

fancy dress PARTY

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICK GARBUTT



FURCIFER CAMPANI

This small, jewel-like species is found only in the central highlands of Madagascar and appears to be restricted to higher altitude localities, such as the Ankaratra and Andringitra massifs where it inhabits bushes and grass tussocks. It is a close relative of, and similar in appearance to, the much more widespread and common jewel chameleon *Furcifer lateralis*.

If you have fondness for chameleons, Madagascar is a treasure trove. At least 66 species – about half of those known to the world – are unique to the island and new ones are being discovered all the time. Contrary to popular belief, chameleons can't change their colours to match their background, but they do use colour as the language of love and defence. They also come in all shapes and sizes: some measure over half a metre; others are barely longer than a fingernail and then there are those whose noses would put Pinocchio to shame, as this portfolio from Nick Garbutt shows to brilliant effect. ▶



PARSON'S CHAMELEON
CALUMMA PARSONII

Arguably the largest and most impressive of all Madagascar's chameleons, Parson's chameleon is a highly variable species that can reach a total length of around 70 centimetres. It is found in the humid rainforests of the east and only the males develop nasal horns.



SHORTHORNED CHAMELEON
CALUMMA BREVICORNIS

This is one of the most readily seen species in the eastern rainforests and is not generally renowned for its coloration as most individuals are a combination of brown, grey and cream. This large male is a notable exception and was photographed in the rainforests of Ranomafana National Park.



PARSON'S CHAMELEON
CALUMMA PARSONII

The chameleon's ability to catch food with its rocket-launcher tongue is one of its unique traits. Large species like the Parson's chameleon are capable of catching small vertebrates, although they are primarily insectivorous. Their tongues are capable of reaching the equivalent length of the body plus tail, which in some individuals means over 60 centimetres.

PAGE 47 *CALUMMA MALTHE*

A close relative of the short-horned chameleon, this species is often more spectacularly patterned with very distinctive bright green areas on its casque and a longer nasal horn. Although there are areas where the distributions of the two species overlap, for instance in Mantadia National Park, *C. malthe* is generally associated with areas of higher altitude, such as Marojejy National Park.



STUMPTAILED CHAMELEON
BROOKESIA SUPERCILIARIS

Stump-tailed chameleons belong to a different subfamily to the true chameleons (Brookesinae) and while they possess the majority of chameleon hallmarks – independently swivelling eyes, projectile tongue, fused toes – they do not have a truly prehensile tail. They spend most of their time hunting for ants in the leaf-litter on the forest floor and climb into low vegetation to sleep at night.



PYGMY STUMPTAILED CHAMELEON
BROOKESIA MINIMA

This is one of the smallest reptiles in the world. It lives in the Lilliputian world of tiny shrubs and dead leaves on the rainforest floor.



LANCE-NOSED CHAMELEON
CALUMMA GALLUS

Few chameleons are more bizarre in appearance than the diminutive lance-nosed chameleon. This rarely seen species is only known from a handful of localities in the lowland rainforests of the east. It is assumed that males use their spectacular horn to joust against one another when competing for females.