

Madagascar for Real



Caterpillar from dry tropical forest in Ankarafantsika National Park. (David Parks photo)

When disturbed this caterpillar takes this defensive pose. It is difficult to avoid seeing the markings on its body as eyes, and these presumably startle and mislead potential predators.

Barren secondary grassland is a common feature of the central highlands which have been devastated by forest clearing and centuries of annual burning for cattle pasture. These practices continue to encroach on the dry tropical forest homes of creatures like this in the west of Madagascar.



Caterpillar at the Nosy Mangabe Reserve. (David Parks photo)

Many caterpillars in Madagascar are decorated with elaborate spines that presumably help to deter predators. Caterpillar spines are sometimes loaded with irritants or toxins, and brushing against them can be quite painful.