

# A Native's Perspective on the Origin, Evolution and Conservation of Madagascar Biodiversity

<b>Date</b>	<b>25 May (Thu.)</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>16:00 (UTC+8)</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>3N01</b>



The island of Madagascar is known as a mega biodiversity country with many species not found anywhere else in the world, including the iconic primate group the Lemurs, the unique Baobab trees. The island is also referred to as a living laboratory for studying speciation owing to its long isolation that started about 80 million years ago, and the subsequent diversification of its taxa. Unfortunately, Madagascar is one of the world's poorest countries and it is facing many conservation challenges due to both historical and contemporary factors. Many efforts have been deployed by foreign and national entities to help study and protect Madagascar's unique biodiversity. However, a lot still remains to be done to achieve long-term goals. Overall, Madagascar represents an interesting case study to gain insights into the multifaceted challenges that mega biodiversity countries are facing as well as the opportunities that these countries present to both conservationists and the scientific community.

Dr. Rakotoarisoa is a broadly trained biologist and educator. He grew up in his native country of Madagascar before immigrating to the US to pursue his graduate studies. He received his PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Yale University and the M.Sc. in Biology from Illinois State University with an emphasis on Conservation Biology. Dr. Rakotoarisoa was a recipient of the Fulbright Scholar awards. His research interests lie in the broad area of biodiversity research and conservation with a focus on the biodiversity of Madagascar. Examples of his work include the investigation of natural history and ecology of endemic birds and the effects of forest fragmentation on these taxa. He has used molecular tools to investigate the phylogeography, phylogeny, and species boundaries of endemic taxa and tested historical biogeographic hypotheses using genetic data. One of Dr. Rakotoarisoa's professional goals is to build research skills in ecology and evolutionary biology in Madagascar, and to advocate for the incorporation of perspectives from these fields to enhance biodiversity research and conservation locally.