

ITINERARY
THAILAND
January 9-30, 2027



Leafbirds are a family of canopy-dwellers found in the rainforests of SE Asia. The Golden-fronted Leafbird is one of four species we might see on the tour. Photograph by participant Mark Myers.

We include here information for those interested in the 2027 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

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- 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 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.



*Greater Flameback is one of 20 or more woodpecker species we'll hope to see.
Photograph by participant Daryl Kellenberger.*

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 Eastern Red-rumped Swallow, Olive-backed Pipit, Citrine and Gray wagtails, Siberian Rubythroat, Bluethroat, Siberian Blue Robin, Blue Rock-Thrush, Eyebrowed Thrush, Taiga 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: the recently published *Birds of Thailand* by Craig Robson, is a useful, portable aid to identifying the country’s birds, and an even more recently published field guide co-authored by our very own Uthai Treesucon is also now available. Either of these texts will serve nicely in the field, the former is more portable, the latter has more and better information; we recommend both!

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 several 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.

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).



Racket-tailed Treepie is a species of the lowlands of Thailand. Photograph by participant Mark Myers.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Good amounts of walking, usually 1-3 miles in morning, 1-2 miles in afternoon, usually on wide roads or tracks in the lowlands, a few times optionally on mountain trails that have slippery, steep, muddy, and/or rocky sections and obstacles such as fallen limbs, roots, and rocks (walking sticks recommended). At coastal salt ponds and in rice paddies, we may walk a 1/2 mile or so along dirt levees that are uneven and sometimes broken by small water channels. We bird most days from dawn until near dusk, with several short breaks for lunch and snacks.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** Participants should be able to step up (and step down) 10-12 inches to get into and out of our vehicles. Some lodgings have stairwells (no elevators) and 100-yard walks between rooms and dining areas, sometimes involving climbing stairs. We bird from a small boat on one occasion, and so an ability to climb into and out of the boat (via the bow, the front of the boat) is necessary.
- **PACE:** Early morning starts, usually with predawn (~5:30 a.m.) breakfast, a birding session, a mid-morning tea/coffee break and lunch in the field, an afternoon birding session, and evening (6:00-7:00 p.m.) returns to accommodations. On some days, we will travel by vehicle to our next destination in the afternoon. There will be

several nighttime excursions to look for birds and other creatures, but we will usually return to the lodging before 10:00 p.m.

- **WEATHER:** Weather in Thailand varies, depending on the location and elevation, from the low 40s in highest elevations in the early morning to the high 90s in the lower elevations. Rain is rare at this season.
- **ELEVATION:** Sea level to 8400 feet.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature, as there are simply no other options (away from our lodgings) on multiple sections of this tour's route.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

Other considerations: 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.

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 Suan Yai: The grounds of this temple, or wat, not far from the heart of Bangkok, is best known for holding a small number of Alexandrine Parakeets, which breed in nest boxes provided specifically for these declining birds. Other birds we could find here include species such as Asian Koel, Plaintive Cuckoo, Streak-eared and Yellow-vented bulbuls, Plain Prinia, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Malaysian Pied-Fantail, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, Ashy Drongo, Brown-throated Sunbird, and Coppersmith Barbet. One or two pairs of Red-breasted Parakeets (or sometimes huge flocks!) can often be found among the larger Alexandrine Parakeets, here, too.

Queen Sirikit/Rot Fai Park: this large park complex, just a short drive from our Bangkok hotel, is a popular recreational site for locals, with a number of biking and jogging paths and sports fields open for public use. The park also has plenty of tall trees and scrub, plus a series of ponds and canals which attract a great variety of birds. Asian Openbill, White-breasted Waterhen, Red-wattled Lapwing, Spotted Owllet, Indochinese Roller, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Black-naped Oriole, Black-naped Monarch, Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Common Iora, Common Tailorbird, and Black-collared and Siamese Pied starlings are just some of the many species we could encounter during a stroll through the pleasant environs of the parks. The hard-to-find Stork-billed Kingfisher is also seen here at times, and the park has a reputation for attracting in occasional rare wintering species among a number of more common winter residents.



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, Great Knot, Common and Spotted redshanks, Black-winged Stilt, Tibetan and Greater sand-plovers, 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, 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 two 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 Green-Pigeon, Brown Boobook, 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, Sultan Tit, 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 Lar (White-handed) Gibbon, Dusky and Robinson's Banded Langurs, and Fea's Muntjac (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.

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 Iora, 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 and Ruby-cheeked sunbirds. Open areas, remaining from pre-park cultivation, add to the diversity of wildlife, including the handsome White-throated Kingfisher and Indochinese Roller. Oh, yes, feel free to reconsider that Great Hornbill: Great Hornbills are resident at Khao Yai, as are Dhole (wild dogs), Asiatic Black Bears, Indian Elephants, and two species of gibbons.



*The Green Peafowl is not as familiar as the Indian Peafowl, and it is endangered in its limited range. In Thailand, they are found in the north, so we'll look for these impressive birds when we are in the Chiang Mai area.
Photograph by participant Myles McNally.*

Chiang Mai area—A brief visit to a hillside reserve south of Chiang Mai 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, Citrine Wagtail, and displaying Oriental Skylarks, and some years see several scarce raptors wintering in the area.

Mae Ping National Park lies to the south of Doi Inthanon by about a couple of hours. Though the main habitat here—dry dipterocarp forest—is similar to what can be found on the lower slopes of Inthanon, most of the key birds of this habitat are much more easily found here than in the accessible parts of Inthanon, where many of these species are now scarce or absent. We will have one late afternoon and evening and the following morning to bird the park in search of specialties which include Black-headed, White-bellied, and Great Slaty Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser yellownapes, Collared Falconet, White-rumped Falcon, Gray-headed Parakeet, Oriental Scops-Owl, Crested Treeswift, Burmese Nuthatch, Common Woodshrike, Oriental and Indochinese cuckooshrikes, Black-hooded Oriole, Rufous Treepie, and Red-billed Blue Magpie.

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 Rufous-throated Partridge, Speckled and Ashy wood-pigeons, Blossom-headed Parakeet, Great and Golden-throated barbets, Bay Woodpecker, Long-tailed Broadbill, Short-billed, Scarlet, and Gray-chinned minivets, Black and White-headed bulbuls, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Himalayan Shortwing, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Mountain Tailorbird, Snowy-browed and Slaty-backed flycatchers, Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, White-necked and Silver-eared laughingthrushes, Pygmy Cupwing, three species of shrike-babblers, Spectacled Barwing, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Black-backed and Rufous-backed sibilas, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Velvet-fronted and Chestnut-vented nuthatches, Hume’s Treecreeper, Green-tailed and Mrs. Gould’s sunbirds, Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker, and Maroon Oriole. Rushing streams provide a home for Plumbeous and White-capped redstarts, Blue Whistling-Thrush, and the scarce, spectacular forktails. 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 Buff-barred Warbler, Himalayan Bluetail, Common Rosefinch, and Eyebrowed, Dark-sided, and Gray-sided thrushes.



*Silver-eared Laughingthrush is one of many small birds we’ll watch for in Doi Inthanon.
Photograph by participant Daryl Kellenberger.*

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-faced Liocichla, Silver-eared Mesia, Streaked Wren-babbler, White-browed and Red-eyed scimitar-babblers, White-tailed Robin, Daurian Redstart, Black-breasted Thrush, Yellow-streaked Warbler, and Spot-breasted Parrotbill. Wintering species, such as White-bellied Redstart and Aberrant Bush-Warbler, are also present (and need to account for themselves!). **Note:** all

accommodations on the mountain have recently been closed by decree of the new king, so it is no longer possible to stay here, though we will still visit the area on a day trip from Fang.

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 Doi Pha Hom Pok 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, Scarlet Finch, and the rare Himalayan Cutia. A good assortment of flycatchers can usually be found here, including Ultramarine, Slaty-Blue, Slaty-backed, White-gorgeted, Rufous-gorgeted, Pale Blue, Little Pied, and Sapphire, and other key species we hope to find include Speckled Piculet, Lesser Yellownappe, Necklaced Woodpecker, Gray-backed Shrike, Gray Treepie, Gray-headed Parrotbill, Whiskered Yuhina, Spot-throated Babbler, Long-tailed Sibia, Blue-winged Minla, Crested Bunting, and many more.



*There is a large harrier roost near along the Mekong River near Chiang Saen, where we'll see the beautiful Pied Harrier.
Photograph by participant Richard Kaskan.*

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 much of the next day to bird the banks of the river, agricultural habitats, remnant patches of forest, and productive lakes in search of the many wintering species found here. We’ll likely see our first Indian Spot-billed Duck, Gray-headed Swampphen, Small Pratincole, and Gray-throated Martin of the trip here, but we’ll want to be especially vigilant for the likes of Baer’s Pochard (individuals of this vanishing species are found in some winters here), Ferruginous and Tufted Duck, River Lapwing and Long-billed Plover (both rare these days), Pied Harrier (large numbers of these can be seen heading to roost late in the afternoon), Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, Baikal Bush-Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Jerdon’s Bushchat, Chestnut-eared Bunting, and many other scarce species. In recent years, even such Thai mega-rarities as

Wallcreeper, Firethroat, Chinese 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.



Pak Thale, on the inner Gulf of Thailand, is an important wintering spot for shorebirds. We'll look for the rare Spoon-billed Sandpiper here. Photograph by participant Mark Myers.

Itinerary for Thailand

Days 1-2, Sat-Sun, 9-10 Jan. Departure from the US and flight to Bangkok. Please plan to depart the US on Day 1, in order to arrive by mid-day on Day 3 to start the tour (losing Day 2 while crossing the International Date Line). We encourage you to arrive early to allow for any delays and to rest after the long flight. Our office will be happy to advise and arrange the best flights for you.

Day 3, Mon, 11 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 Suan Yai and Queen Sirikit Park, both a fairly short drive from our hotel. 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 dinner back at our hotel. Night in Bangkok.

Day 4, Tue, 12 Jan. 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 the coastal regions to the south of Bangkok to begin our search for the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We'll use up to date local information to determine where we begin our birding, and we'll continue to 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 land birds found in these coastal habitats—like White-nest Swiftlet, Golden-bellied Gerygone, Mangrove Whistler, and Asian Golden Weaver. In addition to Spoon-billed Sandpiper, we'll also be looking for some other rare specialties, including Asian Dowitcher, Nordmann's Greenshank, and 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 and White-faced plovers (it's a wet landing at the spit that hosts the plovers, so be sure to keep whatever footwear you're using for the landing available). 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 dainty Malaysian Plover is one of the rarer shorebirds we'll watch for on the beach near Laem Phak Bia.
Photograph by participant Karen Hamblett.*

Day 5, Wed, 13 Jan. Lowland coastal birding near Laem Phak Bia; to Kaeng Krachan National Park. We'll have much of the morning to leisurely bird the variety of wetland habitats near our hotel before we head off towards Kaeng Krachan NP in the afternoon. Our afternoon activities will be flexible, but could include an afternoon visit to Kaeng Krachan or a visit to a hide just outside the park. Our new lodging here, about thirty minutes from the park entrance, is a lovely resort with nicely appointed rooms, all equipped with A/C, and an excellent restaurant that is a short walk from our rooms. On one or more evenings near our lodge, 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 Thick-knee! Night at NANA Resort Kaeng Krachan.

Days 6-7, Thu-Fri, 14-15 Jan. Full days of birding in Kaeng Krachan. We'll have two 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 NANA Resort Kaeng Krachan.

Day 8, Sat, 16 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 and open habitats around the grounds of the nearby Kaeng Krachan Country Club. Here we'll have our best opportunity to find Indian Thick-knee and the local Vinous-breasted Myna, plus more widespread scrubby habitat species and marsh birds including Yellow Bittern, Lesser Coucal, Lineated Barbet, Indochinese Bushlark, Gray-breasted Prinia, the skulking Lanceolated Warbler, and many more. From here we'll start on our way to Bangkok and Khao Yai NP, stopping to 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 Rufous Limestone Babbler (a Thailand endemic) at some impressive rocky outcrops not far from our route before we arrive at our lovely hotel near the entrance to Khao Yai NP at around dusk or slightly later. Night near Khao Yai NP.



We'll try to get good views of the fabulous Siamese Fireback, the national bird of Thailand. This lovely pair was seen on our 2024 tour. Photograph by participant Lois Wood.

Days 9-10, Sun-Mon, 17-18 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.

Day 11, Tue, 19 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; *there will be limited time to repack a few things at the airport before we check in for the flight.* Our flight to Chiang Mai takes about an hour, followed by a roughly 1-hour drive to get to our lodging at the base of Thailand's highest mountain. Night at Inthanon Highland Resort.

Days 12-13, Wed-Thu, 20-21 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 (rare in recent years), Ashy Wood-Pigeon, Pygmy Cupwing, Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, Rufous-winged Fulvetta, Silver-eared Laughingthrush, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Himalayan Bluetail, Dark-sided, Chestnut, and Gray-

sided thrushes, Himalayan Shortwing, and Mrs. Gould's and Green-tailed sunbirds. Lower parts of the park offer up a different suite of species, which may include Large and Small niltavas, Clicking Shrike-Babbler, Eyebrowed Wren-babbler, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Gray-throated Babbler, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, and many other enticing possibilities. 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 have at least one night-birding session where we'll search for owls such as this Oriental Bay-Owl.
Photograph by participant Leslie Flint.*

Day 14, Fri, 22 Jan. Morning birding in lower portions of Doi Inthanon; afternoon drive to Li. 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 southward. From here we will make the roughly 1.5-hour drive to the town of Li, perhaps with a birding stop or two depending on time. We'll spend the afternoon birding at Mae Ping NP along a good 15 km paved road through high quality, dry dipterocarp forest, with many dead trees for the numerous woodpeckers here in the park. After a picnic dinner in the park, we'll do some owling on our way out of the park, targeting Oriental Scops-Owl, Oriental Bay-Owl, and Blyth's Frogmouth. Night near Mae Ping NP.

Day 15, Sat, 23 Jan. Morning birding in Mae Ping NP; afternoon drive to Chiang Mai. We'll have much of the morning to continue our birding at Mae Ping, targeting whichever species we haven't yet come across. As the morning heats up and activity dies down, we'll head back northward towards Chiang Mai, with birding stops along the way depending on time and need. Our hotel in Chiang Mai is quite centrally located, and very near the main night market. Once we've checked in, you'll have the evening free to explore the market for souvenirs, grab some street food for dinner, or just have dinner at our hotel and head to bed early. Night at Mövenpick Suriwongse Hotel.

Day 16, Sun, 24 Jan. After a buffet breakfast at our hotel, we'll pack up the vans and begin working our way north towards the city of Fang, which will be our base for the next several days. Along the way, we'll make several birding stops, including at a productive irrigation project, and some (usually) birdy rice paddies. Targets on the drive will include Greater Painted-Snipe, Eurasian Wryneck, Wire-tailed Swallow, Oriental Skylark, and Citrine Wagtail, to name a few. In the late afternoon, we'll stop in at a wat in a forested valley, where a long series of steps ascends through good forest ending at an ornate temple complex far above the parking lot. Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon and Streaked Wren-Babbler are among the birds we hope to see here, depending on the time it takes to find them, we may have limited (or no) time to climb to the temple. From here we'll continue onward to Fang, our home for the next 4 nights. Night in Tangerine Ville Hotel, Fang.

Days 17-19, Mon-Wed, 25-27 Jan. Doi Ang Khang and Doi Sanju. We'll use the next 3½ days to explore these two wonderful birding sites, both easily accessible from Fang. On Doi Ang Khang, we'll search for species such as Cook's Swift, Great Barbet, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Spot-throated Babbler, White-browed and White-necked laughingthrushes, Giant Nuthatch, Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Spot-breasted Parrotbill, Russet Bush-Warbler, and Slender-billed Oriole, plus a fine variety of Palearctic migrants such as White-tailed Robin, Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush, Daurian Redstart, and Crested, Little, and Chestnut buntings. Targets on Doi Sanju (aka Doi Lang) will include the gorgeous Hume's Pheasant, Necklaced Woodpecker, Gray-backed Shrike, Gray Treepie, Black-throated Tit, Gray-headed Parrotbill, Whiskered Yuhina, Long-tailed Sibia, Ultramarine, Rufous-gorgeted, and Sapphire flycatchers, Siberian Rubythroat, White-bellied Redstart, and even the beautiful, but scarce, Himalayan Cutia, to name just a few. Picnic lunches will be enjoyed in the mountains, allowing us to maximize our birding time at these fantastic sites. Nights in Fang.

Day 20, Thu, 28 Jan. Drive to Chiang Saen. After an early breakfast at our hotel, we'll load up and begin making our way to Chiang Saen, on the banks of the muddy Mekhong River. On the way there, we'll make a couple of stops at productive lakes or marshes as well as a small park dominated by a massive limestone outcropping, where the local Annam Limestone Babbler can be found. Once we arrive in the Chiang Saen region, we'll focus our birding on whatever interesting wintering birds may be in the area, which could be anything from rare Baer's Pochard on a nearby lake to any number of vagrant Passerines in the scrubby countryside, to an influx of rare wintering thrushes in a botanical garden in the hills along the Myanmar border. Whatever we do, we will want to include a late afternoon visit to a vast marsh that hosts a large number of roosting harriers, including both Pied Harrier and Eastern Marsh-Harrier. Night in Chiang Saen.



*The Annam Limestone Babbler is a range-restricted species found in a few karst habitats in SE Asia.
Photograph by participant Myles McNally.*

Day 21, Fri, 29 Jan. 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, and we'll certainly keep watch for any that have been reported in the area. Additionally, things like Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Indochinese Blue Flycatcher, and if we're very lucky, the rare Jerdon's Bushchat may find their way onto our lists today. After a final lunch, we'll bid farewell to our amazing drivers and field crew and head for the airport for the short flight back to Bangkok. We'll return to our hotel restaurant tonight in Bangkok for our farewell dinner. Night in Bangkok.

Day 22, Sat, 30 Jan. 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 150 tours on several continents. He lives near Montreal, where he spends much of his time between tours with his three teenage children and/or indulging in his latest passion—dragonflies.

“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/our-staff/> 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.

“Uthai is a birding master. Jay is an excellent tour leader who keeps everyone as happy as possible, knows the birds and knows very well how to defer to local guides when necessary.” K.W. Thailand

Financial Information

FEE: \$7,725 per person from Bangkok

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$875

DEPOSIT: \$775 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 13, 2026

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen 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 which vary from fairly basic to very nice and well-appointed, all 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.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins and ends in Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport, BKK), Thailand.

Arrival: Bangkok (BKK) on January 11, by 10:00 AM. We recommend arriving early to allow for any travel delays.

Departure: Bangkok (BKK) on January 30, at any time.

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

DOCUMENTS: Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

Passport: A valid passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

Visa: No visa is required for U.S. and Canadian citizens. Non-US citizens should consult the consulates of each destination for current entry requirements.

Prior to your arrival in Bangkok, you will also need to fill out the new Thailand Digital Arrival Card. This form should only be filled out through the official Thai Immigration Bureau Portal at the following link:

<https://tdac.immigration.go.th/arrival-card/#/home>.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$7,725 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 Mai 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 is \$875 for those requesting a single room. 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, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$775 per person; see fieldguides.com/payment-options/ for our Payment Options.

Full payment of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or by July 13, 2026. We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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 full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

NCP 7/2020; 3/26JV; 4/26mz;peg