Eagle-Eye Tours



Thailand Trip Report 2023

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Day 1 - Jan 9, 2023

Aranta Airport Hotel

While the official start to our tour wasn't until the evening dinner, many of us found each other earlier – binoculars being the giveaway, and birded the grounds of the hotel, mainly the adjacent klong (canal). Throughout the day, some relaxed birdwatching yielded over 30 species, and provided a nice introduction for the birders new to Asia. *Highlights: Pink-necked Green-Pigeon, Plaintive Cuckoo, House Swift, Asian Palm Swift, Common Kingfisher, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, and Common Iora.*

Day 2 - Jan 10, 2023

Lad Krabang Agriculture Lands

Following breakfast, we met our guide, Nang, loaded up the vans, and headed out. Our first stop was a short detour east of Bangkok to a patchwork of rice paddies, wetlands and scrub near Lat Krabang. Our main targets were Red Avadavat and White-browed Crake which we found relatively quickly, giving us extra time to look for other open country birds. *Highlights: White-browed Crake, Bronze-winged Jacana, various Reed Warblers, Red Avadavat, several Munias and Weavers, Plain-backed Sparrow, and Richard's Pipit.*

Wat Chalerm Phrakiet and Wat Saun Yai Temples

Our second stop for birding is Wat Chaloem Phra Kiat Worawihan, and barely out of the vans, we

found our two main targets: Red-breasted Parakeets and Spotted Owlet. Historically, these owls were much more common and widespread around Bangkok, but as development has intensified, they have become increasingly rare and very local. A bonus bird at this site was an Oriental Scops-Owl. *Highlights: Red-breasted Parakeet, Spotted Owlet, and Oriental Scops-Owl.* Next, we visit the nearby Wat Suan Yai Temple where the community is actively protecting the nesting cavities of Alexandrine Parakeets, a rare and local species in Thailand. We quickly found about a half-dozen parakeets and get spectacular views of a Spotted Owlet sitting calmly on the temple's gilded decorations. *Highlights: Alexandrine Parakeet and Spotted Owlet.*



Temples in Bangkok © Chris Burney



Temples in Bangkok © Chris Burney

Khok Kham Bird Center

Following a lead from a local shorebird manager, we switched our route a bit to get another shot at Spoon-billed Sandpiper. When we got there, it was late afternoon, the conditions were perfect and the manager had his scope set up already on the bird! The salt pans are covered with hundreds of shorebirds, almost an overwhelming number. We stayed until it got dark and eventually had amazing views comparing the differences between terns, plovers, stints, knots and much more. *Highlights: Pacific Golden-Plover, Lesser Sand-Plover, Greater Sand-Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Great Knot, Red Knot, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Long-toed Stint, Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Little Tern, and Brahminy Kite.*

Day 3 - Jan 11, 2023

Laem Phak Bia and Pak Thale

Thousands of shorebirds winter on the salt pans and beaches of this part of Thailand, and we birded several well-known sites throughout the day. Since we had amazing looks at Spoon-billed Sandpipers the previous day, we did not need to look for this “needle in a haystack” today, giving us more opportunity for our other shorebird targets, namely Asian Dowitcher and Nordmann’s Greenshank which we found these two at our first stop! We spent the rest of the morning getting better views and appreciating the clouds of shorebirds whirling around us. In the afternoon, we took the boat trip out to the sandspit to find Chinese Egret, Malaysian Plover and White-faced Plover – we missed the egret, but had excellent views of the plovers. *Highlights: Garganey, Pied Avocet, Kentish Plover, Malaysian Plover, White-faced Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit, Asian Dowitcher, Terek Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Nordmann’s Greenshank, Gull-billed Tern, Caspian Tern, Common Tern, Pacific Reef-Heron, Striated Heron, Black-capped Kingfisher, Collared Kingfisher, Yellow Bittern, Cinnamon Bittern, and Pied Harrier.*



Boat trip to the sandspit at Laem Phak Bia. © Chris Burney



Boat trip to the sandspit at Laem Phak Bia © Chris Burney

Outside Kaeng Krachan

Before it got dark, we did a little birding near our lodging for the next few days, Samarn Bird Camp. *Highlights: Shikra, Large-tailed Nightjar, Oriental Pied-Hornbill, White-throated Kingfisher, Lineated Barbet, Racket-tailed Treepie, and Black-collared Starling.*

Day 4 - Jan 12, 2023

Kaeng Krachan National Park (Lower Section)

Kaeng Krachan National Park is Thailand's largest national park, occupying 2915 square kilometres (1125 sq. miles). This park is part of a larger complex of protected areas that encompass 4822 square kilometres (1862 sq. miles) in the Tenasserim Range on the boundary between Thailand and Myanmar. For our first day, we explored the lower half of the main road through the park to the middle campground – a mixture of dry deciduous forest that transitions to evergreen as you climb higher in elevation. After lunch, we found a fruiting fig loaded with pigeons, Asian Fairy-bluebirds, barbets, and the bird of the morning – a female Green Broadbill. *Highlights: Thick-billed Green-Pigeon, Wedge-tailed Green-Pigeon, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Indian Cuckoo, Gray-rumped Treeswift, Vernal Hanging-Parrot, various Minivets, Black Baza, Crested Serpent-Eagle, Great Hornbill, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Greater and Common Flameback, Gray-headed Woodpecker, Black-and-red Broadbill, Green Broadbill, Sultan Tit, various Bulbuls, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Asian Fairy-bluebird, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Forest Wagtail, and Eurasian Hoopoe.*



Black-and-red Broadbill, along the main road in Kaeng Krachan National Park © Chris Burney

Bird Hide near Kaeng Krachan National Park

Historically, the blinds in and around Kaeng Krachan National Park were used by poachers for subsistence hunting and sale in local markets. Species particularly hard hit were gamebirds, Lesser Mouse Deer, and Barking Deer. In addition, various passerines such as White-rumped Shama were captured for the caged-bird trade. Beginning in 2008, nearby lodges convinced the poachers to use the blinds strictly for ecotourism – birdwatchers would pay an entry fee that would go directly to the local community. The peak of activity is between 3:30pm to 6:30pm, and we settled into our plastic chairs a little ahead of schedule with our cameras ready. Birds passed through in waves, some visiting repeatedly and giving us amazing views. *Highlights: Bar-backed Partridge, Kalij Pheasant, Red Junglefowl, Asian Emerald Dove, Blue Pitta, Puff-throated Babbler, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Lesser and Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, and Indochinese Blue Flycatcher.*



Blue Pitta, Kaeng Krachan National Park © Chris Burney

Day 5 - Jan 13, 2023

Kaeng Krachan National Park (Upper Section)

On our second day in the park, we explored the upper parts of the main road starting from the fig tree near the middle campground, and we climbed into a pair of 4x4 pickups to access it. The forest in this section of the park is taller and thicker, making the birding a little more challenging – we end up hearing more of our targets than seeing them, however, we did have some special moments such as the Gray Peacock-Pheasants crossing the road, and a few sizable mixed-species flocks.
Highlights: Gray Peacock-Pheasant, Red-billed Malkoha, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Himalayan Swiftlet, Crested Goshawk, Rusty-cheeked Hornbill, Bamboo Woodpecker, Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Broadbill, Common Green-Magpie, Indochinese Roller, Ochraceous Bulbul, Olive Bulbul (Baker's), Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Rufous-browed Flycatcher, Sulphur-breasted Warbler, Yellow-bellied Warbler, Golden Babbler, Rufous-fronted Babbler, White-browed Scimitar-Babbler, Collared Babbler, Black-throated Laughingthrush, Common Hill Myna, Orange-bellied Leafbird, and much more.

Day 6 - Jan 14, 2023

Samarn Bird Camp

Before packing up the vans, and making our way to Khao Yai National Park, we spent an hour or so birding the grounds of the lodge. *Highlights: Oriental Honey-buzzard, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, and White-shouldered Starling.*

Phraek Nam Daeng (Rice Paddies)

Another stop in the vast network of rice paddies, aquaculture ponds and scrublands yielded most of the same species. Unfortunately, many of the fallow wetlands which had been prime sites for several birds have recently been converted due to new tax policies regarding agricultural lands.

Highlights: Little Grebe, Gray-headed Lapwing, Oriental Darter, and Pied Harrier.

Mahachai Mangrove Forest

A quick stop for two mangrove specialists: Golden-bellied Gerygone and Mangrove Whistler. While the Gerygone is fairly common, the Whistler is a little trickier to find, but we got lucky and ended up getting amazing views of this species. *Highlights: Black Baza, Brahminy Kite, Golden-bellied Gerygone, Mangrove Whistler, and Brown-throated Sunbird.*

Wat Phra Phuttabat Noi

Rufous Limestone Babbler is restricted to a small region of limestone outcrops in central Thailand, and we made a quick stop at a temple that is a well-known location for this species. Eventually, we found a pair making their way down an escarpment, and as we were leaving, they gave us great views at close range. *Highlights: Black-naped Monarch, Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Rufous Limestone Babbler, and Blue Rock-Thrush.*

Day 7 - Jan 15, 2023

Khao Yai National Park

We had one full day to explore Thailand's first national park. Established in 1962, Khao Yai is the third largest national park covering an area of 2,168 square kilometres (837 sq. miles). It is part of a larger network of protected areas called Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, a World Heritage Site declared by UNESCO that includes five other conservation areas that extend to the Cambodian border. We first birded the higher reaches of the park slowing down to hopefully find Silver Pheasants and Siamese Firebacks crossing and/or displaying along the road - no luck. Near the top of the mountain at the Khao Khiao viewpoint, we found a nice mix of birds: Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker (Cambodian), various Minivets and Bulbuls, and White-browed Scimitar-Babbler. Lunch was at the visitor center where we had nice views of various barbets and Buffy Fish-Owl. After lunch, we tried a few different areas of the park, namely the Haew Suwat Waterfalls and the main campgrounds. The waterfall area has Slaty-backed Forktail, and a few of us got views of a Mugimaki Flycatcher. We then headed to another section of the park – Haew Narok Waterfall Trail, and see a large bull elephant on the way. At the trailhead parking lot, we found a nice mixed flock with a nice mix of sunbirds. Towards the end of the day, we watched Brown-backed Needletails divebombing a pond to drink, and a bonus was Besra flying directly over us. Back at dinner, we had a Great Eared-Nightjar foraging near our rooms. *Highlights: Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, Brown-backed Needletail, Buffy Fish-Owl, Great Hornbill, Besra, Blue-eared Barbet, Green-eared Barbet, Moustached Barbet, Ashy Minivet, White-bellied Erpornis, Gray-backed Shrike, Blue Whistling-Thrush, Slaty-backed Forktail, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker (Cambodian), Ruby-cheeked Sunbird, Van Hasselt's Sunbird, Crimson Sunbird, Little Spiderhunter, and Blue-winged Leafbird. Mammals include Asian Elephant, Sambar, and Red Muntjac.*



Mountain Imperial-Pigeon at Khao Yai National Park © Chris Burney



Buffy Fish-Owl at Khao Yai National Park © Chris Burney



Red Muntjac at Khao Yai National Park © Chris Burney



Northern Pig-tailed Macaque at Khao Yai National Park © Chris Burney

Day 8 - Jan 16, 2023

The Jungle House (Lodge)

Before heading to the airport for our flight to Chiang Rai, we birded the lush grounds of the Jungle

House. We saw a lot of the same species, and got our first looks at an Asian Barred Owlet. *Highlights: Greater Coucal, Green-billed Malkoha, Asian Barred Owlet, Lineated Barbet, Red-breasted Parakeet, and Chestnut-flanked White-eye.*

Rice Paddy near Airport

With a little extra time before our flight, we made a quick stop to get better views of Gray-headed Lapwings in a rice paddy, and ended up getting our first Little Ringed Plovers for the trip. *Highlights: Gray-headed Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover and Oriental Reed Warbler.*

Tha Ton

On our way to the hotel, we made a quick stop at an agricultural area that is a well-known roost for various buntings, including Yellow-breasted Bunting. While we ended up only hearing a large flock of buntings gathering in the distance, we saw several new birds for the trip. *Highlights: White-breasted Waterhen, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Small Pratincole, Black-winged Kite, Asian Green Bee-eater, Long-tailed Shrike, Pied Bushchat, Purple Sunbird, and Yellow-breasted Bunting.*

Day 9 - Jan 17, 2023

Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park – Doi San Ju

We started early today to get our blinds in position for a stakeout for Hume's Pheasant, and we eventually had great views of a male and female. After the show, we spent the remainder of the day travelling along the border with Myanmar looking for mixed flocks. *Highlights: Hume's Pheasant, Oriental Turtle-Dove, Cook's Swift, Black Eagle, White-browed Shrike-Babbler (Blyth's), Maroon Oriole, Gray-backed Shrike, Japanese Tit, Black Bulbul, Mountain Tailorbird, Gray-headed Parrotbill, Buff-chested Warbler, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, Himalayan Cutia, Blue-winged Minla, Spectacled Barwing, White-browed Laughingthrush, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Ultramarine Flycatcher, and Common Rosefinch.*



Spectacled Barwing near the border with Myanmar in Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park © Chris

Burney



Ultramarine Flycatcher along the border with Myanmar, Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park © Chris Burney

Day 10 - Jan 18, 2023

Doi Ang Khang

We visited a number of sites around Doi Ang Khang starting at the campground where we found our first Giant Nuthatch, flocks of Brown-breasted Bulbul and Crested Finchbill. Next, we travelled a short way down the road to the Chinese Cemetery, and the mix of agricultural lands and secondary forest is full of birds – news ones include Daurian Redstart, Silver-eared Mesia, and Chestnut Bunting. We then visited a temple, Wat Phra That Doi Ang Khang, to look for thrushes. After lunch, we visited the beautiful grounds of the Royal Agricultural Station and scored Streaked Wren-Babbler and White-tailed Robin. Our last planned stop was a border checkpoint where we found a very cooperative Burmese Shrike. *Highlights: Burmese Shrike, Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, Rufous-fronted Babbler, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Giant Nuthatch, Gray Treepie, White-headed Bulbul, Silver-eared Mesia, Streaked Wren-Babbler, Black-breasted Thrush, Eyebrowed Thrush, White-tailed Robin, Daurian Redstart, Streaked Spiderhunter, Orange-bellied Leafbird, and Chestnut Bunting.*

Day 11 - Jan 19, 2023

Huai Bong Reservoir

We started our birding today in the dry Dipterocarp forests near Huai Bong Reservoir, and quickly found our two main targets: Red-billed Blue-Magpie and Lesser Whistling-Duck. *Highlights: Lesser Whistling-Duck, Garganey, Rosy Minivet, Red-billed Blue-Magpie, and Rufous Treepie.*

Rice Paddies near Ping River

We made an impromptu stop along the Ping River and found a nice mix of wetland birds including a lone Greater Painted-Snipe. *Highlights: Greater Painted-Snipe, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, and Citrine Wagtail.*

Mae Taeng Irrigation Project

Our main target for this site was Wire-tailed Swallow, and we had wonderful comparison views of several birds perched with Barn Swallows. *Highlights: Green Sandpiper, Small Pratincole, Shikra, and Wire-tailed Swallow.*

Ban Hong Wildlife Reserve

As it started to get late, we made our last stop of the day for Green Peafowls at Ban Hong Wildlife Reserve. We immediately saw a large group assembled near the entrance, and observed a spectacular show – males displaying for the females and battling for dominance. *Highlights: Green Peafowl and Asian Green Bee-eater.*



Green Peafowl © Chris Burney



Green Peafowl at Ban Hong Non-hunting Area, near Chiang Mai © Chris Burney

Day 12 - Jan 20, 2023

Doi Inthanon National Park – Summit

Highlights: Rufous-throated Partridge, Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail, Pygmy Cupwing, Ashy-throated Warbler, Rufous-winged Fulvetta, Silver-eared Laughingthrush, Chestnut-tailed Minla, Dark-sided Thrush, Gray-sided Thrush, Himalayan Shortwing, and Green-tailed Sunbird (Doi Inthanon).

Doi Inthanon National Park – Lower Sections

We spent the rest of the day slowly descending through the park and exploring the different forest types along the way. In the humid mid-elevation forests, we ran into a nice mixed flock as we were watching Slaty-bellied Tesia. Unfortunately, the flock stayed high in the canopy and we only had brief views of stunners such as Clicking Shrike-Babbler and Yellow-cheeked Tit. Next, we visited a riparian area, mainly for Plumbeous and White-capped Redstart. Lastly, we explored the dry forests at the base of the park and soon found our main target, Collared Falconet. *Highlights: Rufous-winged Buzzard, Collared Falconet, Red-headed Trogon, Clicking Shrike-Babbler, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Plumbeous Redstart, White-capped Redstart, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Golden Babbler, Gray-throated Babbler and Scaly Thrush.*

Day 13 - Jan 21, 2023

Blossom-headed Parakeet Conservation Area

We got to the observation tower early to observe the parakeets leaving their roosts. While we waited for the parakeets, we saw a nice mix of birds including a few new ones for the trip. *Highlights: Eurasian Hoopoe, Blossom-headed Parakeet, and Black-hooded Oriole.*

Touch Star Resort

Before we headed back to Bangkok, we birded the grounds around the lodge seeing many of the same open country species we've seen throughout the trip. *Highlights: Gray-breasted Prinia and Thick-billed Warbler.*

Ob Khan National Park

Enroute to the airport, we made one last stop along the way. *Highlights: Violet Cuckoo, White-crested Laughingthrush, and Black-backed Forktail.*



Eagle-Eye Tours group in Thailand 2023