



Thailand Trip Report (January 2026)

[Link: Thailand Trip Report \(January 2026\)](#)

Our tour this year covered many of the best birding locations in central and northern Thailand. From the staggering diversity and abundance of shorebirds on the coastal plain to the super diverse forests of Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai National Parks and finally the mountainous regions of the north with their pine clad slopes and distinctly Himalayan avian influences we saw over 430 species during our two week tour of the country. In addition to the numerous avian highlights we also had some great mammal sightings including Lar and Pileated Gibbons, Smooth-coated Otters, Lesser Mouse-deer and Gaur.

Day 1

Our first morning began on the outskirts of Bangkok in the parking lot of the first of many spectacular temples we would see on this trip. Just outside the walls the rice paddies were full of wetland species and we were treated to great looks at Yellow Bittern, White-browed Crake and Bronze-winged Jacana along with our first views of more common species in the open country of Thailand. Heading back into the city we made a wide array of stops for specific targets including Java Sparrows at a bustling market, Red-breasted and Alexandrine Parakeets at a pair of temples and roosting Collared Scops-Owls in a city park. We ended the day at Khok Kam where we had our first looks at the vast array of shorebirds wintering along the Gulf of Thailand. The undoubted highlight was spectacular views of a Spoon-billed Sandpiper as it fed at close range near sunset.



Spotted Owlet © Phil Chaon



Spoon-billed Sandpiper © Phil Chaon



Thailand birding group © Phil Chaon

Day 2

A day dedicated to waders. The early risers headed out to the back of our beachfront hotel to watch a flight of Little Terns moving along the coast. Heading out the vast salt pans we were treated to a large flock of Asian Dowitchers along with hundreds of Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers, Broad-billed Sandpipers and Bar-tailed Godwits. A little searching turned up a ghostly Nordmann's Greenshank among the hordes of other shorebirds. After lunch we visited a freshwater wetland near the hotel where we lucked into a vagrant Black-faced Spoonbill that has been moving around the area this winter but has been quite unpredictable! A walk down the Royal Project mangrove boardwalk turned up sweetly singing Golden-bellied Gerygones, a Mangrove Whistler and lots of odd Blue-spotted Mudskippers! We ended the day with an afternoon boat trip with Mr. Daeng to the Laem Phak Bia sandspit where we took a walk along the beach to observe Malaysian and White-faced Plovers, Chinese Egret and Eurasian Curlews. The boat ride back was highlighted by dozens of Black-capped and Collared Kingfishers and a few sleeping Lyle's Flying Foxes.



Salt Pans © Phil Chaon



White-faced Plover © Phil Chaon



Our group © Nang Sanders

Day 3

Our first of three full days in Kaeng Krachan National Park took us to the high point of the mountain. We stopped on the way up the long bumpy road for a pair of Great Hornbills feeding overhead. Reaching the summit we focused on a few fruiting trees (and maybe a few cups of coffee) while enjoying an endless stream of bulbuls, White-browed Scimitar Babblers, Blue-throated Barbets and green-pigeons. Heading into the forest along a newly opened section of road paid off with fantastic looks at a pair of cartoonish Black and Yellow Broadbills and lilliputian White-browed Piculet. Heading back down the mountain we stopped at a stunning forest vista to check out a pair of Wreathed Hornbills and search the bamboo for Collared Babblers. With daylight fading we exited the park but not before stopping to spotlight a massive Gaur visiting a watering hole in the gloaming.



Mountain Bulbul © Phil Chaon



Black-and-yellow Broadbill © Phil Chaon



White-browed Piculet © Phil Chaon

Day 4

Our second day in Kaeng Krachan was spent exploring the vast evergreen forests that stretch from the boundary of the park across the border well into Myanmar. Our first surprise of the day was a nice patch of seeding bamboo that held a small group of colorful Pin-tailed Parrotfinches. At the same spot we had an equally vibrant Ruby-cheeked Sunbird feeding in flowers at close range. A large fruiting tree had dozens of Oriental Pied Hornbills and a few Great Hornbills as well. The real highlight was a troop of Stump-tailed Macaques that decided to exit the tree in a stampede, dozens of these large primates streaming down the trunk of an ancient fig and entering the forest. After spotting a roosting pair of Brown Boobooks, we decided to hop and and explore the area. We were rewarded with great looks at Banded Broadbill and Orange-breasted Trogon. After some hard work we all managed to get looks at a troop of Spot-necked Babblers, while a Crested Jayshrike nearby decided to remain hidden. Following lunch we visited a Heart-spotted Woodpecker nest and after a short while enjoyed a bird visiting to feed the chicks we could hear noisily begging inside. Returning to the forest we spent some time appreciating a very cooperative group of Lar Gibbon and some more time with Orange-breasted Trogons. With the day growing late we moved to a known roost area to watch a group of pint-sized Black-thighed Falconets coming in for the night. At dusk we stopped by the reservoir to wait for any thirsty mammals. While waiting we enjoyed looks at Large-tailed Nightjar, Great-eared Nightjar and a quick look at a Cinnamon Bittern before retiring for a cold beer and a well deserved rest.



Ruby-cheeked Sunbird © Phil Chaon



Banded Broadbill © Phil Chaon



Lar Gibbon © Phil Chaon

Day 5

Our final full day in the Kaeng Krachan area found us just outside the park. Over the course of the day we waited patiently inside a hide near a spectacular bird feeding station. With some patience we got great views of many shy birds including Large Scimitar Babbler, Bar-backed and Scaly-breasted Partridge, Kalij Pheasant, boisterous Greater and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes and the iconic Red Junglefowl. After many hours we were finally treated to long looks at the spectacular Gray Peacock-pheasant, a bird that certainly makes up for its grayness with its peacockness. Needing to stretch our legs we followed up the hide with a break and some owling, getting near instant responses from Indian Nightjar and Oriental Scops-Owl.



Gray Peacock-Pheasant © Phil Chaon



Lesser Mouse Deer © Phil Chaon



Oriental Scops-Owl © Phil Chaon

Day 6

With a little unfinished business we started the morning back at another hide. After a short wait our target arrived. A Blue Pitta bounced out from the forest to devour mealworms before returning like a feathered Fabergé Egg. From Kaeng Krachan we had a long drive to Khao Yai National Park. We broke up the drive with some birding around Nong Pla Lai rice paddies and enjoyed a large mixed flock of Baya, Streaked and Asian Golden Weavers. While scanning through the many Black Kites we picked out a Booted Eagle and a Greater Spotted Eagle. Before turning north we had lunch at a great little noodle shop, arriving at our colorful hotel in the evening.





Heart-spotted Woodpecker © Phil Chaon

Day 7

Khao Yai is Thailand's first national park and extremely popular both for its beauty and proximity to Bangkok. While the crowds made our first stop for Silver Pheasant a bit of a bust it was great to see so many people out and enjoying this spectacular piece of natural heritage. Relocating to a quieter part of the park things picked up with good looks at Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Yellow-vented and Cambodian Flowerpecker, and a mixed flock of Minivets that included Ashy, Rosy, and Brown-rumped. Heading into the forest netted us a noisy flock of Black-throated and White-crested Laughingthrushes while a trail behind the visitors center delivered a pair of stunning Long-tailed Broadbills and a Laced Woodpecker. As evening approached we staked out a large pond and were treated to great views of massive Brown-backed Needletails coming in for a late afternoon drink. Of course, any great day of birding ends with some owling and a brief excursion near our hotel found us looking at Spot-bellied Eagle Owl. This giant piebald raptor glided silently overhead before making a decidedly less graceful entrance into a large nesting cavity!



Golden-headed Cisticola © Phil Chaon



Black-naped Monarch © Phil Chaon



Our group © Nang Sanders

Day 8

Our second morning in Khao Yai began with a flood of frugivores. A few productive fruiting trees included a nice mix of bulbuls and barbets, Eye-browed and Gray-sided Thrush, and a group of nearly 40 Oriental Pied-Hornbills moving across the clearing. Red-headed Trogon only gave brief views but things were more cooperative at breakfast with a Rufous Woodpecker sitting in the open the entire time and a family of Asian Smooth-coated Otters coming by with breakfast of their own. A pair of Buffy Fish-Owls posed in the open soon after and some roadside birding provided a flock of 5 Wreathed Hornbills and a troop of Pileated Gibbons. After a bit of a midday lull we ventured down a shady trail and located a fly over Jerdon's Baza and a couple of Greater Yellownapes. The highlight of the day occurred when our sharp-eyed driver spotted a group of Silver Pheasants visting a small roadside waterhole. After an initial scramble we all savored close looks at 3 of these improbable, ghostly gamebirds. An excellent way to cap off our time in Khao Yai.



Otter © Phil Chaon



Buffy Fish Owl © Phil Chaon



Great Hornbill © Phil Chaon



Thai BBQ © Phil Chaon

Day 9

Mostly a travel day, we enjoyed a bit of a lie-in before heading to Bangkok to catch our flight. Arriving in Chiang Rai a bit early we were eager to fit in some afternoon birding on our first day in the north. Heading to a lake near the airport we enjoyed some open wetland birding with a

smattering of Cotton Pygmy-Geese, a dozen Ferruginous Ducks, lots of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and a few Gray-headed Swamphens. A little farther down the road we visited a towering and surreal island of limestone karst habitat. Temples and caves dotted the sides of this imposing geologic feature and after some work the vine-covered walls revealed a pair of Annam Limestone Babblers – one of the only known locations in Thailand for this localized species. Of course no visit to the area would be complete without a visit to Wat Rong Suea Ten – the blue temple. This ornate monochromatic marvel looked stunning in the late afternoon light and provided a strong contrast to the simpler shrines we saw along the mountain earlier in the afternoon.



Blue Temple © Phil Chaon



Blue-winged Minla © Phil Chaon

Day 10

Our first full day in the north we ascended into the pine clad hills of Doi Ang Khang. A small dish washing station behind a quiet monastery proved to be a magnet for a breakfast buffet of thrushes. Gray-winged Blackbird, Eyebrowed, Black-breasted and Gray-sided Thrush all showed well while Large Niltava, Silver-eared Mesia and Blue-winged Minla also joined in on the easy meal. The rest of the morning was spent exploring the beautiful Royal Project gardens where among the immaculately landscaped flowers and lawns we savored hordes of Mrs. Goulds Sunbirds, a flock of White-headed Bulbuls feasting on cherry blossoms and a handsome Daurian Redstart. Following lunch we headed to a small pond where we tracked down a long staying group of Black-headed Greenfinches - an irregular winter visitor to northernmost Thailand. Before leaving, an Eastern Buzzard swooped down and perched in front of us on our hilltop overlook. A quick stop at an army outpost gave allowed us to pick up a pair of handsome Burmese Shrikes as we gazed across into Myanmar. We ended the day with a flurry of good birds including a handsome set of bulbuls (Striated and Brown-breasted), and a hulking Spot-winged Grosbeak.



Silver-eared Mesia © Phil Chaon



Mrs. Gould's Sunbird © Phil Chaon



Daurian Redstart © Phil Chaon

Day 11

Another beautiful day back up in the mountains before dawn. We spent the first hour after sunrise waiting in small pop up blinds along the roadside. While the Mrs. Hume's Pheasant didn't make an appearance there was plenty of action with Gray-backed Shrikes, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, and Oriental Turtledove all showing up for some mealworms. Farther down the road we encountered a boisterous group of Red-eyed and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, a particularly cooperative Hume's Treecreeper and a pair of outlandishly oversized Giant Nuthatches. A Siberian Rubythroat wowed us, demonstrating a little bit of color can go a long way. After a lovely picnic breakfast we continued through the forest catching brief but exciting looks at Mountain Bamboo-Partridge and Collared Falconet. Things were a bit quiet in the middle of the day but picked up once again with an exceptionally cooperative Great Barbet. We rounded things off with a charming pair of singing Spot-breasted Parrotbills and a Crested Finchbill.



Siberian Rubythroat © Phil Chaon



Great Barbet © Phil Chaon



Spot-breasted Parrotbill © Phil Chaon

Day 12

We made the most of our travel day to Doi Inthanon with some short but productive birding stops. A visit to the Mae Ai paddies gave us a high diversity of open country birds despite the early morning fog. A flock of a few hundred Baya Weavers in the reedbeds was joined by a few Yellow-breasted and Black-faced Buntings, while out in the fields Citrine Wagtails, Red-throated Pipits, Rosy Pipits and Gray-headed Lapwings put on a good show. The large numbers of snipe flushing from the fields as farmers went to work provided a good ID challenge but we all eventually managed good looks at both Common and Pin-tailed Snipe. The long drive was broken up by a roadside stop for a group of elegant Crested Treeswifts. Late afternoon nearer to our destination we were treated to an exceptional show from a group of gaudy Green Peafowl. We ended the day overlooking the Ping River admiring a few hundred Small Pratincoles doing their best impression of river cobblestones before taking to the air to feed at dusk.



Green Peafowl © Phil Chaon

Day 13

Our first full day in Doi Inthanon began with a few short stops along the road up to the summit. We picked up Red-billed Blue Magpies in a roadside pullout and then walked to a towering waterfall for Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts playing in the rapids below. Upon arrival at the chilly peak of Thailand's tallest mountain we descended into a shady swamp forest, more reminiscent of Nepal than anywhere else in Thailand. A pair of Rufous-throated Partridges greeted us mere feet away. On the boardwalk a flowering tree was a magnet for a host of new birds including dozens of the endemic subspecies of Green-tailed Sunbirds, Yellow-browed Tits and a Chestnut Thrush. Further along we tracked down a gorgeous male Himalayan Bluetail and an increasingly bold group of Silver-eared Laughingthrushes. Nearby on a forest trail we encountered a great mixed flock with Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos, Spectacled Barwings and Clicking Shrike-babblers among the many species present. A open wet area was a great feeding spot for Snowy-browed Flycatcher, Himalayan Shortwing, and even Pygmy Cupwing! A large patch of Himalayan Sapria - a parasitic cousin of the huge Rafflesia, was a clear botanical highlight. After lunch we got great looks at the ornately patterned Scaly Thrush along a nearby stream and ended the day with a group of roosting Speckled Wood-Pigeons.



Himalayan Bluetail © Phil Chaon



Scaly Thrush © Phil Chaon



Himalayan Sapria © Phil Chaon

Day 14

Our second full day in Doi Inthanon started with a visit to the deciduous dry forest in the foothills of the mountains. The weather today was cloudy and windy and the forest was quieter than usual. Despite this we managed brief views of Black-headed Woodpecker and nice scope views of Rufous-winged Buzzard. Walking down a quiet road we encountered a few mixed flocks that were quite exciting but didn't contain many new birds except for a Maroon Oriole. We later returned to the forest trail we visited previously and most of managed to get looks at the elusive Slaty-bellied Tesia and got much better photos of Pygmy Cupwing. In the afternoon we visited a hide and were treated to great views of White-tailed Robin and Streaked Spiderhunter.



Pygmy Cupwing © Phil Chaon



White-tailed Robin © Phil Chaon

Day 15

Our final day of the tour was an exciting end to the trip. Arriving at sunrise at an observation tower a few minutes from our hotel we found our target Blossom-headed Parakeets almost immediately. The next hour or so we observed many species from the tower including our first Black-hooded

Oriole and our best looks at Small Minivet and Green-billed Malkoha. Next we made our way to an area of rice paddies for a truly impressive array of raptors. In addition to the more common species we saw Greater Spotted-Eagle, Booted Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle and Short-toed Snake Eagle from a single stationary point. Not ready to see the trip end we continued to bird during our final lunch hour and picked up Black-winged Kite and Thick-billed Warbler as our final new birds of the trip. It was a fantastic two weeks of birding that managed to sample a wide swath of the famous avian diversity of Thailand. From the sunny shores to the highest peaks we 430+ species all while enjoying spectacular scenery, gorgeous temples, incomparable food and a warm welcome everywhere we went.



Blossom-headed Parakeet © Phil Chaon

[Thailand Birding Tour bird list \(Jan 9 - 25, 2026\)](#)