



## The Golden Mantella Handbook



Plate 4: Like much of Madagascar, prime golden mantella habitat here in Andasibe is under pressure from deforestation  
(photo Dr. Adam Britton)

further degrade those pure species, some of which occupy areas no greater than a single football pitch, by hybridisation poses a very real threat that should be avoided by all serious hobbyists.

### Habitat and Climate

Golden mantellas occur predominantly in the moist, humid and temperate, sometimes cool *Pandanus* swamps around Andasibe (see Plate 5) where they can, at certain times of the year, be locally abundant (see Plate 6). Here the preferred micro-habitat is mossy or grassy tussocks or mounds of forest debris in the midst of shallow, swampy water, the leafy forest floors where there are natural

clearings and on the edges of streams and brooks. *Mantella aurantiaca* is classed as an 'upland' species in the sense that it occurs around 900m in altitude. This term is an important consideration where captive husbandry is concerned. In upland this means that this species is comfortable with what we would class as room temperature or around 68°F. (20°C.) in the Northern Hemisphere. In fact, the actual climate the mantella is exposed to during its active period is not unlike that of the conditions experienced directly after a summertime thunderstorm in the Northern Hemisphere – cool and humid. Of course temperatures can rise well above this level but because the mantellas close proximity to cooler swamp or stream waters and the rather leafy, shaded habitat, in real terms, temperatures of 80 – 85°F. experienced in the sun are rarely experienced in the undergrowth. On the other hand, lower temperatures associated with the Madagascan upland winters are accompanied by drier conditions and during this time *Mantella aurantiaca* will enter a phase of dormancy or semi-dormancy during which time its feeding, reproductive and general mobility will either become reduced or cease completely when it will depend mainly on fat reserves. This may also explain why upland

