

Madagascar 17/11/2016 – 08/12/2016

Practical information

We booked with birdingbreaks (www.birdingsbreaks.nl) a trip to Madagascar. We chose an arranged trip for two reasons, first of all we bought a house so had little time to plan everything and second of all we heard that Madagascar is a logistical nightmare so we could rely on a tour operator. Our local guide was Mamy, a very friendly and knowledgeable guy (mamyguide@yahoo.fr).

We flew with KLM from Schiphol to Charles de Gaulle and then to Antananarivo. The return flight was to Nairobi and then to Schiphol. The flights were operated by Air France and Kenya Airways. The plane of Air France was a little bit old, but Kenya Airways had nice new planes with nice onboard entertainment. Pretty nice with such a long flight. We had two national flights. For very logical reasons we started with a national flight to the south and had after two weeks one to the north. Doing it the other way round is a bigger risk because Madagascar Airways is famous for changed schedules and cancelled flights. So always start your loop with a flight, certainly if you need in the end a connection with an international flight. We couldn't complain. Both national flights flew more or less on time, plus or minus some hours. Only our baggage was lacking in the first flight, but after an hour and an extra check of the plane suddenly appeared all the luggage... But besides that, no complaints about Madagascar Airways.

The roads, or better said the road of Madagascar because there is almost only one road from south to north, is in pretty good shape. Although if you travel up north to Antananarivo the part in the mountains is pretty bad with a lot of potholes. But all the rest is very good, besides some old bridges. The traffic is also very light, except in the capital where you can stand for half an hour for a stupid crossing. In the cities around the country most traffic is caused by local taxis, tuktuks, cyclists, etc. So traffic looks pretty safe compared to a lot of other countries.

The food can be pretty challenging. Almost everyone of our group became sick. We had only two days a little bit trouble with diarrhea but others needed after some days a doctor. So take care of your food and take with you enough medicines if you ate something bad. But besides that food is very nice with some standard things like mango, bananas, etc you can find everywhere.

Temperature is most of the time hot to very hot. We also needed a lot of sunscreen, certainly the first days on the water and in the open. Take care about this because you burn like hell in this time of year. The sun is directly above and burns from the morning to the evening. We had some days with rain, most during night and the rest during transport so we were lucky. But most of the time the sky is clear and the sun heats relentlessly.

For identification we used the Helm field guide 'Bird of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands'. In the field this was the best book, at the moment, with most information and the least mistakes compared to the other guides. Bird identification is not very difficult, if you recognize the family and put Madagascar in front of it, you have in 50% of the cases the correct name. The places we visited are put on www.observado.org with the most relevant sightings. The sightings are all put together at the starting point because you best take a local guide. Nature is under immense pressure on the island, so ecotourism is the only way to protect the last bits. Support the local guides and hopefully

they can protect the last intact pieces of nature. This is very important because I have never seen a country where nature is under such immense pressure.

If you want more information, just contact me (Bram Vogels) (bramvogels@hotmail.com)

Day 1: fly

The first day was a travel day. We met very early at Schiphol, around 5 AM, to check in with the group. The rest of the day was sitting in a plane, or sitting in an airport waiting for the plane. We arrived around 12 PM in Antananarivo (Tana for the friends). First of all everyone needs to wait in line for one lady who checks all the medical information. This takes some time because she thinks she is very important. Second you pay for your visa, which goes pretty fast. Third of all you will stand in line for more than an hour waiting for the border control. Most of the time is lost by taking finger prints with a machine which is not working very well and people paying no attention of doing it good. So this combination makes you lose two hours before you can continue to baggage reclaim. Finally we arrived around 3 AM in our hotel and had a short sleep.

Day 2: Tana - Tulear

We stayed in hotel Combava, a ten minutes ride from the airport with no traffic. In the morning we birded the hotel grounds before breakfast. We had just the regular species Red fody, Madagascar wagtail, Madagascar bulbul, etc. and a Black-crowned night-heron. Nothing special but a first taste of Madagascar.

After breakfast we returned to the airport for the national flight to Tulear. The ride to the airport takes during the day almost an hour, due to traffic, so take enough time to get there. From the car we had African black swift, Black heron, Little swift and Mascarene martin. At the airport we were welcomed by an adult Sooty falcon on the towers. Nice one! On the flight to Tulear you can see the impact of humans on the landscape, which is devastating. So don't go over there to see an intact ecosystem because humans altered everything. We stayed in hotel Victory in Tulear. Ordering dinner took a lot of time, so we had time to find our first chameleon and Common jery. Late in the afternoon we could start birding around Table mountain and these days still almost everything is new: Olive bee-eater, Madagascan lark, Sakalava weaver, Madagscan magpie-robin, Subdesert brush warbler, Madagscan cuckoo, Malagasy turtle dove, Crested drongo, Souimanga sunbird and Malagasy coucal, besides Pied crow, Namaqua dove, Common myna, Yellow-billed kite. But we also had nice views of Verreaux's coua, Red-shoulderd vanga and Lafresnaye's vanga. In the distance a Running coua was crossing the road several times, but this was not a perfect view.

Day 3: Tulear – Nosy Ve

In the morning we added our first Madagascar munias to the list during breakfast. Then we got in to the bus for the sandgrouse stakeout, but as you will read in a lot of other reports hunters had a very sustainable impact and there were no more sandgrouses. During our sit and wait around the pool we were entertained by Grey-headed lovebirds, Madagascar cisticola, Mascarene martin, White-throated rail, Olive bee-eater and two Greater painted snipes.

Then it was time to head for the boat for a very bumpy ride to Nosy Ve. Although the sea was pretty rough for the small boat, the island is a little paradise with all these Red-tailed tropicbirds flying

around. Along the beach were some shorebirds with Sanderling, Ruddy turnstone, Whimbrel, Grey plover, White-fronted plover and some other birds like Dimorphic egret, Grey heron and Greater crested tern. The large amounts of terns and waders were not present on the island, so we would try the next morning again before all the fishermen arrive.

Around noon we took the boat to our hotel, which was situated very close to the island on the mainland. On the hotel grounds we had our first Littoral rock thrushes and Madagascar kestrels. In the afternoon we did a walk in the neighboring areas, which were strongly degraded. Littoral rock thrush is even here a regular bird, besides huge amounts of Madagascar larks, Madagascar hoopoe, Madagascar coucal and after some time of checking the brush some Madagascar buttonquails.

In the evening are the hotel grounds a very good place to look for Madagascar nightjar. There were some calling on the hotel grounds and some gave a nice show in the lights.

Day 4: Nosy Ve – Ifaty (hotel Bamboo)

In the early morning we did a detour with the boat to check the island and this time we were lucky because there were 37 Crab plovers on the island, a large flock of Lesser crested terns and a presumable Saunders tern.

Back at the bus we started driving towards Ifaty. Our first stop was around a lake with some stints and ducks. Following species were present: Kittlitz's plover, Curlew sandpiper, Common ringed plover, Little grebe, White-faced whistling duck, Hottentot teal, Black-winged stilt, Madagascar swamp warbler, Common sandpiper, Common greenshank, Little stint and a Baillon's crane. Our second stop was good for Three-banded plover and the third stop was at some saltpans. The two most important species in this last stop were Humblot's heron and Madagascar plover.

We checked in at hotel Bamboo around Ifaty, had a nice meal and some rest during the heat of the day. In the afternoon we had our first visit to the spiny forest (Foret des baobab), which is a very impressive ecosystem with all the spines and the baobabs. The guides knew nice places for Thamnornis, Long-tailed ground-roller, Madagascar harrier-hawk, Madagascar cuckoo-hawk, Sick-billed vanga, Red-capped coua (*olivaceiceps*) and Running coua.

Day 5: Ifaty

After an early breakfast with Grey mouse lemur and Madagascar nightjar we went back to the spiny forest. On this second visit we went for some new species and better views of others: Grey-headed lovebird, Thamnornis, Hook-billed vanga, Madagascar turtle dove, Stripe-throated jery, Crested drongo, Madagascar sparrowhawk, Chabert vanga, Red-tailed vanga, Subdesert Mesite, Archbold's newtonia, Running coua, Madagascar buttonquail, Crested coua and Red-capped coua.

This was a successful run so we headed back to the hotel to search for green pigeon, but these were not present. During the afternoon we had again a break for the worst heat of the day. In the later afternoon we had a third run in the spiny forest with Greater vasa parrot, Madagascar hoopoe, Madagascar cuckoo-hawk, Madagascar paradise flycatcher and Madagascar nightjar. In the evening we also got some mammals like grey mouse lemur, lesser hedgehog tenrec and white-footed sportive lemur.

Day 6: Ifaty – Zombitse – Isalo

This would be a long travel day with some birding spots. Not far outside Ifaty is a nice reedbed where we hoped for Madagascar harrier but got Little bitterns. After some hours driving we got to a new place which would be good for sandgrouse and after a while we got views of our first sandgrouse. A little further we had a group of 15 birds. This place was freshly cut forest with also Madagascar hoopoe, Madagascar cuckoo-hawk, Madagascar buttonquail and Madagascar kestrel.

In Zombitse we started with a roost of a White-browed owl before we headed for the entrance of the park. The list got fast longer with Madagascar buzzard, Giant coua, Cuckoo-roller, Rufous vanga, Long-billed tetraka, Appert's tetraka, Coquerels coua, Common newtonia and some mammals like Verreaux's sifaka and Zombitse sportive lemur.

We returned to the city to have something to eat and went then back to the forest but this time it was much more quiet with only African black swift, Alpine swift, Crested coua, Greater vasa parot and brown lemur. We continued towards our hotel Jardin du Roy around Isalo. This was a very beautiful place with a very luxurious hotel. We climbed the rocks in the evening to enjoy the sunset and the magnificent view with also our first Broad-billed rollers for the trip.

Day 7: Isalo – Anja-park – Ranomafana

A second travel day but to start we went looking around the small lake in front of the hotel for Madagascar partridge. It took a little time but finally we found a couple, then we went to the information centre of the national park to look for the local race of Forest rock thrush. During our search we found a Barn owl on the cliffs and also the rock thrush.

The only other stop was for a little walk in the Anja-park. There is only one target here and that is the Ringtailed lemur, luckily it is very common. On the road we had Striated heron, Hamerkop, Madagascar malachite kingfisher, Madagascar wagtail, African stonecat and Madagascar manikin. The rest of the day was sitting in the bus, praising yourself lucky that the heavy rainfall was during a travel day and get stuck in a roadblock by the police. After we got off we had to drive in a row, but this looked more like a race. Finally we arrived around 21.00 PM in our hotel (Hotel le Grenat), had a quick lunch and went to bed.

Day 8: Ranomafana

Our first walk started at the information centre. The first tropical rainforest in Madagascar is again good for a lot of new and exciting species. So we started with Rands warbler and continued with Madagascar green sunbird, Madagascar bursh warbler, Red-fronted coua, Pitta-like ground-roller, Scaly ground-roller, Cuckoo-roller, Madagascar turtle dove, Madagascar cuckoo-shrike, Pollen's vanga, Common newtonia, Velvet asity, Blue pigeon, Frances's sparrowhawk, Lesser vasa parrot, Spectacled tetraka, Madagascar white-eye and Nelicourvi weaver. The trail goes up and down but is nice and you also have a lot of mammals and other nice creatures: giraf-necked beetle, Golden bamboo lemur, black and white ruffed lemur, red forest rat, red fronted brown lemur, milne Edwards sifaka, ringtailed mongoose, red bellied lemur and greater bamboo lemur.

In the afternoon we took the Vohiparara trail, which is a more flat walking terrain. We first checked the river for pratincoles, but saw only some Mascarene martins and common sandpipers. In the

forest we had Wedge-tailed tetraka, Blue coua, Madagascar brush warbler, Blue vanga, Pitta-like ground-roller, Souimanga sunbird, Madagascar flufftail, Spectacled tetraka, Madagascar white-eye and Green jery. Besides birds and chameleons we had girafnecked beetle and brown mouse lemur.

Day 9: Ranomafana

An early start again on the Vohiparara trail, but on the road we already had cometh moth, Madagascar cuckooshrike, Blue pigeon, Nelicourvi weaver. On the trail we could see Blue coua, Rand's warbler, Madagascar flufftail, Madagascar cuckoo, Pitta-like ground-roller, Common sunbird asity, Common newtonia, Red-tailed vanga, White-throated oxylabes, Rufous-headed ground-roller, Dark newtonia, Madagascan cuckooshrike, Madagascar brush warbler, Madagascar white-eye, Madagscar buzzard, Cuckoo-roller, Greater vasa parrat, Mascarene martin and Blue pigeon. Certainly the rufous-headed ground-roller took some time to connect with. This birds just sits still and calls, so if that's some distance from the path in dense undergrowth you will have to wait for the bird to come closer or another one. We had to wait for another one, because the first stayed away too far. On the forest floor were also some red forest rats running around.

In the afternoon the same forest track was our destination to search for still some new ones. We could add Grey-crowned tetraka, Velvet asity, Yellow-bellied sunbird asity, Forest rock thrush, Long-billed tetraka and Madagascar wood rail. But we missed the Brown mesite.

Day 10: Ranomafana – Antsirabe

The last morning of birding in Ranomafana was a last rush to try for the Brown mesite. We started again on the same trails as yesterday and had a nice start with Madagscar starlings, Pitta-like ground-roller, Madagscar manikin, Blue pigeon and Cryptic warbler. But mesite was the target, so start walking. After the walk we finally heard a Brown mesite calling, but we couldn't see the bird. So this would stay with a heard only... Anyway we got a second chance for the Yellow-bellied sunbird asity and now more people could connect with the people besides me, but still not everyone. We ended the trip with Tylas vanga, Forest rock thrush and Lesser vasa parrot and then it was back into the bus for a whole day of driving. We had some birds like Striated heron, Great egret and Squacco heron, but nothing special.

Day 11: Antsirabe – Perinet

This day started again with a half day travel before we could start birding at the river crossing of the Mangoro river. It took some time before we found the Madagascar pratincoles, but in the end we had magnificent views. Around noon we arrived in our hotel Feon N'yala, which has very nice accommodation and a perfect sight from the dining place for birding. So during lunch and the break in the afternoon we could bird from this place, very relaxing and some nice birds: striated heron, purple heron, ward's vanga, eleonora's falcon, Tylas vanga, Madagascar green sunbird, Madagascar blue pigeon and Chabert vanga.

Our local guide was Patrice. I'm not fast impressed by someone, but this guy really has it. An extremely good eyesight and a continuous rush of energy to keep going. He runs through the bush and finds one animal after another and if he can't find anything there is probably nothing to find at that moment. So try to get this person as a guide, he is worth it.

We started in the nearby park Voi mma with Rainforest scops owl, Indri, Madagascar crested ibis, Madagascar long-eared owl. So these were some nice new species and went back to eat and get some sleep, because the next day was an important one.

Day 12: Antavolobe

This would be D-day, finding the Helmet vanga. First we had to drive an hour on a very bad road and then it would be another hour on foot for the first place to try for the vanga. One of the more important ones of the trip. It took us one and a half hour to get to the place stopping for Frances's sparrowhawk, African stonechat, Helmeted guineafowl, Madagascar magpie-robin, Red-billed teal, Madagascar pond heron, Madagascar pygmy kingfisher and Nelicourvi weaver. And then it was waiting because the local guides rushed in every direction into the forest to search for the Helmet vanga. The waiting was entertained by Bernier's vanga showing very well, although less colorful also a very good one. But unfortunately after a long time, no Helmet vanga. Plan B was another place but much farther away with some slopes on the track. It would take one and a half hour further, but because not everyone was sportive enough it took easily three more hours to get to the place. But finally there it was, the whole grail of the vanga world, a Helmet vanga sitting on a branch preening.

Because it was walking all the time we didn't add to many other species, but we had the Helmet vanga. Nice! Blue coua's were pretty common and we had some Lesser vasa parrots, Common jery, Rand's warbler, Red-tailed vanga, Velvet asity, Spectacled tetraka, Cryptic warbler, Rufous-headed ground-roller, Cuckoo roller, Greater vasa parrot and Diademed sifaka.

Day 13 Perinet

During breakfast we had Madagascar starling, White-throated rail, Madagascar blue pigeon, Broad-billed roller and Indri. Men can they call loud during the early hours. We then went to the reserve Analamazaotra. We started with Crossley's vanga, which we only saw in a glimpse. We had in this nice area Rand's warbler, Madagascar coucal, Madagascar brush warbler, Spectacled tetraka, Cuckoo-roller, Common jery, Madagascar cuckooshrike, Tylas vanga, Blue coua, African stonechat, Nelicourvi weaver, Madagascar magpie-robin, Nuthatch Vanga, Madagascar pygmy kingfisher, Collared nightjar, Velvet asity, Madagascar crested ibis, Red-fronted coua, Lesser vasa parrot, Madagascar flufftail, Crested drongo, Red-breasted coua, Ward's vanga, Madagascar paradise flycatcher and Madagascar wagtail. Mammals were present with a large group of diademed sifaka, common brown lemur and eastern grey bamboo lemur.

In the afternoon we headed again for VOI mma for another look and to stay until dark for some spotlighting. We had some nice flocks with White-headed vanga, Ward's vanga, Nuthatch vanga, White-throated oxylabes, Chabert vanga, Madagascar cuckooshrike, Blue vanga and besides that Madagascar flufftail, Madagascar woodrail, Madagascar crested owl, Hook-billed vanga, Madagascar buzzard, Nelicourvi weaver and Madagascar nightjar. On the mammal list we had Common brown lemur and crossley brown lemur.

Day 14 Perinet

Breakfast was again good for African palm swift, Straited heron, Madagascar starling, Crested drongo, Greater vasa parrot and Purple heron. After breakfast we went to Mantadia, which you reach after more than an hour by jeep. The start was nice with a Scaly breasted ground-roller but

then it slowed down a little bit, but even then we could add some nice species like Spectacled tetraka, Nuthatch vanga, Madagascar crested ibis, Madagascar grebe, Meller's duck, Common moorhen, Madagascar swamp warbler, Broad-billed roller and Frances's sparrowhawk. Most of the time was taken by the search for the Short-legged ground-roller. Patrice was working all day to find it, but unfortunately we couldn't connect with the species. On the way back we stopped at one last place when suddenly Patrice came running out of the forest that there was one calling. Straight up the hill and there we had terrific views of two birds. Short-legged ground-roller was in and that all thanks to the continuous effort of Patrice.

On the way back we stopped at a swamp where we got pretty easily Madagascar rail and a lot of brown-throated martins. Finally we stopped at some fruiting trees so we had nice views of Madagascar green pigeon.

Day 15: Perinet – Antananarivo

We went to an area Turturufi where there is still some left overs of a marsh although rice fields are closing in from all directions. The road to this place is better, because it's in the direction of a mine. We had almost immediately Madagascar snipe displaying over the marsh. In total we had probably around 20 snipes. We also tried for slender-billed flufftail, but unfortunately this one didn't turn up. Other birds in the marshland were African stonechat, Madagascar flufftail, Madagascar manikin, Grey emu-tail, Yellow-billed kite, Meller's duck, Broad-billed roller, Red-billed teal, Madagascar cisticola, Great egret, Madagascar coucal, Madagascar kestrel, Purple heron and Madagascar partridge. Unfortunately one of the drivers got very bad news that his wife died, so we went as fast as possible back to Antananarivo to bring him back to his family. Thereafter we went to our hotel Combava. After some problems with the reservation we got a room and have some sleep.

Day 16: Antananarivo – Mahajanga

The hotel grounds had no new species besides the very common ones like Red fody, Madagascar bulbul, etc. After breakfast we went to the airport to get our flight to the north. On the airport grounds we had again Sooty falcon, Mascarene martin, Squacco heron, African black swift and Little swift. When we arrived in the early afternoon at Mahajanga it was raining very hard. A blessing said the local people, and in the coming days we saw the landscape become more and more green. It was a very slow day, because there are no good birding areas in this area. We did a small walk in the surroundings in the afternoon but only got normal species like Common jery, Madagascar cisticola, Grey-headed lovebird, Common Myna, Madagascar bulbul, Souimanga sunbird, African palm swift and Pied crow.

Day 17: Ankazunbura

Today was operation jacana. It's the first country I've ever been where you have problems to find jacanas, but they fucked it up so hard that even this species becomes hard to find. So after breakfast we got in the bus and drove probably almost three hours to get to a marsh. We got in this area the following species Yellow-billed kite, Yellow-billed stork, White-headed whistling duck, Black heron, Glossy ibis, Common sandpiper, Common greenshank, Madagascar cisticola, Whiskered tern, Purple heron, Humblot's heron, Cattle egret, Squacco heron, Whimbrel, Hottentot teal, Madagascar malachite kingfisher, Pied crow, Madagascar coucal, Allen's gallinule, ... but as you can see no jacana.

We stayed in the heat watching for jacana but no luck. Defeated we had to get back on the bus and back to the hotel. The afternoon was again pretty slow, time to get a little bit of a rest although that's not my kind of travelling. But if there really are no places to go, well you can better have a swim in this hot climate.

Day 18: Mahajanda - Ankaranfantsika

Today was again a day to get going. We were going for a trip by boat, so that's always nice. Just after asking if you ever see dolphins and get a negative answer, some indo-pacific humpback dolphins were bowriding. Nice, again a new mammal. But we were here for birds so start watching in the mangroves for sacred ibis. Besides jacana apparently the sacred ibis is also very difficult to find. We had a lot of Lesser crested terns, Dimorphic egrets, Common sandpiper, White-headed vanga, White-throated rail, Lesser flamingo, Whimbrel, Common redshank, Terek sandpiper, Madagascar pond heron, Curlew sandpiper, Greater sand plover, White-fronted plover and finally after even the lighter exploded of our boatmen because of the heat we found a Madagascar sacred ibis. So one species in, but the Madagascar teal was not present on the regular place. The local people had two hypothesis, one positive one that they were nesting and on a different place and a second one that hunters came along and shot the birds. Let's hope for the first possibility. Further we had Madagascar harrier-hawk displaying above the mangroves.

Then we had to hit the road again and stopped one more time at the jacana place. We had Frances's sparrowhawk, Madagascar coucal, White-faced whistling-duck, Allen's gallinule, striated heron, etc but no jacana. Again... We arrived late afternoon in Ampjoroa and had some birding time at the big lake with Allen's gallinule, Common moorhen, Broad-billed roller, Squacco heron, Purple heron, Crested drongo and Cattle egret. We stayed in the very nice Blue Vanga lodge, basic but everything you need (electricity, running water and very friendly local people).

Day 19 Ankaranfantsika

Our first target was the Schlegel's asity. Although the guide knew some nests, we had some difficulty in tracking the bird down. The first place was empty, as was the second place. After a while we heard one and got short views, but we had to keep looking. From this species you want to see more than a glimpse. So we kept going and had some other species like Coquerel's coua, Crested coua, Madagascar turtle dove, Madagascar green pigeon, Blue vanga, Crested drongo, Madagascar magpie-robin, Madagascar paradise flycatcher, Cuckoo-roller, Long-billed tetraka, Greater vasa parrot, Madagascar cuckooshrike, Common newtonia and in the end I found a couple nest building. At this place we had terrific views of a couple flying back and forth to build a nest. What a cool bird is this Schlegel's asity.

After we had the asity we continued at the park entrance to search for one of our last main target's the van Dam's Vanga. It was already pretty hot and the forest was becoming more and more quiet but after a while we heard the Van Dam's vanga. It took some time to track it in the treetops, but it was nice to see. The last vanga we needed. We also had Sooty falcon, Banded kestrel, Red-capped coua, Souimanga sunbird, Sickle-billed vanga, Chabert vanga, Rufous vanga, Madagascar hoopoe, Madagascar buzzard and the biggest and fattest boa I have ever seen.

In the afternoon we had a little break but then went on our third quest for the jacana. On a local lake which still was a little bit natural, we finally got our first and last Madagascar jacana. The guides told

that in the whole region there is only one couple left. We then went for the boat ride on the big lake and the search for the Madagascar fish eagle. The start was with some Nile crocodiles and more common birds like Olive bee-eater, Greater vasa parrot, Squacco heron, Purple heron, Madagascar malachite kingfisher, Madagascar harrier-hawk but no Madagascar fish-eagle around the nest. But luckily a little bit later the boatmen saw two creatures at the opposite end of the lake in a tree and this proved two Madagascar fish-eagles. Top bird! Further we had Glossy ibis, Black heron, Madagascar pond heron, Madagascar green pigeon and common brown lemur.

Day 20 Ankaranfantsika

Our last full day of birding and our last target was the mesite. We started again at the park entrance. We had pretty soon found Red-capped coua, Van Dam's vanga and then the first place with calling mesites. Just wait for them to cross the tracks and you have nice views. We had in total 5 White-breasted mesites on two different places. The rest of the morning we could have some fun with species we had already seen like Broad-billed roller, Coquerel's coua (perfect views), Crested coua, Crested coua, Cuckoo-roller, Rufous vanga, Madagascar paradise flycatcher, Madagascar magpie-robin, Madagascar crested-ibis, Madagascar bulbul, Common jery, White-headed vanga, Sickle billed vanga. We also had one new mammal species the Woolly lemur and again the group of Coquerel's sifaka. One good advice with these sifakas, don't stand under the mango tree where they are foraging. Mangos come down hard and fast.

In the afternoon we could bird a little further with no stress because all species were in the bag. We had a stroll at the lake with Namaqua dove, White-faced whistling duck, common moorhen, Squacco heron, Madagascar jacana, Striated heron, Cattle egret, Madagascar malachite kingfisher, Madagascar pygmy kingfisher, Greater vasa parrot, Sickle-billed vanga, Madagascar sparrowhawk, Sooty falcon, Allen's gallinule, White-throated rail and Broad-billed roller. At dusk we got our last possible owl species Totoroka scops-owl.

Day 21 Drive drive drive

We had to drive back to Antananarivo, so started early and stopped at some lakes. The only new species was Knob-billed duck at this place, besides Namaqua dove, Grey heron, Black heron, Whiskered tern, Allen's gallinule, Madagascar pratincole, Madagascar black swift, Madagascar cisticola, etc. The whole time we had to watch for Madagascar harrier, because this species is sometimes seen in the area on the plateau. And finally after lunch we got this magnificent bird, a male flying by very close. After the descent when the brake of the bus got stuck, we had a delay of half an hour in which we had again a male Madagascar harrier. In the evening we ate again at hotel Combava and then went to the airport. At the parking on the airport we could add Marsh owl to the list and this was the last species we would see.

Day 22 Fly fly fly

Our plane left in Antananarivo at 2.30 in the morning, we had a stop in Nairobi with Superb starling and some other common mainland species and then had a direct flight to Schiphol. We arrived there pretty tired after two very long days of traveling with no sleep for the unfortunate people who can't sit in a bus or a plane and sleep. But we got some very nice species on our list, so get to bed now.

Bird list		
Red-tailed tropicbird	Grey heron	Madagascar heron
Purple heron	Squacco heron	Madagascar pond heron
Striated heron	Black-crowned night heron	Little bittern
Great egret	Cattle egret	Black heron
Dimorphic egret	Hamerkop	Yellow-billed stork
Lesser flamingo	Madagascar sacred ibis	Glossy ibis
Madagascar crested ibis	Little grebe	Madagascar grebe
White-faced whistling duck	Comb duck	Meller's duck
Red-billed teal	Hottentot teal	Madagascar cuckoo-hawk
Madagascar harrier	Madagascar buzzard	Yellow-billed kite
Madagascar fish eagle	Madagascar harrier-hawk	Frances's sparrowhawk
Madagascar sparrowhawk	Madagascar kestrel	Banded kestrel
Eleonora's falcon	Sooty falcon	Madagascar partridge
Helmeted guineafowl	Madagascar buttonquail	Brown mesite (aud)
White-breasted mesite	Subdesert mesite	Madagascar flufftail
Baillon's crake	Madagascar wood rail	White-throated rail
Allen's gallinule	Common moorhen	Madagascar jacana
Greater painted-snipe	Crab-plover	Black-winged stilt
Madagascar pratincole	Madagascar snipe	Grey plover
Common ringed plover	Greater sand plover	Madagascar plover
Kittlitz's plover	Three-banded plover	White-fronted plover
Whimbrel	Common greenshank	Terek sandpiper
Common sandpiper	Ruddy turnstone	Sanderling
Little stint	Curlew sandpiper	Lesser crested tern
Greater crested tern	Saunders's tern	Whiskered tern
Madagascar sandgrouse	Madagascar turtle dove	Namaqua dove
Madagascar green pigeon	Madagascar blue pigeon	Grey-headed lovebird
Greater vasa parrot	Lesser vasa parrot	Crested coua
Verreaux's coua	Blue coua	Red-fronted coua
Red-breasted coua	Red-capped coua	Coquerel's coua
Running coua	Giant coua	Madagascar coucal
Madagascar cuckoo	Collared nightjar	Madagascar nightjar
Barn owl	Rainforest scops-owl	Torotoroka scops-owl
White-browed owl	Madagascar long-eared owl	Marsh owl
African palm swift	Alpine swift	Madagascar black swift
Little swift	Madagascar malachite kingfisher	Madagascar pygmy kingfisher
Velvet asity	Schlegel's asity	Olive bee-eater
Broad-billed roller	Cuckoo-roller	Madagascar hoopoe
Short-legged ground-roller	Scaly ground-roller	Pitta-like ground-roller
Rufous-headed ground-roller	Long-tailed ground-roller	Common sunbird asity
Yellow-bellied sunbird asity	Madagascar green sunbird	Souimanga sunbird
Madagascar lark	Mascarene martin	Brown-throated martin
Barn swallow	Madagascar wagtail	Forest rock thrush
Benson's rock thrush	Littoral rock thrush	Madagascar magpie-robin
African stonechat	Common jery	Green jery
Stripe-throated jery	Rand's warbler	Cryptic warbler
Madagascar cisticola	Grey emu-tail	Thamnornis
Madagascar brush warbler	Subdesert brush warbler	Madagascar swamp warbler

Spectacled tetraka	Appert's tetraka	Grey-crowned tetraka
Long-billed tetraka	Wedge-tailed tetraka	White-throated oxylabes
Madagascar white-eye	Archbold's newtonia	Common newtonia
Dark newtonia	Red-tailed vanga	Red-shoulderd vanga
Blue vanga	Chabert vanga	White-headed vanga
Hook-billed vanga	Helmet vanga	Rufous vanga
Bernier's vanga	Sickle-billed vanga	Madagascar cuckoo-shrike
Madagascar bulbul	Tylas vanga	Pollen's vanga (aud)
Van Dam's vanga	Lafresnaye's vanga	Madagascar paradise flycatcher
Nuthatch vanga	Crossley's vanga (aud)	Ward's vanga
Crested drongo	Pied crow	Madagascar starling
Common myna	House sparrow	Nelicourvi weaver
Sakalava weaver	Madagascar fody	Madagascar mannikin

Mammal list		
Indri	Black-and-white ruffed lemur	Eastern grey bamboo lemur
Common brown lemur	Diademmed sifaka	Brown mouse lemur
Red-fronted brown lemur	Red forest rat	Milne-Edwards's sifaka
Red-bellied lemur	Greater bamboo lemur	Golden bamboo lemur
Verraux's sifaka	Grey mouse lemur	Coquerel's sifaka
Ring-tailed mongoose	Mongoose lemur	White footed sportive lemur
Lesser hedgehog tenrec	Zombitse sportive lemur	Crossley dwarf lemur
Indo-pacific humpback dolphin		