through the Gondwanaland connection at school.

We loved the Malagasy and they liked us. Good trade. Just be careful around Tana and bus terminals.

Accommodation

We took camping gear with us, as there were no other options at some of the sites we visited. Some international bird tour companies whose clients only stay in hotel accommodation are forced to travel several hours to and from sites like the brilliant Ampijoroa Forest.

Hotels were used when available and ranged from rather disgusting (a Lonely Planet “recommended” shit-dump at Mahajunga) to brilliant, in the case of the Feon N’yala at Perinet or the Hotel Arinofy at Fianarantsoa. All things considered, the accommodation was much better than we expected, but we didn’t expect much.

Guides

We engaged local guides everywhere we went. To say we were stunned at their levels of knowledge, enthusiasm and professionalism would be a gross understatement. In what is a very poor country, and where English ranks nowhere as a spoken language, the guides can often name with common or scientific names every living thing you can find. Our introduction to the quality of the guides is typified by our experience on our first full day in Madagascar. As we walked toward the park entrance at Perinet from our hotel we could hear many different birds calling from the same place. Malagasy lyrebird, perhaps? No, just one of the guides going through his repertoire. Ranomafana National Park goes one step further and has a graded selection of guides of different skills levels and pay rates.

You could be assured that any question you might have regarding birds, mammals and reptiles has been asked before, and you are very likely to get an informed and honest answer.

National Parks in Madagascar (ANGAP)

All national parks or other protected areas we visited were managed to a high standard, even compared to parks elsewhere in the world. They all charged reasonable entry fees and appeared to be supported by the local communities. They had sets of rules that were not too restrictive and which tended to be relaxed for “reasonable” people like ourselves. They generally charged extra for night walks but these were without any doubt worth every cent.

Madagascar has seen most of its forests entirely removed. Much of what is left is regrowth. Amazingly much of its fauna seems capable of living successfully in remnant forest patches. Quite small compartments will generally have an assortment of lemurs, chameleons and many birds.

Roads / transport

Surprisingly good roads serviced the main routes around the island. There were a few bits that inexplicably missed out for reasons that eluded me. I guess the aid money ran out. 2WD traffic can still get around on these stretches but very slowly. There is something of a double-edged sword in this – you are far less likely to die on the gravel roads. The speed that a minibus can travel along a sealed road is worse than scary. There has only been one occasion anywhere where I have had to give loud and clear advice to a driver of a public transport vehicle and it occurred between Ranohira and Fianarantsoa. He slowed down and we lived to talk about it.

Most long-distance public transport was in the form of new or near new 12-seater minibuses. They were always full but not over-full, as there are laws against this and regular police checkpoints take bribes from drivers where the laws have been “misinterpreted”.

Transport of the more local variety is by way of the taxi-brousse. These were almost always aged Peugeot 404s or 504s with odometers that ceased to operate sometime during the Middle Ages. Many were held together with fencing wire, chewing gum or animal body parts. The experience to be gained by travelling in one of these “vehicles” ranges from mild concern to outright terror. Expect the occasional breakdown, assuming the vehicle can be made to function in the first place.

City taxis were also all old French-built things. The quality of the vehicles in their original manufactured form was undoubted, but it was a little disconcerting when we arrived at Tana Airport from Mauritius and had to push-start the taxi.

Weather

Pretty damn good. It was cool to mild at most locations during the night and warm during the day. The exception was Ampijoroa which was warm at night, particularly when

nearby buildings were on fire, and almost too hot for man or beast by day. Rain largely eluded us. We had about two hours by day during the whole trip.

Insects

Two. One at Ranamafana and one somewhere else and they were both left alive! Be scared! Oh, and a few million mosquitoes at Mora Mora – don't go out at night.

Apparently malaria is very common in the east. The locals kept telling us to take our pills. We met an unusually stupid French chappy with malaria. He seemed quite stressed by this new feeling in his body but seemed opposed to the cure we offered him. He may still live, but that is by no means certain.

Some of the non-threatening insects were interesting, particularly the giraffe-necked weevils.

Food

It was possible to live on bread rolls, tinned meat (yuck), mangoes and bananas. I know this from my visit. The bread rolls were exquisite, ubiquitous and very cheap. The fruit was even cheaper with the cost meaningless. We always bought fruit in commercial quantities, or else there was no currency small enough to pay for it.

That's the good news. Don't even contemplate eating red meat in Madagascar unless you knew the animal from which it came and personally supervised every part of the process that led to its arrival on your plate. I weakened and ate some zebu steak at what looked like a good restaurant. Very shortly thereafter I was hallucinating, babbling and crying for my mummy. My temperature was so high I could easily be detected by infrared weather satellites. It ranks by large measure as the worst stomach experience I have ever heard of, let alone experienced. We later offered some to a dog but it refused to eat it.

Bottled water is widely available.

Beer

The only thing written in English in the entire country appeared on the labels of "Three Horses Beer" bottles. Three simple words ending in "beer". It was quite drinkable too. Horses, or their waste, appear to have played no part in the ingredients unlike some exotic brews I have sampled. The THB mob seemed to have cornered the market on this particular travel aid.

Wildlife (see full list in table at end of report)

Birds

The bird list for an island the size of Madagascar is not as long as one might expect. The high rate of endemism, the beauty, the unusual adaptations and the relative tameness of the birds make up for any shortfalls in the long lists one could expect to see elsewhere. We were ecstatic with our sightings and the circumstances that surrounded them. We missed a few desirable chooks, as always, but managed most of the important endemics for a total of 142 species, with an extra 20 in Mauritius. See list at the end of this report.

Mammals

Lemurs are the best mammals on earth, as everyone already knows. I would not have travelled to the island if it had no lemurs. Everything you have seen on television cannot prepare you for how magnificent and friendly these animals are, and how well they are adapted to their environment. They are generally abundant in protected forests, with little likelihood that any of the local species will be missed if you spent a few days at each site. Often all the local lemurs could be seen on the first day and night!

Other mammals are also possible. We were lucky to get good views of fossas, a range of tenrecs, a weasel and a mongoose, amongst others.

Reptiles

Chameleons are not far behind in the race for the most desirable and observable wildlife. I suspect they are quite common in most habitats but can be rascally difficult to see. Many stayed in the treetops unless it was raining. Others were more easily seen at night, but they all shared one characteristic – they desired not to be seen at all. I always thought I had a pretty good eye for things, but the local boys could spot a chameleon in a tree before I could even see the tree.

Snakes are common in Madagascar. People don't tend to bother them and vice versa. Like all the other critters, the snakes were interesting and easily seen at most sites. Many didn't bother to get out of our way.

Last but certainly not least are the geckos. The diurnal geckos are probably the most brightly coloured reptiles anywhere. Don't even entertain the idea that you are quick enough to catch one. These guys are so quick that if you listen closely you can detect a small sonic boom as they scarper. Great for pictures of empty tree trunks.

Diary

Sunday 18th October

My ex-brother-in-law Greg drove me to the airport where I caught up with Dave at the check-in scrum. We flew with Ansett to Melbourne and transferred to an Air Mauritius A340 airbus to Mauritius via Perth. I managed a bed as far as Perth but had no luck thereafter. Before I could summon the courage to quietly murder a couple of babies, Dave solved the problem by flushing them down the toilet while their mother was asleep.

Monday 19th October

We arrived at Mahebourg feeling shagged (but not having been) and absorbed the reality of having my luggage, but musing on the implications of Dave's bags being in a place called Melbourne, Australia. Dave wasn't happy. Methinks this was exacerbated by the scarcity of flights from Oz to Mauritius. This meant that the bags had to go back to Sydney, get transferred to a South African Airways flight to Jo'berg and from there to Tana some time later in the year.

After calming down, we jumped in a taxi for the Hotel Aquarelle, a French-run facility on the coast at Mahebourg. The hotel was a friendly place where the hosts spoke to us in English. We did some basic shopping in the adjacent town so Dave could change his undies etc. This is always nice early in a holiday.

After loading up on bread rolls and fruit we poached the hotel "taxi" for an afternoon at the nearby Domain de Chasseur Reserve. The reserve contained no dodos, hardly surprising really, but some remnant regrowth gave us some idea of where they used to live before we ate them all. Our guide Sam took us for a ramble through the forest where we observed very little of anything. Eventually we spied a couple of pair of Mauritian kestrels, a bird that at one stage had been almost killed out, save for four birds. Mauritius white-eye and an assortment of imported bul-buls, parakeets and finches got our bird-list underway.

The afternoon entertainment at this reserve consists of a "show" where the kestrels are fed live white mice at a special platform. Now we had already watched as the birds had eaten their way through a number of dragon lizards they had plucked from the tree trunks nearby. I suspected correctly that the birds were not the slightest bit interested in some clown and his mice. The crowd of silly French citizens stared at the mouse while I kept telling them to look at the kestrels wheeling behind them, but oh no, what would I know. It reminded me of the Leunig sunrise cartoon.

The afternoon was something of an endurance test. We were trying to stay up so that we could sleep when it got dark and so have our bodies start our holiday in Madagascar in the right time zone. Drinking beer did not help as we counted the minutes until dinner was served while slapping each other and banging our heads on trees and things. It took

me 11.3 seconds to eat my dinner, 2.8 seconds to get to my room and 0.6 seconds to be asleep, although it didn't seem to take that long.

Tuesday 20th October

Not much to do in the morning on account of wind and rain.

The hotel owners were mortified that we were going to Madagascar. They told us we would die there. Apparently this view is widely held in Mauritius. They were so certain of this "fact" that they cancelled our accommodation booking for our return and were not real happy to see us come back. More on that later.

After doing a little shopping we were off to the airport. Around midday the Air Madagascar 737 headed east. It featured some great food accompanied by French wine and champagne. I suppose they cancelled each other out. The arrival at Ivato Airport and the processing therein was civilized. We paid a visit to the lost luggage desk, bribing various individuals so that they would hold Dave's luggage until our return from Perinet several days later.

After push-starting some life into our antique taxi we cut across town to the Taxi-brousse Station East. From there we had a quick journey to Moramanga, a town near to our destination and the home village of the driver. We asked if he could drive us the rest of the way. He had to go home and ask his wife, who agreed and came with us for the ride. I don't think she got out much!

PERINET

We found the Hotel Feon N'yala at 1915 just before they stopped serving dinner. We checked in, had a great meal, were introduced to Three Horses Beer and enjoyed a hot shower. This hotel is situated right next to a reserve with a view of lake and forest and innumerable birds and lemurs.

We couldn't wait for morning!!

Wednesday 21st October

A cool rainy night was followed by some weird sounds emanating from the forest across the road.

We had an American breakfast, grabbed some bread rolls, chicken and tomatoes and traipsed along the road to the ANGAP office to pay our entrance fees for the park (about \$US10) and find a guide. A rather talented chap named Patrice was ambling toward us practicing bird calls, so we signed each other up and we were soon ready to go. He went a bit pale when we told him all the things we wanted to see (ie. everything) but was unfazed when we explained that we had a number of days to achieve this. He suggested we start on the birds, which made Dave very happy.

Patrice started the day as an unemotional character who didn't confide in us too much and just went through the motions as we criss-crossed the forest for the next eight hours. His character would change day by day and beer by beer.

The first day produced about 40 birds including cuckoo roller, velvet asity, Madagascar buzzard, blue coua and Madagascar scops owl. A couple of large Parson's chameleons (the world's biggest) were the reptile highlights and 21 gorgeous indri, 17 greater bamboo lemurs and five brown lemurs rounded out the day just superbly. How long had this place been here without me?

I don't know how many horses we drank, about 15 I think, but the day wasn't over by any means. After a meal, Patrice came spotlighting with us. A sportive lemur sighting was quickly followed by various sleeping birds and a selection of frogs. Then came a greater dwarf lemur. Greater dwarf? What were they thinking? Streaked tenrecs made an appearance as did an avahi or eastern woolly lemur. One of my greatest wildlife watching days ever!!

Thursday 22nd October

I was awake at 0330 and ready to go, I was so excited. We had a 0530 breakfast and a car with driver organized for a day at Mantadia National Park, 10,000 hectares of primary forest not too far up the road. Whilst this park is more or less adjacent to Perinet, it has different lemurs and birds. We were beaming when we had great views of black and white ruffed lemurs, an animal that has to be seen to be appreciated, and luck was on our side when we spied a troupe of diademed sifakas. Patrice explained that these animals could often take many days to locate.

Our bird tally was enriched by pitta-like ground-roller, greater vasa parrot and a Madagascar long-eared owl.

Patrice joined us for drinkies. He stunned us by saying that we were the first tourists to offer him beer after eight years of guiding! It seems most visitors to Perinet are French and French don't do free beer for the likes of Patrice and his lot.

Friday 23rd October

Patrice started the day showing us a few local bird rarities - Madagascar flufftail, Madagascar crested ibis, Madagascar wood rail and blue vanga. He disappeared for a while to attend a family matter and Dave and I wandered off on our own which was very liberating. Snakes, tenrecs, a red forest rat and an indri that was too close to photograph!

A few beers and an extended gasbag with the charming locals, hotel staff and tourists followed lunch. Patrice and his sister Marie, also a guide, joined us for a couple of ales before we went spotlighting. This time we found a lesser hedgehog tenrec and a flat-tailed gecko as well as sportive and greater dwarf lemurs.

Another day in paradise!

Saturday 24th October

Our early breakfast preceded an interesting day indeed. Patrice had been pre-booked by an embarrassment of French tourists, so against the park rules we sneaked into the park without a guide, which kinda upset the head of the guides association when he found us. Explaining that we were given permission by Patrice (who was probably not entitled to do such a thing) didn't help matters.

We passed Patrice on our way out of the park. We crossed the road to the so-called orchid garden. This site proved to be the highlight of my holiday, as no sooner had we arrived we were staring at a fossa (the island's top predator) up a tree. It walked down it, gave us a lingering stare and was off. My hair was standing on end – I was ecstatic to see one of the world's most fascinating animals and something we certainly did not expect to find.

Still glowing with excitement we were surprised to see Patrice running toward us shouting “fossa, big one!!” Yes, we said, we saw it. He didn't seem to hear us and just pleaded with us to follow him. About two kilometers away he showed us another fossa up a tree. He had abandoned his tour group for an hour or so while looking for us! So much for his love of the French. We felt very privileged indeed.

As we returned for lunch, once again through the park sans guide, we found a Madagascar little boa.

After doing some washing we sneaked into the park and had a brilliant time watching some stunning red-bellied lemurs. A very small baby explored its world as its mother and others of the troupe curled up into a communal lemur ball.

We arrived back at the hotel in time to entertain Patrice, sister Marie and his shy but delightful wife Vero. We had a great afternoon; good company, good beer and self-satisfaction in the knowledge that we were the only tourists during our stay here that had a drink with any of the locals. Patrice has transformed from the shy, retiring type to an opinionated character dishing out great insights into the local culture, conservation and tourism. Our “love” of the French is shared. He also explained that we were the first people in his experience that were interested in everything in the forest, as he is, which gave him great satisfaction.

We declined to go spotlighting as our bodies are failing. In confirmation of our decision it then started to rain.

Sunday 25th October

My 42nd birthday started with an illegal walk in the park. We found no new birds but enjoyed great views of red-bellied and brown lemurs before intersecting with a family of

indri for one last look at this magnificent creature. The rest of the day just drifted by, this being something of a lay day.

Monday 26th October

We said goodbye to Perinet and our friends at the Feon N'yala. We waited a while for a taxi-brousse to Moramanga. It was a fun trip as 26 of us crammed into and onto a Peugeot utility. We transferred almost immediately to a taxi-brousse for Tana and then a pre-war taxi to the airport.

Miraculously, Dave's luggage was there. Here the stuffed koalas were invaluable as more people were tipped and bribed, but nothing substantial. More in the way of thanks than any attempt at extortion by the helpful locals. We posted postcards and otherwise amused ourselves.

BERENTY

Our Madagascar Air 737 flight to Fort Dauphin, situated in the south east corner of Madagascar, was smooth and on time. On arrival we found ourselves welcomed by the Berenty Reserve people who maximized their opportunity for relieving us of cash. It was not cheap to stay at this small privately-owned but wildlife filled patch of forest surrounded by sisal plantations.

The road to the reserve gave us our first views of the incomparable ring-tailed lemur, along with a bonus Oustalet's chameleon. The vegetation was an interesting mix of cactus-filled savannah. We arrived at sunset, had a good meal and settled into a comfortable bungalow.

Tuesday 27th October

The day was spent in a Madagascar parallel universe. Nothing looks the same as it was at Perinet and yet the forest was full of lemurs and birds. There are so many ring-tailed lemurs, Verreaux's sifakas and lepilemurs in this forest that you marvel that they can all find something to eat. It was nothing to see mixed groups of twenty or more in one tree. The sifakas are mind-blowing as they leap from tree to tree but dance when on the ground. Ring-tailed lemurs sat around in the sun with arms outstretched. The lepilemurs carried a permanently startled expression on their round faces.

We were ascribed a guide, Andreas, for our stay. He displayed a total lack of enthusiasm but knew where the Malagasy scops owl, white-browed owls and other specialties were hiding.

Post-lunch and we were hunting particular birds, and managed Madagascar buttonquail, giant coua and a number of others. We couldn't find Madagascar sandgrouse. We then immersed ourselves in ring-tailed lemurs and Jack Daniels.

Spotlighting was silly. I am used to seeing the occasional animal when spotlighting, not eye-shine in every direction as grey mouse lemurs and lepilemurs appeared in abundance. It seems the only question regarding seeing lemurs in Madagascar is “which ones are here?”

Dinner and drinks preceded bed and unconsciousness. Our smiling waiter Desire sneaked me a few bananas for the lemurs.

Wednesday 28th October

Up very early for a bit of successful Madagascar sandgrouse, Madagascar buttonquail and guineafowl spotting along the river. After breakfast our driver, Felix, took us to see some baobab trees and for a walk in the spiny forest, which was very productive for birds and reptiles. We paid our guide and driver a little extra to take us to a local village to meet some of the people there. These guys worked on the sisal plantation and judging by their reactions at seeing us, we were something of a curiosity. Children here must spontaneously generate from sisal plants such was their abundance.

After collapsing for an hour or so, I produced the hidden bananas and very shortly thereafter became a lemur tree. The ability of these things to leap from the ground directly upwards is unbelievable. A few bruises marked their progress around my limbs.

We enjoyed a lovely dinner and drinks and a great chat with our new friends Desire and his fiancé Ninah in the restaurant. We paid them for our food and accommodation.

Thanks Berenty!

Thursday 29th October

We left at 0600 for Fort Dauphin. Today is market day and throngs of locals were all walking toward the small village where they would buy and trade. Some had walked 15 kilometres or more. The day was to grow more interesting.

We were surprised to be dumped, not at the airport, but at the Hotel le Dauphin, which was owned by the same people that ran the Berenty Reserve. They herded us into an office cum interrogation room where they demanded that we pay for our time at the reserve. The production of receipts showing our payment threw them off their stride but didn't stop them. Instead of becoming agitated, which never works with the French, I became loud and aggressive, which got their attention. I went on to make pronouncements about ruining their company, something I could never hope to achieve, but at length the manager appeared. She seemed like a lady who didn't wish for her head to be caved in, so she offered us a transfer to the airport – for a price. This didn't work any better for the Frogs than the previous extortion attempt. We agreed that they would get rid of us for free and we wouldn't kill anyone.

Our plane was delayed due to riots and civil insurrection in town. It seemed that the locals had taken a mixed view of Indian shopkeepers and decided to bomb and burn them and generally cause havoc. Our plane had gone to Tana to pick up 80 soldiers. I wandered through town blissfully detached from the proceedings, having almost started a similar campaign against French moteliers. I noted that Fort Dauphin was a decaying shit-hole.

TOLIARA (or Tulear)

The two hours riot delay did not prevent us from getting safely within an Air Madagascar 737 bound for Toliara, on the south west coast. The usual lot met us at the airport where we managed a taxi to the taxi-brousse terminal where we paid an extortionate amount to some secondary wildlife masquerading as people for passage on the last taxi-brousse of the day to the Mora Mora Hotel at Ifaty. The vehicle was a truck that only stalled once before it got hopelessly bogged in sand. It was a slow bumpy trip in one of the poorest parts of a poor country.

Our guide, Mosa, found us rather than the other way. He has a nose for birdwatchers.

I learnt, too late, not to eat at the Hotel Mora Mora.

Friday 30th October

Mosa's father, Masindraka, a local woodcutter, took us to see some rare birds in this dry spiky bastard of a place. With Mosa's help we saw the sub-desert mesite and long-tailed ground roller, but not without effort. I made regular deposits courtesy of last night's dinner. We were back at the hotel for breakfast after paying our guides the money they needed to spend the rest of the day drinking.

Madagascar plovers were seen on some short grass near the hotel.

I chatted with Tiana, a Malagasy guide we met at the airport on our first day. Lunch, then a walk along the beach, on one of the least interesting and dirtiest beaches I have seen. Skinny prostitutes walked up and down in their platform shoes. Never mind, the adjacent sea also supports a moderate local population of fisher-folk.

My stomach went into full revolt in the late afternoon – see “*food*”, in the introduction. I wanted to go home.

Saturday 31st October

Lomotil for breakfast. Our taxi-brousse for Toliara was jam-packed. I sat smothered with Malagasy women and children. We went to the Hotel Chez Alain to find that the transport to our next destination, Hotel La Mangrove left fifteen minutes earlier. We paid \$US20 for a taxi which almost shook down to its component parts.

A nice site on the sea awaited us at La Mangrove. We wandered the road but it was hot with not much doing.

A beer garden was the scene for a passport and visa check from some well-dressed men who might have been immigration officials but may not have been. It was all very unlikely and mysterious.

We ran into a noted and aged Sydney pedophile on his yearly visit to Madagascar with “his” young local girl in tow.

Fed most of my set menu dinner to a dog.

Sunday 1st November

I walked a trail to the top of an overlooking range of hills where there was a beautiful view of the sea. We saw Verreaux’s coua, a target bird, but not much else of any note.

A buffet lunch saw me pick at a few morsels but largely ignore most of it.

After lunch we were transferred back to the Hotel Chez Alain in an old Renault ex-army troop carrier. I bought mangoes, which was funny. Firstly, every second tree hereabouts is a mango tree covered in mangoes but I figured they belonged to someone and after all I could afford to pay. A quantity of the fruit about the size and shape of the Great Pyramid Of Cheops was purchased for the equivalent of ten cents.

Monday 2nd November

The minibus, a near new Mazda van, took us to Ranohira to the northeast of Toliara. We shot off like a startled cat but upon arrival at the town found that every accommodation was fully booked. We were referred from place to place but it soon became obvious that we had no place to stay. We had hoped to get to Isalo National Park but it was clear this was not going to happen so we bailed.

A minivan arrived but was already full. We negotiated with the driver and agreed to pay all the necessary bribes to the police checkpoints along the way. The other passengers didn’t seem to care. I inherited a large pair of tits. My right arm supported one as it fed a happy baby. A different way to travel. The drive to Fianarantsoa saw the driver desperately wanting to kill us. He must have taken a few happy pills and seemed to think that squealing tyres were an indication that the van was content with the world. I disabused him of this notion and he agreed to slow down. Others thanked me for my understanding of the meaning of life.

RANOMAFANA NATIONAL PARK

Shortly after 1700 we arrived in Fianarantsoa, a short drive from Ranomafana NP. We booked a taxi-brousse for the park for first thing the next morning. A tout followed us

from the taxi-brousse station to the Hotel Arinofy on the basis that he might get a tip even though we had already decided to stay there and could see it from the terminal.

We dined on a delicious and generous meal before a great sleep.

Tuesday 3rd November

A fist fight between two taxi-brousse operators competing for our business made for an energetic start to the day. I learnt never to say “yes mate, whatever” to get rid of someone again, as I apparently did yesterday. A very rough road tested our Peugeot station wagon on the two hour drive to Ranomafana NP. Our French friends in the transport were mightily miffed when they found that we had negotiated a much lower fare than they had (they had already paid for the charter and we were cream on top for the driver). Of course, it was very upsetting for us, not.

The park looked great and we soon settled into our campsites. These have a shelter built over each one! Grand! We ingratiated ourselves with David, the park boss-man, who explained that “black is beautiful” each time we saw him. He suggested we could go into the park without a guide, which we quickly did before he could change his mind. We crossed a small river and very soon were face to face with one of the planet’s rarest mammals – the golden bamboo lemur, dutifully chewing on some bamboo. Many others followed, the most amazing being Milne-Edward’s diademed sifaka, a fearless great thing that is likely to use you as a tree if you stand too still. This could be very painful we were told. Nice work.

Our stunning campground, lemurs and all, was the setting for an afternoon’s slothing before linking up with our guide, Loret, and a couple of hours of spotlighting. The spotlighting here is all done at a site the size of my bathroom. By my count, 38 of us sat about to witness the feeding spectacle. The mammals knew the drill and seven different kinds of mammal came to be fed or were otherwise seen – brown lemur, fat-tailed dwarf lemur, rufous mouse lemur (the world’s smallest primate), Milne-Edward’s diademed sifaka, red-bellied lemur, avahi (or eastern woolly lemur) and striped civet. And unbelievably, the Birdquest tour that shadowed us around Madagascar does not have this on its program - as there are no birds! What is the matter with these people? The mouse lemurs are so tiny with their perfectly formed little fingers and toes. These cute guys jog down the trees and lick banana that had been rubbed onto the bark.

Cold night. We had been advised that Madagascar was always really hot so we didn’t bring sleeping bags, just thermals and bag liners. We slept with all our clothes.

Wednesday 4th November

Sleepy-eyed Loret was late so the day started slowly but there was never any doubt about seeing the inhabitants of the forest. In fact it was an advantage to start late. It works this way – all the rare animals (and there are a few) are shadowed by park staff. It can take the staff a while to find each group each morning so an early start yields the poorest result.

Much yelling across valleys by guides on behalf of their customers pinpoints each different animal. The lemurs didn't seem to give a toss that they had human guardians.

Dave was very excited at seeing the local birds, with pitta-like ground roller the most beautiful and fortunately quite common. Dave oscillated between bouts of great excitement and conspiracy theories regarding our guide withholding information. Why he would want to do this eluded me entirely. The guides are paid a salary whether they work or not. It is in their best interests to show us everything quickly so they can go home.

The local birds were largely sorted during the morning, leaving time for the lemurs. First on my list was the rare broad-nosed gentle or greater bamboo lemur. Loret made a few primal grunts and was answered by one of his colleagues a couple of hills away. I was soon in the company of other tourists, various local researchers, scientists, documentary filmmakers, volunteers, Dave, Loret, and some greater bamboo lemurs. We have now seen all the local lemurs excepting the aye-aye, which is only a sort-of lemur anyway and occurs in low numbers up the road a bit.

The afternoon was punctuated by short drinking sessions, aimless wanderings and a spotlight along the road where others had recently seen big furry things.

Thursday 5th November

Our double-booked guide saw us join a group from Zimbabwe for the short journey uphill to Vohiparara. The two Zim men were truly horrible, one being in a league of his own in terms of horribleness. He explained to our guide of 12 years experience how to do his job. That was too much, Zim! So Dave and I started on him, slowly and subtly at first, but eventually with some degree of venom. His wife was happy for our support, and judging by her reaction she hadn't seen too many stand up to her husband's bullying before, so she loved us!

David, the park boss, had lent us some bicycles to ride back down the hill. They were for rent but he insisted we didn't have to pay. We had to get away from Zim so left him and rode the 9km back to Ranomafana.

All the guides had been booked so David sent us into the park without one. I had great views of ring-tailed mongoose after one of the locals burnt some chicken feathers. Soon the smelly smoke was seeping through the forest and along came this beautifully marked mammal. I then spent some time searching for insects with Keve, a large American researcher and bug expert.

Spotlighting threw up golden bamboo, fat-tailed dwarf and greater dwarf lemurs and ring-tailed mongoose.

Friday 6th November

A wonderful day. I decided to hire a guide from the lower end of the skills base, the young and charming Lalasua. (*Lalasua corresponded with me for several years after my return.*) I hoped to take photos of some Milne-Edward's diademed sifakas. She yelled "props" across the park and soon came the reply "props". I figured "props" was short for "Propithecus" the generic name for this group of lemurs. We waited for an hour while the "props" woke up, had a scratch, licked themselves, belted a few flies, had another scratch and progressively got closer until finally one jumped over me clearing my head by about six inches! This was when I learnt that it is not unknown for these very large lemurs to use humans as jumping posts.

I chatted with Lalasua for a long time and took some photos of her – she had none – before tracking down Dave who was in the company of some golden bamboo lemurs.

Today we went to town. There is a small village some distance down the road – too far to walk anyway. We had a big feed and bought a pile of food to bring back to camp. Had a beer or two in a hotel and watched the world go by.

Most of the rest of the afternoon was enjoyed drinking with some local girls and commenting on some very fat tourists that had joined the camp. The girls were fascinated by some of the men, especially the one with tits (not the girl's tits, the man's).

Spotlighting was cancelled.

Saturday 7th November

We were dropped up the road at Vohiparara to seek a few missing birds from our wish list. We saw most of them before going to a camp set up for biodiversity survey work. Here we arranged for the staff to take us spotlighting later in the day. We then called in at the local village where we sampled some cooked crayfish that they had caught earlier in the day in the river. Yummo!

Some of the afternoon was spent relaxing around the camp and helping the researchers identify things.

An early dinner before we piled into the park vehicle with our almost flat-tyred, brakes-challenged unlit bicycles. These were to be used later in the night to cover the long steep downhill run. We had hoped to see aye-aye but failed. We did see the world's smallest reptile, the pygmy stump-tailed chameleon, various lemurs, a beautiful flowering orchid or three, and each other. The trails were rough, the adventure was raw and the guides failed to get us lost. The local village head-man came to meet us and ask whether tourists would pay his men as guides if the area became a national park. Of course we responded in the positive if it meant saving the forest from being removed.

We engaged the extreme sport of the nocturnal downhill bike challenge without loss of life.

Sunday 8th November

We tracked down Crossley's babbler, a bird that had been elusive, three mongoose and the usual suspects. We then went to town where we had a beer at the pub before Loret found us. He gave us a lift back to camp after we did a little shopping. Total relaxation day.

Spotlighting revealed the more aggressive side of a rufous mouse lemur as it tackled and ate a small snake. Aside from that little cameo we found a few frogs, a streaked tenrec and little else.

Monday 9th November

We packed up and David organized the park vehicle to give us a lift to the village to wait for a taxi-brousse for Fiananananarantsoa. We waited and then we waited all over again. Four hours later an already crammed vehicle saw a major passenger reshuffle to stack us in. We sat crippled in the back. Half my arse was inside the vehicle and the other half out the window. Two breakdowns, not ours, but these things are communal, slowed our passage.

The day ended at the Hotel Arinofy. We could almost have walked from the park in the time we spent to get there, but at least we made it. Ate heartily on the fine fare offered and slept well.

Tuesday 10th November

ANTANARIVO

A taxi-brousse and then a taxi took us to Le Manoir Rouge Hotel in Ivato (part of Antanarivo). The hotel was built in 1931. In 1933 they changed the tap washers. They had done nothing since then. Still, the sheets were clean and the rooms large and reasonably cheap at 80,000 Malagasy francs / night (\$US16). We poked about what there was of the town finding both food and drink before closing on an unremarkable travel day.

Wednesday 11th November

First chore was to walk to the airport where we reconfirmed all our flights with a very pleasant English-speaking girl. We had breakfast and then caught a taxi-brousse to Tana. We looked for the ANGAP office but it had gone missing to another part of the city. I bought a book on Madagascar wildlife (Hilary Brandt – good too), and toured the city which was pleasant and quite interesting. We even found chameleons in the center of the city! We negotiated a maze of markets and canals and by dead reckoning arrived at the required taxi-brousse terminal to pay for our tickets for tomorrow's journey to Ampijoroa.

The afternoon was a little slow. Early nights sleep.

Thursday 12th November

AMPIJOROA FOREST STATION

Unfortunately the minibus to Ampijoroa leaves mid-afternoon and arrives in the middle of the night. This meant the morning was spent reading the Madagascar wildlife guide – twice – cover to cover.

Taxi-brousse Terminal North is a random assortment of crazily parked vehicles and mud. A couple of clip-on koalas were enough to guarantee the best seats in the minibus. These were the seats where you don't have to check-in your legs.

The mechanical limits of the Toyota Hiace were tested. There was something of a convoy that leaves Tana for Mahajunga at roughly the same time each day. We left last and soon passed all the others, sometimes at speeds that would have seen the Toyota design people looking at the specifications for the van. Credit goes to the driver in that he knew every corner and pothole on the 450km route, day or night. At one stage I was desperate to drain some fluids but figured that a rest stop must be just round the corner. I kept thinking this until I could wait no more. I tapped the driver on the shoulder and pointed at various things. This is the truth – there were people jumping out windows, they were so desperate to piss. Every single person on board ran, hobbled and groaned as they scattered to the four winds along a desolate featureless stretch of road.

The landscape was frightening. For the first 100km there was not one local tree, shrub or any other vegetation. It was once all forest. All that grew was an exotic grass that even the zebu wouldn't eat. Sad, so sad. Then tiny remnants of forest would appear, but all had been recently burnt.

We left Tana at 1400 and arrived at Ampijoroa at 2300. We were welcomed and settled into the campground and asleep by 2330.

Friday 13th November

We paid the camp fees for six days' stay. Two days would have been sufficient, but who's complaining, it was spiritually uplifting and character building. In fact, after six or so years as I write this it is Ampijoroa that I remember most.

Our new guide Izo, a true champion of a human being, was our guide. He became a good friend during our stay – a record length of stay at this site for tourists. We had very little sleep but that didn't stop us from seeing most of the local bird specialties in what is one of the strangest and most poorly represented forest types anywhere. The habitat is dry deciduous monsoon rainforest Mad-style.

The lemur count continued to climb with western woolly and brown lemurs, *Lepilemur edwardsi* and Coquerel's sifaka. There were numerous snakes, lizards, leafless orchids and odd trees and shrubs.

The camp for the park workers and researchers houses an informal restaurant where a charming lady cooked all our meals during the stay. They were quite good considering the raw materials at her disposal.

An orphaned sifaka provided me some joy after lunch. It got very hot each day at this time.

We were both too tired for spotlighting and enjoyed the privacy and solitude of our tents.

Saturday 14th November

My sore throat and I joined Dave and Izo on a hunt for Schlegel's asity, one of the more striking birds in the country and by no means common. We failed after some hours searching. We did manage Oustalet's chameleons, some great skinks, hog-nosed snakes and various other new birds. Izo pointed out an active family of mongoose lemurs.

Lunch was zebu casserole and pasta done in the unusual "didn't make me sick" style.

A very hot afternoon was largely spent watching the endangered Madagascar fish eagles on the shores of Lake Ravelobe across the road from camp. I enjoyed the company of a few of the local kids.

The evening spotlighting was nothing short of sensational. Ravelobe's mouse lemur was first on the list, the most recently discovered lemur and apparently a rare and local endemic. The other four nocturnal lemurs found here were all seen – western woolly, grey mouse, Milne-Edwards sportive and fat-tailed dwarf. We had a great view of a tailless tenrec, the most fecund mammal on earth, and two different bats – both of which we could identify. Eleven different mammals and several new birds were seen on the day.

A thunderstorm during the night cooled everything down.

Sunday 15th November

The morning walk was to a site named the "Grand Lavaka", the local equivalent of the Grand Canyon. Whereas the latter took many thousands of years to form, the local version was created by land erosion following forest clearing. It was more depressing than spectacular. A tailless tenrec, giant hog-nosed snakes and the usual lemur soup kept us company.

Izo showed me a few local endemic plants that included some rare baobabs.

Our bodies are slowly grinding to a halt.

Monday 16th November

Another attempt at seeing the fabulous Schlegel's asity met with eventual success. Dave must have been impressed as he took a whole roll of slides.

I circumnavigated the lake and after lunch sat beside it watching the local people go about their lives. Some watched me back, particularly young kids. We kept each other entertained in the heat. The folk at Lake Ravelobe are very poor indeed. Whatever is fruiting at the time becomes not just part of the diet, it is the diet. So we ate a lot of mangoes, but not near as many as the locals did. One young boy had a pair of large crickets to play with. They had been modified to stop them escaping. After they started to tire of trying to escape, he ate them.

At 2145 I thought it odd that the sun should be coming up so soon. No, a building next to the campground was on fire. A few locals with buckets put in an appearance for the sake of tokenism but not much could be done. There was no running water, no fire brigade to phone, no phone not to phone it on, and so everything just burnt to the ground. Nothing could be saved. The spectacle was supervised by a greater hedgehog tenrec, which took time out from chasing a cockroach up a tree. So all wasn't lost after all.

Tuesday 17th November

A slow day spent reflecting on the holiday, chatting with researchers and Malagasy tourism surveyors, and doing little else.

Izo and a French backpacker had a full-blown argument that almost ended in blows. Any small white man wanting to fight a large black man IN THE DARK cannot be all that bright. I intervened if only to stop the noise. I had to yell at them louder than were yelling at each other, which was not easy.

The evening spotlighting, our last, was uneventful.

Wednesday 18th November

We hadn't waited long beside the road before a taxi-brousse found room for us as we journeyed northwest to Mahjunga. Soon after leaving the reserve the landscape reverted to its environmental apocalyptic state.

The Malagasy are honest, open and trustworthy. When I have revealed my little album of photos in any taxi-brousse they all looked at every photo before passing it along. They smiled often and were very keen to leave a good impression on tourists. When we boarded this particular taxi-brousse I proffered a 10,000fmg note. I thought this was about right for the 113km journey for the two of us (\$US1 each). We jumped out when we reached town only to have a local guy run over to us with money in hand. It seems some change was due and he had to get to town to find it.

We stayed in the Hotel Kanto. The hotel was a dump (recommended by Lonely Planet!), but we stayed anyway. We had a chicken and chips lunch at the restaurant but I had to send the chicken back because it was pecking at the chips. Slept during the afternoon in one of the most hot and humid places I have ever found. Just thinking about moving was very stressful. A very hot bath would have cooled me down.

I spent hours writing and drinking Jack, reflecting on a great holiday punctuated by some wonderful wildlife and people experiences. The indri, the fossas and the golden bamboo lemurs are chiselled into my brain forever. Dave has been exemplary as a companion thus far.

Off to the bar to chat to the locals and re-write my mammal and reptile list.

Thursday 19th November

The last full day in Madagascar, I hope. I gave my final stuffed kangaroo toy to the English-speaking schoolgirl in the restaurant. She told me I was a very kind person. Hmm. At 0600 it was not oppressively hot, yet. Just the flies and the aroma of an inadequate or non-existent sewage system.

Dave lost interest in being interested. I have withheld the details on the basis that anyone can have an off day.

I quote from my diary of the day – “Had a walk into town to take a photo of the baobab roundabout and reconfirm this afternoon’s flight to Tana. On the way back sat with a group of the local hoods avoiding school or whatever it was that they were avoiding. For the life of me I cannot understand why a casual tourist would want to come to this country. The landscapes are unimpressive unless you are writing a book on the environment or lack thereof. The food is ordinary at best. The climate is poxy outside of the eastern escarpment, the beaches are rubbish and people die from all sorts of creative diseases, including a common one from the way taxi-brousses use the road.” I see.

Also penned was – “But it will always be the lemurs. The gentle naïve faces, the little hands and gripping feet, the startled faces, the indri leaping from tree to tree like giant black and white tree frogs, never making an mistake, and in no real hurry.”

I looked at my carefully prepared notes on lemurs in their plastic wallet. They were all torn and tattered and just might survive the journey. I felt a bit the same.

We called a taxi and went to the airport. Dave, who has in recent hours developed a deep and abiding hatred for all things French, was resplendent in a pair of shorts that had been fashioned from a pair of long cotton pants and crafted with the aid of a sharp knife. I’m still not sure how this reflected poorly on the French, but he had his reasons for this being the case. I stayed my distance.

Airport mathematics was much in evidence. This is a rare stream of mathematics only found in airports. Passenger and baggage queues started to form, first in an orderly line, and then like snowflake patterns. I hadn't realized that such an attractive display could be achieved in such a short time. Then things got a little weird. A lady with a painted face preceded a white coffin, countless mourners and many flowers. The coffin was weighed, checked in with much crashing and banging and put somewhere, hopefully out of the sun. In fact it has gone with the rest of the luggage. I preciously gripped my numbered baggage labels.

The fabric of the universe stretched as the scrum inexorably ground toward the sole check-in person. I was no longer able to remove myself from the tightly packed mass. Things then deteriorated as more coffins arrived. There must have been a taxi-brousse accident or else others found the location of the restaurant we used yesterday and hadn't sent the chicken back.

We arrived safely in Tana. We pushed our taxi most of the way to the hotel, and then paid the driver. Time to go home methinks.

Friday 20th November

The big "International Departure Festival". There was always going to be something new; there generally is at airports and this day was no exception. We were searched for Malagasy currency and then re-directed back out of the airport. We bought breakfast with it and re-entered, this time without incident.

I calculated the cost of this holiday at \$A3833.

We arrived at Mahebourg, Mauritius and negotiated a fare with a taxi driver. When we arrived at our hotel he wanted \$2 more. I told him to fuck off. He did, but being a pragmatic sort of sleezebag, he asked if he could pick us up for the airport the next day!

We had previously booked a room at the Aquarelle. They told us it wasn't available and in charming French fashion turned their backs on us. Dave and I offered some advice on hotel management and they soon found not one room but two! That's better.

Saturday 21st November

Went home.

Steve Anyon-Smith
27th June 2005
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enquiries welcomed

Bird List For Madagascar

Perenet - P, Berenty - B, Mora Mora - M, Le Mangrove - LM, Toliara - T, Ranohira - RA, Ranomafana - R, Ampijoroa - A, Tana - TA, Fianarantsoa - F, MJ - Mahajunga

| | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Mad. Little Grebe | P |
| Reed Cormorant | A |
| Darter | A |
| Squacco Heron | P B A |
| Malagas Pond Heron | P A |
| Cattle Egret | A |
| Green-backed Heron | P B A |
| Black Heron | A |
| Dimorphic Egret | B LM A |
| Great Egret | P R A |
| Purple Heron | P B |
| Grey Heron | LM A |
| Humblot's Heron | LM A |
| Hamerkop | P |
| Mad. Crested Ibis | P A |
| White-faced Whistling Duck | A |
| Knob-billed Duck | B |
| Red-billed Teal | LM |
| Mad. Cuckoo Falcon | T to RA |
| Yellow-billed Kite | B A |
| Mad. Fish Eagle | A |
| Mad. Harrier Hawk | P B M A |
| Reunion Harrier | RA to F |
| Henst's Goshawk | R |
| Mad. Sparrowhawk | P B |
| Frances's Sparrowhawk | P B A |
| Mad. Buzzard | P B R A |
| Mad. Kestrel | P B M LM A |
| Banded Kestrel | M |
| Sooty Falcon | TA to A A |
| Peregrine Falcon | A |
| Mad. Partridge | TA to A |
| Helmeted Guineafowl | B A |
| White-breasted Mesite | A |
| Brown Mesite | R |
| Subdesert Mesite | M |
| Mad. Button Quail | B LM A |
| White-throated Rail | P to TA A |
| Mad. Wood Rail | P |
| Mad. Flufftail | P |
| Common Moorhen | P |
| Mad. Jacana | A |
| Black-bellied Plover | LM |
| Mad. Plover | M |
| Kittlitz's Plover | A |
| Whimbrel | M LM |
| Greenshank | B LM A |
| Common Sandpiper | B A |
| Caspian Tern | LM |
| Common Tern | MJ |
| Mad. Sandgrouse | B A |
| Rock Dove | TA |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Mad. Turtle Dove | P B R A |
| Namaqua Dove | B L E A |
| Mad. Green Pigeon | P L M R A |
| Mad. Blue Pigeon | P R |
| Greater Vasa Parrot | P R A |
| Lesser Vasa Parrot | P B M A |
| Grey-headed Lovebird | B M L M R A |
| Mad. Lesser Cuckoo | P R A |
| Giant Coua | B |
| Coquerel's Coua | A |
| Red-fronted Coua | P R |
| Running Coua | B M L M |
| Red-capped Coua | A |
| Crested Coua | B M A |
| Verreaux's Coua | L M |
| Blue Coua | P R |
| Mad. Coucal | P B M L M R A |
| Malagasy Scops-Owl | P B |
| White-browed Owl | B |
| Mad. Long-eared Owl | P A |
| Mad. Nightjar | B A |
| Collared Nightjar | P |
| Malagasy Spine-tail Swift | P B R |
| African Palm Swift | P R |
| Alpine Swift | B |
| African Black Swift | B |
| Malagasy Kingfisher | P B R A |
| Mad. Pygmy Kingfisher | P R A |
| Mad. Bee-eater | B M L M A |
| Broad-billed Roller | P A |
| Pitta-like Ground Roller | P R |
| Rufous-headed Ground Roller | R |
| Long-tailed Ground Roller | M |
| Cuckoo Roller | P R |
| Hoopoe | M L M A |
| Velvet Asity | P R |
| Schlegel's Asity | A |
| Sunbird Asity | P |
| Mad. Bush Lark | B M L M R A |
| Brown-throated Sand Martin | P |
| Mascarene Martin | P L M R A |
| Mad. Wagtail | P R A |
| Ashy Cuckoo Shrike | P R A |
| Long-billed Greenbul | P R A |
| Spectacled Greenbul | P B R |
| Mad. Black Bulbul | P B M L M R A |
| Mad. Magpie Robin | P B M L M R A |
| Stonechat | P R A |
| Forest Rock Thrush | P |
| Mad. Swamp Warbler | A |
| Mad. Brush Warbler | P M L M R A |
| Mad. Cisticola | P L M A |
| Grey Emutail | R |
| Rand's Warbler | P |
| Dark Newtonia | P |
| Common Newtonia | P B M L M R A |
| Archbold's Newtonia | B |

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Common Jery | P B M LM R A |
| Green Jery | P |
| Striped-throated Jery | P M R |
| Wedge-tailed Jery | P |
| Ward's Flycatcher | P |
| Mad. Paradise Flycatcher | P B M LM R A |
| White-throated Oxylabes | P R |
| Yellow-browed Oxylabes | R |
| Crossley's Babbler | R |
| Souimanga Sunbird | P B M LM R A |
| Long-billed Green Sunbird | P A |
| Mad. White-eye | P B M LM R A |
| Red-tailed Vanga | P R A |
| Rufous Vanga | R A |
| Hook-billed Vanga | P B M A |
| Lafresnaye's Vanga | M |
| Van Dam's Vanga | A |
| Pollen's Vanga | R |
| Sickle-billed Vanga | B M A |
| White-headed Vanga | P B M R A |
| Chabert's Vanga | P B M A |
| Blue Vanga | P R |
| Nuthatch Vanga | P |
| Tylas Vanga | P R |
| Crested Drongo | P B M LM R A |
| Pied Crow | B M A |
| Mad. Starling | P R |
| Common Myna | P |
| Nelicourvi Weaver | P R |
| Sakalava Weaver | B M LM A |
| Mad. Red Fody | A |
| Forest Fody | P R |
| Mad. Mannikin | P M A |

Total 142

Bird List For Mauritius

White-tailed Tropicbird
Little Egret
Cattle Egret
Striated Heron
Common Sandpiper
Ruddy Turnstone
Mauritius Kestrel
Whimbrel
Rock Dove,
Common Myna
Red-whiskered Bulbul
Mauritius Bulbul
Mascarene Swiftlet
House Sparrow
Common Waxbill
Mauritius Fody
Yellow-fronted Canary
Mascarene Grey White-eye
Zebra Dove
Red Fody

Total 20

Total number of birds for trip - 162 species

Mammal List

| English Name | Scientific Name | Seen At | Max No. |
|-------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------|
| Lemurs | | | |
| Indri | <i>Indri indri</i> | Perinet | 21 |
| Diademed Sifaka | <i>Propithecus diadema diadema</i> | Mantadia | 10 |
| Milne-Edwards Diademed Sifaka | <i>Propithecus diadema edwardsi</i> | Ranomafana | 4 |
| Verreaux's Sifaka | <i>Propithecus verreauxi verreauxi</i> | Berenty | 50+ |
| Coquerel's Sifaka | <i>Propithecus verreauxi coquereli</i> | Ampijoroa | 15 |
| Eastern Woolly Lemur | <i>Avahi laniger</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 4 |
| Western Wolly Lemur | <i>Avahi occidentalis</i> | Ampijoroa | 4 |
| Ring-tailed Lemur | <i>Lemur catta</i> | Berenty | 100+ |
| B&W Ruffed Lemur | <i>Varecia variegata variegata</i> | Mantadia | 15 |
| Brown Lemur | <i>Eulemur fulvus fulvus</i> | Perinet and Ampijoroa | 12 |
| Red-fronted Brown Lemur | <i>Eulemur fulvus rufus</i> | Berenty and Ranomafana | 10 |
| Red-bellied Lemur | <i>Eulemur rubriventer</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 8 |
| Mongoose Lemur | <i>Eulemur mongoz</i> | Ampijoroa | 3 |
| Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur | <i>Hapalemur griseus griseus</i> | Perinet, Mantadia and Ranomafana | 17 |
| Golden Bamboo Lemur | <i>Hapalemur aureus</i> | Ranomafana | 3 |
| Greater Bamboo Lemur | <i>Hapalemur simus</i> | Ranomafana | 3 |
| Grey Mouse Lemur | <i>Microcebus murinus</i> | Berenty, Mora Mora and Ampijoroa | 5 |
| Rufous Mouse Lemur | <i>Microcebus rufus</i> | Ranomafana | 8 |
| "Unnamed" Mouse Lemur | <i>Microcebus ravelobensis</i> | Ampijoroa | 1 |
| Greater Dwarf Lemur | <i>Cheirogaleus major</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 2 |
| Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur | <i>Cheirogaleus medius</i> | Ranomafana and Ampijoroa | 1 |
| Sportive Lemur | <i>Lepilemur microdon</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 1 |
| Sportive Lemur | <i>Lepilemur leucopus</i> | Berenty | 10+ |
| Sportive Lemur | <i>Lepilemur edwardsi</i> | Ampijoroa | 4 |

Other Mammals

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Fossa | <i>Cryptoprocta ferox</i> | Perinet | 2 |
| Malagasy Striped Civet | <i>Fossa fossana</i> | Ranomafana | 1 |
| Ring-tailed Mongoose | <i>Galidia elegans</i> | Ranomafana | 3 |
| Lowland Streaked Tenrec | <i>Hemicentetes semispinosus</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 2 |
| Greater Hedgehog Tenrec | <i>Setifer setosis</i> | Perinet and Ampijoroa | 1 |
| Tail-less Tenrec | <i>Tenrec ecaudatus</i> | Ampijoroa | 2 |
| Red Forest Rat | <i>Nesomys rufus</i> | Perinet and Ranomafana | 2 |
| Grey Long-tailed Mouse | <i>Macrotarsomys ingens</i> | Ampijoroa | 1 |
| Madagascar Fruit Bat | <i>Pteropus rufus</i> | Berenty | 20+ |
| Bat | <i>Tadarida condylura</i> | Ampijoroa | 6 |
| Bat | <i>Tadarida midas</i> | Ampijoroa | 1 |

Total Lemurs = 21 + 3 Subspecies

Total Mammals = 32

Chameleon list

| English name | Scientific name | First seen |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| Parson's chameleon | <i>Calumma parsonii</i> | Perinet |
| Short-horned chameleon | <i>Calumma nasutus</i> | Perinet |
| Nose-horned chameleon | <i>Calumma brevicornis</i> | Perinet |
| | <i>Calumma gastrotaenia</i> | Vohiparara |
| O'Shaunessy's chameleon | <i>Calumma o'shaunessyi</i> | Vohiparara |
| Will's chameleon | <i>Furcifer willsii</i> | Ranomafana |
| Pygmy Stump-tailed chameleon | <i>Brookesia minima</i> | Vohiparara |
| | <i>Brookesia nasus</i> | Vohiparara |
| Oustalet's chameleon | <i>Furcifer oustaleti</i> | Ampijoroa |
| Rhinocerus chameleon | ? | Ampijoroa |

Snake list

| English name | Scientific name | First seen |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| | <i>Liopholidophis thieli</i> | Ranomafana |
| | <i>Liopholidophis rhodogaster</i> | Ranomafana |
| Madagascar little boa | <i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i> | Perinet |
| Yellow Philodophis | <i>Philodophis ?</i> | Perinet |
| Giant Hog-nosed Snake | <i>Leioheterodon madagascariensis</i> | Ampijoroa |
| Yellow Hog-nosed Snake | <i>Leioheterodon modestis</i> | Ampijoroa |
| | <i>Memphis mahafaliensis</i> | Ampijoroa |
| Madagascar Ophis? | ? | Ranomafana |