

ITINERARY
THAILAND

January 12-February 2, 2019



The gorgeous Blue Pitta is found in lowland forests across much of Thailand, but they can be difficult to see. We've had good luck on recent tours, using a photography blind at Khao Yai National Park. Photograph by guide Dave Stejskal.

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Thailand tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Think about a Great Hornbill; then put its four-foot length in the back of your mind for a while. Now let us introduce Thailand. A country the size of France, Thailand is located in the heart of Southeast Asia, with borders on Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia; it is close enough to China and Vietnam to be within foraging range for large needletail swifts. While one or two of these neighboring countries might not be ideal places for tourists to visit yet, Thailand is. Its central, crossroads location is reflected in its bird life, which includes Indo-Chinese, Himalayan, and Sundaic elements, as well as many widespread species typical of the Oriental (Indo-Malayan) faunal region.

From a North American perspective, Thailand's bird families are a mixture of the familiar, the superficially familiar, and the wonderfully different and bizarre (you can let that Great Hornbill with its huge, casqued bill return to the front of your

mind for a while). “Familiar” includes most waterbirds such as herons, waterfowl, and shorebirds, and a few landbirds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, treecreepers, pipits, swallows, and thrushes, although most of the species are different (Common Greenshank for Greater Yellowlegs, Yellow Bittern for Least Bittern, etc.). “Superficially familiar” are numerous ecological counterparts, such as Old World flycatchers and Old World warblers for tyrant flycatchers and wood warblers. However, the Old World warblers are mostly dull and, well, rather like tyrant flycatchers in the challenges presented, while many of the flycatchers are more like wood warblers in color intensity, including the vivid niltavas and blue-flycatchers.

As for the “wonderfully different and bizarre,” these are many: humongous hornbills with wingbeats that sound like an oncoming locomotive; barbets that should provide the basis for any soundtrack of exotic jungle sounds; the gaudy broadbills; aerodynamic treeswifts that perch on snags and wires; brilliant pittas that hide so well; strangely shaped and exotically colored woodpeckers; forest-loving kingfishers; and drongos with racket tails. Even the prosaic in Europe isn’t prosaic if you haven’t been to Europe—Doi Inthanon is a fun place to see your lifer Eurasian Jay or Eurasian Hoopoe.

Just as many of us will be escaping a northern winter, most of the breeding species of Siberia and temperate China head south for warmer winters. On a couple of occasions during this tour, we will seek wintering waterbirds ranging from Chinese Pond-Heron to Broad-billed Sandpiper. On a daily basis we will see that Thailand’s marshes, fields, woods, and forests are alive with northern passerines. Although they don’t count for your North America list, one visit to Thailand in winter is like a lifetime on Attu and St. Lawrence (which don’t have the Great Hornbills you are keeping in the back of your mind). We have a good chance of seeing such stars (and this is just a partial list) as Red-rumped Swallow, Olive-backed Pipit, Citrine and Gray wagtails, Siberian Rubythroat, Bluethroat, Red-flanked Bluetail, Siberian Blue Robin, Blue Rock-Thrush, Eyebrowed Thrush, Taiga (Red-throated) Flycatcher, Brown Shrike, Little Bunting, and the host of migrant Old World warblers that will provide constant pleasure and challenge (some twenty species of migrant and resident *Phylloscopus* are known from Thailand). Occasional hard winters farther north push even more thrushes, buntings, and others into northern Thailand.

Thailand’s wealth of bird life (just north of 1000 species) should be a bit daunting, but help exists: *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand* by Boonsong Lekagul and Phil Round is a modern field guide richly illustrated by Mongkol Wongkalasin and Kamol Komophalin. In addition to field marks and range maps, this book deals with the habitat and status of the birds in Thailand. But it is a bit dated and doesn’t deal with a number of species that have been split or elevated to full-species status since its publication. In conjunction with the more recently published *Birds of Thailand* by Craig Robson, studying the birds of Thailand is pure pleasure. Either of these texts will serve nicely in the field (we recommend the latter, though).



The Siberian Rubythroat is a common winter migrant in Thailand. Photograph by guide Dave Stejskal.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: The perfect itinerary is an impossibility, but we are pleased with this survey of Thailand, originally designed (and improved a little yearly) by Thai ornithologist and birder Uthai Treesucon, who will be co-leading the tour along with Field Guides’ Jay VanderGaast. In a three-week period, we will visit central and northern Thailand, covering forests from near sea level to the top of Thailand’s highest mountain, as well as a mixture of marshes and open areas. With three- or four-night stays at three prime birding locations, hotel changes and attendant repacking are reduced while we still manage to visit an impressive variety of Thailand’s most important national parks and forest reserves. The climate is tropical, with temperatures ranging from hot to cool, depending on the altitude; January-February is in the dry season, so rain (and leeches) should be at a minimum.

Thailand is usually thought of as an excellent introduction to the pleasures of birding in Southeast Asia, and this is the general intent of our tour here. Each site that we plan to visit is rich in widespread tropical Asian birds, and we’ll try to see as many of these as we can. But we also see a number of species that are rarely seen outside of Thailand. In each of the areas visited, there are usually a few special birds of restricted range in residence that may take some extra effort to see (Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo at Khao Yai, Ratchet-tailed Treepie at Kaeng Krachan, Giant Nuthatch on Doi Lang, and Hodgson’s Frogmouth on Doi Ang Khang are good examples). Most days will have early starts (either dawn or pre-dawn, usually with breakfast around 5:30-6:00 a.m.), a mid-morning tea/coffee break in the field, picnic lunches prepared in the

field, and late-afternoon (5:00-6:30 p.m.) returns to our accommodations, ideally arriving in plenty of time to clean up before our typically delicious Thai dinner and list session.

For this tour, you need to be in fair condition physically and capable of a moderate amount of walking, including walking uphill. Even commuting from our rooms to and from the restaurant at several of our lovely lodgings requires walking as much as 100 m. on the grounds and/or climbing some steep stairs (where no elevators exist). *The long, full days require folks to be on their feet for several hours at a time and capable of being active, with only short breaks, from dawn until near dusk, on a daily basis.* And some of those days can be hot. While most birding is along roads, we do take several trails for a few hours each, some sections of which are steep climbs and involve negotiating uneven, sometimes slippery, terrain as well as circling tree falls and crossing logs. At coastal salt ponds and in rice paddies, we may end up walking up to a 1/2 mile or so along dirt levees that are quite uneven and sometimes interrupted by small water channels. Participants who opt to do these walks should be steady on their feet and possess a good sense of balance. Our guides can advise exactly which of the hikes undertaken will be most demanding, and there's always an option to stay back with the drivers and/or crew. For some folks, this could entail missing as many as four or five efforts during the course of this three-week tour. Overall, this tour is not strenuous, but it does require steady application of "get up and go" and a readiness to adapt to variable terrain.

Thailand is easily reached from North America, with international flights arriving in Bangkok. Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai are reached by van from Bangkok. Chiang Mai, a short flight northwest from Bangkok, is central to Doi Inthanon, Doi Ang Khang, Doi Lang, and Chiang Saen. While Thailand is notably rich in culture, those interested in this tour should be aware that general sightseeing on this itinerary is rather limited (though we'll encounter—and be birding at—several "wats" or Buddhist temples). If you're interested in seeing some of the sights around Bangkok or elsewhere, we encourage you to arrive in Thailand before the start of the tour, or to delay your departure, in order to see some of the sights on your own. In fact, considering the jetlag factor, we encourage everyone to arrive at least a day early in order to start recovering from the very long international flight and the many time-zone changes. Our hotel in Bangkok is 40-45 minutes from the airport and is a pleasant place to recover, even offering a bit of introductory birding right on the landscaped grounds. The Field Guides office can arrange reliable transfers from the airport to the hotel for you, as well as a wonderful local guide if you wish. Past participants recommend coming a few days early, one for recovery, and two for touring the Emerald Palace, the Reclining Buddha, the floating market, and the original capitol with our English-speaking Thai operator. Talk with Karen if you are interested in sharing a cultural tour with other participants.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides.



*This charming Spotted Owlet seems quite at home in a temple façade. While the tour does not feature general sight-seeing opportunities, we will visit the grounds of several temples in our search for interesting and exciting birds.
Photograph by participant Reggie David.*

About the Birding Areas



Bangkok and Surroundings—After arrival and later while en route to Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai national parks, the tour will visit several areas with wetlands and open country habitats around Bangkok. These areas will probably include (subject always to Bangkok traffic, an unavoidable although perhaps essential component of the complete Thailand experience):

Wat Tian Thawai: The grounds of this old temple, or wat, in Nothaburi Province will introduce species such as Brahminy Kite, Asian Koel, Green-billed Malkoha, Streak-eared Bulbul, Plain Prinia, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Malaysian Pied-Fantail, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, Plain-backed Sparrow (not entirely plain!), Ashy Drongo, Olive-backed Sunbird, and Scaly-breasted Munia, and a few fancier birds, possibly Alexandrine Parakeet, Spotted Owlet, and Coppersmith Barbet.

Wat Phai Lom: Located on the bank of the Chao Phraya in Prathumthani Province northwest of Bangkok, Wat Phai Lom is an ephemeral nesting site for Asian Openbill (Stork). In addition to flocks of the storks, other sightings in the area could include Bronze-winged Jacana, Plaintive Cuckoo, Asian Pied Starling, and a mixture of herons and egrets.

Rangsit marsh: This extensive marshland, in the heart of industrial greater Bangkok, offers some very productive morning birding for the patient observer. A network of overgrown pastures, cattail and sedge marshes, and small ponds, all accessed by a decent dirt track, provide shelter for a number of both conspicuous and shy species. We'll certainly hear, and definitely attempt to see, such wetland skulkers as Black-browed Reed-Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper-Warbler, Lanceolated Warbler, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Cinnamon Bittern, Gray-headed Swamphen, and many others during our morning visit before we head down the coast to Pak Thale and Laem Phak Bia.

Note: All of these areas are either at or very near sea level, and since we are in the heart of tropical Southeast Asia, temperatures and humidity levels will be at their highest on the tour during our birding in the Bangkok area.

Pak Thale and Laem Phak Bia—Salt pans, shrimp ponds, and coastal mudflats near Phetchaburi, about eighty kilometers south of Bangkok, host impressive concentrations of waterbirds, including thousands of Palearctic shorebirds, making this area perhaps the most alluring spot in the world for shorebirding. Some of the regular species are Marsh Sandpiper, Red-necked, Temminck's, and Long-toed stints, Curlew and Broad-billed sandpipers, Common and Spotted redshanks, Black-winged Stilt, Lesser Sand-Plover (Mongolian Plover), Greater Sand-Plover, Brown-hooded Gull, and Whiskered Tern. Other rare possibilities along the coast here and a bit further south include Malaysian Plover, Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot, Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's) Gull, and Pallas's (Great Black-headed) Gull. And in most years, the unique and Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper puts in an appearance somewhere along this coast! We'll orchestrate our activities on the coast according to where target birds are being seen this winter, giving special consideration to finding the Spoon-billed Sandpiper during our time here.

Kaeng Krachan National Park is Thailand's largest national park and one of Southeast Asia's biggest expanses of accessible forest. The park protects the watershed of a large reservoir about 250 kilometers southwest of Bangkok. The primary habitat in the 3000-square-kilometer park is broadleaf evergreen forest, with small areas of hill evergreen and mixed deciduous forest. We'll devote time to all three of these habitats, but we'll concentrate on the evergreen forest at the higher elevations. Among the most special prizes of Kaeng Krachan are some very range-restricted species—the

Rusty-cheeked Hornbill, known only from southern Myanmar and adjacent western Thailand; and Ratchet-tailed Treepie, until discovered here, a species previously known only from Vietnam, Laos, and Hainan Island (China) far to the east.

But there are other prizes among the park's 400-plus species, and, aided by picnic meals in the park, we will be able to spend three full days birding in the forests in pursuit of a full range of Asian forest birds from tiny flowerpeckers to gigantic hornbills. If Thailand is a faunal crossroads (and it is), then Kaeng Krachan is where the avian traffic cop stands, welcoming traffic from the Sundaic (Peninsular), Indo-Chinese, and Indo-Himalayan directions into this preserve.

Surprising discoveries have included the presence of both Collared and Black-thighed falconets, Red-bearded and Blue-bearded bee-eaters, Wreathed and Plain-pouched hornbills, Moustached and Blue-throated barbets, and Laced and Streak-breasted woodpeckers. We'll also hope for Rufous-bellied Eagle, Yellow-vented Pigeon, Brown Boobook (Hawk-Owl), Collared Scops-Owl, White-browed Piculet, Bamboo and Great Slaty woodpeckers, Long-tailed, Silver-breasted, Black-and-yellow, Black-and-red, Banded, and Dusky broadbills, Gray-rumped Treeswift, Black-throated Laughingthrush, Collared Babbler (a recent split from White-hooded Babbler), Sultan Tit, Crested Jay, and Common Green-Magpie. And should the bamboo have flowers or seeds, the generally scarce Pin-tailed Parrotfinch can become almost conspicuous! We will certainly miss a few of these, just as we certainly will see a variety of other barbets, hornbills, woodpeckers, cuckooshrikes, laughingthrushes, babblers, and bulbuls.

Forests of this magnitude also support (and hide) many mammals. Possible species include White-handed Gibbon, Dusky and Banded leaf-monkeys, and Fea's Barking Deer. Moderate to great luck could produce Indian Elephant, Gaur, or a Leopard (we've seen an all-black individual at close range and several spotted morphs on past tours!) and incredible luck a Malayan Sun Bear, Clouded Leopard, or Asian Tapir. Even if these are likely to remain dreams, in this crowded world it is wonderful to bird where these mammals still survive.



The Red-bearded Bee-eater is larger and more substantial than "typical" bee-eaters. We will look for these, and the equally impressive Blue-bearded Bee-eater, in Kaeng Krachan National Park. Photograph by participant Joe Wunderle.

Khao Yai National Park—Located 200 kilometers northeast of Bangkok, Khao Yai National Park is perhaps Thailand's most famous birdwatching site. With almost 2200 square kilometers under protection since 1962, Khao Yai continues to support a rich assortment of birds and mammals. From our base just outside the park, the tour will concentrate on the semi-evergreen forest from 600 to 800 meters elevation on a sandstone plateau. Although classified by botanists as "semi-evergreen," to the casual visitor the park's towering forests are a good place to start defining the word "green."

Khao Yai's avifauna is similar to that of Kaeng Krachan, but there's certainly enough non-overlap to make a visit to both of these magnificent parks well worth our while. Some of the birds we hope to see include Jerdon's Baza, Red Junglefowl, Vernal Hanging-Parrot, Green-billed Malkoha, Collared Owlet, Great Eared-Nightjar, Orange-breasted and Red-headed trogons, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Wreathed Hornbill, Moustached, Green-eared, and Blue-eared barbets, Greater Flameback, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Great lora, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Scarlet Minivet, Blue-winged Leafbird, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Asian Fairy-bluebird, and the familiar, but natural and native, Common Hill Myna. Khao Yai's beautiful streams and trails also provide the lucky with opportunities to see some rare and/or shy species such as Siamese Fireback, Silver Pheasant, the range-restricted Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo and Brown Hornbill, Banded and

Blue-eared kingfishers, Blue and Eared pittas, Banded Broadbill, Slaty-backed Forktail, and Van Hasselt's (split from Purple-throated) and Ruby-cheeked sunbirds. Open areas, remaining from pre-park cultivation, add to the diversity of wildlife, including the handsome White-throated Kingfisher and Indian Roller. Oh, yes, feel free to reconsider that Great Hornbill: Great Hornbills are resident at Khao Yai, as are Tigers, Asiatic Black Bears, Indian Elephants, and two species of gibbons.

Chiang Mai area—A brief dawn visit to a pristine tract of lower elevation dry forest under royal protection not far out of town should garner fine views of the rare Green Peafowl, restricted now to just a handful of sites in Southeast Asia. Rice paddies in the right stage near Chiang Mai can produce Gray-headed Lapwing, Pin-tailed Snipe, Greater Painted-Snipe, and displaying Oriental Skylarks.



Niltavas are a group of small, colorful Old World flycatchers. This Small Niltava is one of four species we'll watch for in the forests of Doi Inthanon. Photograph by guide Dave Stejskal.

Doi Inthanon National Park—Thailand's highest peak, Doi Inthanon (2565 meters, ca. 8400 feet), lies in the granitic Thanon Thong Chai range fifty-five kilometers southwest of Chiang Mai. Starting at 300 meters, the road to the summit transects dry dipterocarp woodland, mixed deciduous forest, dry evergreen forest, pine forest, and submontane and montane forest. Large areas have been cleared, but substantial blocks of forest remain, particularly at the higher elevations where the bird life is the most different from that of our other venues on this tour. Birding these forests will add to our vocabularies many names such as sibia, minla, mesia, wren-babbler, woodshrike, treepie, shrike-babbler, fulvetta, yuhina, parrotbill, shortwing, and niltava.

Based in the lowlands at the foot of Doi Inthanon, we will have two full days to sample this altitudinal transect in pursuit of White-rumped Falcon, Collared Falconet, Rufous-throated Partridge, Speckled Wood-Pigeon, Oriental Scops-Owl, Indian and Large-tailed nightjars, Great and Golden-throated barbets, Black-headed Woodpecker, Long-tailed Broadbill, Short-billed, Scarlet, and Gray-chinned minivets, Black and White-headed bulbuls, Golden-fronted Leafbird, White-browed Shortwing, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Mountain Tailorbird, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, White-necked and Silver-eared (recently split from Chestnut-crowned) laughingthrushes, Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler), three species of shrike-babblers, Spectacled Barwing, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Black-backed and Rufous-backed sibilas, Gray-headed Parrotbill, Velvet-fronted and Burmese (Chestnut-bellied) nuthatches, Hume's (Brown-throated)

Treecreeper, Green-tailed and Gould's sunbirds, Maroon Oriole, Red-billed Blue Magpie, and Gray and Rufous treepies. Rushing streams provide a home for Plumbeous and White-capped (River Chat) redstarts, Blue Whistling-Thrush, and the scarce, spectacular forketails. We will also search for some other rarities, particularly including Green and Purple cochoas, both of which we have seen a few times on past tours.

Nor will we discriminate against the many LDJs (Little Dull Jobs—they are birds, too, and we are a fairly equal-opportunity bird-finding company), such as babblers and leaf warblers. Migrants are in abundance from the lowlands to the rhododendron-lined bog near the summit, a frequent haunt for Eurasian Woodcock, Buff-barred Warbler (Orange-barred Leaf-Warbler), Common Rosefinch, and Eyebrowed, Dark-sided, and Gray-sided thrushes.

Doi Ang Khang is located on the Thai-Myanmar border about 150 kilometers northwest of Chiang Mai. Although this mountain, which rises to about 1800 meters (ca. 6000 feet), has less forest than Doi Inthanon, remnant woodland, scrub, and grasslands are still rich in bird life, including Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Hodgson's Frogmouth, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted and White-headed bulbuls, Russet Bush-Warbler, White-browed Laughingthrush, Scarlet (Red)-faced Liocichla, Silver-eared Mesia, Streaked and Eyebrowed wren-babblers, White-browed and Rusty-cheeked scimitar-babblers, White-tailed Robin, and Gray-headed and Spot-breasted parrotbills. Wintering species, such as White-bellied Redstart and Aberrant Bush-Warbler, are also present (and need to account for themselves!).

Doi Lang—After a good introduction to Thailand’s montane avifauna on Doi Inthanon and Doi Ang Khang, we will turn to our final mountain venue, Doi Lang. Although we will continue to learn by seeing the widespread montane species again (and by catching up on a few we inevitably will have missed on other mountains), our focus on this massif will be some specialties. Doi Lang, on the shoulder of Doi Pha Hom Pok, Thailand’s second highest peak, is a part of the 52,000-hectare Mae Fang National Park. It is at the northwesternmost corner of Thailand and supports the most extensive remaining tracts of evergreen hill forest at high elevation. The air is clear and crisp and cool, and early-morning activity is terrific. On our drives up the mountain (mostly via a good, paved road), watch for Mountain Bamboo-Partridges and Hume’s Pheasant in the road and Giant Nuthatch, a specialty restricted to southern China and corners of Myanmar and Thailand, in the pines. At the highest elevations are several species of Himalayan affinities that within Thailand occur only here, such as Black-throated Tit and the rare Himalayan Cutia.



The beautiful Hume’s Pheasant is considered Near Threatened. Found primarily in Yunnan and Myanmar, there is a population in northern Thailand that we will make an effort to find. This bird was seen very well on a recent Field Guides tour. Photograph by guide Dave Stejskal.

Chiang Saen—Our final birding venue of the tour lies in the famed ‘Golden Triangle’, where Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand converge along the banks of the impressive Mekong River. We’ll have most of an afternoon and nearly the entire next day to bird the banks of the river, agricultural habitats, remnant patches of forest, and productive lakes in search for the many wintering species found here. We’ll likely see our first Indian Spot-billed Duck, Gray-headed Swamphen, Small Pratincole, River Lapwing, and Gray-throated Martin of the trip here, but we’ll want to be especially vigilant for the likes of Baer’s Pochard (one or two individuals of this vanishing species are found most winters here), Ferruginous and Tufted Duck, Long-billed Plover, Pied Harrier (large numbers of these can sometimes be seen heading to roost late in the afternoon), Chestnut-crowned Bush-Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Jerdon’s Bushchat, Chestnut-eared Bunting, and many other scarce species. In recent years, even such Thai mega-rarities as Wallcreeper, Firethroat, White-tailed Rubythroat, and Mandarin Duck have been found here at this season! It should be an exciting area to finish our birding before we fly back to Bangkok at the end of this tour.

Itinerary for Thailand

Days 1-2, Sat-Sun, 12-13 Jan. Departure from the US and flight to Bangkok. We encourage you to come a day or so early, but you will need to leave the US by Saturday, January 12 in order to arrive by mid-day on Monday, January 14 to start the tour. Day 2 will be lost to crossing the International Date Line on our long flights to Thailand. Our office will be happy to advise you and arrange the flights that are best for you.

Day 3, Mon, 14 Jan. Afternoon birding near Bangkok. Tour activities start officially with lunch today at 12:00 p.m. We will meet just outside the Greenery Cafe in the lobby of our hotel, the Rama Gardens. If you arrived early, you’ll have time to rest up, tour Bangkok, and/or bird a bit on the grounds of our hotel. We plan to leave for birding this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. to visit Wat Tian Thawai and Wat Phai Lom on the outskirts of Bangkok. Be prepared for hot and humid weather this afternoon. Rain at this time of year is unlikely; nevertheless, pack your umbrella, just in case. All of our birding will be at a

very leisurely pace on open, flat ground. We should be out until about sunset or shortly thereafter. We'll do our first day's bird list and enjoy a delicious buffet dinner back at our hotel. Night in Bangkok.

Day 4, Tue, 15 Jan. Rangsit marsh & coastal birding south of Bangkok. After an early (6:00 a.m.) buffet breakfast this morning at our hotel, we'll depart with our bags in tow, heading for nearby Rangsit marsh a short drive from our hotel (traffic permitting!). We'll bird here until mid-morning and then head south of Bangkok to the tiny fishing village of Laem Phak Bia. We'll bird these coastal environs (often hot and usually sunny, but often with a forgiving breeze) southwest of Bangkok for the rest of this day and most of tomorrow. Most of the terrain is flat, but we may walk along some very uneven levees between ponds or along the mudflats. We plan to visit a variety of habitats today and tomorrow including freshwater marsh, salt ponds, shrimp farm ponds, tidal mudflats, mangroves, light coastal woodland, and coastline.

There are birds aplenty to search for today and tomorrow, including a fine variety of shorebirds, herons, terns, kingfishers, and several very local landbirds found in these coastal habitats—like Germain's Swiftlet, Golden-bellied Gerygone, and Asian Golden Weaver. With luck we could encounter the fabulous Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher, Nordmann's Greenshank, or the Endangered Chinese Egret. This area of the coast has a long history of turning up some incredible finds! If the tide is right, we'll plan to take a two-hour boat trip in shallow water today or tomorrow afternoon to a sandy spit in search of the rare and local Malaysian Plover (it's a wet landing at the spit that hosts the plovers). Our very comfortable resort hotel for the night sits right on the beach overlooking the Gulf of Thailand and boasts some fabulous Thai seafood. Night near Laem Phak Bia.



The elegant Marsh Sandpiper can be very common along the coast near Laem Phak Bia. Photograph by guide Dave Stejskal.

Day 5, Wed, 16 Jan. Lowland coastal birding near Laem Phak Bia; to Kaeng Krachan National Park. We'll have the entire day to leisurely bird the variety of wetland habitats near our hotel before we head off to Kaeng Krachan Country Club, our base for birding Kaeng Krachan NP, in the late afternoon. Our lodging here, about thirty minutes from the park entrance, is a resort with basic, but comfortable, duplex villas with a/c and private bath facilities. The restaurant is a short walk from our rooms. On one or more evenings here at these extensive grounds, we'll plan to do some owling with our sights set on Large-tailed and Indian nightjars, Collared Scops-Owl, and maybe even an Indian (Eurasian) Thick-knee! Night at Kaeng Krachan Country Club.

Days 6-8, Thu-Sat, 17-19 Jan. Full days of birding in Kaeng Krachan. We'll have three full days to explore the various habitats of this big, pristine park on the Myanmar border. The possibilities here are nearly inexhaustible, and we'll try to balance the common with the not so common, as most of the birds seen in the park will be new to us. Most of our birding will be along a good but narrow one-way dirt road through the park. The terrain here is hilly and there are a number of steep stretches along the road, but we'll do our best to bird down the road rather than up it (some uphill walking will be unavoidable, though, due to the park ascent/descent schedule for vehicles). Lunches will be in the field to maximize our birding time. Daytime temperatures in the sun can climb to the low 90s in the lower sections of the park, but early morning and evening temperatures, especially higher up, should be very pleasant. Nights at Kaeng Krachan Country Club.

Day 9, Sun, 20 Jan. Birding at Kaeng Krachan Country Club; drive to Khao Yai NP. After a slightly later breakfast this morning, it's likely that we'll want to bird the drier forest around the grounds of the country club in search of a few

species that prefer this habitat, including both Greater and Lesser necklaced laughingthrushes. As we head to the coastal lowlands to the east after birding around the hotel, we'll keep an eye open for the local Vinous-breasted Starling, if we haven't seen it before we leave the country club today. On our way to Bangkok and Khao Yai NP, we'll enjoy another delicious Thai seafood lunch at a restaurant south of the capital. We plan at least one major stop after lunch to look for the local Limestone Wren-Babbler at some impressive rocky outcrops not far from our route before we arrive at our lovely hotel near the entrance to Khao Yai NP in the late afternoon.

Should we arrive at our hotel in time to do some additional birding, we may want to visit a nearby cave in a low limestone mountain to witness the early-evening exodus of large numbers of Wrinkle-lipped Free-tailed Bats (sometimes with attendant Peregrine Falcons or Shikras hoping for an easy meal!). Night near Khao Yai NP.

Days 10-11, Mon-Tue, 21-22 Jan. Full days of birding in Khao Yai. We'll bird the roadsides and a couple of forest trails (some steep and narrow sections, but doable if taken slowly) in this lovely park, Thailand's oldest. A sampling of different habitats at different elevations should prove productive. Most of the terrain is rather flat, but there are a couple of good trails with some steep sections that we may want to sample during our stay. Temperatures in the early morning can be rather cool, but it should warm quickly to near 90 degrees F. During our stay, breakfasts will be early at our accommodations, and lunches will be in the field. On one afternoon, we may drive about two hours to a nearby forest reserve where the fabulous Siamese Fireback, Thailand's national bird, is reliably seen (if we haven't seen it already). Nights near Khao Yai.



*Limestone Wren-babbler will be one of our goals near Khao Yai.
Photograph by participant Fred Dalbey.*

Day 12, Wed, 23 Jan. Morning birding at Khao Yai NP en route to Bangkok; afternoon flight to Chiang Mai. Depending upon the scheduling of our flight today from Bangkok to Chiang Mai in the north, we'll plan some birding based on what we still want to see. We'll need to load the luggage vehicle with our bags and send it on ahead of us before we depart this morning, so make sure that you have all that you need for the morning and the flight this afternoon with you; *our bags will likely be checked by our ground crew onto our flight before we arrive at the airport.* After arrival in Bangkok, we'll board our domestic flight for the short (about an hour) trip to Chiang Mai. From the Chiang Mai airport, we'll make our way to our comfortable hotel in the heart of town for the night.

This evening offers a rare opportunity for an optional dinner at the Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center, where you can watch an entertaining show of Thai dance and music during dinner. Or you may opt for a quiet dinner at or near our hotel and a chance to catch up on some sleep or the writing of field notes. Night in Chiang Mai.

Day 13, Thu, 24 Jan. Morning birding near Chiang Mai; to Doi Inthanon National Park. We'll have the morning to bird the dry forest and paddies near Chiang Mai just out of town after our early hotel breakfast. We'll need to load the luggage vehicle with our bags before departing the hotel this morning, so make sure

that you have all that you need for the day with you. Before we head south to Doi Inthanon NP, we'll visit a preserved patch of dry forest to the east of Chiang Mai that still boasts a fairly healthy population of the endangered Green Peafowl, several of which we've seen roosting in the treetops and displaying on the ground on our past tours. All of our birding will be along good paved and dirt roads on mostly level terrain (a few dirt levees out through the rice paddies, but nothing serious). Depending on our timing, lunch may be in the field, or at our accommodations at the base of Doi Inthanon. Keep an eye out for noisy groups of Rufous Treepies and Red-billed Blue Magpies in the plantings around our cabins! The afternoon should find us making an initial exploration of the highland forests of Doi Inthanon National Park. Night at Inthanon Highland Resort.

Days 14-15, Fri-Sat, 25-26 Jan. Doi Inthanon NP. Two full days here will give us time to sample the many forest types at different elevations on the slopes of this impressive mountain. Various elevations and the associated habitats have

their own characteristic bird life, but we'll probably want to concentrate most of our efforts at the higher reaches of Doi Inthanon, where, at nearly 8400 feet, morning temperatures can be downright cold! On some of our previous tours, folks have voted the small bog at the summit as their favorite birding site on the entire trip—and for good reason. Although the quantity of birds present there isn't particularly impressive, the quality of the species and of the looks we usually have are top notch. Among the possibilities are: Rufous-throated Partridge, Eurasian Woodcock, Ashy Wood-Pigeon, Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler), Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, Rufous-winged Fulvetta, Silver-eared (split from Chestnut-crowned) Laughingthrush, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Himalayan and Red-flanked bluetails, Dark-sided, Chestnut, and Gray-sided thrushes, White-browed Shortwing, and Gould's and Green-tailed sunbirds have been the rewards for our efforts in past years. On one of our mornings in the park, we plan to bird the low-elevation dry dipterocarp forest to search for a few special birds, namely the scarce White-rumped Falcon and Collared Falconet, Black-headed Woodpecker, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Black-backed Forktail, and Burmese (Chestnut-bellied) Nuthatch, among others. Breakfasts during our stay will be early at our resort, and lunches will again be in the field to maximize our birding time in this invigorating environment. Nights at Inthanon Highland Resort.



We'll look for the delightful Spot-breasted Parrotbill in Doi Ang Khang. Photograph by participant Fred Dalbey.

Day 16, Sun, 27 Jan. Morning birding in lower portions of Doi Inthanon; afternoon drive to Doi Ang Khang. After breakfast, we'll load our bags into our luggage vehicle and we'll head to a nearby dry forested hillside in order to catch a glimpse of the beautiful Blossom-headed Parakeet before it heads off to a favored feeding site. An hour or so of birding here should produce a few birds that may have eluded us until now, but then we'll continue our journey northward. We'll have a picnic lunch along the way today at a productive irrigation project as we take a break from the long drive north to Ang Khang. We plan to make a couple of scheduled stops in open country en route, as well as a late afternoon visit to a fascinating temple situated inside a limestone cave. A long series of steps ascends through good forest holding prizes such as Pin-tailed Pigeon and Streaked Wren-Babbler, ending at the ornate temple complex far above the parking lot. It's quite a climb, but it's well worth it! From here, we'll continue north, and then west, to our lovely hotel on Doi Ang Khang. Night at Ang Khang Nature Resort.

Day 17, Mon, 28 Jan. Doi Ang Khang all day. After an early breakfast at our resort, we'll board our vans and venture to the nearby light woodland and trails. Many local specialties reside in the patchy woodland and scrub on the slopes of this massif and are easier to find here than at any other accessible area in Thailand. We'll search for the likes of Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Cook's Swift (now split from Fork-tailed Swift), Speckled Piculet, Lesser Yellownape, Gray-headed

Woodpecker, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Spot-throated Babbler, White-browed and White-necked laughingthrushes, Scarlet(Red)-faced Liocichla, Spot-breasted Parrotbill, Russet Bush-Warbler, and Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker, plus a fine variety of Palearctic migrants such as White-bellied Redstart, Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush, and Crested, Little, and Chestnut buntings. We'll want to venture down (or up) a couple of narrow trails (mostly dry) in search of these and others during our stay. We'll plan to go nightbirding after dinner tonight for the fabulous Hodgson's Frogmouth (very difficult) and the Mountain Scops-Owl (a little less difficult). Night at Ang Khang Nature Resort.

Day 18, Tue, 29 Jan. Doi Ang Khang; late afternoon visit to Doi Lang and transfer to Fang. We'll have all morning to continue exploring Doi Ang Khang before we pack up after lunch and head up to Doi Lang, with Hume's Pheasant as a major target for the afternoon. Late in the day, we'll make our way back down the mountain and on to our excellent hotel in Fang, our home for the next two nights. Night in Fang.

Day 19, Wed, 30 Jan. Doi Lang all day. After an early breakfast at our hotel, we'll drive back up the surprisingly good road on the southwestern flank of Doi Lang in hopes of reaching some of the best birding areas during the best activity period. Today is our primary effort for the Giant Nuthatch in the pine zone of this massif, the second highest peak in Thailand. We'll also have another shot at the elusive Hume's Pheasant if we haven't already seen it. The other

possibilities here are sure to keep us attentive during our time here. Besides the nuthatch and the pheasant, other attractions here include Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Rusty-naped Pitta, Crested Finchbill, Himalayan Cutia, Long-tailed Sibia, Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler, Ultramarine Flycatcher, Yellow-browed and Black-throated tits, plus many others. We'll enjoy picnic lunches high on the mountain both today and tomorrow, with dinners back at our hotel in the evening. Night in Fang.

Day 20, Thu, 31 Jan. Morning birding on Doi Lang; afternoon drive to Chiang Saen. After an early breakfast at our hotel, we'll enjoy one more good morning on the slopes of Doi Lang before we head down the mountain and on to our next venue. We'll plan to arrive in the Chiang Saen area in plenty of time to do some productive late afternoon birding before we settle in at our comfortable hotel in town. Night in Chiang Saen.

Day 21, Fri, 1 Feb. Morning birding near Chiang Saen; afternoon flight to Bangkok. We plan on a full morning of birding in and near Chiang Saen, located in the famed Golden Triangle, before heading off to the airport for our mid-afternoon flight to Bangkok. We'll be on the lookout for several species that we are unlikely to encounter earlier in the tour, including Indian Spot-billed Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Gray-headed Swamphen, River Lapwing, Small Pratincole, and Gray-throated Martin. Additionally, this region of extreme northern Thailand has a long history of harboring a number of local wintering rarities, so we'll devote some time to tracking down as many of these as are known to be present. Pack your list in your carry-on so that we can do our final list together at the airport, if there's time. We'll return to our hotel restaurant tonight in Bangkok for our farewell dinner. Night in Bangkok.

Day 22, Sat, 2 Feb. Departure. You will be transferred to the international airport by our reliable hotel staff in time for your (various) flights. You will arrive on the same date, after recovering that lost day by once again crossing the International Date Line—in the opposite direction.

About Your Guides

Jay VanderGaast was introduced to birding by his father, and his obsession with birds was evident by age seven when he memorized the plates in Peterson's eastern field guide. He went on to earn a B.S. in biology at university and briefly contemplated a career in research, but two years on the mosquito-infested arctic tundra watching ptarmigan do little other than occasionally getting eaten by Gyrfalcons soon put an end to that plan! Instead, he strapped on a backpack and a pair of bins and began roaming the world in search of birds.

His travels eventually led him to Costa Rica, where he stumbled into a job as a birding guide at Rancho Naturalista Lodge. Amazed that he was actually getting paid to watch birds, he jealously guarded his position there for six years. His career with Field Guides coincided with the dawn of the new millennium (if you believe that began in 2000!), and since then he has guided more than 100 tours on several continents.

When he's not on tour, Jay's native habitat is his home near Montreal, where he lives with his partner, Annie, and their children—daughters Ariane and Elodie, and son Noah. Jay co-led our 2017 Thailand tour with Uthai Treesucon and Dave Stejskal.

“Jay VanderGaast was a delight to travel with...incredible at finding the birds and extremely helpful in getting us on the birds—which was much appreciated! ...he made the trip an exceptional experience which I will remember for the rest of my life.” L.K., Costa Rica

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Jay's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Uthai Treesucon is a native of Thailand who lives in Bangkok. A keen birder and biologist, he rediscovered Gurney's Pitta in peninsular Thailand in June 1986 with Phil Round and has made many other notable ornithological discoveries in Thailand. Since the rediscovery of the pitta, he has played a leading role in BirdLife International's conservation project attempting to secure the future of that species. One of the most experienced ornithologists in Thailand, Uthai has a legendary ear for bird calls. He has led birding tours throughout Thailand as well as in Myanmar, India, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. He works closely with BirdLife International and is also a conservation and projects officer of the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand. Uthai has co-guided almost all of the previous Thailand tours with Field Guides since 1997.

Financial Information

FEE: \$6875 from Bangkok

DEPOSIT: \$700 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: September 14, 2018

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$770

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Mandy Mantzel. Mandy will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations during the tour are in comfortable villas and hotels (some five-star hotels) with air conditioning and hot showers. At Doi Inthanon, the villas have multiple sleeping quarters, each with a private bath, and we may be putting two to three doubles in the same building. All of the bathroom facilities at our hotels are private, with familiar western-style, not the traditional Oriental-style, toilets.

DOCUMENTS: A valid passport is necessary for US and Canadian citizens to enter Thailand. We recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. No visa is required for U.S or Canadian citizens to visit Thailand. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen, please check with the Thai consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$6875 for one person in double occupancy from Bangkok. It includes all lodging from Day 3 through Day 21, all meals from lunch on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 22, *domestic flights from Bangkok to Chiang Mai and return from Chiang Saen to Bangkok*, all ground transportation, entrance fees, airport transfers, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to and from Thailand, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$770. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$700** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by September 14, 2018. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides

Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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