

# Madagascar for Real



Heterixalis frog at Marojejy National Park. (David Parks photo)

Ancestors of some modern plants and animals flourished on Madagascar before it became isolated. Others arrived on rare occasions over many millions of years. Most recently, people have introduced foreign plants and animals and wiped out some of the native ones.

The earliest known ancestor of modern frogs lived in Madagascar 250 million years ago.



Mantella laevigata from hilltop rainforest on Nosy Mangabe Reserve. (David Parks photo)

The Mantella frogs of Madagascar show striking convergence with the poison arrow frogs (Dendrobatidae) of the New World tropics in habits and appearance. This gaudy frog's bright yellow back, blue spots and coppery flecks may be a fair warning of danger since members of this group carry toxic alkaloids in their skin which they accumulate from insect prey.