Madagascar 2011

During the summer of 2011 (24th June to 4th August), we visited North-West Madagascar largely to obtain data; we spent six weeks collecting and analysing data for our dissertations which range from the impact of forest fires to the landscape ecology of birds. Most of this time was spent in a village called Mariarano, with one week spent in a section of forest near a village called Matsedroy. Living in very basic conditions, with limited electricity and no running water, we were given the opportunity to not only collect our data but to meet new people, discover a completely different culture and take in the sights of a beautiful yet under threat forest region where little is known about the diverse species living here.

Ryan Anderton:

“I gained and improved valuable skills during my time in Madagascar – my experience of the expedition has encouraged me to continue to travel in the future. By meeting new people and adapting to a new environment I feel I have learnt important lessons on problem solving and team leadership. I also learnt a lot about the Malagasy culture by befriending and talking to the local villagers in Mariarano. I feel that the expedition to Madagascar was invaluable to my dissertation research as not only have I collected more than adequate data, I was able to improve planning and time management skills as I had to regularly organise day trips to forest fragments some distance away from base camp. This expedition has not only provided me with excellent data and the chance to gain valuable skills but has given me the opportunity to experience a new culture so diverse from ours.”
Harry Briggs: “Madagascar has played a central role in my dissertation providing quality data over the six week period. Throughout the expedition I worked with expert herpetologists as well as Dr. Long from Oxford University – their guidance was vital in constructing the species distribution models I required for my dissertation. The expedition also gave an opportunity to visit a region of the world that under any other circumstances would prove difficult to reach; a region of the world considered biodiversity rich and heavily under threat from anthropogenic impacts, namely deforestation. As well as giving me access to fantastic resources and expert advice, visiting Madagascar allowed me to meet Malagasy people, some of which have a similar academic background and have given me insight into careers after university in this field of work.”

Jacqui Bamforth: “Considering I have never been outside Europe before, or away from my family for more than two weeks, the expedition to Madagascar was certainly a test – since going on it I cannot wait to experience the rest of the world when I finish my course as travelling is such an important way to learn new cultures, improve employable skills and understand your place in an increasingly interconnected global society. I was able to collect excellent data for my dissertation on Madagascar’s forest birds of the North-West region; the bird species here are under serious threat yet relatively little is known about their habitat preferences and adaptability to a changing environment. The expedition also gave me
access to ornithologists and other important resources for my literary review section of my dissertation. I feel the experience was invaluable.”

Max Marcheselli:

“My main aim for the expedition to Madagascar was to gather substantial data for my dissertation on the distribution of Lemurs, but in reality I achieved much more than this. Living in very basic conditions in a remote Malagasy village allowed me to experience a completely different culture and get to know villagers who often had no knowledge of the wider world. After learning much from local guides and several experts on the flora and fauna of the area I was regularly given the opportunity to pass this onto the many secondary school groups which visited throughout the expedition during data collection walks. The expedition to Madagascar gave me the prospect of improving skills such as time management and developing new ones by working with statistical software. Madagascar is one of the world’s greatest biodiversity hotspots and we were constantly surrounded by species that are only found in North-West Madagascar – seeing such an environment reminded me why it is so important to conserve it.”
Madagascar Bee-eater.

Madagascar Fish Eagle – only 100 breeding pairs left.

Coquerel’s Sifaka Lemur with baby (approx. 2 weeks old).

Ebanai – tiny!