

Madagascar Fauna Group

Monthly from Madagascar



September 2004

by Gareth Kett

The dry season is well and truly upon us now - although in the Tamatave, in the east of Madagascar, 'dry' tends to mean 'less wet than normal'. So the road to Ivoloina is frequently dusty, and there's no need to worry about too many leeches at Betampona!

Betampona Reserve

The province director of the 'Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées' (ANGAP), Christain Rasolofomanana, and the ANGAP Research Coordinator, Juliette Randriamanarivo, visited Betampona for the first time with Dr Karen Freeman, Bernard lambana and myself of the MFG and a team of four ANGAP agents . The visit was in line with MFG's initiative to work more closely with Malagasy government bodies.

Saturday classes for children aged 10-12 are being run for the first time ever at Ambodriana, a village about 8km from Betampona. These classes have been organized, funded and run by MFG following the success of the Saturday classes at Ivoloina, which have markedly increased examination pass rates attained by local children.



Karen, Bernard, and Celestin with the ANGAP agents

The five remaining **black and white ruffed lemurs** (*Varecia variegata variegata*) from the lemur releases of 1997, 1998, and 2001 have all been seen and are doing well. Farah's group

has expanded to 5 members. This is the time of year that most baby lemurs are born and often black and white ruffed lemur group sizes increase in preparation for the arrival of the babies.



George proving to be a natural in front of the camera Ivoloina Parc Zoologique

Late in the month a film team from France's "Strawberry Films" **filmed a documentary** at Betampona, focusing on local reforestation training activities, (which were organised by the Betampona team), and the reserve's lemurs, interviewing Celestin and Jean-Noel. On returning from Betampona they filmed the zoo at Ivoloina, interviewing George and Karen.

Karen's **snail shell collection** initiative has yielded more exciting results. The discovery of the *Ampelita gaudens* shells has proven to be a southern range extension for the species. The discovery of *Tropidophora soulaiana* at Betampona earlier in the year was also a species southern range extension.

Ivoloina Parc Zoologique

Research into the **bird ecology** of Ivoloina has started. Lalatahiana Davy Randriatavy ('Lala' for short!), who has previously studied plant regeneration and lemur diets at Betampona, and assisted Amanda Hildt (University of Virginia) with her plant regeneration project at Betampona in August, has begun a month-long study of bird associations with flora species at Ivoloina. The findings of Lala's work, future studies and Ivoloina wildlife inventories will be used to help develop wildlife management objectives for the 332ha of forest within the Ivoloina park.



Fantastic news! We've had the season's first addition to the lemur population. One of our free-ranging Red-bellied lemurs (*Eulemur rubriventer*) has given birth to a healthy baby. Mother and infant are both in the best of health.

New! A welcome arch has been completed at the Park entrance. The road along the river to Ivoloina is fairly long, and rough due to heavy truck usage, so we felt it important that visitors know that they've arrived and feel welcome. The Park is currently

They never seem willing to look at the same time.

undergoing a general face-lift. In addition to the entrance arch, the forest trails, zoo paths, animal cages and interpretive facilities are all being improved. Madagascar is keen to embrace the English language, and we're doing our bit by adding English wording to the Malagasy and French information already available.



Environmental Education Center extension nears completion

Staff Member of the Month

Chryjocelyne Raharivololona Zafilaza

Joselyne has recently been officially appointed as MFG's "National Representative". Quiet, yet assertive, Joselyne combines political and environmental knowledge with limitless patience, regularly making the long trip to Tana to facilitate MFG activities.

She is popular amongst Tamatave officials and invaluable in MFG's efforts to establish firm working relationships with local government bodies. In addition she is doing a great job in promoting Park Ivoloina as Tamatave's key attraction for local, national and international visitors.

Between 1990 and 1999 Joselyne undertook professional training in environmental, conservation and communication related topics, gaining four years work experience with the Department Water and Forests in Tamatave, before joining MFG as a secretary in 1999. She soon became responsible for personnel and communications, before being promoted to Office Manager in 2003. Joselyne lives in Tamatave with her two young nephews.



The New Welcome Arch

The new school year is upon us and so Saturday classes have resumed at the **Environmental Education Center** (EEC). This year Randria, Onesime and Mr Gimod are taking classes for 103 children following the heart-breaking task of whittling numbers down from 240 hopefuls, based upon examination results.

We are unable to take any more children due to the availability of space. The somewhat cramped learning environment will soon be relieved with the completion of the education center extension.

