

Madagascar for Real



Day Gecko, *Phelsuma madagascariensis*, from dry tropical forest in a canyon in the Ankarana Plateau (David Parks photo).

The geckoes of Madagascar (63 species, of which 53 are endemic) include some of the most cryptic and some of the most flamboyant organisms to be found anywhere. The gaudiest of the large Day Geckoes is reputed to be this one from the Ankarana Reserve. Day Geckoes are usually brightly colored and, as the name implies, active during daylight hours, so they are easy to see.



Leaf-tailed Gecko, *Uroplatus fimbriatus*, at the Nosy Mangabe Reserve (David Parks photo).

The large Leaf-tailed Gecko (ten inches long) is almost invisible with a color pattern matching the bark of the tree it rests on. Pressing its body fringes to the bark, it casts no shadow and is amazingly difficult to see. They rest head-down with their eyes open. When disturbed they gape widely, exposing a bright red mouth lining.