



BIRDING TOUR MADAGASCAR: THE REMOTE NORTH

19 - 28 SEPTEMBER 2024

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Slender-billed Flufftail, one of the many rare and range-restricted species that we'll be on the lookout for.

Itinerary (10 days/9 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Antananarivo (Tana)

You will arrive at Ivato International Airport, serving Antananarivo (usually abbreviated to Tana), the capital of Madagascar, and transfer to your hotel close to the airport. We might already see some common birds such as **Red Fody** and **Madagascar Wagtail** around the hotel grounds.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux Hotel, Antananarivo

Day 2. Lake Tsarasoatra (time-permitting), flight to Mahajanga

Today we will fly to the town of Mahajanga (Majunga) in the northwest of Madagascar on the Betsiboka Delta. If time allows before our flight departs, we will make an early visit to Lake Tsarasoatra. This small lake near Tana is a Ramsar Site and plays a pivotal role for 14 threatened waterbird species and subspecies that are endemic to Madagascar. Here we hope to get acquainted (or more likely re-acquainted, since many of the folks joining this remote Madagascar trip will already have visited Madagascar before and are now only seeking “off the beaten track” species) with many of Madagascar’s more common birds, such as **White-throated Rail** and **Humblot’s Heron**, along with **Malagasy Pond Heron**, which we usually find in very small numbers amid the heronry consisting mainly, of **Squacco Heron**.



White-throated Rail is possible at Lake Tsarasoatra.

After arrival in Mahajanga a stroll along the beach adjacent to our hotel might yield a number of shorebirds.

Overnight: Sunny Hotel, Mahajanga

Day 3. Transfer to Bealanana

Today's drive to Bealanana will take the full day. En route, however, we will briefly pass through Ankarafantsika National Park, where we might encounter **Broad-billed Roller**, **White-headed Vanga**, **Madagascar Hoopoe**, **Crested Drongo**, and arguably the most unique of the vangas, **Sickle-billed Vanga**. We plan to stop at Antsohihy for lunch and will arrive at Bealanana in the evening.

Overnight: Guest house in Bealanana



The fascinating Sickle-billed Vanga.

Day 4. Bealanana to Bemanevika

We will leave after breakfast, driving toward the east coast, and should arrive in Bemanevika in the late morning. En route we will be aware of roadside birds like **Olive Bee-eater**, **Malagasy Kestrel**, **Madagascar Cisticola**, and perhaps the occasional **Madagascar Buzzard**.

Bemanevika is one of three protected areas in Madagascar's Protected Areas System (SAPM – Système des Aires Protégées de Madagascar), comprising a unique mosaic of wetlands, marshlands, grasslands, and rainforest fragments and being home to two of Madagascar's most threatened endemics, **Madagascar Pochar**, the world's rarest duck, formerly thought to be extinct in the wild, only rediscovered in 2006, and now classified as Critically Endangered

(IUCN), and the Endangered (IUCN) **Madagascar Serpent Eagle**, as well as a good number of other threatened and endemic species.

On our arrival, an eager camp staff will welcome us to the pristine environment that they and the Peregrine Fund maintain and conduct research in, which will be our base for the next three nights.

After setting up camp we will start exploring the different habitats of this exciting place and will be looking for **White-throated Rail**, **Madagascar Lark**, and other species. On one of the small lakes we'll scan for **Meller's Duck** and **Malagasy Kingfisher**, and in the forested area we set out to seek one of the main targets of this trip, **Red Owl**, by far the most uncommon of the owls the island has to offer, and one which very few world birders have laid eyes upon.

Overnight: Camping, Bemanevika



*The mega rare **Red Owl** will hopefully be seen on this tour (photo Alan van Norman).*

Days 5 – 6. Bemanevika

We will have two full days to search for the very special birds this area has to offer. Our main targets, of course, are the sought-after **Madagascar Pochard**, **Madagascar Serpent Eagle**, **Red Owl**, and **Slender-billed Flufftail**, and there is an excellent chance that during these two days we will be able to lay eyes on all – or most – of them.

In addition, there will be many other fascinating species. In the grasslands and nearby wooded areas we will be on the lookout for **Malagasy Harrier**, **Madagascar Cuckoo**, **Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk**, **Lesser Vasa Parrot**, **Madagascar Lark**, **Mascarene Martin**, **Malagasy Kestrel**, and **Olive Bee-eater**, in the wetlands and adjacent habitats we will keep our eyes open for **Madagascar Partridge**, **Grey Emutail**, **Madagascar Harrier-Hawk**, **Blue Coua**, **Malagasy Black Swift**, and **Malagasy White-eye**, while marshy areas could yield **Madagascar Flufftail**.

At the “Madagascan Pochard Lake” we could find **Madagascar Grebe**, **Madagascar Swamp Warbler**, and **Madagascar Rail**, and night outings will provide opportunities for **Madagascar Nightjar**, **Rainforest Scops Owl**, and **Madagascar Owl**.

Overnight: Camping, Bemanevika



The tiny Rainforest Scops Owl.

Day 7. Bemanevika to Antsohihy

Today we start our return voyage, driving back west for an overnight stop in Antsohihy while birding en route. We will stop for a picnic lunch.

Overnight: Hotel in Antsohihy

Day 8. Antsohihy to Mahajanga

Today we will transfer from Antsohihy to Mahajanga. On the way we'll have lunch in Ankarafantsika National Park, where 129 species of birds have been recorded, more than half of

Duration:	10 days
Limit:	4 – 8
Dates:	19 – 28 September 2024 19 – 28 September 2025
Start:	Antananarivo (Tana)
End:	Antananarivo (Tana)
Price:	We encourage a group of at least 8 people to book this tour as the logistics are pricey for smaller groups – please ask us for prices if you have a group wishing to do this tour.

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Bottled water throughout the tour
Return flight Tana/Mahajanga (Majunga)/Tana

Price excludes:

International flights
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts
Drinks
Laundry
Personal insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))