

The Comoro Islands

2/10-10/10 2012



Karthala Scops Owl (*Otus pauliani*) ©M. Lagerqvist

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Introduction

This trip report covers a nine day birding trip to the Comoro Islands done by me, Rob Hutchinson and Jonathan Newman in October 2012.

The Comoro Islands form an archipelago of volcanic islands situated off the south-east coast of Africa, to the east of Mozambique. They are divided between the Union of the Comoros, a sovereign nation formed by the three islands of Grande Comore, Anjouan and Mohéli, and the French overseas department of Mayotte.

The island of Mayotte is the oldest of the islands. The ages progressively decrease from east to west. The most recent island is that of Grande Comore, and its volcano, Karthala, is still active. The Comoro Archipelago enjoys a tropical climate, with slight daytime temperature variations throughout the year of around 26 °C at sea-level and abundant precipitation. There are two seasons in the Comoros: the hot and humid season from November to April and the dry season from May to October.

The native vegetation on the islands is evergreen forest, with the forest on Mt Karthala naturally occurring up to c.1,800 m, above which giant heather vegetation predominates.



Rain forest on the slope of Mt. Karthala, habitat of Karthala Scops Owl. ©M. Lagerqvist

The islands form an endemic bird area (EBA) with 21 endemics recognized by Clements and 23 by IOC. The birds of the Comoros are however poorly known with many very distinct forms today classified as subspecies. With more studies on the Comoro avifauna it is not unlikely that the number of recognized endemics will surpass 40 species in the near future.

In this report we provisionally recognize 41 endemics; with a further four subspecies or subspecies groups highlighted as possible future splits. Of these 45 targeted species or subspecies we managed to see 43 during our visit to the islands.

All the restricted-range species occur in forest, largely in the uplands, where there is forest remaining, apart from Karthala White-eye which is confined to the higher-altitude heath zone of Mt Karthala. Today, forest has been largely cleared from the lowlands and grazing by cattle prevents regeneration; on Mt Karthala cultivation now extends as high as 1,400 m in places. Very little intact, upland forest remains on Anjouan, while most that exists on Mohéli and Grand Comoro is badly degraded.



Giant heather at 2,000 m on Mt. Karthala, habitat of Karthala White-eye. ©M. Lagerqvist

Four species restricted to Mt Karthala are considered threatened, and, consequently, the forests here rank highly amongst the key forests for threatened birds in Africa. Further habitat degradation and fragmentation in this region are particularly threatening to Karthala White-eye and Karthala Scops Owl. On Anjouan, the recently rediscovered Anjouan Scops Owl, confined to c. 10 km² of native forest (all that remains), is estimated to number around 50 birds and Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller less than 100 pairs; accelerating habitat clearance and capture for food render both highly threatened. On Mayotte, Mayotte Drongo occurs at low density and the entire population may not exceed a few dozen pairs.

The table on the next page summarizes all the endemics and on which island each occurs. To highlight the extraordinary avian diversity of these islands we have in this report chosen to accept most splits proposed during recent years. For taxonomic notes on each species see the trip list at the end of the report.

Distribution of endemic species and distinct subspecies

Endemic species recognised in this trip report

Comoros Olive Pigeon (<i>Columba pollenii</i>)
Comoros Green Pigeon (<i>Treron griveaudi</i>)
Comoros Blue Pigeon (<i>Alectroenas sganzini</i>)
Karthala Scops Owl (<i>Otus pauliani</i>)
Anjouan Scops Owl (<i>Otus capnodes</i>)
Mohéli Scops Owl (<i>Otus moheliensis</i>)
Mayotte Scops Owl (<i>Otus mayottensis</i>)
Karthala Spinetail (<i>Zoonavena mariaae</i>)
Grand Comoro Cuckoo-Roller (<i>Leptosomus gracilis</i>)
Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller (<i>Leptosomus intermedius</i>)
Comoros Blue Vanga (<i>Cyanolanius comorensis</i>)
Comoros Cuckooshrike (<i>Coracina cucullata</i>)
Grand Comoro Drongo (<i>Dicrurus fuscipennis</i>)
Mayotte Drongo (<i>Dicrurus waldenii</i>)
Pale Paradise Flycatcher (<i>Terpsiphone vulpina</i>)
Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher (<i>Terpsiphone comorensis</i>)
Grand Comoro Bulbul (<i>Hypsipetes parvirostris</i>)
Mohéli Bulbul (<i>Hypsipetes moheliensis</i>)
Mohéli Brush Warbler (<i>Nesillas moheliensis</i>)
Anjouan Brush Warbler (<i>Nesillas longicaudata</i>)
Grand Comoro Brush Warbler (<i>Nesillas brevicaudata</i>)
Benson's Brush Warbler (<i>Nesillas mariaae</i>)
Anjouan White-eye (<i>Zosterops anjuanensis</i>)
Mohéli White-eye (<i>Zosterops comorensis</i>)
Kirk's White-eye (<i>Zosterops kirki</i>)
Mayotte White-eye (<i>Zosterops mayottensis</i>)
Karthala White-eye (<i>Zosterops mouroniensis</i>)
Karthala Thrush (<i>Turdus comorensis</i>)
Mohéli Thrush (<i>Turdus moheliensis</i>)
Anjouan Thrush (<i>Turdus bewsheri</i>)
Humblot's Flycatcher (<i>Humblotia flavirostris</i>)
Grand Comoro Humblot's Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris humbloti</i>)
Mohéli Humblot's Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris mohelicus</i>)
Grand Comoro Green Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris moebii</i>)
Mohéli Green Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris voeltzkowi</i>)
Anjouan Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris comorensis</i>)
Mayotte Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris coquerellii</i>)
Grand Comoro Fody (<i>Foudia cosobrina</i>)
Mohéli Fody (<i>Foudia eminentissima</i>)
Anjouan Fody (<i>Foudia anjuanensis</i>)
Mayotte Fody (<i>Foudia algondae</i>)

G. Com.	Mohéli	Anjouan	Mayotte
✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓		
✓	✓	✓	✓
✓			
		✓	
	✓		
			✓
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Endemic subspecies that may warrant species status

Persian Shearwater ssp <i>temptator</i>
Greater Vasa Parrot ssp <i>comorensis</i>
Lesser Vasa Parrot ssp <i>sibilans</i>
Frances's Sparrowhawk ssp <i>griveaudi/pusillus/brutus</i>

G. Com.	Mohéli	Anjouan	Mayotte
	✓		
✓	✓	✓	
✓		✓	
✓		✓	✓

Itinerary

2/2	Antananarivo (Madagascar)-Moroni (Grande Comore)
3/10	Mt. Karthala (Grande Comore)
4/10	Mt. Karthala (Grande Comore)
5/10	Moroni (Grande Comore)-Fomboni (Mohéli)
6/10	Châlet St. Antoine (Mohéli)
7/10	Fomboni (Mohéli)-Moutsamoudou (Anjouan)
8/10	Moutsamoudou (Anjouan)-Dzaoudzi (Mayotte)
9/10	Pic Combani-Pointe Mahabo (Mayotte)
10/10	Dzaoudzi (Mayotte)-Mahajanga (Madagascar)



Diary

2/2 –Moroni (Grande Comore)

We left Antananarivo on the slightly delayed Air Madagascar flight at 12.45, arriving at Moroni airport on Grande Comore at 14.15 (one day later than planned due to a cancelled flight the previous day). Since we had heard that immigration and visa procedures can be very slow, we ran across the tarmac and made it to the front of the queue. After having our photos taken and visas issued we were met by our guide Chauffeur.

On Grande Comore we expected to see all endemics except the drongo on Mount Karthala. However, having arrived one day later than planned we had limited time and decided to try for the drongo straight away. Having just a couple of hours of daylight left we drove straight from the airport to Salimani. The area around Salimani is an old oil palm plantation with secondary growth, crisscrossed by transportation roads.

The strategy here is just to park the car and walk the crossroads and it only took us a few minutes to locate a **Grand Comoro Drongo**. Apart from the drongo we also saw a male **Grand Comoro Fody** and both **Grand Comoro Green** and **Grand Comoro Humblot's Sunbird**. On the way back to Moroni we saw a nice male **France's Sparrowhawk** perched on a wire along the road. The birds here look quite different from the ones on Madagascar.

Back in Moroni we checked in at Retaj Moroni Hotel, and had a nice dinner at the hotel restaurant.



Grand Comoro Drongo (*Dicrurus fuscipennis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

3/2 Mount Karthala (Grande Comore)

Early breakfast at the hotel and departure at 04.30 for the 30 minutes car ride to Mvouni, the village where you start the trek up Mt. Karthala at 360 meters. The first part of the trail goes through small cultivated lots and secondary forest. In this habitat we saw **Kirk's White-eyes**, **Comoros Blue Pigeons**, **Lesser Vasa Parrot**, **Grand Comoro Cuckoo-Roller**, **Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher**, **Comoros Cuckooshrike**, **Grand Comoro Green** and **Grand Comoro Humblot's Sunbird** and a couple of spectacular **Comoros Olive Pigeons**.



Humblot's Flycatcher (*Humblotia flavirostris*) ©M. Lagerqvist

Closing in on 1 000 meters we started to see good primary forest and the Madagascar Bulbuls were replaced by **Grand Comoro Bulbuls**. At 1 030 meters we had a pair of **Humblot's Flycatcher**. Slightly above we found our first **Karthala Thrush**. Between 1 000 and about 1 400 meters the trail passes through beautiful mossy forest before giving way to lower bushy forest and open areas. Here Kirk's White-eyes were very common and we started seeing our first **Madagascar Stonechats**, the most common species at the higher, more open areas of the mountain.

The campsite is situated at 1 600 meters and we pitched our tent and had baguettes with tuna before continuing higher in search of Karthala White-eye, which inhabits the giant heather heathlands. At 2 000 meters we encountered a small pack of **Karthala White-eyes**, which showed off beautifully. We continued a bit further but only found one more bird at 2 100 meters. Scanning the open areas we were also awarded great views of an adult **Malagasy Harrier** and a few distant **Karthala Spinetails** before walking back down to the camp site. Around and above the campsite we saw spectacular flocks of **Greater Vasa Parrots**, totalling more than 200 birds.



Karthala White-eye (*Zosterops mouroiensis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

At 16.45 we started our descent back down to the mossy forest to look for Karthala Scops Owl. Walking slowly down through the forest, making regular stops, playing the tape and listening proved to be a good strategy. At 19.15 we heard an owl responding further down the trail, at around 1 250 meters. It proved very responsive and gave us fantastic views. When we were happy with the views we left the owl and walked back up to our camp to warm ourselves by the fire and have a meal of rice and sardines.

4/2 Mount Karthala (Grande Comore)

After a rainy and very windy night without much sleep in our cold and a far too small tent we were happy when morning broke and we could have some breakfast at 5.30. Having seen all our targets on the first day we walked down quickly, again noting all species seen on the way up, the only addition being a surprise **Grand Comoro Drongo** at about 1 000 meters]. During the last part of the trail it started to rain more and more and when arriving at Mvouni it was pouring down. We called for a taxi and headed back to our hotel where we had lunch.

We spent the rest of the day arranging our flights for the upcoming days. Due to our delayed arrival to the Comoros we had asked the local tour agency to change our flight to Mohéli, but in spite of assuring us it had been done we called the airline to double check. It was lucky we did as they told us our tickets hadn't been changed, and that there were no seats available for the next day's flight. Pondering over our options at the hotel reception it turned out that we were standing next to the owner of AB Aviation and he called their office to help us out! They booked us on a flight to Anjouan and from there to Mohéli, not ideal but it would get us there.

We then took a taxi to AB Aviation's offices where we got our new tickets. Then we headed to the offices of Inter Îles Air and booked us on a flight from Anjouan to Mayotte on the 9th. Having finally sorted out our flights we took a taxi back to the hotel for a well-deserved lobster pizza at the hotel restaurant.

5/2 Moroni (Grande Comore)-Fomboni (Mohéli)

We had breakfast at the hotel and took a taxi at 6.00 to be at the airport in good time for our flight to Anjouan. Not surprisingly the early breakfast turned out to be totally unnecessary as our flight didn't take off until 10.55. More surprisingly it took us directly to Mohéli! We still don't understand exactly what happened but maybe they changed the flight since more passengers wanted to go to Mohéli that day? Flying in the Comoros can be an interesting experience!

At Fomboni airport we bumped into Pete Morris leading the Birdquest remote Madagascar and Comoros tour. It turned out they had also had their fair share of troubles with flights, leaving them just one night on Mohéli. In spite of this they had seen all but two of the endemics. At the airport we took a taxi to hotel Relais de Sengani, according to the somewhat outdated Lonely Planet guidebook the only "real" hotel in the city – and the lack of competition showed. Service was extremely slow and it took them two hours(!) to prepare a grilled fish with rice in the hotel restaurant. We seemed to be the only guests, so maybe they had to catch the fish? On the bright side the reception did manage to arrange a car and driver called Babadie to be with us the following day.

After having negotiated the price (EUR70 for the full day) he gave us a ride to the outskirts of Fomboni where he dropped us off at the start of a trail leading up to the central ridge of the island. Our plan was to look for Mohéli Scops Owl at dusk.



Mohéli Scops Owl (*Otus moheliensis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

The trail was easy walking and after a short while we reached good secondary forest that looked promising. Here we soon added **Mohéli Fody**, **Pale Paradise Flycatcher**, **Mohéli Green** and **Mohéli Humblot's Sunbird** to our list while waiting for the sun to set. As soon as it got darker we heard our first **Mohéli Scops Owl** calling and it responded well to playback, giving us great views of this very handsome owl. The species seemed to be very common in this area and we saw or heard at least ten different individuals!

Very content with the evening we walked back into town where we were surprised to meet Babadie. He had apparently been very concerned about us walking back in the dark and had contacted the local police who had gotten a report about three white guys walking along the road. It all seemed like much ado about nothing but we happily accepted a ride back to the hotel. I guess they're not very used to birders in Fomboni!

5/2 Châlet St. Antoine (Mohéli)

Since we wanted to get an early start we had asked the hotel to prepare some food to bring with us. This turned out to consist of one dry baguette each. At 4.00 Babadie picked us up for the one hour drive to the village of Miringoni where the trail to Châlet St. Antoine on the central ridge begins. There were large road works in progress at Miringoni to close the last part of Mohéli's circular road between Miringoni and Ouallah. In spite of the road works we soon located the start of the trail up the mountains. Since it looked pretty straight forward on the map, we didn't hire any guide to show us the way.

The first part of the trail passes through secondary forest and in this habitat we added **Mohéli White-eye** to our list of endemics. After about half an hour's walking we reached a river crossing, as indicated on the map. However the trail soon crossed back again and also split and we got unsure about which trail to follow. After some debating we decided to walk back to the village and get a guide, but after just a few minutes we bumped into a villager. He didn't speak any English or French, but he knew Châlet St. Antoine and immediately agreed to show us the way. After a while it became obvious that it was good to have a local guide since parts of the trail were overgrown and easily missed.

In the good primary forest we soon found our first **Mohéli Thrush** and a bit further on our first **Benson's Brush Warbler**, a very distinct brush warbler found up in the trees rather than skulking low down as most of its relatives.

A bit further up we found what is possibly the best looking Comoro endemic, the radiantly blue **Comoros Blue Vanga**, now probably restricted to Mohéli, since the Grande Comore race hasn't been recorded since the eighties and is now feared to be extinct. We could now concentrate on what are probably the two most difficult Comoro endemics; Comoro Green Pigeon and Mohéli Brush Warbler (split from Madagascar Brush Warbler).

Almost at the top of the ridge we heard a **Mohéli Brush Warbler** calling and after some work we all managed to get good views of this very skulking bird. On top of the ridge stands the derelict Châlet St. Antoine.



Comoros Blue Vanga (*Cyanolanius comorensis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

Since this is one of the few open areas on the trail we spent some time looking for pigeons. Seeing nothing we decided to walk along the trail that follows the ridge top. It is however very overgrown and extremely narrow with dangerously steep slopes on both sides. We found another Mohéli Brush Warbler, but soon decided to turn back and walk slowly down again.

We kept scanning for pigeons and saw Comoros Olive and good numbers of Comoros Blue Pigeons, but no sign of Comoros Green Pigeon and we had to admit defeat. The only new encounter on the way down was a group of very inquisitive Mongoose Lemurs. We also heard a Mohéli Scops Owl calling.

Back at Miringoni we found Babadie waiting for us and we headed back to Fomboni to find something to eat and check boat departures to Anjouan. There are boats from Mohéli to Anjouan a few days a week. Departures are posted on a board in the harbour, but we were out of luck with no departures the next day. Finding something to eat was equally unsuccessful, with no stores to speak of and a local market where the only available fruit was green bananas.

With no ferry or flights the following day our only option was to stay an extra day on Mohéli or try to arrange a private boat transfer. With the help of Babadie we managed to arrange for a transfer in a small boat with an outboard engine. We were a bit sceptical but since we really didn't want to spend more time than necessary on Mohéli and the boat at least had two engines we decided to give it a go and agreed to pay EUR150 for the transfer.

Giving up on finding food in town we headed back to the hotel to still our hunger with another grilled fish and rice. However, our day wasn't over yet. After having gone to bed I was woken up by someone banging on my window. It was Babadie with bad news about the boat.

Apparently the boat owner had found other clients and decided to take them to Grande Comore instead. Discussing our options with Babadie he thought the boat owner would probably take us if we paid and extra EUR100 for the transfer. Not happy with the situation, but not in a good bargaining position we told Babadie to phone the owner and offer him the extra payment. At this point he got a phone call and disappeared, not returning. We were left wondering what had happened but decided to get up as planned the next morning and hope for the best.



Benson's Brush Warbler (*Nesillas mariae*) ©M. Lagerqvist

6/2 Fomboni (Mohéli)-Mchakojou (Anjouan)

At 6.00 we were packed and waiting for Babadie to arrive. Time passed and we started to despair, but at 6.40 he arrived saying everything was arranged. When asked about why he just left last night he explained that he had gone to the police station since his brother-in-law had been arrested for beating up his wife.

After a quick breakfast we took off at 7.10 and the boat was waiting for us. One of the reasons for wanting to go by boat was to get the chance to see some good seabirds, especially the endemic race of Persian Shearwater breeding on Mohéli. However our choice of boat couldn't possibly have been any worse. The boat's owner had more clients to transfer after us and the driver was clearly in a hurry to get to Anjouan. In spite of the waves at open sea he drove at full speed and with only a hard plank to sit on and nothing else to hold on to it was in a very traumatic ride where we're tossed up and down and praying for our backs to survive all the hard landings.

Using the bins was out of the question but we did manage to get a brief view of a single **Persian Shearwater** passing by the boat. We also saw flocks of **Sooty Terns** mixed up with a few **Bridled** and **Greater Crested Terns**. At one point we had a short stop to fill up gas which gave us great views of a **White-tailed Tropicbird** and two **Masked Boobies**. After two hours we arrived at Moutsamoudou, the capital of Anjouan. The beach here was totally covered in trash and possibly the filthiest I've ever seen, but we were all still very happy to get solid ground under our feet. We got a taxi to Hotel El Amal, which was surprisingly nice and served good pizzas in the hotel restaurant.

Having recovered from the boat ride we arranged a taxi at the reception to take us to Lac Dzilandée, which is supposed to be the best site for the rare Anjouan Scops Owl. Anjouan is the most deforested of the four islands and primary forest is now only left high up on steepest mountain slopes. The difficult access to good forest and the fact Anjouan Scops Owl seems less responsive than the other species makes it the most challenging of the endemic scops owls to see well. Knowing that the few other birders that have visited Anjouan had spent many hours trying to see it and still only managing brief glimpses we were prepared for a long night's birding.

It's not possible to drive all the way to Lac Dzilandée. Instead you park by the main road where there is a gate and you pay a EUR3 entrance fee, which includes a guide, although we would have preferred to walk on our own. We started walking along the gravel track and within half an hour we had seen all the targeted daytime endemics; **Anjouan Thrush**, **Anjouan Brush Warbler**, **Anjouan White-eye**, **Anjouan Sunbird** and **Anjouan Fody**. (We did not look for Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller, a split that has been proposed after our trip.) At this point we were joined by a second guide who told us that we needed to let him guide us and pay an extra EUR30 if we wanted to continue. Having already paid for a guide at the entrance we refused to pay him anything extra but he didn't give up and soon some of his companions joined him, insisting that we would not be allowed to continue without paying the extra guiding fee. Not wanting to reward this guy for trying to pressure money from us we decided to turn back and find a new site for the owl.

Walking back we scanned the surrounding ridges for forest cover and chose a ridge that looked promising. We explained our plan for our guide and driver and they agreed to wait while we scaled the ridge. There was a small track going up the steep mountain side and after a while we reached the forest edge. Here we found a good position to wait for dusk – while waiting we were awarded great views of a **Malagasy Harrier** flying by at eye level.

At dusk we played the tape and got a response from the forest above us. We walked up a bit higher and played the tape again and an **Anjouan Scops Owl** immediately came in and landed in the open on a nearby branch. After a little scrambling on the dangerously steep trail we all got great views before it flew off again. Having expected a long night's search we were very happy with good views by 18.40 and started to walk down again. On the way down we heard three more owls calling. Down by the road our taxi was waiting for us and we headed back to the hotel for a celebratory dinner.



Anjouan Scops Owl (*Otus capnodes*) ©M. Lagerqvist

8/2 Moutsamoudou (Anjouan)-Dzaoudzi (Mayotte)

Having seen all the endemics the first afternoon and with very little time allotted for Mayotte we decided to try to leave Anjouan a day earlier than planned. After breakfast we headed into town to the Inter îles Air office. Luckily for us there was a flight at 12.25 with seats left. Having little time to spare we took a taxi back to the hotel to take a shower and pack our bags, before heading to the airport.

A little more than an hour late we finally left the Republic of the Comoros at 13.40 for the short flight to the French overseas department of Mayotte. The airport is on the island of Petite-Terre, from where you take a taxi to Dzaoudzi and then a ferry to the city of Mamoudzou on the main island Grande-Terre. At Mamoudzou we found another taxi to take us to hotel Relais de Foret at Pic Combani in the forested mountains on the interior of the island. Along the road we made a pit stop at a gas station for crisps, biscuits and ice-cream lunch.

Most of the island's endemics are easily found in the immediate surroundings of the hotel and we found a spectacular **Mayotte Drongo** even before checking in. We were also greeted by a **Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller** uncharacteristically showing off at eye level. Our next target was the **Mayotte Scops Owl**, which is supposed to be one of the easiest scops owls to see and we were not disappointed. We heard a couple of owls calling along the hotel entrance road, and after a little searching we were awarded fantastic daylight views.



Mayotte Scops Owl (*Otus mayottensis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

A little more relaxed birding around the hotel grounds awarded us great views of Comoros Blue and Comoros Olive Pigeons and we heard Mayotte White-eyes calling. We ended the day with a nice dinner at the neighbouring hotel Gite du Mont Combani.

9/2 Pic Combani-Pointe Mahabo (Mayotte)

We began the day with a couple of hours birding along the lower part of the trail leading up to the top of Pic Combani – right above the hotel cabins. We got great views of all our three targets; **Mayotte White-eye**, **Mayotte Sunbird** and the endemic race of **Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher**. We also got fantastic close-up views of a **Frances's Sparrowhawk**.

Since the hotel is situated along a gravel road off the main road it is difficult to get a taxi to the hotel. The hotel owner suggested that we walk up to the road and wait for a taxi to pass by, but we were lucky and got a ride to the town of Combani from another couple staying at the hotel with their own car. In Combani we got a taxi brousse to Mamoudzou to look for the last remaining endemic, the Mayotte Fody.

After checking in at Hôtel Ibis we had lunch at the neighbouring Caribou Bar, a popular hangout for expats. We then took a taxi to the park at Pointe Mahabo on the outskirts of town, the best site for the fody. Both **Mayotte White-eye** and **Mayotte Sunbird** were common and more easily found here than at Pic Combani. Within half an hour we also found a couple of male **Mayotte Fodies**, which are much more orange than the other fody species.



Mayotte Sunbird (*Cinnyris coquerellii*) ©M. Lagerqvist

With all the endemics seen, we decided to spend the rest of the afternoon looking for Crab-plover and shore birds. We took the ferry to Dzaoudzi and from there we walked along the causeway to Petite-Terre scanning the mudflats of Labattoir, the shallow bay between the islands. We quickly located a small group of **Crab-plovers** and also added a number of other more common shorebirds to our Comoro list before heading back to Mamoudzou.

We ended our last day, celebrating a successful Comoros trip with a tasty dinner at the Caribou Bar.

10/2 Dzaoudzi (Mayotte)-Mahajanga (Madagascar)

Breakfast and then off to the airport for our Austral Air flight to Mahajanga on Madagascar which left only 30 minutes late. End of trip.

Strategy and sites

You could probably see all the endemics in 7-8 days, but a couple of the species can be tricky and inter islands logistics are very unreliable, so it's advisable to include a couple of spare days.

Species that cause most trouble for visiting birders are:

- Grande Comoro Scops Owl can take some work finding, we only heard one bird.
- Mohéli Brush Warbler and Comoros Green Pigeon on Mohéli – both scarce and restricted to the higher altitudes of the island's central ridge.
- Anjouan Scops Owl and Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller on Anjouan. The owl is easily heard but can be difficult to see well. The cuckoo-roller seems to be very scarce and is missed by most birders.

A total of about 9-10 days would be ideal.



Not just endemics – there is also good shorebirding, here a Crab-plover (*Dromas ardeola*) at Labattoir in Mayotte. ©M. Lagerqvist

Grande Comore

To see all the endemics you need to visit two sites: Mt. Karthala and Salimani. Even though all endemics can be seen along the trail up Mt. Karthala, the drongo is much easier at Salimani. Two full days should be enough time.

Mt. Karthala

To see all the targets, including Karthala White-eye and the scops owl, you need about 1.5 day. You should start out at dawn from Mvouni. The first part of the trail, before you reach primary forest, is good for species like Comoros Olive and Comoros Blue Pigeon, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Grand Comoro Cuckoo-Roller, Comoros Cuckooshrike, Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher and both sunbirds.

Once you reach good primary forest above 1,000 meters you should be on the lookout for Grand Comoro Brush Warbler, Grand Comoro Bulbul, Karthala Thrush and Humblot's Flycatcher. The primary mossy forest is also the prime habitat of the Karthala Scops Owl.

Above 1,400 meters until you reach the camp site at 1,600 meters, where the mossy forest is replaced by smaller trees and bushes is good for Kirk's White-eye and Grand Comoro Fody. Greater Vasa Parrot is also very common around the camp site.

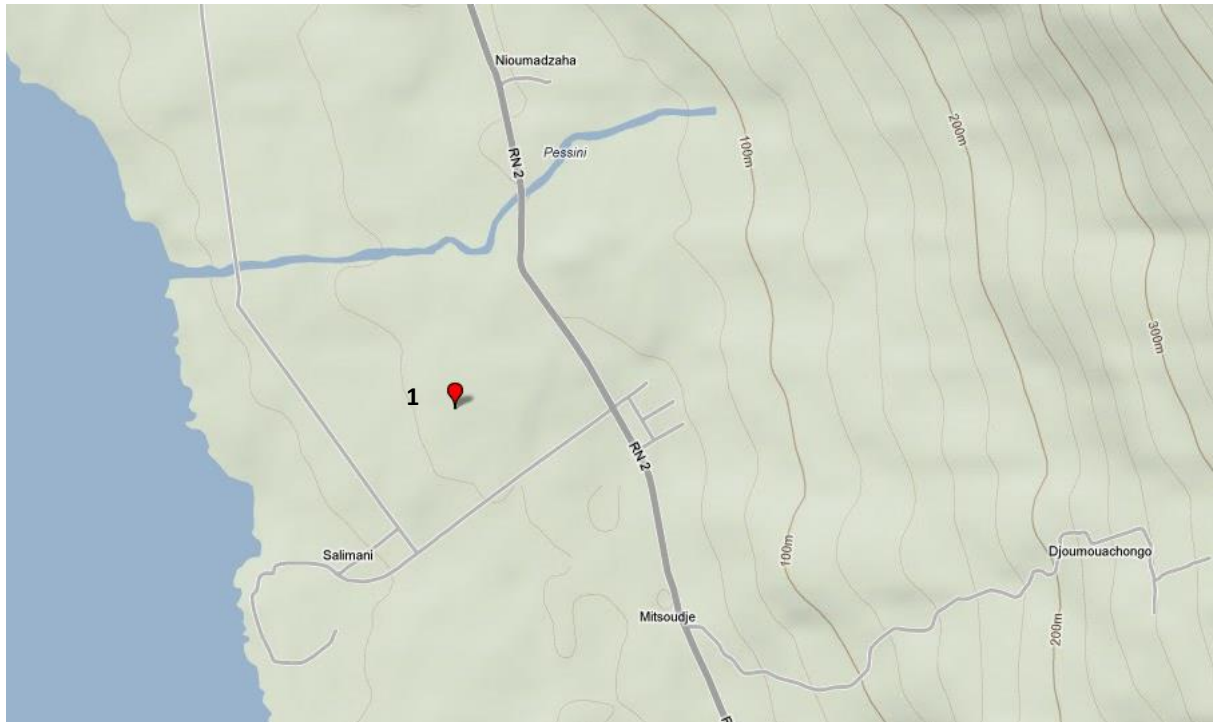
To see the Karthala White-eye you need to go well beyond the camp to where the giant heather heathland begins at just below 2,000 meters. These open areas are also a good place to look for Karthala Spinetail and Malagasy Harrier.



1. Start of trek at the village of Mvouni	S 11.72185	E 43.27494	376 m.
2. Humblot's Flycatcher	S 11.72071	E 43.30621	1 029 m.
3. Karthala Scops-Owl	S 11.71970	E 43.31271	1 244 m.
4. Good alternative lower site to camp	S 11.72030	E 43.31583	1 295 m.
5. Camp site	S 11.73499	E 43.32857	1 610 m.
6. The first Karthala White-eyes	S 11.74527	E 43.34321	1 997 m.

Salimani

The old palm oil plantation at Salimani is the most accessible site for the threatened Grand Comoro Drongo. The area is close to Moroni and easily visited on the day of arrival or on the afternoon after descending Mt. Karthala. Apart from the drongo other endemics like Kirk's White-eye, both sunbirds and Grand Comoro Fody occur here.



1. Grande Comoro Drongo

S 11.80549

E 43.27311

57 m.

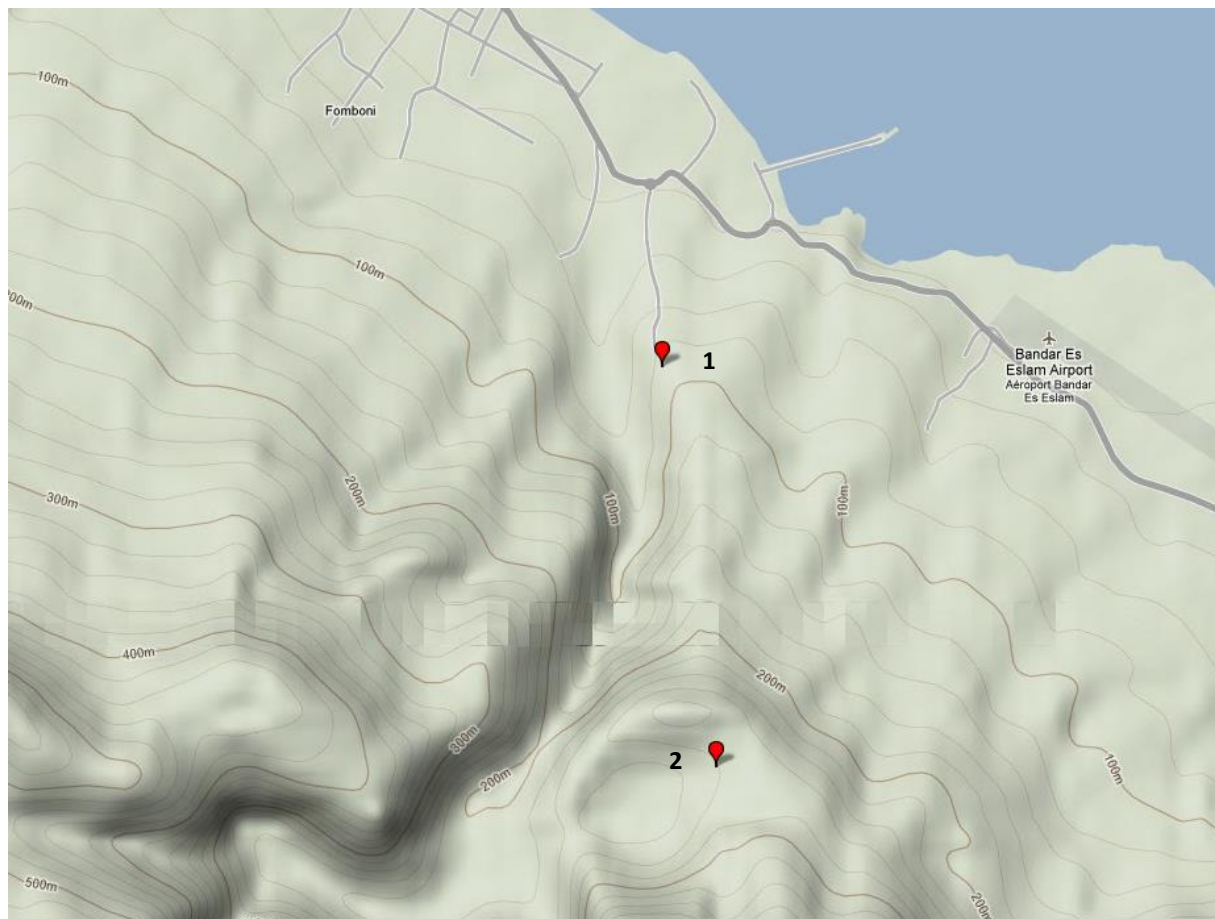
Mohéli

All the endemics can be seen along the trail from Miringoni to Châlet St. Antoine, but to avoid having to camp out the scops owl can easily be seen on the outskirts of Fomboni. Persian Shearwater of the endemic *temptator* subspecies breeds on the ridge and can be heard at night time, but is best looked for from boat on the sea between Mohéli and Anjouan.

One day is enough to see all the endemics, but a couple of the species can be difficult and to improve your chances of seeing them it might be a good idea to allow time for an extra day in in case you miss them on your first try.

Djoumadounia

Djoumadounia is an easily reached area of secondary forest on the outskirts of Fomboni, with a high density of Mohéli Scops Owl. Apart from the scops owl the site is also good for Pale Paradise Flycatcher, both endemic sunbirds and Mohéli Fody. The site is perfect for an afternoon/evening visit on the day of arrival.



1. End of road, start walking	S 12.29651	E 43.74983	92 m.
2. First Mohéli Scops Owl	S 12.30928	E 43.75160	264 m.

Châlet St. Antoine

Châlet St. Antoine is a derelict hut on the top of the island's central ridge. A full day is recommended to have a good chance of seeing all the primary forest endemics. The trail from Miringoni can be tricky to find and a local guide is advisable to show you the way up to Châlet St. Antoine.

The lower area of secondary forest is good for both sunbirds and Mohéli White-eye. Once you reach better forest Mohéli Thrush and Benson's Brush Warbler become common and you should be on the lookout for Mohéli Bulbul and Comoros Blue Vanga.

The two most difficult birds, and also among the most tricky of all Comoros endemics, are Comoros Green Pigeon and Mohéli Brush Warbler. We only saw the warbler just below and on top of the ridge and it's a very skulky bird, difficult to get good views of. The pigeon was the only target species we missed on the trip but it is present on the ridge around Châlet St. Antoine. The ridge can also be accessed from the village of Ouallah where the pigeon was seen by Birdquest in 2008.



1. Start of trek at the village of Miringoni	S 12.30200	E 43.64109	46 m.
2. First sighting of Benson's Brush Warbler	S 12.29025	E 43.66172	578 m.
3. First sighting of Mohéli Brush Warbler	S 12.28909	E 43.66338	663 m.
4. Ridge top at Châlet St. Antoine	S 12.28840	E 43.66421	702 m.

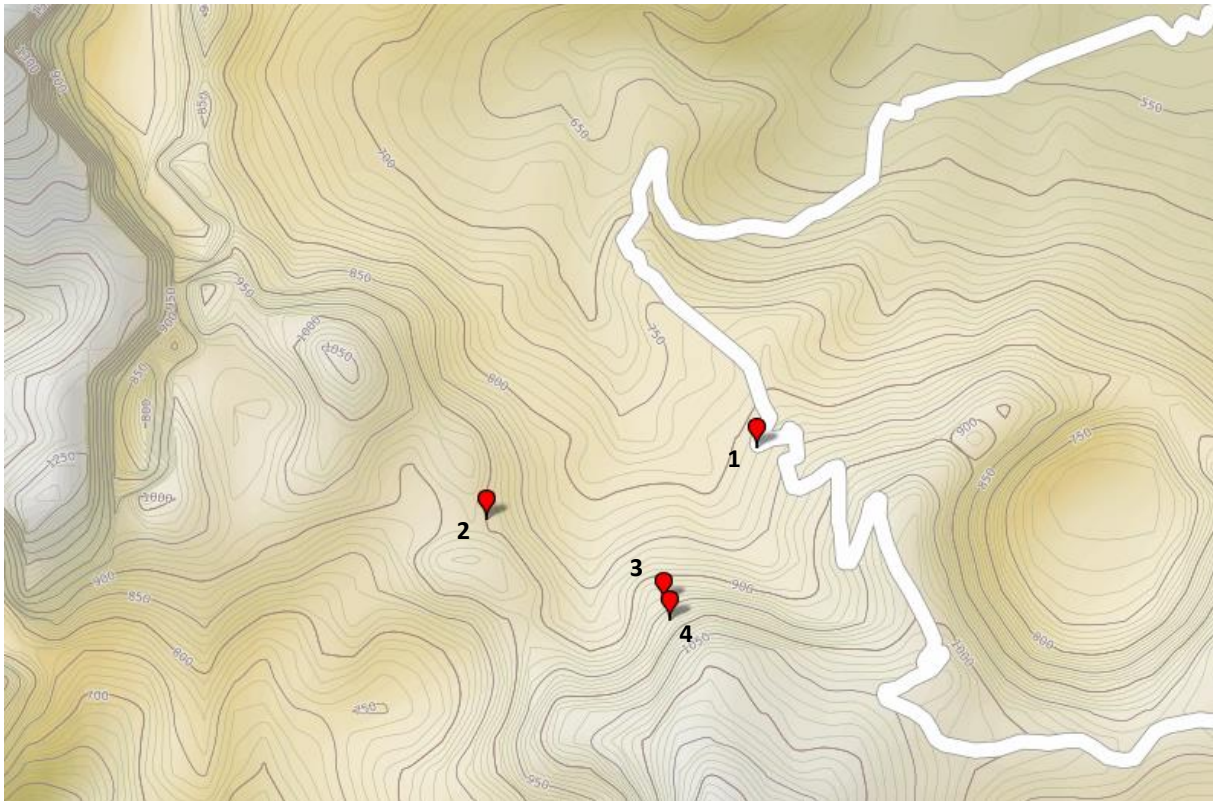
Anjouan

All daytime endemics, perhaps with the exception of the rare Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller, can easily be seen in a morning or afternoon. For a chance to see the scops owl you need also need one evening/night.

Mchakojou/Lac Dzilandée

You don't need to get into good forest to see most endemics. Anjouan Brush Warbler, Anjouan White-eye, Anjouan Thrush, Pale Paradise Flycatcher, Anjouan Sunbird and Anjouan Fody were all easily found in the highly altered habitat along the path leading down towards Lac Dzilandée from the main road. Anjouan Cuckoo-Roller is supposed to occur in the area, but we did not see it.

To have a good chance of seeing the owl you need to get into forest, of which very little remain on Anjouan. The owl can probably be found on any of the forested ridge tops in the area, but the one at Mchakojou is very easily accessible, even though the short trail is pretty steep. It has also been seen in plantations and secondary forest around Lac Dzilandée. We saw it easily, but it can be tricky to get good views of, so you should be prepared to stay into the night at the site.



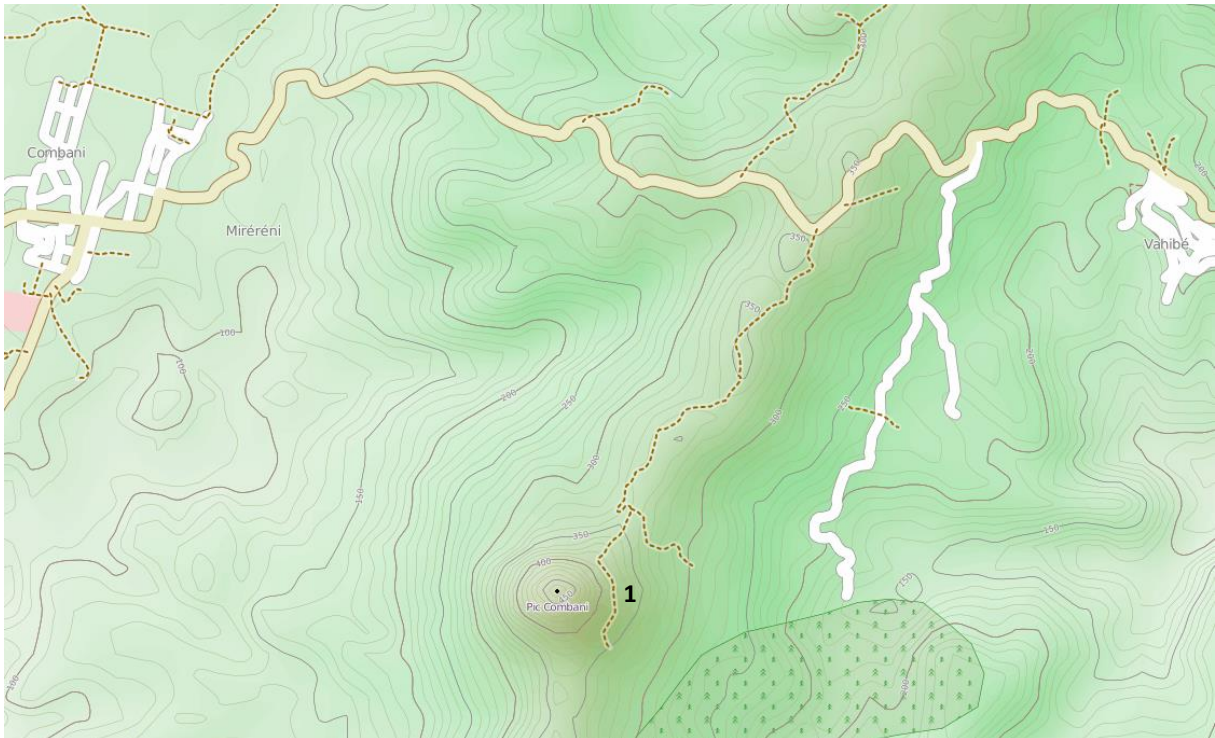
1. Entrance to Lac Dzilandée, parking	S 12.22529	E 44.44637	821 m.
2. Point where we had to turn back	S 12.22725	E 44.43874	901 m.
3. Start of short ridge trail	S 12.22952	E 44.44375	980 m.
4. Anjouan Scops Owl	S 12.23002	E 44.44391	1 000 m.

Mayotte

All endemics are very easy and could be seen in a full day covering two sites; Pic Combani and Pointe Mahabo, but one night at Pic Combani and one night in Mamoudzou is recommended – especially if you don't have your own transportation – and will also give you the chance to look for shorebirds at Labattoir.

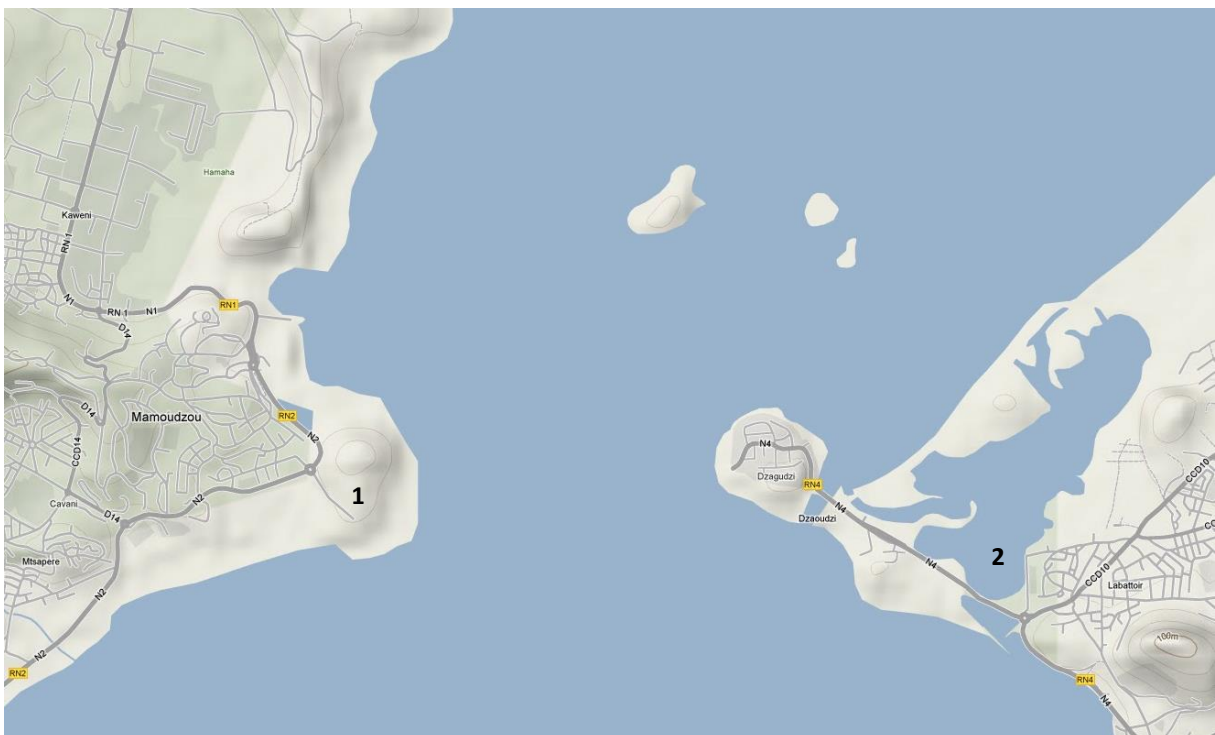
Pic Combani

Pic Combani (no 1 below) is easily accessible, with good accommodation right in the forest. The threatened Mayotte Drongo is easily found around the lodges, as is Mayotte Scops Owl – even in daytime! Mayotte White-eye, Mayotte Sunbird and Mayotte Fody can also be seen, but the fody is much easier found at Point Mahabo.



Pointe Mahabo and Labattoir

Pointe Mahabo (no 1 below) as a small park on the outskirts of Mamoudzou – it's just a few minutes by taxi from the ferry terminal. Mayotte White-eye and Mayotte Sunbird are common. Mayotte Fody is a bit scarcer but we found two males during our one hour in the park. If you have time to spare after having seen the endemics, Labattoir (no 2 below) is nice site to watch for terns and shorebirds and usually have overwintering Crab-plovers. The site is reached by taking the ferry from Mamoudzou to Dzaoudzi and then walking along the causeway to Petite-Terre.



Accommodation

NOTE: In April 2013 Lajos Nemeth visited the Comoros. He stayed at different hotels on Grande Comore and Moroni and I've incorporated his notes about in this chapter.

Retaj Moroni

Avenue Ali Soilihi, Moroni (Grande Comore)

Web site: <http://www.retaj-hotels.com/moroni/index.php>

Tel: 002 69333 65 42

E-mail: reservations.moroni@retaj.com

Rather uninspiring, but good standard, with very helpful and friendly staff, an ATM in the lobby and a restaurant that serves good pizzas. The hotel is Islamic and does not serve any alcoholic beverages. Rather expensive though, a standard twin room is EUR 110.

Jardin de la Paix

Rue Ahmed Djoumoi, Moroni (Grande Comore)

Web site: <http://www.comores-jardindelapaix.com/>

Tel: 00 269 773 28 00

E-mail: jardinpaix.comores@yahoo.fr

REMARKS BY LAJOS NEMETH: Very charming, food and staff is great, cheap (EUR 30-50 for a single room). To make it better, in the same building there is a ticketing office, so they made my Mohéli ticket with AB Aviation here on spot.

Le Reilais de Singani

Boîte Postale 08, Fomboni (Mohéli)

Hot rooms with no air condition and very slow service, but the only "real hotel" in Fomboni. The hotel restaurant serves a tasty grilled fish, but be prepared for a long wait.

The only high end accommodation on Mohéli is the Mohéli Laka Lodge (www.lakalodge.com) on the south coast. It is rather inconveniently located if you want to visit Châlet St. Antoine (at least until the road between Miringoni and Ouallah is completed), but there are alternative trails up to the central ridge from Ouallah. A double bungalow or apartment is EUR 50-60.

Auberge Les Abou

Main street, Fomboni (Mohéli)

REMARKS BY LAJOS NEMETH: Fantastic hotel just two minutes from the airport, cheap (EUR 33), with A/C, great food and very good Wi-Fi. AB Aviation has its office on spot, so very easy to arrange your ticket and get last minute information. No need to go to airport early, I saw the plane coming from Grande Comore from my terrace, so I took my gears, went out to airport in two minutes, and jumped on. From room to take off it was 30 minutes.

Hotel Al Amal

B.P. 59, Moutsamoudou (Anjouan)

A bit run down but probably the best choice in Moutsamoudou with clean rooms, helpful staff and a good hotel restaurant. An added bonus is that you can see Anjouan Brush Warbler and Anjouan Sunbird in the hotel garden. There is a nearby ATM in downtown Moutsamoudou.

Le Relais Forestier

Mont Combani, BP 287 Kawéni (Grande-Terre)

Web site: <http://relaisforestier.malango.pro/>

Tel: 06 39 69 25 20

E-mail: lerelaisforestier@hotmail.com

There are two lodges at Pic Combani and either one would be a good choice, with Mayotte Drongo and Scops Owl on the hotel grounds. A double bungalow at Le Relais Forestier is EUR 60 including breakfast. Dinner is served at the neighbouring, slightly more expensive Gite du Mont Combani (<http://www.gitedumontcombani.com/>).



Mayotte White-eye (*Zosterops mayottensis*) ©M. Lagerqvist

Contacts

Comore Tours & Safaris

E-mail: comotour@yahoo.fr

Tel: +269 333 38 29

To save time we arranged the trek up Mt. Karthala in advance with the help of Omar Toiouil from Comore Tours & Safaris. He quoted EUR 65 per person for guide, porter, camping equipment and food (breakfast, two lunches and one dinner). Unfortunately, our late arrival to Grande Comore coincided with another booking for Omar, so he arranged with a colleague named Chauffeur (tel +269 336 53 87) to guide us up Mt. Karthala instead (for a somewhat higher price).

Comore Tours & Safaris can also arrange a car and driver on Grande Comore for EUR 50 per day (excluding fuel), and help with booking airline tickets.

AB Aviation

Web site: <http://flyabaviation.com/>

Tel: +269 773 95 70

AB aviation operates flights between Grand Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan. We paid EUR 65 per person for our flight from Moroni to Fomboni. We booked the flight in advance through Comore Tours & Safaris.

Inter Îles Air

Tel: + 262 269 64 21 21

E-mail: contact@interilesair.com

Inter Îles Air operate flights to all four islands. A few weeks after our visit one of their planes crashed in the sea shortly after take-off from Moroni airport, but fortunately all passengers survived.

Air Austral

Web site: <http://www.air-austral.com/>

Air Austral operates flights between Moroni, Grande Comore and Dzaoudzi, Mayotte. The also operate international flights from Moroni to Réunion and from Dzaoudzi to Réunion, Mauritius and Madagascar.

Literature and other resources

Field guides

Sinclair, Ian; Langrand, Olivier: *"Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands: Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles and the Comoros"*, Struik Publishers, 2003

The best field guide covering the Comoros. Does not illustrate the different subspecies in the Comoros, but since they don't overlap geographically it still works well. A new edition is due in 2013.

Louette, Michel; Abdérémane, Hachime, Yahaya, Ibrahim; Meirte, Danny: *"Atlas des oiseaux de la Grande Comore, de Mohéli et d'Anjouan"*, Studies in Afrotropical Zoology n 294, 2008

A bird atlas covering Grande Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan, containing detailed maps of the distribution of all species on each island. Also shows densities and at which altitudes they occur.

Maps

Great and very detailed maps of all four islands can be ordered online for EUR 8.95 per map from the Institut Géographique National France. Their online shop is found at: <http://loisirs.ign.fr/cartes.html>

Online resources

There are very few trip reports from the Comoros, but a few can be found:

- Peter Kaestner, Grand Comore, 1999
<http://www.worldtwitch.com/comore.htm>
- Birdquest, The Comoros & Northern Madagascar, 2008
<http://www.birdquest-tours.com/Madagascar-Comoros-birding-tour-report/2008>
- Birdquest, The Comoros & Northern Madagascar, 2012
<http://www.birdquest-tours.com/Madagascar-Comoros-birding-tour-report/2012>
- Johannes Fischer, Madagascar and Comoros, 2012
<http://gottatwitchemall.blogspot.hu/>

Birding Comores – part of the Biodiversity Comores website, contains a photo and sound gallery, a site guide per island and other useful information, can be found at:

http://biodivcomores.africamuseum.be/Biodiversity/Birds/Bird_home.htm

Herremans, Marc: *"Bird Calls of the Comores"*, 2001 Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. Audio CD which includes calls of all the Comoro endemics. Can be ordered online for EUR 16 from Biodiversity Comores at:

<http://biodivcomores.africamuseum.be/Biodiversity/Birds/Resources.htm>

Species list

Taxonomy not based on any specific authority; see taxonomic notes in the species list.

Heard only species indicated by *.

Introduced species indicated by [...].

Range restricted/target species in **red bold** typeface.

Petrels and Shearwaters	<i>Procellariidae</i>
Persian Shearwater 7/10, 1 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan	<i>Puffinus persicus temptator</i>
NOTE: Persian Shearwater is a recent split from Audubon's Shearwater (<i>P. lherminieri</i>) comprising the ssp <i>persicus</i> that breeds the Kuriamuria Islands off Oman and ssp <i>temptator</i> which is endemic to Mohéli. Given the widely separated breeding ranges a further split would not be surprising. It is split as Mohéli Shearwater (<i>P. temptator</i>) in the Comoro bird atlas.	
Tropicbirds	<i>Phaetontidae</i>
White-tailed Tropicbird 7/10, 1 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan	<i>Phaeton lepturus lepturus</i>
Hérons and Bitterns	<i>Ardeidae</i>
Squacco Heron 9/10, 1 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Western Cattle Egret Small to moderate numbers seen at several sites on all four islands	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron 9/10, 2 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre	<i>Ardea cinerea firsas</i>
Gannets and Boobies	<i>Sulidae</i>
Masked Booby 7/10, 1 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan	<i>Sula dactylatra melanops</i>
Kites, Hawks and Eagles	<i>Accipitridae</i>
Yellow-billed Kite 7/10, 2 sp, Fomboni-Hoani	<i>Milvus aegyptius parasitus</i>
Malagasy Harrier 3/10, 1 ad ♂, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore 7/10, 1 ♀, Mchakojou, Anjouan	<i>Circus macrosceles</i>

Frances's Sparrowhawk
9/10, 1 ad, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Accipiter francesiae brutus

Frances's Sparrowhawk
2/10, 1 ad, Vouvouni, Grande Comore

Accipiter francesiae griveaudi

NOTE: Endemic subspecies on all four islands. Comoro birds differ in size from the larger Madagascar ssp *francesiae*. There are also differences between the races regarding colouration and extent of the barring on the under parts. Phylogenetic research needed.

Falcons and Caracaras

Falconidae

Malagasy Kestrel
7/10, 1 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Falco newtoni aldabranus

NOTE: The rare *aldabranus* ssp is endemic to Aldabra in the Seychelles and Anjouan.

Crab-plover

Dromadidae

Crab-plover
9/10, 5 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Dromas ardeola

Plovers

Charadriidae

Grey Plover
9/10, 5 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Pluvialis s. squatarola

Common Ringed Plover
9/10, >15 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Charadrius hiaticula tundra

Greater Sand Plover
9/10, >20 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Charadrius leschenaultii scythicus

Sandpipers and Snipes

Scolopacidae

Bar-tailed Godwit
9/10, 2 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Limosa lapponica

Whimbrel
6/10, 6 sp, Fomboni, Mohéli
7/10, 3 sp, Mohéli-Ajouan
9/10, >20 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Numenius phaeopus

Eurasian Curlew*
9/10, 1 sp heard, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Numenius arquata

Common Greenshank
9/10, 1 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Tringa nebularia

Terek Sandpiper
9/10, 5 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Xenus cinereus

Common Sandpiper
7/10, 2 sp, Fomboni, Mohéli
9/10, 5 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Actitis hypoleucos

Ruddy Turnstone
9/10, >20 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Arenaria i. interpres

Sanderling
9/10, 1 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Calidris a. alba

Curlew Sandpiper
9/10, 2 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Calidris ferruginea

Gulls, Terns and Skimmers

Laridae

Brown Noddy
7/10, >100 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan

Anous stolidus pileatus

Greater Crested Tern
9/10, 2 sp, Labattoir, Petite-Terre

Thalasseus bergii thalassinus

Bridled Tern
7/10, 2 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan

Onychoprion anaethetus antarcticus

Sooty Tern
7/10, 3 sp, Mohéli-Anjouan

Onychoprion fuscatus nubilosus

Pigeons and Doves

Columbidae

[Rock Dove]
5/10, 2 sp, Fomboni, Mohéli
6/10, 1 sp, Fomboni, Mohéli

Columba livia

Comoros Olive Pigeon

Columba pollenii

3/10, 2 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
4/10, 1 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
5/10, 2 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli
6/10, 1 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli
8/10, 1 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre
9/10, 2 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Malagasy Turtle Dove
2/10, Salimani, Grande Comore
3/10, >5 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
4/10, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
5/10, Djoumadounia, Mohéli
6/10, 1 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli
7/10, 2 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Nesoenas picturata comorensis

NOTE: The dark *comorensis* ssp is endemic to the Comoro Islands.

[Ring-necked Dove]
5/10, 1 sp, Fomboni, Mohéli

Streptopelia capicola

[Tambourine Dove]*

9/10, 1 sp heard, Pointe Mahabo, Grande-Terre

Turtur tympanistria

Comoros Blue Pigeon

3/10, >15 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

6/10, >5 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

7/10, >5 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

8/10, >5 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

9/10, >10 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Alectroenas s. sganzini

Parrots

Psittacidae

Greater Vasa Parrot

3/10, >200 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Coracopsis vasa comorensis

NOTE: Smaller and paler than Malagasy races and with different vocalizations. Further research need to be undertaken, but a future split would not be surprising.

Lesser Vasa Parrot

3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, 2 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Coracopsis nigra sibilans

NOTE: Smaller and browner than Malagasy races and with different vocalizations. Further research need to be undertaken, but a future split would not be surprising.

Barn Owls

Tytonidae

Western Barn Owl

2/10, 1 sp, Salimani-Moroni, Grande Comore

5/10, 1 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

7/10, 2 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Tyto alba affinis

Owls

Strigidae

Karthala Scops Owl

2/10, 1 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Otus pauliani

Anjouan Scops Owl

7/10, 1 sp + 3 heard, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Otus capnodes

Mohéli Scops Owl

5/10, 4 sp + 6 heard, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, 1 heard, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

Otus moheliensis

Mayotte Scops Owl

8/10, 3 sp + heard, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

9/10, heard, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Otus mayottensis

Swifts**Apodidae****Karthala Spinetail***Zoonavena mariaae*

2/10, 5 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

NOTE: Usually considered conspecific with Madagascar Spinetail (*Z. grandidieri*) but geographically isolated and morphologically distinct and probably better treated as a distinct species endemic to Grande Comore.

African Palm Swift*Cypsiurus parvus griveaudi*

2/10, 3 sp, Moroni-Salimani, Grande Comore

4/10, 2 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

5/10, >10 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, >10 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

7/10, Mchakojou, Anjouan

8/10, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

9/10, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Malagasy Black Swift*Apus balstoni mayottensis*

2/10, 3 sp, Moroni-Salimani, Grande Comore

3/10, 2 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

6/10, >10 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

7/10, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Cuckoo-Rollers**Leptosomidae****Grand Comoro Cuckoo-Roller***Leptosomus gracilis*

3/10, 1 sp + heard, Mt. Karthala, Gr. Comore

4/10, heard, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

NOTE: Lynx/BirdLife split *gracilis* from Grande Comore and *intermedius* from Anjouan as two distinct species, while retaining birds from Mohéli and Mayotte within Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller. Sinclair and Legrand split *gracilis* based on smaller size, plumage differences and a faster, higher pitched call. Rheindt however considered plumage differences to be minor and calls to be similar. A split of *gracilis* and *intermedius* with Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller on Mohéli creates a very odd biogeographic distribution pattern and more research – especially on the Mohéli birds – is needed to settle the issue. We found Grande Comore birds to be quite distinctive in size and plumage. We did unfortunately not see *intermedius* on Anjouan.

Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller*Leptosomus discolor*

5/10, heard, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, 1 sp + heard, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

8/10, 1 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

9/10, 1 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

Bee-eaters**Meropidae****Olive Bee-eater***Merops s. superciliosus*

5/10, >20 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, >5 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

9/10, 2 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre

9/10, 1 sp, Pointe Mahabo, Grande-Terre

Vangas	Vangidae
Comoros Blue Vanga 6/10, 9 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli	<i>Cyanolanius c. comorensis</i>
NOT: Considered conspecific with Madagascar Blue Vanga by most authorities but split by Sinclair and Legrand based on larger size, subtle colour differences and different bill shape. Race <i>bensoni</i> from Grande Comore is possibly extinct, making this a Mohéli endemic.	
Cuckooshrikes	Campephagidae
Comoros Cuckooshrike 3/10, 6 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore 4/10, 4 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore	<i>Coracina c. cucullata</i>
NOTE: Split by IOC but retained within Ashy Cuckooshrike by Clements. IOC separates birds on Mohéli as race <i>moheliensis</i> . Clements treat <i>moheliensis</i> as a synonym of <i>cucullata</i> .	
Drongos	Dicruridae
Grand Comoro Drongo 2/10, 1 sp, Salimani, Grande Comore 4/10, 1 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore	<i>Dicrurus fuscipennis</i>
Mayotte Drongo 8/10, 3 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre 9/10, 2 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre	<i>Dicrurus waldenii</i>
Monarchs	Monarchidae
Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher 9/10, 5 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre	<i>Terpsiphone mutata pretiosa</i>
Pale Paradise Flycatcher 7/10, 2 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan	<i>Terpsiphone vulpina vulpina</i>
Pale Paradise Flycatcher 5/10, >10 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli 6/10, >30 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli	<i>Terpsiphone vulpina voeltzkowiana</i>
Grand Comoro Paradise Flycatcher 2/10, >5 sp, Salimani, Grande Comore 3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore 4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore	<i>Terpsiphone comorensis</i>
NOTE: All Comoro races are usually retained within Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (<i>T. mutata</i>), however a recent study by Bristol et al (2013) found substantial genetic distances of 2.9-3.5 % between three subspecies clusters; (1) <i>vulpina</i> (incl. <i>voeltzkowiana</i>) from Anjouan and Mohéli respectively, (2) <i>mutata</i> (incl. <i>singetra</i> and <i>pretiosa</i>) from Madagascar and Mayotte and (3) <i>comorensis</i> from Grande Comore. We provisionally treat them as three species calling <i>vulpina</i> Pale Paradise Flycatcher after the paler plumage of <i>vulpina/voeltzkowiana</i> .	



Gr. Comoro Paradise Flycatcher



Pale Paradise Flycatcher
ssp voeltzkowiana



Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher
ssp pretiosa

Crows and Jays

Corvidae

Pied Crow

Corvus albus

Small to moderate numbers seen at many sites
on all dates and islands

Bulbuls

Pycnonotidae

Malagasy Bulbul

Hypsipetes m. madagascariensis

2/10, >10 sp, Moroni-Salimani, Grande Comore
3/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
5/10, >10 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli
6/10, >10 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli
7/10, >20 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan
8/10, >10 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre
9/10, >20 sp, Pic Combani/P. Mahabo, Gr.-Terre

Grand Comoro Bulbul

Hypsipetes parvirostris

3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
4/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Mohéli Bulbul

Hypsipetes moheliensis

6/10, >20 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

Reed Warblers and allies

Acrocephalidae

Mohéli Brush Warbler

Nesillas moheliensis

6/10, 3 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

NOTE: Usually treated as a race of Malagasy Brush Warbler (*N. typica*), but differs from *typica* by coloration, size, longer bill and quite different calls. As noted by Rheindt, it also creates an odd biogeographical pattern to retain *moheliensis* within Malagasy Brush Warbler while treating *longicaudata* as a separate species. Note that sometimes Benson's Brush Warbler is also called Mohéli Brush Warbler.

Anjouan Brush Warbler*Nesillas longicaudata*

7/10, 2 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan
 7/10, 2 sp, Moutsamoudou, Anjouan

Grand Comoro Brush Warbler*Nesillas brevicaudata*

3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
 4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Benson's Brush Warbler*Nesillas mariaae*

6/10, 6 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

White-eyes**Zosteropidae****Anjouan White-eye***Zosterops anjuanensis*

7/10, >10 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

NOTE: Usually treated as a race of Malagasy White-eye (*Z. maderaspatanus*) but Malagasy White-eye belongs to an explosive radiation of white-eyes also including Kirk's and Mayotte White-eye from which Anjouan White-eye differ by 3.2 % (see note under Mohéli White-eye). Anjouan White-eye is thus better treated as a separate species.

Mohéli White-eye*Zosterops [m.] comorensis*

5/10, >10 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli
 6/10, >10 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

NOTE: Usually treated as a race of Malagasy White-eye (*Z. maderaspatanus*) but a study by Warren et. al. (2006) shows that *maderaspatanus* from Madagascar, *mayottensis* from Mayotte, *comorensis* from Mohéli, *aldabrensis* from Aldabra and *kirki* from Grande Comore belong to an explosive radiation probably originating from the African mainland. All five are groups about equally diverged (2.3 %) so it would make sense to treat them as five species rather than two (like Clements who split *mayottensis*) or three (like IOC who splits *mayottensis* and *kirki*).

Kirk's White-eye*Zosterops kirki*

3/10, >100 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore
 4/10, >50 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

NOTE: See comment under Mohéli White-eye above.

Mayotte White-eye*Zosterops mayottensis*

8/10, heard, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre
 9/10, >5 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre
 9/10, >15 sp, Pointe Mahabo, Grande-Terre

Karthala White-eye*Zosterops mouroniensis*

3/10, 6 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Starlings***Sturnidae***

[Common Myna]

Acridotheres tristis

Small to moderate numbers seen at many sites
on all dates and islands

Thrushes***Turdidae*****Karthala Thrush***Turdus comorensis*

3/10, 4 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, 5 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

NOTE: The three races of *Turdus* on the Comoros are usually considered races of Comoros Thrush (*T. bewsheri*). They are however three very distinct birds plumage wise, something that is not illustrated in any field guide. We did some experiments with playback on Mohéli and Anjouan and they do react inquisitively to each other's calls and no genetic research has been done so more research is clearly needed to ascertain the taxonomic status of these attractive birds. We provisionally treat them as three species to highlight their distinctiveness.

Mohéli Thrush*Turdus moheliensis*

6/10, >15 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

Anjouan Thrush*Turdus bewsheri*

7/10, >15 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

*Karthala Thrush**Mohéli Thrush**Anjouan Thrush***Old World Flycatchers*****Miscicapidae***

Madagascar Stonechat

Saxicola sibilla voeltzkowi

3/10, >50 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

NOTE: Treated as a race of African Stonechat by both IOC (who split Madagascar Stonechat) and Clements (who treat Madagascar Stonechat as a subspecies group within African Stonechat), but genetic comparisons between *sibilla* and *voeltzkowi* show no significant differences and therefore better treated as a subspecies of Madagascar Stonechat.

Humblot's Flycatcher*Humblotia flavirostris*

3/10, 3 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, 1 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Sunbirds*Nectariniidae***Grand Comoro Humblot's Sunbird***Cinnyris humbloti*

2/10, 2 sp, Salimani, Grande Comore

3/10, >15 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, >5 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Mohéli Humblot's Sunbird*Cinnyris mohelicus*

5/10, >10 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, >30 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

NOTE: Warren et al (2003) show that the two races of Humblot's Sunbird are deeply divergent (3.8 %) and thus better treated as two separate species. The two taxa also differ in several plumage characters.

Grand Comoro Green Sunbird*Cinnyris moebii*

2/10, 2 sp, Salimani, Grande Comore

3/10, >10 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Mohéli Green Sunbird*Cinnyris voeltzkowi*

5/10, 1 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, 2 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

NOTE: IOC and Clements regard *moebii* and *voeltzkowi* as races of Malagasy Green Sunbird (*C. notatus*) while Sinclair and Legrand split Grande Comore *moebii* as Comoro Green, while retaining Mohéli *voeltzkowi* within Malagasy Green Sunbird. Warren et al (2003) show that *moebii* and *voeltzkowi* form sister groups to *notatus*. The two Comoros taxa are separated by 3.0 % and also differ in several plumage characters – we therefore separate them as two species.

Anjouan Sunbird*Cinnyris comorensis*

7/10, >20 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Mayotte Sunbird*Cinnyris coquerellii*

9/10, >20 sp, Pointe Mahabo, Grande-Terre

Old World Sparrows*Passeridae***[House Sparrow]***Passer domesticus*

2/10, >5 sp, Moroni, Grande Comore

8/10, >20 sp, Mayotte

9/10, Mayotte

Weavers and Widowbirds*Ploceidae***Grand Comoro Fody***Foudia cosobrina*

2/10, 1 ♂, Salimani, Grande Comore

3/10, >30 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

4/10, 4 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

Mohéli Fody

5/10, >20 sp, Djoumadounia, Mohéli

6/10, >20 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli

Foudia eminentissima

Anjouan Fody

7/10, >5 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Foudia anjuanensis

Mayotte Fody

7/10, 2 ♂ + 1 ♀, Pointe Mahabo, Grande-Terre

Foudia algondae

NOTE: All four endemic Comoros taxa are usually treated as races of Comoros Fody (*F. eminentissima*). However, differences in plumage between the four taxa are equal to or exceed those of other fody species and Rheindt also noted that the vocalizations of the different taxa are “very dissimilar from one another”. We therefore treat them as four species.

Waxbills, Munias and allies**Estrildidae****[Bronze Mannikin]**

3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore

7/10, >10 sp, Mchakojou, Anjouan

Lonchura cucullata scutata



Mayotte Drongo (*Dicrurus waldenii*) ©M. Lagerqvist

MAMMALS

Taxonomy not based on any specific authority.

Heard only species indicated by *. Introduced species indicated by [...].

Tenrecs	<i>Tenrecidae</i>
[Common Tenrec] 3/10, 1 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore	<i>Tenrec ecaudatus</i>
Large Lemurs	<i>Lemuridae</i>
[Common Brown Lemur] 8/10, >20 sp, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre	<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>
NOTE: Common Brown Lemur on Mayotte is sometimes classified as belonging to the endemic subspecies <i>mayottensis</i> . However, the lemurs on Mayotte probably introduced to the Comoros by man, possibly several hundred years ago.	
[Mongoose Lemur] 6/10, 4 sp, Châlet St. Antoine, Mohéli	<i>Eulemur mongoz</i>
Old World Fruit Bats	<i>Pteropodidae</i>
Livingstone's Fruit Bat 7/10, Mchakojou, Anjouan	<i>Pteropus livingstonii</i>
Seychelles Fruit Bat 2/10, >50 sp, Salimani, Grande Comore 3/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore 4/10, >20 sp, Mt. Karthala, Grande Comore 8/10, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre 9/10, Pic Combani, Grande-Terre	<i>Pteropus seychellensis comorensis</i>
Unidentified mammals	

Apart from the species above, we also saw two more mammal species that we have not been able to identify. The first was a small rodent, reminiscent of the *Eliurus* tuft-tailed rats on Madagascar.

It was seen both at Djoumadounia and at Châlet St. Antoine on Mohéli.

The second was a small dark bat that was seen at 1,000 meters at Mchakojou on Anjouan.