

Madagascar

We had been planning our trip to **Madagascar** for a long time, so when the opportunity for affordable flights came up, we didn't hesitate for a moment.

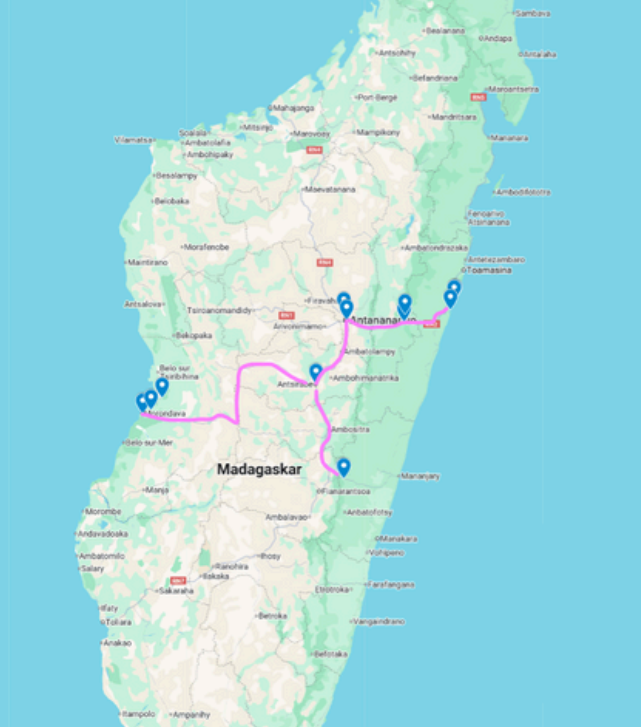
One thing was clear from the start — we wanted to travel outside of the rainy season to make getting around easier. That's why we set off at the end of May. Our main goal was to see reptiles, though we also came across several interesting mammals.

Right at the beginning, we faced some complications with renting a car. Elections were taking place at the time, so the rental office at the airport was closed. Fortunately, the following day we managed to arrange for the company to deliver the car directly to our hotel in the city. They required cash payment, which was quite a challenge given the ATM withdrawal limits, but in the end, everything worked out. Originally, we hadn't planned on renting a 4x4, but we had to take whatever was available at the time.

Our first destination was **Ranomafana National Park**. We hadn't expected Madagascar's roads to be particularly good, but even so, we were unpleasantly surprised by how long the drive took. By the afternoon, we finally arrived in Ranomafana and checked into **Setam Lodge**. I have to say, the price for accommodation was surprisingly affordable. That very evening we arranged a night herping tour with a guide. It wasn't possible to go directly into the park at night, so the search took place along the main road with a crowd of other people. In the roadside vegetation, we spotted countless species of chameleons: *Calumma crypticum* (Cryptic Chameleon), *Calumma oshaughnessyi* (O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon), *Calumma glawi* (Glaw's Chameleon), *Calumma fallax* (False Chameleon). My personal highlight was finding two individuals of *Uroplatus phantasticus* (Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko). We also saw several dwarf lemurs of the genus *Cheirogaleus* and the red mouse lemur, *Microcebus rufus* (**Brown Mouse Lemur**). Please, let me know in the comments if you think these might be another species!

Later on, within the hotel garden, we also found several small geckos, *Ebenavia boettgeri* (Boettger's Clawless Gecko), and *Sanzinia madagascariensis* (Madagascar Tree Boa).

The following day we visited the national park. First, we came across a group of *Haplemur aureus* (**Golden Bamboo Lemur**), and later on *Propithecus edwardsi* (**Milne-Edwards' Sifaka**). Also *Phelsuma quadriocellata* (Peacock gecko) were found in the area around the cabins in the park. In the afternoon, we stopped at the **Ranomafana Arboretum**. We wanted to see *Calumma parsonii* (Parson's Chameleon) there, and in the end we managed to, although I suspect the animals were being kept mainly to attract tourists.



Calumma glawi - Glaw's Chameleon



Calumma oshaughnessyi - O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon



Uroplatus phantasticus - Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko



Cheirogaleus sp. - Dwarf lemur

Originally, we had planned to head towards the Anja Community Reserve to see some *Lemur catta* (Ring-tailed Lemurs), or possibly even continue on to Andringitra National Park. However, due to the demanding travel conditions and our other plans, we had to adjust our itinerary a bit. Our next destination was **Morondava** and the famous **Baobab Alley**. Under normal circumstances, the journey could be managed within a single day, but due to the poor road conditions, the hectic traffic, and the fact that we had mistakenly chosen an impassable road and had to turn back, we were forced to spend the night in Antsirabe. There, we found a very pleasant small hostel, **La Résidence Mahasoa**, which also served excellent food.

In the morning, we set off for Morondava. Along the way, we made several stops and saw *Chalarodon madagascariensis* (Madagascar Rainbow Lizard), *Zonosaurus karsteni* (Karsten's Girdled Lizard), and skinks of the genus *Trachylepis*. Right by the pond in the alley, we encountered *Pelomedusa subrufa* (Marsh Terrapin). During an evening walk, we spotted few *Paroedura picta* (Madagascar Ground Gecko) and very abundant *Microcebus murinus* (Gray Mouse Lemur), which seemed to be on almost every tree.



Microcebus rufus - Brown Mouse Lemur



Sanzinia madagascariensis - Madagascar Tree Boa



Haplemur aureus - Golden bamboo lemur



Phelsuma quadriocellata - Peacock gecko



Propithecus edwardsi - Milne-Edwards' Sifaka



Chalarodon madagascariensis -
Madagascar Rainbow Lizard



Paroedura picta - Madagascar ground gecko

The following day, we ventured further to **Kirindy Village**, but we weren't very lucky with sightings. We also visited the **Zazamalala Wildlife Centre**, though I had somewhat mixed feelings about it. There, we saw ***Propithecus verreauxi*** (**Verreaux's Sifaka**) and ***Eulemur rufifrons*** (**Red-fronted Lemur**). In addition to these two species, the centre is supposed to house *Lemur catta* (Ring-tailed Lemur), but judging by their turtle enclosure, it felt more like a somewhat odd zoo than a proper reserve.

Our next stop was **Andasibe**. We stayed at **Feon'ny Ala**, which has a wonderful terrace from which you can observe the forest. On the way to the hotel, we saw ***Haplemur griseus*** (**Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur**) feeding on bamboo. During our visit to **Parc Mitsinjo**, we observed ***Eulemur fulvus*** (**Common Brown Lemur**), ***Propithecus diadema*** (**Diademed Sifaka**), ***Avahi laniger*** (**Woolly Lemur**), and, most impressively, a singing group of ***Indri indri*** (**Indri**). Of course, we also went on a night walk, which was quite successful. We saw ***Uroplatus sikorae*** (Sikora's Leaf-Tailed Gecko), ***Calumma parsonii*** (Parson's Chameleon), ***Uroplatus phantasticus*** (Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko), ***Calumma nasutum*** (Nose-horned Chameleon), ***Calumma emelinae*** (Emeline's Chameleon), ***Calumma brevicorne*** (Short-horned Chameleon), and most notably, ***Brookesia superciliaris*** (Superciliaried Leaf Chameleon).

On the next night, we visited **VOI MMA Parc**, which was probably the most productive in terms of sightings. In addition to more ***Calumma parsonii*** (Parson's Chameleons), we saw several geckos of the genus ***Uroplatus***, including ***Uroplatus phantasticus*** (Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko) and ***Uroplatus sikorae*** (Sikora's Leaf-Tailed Gecko), ***Pseudoxyrhopus tritaeniatatus*** (Three-striped Ground Snake) as well as ***Brookesia superciliaris*** (Superciliaried Leaf Chameleon) and ***Microcebus lehilahytsara*** (**Goodman's Mouse Lemur**).

Our final stop was the **Palmarium Reserve**. We arrived in Manambato, where we boarded a boat to the reserve. At the harbor, we saw ***Furcifer pardalis*** (Panther Chameleon) and ***Phelsuma lineata*** (Lined Day Gecko). Along the canal, we were very lucky and spotted a ***Crocodylus niloticus*** (Nile crocodile).

The **Palmarium Reserve** was truly fascinating. Our main target species was (of course) the **Aye-Aye**. Immediately upon arriving at the hotel, the trees right next to our terrace were alive with the calls of ***Varecia variegata*** (**Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur**). Around the reserve, several other lemur species were roaming: ***Eulemur macaco*** (**Black Lemur**) and ***Eulemur coronatus*** (**Crowned Lemur**). Before dinner, we boarded another boat and headed to a small island to look for ***Daubentonia madagascariensis*** (**Aye-Aye**). The guides placed coconuts at several stations, and after a short wait, an Aye-Aye appeared briefly in the treetops, though it was startled by the light. After moving to another station, we saw another individual, and eventually we were able to observe three Aye-Ayes feeding on coconuts. While it wasn't exactly a "wild" encounter, it was truly an extraordinary experience. Seeing this incredible animal somewhere truly in the wild would probably have been impossible for us, and although Palmarium is perhaps a somewhat controversial place, the observation itself took place with minimal disturbance to the lemurs.



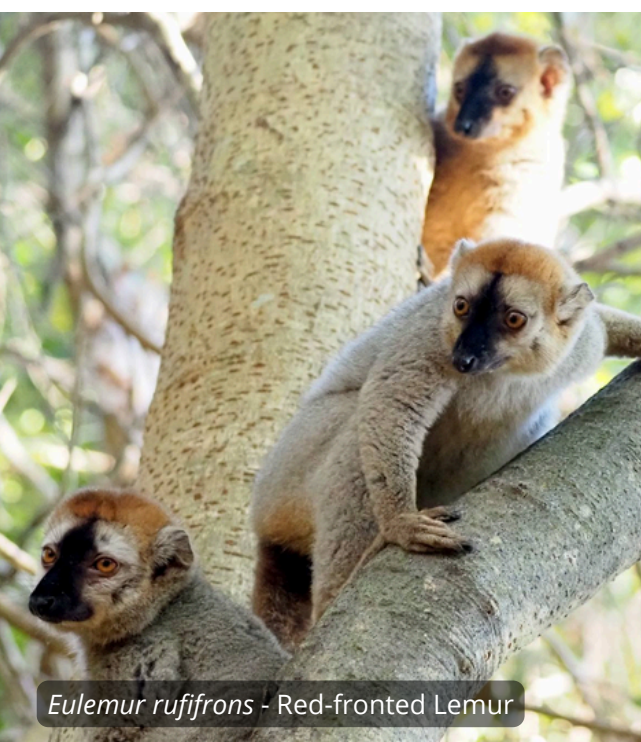
Zonosaurus karsteni - Karsten's Girdled Lizard



Microcebus murinus - Gray Mouse Lemur



Propithecus verreauxi - Verreaux's Sifaka



Eulemur rufifrons - Red-fronted Lemur

After we had admired them long enough, we took the boat back to the hotel for dinner. Later, we went for a short walk with headlights around our bungalow and came across several *Ebenavia boettgeri* (Boettger's Clawless Gecko), *Phelsuma grandis* (Madagascar Giant Day Gecko), and *Geckolepis maculata* (Spotted Fish-Scale Gecko).

The next day we had arranged a guided tour of the reserve. The local lemurs are incredibly bold - one even walked straight into the restaurant to steal some fruit from breakfast. Throughout the tour, they hopped around us, trying to beg for food, with *Varecia variegata* (Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur) being particularly persistent. At one point, the guide even attracted an *Indri indri* (Indri), and although we are not usually fans of feeding-based reserves, we couldn't resist offering it a piece of banana that the guide handed us. In addition to *Varecia variegata* and *Indri indri*, also *Eulemur fulvus* (Common Brown Lemur), *Eulemur macaco* (Black Lemur), *Eulemur coronatus* (Crowned Lemur) were present. We also saw a hybrids between *Eulemur fulvus* and *coronatus* and *Eulemur coronatus* and *macaco*.. Since these two species would not naturally meet in the wild, it raises some questions about whether introducing animals into the reserve regardless of their origin is really a good solution. As for reptiles, our biggest wish was to see *Langaha madagascariensis* (Madagascar Leaf-nosed Snake). To find it, we had to take a boat to a more remote part of Palmarium, but thanks to our guide, we succeeded. We also saw several chameleons: *Calumma parsonii* (Parson's Chameleon) and *Furcifer pardalis* (Panther Chameleon).

On the evening walk, we were lucky to spot *Avahi laniger* (Eastern Woolly Lemur) as well as several tiny, yet undescribed, *Brookesia* (leaf chameleons) and *Madagascarophis colubrinus* (Madagascar Cat-eyed Snake).

The next day, we headed back to Manambato and then to Antananarivo. Overall, it was a very successful trip. Unfortunately, the season didn't allow us to see any tenrecs, and even Leaf-tailed geckos were relatively scarce.



Hapalemur griseus - Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur



Calumma brevicorne - Short-horned Chameleon



Propithecus diadema - Diademed Sifaka



hybrid - *E. coronatus* x *E. macaco*



Avahi laniger - Woolly Lemur



Indri indri - Indri



Eulemur fulvus - Common Brown Lemur



Uroplatus sikorae - Sikora's Leaf-Tailed Gecko



Brookesia superciliaris - Superciliaried Leaf Chameleon



Microcebus lehilahytsara - Goodman's Mouse Lemur



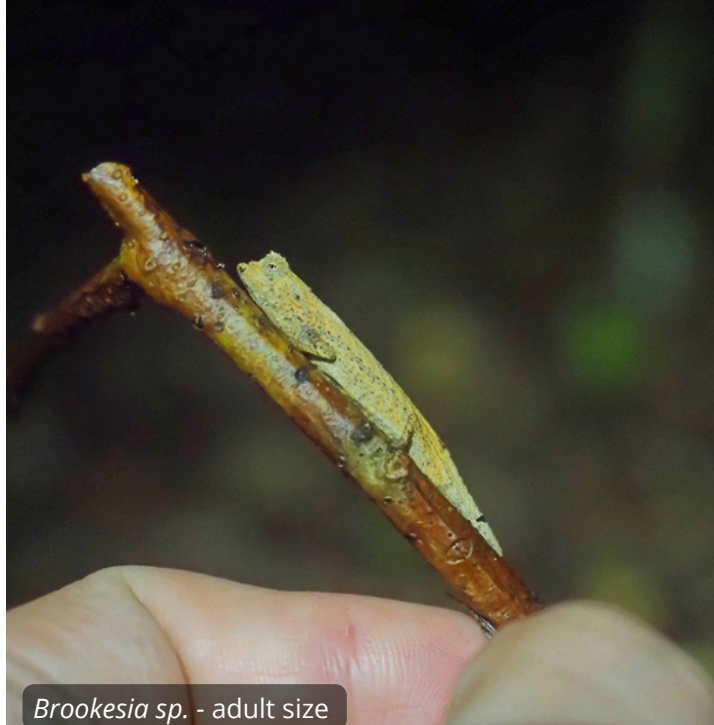
Pseudoxyrhophus tritaeniatus - Three-striped Ground Snake



Calumma parsonii - Parson's Chameleon



Crocodylus niloticus - *Crocodylus niloticus*



Brookesia sp. - adult size



Eulemur macaco - Black Lemur



Indri indri - Indri



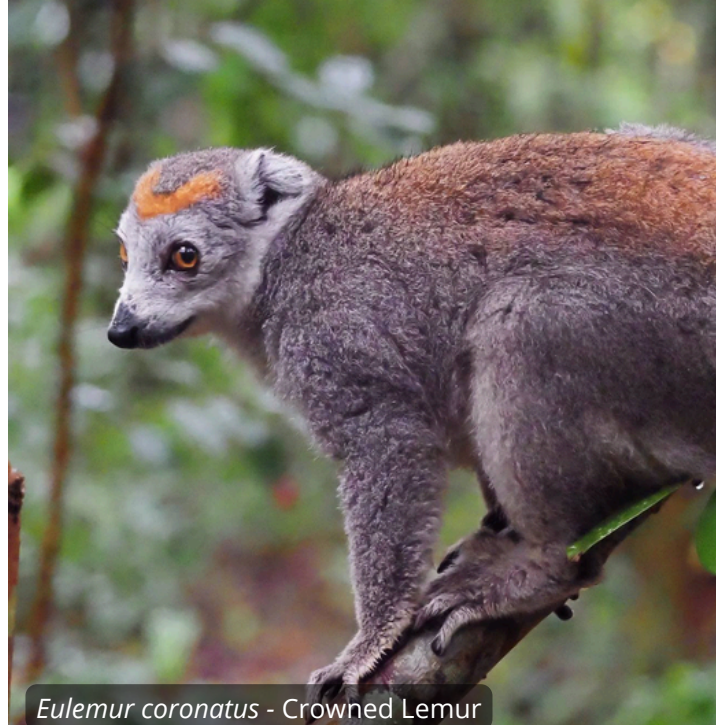
Avahi laniger - Eastern woolly lemur



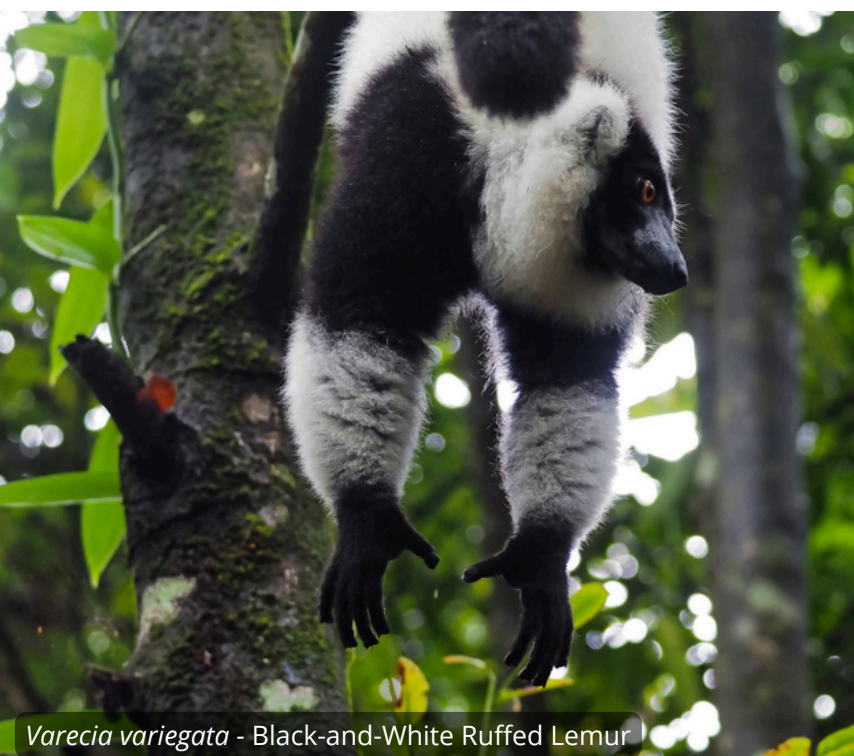
Hybrid *E. coronatus* x *E. fulvus*



Eulemur rubriventer - The red-bellied lemur



Eulemur coronatus - Crowned Lemur



Varecia variegata - Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur



Calumma crypticum - Cryptic Chameleon



Phelsuma grandis - Madagascar Giant Day Gecko



Madagascarophis colubrinus
- Madagascar Cat-eyed Snake



Langaha madagascariensis - Madagascar Leaf-nosed Snake



Avahi laniger - Eastern Woolly Lemur



Eulemur coronatus x *macaco* hybrid
- Crowned lemur x Black lemur hybrid



Corvus albus - Pied Crow



Pelomedusa subrufa - Marsh Terrapin



Phelsuma hielscheri - Hielscher's Day Gecko



Agapornis canus - Grey-headed Lovebird



Oplurus cyclurus - Malagasy Swift



Geckolepis maculata - Spotted Fish-Scale Gecko



Daubentonia madagascariensis - Aye-aye



Phelsuma guttata - Spotted Day Gecko



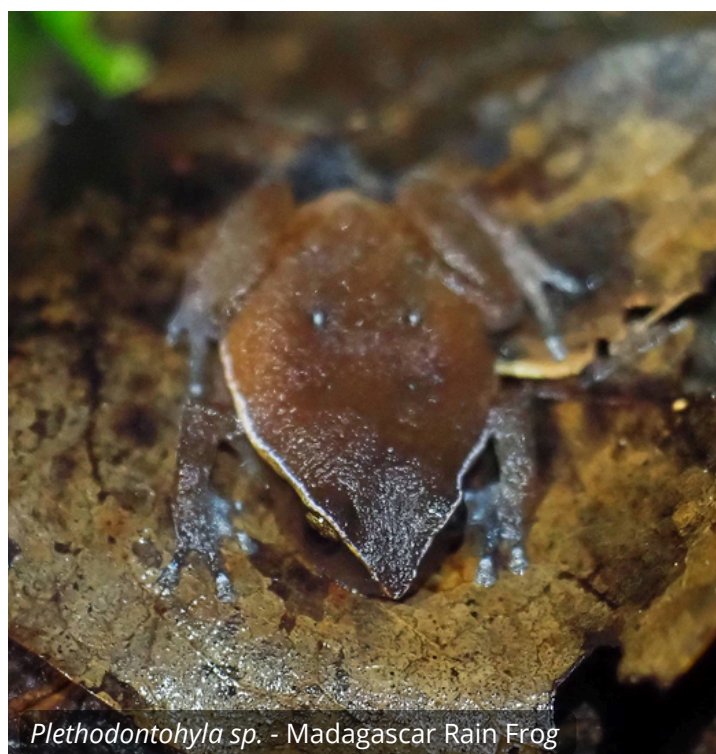
Heterixalus sp. - Reed Frog



Phelsuma lineata - Lined Day Gecko



Guibemantis liber - Yellow-bellied Madagascar Frog



Plethodontohyla sp. - Madagascar Rain Frog



Mimophis mahfalensis - Malagasy Common Snake



Boophis viridis - Green Bright-eyed Frog

List of Mammals

<i>Avahi laniger</i>	Eastern Woolly Lemur	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Daubentonia madagascariensis</i>	Aye-aye	Palmarium
<i>Eulemur coronatus</i>	Crowned Lemur	Palmarium
<i>Eulemur coronatus</i> × <i>Eulemur fulvus</i>	Crowned Lemur × Common Brown Lemur (hybrid)	Palmarium
<i>Eulemur coronatus</i> × <i>Eulemur macaco</i>	Crowned Lemur × Black Lemur (hybrid)	Palmarium
<i>Eulemur fulvus</i>	Common Brown Lemur	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Eulemur macaco</i>	Black Lemur	Palmarium
<i>Eulemur rubriventer</i>	Red-bellied Lemur	Andasibe
<i>Eulemur rufifrons</i>	Red-fronted Lemur	Morondava
<i>Hapalemur aureus</i>	Golden Bamboo Lemur	Ranomafana
<i>Hapalemur griseus</i>	Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur	Andasibe
<i>Cheirogaleus sp.</i>	Dwarf Lemur	Ranomafana
<i>Indri indri</i>	Indri	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Microcebus lehilahytsara</i>	Goodman’s Mouse Lemur	Andasibe
<i>Microcebus murinus</i>	Gray Mouse Lemur	Morondava
<i>Microcebus rufus</i>	Brown Mouse Lemur	Ranomafana
<i>Propithecus diadema</i>	Diademed Sifaka	Andasibe
<i>Propithecus edwardsi</i>	Milne-Edwards’ Sifaka	Ranomafana
<i>Propithecus verreauxi</i>	Verreaux’s Sifaka	Morondava
<i>Varecia variegata</i>	Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur	Palmarium

List of Birds

<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common Myna	Morondava
<i>Agapornis canus</i>	Grey-headed Lovebird	Ambositra
<i>Ardea ibis</i> (syn. <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>)	Cattle Egret	Morondava
<i>Bernieria madagascariensis</i>	Long-billed Bernieria	Andasibe
<i>Caprimulgus madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Nightjar	Morondava
<i>Copsychus albospectularis</i>	Madagascar Magpie-Robin	Andasibe, Ranomafana
<i>Corvus albus</i>	Pied Crow	Morondava
<i>Corythornis madagascariensis</i>	Malagasy Kingfisher	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Coua caerulea</i>	Blue Coua	Andasibe
<i>Coua gigas</i>	Giant Coua	Morondava
<i>Dicrurus forficatus</i>	Crested Drongo	Morondava
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret	Morondava
<i>Foudia madagascariensis</i>	Red Fody	Morondava
<i>Merops superciliosus</i>	Olive Bee-eater	Morondava
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite	Morondava, Ranomafana
<i>Motacilla flaviventris</i>	Madagascar Wagtail	Andasibe, Ranomafana
<i>Neomixis tenella</i>	Common Jery	Ranomafana
<i>Oena capensis</i>	Namaqua Dove	Morondava
<i>Philepitta castanea</i>	Velvet Asity	Ranomafana
<i>Tachypiza francesiae</i>	Frances's Sparrowhawk	Palmarium, Andasibe, Ranomafana
<i>Terpsiphone mutata</i>	Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher	Morondava, Ranomafana, Andasibe
<i>Vanga curvirostris</i>	Hook-billed Vanga	Andasibe

List of Reptiles

<i>Brookesia sp.</i>	Leaf Chameleon	Palmarium
<i>Brookesia superciliaris</i>	Superciliaried Leaf Chameleon	Andasibe
<i>Calumma brevicorne</i>	Short-horned Chameleon	Andasibe
<i>Calumma crypticum</i>	Cryptic Chameleon	Ranomafana
<i>Calumma emelinae</i>	Emeline's Chameleon	Andasibe
<i>Calumma fallax</i>	False Chameleon	Ranomafana
<i>Calumma glawi</i>	Glaw's Chameleon	Ranomafana
<i>Calumma nasutum</i>	Nose-horned Chameleon	Andasibe
<i>Calumma oshaughnessyi</i>	O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	Ranomafana
<i>Calumma parsonii</i>	Parson's Chameleon	Palmarium, Arboretum Ranomafana, Andasibe
<i>Crocodylus niloticus</i>	Nile Crocodile	Palmarium
<i>Ebenavia boettgeri</i>	Boettger's Clawless Gecko	Palmarium, Ranomafana
<i>Furcifer oustaleti</i>	Oustalet's Chameleon	Morondava
<i>Furcifer pardalis</i>	Panther Chameleon	Palmarium, Andasibe, Manambato
<i>Geckolepis maculata</i>	Spotted Fish-Scale Gecko	Palmarium
<i>Gehyra mutilata</i>	Stump-toed Gecko	Andasibe
<i>Hemidactylus mercatorius</i>	Mercator's House Gecko	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Hemidactylus sp.</i>	House Gecko	Morondava

List of Reptiles

<i>Pelomedusa subrufa</i>	Marsh Terrapin	Morondava
<i>Phelsuma grandis</i>	Madagascar Giant Day Gecko	Palmarium
<i>Phelsuma guttata</i>	Spotted Day Gecko	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Phelsuma hielscheri</i>	Hielscher's Day Gecko	Morondava
<i>Phelsuma laticauda</i>	Gold Dust Day Gecko	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Phelsuma lineata</i>	Lined Day Gecko	Palmarium, Ranomafana, Andasibe
<i>Phelsuma mutabilis</i>	Variable Day Gecko	Morondava
<i>Phelsuma quadriocellata</i>	Peacock Day Gecko	Ranomafana
<i>Phelsuma ravenala</i>	Traveller's Tree Gecko	Manambato
<i>Pseudoxyrhopus tritaeniatus</i>	Three-striped False Snake	Andasibe
<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Tree Boa	Ranomafana
<i>Sanzinia volontany</i>	Yellow Madagascar Tree Boa	Morondava
<i>Trachylepis elegans</i>	Elegant Skink	Morondava
<i>Uroplatus phantasticus</i>	Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko	Andasibe, Ranomafana
<i>Uroplatus sikorae</i>	Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko (Sikora's)	Andasibe
<i>Zonosaurus karsteni</i>	Karsten's Girdled Lizard	Morondava

List of Amphibians

<i>Aglyptodactylus madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Jumping Frog	Andasibe
<i>Boophis doulioti</i>	Douliot's Bright-eyed Frog	Morondava
<i>Boophis guibei</i>	Guibe's Bright-eyed Frog	Andasibe
<i>Boophis madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog	Andasibe, Ranomafana
<i>Boophis pyrrhus</i>	Red Bright-eyed Frog	Andasibe
<i>Boophis tephraeomystax</i>	Mascarene Bright-eyed Frog	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Boophis viridis</i>	Green Bright-eyed Frog	Andasibe
<i>Gephyromantis sp.</i>	Madagascar Frog	Ranomafana
<i>Guibemantis liber</i>	Yellow-bellied Madagascar Frog	Andasibe
<i>Guibemantis pulcher</i>	Beautiful Madagascar Frog	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Heterixalus madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar Reed Frog	Palmarium, Andasibe
<i>Heterixalus sp.</i>	Reed Frog	Ranomafana
<i>Mantidactylus femoralis</i>	Brown Stream Frog	Andasibe
<i>Mantidactylus opiparis</i>	Large-stream Madagascar Frog	Andasibe
<i>Plethodontohyla sp.</i>	Madagascar Rain Frog	Andasibe
<i>Ptychadena mascareniensis</i>	Mascarene Grass Frog	Morondava
<i>Spinomantis sp.</i>	Madagascar Climbing Frog	Andasibe