



## Thailand: 18 Days Birding in Paradise

### **Day 1: Pick Up From Either Chiang Rai Airport or Hotel; Transfer to Chiang Saen for Our First Taste of Thai Birding**

Our morning will start with an early pick up from the Airport (for those arriving the same date the tour starts) or in the hotel you stayed the night before. We will be transferred to Chiang Saen. Chiang Saen is a small town in northeast Thailand situated near the Mekong River and the border of Laos and Myanmar. There are several birding sites of interest near the town like the Chiang Saen Lake, very important for birds since it is the only large lake in the far north. Wildfowl here include Lesser Whistling Duck, sometimes in hundreds, Common Pochard and Ferruginous Duck. More uncommon species sometimes present include Baikal Teal and Baer's Pochard, one of the few places you can still find this bird over-wintering. In the eastern part of the lake we can find Purple Sunbird and Burmese Shrike. Along the lakeshore we will look for crakes, possibly Cinnamon Bittern, Freckle-breasted Woodpecker and Racquet-tailed Treepie, and various wintering migrants.

After a great first day birding in Thailand we will spend the night in our nice hotel in the Chiang Rai Area.

### **Day 2: Full Day Birding Chiang Saen Area**

We will revisit the Chiang Saen area adding additional species and birding spots, hopefully seeing the sought-after Siberian Rubythroat or Eurasian Wryneck. There is an excellent chance of seeing Ruddy Shelduck, Garganey and Asian Openbill. Other exciting species include Burmese Shrike, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Plain Prinia, River Lapwing, Grey-throated Martin, Small Pratincole and Temminck's Stint.

We might also see: Chinese Francolin, Long-tailed Shrike, Striated Grassbird and other species. The latter is now irregularly encountered. Nearby grasslands hold large roosts of both Eastern Marsh Harrier and Pied Harrier, as well as Eastern Grass Owl.

After a great day of birding in Thailand we will spend the night in our nice hotel in the Chiang Rai Area.



### **Day 3: AM Birding Chiang Saen Area and Transfer to Fang, Birding Along the Way**

After our last look at the excellent wetland at Chiang Saen, looking for species we might have missed the day before, such as Grey Bushchat, White-vented Myna, Red-rumped Swallow, Eurasian Wryneck, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Crested Goshawk and White-breasted Waterhen, we will move on to Fang. If time allows we will visit both the hot springs and paddies. In the paddies we can find Dusky Warbler, Thick-billed Warbler, Black-collared Starling and Black-winged Stilt. Birds here also include Blue Whistling Thrush, Horsfield's Bush Lark, Indian Roller, Indochinese Swiftlet, Mrs. Hume's Pheasant, White-bellied Redstart, Lesser Whistling Duck, Asian Openbill, Greater Painted-snipe, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Pin-tailed Snipe, Greater Coucal, Asian Koel, Large-tailed Nightjar, White-throated Kingfisher and Black-capped Kingfisher.

In the hot springs we will look for: Coppersmith Barbet, Cook's Swift, Great Myna, Taiga Flycatcher, Spotted Dove, Black-hooded Oriole, Grey Wagtail, Olive-backed Pipit, Asian Barred Owlet, Blue Rock Thrush, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Black Drongo, Ashy Drongo, Pin-striped Tit-Babbler, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Black-collared Starling, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Bluethroat, Siberian Rubythroat and Blue Whistling Thrush.

We will spend the night in one of the many nice hotels near Fang.



## **Days 4 & 5: Two Full Days Birding at Doi Lang**

Situated on the Burmese border, Doi Lang without a doubt is one of the best birding sites in Thailand, and we will spend two full days here enjoying its spectacular birds. Doi Lang is part of the Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park. This park is a major attraction to birders because of its location, and is one of the largest national parks in the far north of Thailand. It is one of the only places you can find a variety of species not present elsewhere in Thailand. The park has a great variety of habitats which translate to a good variety of bird species. You can find open pine and oak-pine forests, also evergreen, dipterocarp and bamboo forests.

Mouthwatering species include Giant Nuthatch, Himalayan Cutia, Mrs. Hume's Pheasant, Crested Bunting, Crested Finchbill, Hodgson's Frogmouth and Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler. Birding this remote area is thrilling, with the chance of finding perhaps a rare laughingthrush or flycatcher all adding to the excitement. Highlights of the day include: Russet Bush Warbler, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Burmese Shrike, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, White-browed Laughingthrush, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Red-tailed Laughingthrush, Rusty-naped Pitta, Spotted Wren-Babbler (Spotted Elachura), Scarlet Finch, Golden Bush Robin, Green Cochoa, Jerdon's Bushchat and Fire-tailed Sunbird. Stunning birds like Black-breasted Thrush, Grey-sided Thrush, Eyebrowed Thrush, Spot-winged Grosbeak, Black-eared Shrike-babbler, Spot-breasted Laughingthrush, Red-faced Liocichla, Orange-flanked Bush-Robin, White-tailed Flycatcher, Black-throated Tit and Whiskered Yuhina are also possible.

We will spend two nights in our lovely hotel in Fang City, near Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park.

## **Day 6: AM Transfer and Full Day Birding at Doi Ang Khang**

On day 6, we will be transferred to Doi Ang Khang where we will bird all day. This superb mountainous region in the northwest of Thailand holds many *Phylloscopus*

warblers, including Claudia's Leaf Warbler and Pallas's Leaf Warbler. Today we will visit the Firebreak Trail. This trail holds one of the last remains of evergreen rainforest at Doi Ang Khang. Here we will aim to see Rufous-winged Buzzard, Small Niltava, Eastern Buzzard, Scarlet-faced Liocichla, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Rufous-throated Partridge and Martens's Warbler. In the open areas we can find Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Grey Treepie and Spot-throated Babbler. Spot-breasted Parrotbills are sometimes seen along the trail. If there has been a cold winter further north we may encounter a rare thrush, perhaps Black-breasted Thrush or Siberian Thrush.

The open wooded canopy is good for *Phylloscopus* warblers like Claudia's Leaf Warbler and Pallas's Leaf Warbler. Other species we may see include Buff-throated Warbler, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Cook's Swift, Great Barbet, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Spot-throated Babbler, White-browed Laughingthrush, Gould's Sunbird, Mrs. Hume's Pheasant and Black-headed Greenfinch.

After an extensive search for birds at the Firebreak Trail, we will head to our hotel to have supper, rest and prepare for another incredible birding day.



## **Day 7: AM Birding at Doi Ang Khang and PM Birding at Doi Chiang Dao**

In the morning we will head to Doi Ang Khang. This time we will try for another trail, the Mae Phur Valley Trail. Here we will hope to find any species we may have missed the day before like Collared Owlet, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Gray-headed Parrotbill, Pale Blue Flycatcher, Sapphire Flycatcher, Striated Bulbul, Pale-billed Parrotbill, Lesser Shortwing, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Scaly Thrush, Silver-eared Mesia, Hill Blue Flycatcher, Large Niltava, Rufous-bellied Niltava and Daurian Redstart.

When the day gets hotter we will get back to our car and move onto Doi Chiang Dao. Doi Chiang Dao is the tallest peak of the Pha Daeng National Park. The habitat here

includes pine forest, pine-oak forest, evergreen forest and open scrub. Along the various trails species we hope to see include Crested Treeswift, Streaked Wren-Babbler, Hainan Blue Flycatcher, Bamboo Woodpecker, Mountain Bamboo Partridge, Bay Woodpecker, Pale-footed Bush Warbler, Blyth's Shrike-babbler, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Hill Prinia, Chestnut-flanked White-eye, Oriental White-eye, Japanese White-eye and Spot-winged Grosbeak.

The temple grounds of Wat Tamphaplong offer excellent birding, with Orange-breasted Trogon, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Puff-throated Bulbul, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Brown-backed Needletail, Scarlet Minivet, Violet Cuckoo, Blue-throated Barbet, Great Barbet, Blue-winged Leafbird, Orange-bellied Leafbird and Asian Fairy-bluebird all occurring.

We will end our day by heading to our hotel near Doi Chiang Dao to have supper and rest.



### **Days 8 & 9: AM Birding at Doi Chiang Dao and Mid-day Transfer to Doi Inthanon National Park with Afternoon Birding**

We will bird Doi Chiang Dao in the morning. Further new species may include Blue-throated Barbet, Grey Treepie, Aberrant Bush Warbler and Slender-billed Oriole. After a good morning of birding, and when the day gets hotter, we will move to Doi Inthanon National Park. Doi Inthanon has long been considered the jewel of north Thailand's birding locations. It is not only the highest mountain, at 8,500 feet, but it also has a system of good roads, together with a few trails. The habitat varies enormously, from dry dipterocarp at the foot of the mountain to a peat swamp at the summit, and large tracts of primary forest remain. Birds we hope to see include Pygmy Wren-babbler, Black Baza, White-rumped Falcon, Collared Falconet and Rufous-winged Buzzard. Skulking thrushes include Dark-sided, Siberian and Eyebrowed. Other sought-after species here are Ashy Wood Pigeon, four species of niltava and both Green and Purple Cochoas.



A variety of high altitude warblers includes Buff-barred Leaf Warbler, Blyth's Leaf Warbler and Ashy-throated Leaf Warbler, two of which cannot be found elsewhere in Thailand. Sibias, laughingthrushes and minlas are plentiful. The peat swamp includes Dark-sided Thrush, Pygmy Wren-babbler, White-browed Shortwing and Eurasian Woodcock.



### **Day 10: Birding Doi Inthanon NP in the AM & Mae Ping NP in the PM**

We will have a final morning at Doi Inthanon National Park, looking for any species we are missing; perhaps a Lesser Shortwing, White-browed Shortwing, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Slaty-breasted Tesia, Green Cochoa, White-rumped Falcon, Collared Falconet, Black-headed Woodpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker, Black-backed Forktail or Blossom-headed Parakeet. After departing the mountain we will move to Mae Ping National Park.

Mae Ping National Park contains some of the best dipterocarp forest in Thailand. Because of this, it is excellent habitat for larger woodpeckers, including Black-headed Woodpecker, White-bellied Woodpecker and Great Slaty Woodpecker. Grey-headed Parakeet, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, White-bellied Erpornis, Burmese Nuthatch and Oriental Scops Owl are other draws here.

In the late afternoon we will head to the nearest town where we will stay the night and rest to enjoy another half day in Mae Ping National Park the following morning.

### **Days 11 & 12: AM Birding in Mae Ping NP and PM Birding in Mae Wong NP**

We will bird the morning at Mae Ping National Park. We will visit new trails and hope to find Orange-breasted Trogon, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Slaty-backed Forktail, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, White-browed Fantail, Chinese Francolin,

Green-billed Malkoha, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Lineated Barbet, Greater Yellownappe, Ruby-cheeked Sunbird and Brown Dipper. We will then move to the excellent Mae Wong National Park. Mae Wong is one of the westernmost parks in Thailand. It is home to a few very rare species like Burmese Yuhina and Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler. The park headquarters is situated in an area of bamboo at the base of the mountain. The species we hope to encounter include Rusty-naped Pitta, Blue Pitta, Long-tailed Broadbill, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Asian Stubtail and Grey Peacock-Pheasant.

On day 12 we will visit new trails in Mae Wong National Park, trying for more important bird species. On one of the many trails in Mae Wong there are two lookouts with excellent views and good birding. This is the only spot in Thailand that Rufous-necked Hornbills are seen. In a good year, Burmese Yuhina move around the small fruiting trees. This is also the best spot for Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler and Little Cuckoo-Dove. Three kinds of laughingthrushes come in for food together with Blue Whistling Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush and Silver-eared Mesia.

After a good day of birding, in the evening there could be a chance to switch focus to mammals. Leopard Cat and Yellow-throated Marten are regular.



### **Day 13: AM Birding in Mae Wong NP; Mid-day Transfer to Bueng Boraphet**

In the morning we will bird Mae Wong once again. When the day gets hotter we will be transferred to Bueng Boraphet. Approximately 250 km north of Bangkok, this large wetland holds numerous waterbirds. We will spend most of our time here on a boat but there are two areas of interest at the edge of the lake which are well worth visiting. Garganey are numerous and counts over a thousand are commonplace. Other birds frequenting the lake include Cotton Pygmy Goose, White-browed Crake, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, Cinnamon Bittern and possibly Black Bittern. The drier areas surrounding the lake are good for Asian Golden Weaver and Baya Weaver. The marshy areas hold Oriental Warbler and Black-browed Reed Warblers. Oriental Pratincole use nearby fields to rest and can be seen hawking over the lake.

After good birding in Bueng Boraphet, we will head to our nearby hotel to have supper, rest and prepare for another great Thai birding day.

### **Day 14: AM Bueng Boraphet Birding & Driving South to Laem Pak Bia**

We will head to Bueng Boraphet for a good morning of birding around the freshwater lake. On the northern edge of the lake there is a large area of agricultural ponds with low shrubs around them. We visit this area for Savanna Nightjar and Siberian Rubythroat, but there are many birds here and it is worth spending some hours walking and driving around the area.

At mid-day we will drive south to Laem Pak Bia. This area of salt pans needs little introduction, holding a small wintering population of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Sifting through the flocks of Red-necked Stint will, hopefully, yield an encounter with this fast-declining species. Other waders include Asian Dowitcher, Ruff, Heuglin's Gull, Milky Stork, Spot-billed Pelican and possibly Eastern Curlew. Day counts of thirty plus wader species are the norm at Laem Pak Bia.

After another great day of birding in Thailand we will spend the night in our nice hotel near Laem Pak Bia .



### **Day 15: Full Day Birding and Boat Trip at Laem Pak Bia**

We will enjoy a full day birding small areas of ponds and mangroves, salt pans and sandspit. We will take a boat to the sandspit at Laem Pak Bia, where a different array of birds awaits us: Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot, Caspian Tern, Chinese Egret, Malaysian Plover and the recently described White-faced Plover (split from Kentish Plover) are frequent. Pallas's Gulls use the sandspit to roost. There is often a rarity present, with Black-tailed Gull being the most regular. Also found here are



Black-faced Spoonbill, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Slaty-backed Gull, Red Phalarope, Black-legged Kittiwake and Eurasian Wryneck, among many others.

In the pond and mangrove area we can find Javan Pond Heron, Chinese Pond Heron, Red-wattled Lapwing, Pin-tailed Snipe, Little Cormorant, Little Egret and Great Egret. Less frequent birds include Indian Cormorant, Little Grebe, Greater Painted-snipe, Black-capped Kingfisher and Ruddy-breasted Crake. A couple of short walkways give access inside the mangrove, where Golden-bellied Gerygone is abundant and Striated Heron can usually be found.

### **Day 16 & 17: Birding at Kaeng Krachan National Park**

We have the opportunity to enjoy the plethora of waders again this morning before transferring to Kaeng Krachan at mid-day. The largest of Thailand's National Parks, covering 1,125 square miles, Kaeng Krachan is home to a dazzling array of species. We will enjoy this beautiful location for 2 full days. Ratchet-tailed Treepie, White-faced Scops Owl, Ferruginous Partridge, Eared Pitta, various broadbills, Heart-spotted Woodpecker and Tickell's Brown Hornbill are some of star attractions. We will also have use of private hides, where there will be the opportunity to get point blank views of species such as Bar-backed Partridge, Green-legged Partridge, Siberian Blue Robin and Orange-headed Thrush.

The park also hosts numerous mammals. Asian Elephant, Banded Langur, Black Giant Squirrel and White-handed Gibbon are all regularly seen.

### **Day 18: AM Birding at Kaeng Krachan National Park and PM Flights Home**

A final morning birding at Kaeng Krachan National Park will assure that we see the most bird species as possible in this great location. Today we will hope to see Great Barbet, Blue-throated Barbet, Black-throated Laughingthrush, Blyth's Shrike-babbler, Rufous-browed Flycatcher, Kalij Pheasant, Red Jungle Fowl, Green-legged Partridge and Bar-backed Partridge.

We will be transferred to Bangkok at mid-day in order to take our flights home.

