THE COMOROS
& NORTHERN MADAGASCAR

5/9 OCTOBER – 1 NOVEMBER 2008

TOUR REPORT

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This, our first tour to explore some of the more remote areas of Northern Madagascar and the Comoro Islands, was as much an expedition as a tour. Not only were we largely visiting areas that Birdquest had not visited before, we also visited a few sites that few, if any, birders had ever visited before! The trip had taken plenty of preparation, and we were delighted to be invited as the first group to look for the recently rediscovered Madagascar Pochard! I won’t say it was all plain sailing as we had a few hiccups along the way, but these were all ironed-out, and the trip generally went very smoothly. In fact, I think it’s fair to say that it was a terrific success. We recorded a total of 207 species, not a huge total, but it included nearly all of the birds we were after. It was an excellent tour for globally threatened species, with 33 (16%) of the species recorded being listed as of conservation concern, with five of them being listed as critically endangered, and a further 11, endangered! So what were the highlights? No doubt rarities on Madagascar that will stick in the mind include the amazing Sakalava Rail, the seldom-seen Amber Mountain Rock Thrush, the recently re-discovered Madagascar Pochard and the rarely seen Madagascar Red Owl. On the Comoro Islands, the clean-sweep of all of the endemics was very pleasing, and good views of them all to boot! Getting all four of the endemic scops owls firmly fixed in the spotlight beam was perhaps the single most satisfying achievement (bringing our tally of owls on the trip to nine!), but other great birds included the electric blue Comoro Blue Vanga, the rare Grand Comoro Drongo and the plentiful but attractive Comoro Blue Pigeon. We saw plenty of other great wildlife too. Stunning lemurs included the fabulous Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemur and a brilliant family of Crowned Sifakas, and the amazing reptiles and amphibians that we saw included the world’s smallest chameleon!

We began the tour with a brief overnight in the capital Tana, followed by an early morning flight up to Maroantsetra. Things went at full pelt as we were whisked to our speedboats and were soon heading out across the Bay of Antongil to our destination, the forested foothills of the Masoala Peninsula. We were there in time for lunch, and were soon beginning our exploration of the surrounding forest. We had just under three days to explore, and in this time managed to unveil some real goodies. A couple of Helmet Vangas and a showy female Bernier’s Vanga were high on the wants lists, but it was the tame Scaly Ground-Roller that really stole our hearts! We also had great
views of two different Short-legged Ground-Rollers and other goodies included a brilliant pair of Brown Mesites, a tame Madagascar Wood-Rail, several superb Red-breasted Couas, an unexpected Banded Kestrel, a perched Madagascar Sparrowhawk and a friendly pair of Rainforest Scops Owls. Along the coast, we noted a few Madagascar Pratincoles, and found a Roseate Tern amongst a small group of Lesser Crested Terns. We found a number of other interesting creatures including some fine chameleons, Red Ruffed Lemurs and attractive White-fronted Brown Lemurs. At night, a new set of lemur came out to play, with Eastern Avahis, Seale’s Sportive Lemurs and Greater Dwarf Lemurs all putting in appearances close to the camp. It had been a great start to the trip, and we headed back to Tana happy, pausing briefly to admire some amazing Tomato Frogs in Maroantsetra on the way!

Having re-joined with Bill (following our brief encounter at Maroantsetra airport), the next leg of our tour saw us flying up to Antsiranana, with a brief stop on Nosy Be. We then made our way the short distance to Joffreville and checked-in to our very elegant hotel and met our slightly eccentric Zimbabwean hosts! That afternoon we spent in the delightful Montagne d’Ambre National Park. If any one wants to know how to make nice trails for birders, go and have a look here! Anyhow, we wasted little time in finding the main target, the attractive Amber Mountain Rock Thrush, and went on to get great views of several pairs. We also found both Crowned and Sanfords’s Brown Lemurs, and a number of other interesting birds included some confiding Dark Newtonias, a showy pair of White-throated Rails and the distinctive local fulvescens form of Spectacled Greenbul. We were also privileged to see the world’s smallest chameleon, the amazing Brookesia minima!! After dark, our nightwalk was relatively quiet, but we did track down some superb Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemurs, and found a roosting Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher.

As the following day was largely a travel day, those that wanted returned to Montagne d’Ambre National Park, where we enjoyed more rock thrushes and got great views of a pair of glittering Pitta-like Ground-Rollers. We then headed a long way south, eventually pitching up at Antsohihy for the night. On the way we passed a few wetlands which held good numbers of Black Herons and our first Madagascar Pond Herons of the trip.

We were now in our Landcruisers, and we needed them! It took nearly the whole day to get to the Madagascar Pochard site, and at times, we were barely on a road. Some difficult river crossings and slippery slopes made it a little harder, and a torrential downpour in the afternoon did not help. Indeed the second vehicle became stuck, and it was late afternoon before we were all reunited at the camp. We had managed a few roadside stops en route, but other than a Baillon’s Crake and a stunning pair of Madagascar Harriers, there was little to write home about. Some rum and plenty of chilli softened the camping and we lay down expectantly, thinking about what lay ahead.

After an early breakfast we drove towards the lake where the pochards were rediscovered. We paused to admire more Madagascar Harriers as we went, and then got to a small pass between a crater lake and a marsh. The fact that the pochards have survived is one of those strange quirks of nature: the crater lake is not suitable for rice cultivation and apparently has no fish! Quite how the crocodiles survive is another question, but what is for sure is that the lack of human disturbance has created a wetland paradise. Even from the track, we could already see our first Madagascar Pochards and Meller’s Ducks! We walked down into the forest to the researchers’ camp, and were soon shown a roosting Madagascar Long-eared Owl which gave brilliant scope views. We were then walked a few metres to a roosting male Madagascar Red Owl. You almost had to pinch yourself! It was fantastic, just a few metres away in a Pandanus Palm, and not remotely bothered by our presence! Some of us even went to look at the second Madagascar Red Owl, the female. At the lake, we feasted our eyes on at least a dozen Madagascar Pochards, both males and females showing well, and at least a couple of females had broods of tiny pied ducklings! About a dozen Meller’s Ducks showed well and Madagascar Little Grebes were refreshingly common! Back in the forest we saw a couple of groups of Grey-crowned Greenbuls, a male Common Sunbird-Asity and some smart male Forest Fodys. After lunch we explored a nearby marsh where a Madagascar Rail showed well, and we got
more great views of Madagascar Harriers. Common Quails showed on the way back to the village, and we arrived back in time for a celebratory beer, for it had been an amazing day! My work was not over however, as I attended an excellent meeting with the local mayors and a room full of villagers in which the local NGO that has been formed to protect the pochards received their first donation – from Birdquest. Let’s hope the project is successful and the wonderful habitat stays intact!

We left the following day, and once again spent most of the day in our Landcruisers. Early in the morning we found Stripe-throated Jery and Rand’s Warbler, but really there was little time to bird, and after what had been an epic journey, we arrived at Ankarafantsika National Park where we rolled into Ampijoroa Forest Station well after dark. I wasn’t planning to include Ampijoroa in the itinerary, but as there had been several requests, and we were passing the site anyway, we paid the excellent park a visit.

We were up early – it gets hot quickly here, and after not too much searching we were watching an amazing male Schlegel’s Asity, pure magic! We continued to another block of forest and after a longish walk we were at the nest of a Van Dam’s Vanga – a species that can play hard to get. Coquerel’s and Red-capped Couas showed well, a pair of White-breasted Mesites gave terrific views and a roosting Torotoroka Scops Owl looked quite endearing in its hollowed out trunk. Mammals included the stunning Coquerel’s Sifaka, Milne-Edwards Sportive-Lemurs and a lovely Western Avahi. We even found another pair of Van Dam’s Vangas on the way back and admired some cute Mauritian Tomb Bats roosting in trees in the campground. We took a break in the middle of the day, but those that opted for the optional siesta were rudely interrupted with the news that some superb Madagascar Crested Ibises were showing! Great views were had by all, and we then headed to the lake for an afternoon boat trip. Some Mongoose Lemurs were notched up en route, but the boat trip itself degenerated into a bit of a farce! After great views of a stunning Humblot’s Heron and close-up views of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle, the engine broke, and we spent most of the time being paddled back, only to see the boat set off again ten minutes later! Oh well, we’d cleaned up anyway! A nightwalk provided fantastic views of Madagascar Nightjar and several Golden-brown Mouse Lemurs, but not much else of note.

A few of us returned to the forest the following morning, seeing more stunning Schlegel’s Asities, four more Madagascar Crested Ibises and a fine Madagascar Nightjar sheltering two tiny chicks! We then headed for the comfort of Majunga, pausing for a Madagascar Jacana on the way, and put our feet up for a while. In the afternoon we made an excursion to a small lake where we saw numerous African Pygmy Geese, several more Madagascar Jacanas, a showy Allen’s Gallinule and, best of all, the rare endemic race of White-backed Duck.

The following morning we took a boat out into the Betsiboka Estuary. En route we passed a flock of Saunders’s Terns. On arrival at the site, the tide was relatively high, but we soon found good numbers of the main target, the endangered Bernier’s (or Madagascar) Teal, and these cute ducks showed very well indeed. We also found a single Madagascar White Ibis, and then headed back to Majunga for lunch. It was then time to venture into the unknown as we boarded our flight to Moroni on Grand Comoro! We arrived just before dark, and soon encountered the first reason why few tourists venture to the Comoro islands! After an hour and a half we still had no visa, the machine was broken and it was hot and humid! Our local agents arranged for us to leave the airport without visas (we would have to return) and we headed off to the hotel to get planning! The following day was a big one, as we were to make our attempt on Mount Karthala!

I was greeted in the morning by the news that one, then two and ultimately three of the group had decided not to come up Mount Karthala, and Hugh arranged for the three of them to bird the lowlands for the two days, where they successfully found many of the endemics (as well as good food, a comfortable hotel etc etc!!). The rest of us embarked upon the long trek up Mount Karthala. It wasn’t especially steep, but it was long, and frequently on rock. We climbed from c360m to our
We arrived on Moheli just before dusk and set off. Our time on the island was to be somewhat limited, and with only one night, it was important to get to a site for the endemic owl. Confusion reigned, but eventually we got to a suitable area, and within seconds we could hear the strange Tyto-like growls of the critically endangered Moheli Scops Owl! It did not take long to find one, and after some great views, we retired to the hotel for dinner and beer! The following morning we embarked on a bit of a death march up a most unpleasant trail. It proved to be pretty successful as we found plenty of the different-looking local form of the Comoro Thrush and then a couple of Comoro Green
Pigeons. A pair of electric-blue Comoro (Blue) Vangas quite literally dazzled us from a few metres range and we found some impressive Livingstone’s Fruit-Bats, but try as we might, we could not find the last endemic, the Moheli (or Benson’s) Brush-Warbler. Depression was setting in, and as we headed back to the harbour, we had one last roll of the dice, and amazingly, pulled off another last minute save as a Benson’s Brush-Warbler showed brilliantly above our heads. We also pulled in some more Comoro Vangas, but inevitably set off on the boat a little later than scheduled, along with plenty of uninvited fellow passengers! The journey back was a little choppier, but was fine, though we did not add any new species.

That left us with one whole day on Anjouan. Having once again seen the two endemics in the hotel garden, we headed to the traditional site of Lac Dzianlandzé in the highlands. Locals were employed to find the owl (though the result of this farce was some Barn Owl legs under a bridge) and we set off on the two hour walk (15 minutes if you’re a local!) to the lake. We saw some excellent scaly Comoro Thrushes (another distinctive endemic form!) but then the heavens opened. The rain was light but persistent and eventually became torrential! By the time we got back to the bus, everyone was soaked from head to toe! The prospect of returning to the lake was not too appealing, and so we followed the somewhat confused advice of our guide and headed to another patch of forest. Although at lower altitude than expected, and not too close to the road, it did show some promise as there were at least a few native trees that contained a pair of the rare local form of Crested Drongo and some more Livingstone’s Fruit-Bats. We waited till dusk, with everything crossed, not wanting to think about what we’d do if... Then, bang on dusk, an Anjouan Scops Owl called. We scrambled a little higher, and after just a couple of plays of the tape, one came zooming in from great distance and was soon firmly fixed in the beam. It was a sooty dark-morph adult, with yellow eyes, and having achieved great views and made some recordings, we headed back to the car, now knowing that we had a serious chance of a clean sweep of the Comoron endemics.

Our flight to Mayotte the following day was delayed because of bad weather on Mayotte, and by the time we left Anjouan the wind was picking up there too. The pilot delayed the flight due to the tail wind for a while, and then floored it and got us airborne. Looking down at the sea, we were pleased that we were not off to Moheli in a boat, and the landing at Dzaoudzi was decidedly rocky! Once back on terra firma we headed across to the main island and on to our hotel near to Pic Combani. The local Frances’s Sparrowhawk was notched up on route, and once installed at the hotel we began our exploration. We always knew that, due to the airline schedules, we would have too much time on Mayotte, and so it proved. We easily found the four endemics (Mayotte Scops Owl, Mayotte Sunbird, Mayotte White-eye and Mayotte Drongo) close to our hotel, and enjoyed repeated views of all of them. We also found Cuckoo-Rollers, an Eleonora’s Falcon and numerous Comoro Blue and Comoro Pigeons there. Exploring further afield, we found a selection of waders, including 15 Crab Plovers, the local form of Madagascar Swift and numerous White-tailed Tropicbirds on Petite Terre, some fantastic Madagascar Pond Herons and an Allen’s Gallinule at Lac Karihani, and a fine Comoro Fody of the local form in a park near to the capital. We also enjoyed the local Brown Lemurs, some good food and a little downtime!

Leaving Mayotte behind (we were entertained at the airport by some crack French Commandos who failed to shoot a domestic duck from 10m!), we headed back to Madagascar, and as we were greeted at Majunga Airport, I have to say, it was almost like arriving home! We once again headed for comfort to prepare ourselves for the last leg of our epic adventure! Our final destination was to be the marshes of Lac Kinkony, the haunt of another of Madagascar’s rare and seldom-seen species, the Sakalava Rail. Once again we boarded our 4X4s, and began by sailing across to Katsepy on the ferry. It has to be said, the journey to Lac Kinkony was not as arduous as we expected. A few stops on the way produced goodies such as the local subspecies of African Openbill and some cute Decken’s Sifakas, and by the evening we had arrived at our camp. However, we were not prepared for what we found. Fearing the worst, we were not psychologically prepared for an almost East African safari-type set-up. It was positively palatial, and we coped admirably, even drinking the cold beer under the
gazebo in the heat of the day! The site itself did not disappoint either. We made a few boat trips out into the dense and spiky Phragmites swamp, the haunt of our target, and gradually got progressively better and better views of the superb Sakalava Rail. In total we saw four, including two birds on nests, one containing two speckled pink eggs. We even recorded the undescribed song, a Little Grebe-like trill, quite unlike the song of the closely-related Black Crake. We had some magical times watching this most endearing species, and, perhaps not surprisingly, it became our bird of the trip. The lake was busy with other birds too. Along the narrow channels, we found numerous Little Bitterns and Madagascar Swamp-Warblers, great number of egrets, herons and Glossy Ibises came and went and a few Madagascar White Ibises and African Openbills drifted over! It was the perfect finale, and we left the site feeling rather chuffed! The journey back was not too bad. We paused to look at some Decken’s Sifakas again, and made a stop by a river where we found seven or eight Yellow-billed Storks, an African Spoonbill, no fewer than five Humblot’s Herons, a few White-fronted Plovers and some lively Madagascar Pratincoles! The heavens then opened, and torrential rain soon turned the road into a river! Fortunately we made it through, and as the skies lightened, we stopped to assess the luggage, and found a cute pair of Madagascar Buttonquails (and thousands of aggressive mosquitoes) foraging by the road. Back at Katsepy, we made one final pilgrimage, this time to the superb Crowned Sifakas. We spent a very enjoyable half hour in their company, wrapping up what had been an amazing adventure!

The following day, was, to be honest, a little tedious, as we spent the whole day slowly heading back towards Tana for our flight home, killing time at the most comfortable places we could find! It did give us time to reflect back on the tour. It was an adventure that many of us had thought about for some time, but now it was a reality. In all honesty, I don’t think any of us would have dared believe that the trip would have been so successful and have operated so smoothly. I can look forward to the next one with less nerves!!
SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).
Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from Threatened Birds of the World, BirdLife International’s magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world’s avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/index.html

PODICIPEDIDAE
Little Grebe (Dabchick)  Tachybaptus ruficollis: At least 20 were seen at Lac Karihani on Mayotte, our only ones of the trip.
Madagascar Little Grebe Tachybaptus pelzelnii: It was great to see this species so plentiful at the pochard site, where we saw an estimated 40. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 5,000 and is decreasing. It qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small population which is suspected to be in decline. It has been eliminated from some sites by a combination of predation by introduced fish and entanglement in monofilament gill-nets, and is suffering habitat loss to rice cultivation. Its decline is likely to accelerate in the next ten years.

PROCELLARIIDAE
Bulwer’s Petrel Bulweria bulwerii: This one caused a little fun and confusion, largely as it’s not in the book. The first was seen from the hotel on Grand Comoro and was suspected to be this species. We then saw several more between Anjouan and Moheli which, we began to suspect, may be Jouanin’s (as we thought Bulwer’s may not even occur!). However, the jizz seemed very like Bulwer’s, and photos and reference to better books indeed show them to be this species, which is as likely on range. Jouanin’s, I am reliably informed, is a much bulkier, thick-set bird with a relatively huge bill and a stockier, shearwater-like jizz (rather than the almost tern-like jizz of Bulwer’s). See Mike Watson’s photo on our Oman & Bahrain tour page (http://www.birdquest.co.uk/HolidaysbyRegion.cfm?Holiday=793) for a good comparison
Arabian Shearwater Puffinus persicus: We were pleased to see a total of seven on the crossings between Anjouan and Moheli, a couple of which showed well. There’s been a lot of revision in the Audubon’s/Little Shearwater complexes recently, and the form concerned, temptator, may yet be elevated to species’ status. Incidentally, as discussed on the tour, Mascarene Shearwater P. atrodorsalis (as featured in Sinclair’s book) is now regarded to be an immature temptator.

PHAETHONTIDAE
White-tailed Tropicbird Phaethon lepturus: We enjoyed repeated encounters with this splendid species around the Comoro Islands, especially on Mayotte where good numbers were visiting the cliffs at Moya Beach.

SULIDAE
Masked Booby Sula dactylatra: Good numbers and great views during the crossings between Anjouan and Moheli.

PHALACROCORACIDAE
Long-tailed Cormorant (Reed Cormorant) Phalacrocorax africanus: A relatively scarce species in Madagascar, we noted small numbers around Maroantsetra and again in the Lac Kinkony area.
ANHINGIDAE
African Darter *Anhinga rufa*: We noted three at Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa, and small numbers in the Lac Kinkony area.

FREGATIDAE
Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor*: Two females, one on each crossing, were noted between Anjouan and Moheli. Many frigatebirds went unidentified.
Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*: Several were identified between Anjouan and Moheli, including some adult males.

ARDEIDAE
Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: Magnus saw one from the platform at Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa, and we all managed some great views during our boat trip at Lac Kinkony. The subspecies concerned, *podiceps*, is endemic to Madagascar.
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Small numbers were seen around Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa, and at Lac Kinkony.
Squacco Heron (Common Squacco Heron) *Ardeola ralloides*: A common bird in the wetlands in Madagascar, but not recorded on the Comoro Islands. Many birds were in their delightful golden-brown breeding dress.
Madagascar Pond Heron (Malagasy Pond Heron) *Ardeola idae*: We first recorded this attractive species on the drive between Montagne d’Ambre and Antsohihy. Singles were also noted at the Madagascar Pochard site and at Lac Ravelobe at Ampijoroa. However, the most impressive gathering was at Lac Karihani on Mayotte, where we noted at least 30. Many were in splendid breeding dress, but more educational, were the heavily-streaked non-breeding plumaged birds. A very handsome heron in its delicate creamy breeding plumage, it is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,000 and 6,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because it has a very small population which is undergoing a continuing decline because many of its breeding colonies are heavily and increasingly exploited for eggs and young. This exploitation is exacerbated by pressures on its wetland habitats.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Common in open areas throughout the tour.
Green-backed Heron (Striated Heron) *Butorides striatus*: Scattered sightings throughout the trip. This highly polytypic species is represented in Madagascar by the subspecies *rutenbergi* and in the Comoro Islands by the subspecies *rhizophorae*.
Black Egret (Black Heron) *Egretta ardesiaca*: We enjoyed good numbers at a flood on the drive between Montagne d’Ambre and Antsohihy and saw plenty more at various wetlands in the Ampijoroa/Majunga/Lac Kinkony areas.
Dimorphic Egret *Egretta dimorpha*: Common at most wetlands in Madagascar, with numerous example of both light and dark phase birds and even an intermediate individual during the boat trip on the Betsiboka Estuary.
Great Egret (Great White Egret) *Casmerodius albus*: Common in rice paddies and at various wetland sites throughout the Madagascar legs of our tour, with just small numbers on the Comoro Islands.
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Small numbers of the endemic form *madagascariensis* were seen at several wetlands.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Small numbers around Majunga, on Mayotte and Lac Kinkony. The endemic form is *firas*. 
Humblot’s Heron *Ardea humbloti*: We enjoyed some fantastic encounters with this species at Ampijoroa and on the journeys to and from Lake Kinkony. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 1,500 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because it has a very small population which is undergoing continuing declines owing to overexploitation and loss and degradation of its wetland habitats.

**CICONIIDAE**

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*: A total of seven or eight were seen along a river bank near to Lac Kinkony. A scarce species in Madagascar.

African Openbill (A O Stork) *Anastomus lamelligerus*: A rare bird in Madagascar, we were lucky to see a couple near to Namakia (on the way to Lac Kinkony) and a couple more at the lake itself. It is represented in Madagascar by the endemic subspecies *madagascariensis*.

**THRESKIORNITHIDAE**

Madagascar White Ibis (Madagascar Sacred Ibis) *Threskiornis bernieri*: A single during our trip on the Betsiboka Estuary seemed a poor tally until we learned that the other group missed them altogether! We then saw a few more around Lac Kinkony. Characterized by the pale iris and white wing tips, this recently split species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 2,300 – 3,250 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because it has a very small population which is declining owing largely to unsustainable harvesting of its eggs, disturbance of nesting sites and the degradation of wetland habitats in Madagascar. Declines are predicted to continue into the future.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: Excellent numbers, especially at Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa and in the Lac Kinkony area.

Madagascar Crested Ibis (White-winged Ibis) *Lophotibis cristata*: We enjoyed some amazing encounters with the western subspecies *urschi* of this delightful species at Ampijoroa. We saw at least six, and watched them for as long as we wanted, foraging on the ground. We also heard them on the Masoala Peninsula. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 10,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Near Threatened as its population is projected to decline moderately rapidly in the future owing to the poaching of adults, young and eggs, as well as deforestation.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*: A single was found along a river bank near to Lac Kinkony when we were actually trying to find one!!

**PHOENICOPTERIDAE**

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*: About ten scruffy immature birds were noted in the Betsiboka Estuary. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 2,220,000 – 3,240,000 and is decreasing. It is classified as Near Threatened because populations appear to be undergoing a moderately rapid reduction. Proposed large-scale soda ash extraction at Lake Natron, the most important breeding colony, although currently on hold, would be disastrous for this species and, were this to happen, the species may qualify for up listing to a higher threat category.

**ANATIDAE**

White-faced Whistling Duck (White-faced Duck) *Dendrocygna viduata*: This attractive duck was common at several of the wetland sites visited.
White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*: A new Madagascar bird for me, Hugh did well to pick out one of these elusive ducks in the water hyacinth at the lake near to Majunga. It is uncommon in Madagascar and is represented by the endemic subspecies *insularis*.

Comb Duck (Knob-billed Duck) *Thalassornis leuconotus*: Our first was a single at a flood on the drive between Montagne d’Ambre and Antsoihy and we went on to see plenty more at Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa and a few around Lac Kinkony.

African Pygmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*: A couple were seen on the drive between Montagne d’Ambre and Antsoihy, and we went on to see plenty more near to Majunga, many of which showed well. Richard also saw one at Lac Kinkony. This formerly common species has become harder and harder to find as more and more of its habitat has been destroyed.

Meller’s Duck *Anas melleri*: About a dozen were seen brilliantly at the Madagascar Pochard site. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,000 and 5,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because it is believed to have a very small, although widely dispersed, population, which is undergoing a continuing decline owing to intensive hunting, habitat loss and degradation, and disturbance.

Madagascar Teal (Bernier’s Teal) *Anas bernieri*: At least 30 showed very well during our trip around the Betsiboka Estuary. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 1,500 and 2,500 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because it has a very small population, that is undergoing a rapid and continuing decline owing to habitat loss and hunting.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*: Small numbers seen at a few sites, including at least 25 on the Madagascar Pochard lake and c50 at Lac Kinkony.

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*: About five were seen at a small wetland near to Bealanana and small numbers were seen at Lac Kinkony.

Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata*: It was a huge bonus to get permission to visit the lake where this species was rediscovered, and it did not disappoint! We were absolutely thrilled to see c12 adults (great views of both males and females) and a couple of broods of ducklings. Cliff’s top bird, it is not surprisingly classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at fewer than fifty individuals! It was rediscovered in 2006 following the last sighting in 1991. It is currently known from just the single location that we visited! While it may also persist at other sites, the population is likely to be tiny and therefore it is classified as Critically Endangered.

**ACCIPITRIDAE**

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*: Particularly common in the hotter areas of Madagascar such as around Ampijoroa and Majunga, but not recorded in the Comoro Islands. This form is often lumped in Black Kite *M. migrans*.

Madagascar Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus vociferoides*: Great views of a pair of fine adults at Lac Ravelobe at Ampijoroa. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 222 individuals and is decreasing! More comprehensive surveys have increased the known number of pairs of this species. However, it still has an extremely small population which is probably declining rapidly, and it is therefore classified as Critically Endangered. Deforestation, soil erosion and the development of wetland areas for rice-paddies have caused loss of nesting and foraging habitat. The species is threatened by direct human competition for fish-stocks, persecution through the taking of nestlings and shooting of adults, accidental entanglement in fishing-nets, disturbance at breeding sites by human activities and, according to local people, use of eagle body parts in food and traditional medicine.
Water pollution poses a potential threat given the species’ reliance on fish and the tendency for pollutants to accumulate in prey tissues.

**Madagascar Harrier-Hawk** *Polyboroides radiatus*: Our first couple were seen in the Madagascar Pochard area, and we went on to see several others.

**Madagascar Harrier** (*Malagasy Harrier*) *Circus macrosceles*: We enjoyed some stunning views of this one, with several showing very well in the Madagascar Pochard area (the reason the Peregrine Fund were working there!) and several more showing well in the Comoro Islands. Until very recently this species was lumped with Réunion Harrier *Circus maillardi*; Madagascar Harrier is found in Madagascar and the Comoros. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between just 250 and 999 and is decreasing. It qualifies as Vulnerable based on its very small population which is likely to be declining owing to a variety of threats, principally habitat loss and degradation, and persecution by humans. Recent surveys suggest that the species is rarer than previously thought. If these lower population estimates are confirmed the species may be up-listed to a higher threat category.

**Madagascar Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter madagascariensis*: A single showed briefly, but well, in the scope at the Masoala, though flew off before everyone got to see it. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 10,000 and 100,000 and is decreasing. It’s suspected to be experiencing a moderately rapid population reduction owing to habitat loss and degradation. If the decline is shown to be more rapid, or the total population smaller, the species might qualify for a higher threat category.

**Frances’s Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter francesii*: Stunning views of a couple of males near to our lodge on the Masoala. We also saw a few on Grand Comoro (*griveaudi*) and Mayotte (*brutus*). The plumage of the forms varies somewhat and more than one species may be involved. Some literature suggests that the form on Anjouan, *pusillus*, may be extinct, and there may have been no confirmed sightings since 1958!

**Madagascar Buzzard** *Buteo brachypterus*: This vocal species was pretty common and widespread on Madagascar.

**FALCONIDAE**

**Madagascar Kestrel** *Falco newtoni*: Seen in small numbers on most days on Madagascar.

**Banded Kestrel** *Falco zoniventris*: We were surprised to see a single near to the lodge on the Masoala on a couple of occasions. Although widespread, this is always a tricky and elusive species.

**Eleonora’s Falcon** *Falco eleonorae*: A single was seen flying over the lodge on Mayotte by Pete, and, that evening, Hugh and Bill got to see one (the same?) perched up.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*: Richard found what was presumably a pair (at least one adult anyway) and at least one juvenile, on the cliffs at Moya Beach. They seemed to enjoy chasing the tropicbirds! The subspecies involved, *radama*, is endemic to Madagascar and the Comoro Islands.

**PHASIANIDAE**

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*: Two or three (or four?!?) flushed at the Pochard Site, and others heard there, and also seen and heard on Mount Karthala, Grand Comoro. The subspecies involved seems to be *africana*.

**NUMIDIDAE**

**Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris*: A couple seen on the Masoala and another pair briefly near to Katsepy. This species is introduced in Madagascar.
MESITORNITHIDAE

White-breasted Mesite *Mesitornis variegata*: A pair and a single were seen superbly at Ampijoroa as they walked on the forest floor, calling every so often. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 8,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Vulnerable because it has a small range which is severely fragmented and decreasing. Consequently its small population is suspected to be declining and is likely to suffer a rapid decline over the next three generations.

Brown Mesite *Mesitornis unicolor*: Brilliant views of a confiding pair on the Masoala Peninsula. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 10,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Vulnerable because its habitat is becoming increasingly fragmented, its extent of occurrence and the area and quality of suitable habitat are decreasing, and thus its small population is suspected to be declining rapidly.

TURNICIDAE

Madagascar Buttonquail *Turnix nigricollis*: First seen at the Pochard Site, we had surprisingly few sightings, but found a very confiding pair on our way back to Katsepy. Probably the easiest buttonquail to see well in the world!

RALLIDAE

Madagascar Flufftail *Sarothrura insularis*: (H): Heard on a couple of occasions near to the Pochard Site.

Madagascar Wood Rail *Canirallus kioloides*: One on the Masoala showed remarkably well for this often rather tricky species, and we heard a few others.

Madagascar Rail *Rallus madagascariensis*: It took some effort (scrambling down a steep slope) for some of us to get a good look at one of these splendid rails at the Pochard Site. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 10,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Vulnerable because its population is small and undergoing a continuing decline owing to the accelerating destruction and modification of its wetland habitats.

White-throated Rail *Dryolimnas cuvieri*: Great views on a couple of occasions at Montagne d’Ambre and seen again very well at the Pochard Site. Also heard at a number of other occasions.

Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis olivieri*: Our bird of the trip in Madagascar, and that’s with some stiff competition! We enjoyed fabulous views of at least four at Lac Kinkony, finding two nests as we went, and recorded the song! A brilliant finale to a great tour! This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 250 and 999 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered because the total population is likely to be very small and is severely fragmented. It is severely threatened by the widespread and rapid degradation and destruction of wetlands in Madagascar.

Baillon’s Crake *Porzana pusilla*: A single was scoped-up at a roadside stop on the drive from Antsohihy to the Pochard Site. This widespread species (the subspecies here is *intermedia*) may well comprise of more than one species.

African Swamphen *Porphyrio madagascariensis*: About five were seen at a roadside marsh on the drive between Montagne d’Ambre and Antsohihy.

Allen’s Gallinule (Lesser Gallinule) *Porphyrio alleni*: Madagascar is a good place to find this often elusive species, and we enjoyed great views of one out in the open on a pool near to Majunga. We also saw a showy bird at Lac Karihoni on Mayotte where it is a sporadic visitor.
Common Moorhen  *Gallinula chloropus*: Seen at a few sites on Madagascar and at Lac Karihani on Mayotte. Birds from Madagascar and the Comoro Islands (*pyrrhorrhoa*) have a very strange repertoire of noises, and show buff undertail coverts. Recent studies suggest that this widespread species comprises more than one species (the New World and Old World forms should almost certainly be split) so it is wise to note where you have seen moorhens!

Red-knobbed Coot (Crested C)  *Fulica cristata*: A single showed well on the Madagascar Pochard lake.

**JACANIDAE**

Madagascar Jacana  *Actophilornis albinucha*: We eventually saw one at Lac Ravelobe at Ampijoroa (much to Magnus’s relief) and saw a few more well at the small lake near to Majunga.

**DROMADIDAE**

Crab Plover  *Dromas ardeola*: A single showed briefly on the Betsiboka Estuary, but we went on to see at least 15 more on Petite Terre, Mayotte. This spectacular species is the only representative of this monotypic family.

**RECURVIROSTRIDAE**

Black-winged Stilt  *Himantopus himantopus*: Small numbers noted at Ampijoroa and around Lac Kinkony.

**GLAREOLIDAE**

Madagascar Pratincole  *Glareola ocularis*: Our first were found on the Masoala where we saw a few. Some of the group saw a single near to the hotel on Grand Comoro, and we saw several more on the journeys to and from Lac Kinkony. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000 and is decreasing. It is listed as Vulnerable because its population is small and undergoing a continuing decline, probably owing to pressures on its wetland habitats.

**CHARADRIIDAE**

Ringed Plover (Common Ringed Plover)  *Charadrius hiaticula*: Only seen on the Comoro Islands, where our maximum count was c10 on Petite Terre, Mayotte.

Kittlitz’s Plover (Kittlitz’s Sand Plover)  *Charadrius pecuarius*: Just a single was noted at Ampijoroa.

Three-banded Plover  *Charadrius tricollaris*: This species prefers muddy freshwater habitats and was seen on Lac Ravelobe, Ampijoroa. The endemic subspecies concerned is *bifrontatus*.

White-fronted Plover  *Charadrius marginatus*: A few seen on sand banks along a river near to Lac Kinkony.

Greater Sand Plover  *Charadrius leschenaultii*: A few seen on the Betsiboka Estuary and up to eight on Petite Terre, Mayotte.

Grey Plover (Black-bellied Plover)  *Pluvialis squatarola*: A few seen from the boat as we returned from the Masoala and small numbers on Petite Terre, Mayotte.

**SCOLOPACIDAE**

Madagascar Snipe  *Gallinago macrodactyla*: Magnus and Pete saw a single in flight at the Madagascar Pochard site. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 1,800 and 7,500 and is decreasing. It is listed as Near Threatened because of its small population and an expected population decline in the next ten years owing to wetland modification and hunting. Further information on the population size and trends may qualify it for a higher threat category.
Eurasian Whimbrel  \textit{Numenius phaeopus}: Scattered sightings from coastal areas on Madagascar and the Comoro Islands.
Common Greenshank  \textit{Tringa nebularia}: A few seen from the boat as we returned from the Masoala, and at least three on the sand banks along the river near to Lac Kinkony.
Terek Sandpiper  \textit{Xenus cinereus}: Good numbers on the Betsiboka Estuary, where we logged at least 150, mostly roosting in the mangroves, and we also saw a single on Petite Terre, Mayotte.
Common Sandpiper  \textit{Actitis hypoleucos}: Small numbers seen at scattered sites throughout, both on Madagascar and in the Comoro Islands.
Ruddy Turnstone  \textit{Arenaria interpres}: A few in the Comoro Islands with a maximum of three on Petite Terre, Mayotte.
Sanderling  \textit{Calidris alba}: Just a single on Petite Terre, Mayotte.
Curlew Sandpiper  \textit{Calidris ferruginea}: Surprisingly few seen, with just five noted on the Betsiboka Estuary and a single on Petite Terre, Mayotte.

\textbf{STERNIDAE}

Greater Crested Tern (Swift Tern)  \textit{Sterna bergii}: First seen on the way to the Masoala (side-by-side with the following species), a couple more in the Betsiboka Estuary and a few on Petite Terre, Mayotte.
Lesser Crested Tern  \textit{Sterna bengalensis}: Good numbers on the rocks on the Masoala Peninsula, and on the crossings there, and a single in the Betsiboka Estuary.
Roseate Tern  \textit{Sterna dougallii}: A single adult with discoloured greater coverts (showing as a black wing-bar) was seen on rocks at the Masoala.
Common Tern  \textit{Sterna hirundo}: A couple in shabby non-breeding plumage were seen on the way back from the Masoala.
Bridled Tern  \textit{Sterna anaethetus}: Quite a few in the Comoro Islands, both offshore from Grand Comoro, and during the boat trips to and from Moheli where we got some excellent views.
Sooty Tern  \textit{Sterna fuscata}: Also seen very well in the Comoro Islands, with just a couple off Grand Comoro, and some great views during the boat trips to and from Moheli.
Saunders’s Tern  \textit{Sterna Saundersi}: A flock of about 25 were seen in the Betsiboka Estuary. Usually we have to resort to identifying these birds as Saunders’s on range, but one or two of the birds clearly showed extensively black in the outer primaries, a feature of Saunders’s Tern.
Whiskered Tern  \textit{Chlidonias hybridus}: Good views of several in fine plumage at Lac Kinkony.
Brown Noddy  \textit{Anous stolidus}: Many great looks during the crossings between Anjouan and Moheli.

\textbf{PTEROCLIDIDAE}

Madagascar Sandgrouse  \textit{Pterocles personatus} (NL): Richard saw a flock of three and Magnus 15+ flying down the river at the ferry crossing on the way to Lac Kinkony.

\textbf{COLUMBIDAE}

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)  \textit{Columba livia}: Introduced nonsense – no domestic ducks or chickens on the list though!
Comoro Pigeon (C Olive P)  \textit{Columba polleni}: We enjoyed many great looks at this surprisingly lethargic and approachable pigeon on both Grand Comoro and Mayotte. This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It is listed as Near Threatened owing to its small population. It faces threats from habitat clearance and degradation and hunting, and if the population was found to be in decline it may qualify for a higher threat category.

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Ring-necked Dove (introduced) *Streptopelia capicola*: Introduced to the Comoro Islands where we saw a few.

Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata*: Widespread on Madagascar and in the Comoro Islands. In Madagascar it is represented by the nominate subspecies, whilst on the Comoro Islands, the rather more chestnut-looking *picturata* was noticeably different.

Tambourine Dove (introduced) *Turtur tympanistria*: Another introduced gem in the Comoro Islands!

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*: This pretty little pigeon was very common in the drier western parts of Madagascar.

Madagascar Green Pigeon *Treron australis*: We noted a few on the Masoala and then saw small numbers at most of the other sites visited.

Comoro Green Pigeon *Treron griveaudi*: A handful were seen above Ouallah, on Moheli, including one which posed in the scope. This species is more usually lumped in Madagascar Green Pigeon, and is not recognized by BirdLife International. If it was, it would surely be regarded as Endangered or even Critically Endangered!

Madagascar Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas madagascariensis*: Some good views were obtained on the Masoala, and a couple of others were noted around the Pochard Site.

Comoro Blue Pigeon *Alectroenas sganzini*: This delightful species was pleasingly common at many of the sites visited in the Comoro Islands, with many showing very well indeed.

**PSITTACIDAE**

Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa*: First seen well on the Masoala, with sightings of small numbers at most sites in Madagascar. Also seen well in the Comoro Islands where it was especially common on Grand Comoro. The form here, *comorensis*, is smaller and browner than the nominate form on Madagascar, and has different vocalizations.

Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra*: First seen on the Masoala, we saw small numbers at several sites on Madagascar, often in the same areas as the previous species. The high musical whistles of this species are distinctive. On the Comoro Islands, we enjoyed some good views on Grand Comoro, where the small, pale, and vocally distinct *sibilans* subspecies occurs.

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis cana*: Good numbers around Ampijoroa and on the journeys, and also seen at several sites on the Comoro Islands where they are introduced.

**CUCULIDAE**

Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo (Madagascar Cuckoo) *Cuculus rochii*: We first saw this species on the drive to the Pochard Site and saw and heard a few others. Along with Cuckoo-Roller, the characteristic sound of Madagascar.

Coquerel’s Coua *Coua coquereli*: Great views of at least four at Ampijoroa, a couple of which showed extremely well.

Red-breasted Coua *Coua serriana*: We enjoyed several excellent encounters with this attractive species on the Masoala Peninsula.

Red-fronted Coua *Coua reynaudii*: We got great views of a pair of this attractive species in the forest at the Madagascar Pochard site.

Red-capped Coua *Coua ruticeps*: A beautiful and obliging pair were watched on the forest floor at Ampijoroa, and a couple of others were seen along the tracks on the way to Lac Kinkony.

Crested Coua *Coua cristata*: This attractive species was first seen on the Masoala, where the subspecies is *cristata*, and again at Ampijoroa, where the subspecies is *cristata/dumonti*. The evening choruses are always good to hear.

Blue Coua *Coua caerules*: Several views of this stunning (and rather turaco-like) coua on the Masoala Peninsula, and another seen at the Pochard Site.
Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou*: Widespread in almost any habitat, but easiest to see early in the morning!

**TYTONIDAE**

Madagascar Red Owl *Tyto soumagnei*: One of the highlights of the tour was seeing a brilliant pair of this rarely-seen species, in broad daylight and at point-blank range! Second favourite in our Madagascar bird-of-the-trip vote. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 1,000 and 2,499 and is decreasing. It is classified as Endangered as its population is thought to be very small and declining owing to the destruction and severe fragmentation of its rainforest habitat. Its presumed range has recently been extended by new records, and the population size may be larger than previously thought, in which case the species may qualify for down listing to a lower category of threat.

Barn Owl (Common B O) *Tyto alba*: A single was seen briefly from the vehicle near to Ampijoroa, and we managed a couple of brief sightings for some in the Comoro Islands. The form concerned is *affinis* which occurs through much of Africa, though birds on Madagascar and the Comoro Islands are occasionally given subspecific status.

**STRIGIDAE**

Grand Comoro Scops Owl (Karthala/Comoro S O) *Otus pauliani*: Brilliant views of a pair at the last minute on Mount Karthala, just when we’d nearly given up. This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at just 2,000 and is decreasing! It is classified as Critically Endangered since it has an extremely small range, occurring at only one location, an active volcano where clearance of forest for agriculture by the island’s large and increasing human population is causing a continuing decline in the area of suitable habitat, and thus its extent of occurrence, area of occupancy, and population.

Anjouan Scops Owl *Otus capnodes*: We got there in the end! Our guide took us to a tiny forest patch in a clove plantation and passed on very mixed messages! At dusk however, a dark-phase bird zoomed in over my head and gave great views in the spotlight, revealing his yellow eyes! This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between just 50 and 249 and is decreasing! It is classified as Critically Endangered because it has a small population which is likely to be declining owing to continuing habitat destruction and degradation in its small range. Its prospects are currently uncertain as forest degradation advances on Anjouan. However, recent evidence suggests that it can adapt to human-affected forest areas where large trees remain.

Moheli Scops Owl *Otus moheliensis*: Another one where a certain amount of confusion ended well, as we saw two of these brilliant owls in the spotlight and heard their bizarre tyto-like calls. Our bird-of-the-trip in the Comoro Islands! This species is classified as Critically Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at just 400 and is decreasing! It is classified as Critically Endangered because it has an extremely small range, occurring on only one mountain ridge (or so they thought!!). There has been a continuing decline in the area and quality of habitat, from which it is suspected that there has been a continuing decline in its extent of occurrence, area of occupancy and the number of mature individuals.

Mayotte Scops Owl *Otus mayottensis*: We enjoyed amazing views of this common and inquisitive owl near to our hotel on Mayotte, and entertained a few of the locals with them too!

Rainforest Scops Owl *Otus rutulus*: Great spotlight views of a pair on the Masoala where they seemed to be particularly common.
Torotoroka Scops Owl *Otus madagascariensis*: One was seen superbly well at its daytime roost in a hollow trunk at Ampijoroa. Until recently, this species was lumped in Rainforest Scops Owl *O. rutilus*, with the name Malagasy Scops Owl being used for the enlarged species, but they differ markedly in coloration, patterning and calls.

Madagascar Long-eared Owl *Asio madagascariensis*: We enjoyed stunning views of a superb adult of this very scarce and elusive species above the camp in the forest at the Pochard Site. Another bonus of our excellent visit there!

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Madagascar Nightjar *Caprimulgus madagascariensis*: Several sightings, the best of which was the adult with the tiny chick at Ampijoroa.

APODIDAE

Madagascar Spinetail (Malagasy Spine-tailed Swift) *Zoonavena grandidieri*: Our best views on Madagascar were around our lodge on the Masoala. We also saw a handful well high up on Mount Karthala where the endemic subspecies is *mariae*.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*: Common on Madagascar (endemic subspecies *gracilis*) and the Comoro Islands (endemic subspecies *griveaudi*).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: A couple were seen by some of us high over the Pochard Site. The endemic subspecies is *willisi*.

Madagascar Swift *Apus balstoni*: A handful seen on Madagascar, the first of which was on the Masoala, and a few of the endemic subspecies *mayottensis* were seen well at Moya Beach on, appropriately enough, Mayotte!

ALCEDINIDAE

Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher (Malagasy Kingfisher) *Corythornis vintsioides*: The first of many excellent sightings of this colourful species was in the ricefields at the Masoala. In the Comoro Islands, we had several sightings of the endemic *johannae* subspecies, which is less tied to water than the birds in Madagascar.

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina madagascariensis*: One of these gems was seen superbly as it roosted during our nightwalk at Montagne d’Ambre National Park.

MEROPIDAE

Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*: Fairly common in small numbers more or less throughout and frequently seen along the roadside during journeys as birds are attracted to the man made banks in which they excavate their nest burrows. Also seen breeding in the Comoro Islands.

CORACIIDAE

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*: These noisy birds were fairly widespread. Those around the HQ at Ampijoroa were probably the most obliging. The nominate form is an endemic breeder in Madagascar, but winters in Africa.

BRACHYPTERACIIIDAE

Short-legged Ground-Roller *Brachypteracias leptosomus*: We enjoyed brilliant views of two of these puffbird-like birds on the Masoala. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It qualifies as Vulnerable because its small population is likely to be declining owing to the destruction and degradation of its forest habitat. This decline is likely to become rapid over the next ten years. The principal threat to its forest habitat is from
slash-and-burn cultivation by subsistence farmers, which results in progressively more degraded regrowth and leads eventually to bracken-covered areas or grassland. Much of the forest on the eastern coastal plain has either already been cleared or is highly degraded, remaining habitat is under pressure from the increasing human population, and commercial logging is an additional threat in some areas. If present trends continue, the remaining unprotected forest, especially at the lower altitudes preferred by this species, will disappear within decades. The species is also hunted.

Scaly Ground-Roller *Brachypteracias squamiger*: After Richard spotted one on a side trail on the Masoala, we were amazed at how tame and obliging the bird was. I’m sure it would have walked between our legs if we’d waited long enough! Bob’s top bird and our third favourite in Madagascar. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It is classified as Vulnerable on the basis of a suspected rapid decline in its small population owing to the destruction and degradation of its forest habitat. The rate of decline is likely to increase over the next ten years.

Pitta-like Ground-Roller *Atelornis pittoides*: Brilliant views of an angry pair of this colourful species at Montagne d’Ambre National Park for myself, Richard and Magnus.

**LEPTOSOMATIDAE**

Cuckoo-Roller *Leptosomus discolor*: A great and familiar sound, for much of the tour. Easier to hear than see, we did manage a few sightings in Madagascar, including at Montagne d’Ambre National Park and the Pochard Site. Also seen on Grand Comoro and on Mayotte (apparently the nominate subspecies, same as Madagascar on Mayotte). Sinclair proposed splitting the form *gracilis* as Comoro Cuckoo-Roller. Most literature gives the range of *gracilis* as Grand Comoro, but in the latest version of his book he refers to *gracilis* as Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller (most literature refers to the form on Anjouan as *intermedius*)! Clearly there is some confusion! In any event, it seems like a weak split, and if it is a split, it seems to make more sense that all of the Comoron forms are split together!

**UPUPIDAE**

Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa marginata*: A few sightings of this purring hoopoe which was first seen on the drive to Antsohihy. The frequent purring call is very different to that of African and European birds.

**PHILEPITTIDAE**

Schlegel’s Asity *Philepitta schlegeli*: Great scope views of several (adult males, immature male and a female) at Ampijoroa. The incredible wattle of the male has to be seen to be believed! Having missed it just weeks before, it instantly became Bill’s top bird! This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population and population trend are unknown. It is listed as Near Threatened because it is expected to experience a moderately rapid population decline over the next ten years, owing to habitat clearance and degradation, and is suspected to have a moderately small population. Evidence that this species is experiencing a rapid decline or has a small population may qualify it for up listing to a higher threat category.

Common Sunbird-Asity *Neodrepanis coruscans*: A male showed quite well at the Pochard Site, and a few others were heard there.

**ALAUDIDAE**

Madagascar Bush Lark *Mirafra hova*: Very common in areas of open country.
HIRUNDINIDAE
Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica*: Common and widespread, we saw good numbers.
Brown-throated Sand Martin *Riparia paludicola*: Common over marshy areas at the Pochard Site. This and the above species are easily confused, but Mascarene Martin is bigger and bulkier, with a longer, fatter and more torpedo-shaped body, broader-based wings, and a steadier flight (Brown-throated Martin has a much more ‘flippy’ flight).

MOTACILLIDAE
Madagascar Wagtail *Motacilla flaviventris*: Common and attractive with a pleasant song. Often very tame, and frequently seen around humans.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE
Ashy Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina cinerea*: A widespread, though never common, constituent of mixed species flocks with an explosive slurred whistle. We first saw them on the Masoala.
Comoro Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina cucullata*: We all enjoyed good views of a few on Grand Comoro, including a couple of distinctive olive individuals. The form on Moheli, *moheliensis*, which we failed to find, seems to be very scarce! This species is often lumped in Ashy Cuckoo-Shrike, but differs on voice and plumage.

PYCNONOTIDAE
Madagascar Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*: One of the commonest and most ubiquitous species in Madagascar and the Comoro Islands. In the latter, it is a species of trash habitat.
Comoro Bulbul *Hypsipetes parvirostris*: Common in forest on Grand Comoro (nominate) and we also saw a pair of the thick-billed Moheli subspecies (*moheliensis*) above Ouallah. Differs only subtly from the previous species, though the calls are very different.
Long-billed Greenbul *Phyllastrephus madagascariensis*: Plenty of good views. First seen on the Masoala (nominate), the western form (*inceleber*) was noted at Ampijoroa. It really is long-billed.
Spectacled Greenbul *Phyllastrephus zosterops*: Small numbers on the Masoala, where the dark *andapae* subspecies is sometimes mistaken for Dusky Greenbul. At Montagne d’Ambre we saw the distinctive, grey and cream, *fulvescens* subspecies. Also seen at the Pochard Site. Often noticed by their high-pitched spluttering calls.
Grey-crowned Greenbul *Phyllastrephus cinereiceps*: Relatively common and easy to see in the forest at the Pochard Site, often creeping about like a nuthatch! This species is classified as Near Threatened by BirdLife International. Its world population and population trend are unknown, but it is listed as Near Threatened because it probably has a moderately small population, which is likely to experience a moderately rapid population decline in the next ten years, owing to habitat loss to shifting agriculture. Surveys of the population and close monitoring of threats are required to confirm its status.

VANGIDAE
Red-tailed Vanga *Calicalius madagascariensis*: The wolf-whistle call of this bird, one of the flock-leaders, was more frequently heard than the bird was seen though we got a number of great looks.
Rufous Vanga *Schetba rufa*: Seen well a couple of times on the Masoala and a male noted at Ampijoroa.
Hook-billed Vanga *Vanga curvirostris*: Seen well on a few occasions, the first of which were on the Masoala. The pure, high-pitched whistles give them away.
Van Dam’s Vanga *Xenopirostris damii*: A bit of probing led to us seeing a female on the nest at Ampijoroa, and later we saw a pair foraging at close range. Always a bit sneaky and quiet, but usually findable with a bit of effort. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It is listed as Endangered owing to its very small range (being currently known from only two sites). The habitat at both sites is under great pressure, especially from fire.

Sickle-billed Vanga *Falculea palliata*: Several sightings of this stunning vanga, they were particularly prominent around the camp at Ampijoroa. Their strange moaning calls are always amusing!

White-headed Vanga *Leptopterus viridis*: First seen on the Masoala, we saw them at a few other sites, even in the mangroves at the Betsiboka Estuary.

Chabert’s Vanga *Leptopterus chabert*: A pretty common and widespread inhabitant of open areas and forest edge. Great eye-make-up. Birds in the east were the nominate subspecies whilst those in the west, with white bases to their outer tail feathers, are the *schistocercus* subspecies. First seen on the Masoala.

Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascarinus*: Some great views of this electric blue vanga that lacks the bold eye-ring of Chabert’s. First seen on the Masoala.

Comoro Vanga (C Blue V) *Cyanolanius comorensis*: Great views of three pairs of these stunning birds on Moheli (*bensoni*), the first of which were amazingly confiding! Often lumped with the previous species, and not recognized by BirdLife (hence no threat category!). They do seem different though, both in plumage and voice. The nominate form from Grand Comoro is known from just one specimen and may be extinct?

Bernier’s Vanga *Oriolia bernieri*: Great views of a smart barred female on the Masoala. A much-wanted bird for the group. This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It is classified as Vulnerable on the basis of suspected continuing declines in both its small population and its small range, owing to the destruction and severe fragmentation of its lowland forest habitat, mainly as a result of subsistence agriculture.

Helmet Vanga *Euryceros prevostii*: Great views of a couple of these stunners on the Masoala. The fact that it was only our fifth favourite shows the quality of birds we saw! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 10,100 and 19,999 and is decreasing. It has a small range, restricted to northeastern Madagascar, where its lowland forest habitat is being cleared rapidly for subsistence agriculture and timber. On this basis, its population is likely to be severely fragmented and declining rapidly, thus it is listed as Vulnerable.

Tylas Vanga (Tylas) *Tylas eduardi*: Seen well in mixed flocks on the Masoala, and heard and seen by some at the Pochard Site. Sometimes considered an oriole or flycatcher rather than a vanga (although recent evidence indicates that it is indeed a vanga), this species mimics the bigger-billed and butcher Pollen’s Vanga, presumably in order to avoid unwanted attention.

**TURDIDAE**

Amber Mountain Rock Thrush *Pseudocossyphus erythronotus*: Brilliant views of several of these smart thrushes at Montagne d’Ambre National Park. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at 5,000 and is declining. This recently split species is listed as Endangered because it has a very small extent of occurrence and its forest habitat is declining in both area and quality. The population is small and suspected to be declining, albeit slowly.
Forest Rock Thrush *Pseudocossyphus sharpei* (H): One was heard giving a couple of phrases of song as we left the Pochard Site.

Comoro Thrush *Turdus bewsheri*: We enjoyed great views of all three subspecies: *comorensis* on Grand Comoro, *moheliensis* on Moheli and nominate on Anjouan. The three differ radically in plumage and unpublished biometric data suggests a three-way split may be justified. Watch this space...

Madagascar Magpie-Robin *Copsychus albospecularis*: Pretty common and seen throughout the tour. The dark birds on the Masoala, *albospecularis* were particularly impressive.

African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: Common in open country in the highlands, especially around the Pochard Site. The endemic form *voeltzkowi* on Grand Comoro in the Comoro Islands was also seen well. The split African Stonechat retains the name *Saxicola torquata* as the type specimen of ‘The Stonechat’ came from Cape Province in South Africa. The European Stonechat now takes the name *S. rubicola*. The form on Madagascar, *sibilla*, and the Comoro Islands may merit specific status in their own right?

**Timaliidae**

White-throated Oxylabes *Oxylabes madagascariensis*: This sneaky species is common in the rainforest but is often tough to see. We managed some good views, especially on the Masoala, where some of us saw the confusing yellow-throated, olive juveniles!

Crossley’s Babbler *Mystacornis crossleyi*: Great looks at a female of this terrestrial babbler on the Masoala.

**Sylviidae**

Grey Emu tail *Dromaeocercus seebohmi*: Good views of a couple of singing birds at a roadside marsh on the way to the Pochard Site. ‘Grey’ is something of a misnomer as the bird is essentially brown, albeit a colder brown than Brown Emu tail. Perhaps Forest and Marsh Emutails would be better?

Anjouan Brush Warbler *Nesillas longicaudata*: Easy to see in our hotel garden in Anjouan, and several others heard and glimpsed.

Madagascar Brush Warbler *Nesillas typical*: Commonly heard scolding in the undergrowth of the wet forests, we managed to get several good views.

Grand Comoro Brush Warbler (Comoro B W) *Nesillas brevicaudata*: We enjoyed great views of several on Mount Karthala and at La Grille.

Moheli Brush Warbler (Benson’s B W) *Nesillas mariae*: Some desperate tramping around on a difficult hillside was unsuccessful, but we then pulled out a last minute save finding one or two showy birds along the roadside! It stopped a small wave of depression, and kept us on track for a clean sweep!!

Madagascar Swamp Warbler *Acrocephalus newtoni*: Seen and heard at a few sites, it was most common and conspicuous in the wetlands at Lac Kinkony.

Rand’s Warbler *Randia pseudozosterops*: A few heard at the Pochard Site, those of us that walked out on the last morning managed some good views of this rather drab warbler. The rattled song is very like one of Stripe-throated Jery’s variants, and the two often go around together, singing from adjacent perches in the same tree!

Common Newtonia *Newtonia brunneicauda*: The ‘chucka-chucka-chucka’ call was a familiar sound in all forests.

Dark Newtonia *Newtonia amphichroa*: A few seen very well at Montagne d’Ambre National Park, including a roosting bird! Also heard at the Pochard Site.

Madagascar Cisticola *Cisticola cherina*: Sounds remarkably like a Zitting Cisticola. Common in open areas, even the very dry.
Common Jery *Neomixis tenella*: Indeed common, its buzzy calls being heard on a near daily basis in Madagascar.

Green Jery *Neomixis viridis*: Our best views were of the one that sang above the chalets each morning on the Masoala. A few others heard.

Stripe-throated Jery *Neomixis striatigula*: The strident Tree Pipit-like song was heard on a number of occasions at the Pochard Site, and we got good views of a couple of individuals there.

**MONARCHIDAE**

Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata*: Common and tame in all forests on Madagascar and in the Comoros. We got many wonderful views and even saw birds on their nests. The subspecies seen (in the order we saw them) were: nominate (eastern Madagascar), singetra (western Madagascar), comorensis (Grand Comoro), voeltzkowiana (Moheli), vulpina (Anjouan), and pretiosa (Mayotte).

**MUSCICAPIDAE**

Grand Comoro Flycatcher (Humblot’s Flycatcher) *Humblotia flavirostris*: Those of us that climbed Mount Karthala were pleased to get some excellent views of this unobtrusive and very different-looking flycatcher. This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 10,000 and 19,999 and is decreasing. It is classified as Endangered since it has a very small range, occurring at only one location, an active volcano, where there has been a continuing decline in the extent and quality of its forest habitat. It may be adapting to these changes, but the habitat remains threatened and insufficiently protected.

**NECTARINIIDAE**

Souimanga Sunbird *Nectarinia souimanga*: Abundant almost everywhere on Madagascar, its joyful little warble is another of the familiar sounds of Madagascar.

Humblot’s Sunbird *Nectarinia humbloti*: This pretty little sunbird was common on both Grand Comoro (nominate) and Moheli (mohelicus). Cliff’s favourite in the Comoro Islands.

Mayotte Sunbird *Nectarinia coquerellii*: This gorgeous species, complete with fluorescent orange breast, was common on Mayotte.

Anjouan Sunbird *Nectarinia comorensis*: A dark but attractive species that was very common on Anjouan.

Long-billed Green Sunbird (Madagascar Green Sunbird) *Nectarinia notata*: The scarcer of the two endemic sunbirds on Madagascar, we managed to see a few well. We also saw the form voeltzkowi on Moheli.

Comoro Green Sunbird *Nectarinia moebii*: This form was common and easy to see on Grand Comoro. It is usually lumped in the previous species, and indeed it seems bizarre that voeltzkowi on Moheli is more closely related to the Madagascan birds than to the birds on Grand Comoro?!

**ZOSTEROPIDAE**

Mayotte White-eye (Chestnut-sided W-e) *Zosterops mayottensis*: This attractive, chestnut-flanked species, was common all over Mayotte, not just on Petite Terre as the literature had suggested!

Madagascar White-eye *Zosterops maderaspatana*: Common and widespread on Madagascar. We also saw two forms in the Comoro Islands: comorensis on Moheli, which shows buffy flanks and anjouanensis on Anjouan which is rather brighter than birds from Madagascar. If Mayotte and Grand Comoro have endemic white-eyes, why not Moheli and Anjouan?
Kirk’s White-eye  *Zosterops kirki*: Common and easy to see on Grand Comoro. This bright yellow white-eye exhibits a very broad eyering. It is still, inexplicably, lumped in Madagascar White-eye by many authors!

Mount Karthala White-eye (Comoro W-e)  *Zosterops mouroniensis*: We eventually sorted this one out high up on Mount Karthala, enjoying good views of several! This species is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at between 2,500 and 9,999 and is decreasing. It qualifies as Vulnerable since it has a very small range, confined to the top of an active volcano. The area of occupancy and probably the population have declined since the 1980s. The limited range and small population of this species render it extremely susceptible to future threats, most notably, a serious eruption. In such a case the species may warrant up-listing to Critically Endangered.

**ESTRILDIDAE**

**Madagascar Mannikin  *Lonchura nana*:** Seen nicely at several sites and especially common and showy near to our camp at the Madagascar Pochard site.

Bronze Mannikin (introduced)  *Spermestes cucullatus*: Introduced to the Comoro Islands where it was relatively common.

**PLOCEIDAE**

Nelicourvi Weaver  *Ploceus nelicourvi*: A relatively inconspicuous forest species that was seen well on a number of occasions. We also saw plenty of their hanging nests.

Sakalava Weaver  *Ploceus sakalava*: Our best views were at the small colony as we were driving back to Katsepy from the rails.

Madagascar Red Fody (Madagascar Fody)  *Foudia madagascariensis*: A common bird throughout. It is introduced in the Comoro Islands and hybridizing with the endemic species!

Forest Fody  *Foudia omissa*: Some great looks at pure-looking males in the forest at the Pochard Site. In my opinion, this species is likely to become more and more rare due to hybridization with the commoner Madagascar Red Fody. This hybridization occurs as a result of man-made habitat fragmentation.

Comoro Fody  *Foudia eminentissima*: Perhaps the smartest was the male on Mayotte (*algondae*) though we also saw them on Grand Comoro (*consobrina*), Moheli (nominate and Anjouan (*anjouanensis*). The vocalizations are very different from Red Fody, though several males showed odd splodges of red on the underparts, perhaps indicating a certain level of gene flow (hybridization)?

**PASSERIDAE**

House Sparrow  *Passer domesticus*: Introduced - only seen at Tamatave in Madagascar (the only known population) but widespread in the Comoro Islands.

**STURNIDAE**

Common Myna  *Acridotheres tristis*: Introduced and widespread.

Madagascar Starling  *Hartlaubius auratus*: We enjoyed several excellent sightings of this subtle but smart starling.

**DICRURIDAE**

Grand Comoro Drongo  *Dicrurus fuscipennis*: We were lucky to find this species with relative ease, locating about three pairs. Rather a drab and unimpressive drongo if the truth be known, but much appreciated by Bill, Cliff and Hugh after the effort they put in! This species is classified as Endangered by BirdLife International. Its world population is estimated at just 100 and is fluctuating. It is classified as Endangered because it has an extremely small
population occupying a very small range at only one location around an active volcano. There has been a continuing decline in the area, extent and quality of native habitat at this location, but the species’ population now appears to be fluctuating, and not in decline.

Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus*: Common on Madagascar and remarkably smart for a drongo. On Anjouan, we saw a pair of the rare endemic *potior* subspecies which may merit specific status?

Mayotte Drongo *Dicrurus waldenii*: Common and easy to see near to our hotel on Mayotte. We even found a nest!

**CORVIDAE**
Pied Crow *Corvus albus*: Fairly common throughout.

**MAMMALS**
Common Tenrec (Tailless T) *Tenrec ecaudatus*: A single individual was caught and shown to us on Mount Karthala, Grand Comoro. It narrowly avoided ending up on the barbecue, much to our guides’ dismay!

Comoro Black Flying Fox (Livingstone’s F F) *Pteropus livingstoni*: Great views of several of these huge bats (one of the world’s largest) on Moheli and Anjouan.

Seychelles Flying Fox *Pteropus seychellensis*: Common throughout the Comoro Islands and frequently active during the day.

Mauritian Tomb Bat *Taphozous mauritianus*: Three adults were seen roosting on a tree in the daytime in the campground at Ampijoroa.

Commerson’s Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros commersonii*: Seen well in the spotlight at Ampijoroa.

Golden-brown Mouse Lemur (Golden Mouse Lemur) *Microcebus ravelobensis*: This recently described species was seen well in the spotlight at Ampijoroa. We also snook a look at one in a trap.

Greater Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus major*: Good views of a couple in a fruiting tree at our lodge on the Masoala.

Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemur *Phaner electromontis*: After a bit of a hunt, we got great looks at a couple of these on our nightwalk at Montagne d’Ambre National Park.

Seal’s Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur sealii*: Great views of several at the Masoala. It is possible that the form here may represent an as yet undescribed form.

Milne-Edward’s Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur edwardsi*: Several showed very well at Ampijoroa.

Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*: Nice looks at three in a tree at Ampijoroa.

Crowned Lemur *Eulemur coronatus*: Great views of a small group including some smart males and a baby at Montagne d’Ambre National Park

Common Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus*: A few seen at Ampijoroa. Also seen on Mayotte where they are thought to have been introduced. However, some literature describes the form on Mayotte as *mayottensis*. It seems their origin is uncertain!

Sanford’s Brown Lemur *Eulemur sanfordi*: Good views on a couple of occasions at Montagne d’Ambre National Park.

White-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur albifrons*: Excellent views of this attractive lemur on the Masoala.

Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra*: Another excellent and very vocal lemur that showed brilliantly on the Masoala.

Eastern Avahi (Eastern Woolly Lemur) *Ava hi laniger*: Some fine looks during our nightwalk on the Masoala.
Western Avahi (Western Woolly Lemur) *Avahi occidentalis*: Great views of one in the day time for some of us at Ampijoroa.

Coquerel’s Sifaka *Propithecus coquereli*: Some brilliant looks at Ampijoroa – a very smart creature.

Decken’s Sifaka *Propithecus deckeni*: Seen well on the way to and back from Lac Kinkony.

Crowned Sifaka *Propithecus coronatus*: My lemur of the trip, we enjoyed some brilliant views of these superb creatures at Katsepy.

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus*: I am pretty certain that the introduced mongooses we saw on Grand Comoro were this species.

Ring-tailed Mongoose *Galidia elegans*: A single bold individual showed very well around the picnic tables at Montagne d’Ambre National Park.

Small Indian Civet (introduced) *Viverricula indica*: One was seen well at night around our camp on Mount Karthala. Introduced of course.

Black Rat *Rattus rattus* (NL): One seen by Hugh on Mayotte.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicusi*: Several seen on the Comoro Islands, often around the towns! This and the previous species are introduced of course.

Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*: Some Bottle-nosed Dolphins between Mamoudzou and Dzoudzi were probably this species (rather than Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins *T. truncatus*).

Spinner Dolphin *Stenella longirostris*: Many great views around the Comoro Islands. Frequently seen leaping out of the water like salmon, we also had a few bow-riding with us on the way back from Moheli!

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

[The list below is far from complete but hopefully points out the more memorable sightings. I have been unable to identify all of the ‘herps’ we saw (such as the frog at the Pochard Site). I have also not even attempted any of the species from the Comoro Islands! The list below is, I hope, reasonably accurate.]

**FROGS**

*Dyscophus antongili*: The amazing Tomato Frog that we saw in Maroantsetra.

*Mantidactylus albofrenatus*: The small frog which was buff brown on top and showed dark legs that we saw on the Masoala.

*Mantidactylus ulcerosus*: The small frog with the buff line down its back that we saw on the Masoala.

[Boophis sp.: Some large tree frogs were present in the toilets at Ampijoroa]

**CHAMELEONS**

*Brookesia peyrierasi*: The tiny chameleon that we saw at the Masoala.

*Brookesia minima*: The tiny chameleon that we saw at Montagne d’Ambre National Park – the smallest chameleon in the world!

*Calumma boettgeri*: I think this is the chameleon, with the bluish protrusion on its nose, that we saw at Montagne d’Ambre National Park.

*Furcifer ‘montagne d’ambre*: A few of this attractive chameleon were seen at Montagne d’Ambre National Park, including one eating a yellow slug.

*Furcifer oustaleti*: Seen in the hotel garden at Joffreville and again at Ampijoroa

*Furcifer pardalis*: The large and attractive chameleon at the Masoala.

*Furcifer rhinoceratus*: A single Rhinoceros Chameleon was seen on the nightwalk at Ampijoroa.
IGUANID LIZARDS
Oplurus cuvieri: Several at Ampijoroa (the chunky lizard with the broad black collar, often known as Spiny-tailed Iguanid).

SKINKS
Zonosaurus laticaudatus: The fat skink that was common at Ampijoroa

GECKOS
Hemidactylus frenatusi: I believe that the house geckos, in the west of the country at least, are this species Asiatic House Gecko.
Phelsuma lineata: The commonly seen green gecko with red markings.
Phelsuma madagascariensis: The large Phelsuma that we saw at Ampijoroa.
Uroplatus sikorae: Several of these amazingly camouflaged leaf-tailed geckos were seen brilliantly at Montagne d’Ambre National Park

CROCODILES
Crocodylus niloticus: Nile Crocodile was seen well at the lake at Ampijoroa.

SNAKES
Mimophis mahfalensis: This was the small, thin snake that we saw at Ampijoroa.
Top Birds of the Tour


Our Top Six on Madagascar...

1st  SAKALAVA RAIL (above left)
2nd  Madagascar Red Owl (above)
3rd  Scaly Ground-Roller (below left)
4th  Schlegel’s Asity (below)
5th  Helmet Vanga (next page, top left)
6th  Madagascar Pochard (next page, top right)

(All photos were taken by Pete Morris on the tour and are available on the accompanying CD)
Our Top Six in The Comoros...

1st  MOHELI SCOPS OWL (left)
2nd  Comoro Blue Vanga (below left)
3rd  Comoro Blue Pigeon (below)
4th= Grand Comoro Drongo
     (next page, top left)
4th= Mayotte Scops Owl
     (next page, top right and centre right)
6th  Mayotte Drongo (next page, centre left)
Other highlights on the pre-tour extension included some amazing Tomato Frogs at Maroantsetra and a couple of puffbird-like Short-legged Ground-Rollers on the Masoala.

And the best of the rest...
Above: At Montagne d’Ambre, we soon found the endemic Amber Mountain Rock Thrush (top left). Other interesting sightings included a Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher (top right), the world’s smallest chameleon, *Brookesia minima* (centre left), Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemur (centre right), the incredibly well-camouflaged Leaf-tailed Gecko (*Uroplatus sikorae*) (above left) and Pitta-like Ground-Roller (above right). Below: Getting to the pochard site involved some tough driving, but once there, the crater lake and surrounding forest provided the goodies!
Meller’s Ducks (top left) and Madagascar Little Grebes (top right) were both common alongside the pochards. Madagascar Harriers (above) were pleasingly common in the area (this is an immature male) whilst the forest not only provided us with the Red Owls, but also this roosting Madagascar Long-eared Owl (middle right)! We then moved on to Ampijoroa, where further diurnal nightbird sightings included Torotoroka Scops Owl (right) and a cute Madagascar Nightjar with her chick (below).
Other highlights at Ampijoroa included three Van Dam’s Vangas (*top left*) and a cute Western Avahi (*top right*). The critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle (*above left*) and the endangered Humblot’s Heron (*above right*) both showed very well around the lake, and we were also delighted to find several cracking Madagascar Crested Ibises (*below right*). Before we left for the Comoro Islands, we also had time to admire good numbers of Berniers (or Madagascar) Teals (*below left*).
The first island we visited in the Comores, Grand Comoro, provided a good number of endemics and interesting species, including Comoro Pigeon (top left), the local form of Frances’s Sparrowhawk (top centre), the elusive Grand Comoro Scops Owl (top right), the unusual-looking Grand Comoro (or Humblot’s) Flycatcher (centre left), the attractive Humblot’s Sunbird (centre), Kirk’s White-eye (centre right upper) and the rather drab Karthala White-eye (centre right lower) and Grand Comoro Brush Warbler (below). It was also good to see that Madagascar Harriers seemed to be doing reasonably well on the Comoros, including this female (below right).
Our boat trips to and from Moheli produced several Masked Boobies (top left), several unexpected Bulwer’s Petrels (top right - upper), and a few Persian Shearwaters (top right - lower). Moheli provided the hoped for birds and Livingstone’s Flying-Fox (above left). On Anjouan we soon cleaned up, and Anjouan Sunbird (above centre) and Anjouan Brush Warbler (above right) were even common in the hotel garden! The local form of the Comoro Thrush (right) was also of interest. White-tailed Tropicbirds (below left) were seen frequently around the islands including on Mayotte, our final island, where introduced Brown Lemurs (below) were common but cute.
The four endemics on Mayotte, including Mayotte White-eye (top centre) and Mayotte Sunbird (top right) were easily found, and other goodies included several fine Madagascar Pond Herons (top left), the local form of Comoro Fody (left) and Crab Plover (above). Back on Madagascar, other highlights of our successful Sakalave Rail trip included several Little Bitterns (below centre) and both Decken’s (below right) and cute Crowned (below left) Sifakas.