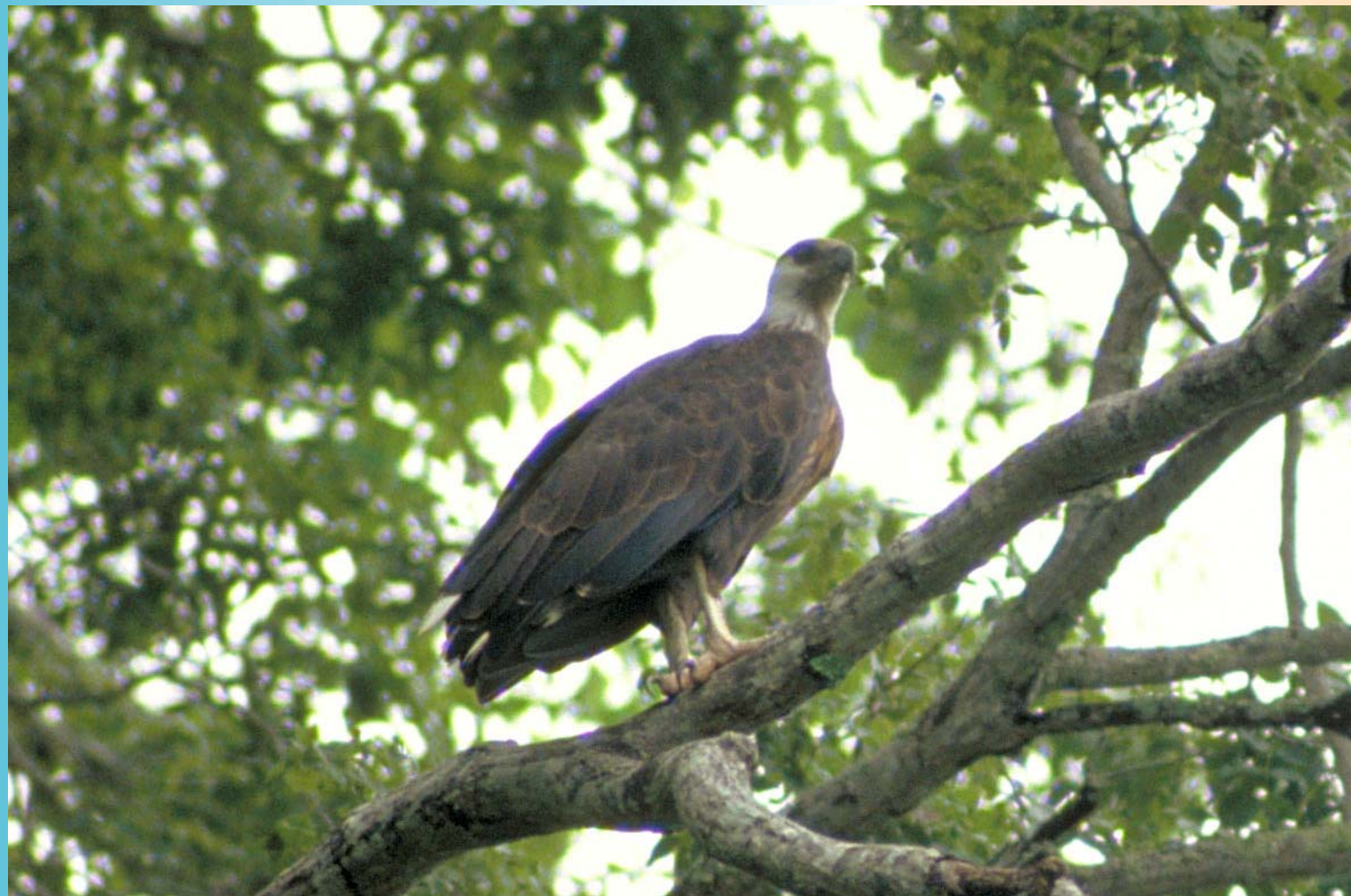


# Madagascar for Real

For its size and tropical location, Madagascar has a limited resident bird fauna of about 250 species, but half of these are found nowhere else. There are even five endemic families of birds. This is an amazingly high level of endemism



Madagascar Fish Eagle, *Haliaeetus vociferoides*, Ankarafantsika National Park (Larry Barnes photo)

considering that birds could fly between Africa and Madagascar in as little as 200 miles. Another endemic family, the flightless giant elephant birds, became extinct within the last few hundred years. Shell fragments of their two-gallon-size eggs still litter the ground in some areas. The Madagascar Fish Eagle (at left) is one of the world's rarest birds of prey, with a total population of about 100 pairs. This eagle is a close relative of the American Bald Eagle

Below:

A male Paradise Flycatcher sleeping above a trail.



Paradise Flycatcher, *Terpsiphone mutata*, Nosy Mangabe Reserve (David Parks photo)



Madagascar Kestrels, *Falco newtoni*, Antananarivo. (Larry Barnes photo)

Fledgling Madagascar Kestrels were in a vent pipe at our hotel in Antananarivo. This falcon is one of the few species of endemic wildlife becoming more common and widespread in response to human activities. The Madagascar Kestrel is closely related to the similar American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*).



Coquerel's Coua, *Coua coquereli*, at Ankarafantsika National Park. (Larry Barnes photo)

Madagascar's nine species of Couas constitute a unique subfamily of cuckoos found only in Madagascar. Coquerel's Coua (above) inhabits dry forest while the Blue Coua (right) is a rainforest species.



Blue Coua, *Coua caerulea*, Marojejy National Park. (David Parks photo)