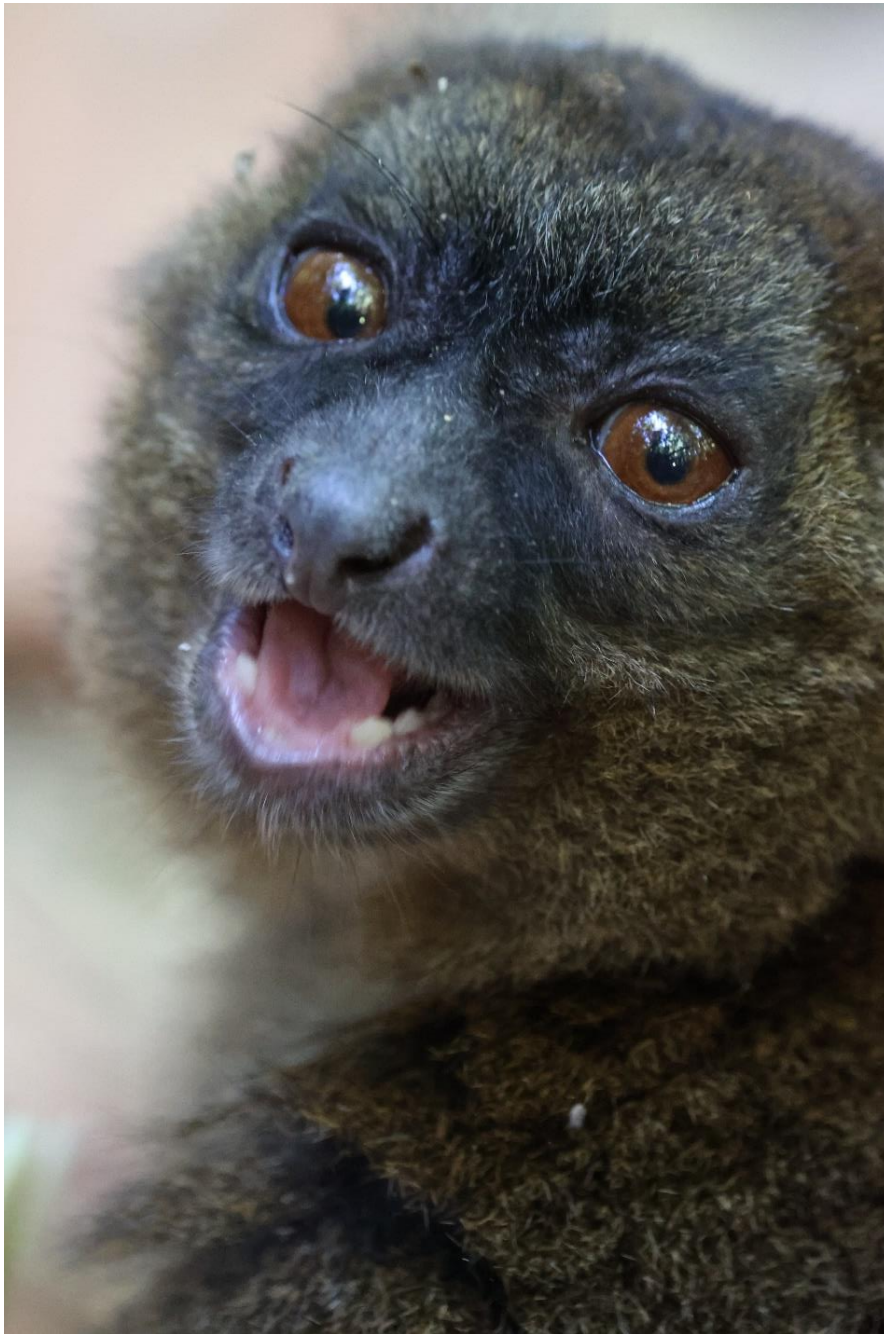


## Madagascar Trip Report – November, 2024



In April 2023 I was speaking with my friend Rob about a recent trip to Madagascar. By the time I got off the phone we had hatched a plan to join up for a trip to the Masoala Peninsula and the deep south of Madagascar, two areas I had not visited on previous trips to Madagascar in May 2009 and in November 2022. We reached out to Patrick, our guide from the 2022 trip and, after a number of drafts, came up with a 26-day itinerary. Kate, a friend of Tracey's, said she was interested in joining us and her husband, Scott, decided he was up for it as well. So a group of six of us was formed.

Rob and his wife Lana arrived in Madagascar the week before we did for a trip to Kirindy and Tsingy de Bemaraha. Tracey, Kate, Scott and I met up at the Vancouver Airport for the lengthy trip to Madagascar via Addis Ababa on Ethiopian Airlines. The flights were uneventful and, thanks to a priority transfer line in Addis, we managed to catch our flight to Antananarivo despite a tight connection. The connection was too tight for Scott's bag, which rested for an extra day in Addis before rejoining us in Antananarivo the following day. Our guesthouse was a large colonial house overlooking the city and above at least some of the city's smog. After the first of many steaks in green peppercorn sauce we headed back for an early night.

We had breakfast the next morning in a small café which prominently featured a couple of dishes made with wasps, apparently a specialty of Reunion but not one I was keen to experience. We wandered past the Rova, the old royal palace which had been closed on both my previous trips to Madagascar but which was now open as a museum. The collection of exhibits inside features everything from dinosaurs to outrigger canoes and was well worth a visit. Upon our return to the guest house we received a note from Rob and Lana that their flight from Morondava had been cancelled and they were going to drive through the night to try to catch our next morning's flight to Maroantsetra.

We arrived at the airport early the next morning. After much calling around, we were able to find someone to release Scott's bag from the office where it had been stashed after its arrival the day before. Throughout this time we were getting updates from Rob, Lana, and Patrick which were ulcer-provoking – according to Google they were 2 hours and 20 minutes away at 6:55 am and our flight was scheduled to depart at 9:50 am. The flight started boarding at 9:35 am. Our final text message from Rob stated that they were 5 minutes from the airport and could actually see the plane but weren't going to be allowed to board.

We landed in Maroantsetra and were met by Aldin, who had been notified by Patrick that they had missed the flight and were embarking upon a 21+ hour drive to meet us in a couple of days. Together with Aldin, we drove to the river and got into a canoe for the trip to Farankaraina. At this point it started to rain and continued to do so for the entire 1 ½ hour trip. At the mouth of the river we started our short hike to Antongil Camp.

Antongil Camp consists of a cabin with three small bedrooms and a camping area. Previously there were six bungalows, but these have fallen into disrepair and are being rebuilt. We started out on a short hike, but it started to rain heavily, so we returned for a nap instead. After dinner, the rain had slowed to a light drizzle and we set out again. Our first mammal was a Webb's Tuft-tailed Rat which sat obligingly on a branch while we took photos. The next mammal, somewhat surprisingly, was an Aye-aye which moved quickly up and away from the light. We also saw a Greater Dwarf Lemur, two Eastern Woolly Lemurs and a couple of likely mouse lemurs which were in such heavy foliage that we couldn't get a reasonable view. A second tuft-tailed rat was seen very briefly and could not be identified to the species level.



The next morning was sunny and we left camp about 7:00 am. A pair of Red-ruffed Lemurs crossed the road on some high branches. After a swim and lunch, light rain started up, delaying our afternoon walk. When we did go out, we saw a group of White-fronted Lemurs very close to camp, while a pre-dinner walk produced two Northern Bamboo Lemurs in the bamboo near the new restaurant building which was under construction. A night hike to a fruiting Canarium tree revealed additional Greater Dwarf and Eastern Woolly Lemurs as well as Masoala Sportive Lemur and Anjiahely Mouse Lemur. An unidentified gray rat and an Eastern Red Forest Rat which scampered up into Scott and Kate's room upon our return rounded out the night's tally.



The next morning, I did a quick walk back to where I had seen the unidentified rat the night before but was unsurprisingly unable to relocate it. We had a pleasant walk in the sunshine back to the boat launch and an uneventful boat ride back to Maroantsetra. We unloaded our gear onto a boat named Singata for the trip to Masoala, then discovered that Patrick, Rob and Lana were stranded about 60 km to the south after one of the river ferries had broken down. An hour and a half later we received a call from Patrick that we were going to take the Singata down to the spot where they were stranded before heading over to Masoala. We left about noon and, after getting the boat stuck on some sandbars at the river mouth, made it down the coast to a spot where we could see a 4X4 vehicle on the beach with four people beside it. After boarding we heard their story – 51 hours of driving, including 15 ½ hours from Morondava to Antananarivo, then 36 hours to the pick-up spot, including nine river crossings by ferry. As Patrick would say, “welcome to Madagascar”.



A bumpy ride across the bay took us to Dounia Forest Lodge, one of my favourite spots on the trip. Beautiful cabins on the hillside overlook a curving beach, with forest rising up immediately behind the lodge. We started a walk into the reserve about 4:30 pm, seeing Red-ruffed Lemurs almost immediately, then continued after darkness fell and saw Masoala Sportive Lemur, Masoala Woolly Lemur, a Fanaloka in dense vegetation, a couple of Lowland Streaked Tenrecs and Anjiahely Mouse Lemur. We were back for a delicious dinner about 7:30 pm and were all too tired to do a further night walk.



We entered the national park the following morning and almost immediately found a Ring-tailed Vontsira, followed by a number of impressive birds including White-headed Vanga, Helmet Vanga and

Blue Coua and some Red-ruffed Lemurs who briefly posed for photos. After lunch and a swim, we again entered the forest and saw some White-fronted Brown Lemurs before dark. After dark, the action picked up. Masoala Sportive and Woolly Lemurs were followed by a Lesser Tuft-tailed Rat, a forest rat and an Anjiahely Mouse Lemur. We were walking down the trail when Rob spotted some eyeshine just off the trail and said, "I see a rodent". As this was how he had announced the Spotted Fanaloka the night before, I quickly joined him and we both realized the creature was too large to be a rodent. It turned sideways, and we saw a large brownish-grey body behind the surprisingly small head. A Falanouc! Rob headed into the bush to outflank it while Aldin and I followed the animal. It appeared clearly in the thermal imager for an instant, but then disappeared behind a log and into the undergrowth while I was trying to get my camera and flashlight on it. We found two Lowland Streaked Tenrecs near the village just before returning to Dounia Lodge for a late dinner. After dinner, Aldin and I went out again and saw a White-tailed Tree Rat as well as previously seen lemurs. At one point we were standing under a Canarium tree and heard fruit falling around us. Looking up, we found an Aye-aye peering down at us. Growing up, Aye-eyes were a near-mythological creature. To have seen two already on this trip felt like an incredible gift.



We packed up early the next morning and headed back to Maroantsetra, passing by a small island with a colony of Madagascar Flying Foxes on it. After dropping off some of our bags at the Manga Beach Hotel we drove about half an hour to a spot on the river where we caught a boat for the upstream trip to Makira National Park. We arrived at the landing point about noon, and then had a two-hour hike to the camp, which consisted of two cabins with beds and bathrooms and a few camping shelters for tents. A couple of Northern Bamboo Lemurs were close to camp. We also saw a dwarf lemur which is apparently

as yet still undescribed (see photo below), Mittermeier's Mouse Lemur, Eastern Woolly Lemur and, after a fair bit of walking, Seal's Sportive Lemur. We arrived back at camp about 9:00 pm for beef brochettes and salad, followed by an early night to bed.



The following day the scouts were looking for Silky Sifaka but without success. We did have a glimpse of White-fronted Brown Lemurs during our hike up onto the ridge but little else, although I can certainly recommend Makira as the place to go if you want hikes with maximal elevation gain and loss. Our night hike produced a couple of dwarf lemurs, one of which appeared to be Greater Dwarf Lemur, and a Tree Rat seen briefly while it was descending rapidly along some vines hanging down from an enormous tree.

We left camp the next morning about 8:20 and were back at the boat by 10:00 am for the downstream trip to Maroantsetra, arriving about 12:40 pm. We dropped our bags at the Manga Beach Hotel, ordered lunch, and then accompanied Aldin to a series of open sewage drains around town, apparently the preferred habitat of the Tomato Frog. Sure enough, Aldin quickly found three Tomato Frogs, but wanted us to see an even larger specimen, so we wandered over to a friend's backyard where Aldin found the biggest frog yet. We returned to the hotel for a delicious beef brochette lunch, followed by laundry washing and battery recharging. At dinner, we received a message that our flight the next morning had been cancelled. The dinner conversation revolved around options, none of them particularly appealing. I consoled myself with steak with green peppercorn sauce and chocolate mousse, which helped somewhat.





We didn't hear anything from the airline about a replacement flight, so we wandered over to the beach and went for a swim. As chance would have it, one of the twice-weekly ferry departures from Maroantsetra was scheduled for 9:00 pm that night. By mid-afternoon we had still not heard anything further and decided we would wait until 6:00 pm and then head to the ferry if we hadn't received word from the airline. By 6:30 there was still flight information, so we had dinner and left for the harbour. Following a tip from an Irish chap we had met, Rob and I boarded early and made our way to the covered top deck to claim some space, sprawling across three mats. This was fortunate, as the ferry took on about three times its allotted capacity. We made some new friends and got at least a little sleep.



The next day was a long travel day. We arrived at Foulpointe at 11:00 am, the end of the ferry ride and clambered into buses for the three-and-a-half hour drive to Toamasina. In Toamasina, Patrick had arranged for a van with driver and assistant to meet us. We stopped for dinner, then left town as dusk was falling. Although one of the main roads in Madagascar, RN2 is pot-holed and slow, with lots of vehicles parked for the night along the verges. We arrived at the Cyperus Hotel in Andasibe at 3:20 am and soon fell asleep.

Despite the late arrival, we were all keen to visit Analamazaotra National Park and were on our way there by 8:30 am. Our guide for the day, Tina, was one of the most enthusiastic local guides that we had in Madagascar. The morning walk produced great views of Eastern Bamboo Lemur, Diademed Sifaka, Indri and Brown Lemur, as well as a variety of Uroplatus and Brookesia species and a nice selection of birds. We were back for a late lunch, a bit of down-time and a supper of duck à l'orange. At 7:00 pm we picked Tina up and headed to the VOIMMA reserve across the road from Analamazaotra, a community reserve which allows nighttime visits. Following Tina's suggestion, we arrived after 7:00 pm and, as predicted, most of the tourists there for a night walk were already leaving. We had good views of Crossley's Dwarf Lemur, Goodman's Mouse Lemur and, finally, a Hairy-eared Dwarf Lemur, which had been high on my most-wanted list. This also turned out to be the first one that Patrick had ever seen. We left about 10:00 pm, well satisfied with the night's discoveries. There was still no word from Madagascar Airlines about a replacement flight, so we all felt glad we had left Maroantsetra when we did.







Our original plan had been to fly from Maroantsetra to Antananarivo and then drive to Lake Alaotra for a night before going to Analamazaotra. Because of the ferry ride, we ended up in Analamazaotra first. To go to Lake Alaotra would add at least seven hours each way prior to the long drive to Ranomafana. Patrick was game for this option, but the consensus from the group was that we would prefer to skip the lake in favour of an extra night in Ranomafana. We left Analamazaotra the next morning, first stopping at the post office to look for bats. Wandering into a post office in Canada and asking to check out the attic would likely result in police being called, but the postal staff were unfazed. We were escorted to the second floor and a rather dodgy-looking ladder was produced. Patrick, as the lightest of the bat keepers, went up first and reported that there weren't any bats in residence. We then drove to a house in the village where bats had been seen previously. The residents were also unfazed, and we went up to a bedroom, perched a box on top of a chair and had a look. A number of Peters's Goblin Bats were present. We stopped on the edge of Tana for a pizza lunch, then continued on to Ambositra for the night. I wandered around town looking for an ATM and was directed downtown, where a number of Ambositra's prostitutes were eagerly waiting to engage me in conversation. I eventually gave up on the ATM quest for the night and headed back to the hotel (by myself, I might add).



After a sizable breakfast buffet, we successfully found a functioning ATM and departed Ambositra. We stopped at l'Artesania Hotel for lunch, a place I recalled from our last trip to Madagascar. We continued driving all afternoon and entered Ranomafana National Park just before dusk, to be greeted by a pair of Red-bellied Lemurs by the side of the road. Setam Lodge welcomed us with a delicious meal, after which we headed to bed. A text from Madagascar Airlines notified us at 1:20 pm that Monday's flight had been rescheduled to 3:20 pm that afternoon and we should report to the airport immediately.

The next morning, we found Eastern Bamboo Lemurs just before we crossed the bridge into the national park, followed by Milne-Edwards Sifakas, Lowland Forest Rat and Golden Bamboo Lemurs inside the park. We went to Bellevue lookout point just before noon and were rewarded by close views of a Ring-tailed Vontsira that was clearly in the habit of stopping by at lunch time. We went back to Setam Lodge for lunch and returned in the afternoon to find several more Milne-Edwards Sifakas, a Greater Bamboo Lemur named Simone, who is the last of her species remaining in Ranomafana, more Eastern Bamboo Lemurs and, at dusk, a Spotted Fanaloka. We drove along the park road after dark and saw a Groves's Dwarf Lemur as well as a couple of unidentifiable rodents and additional dwarf lemurs.



We went to a different area of Ranomafana the next morning and saw more Milne-Edwards Sifakas, a Small-toothed Sportive Lemur and a Lowland Streaked Tenrec, as well as a beautiful Mantella frog. Stopping at the cave across the road from Andriamamovoka Waterfall for a brief look at the Major's Long-fingered Bats in residence, we headed back to Setam Lodge for lunch. After lunch, we returned to



the main entrance and found some Golden Bamboo Lemurs which we were able to observe at close range for some time. We hiked back to Bellevue and found the Spotted Fanaloka from the previous night, then a small group of Milne-Edwards Sifakas. After the usual fantastic meal at Setam, Patrick and I took a walk in a nearby community forest. We spotted a Lesser Tuft-tailed Rat, a Rufous Mouse Lemur and a Madagascar Scops Owl, before heading over to the river to try to see a Web-footed Shrew Tenrec. Sitting and waiting for anything is not my strong suit, but I lasted about 45 minutes before boredom and fatigue got the best of me and we returned to the lodge.







The next morning, we found a Naked-nosed Shrew Tenrec by the lodge before heading into the park. The only new mammal in the park was a Red-fronted Brown Lemur but we saw several stunning birds, including a Scaly-breasted Ground Roller. After lunch, we drove the couple of hours to the Kianjavato Ahmanson Field Station (KAFS) in Kianjavato, which had been expanded since our previous visit two years previously. We drove to Sangasanga forest and hiked to observe some Peters's Sheath-tailed Bats in an abandoned building and Eastern Sucker-footed Bats in rolled up Ravanala palm fronds. We heard some distant Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs, but didn't try to find them for fear of missing out on the nighttime Aye-aye show. At dusk, two Aye-eyes emerged from their nest, Alexandria, the sister of Boozy, the previously radio-collared Aye-aye at the site, and her son, Topaz. We were able to watch the Aye-eyes for an hour, at one point getting great views as they descended some lianas. We also observed a

couple of Greater Dwarf Lemurs. The drive back to KAFS was uneventful. At KAFS, the passengers got out and walked up the hill to the station due to the steepness of the road. A few minutes later, we heard a sickening crash and discovered that, while backing up to take a run at the hill, the vehicle must have caught a rock and overturned on its side. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured, but the windshield was smashed on the left side.



A group of guys were able to right the vehicle, which appeared to have tolerated the overturn remarkably well apart from the windshield. Patrick was able to contact a friend with another Mercedes Sprinter to drive us to Manombo Reserve. After a tasty lunch in Manakara we arrived at the Bemelo campsite just outside the reserve at 4:30 pm, having driven by extensive areas of burned forest on the way. A number of plant researchers were camped in the campground, occupying all of the shelters, but we found space to pitch Patrick's newly purchased tents in the surrounding field. Patrick spoke with the reserve manager and returned with bad news. We wouldn't be allowed to do a night hike because of fires in the reserve and because of the risk of cattle rustlers, although we would be able to do a hike the following morning. This was disappointing news as the main reason we had come to Manombo was to see the endemic nocturnal sportive and woolly lemurs here. I walked around the campground and noticed some bats emerging from the administrative building, including one that came out of the eavestrough and was captured by Patrick. It turned out to be a Malagasy Eastern Free-tailed Bat, a new species for the trip.



The next phase of our trip required 4X4 vehicles and the vehicles arrived that afternoon. The two new drivers, Luke and Elvis, asked if we wanted to leave anything in one vehicle overnight while they drove the other vehicle to town. They were taking the keys with them, so we wouldn't be able to access any gear during the night. The sky was clear, so we all decided to leave our gear in the tents. You can guess how this story ends. Shortly after going to bed, it started to rain. We lowered the fly of each tent, then got some tarps from Patrick to drape over the tents for additional protection, wishing fervently we had put our gear in the vehicle.

The sky was clear the next morning, allowing us to dry off our belongings. A ladder was rigged up so that we could look in the attic of the administrative building for bats, but only Malagasy Eastern Free-tailed Bats were visible. After a short drive, we entered the reserve. Neither fires nor cattle rustlers were in evidence. We came across a small group of Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs and eventually found a group of White-collared Brown Lemurs, our main diurnal target here, as well as an Eastern Red Forest Rat. After lunch back at the campsite, we continued our drive south. We spent almost four hours waiting for the ferry just before Manambondro as large trucks working on the road have priority and a number of these arrived while we were waiting, as well as a military vehicle which also took priority. Once across the lake, we had a half hour drive on a great road to town, where we pitched up at the Coin des Amis hotel, which was exceptionally basic even given the 40 000 ariary price. I'm not sure they had previously rented rooms for the entire night.





The sounds of roosters and people awoke us early and we were back on the road by 6:40 am. The first stretch of the road was beautiful, but things soon took a turn for the worse. I have driven on some terrible roads in the world. I have never been on roads quite like this. We crossed three bridges that had most of their boards missing, so that the vehicle was driving on the beams only, guided by the other driver walking on the beams and indicating minute adjustments to prevent the vehicle from toppling into the creek below. We also had three ferries, two of them very iffy indeed. The final ferry was just before the town of Manantenina where we discovered a lovely new hotel, the Motel M1, where we were able to shower, wash clothes and eat a lovely meal of sauteed beef with vegetables and French fries.

We were greeted with delicious coffee in the dining room at 7:30 am and sat eagerly awaiting breakfast. Half an hour later the server said she didn't realize we wanted breakfast but was able to whip up some rice porridge, so we were on our way without too much delay. The road was in generally good shape and crews were at work, although we still had to contend with five ferries that day. We arrived in St. Luce about 2:00 pm. Accommodation here is in a very basic research station with mattresses on the upper floor and thin dividing walls, a honeymooner's nightmare but perfectly serviceable for the night. An afternoon walk produced a couple of groups of Red-collared Brown Lemurs and several Southern Woolly Lemurs, while a night-time walk revealed more woolly lemurs, three Thomas's Dwarf Lemurs in rapid succession and a Tanosy Mouse Lemur.



We saw further Red-collared Brown Lemurs in the morning before an early departure. Driving out over a rough track, we made a short detour to visit a roosting colony of Madagascar Flying Foxes, then stopped at a private reserve, Nahampoana. Nahampoana has native Southern Bamboo Lemurs as well as introduced Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas, all of which are easily viewable in an hour's visit. After a fantastic lunch at the Hotel le Dauphin in Fort Dauphin, we switched to two new vehicles and drivers for the next phase of the trip. We stocked up on fuel, water and junk food and eventually made it out of Fort Dauphin about 2:30 pm. The road to Parcel 1 of Andohahela National Park was fairly rough and we had mechanical problems at one point, so we ended up walking the last section of the road until the vehicles were able to rejoin us. After a short hike into the forest, we pitched camp by a small stream.









I walked up the stream to check out a small pool where people had been bathing and found an eel swimming around. Rob scrambled up the rocks by the side of the stream to see it and disturbed a Web-footed Shrew Tenrec which dashed under one of the larger rocks, a spot from which it refused to re-appear. I had decent views of a Webb's Tuft-tailed Rat at the campsite and poor views of Andohahela Sportive Lemur and Grey-brown Mouse Lemur on a little walk back down the trail. After a late dinner of roast pork and French fries, Tracey, Rob and I headed further down the trail, seeing further sportive and mouse lemurs, as well as Greater Dwarf Lemur and a Spotted Fanaloka which was clearly used to being fed by visitors, as it followed us some way along the trail.

The next morning's hike was surprisingly light on mammals, although we did have nice views of Blue Vanga. We departed after lunch. The hike in to the campsite, which had seemed significant in the dark the prior night, took us 13 minutes. After the short rough drive through the park we were back on the Route National, although there wasn't actually much difference between the two routes on this stretch. We stopped mid-afternoon at a bar to discuss options. Kate had been ill during the night and still wasn't feeling well, so Kate and Scott decided to spend the night at Berenty Lodge and Rob and Lana elected to join them. Berenty is located about an hour's drive past the turnoff for Parcel 2 of Andohahela. Patrick had been worried about the possible state of the road in to Mangatsiaka campsite, but it turned out to be rough but manageable, particularly because the river at kilometre two was completely dry. From the end of the road it was only a 400 metre walk to the actual campground, a beautiful spot with some big shady trees, picnic tables and an outhouse beside a dry streambed. A White-footed Sportive Lemur poking out of a hole in a dead hollow tree added to the appeal.



A two-hour night walk provided good views of White-footed Sportive Lemurs, lots of Grey Mouse Lemurs, including a mating pair, and a couple of family groups of Verreaux's Sifakas. Arrival in the spiny forest zone of the park meant a new slate of reptiles, including Warty Chameleons and Big-headed Ground Geckos. We were back at camp by 9:30 pm for dinner and bed, relishing the cooling breeze.



We left after a morning walk to see the sifakas and met up with the others a little after 10:00 am. Lunch consisted of crackers, cookies and bananas consumed as we drove. We passed one group of Sifakas and a group of Ring-tailed Lemurs during the drive. We arrived at the Angora Hotel in Ampanihy (“the place of bats”) by 7:00 pm, only to discover that there were no available rooms and no bats. Patrick had spoken with someone supposedly at the hotel five months prior but had been unable to contact him again. The manager stated that the phone number was wrong, so we remain unsure who the person on the other end of the line might have been. After some discussion, we were allowed to camp on the grounds of the hotel and use one of the rooms. We ordered Coke and beer at the hotel restaurant, followed by chicken, the only dish available. The chicken arrived two hours later and appeared to have passed away from starvation, although the fries were excellent, as is usually the case in Madagascar.

We arrived in Tsimanampetsotse shortly after 3:00 pm the next day and drove the half hour to the campsite. The campsite was lovely, with ramadas and stone picnic tables. While waiting for supper to cook, a Broad-striped Vontsira appeared close to the cooking area. He returned several times, eventually joined by a second vontsira. After supper, we hiked a loop trail and saw several Grey Mouse Lemurs, Ring-tailed Lemurs settling down for the night, giant hissing cockroaches and a large Radiated Tortoise.





The next morning's walk produced a cluster of Mahafaly Long-fingered Bats in a cave and a large tropp of Ring-tailed Lemurs. We stopped to observe some flamingoes on the lake, then left the park and drove to Domaine d'Ambola, a lovely hotel on the beach. A leisurely afternoon followed, eating delicious food and having a swim.





We arose early the next morning and drove to Ankao, where we caught the boat to Tulear. The harbour in Tulear was a ringer for Richard Scary's busytown – canoes, boats, people wading, people swimming, and a tractor to convey our bags to shore. We met Patrick's brother Mario who was there with Patrick's vehicle, equipped with air-conditioning! We were soon at Bella Donna, a lovely hotel on the beach in Ifaty. After lunch, we headed over to the Mousa reserve, a privately-owned property outside town. We quickly managed to see a Long-tailed Ground Roller, followed after dark by Petter's Sportive Lemur and Grey Mouse Lemur. It was starting to rain, so our walking pace increased significantly. Of the possible target species, the only significant ones remaining to be seen were Dumeril's Boa and Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec. As if on cue, a boa appeared beside the path, followed soon after by a Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec. As this seemed to stretch the bounds of credulity, I asked Patrick about it afterwards and he confirmed that the spotters likely extracted the boa from a known burrow and probably broke open some logs to find the tenrec which they then planted by the side of the path. Back at the hotel we had a delicious dinner of zebu in a Camembert sauce, with fries and legumes, followed by passionfruit ice cream.



The next morning dawned overcast and rainy. We went for a swim in the shallows off the beach, then packed up, had lunch and left about three hours prior to our flight. We arrived at the airport two hours before our flight and immediately wished we had arrived earlier. A long lineup snaked through the terminal and appeared to be moving not at all. After about 1 ¼ hours, a second line formed, which also moved at a glacial pace. By the time we reached the counter the mood in the line had turned ugly. As I

was reaching out to one of our travel companions for her passport and phone, the woman behind me tried to strike the materials out of my hand, while her partner, a short fat Belgian, called me “Brexit man” and said we weren’t Europeans any more, as if that had relevance to our place in an airport queue in Madagascar. I guess if “Brexit man” is the worst insult he could summon I should probably feel sorry for him, but I wasn’t feeling that generous. We made it through to the waiting area and I noticed that the angry Belgian dwarf and his wife weren’t there, but unfortunately they did make it on the flight, yelling at a Malgasy woman that he and his wife wanted to sit where she was, despite them not having assigned seats. A flight attendant spoke to him and threatened to turf him off the flight, which caused him to quiet down a bit. In Antananarivo airport he rammed his baggage cart in front of me to which I responded by accidentally bumping into him on my way out of the building. Very mature all around.

We had a delicious dinner at Restaurant le Pousse-Pousse and a good night’s sleep at Hotel Mirandava. The next morning was devoted to some last-minute souvenir shopping prior to heading to the airport.

A huge thanks to Tracey, Rob, Lana, Scott and Kate for their companionship on the trip and to Patrick for his guiding and logistics. Given the issues with Madagascar Airlines at the moment, this was a challenging trip requiring a number of last-minute pivots and changes. I can’t thank him enough.

As always, feel free to contact me at [ibtson@yahoo.com](mailto:ibtson@yahoo.com) for further information.

Ian Thompson

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List of mammal species seen:

1. Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec – *Echinops telfairi*
2. Lowland Streaked Tenrec – *Hemicentetes semispinosus*
3. Naked-nosed Shrew Tenrec – *Microgale gymnorhyncha*
4. Web-footed Shrew Tenrec – *Microgale mergulus*
5. Grey Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus murinus*
6. Grey-brown Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus griseorufus*
7. Golden-brown Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus ravelobensis*
8. Anjiahely Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus macarthurii*
9. Tanosy Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus tanosi*
10. Mittermeier’s Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus mittermeieri*
11. Goodman’s Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus lehilahytsara*
12. Hairy-eared Dwarf Lemur – *Allocebus trichotis*
13. Thomas’s Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus thomasi*
14. Greater Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus major*
15. Groves’s Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus grovesi*
16. Crossley’s Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus crossleyi*
17. Undescribed Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus sp.*
18. Masoala Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur scottorum*
19. Seal’s Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur seali*
20. Andohahela Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur fleuretae*



21. White-footed Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur leucopus*
22. Petters’s Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur petteri*
23. Small-toothed Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur microdon*
24. Grey Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur griseus*
25. Southern Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur meridionalis*
26. Northern Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur occidentalis*
27. Golden Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur aureus*
28. Greater Bamboo Lemur – *Prolemur simus*
29. Ring-tailed Lemur – *Lemur catta*
30. Rufous Brown Lemur – *Eulemur rufus*
31. Red-fronted Brown Lemur – *Eulemur rufifrons*
32. White-fronted Brown Lemur – *Eulemur albifrons*
33. White-collared Brown Lemur – *Eulemur cinereiceps*
34. Red-collared Brown Lemur – *Eulemur collaris*
35. Red-bellied Lemur – *Eulemur rubriventer*
36. Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur – *Varecia variegata*
37. Red Ruffed Lemur – *Varecia rubra*
38. Eastern Woolly Lemur – *Avahi laniger*
39. Masoala Woolly Lemur – *Avahi mooreorum*
40. Southern Woolly Lemur – *Avahi meridionalis*
41. Verreaux’s Sifaka – *Propithecus verreauxi*
42. Diademed Sifaka – *Propithecus diadema*
43. Milne-Edwards’s Sifaka – *Propithecus edwardsi*
44. Indri – *Indri indri*
45. Aye-aye – *Daubentonia madagascariensis*
46. White-tailed Tree Rat – *Brachytarsomys albicauda*
47. Tanala Tufted-tail Rat – *Eliurus tanala*
48. Lesser Tufted-tail Rat – *Eliurus minor*
49. Webb’s Tufted-tail Rat – *Eliurus webbi*
50. Eastern Red Forest Rat – *Nesomys rufus*
51. Lowland Red Forest Rat – *Nesomys audeberti*
52. Madagascar Flying Fox – *Pteropus rufus*
53. Peters’s Sheath-tailed Bat – *Paremballonura atrata*
54. Eastern Sucker-footed Bat – *Myzopoda aurita*
55. Peters’s Goblin Bat – *Mormopterus jugularis*
56. Malagasy Eastern Free-tailed Bat – *Chaerephon atsinanana*
57. Major’s Long-fingered Bat – *Miniopterus majori*
58. Mahafaly’s Long-fingered Bat – *Miniopterus mahafaliensis*
59. Spotted Fanaloka – *Fossa fossana*
60. Falanouc – *Eupleres goudotii*
61. Ring-tailed Vontsira – *Galidia elegans*
62. Broad-striped Vontsira – *Galidictis fasciata*

