

# THAILAND HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH 20-APRIL 8, 2021

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Red-headed Trogon (female) © Dion Hobcroft

*The Orient is a timeless land of ancient cultures, golden pagodas, and wonderful, little-known exotic birds. Thailand, situated at the crossroads of three biogeographic provinces (Himalayan, Indochinese and Sunda), is the heartland of Southeast Asia. It hosts a remarkably diverse avifauna of well over 900 species, including some of the world's most beautiful birds. Thailand also offers a variety of interesting mammals, reptiles and amphibians, a number of which we shall see. On previous tours we have enjoyed encounters with White-handed Gibbons, the rarely observed Slow Loris, Leopard, Asian*

*Elephant, and a variety of squirrels, including the spectacular cat-sized Black Giant Squirrel. The people of Thailand are really wonderful—it is indeed the “Land of Smiles.”*

*This tour is an ideal introduction to the biological riches of the Oriental region. From our bases in lovely accommodations with exquisite food, we will explore nearby birding hot-spots, including the lush lowland forests and deciduous woodlands of the rightly renowned Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai National Parks, and the rich montane forests of the far north, in the foothills of the Himalayas.*

*While the pheasants are perhaps the finest spectacle of any Oriental tour, Thailand also boasts a vast array of characteristic Southeast Asian birds that cannot fail to impress any birder, including pigeons, parakeets, malkohas, trogons, hornbills, barbets, kingfishers, broadbills, pittas, minivets, bulbuls, leafbirds, spiderhunters, babblers, parrotbills, and the challenging *Phylloscopus* warblers.*

*This tour can be taken by itself or in combination with Cambodia (March 5-20, 2021).*



**March 20-21, Days 1-2: Travel to Bangkok, Thailand.**

Participants can take one of a number of connections which depart the United States on March 20 and arrive in Bangkok on March 21. Upon arrival and after clearing customs and immigration, participants may proceed to our airport hotel by a direct shuttle, where a room will be reserved in your name. Those arriving in Bangkok early enough on March 21 are welcome to join our leader for dinner.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group should consider arriving in Bangkok on March 20 and spending the night. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging and day-touring arrangements in Bangkok.

NIGHT (March 21): Novotel Airport Hotel, Bangkok

**March 22, Day 3: Birding the Gulf of Siam.** This morning we will leave early for one of the greatest shorebird spectacles on the planet. In order to explore this area’s fascinating mosaic of coastal wetlands and commercial salt farms, we’ll drive west and south along the Gulf of Siam. Large numbers of shorebirds congregate here in addition to a few coastal specialties. Species we may encounter include Brahminy Kite; possibly Slaty-breasted Rail; Pacific Golden and Gray plovers; Greater and Lesser sand plovers; Marsh, Wood, and Common sandpipers; Long-toed and Red-necked stints; Brown-headed Gull; Gull-billed and Whiskered terns; House Swift; Germain’s Swiftlet; Collared Kingfisher; Common Tailorbird; Plain Prinia; Golden-bellied Gerygone; Long-tailed Shrike; and Brown-throated Sunbird. In addition, we may find one of the most extraordinary and endangered shorebirds, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. In recent years this blue-ribbon bird has been found wintering fairly regularly, in



addition to such other shorebird gems as Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpiper, and Great Knot. If the tide permits, we will visit Laem Pak Bia sand spit, home to the scarce Malaysian Plover and the recently re-discovered White-faced Plover. Please note that some activities will be tide-dependent. After an action-packed day we will return back to Bangkok and our very comfortable hotel.

NIGHT: Novotel Airport Hotel, Bangkok

**March 23, Day 4: Drive to Khao Yai National Park.** Despite Bangkok's huge size, there are still remnants of the vast marshes and swamp forests that once characterized the entire Chao Praya River floodplain that is the centerpiece of continental Thailand. We will begin birding with a visit to Muang Boran fishponds during the relative cool of the morning. We can expect to encounter a good range of open-country and secondary woodland birds, as well as large numbers of freshwater wetland species. Some of the birds we may come across include Little Cormorant; Purple and Gray herons; Great, Intermediate, Little and Cattle egrets; Javan Pond-Heron; with a bit of luck Yellow and Cinnamon bitterns; Black-shouldered Kite; Ruddy-breasted Crake; White-breasted Waterhen; Common Moorhen; Pheasant-tailed (uncommon) and Bronze-winged jacanas; Red-wattled Lapwing; a smattering of shorebirds, such as Little Ringed Plover and Wood Sandpiper; Red Collared, Zebra and Spotted doves; Asian Koel; Greater and Lesser coucals; Common, White-throated, and the gorgeous Black-capped kingfishers; Indian Roller; Hoopoe; Coppersmith Barbet; Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker; Asian Palm-Swift; Yellow-vented and Streak-eared bulbuls; Black Drongo; Thick-billed, Black-browed and Oriental Reed-warblers; Oriental Magpie-Robin; Siberian Stonechat; Taiga Flycatcher; Malaysian Pied-Fantail; Brown Shrike; Asian Pied and Black-collared starlings; Common and White-vented mynas; the handsome Plain-backed Sparrow; Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker; and with a bit of luck, the very localized Asian Golden-Weaver.

Then we will drive northward to the ancient capital of Ayutthya, where we will lunch amidst a pantheon of stupas, and remnants of this lovely and important Siamese antiquity. After lunch we will continue on to our very comfortable accommodations near Khao Yai National Park. If time permits, we will make a stop at a spectacular Buddhist temple where we hope to have luck seeing the localized Limestone Wren-Babbler.

NIGHT: Balios Resort Khao Yai, Moo Si



Scaly-breasted Partridge have become reasonably reliable to see in recent years.

© Dion Hobcroft

**March 24-25, Days 5-6: Khao Yai National Park.** Khao Yai National Park is justly regarded as one of the premier reserves in Southeast Asia. It encompasses an area of 2,168 square kilometers and an altitudinal range from 1,600 feet (500 meters) to 4,250 feet (1,328 meters). Khao Yai's lush, tall, evergreen forests alternating with grassy clearings, waterfalls, and pristine creeks provide ideal habitat for many species of birds and mammals. Birding is relatively easy along the forest-lined roads, although we will also work the forest trails in order to see some of the more retiring specialties. Typically, one can walk for some time without seeing many birds. Then, suddenly, there is a change in atmosphere, and the forest is alive with activity. Mixed flocks of a dozen or more species and as many as 100 individuals can be frustrating, overwhelming and exciting. We shall also keep a watch out

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for fruiting trees, where we may see congregations of frugivores such as Thick-billed Pigeon; Mountain Imperial-Pigeon; Asian Emerald Cuckoo (uncommon); Austen's Brown (the rarest of this group), Great, Wreathed, and Oriental Pied- hornbills; and Green-eared and Moustached barbets. We may also see the dazzling Asian Fairy Bluebird, and, if we are fortunate, Golden-crested Myna. The incredible song of the White-handed Gibbon resonates through the forest and we will try our best to see these wonderful primates. We are likely to encounter several species of squirrel, including the attractive Variable and Cambodian Striped species.

Normally, it will be cool in the mornings and late afternoon and warm to hot during the middle of the day. Bird activity is greatest during the cooler part of the day, so we will concentrate our birding then. Khao Yai is vast and we cannot hope to see it all. Some of the other species we hope to encounter include Besra; Changeable Hawk-Eagle; Silver Pheasant; Siamese Fireback (if we are fortunate); Scaly-breasted Partridge; Barred Cuckoo-Dove; Vernal Hanging-Parrot; Green-billed Malkoha; Brown Boobook; Mountain Scops-Owl; Great-eared, Large-tailed, and Gray nightjars; Red-headed and Orange-breasted trogons; Chestnut-headed Bee-eater; Heart-spotted and Great Slaty woodpeckers; Dusky, Banded, and Long-tailed broadbills (these are some of the real gems of the Orient); with a great deal of luck, possibly either Eared or Blue pittas; Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike; Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike; Scarlet and Swinhoe's minivet; Red-whiskered, Stripe-throated, Gray-eyed, Puff-throated, and Ashy bulbuls; six species of drongo; Green Magpie; Black-naped and Silver oriole (rare); Abbott's Babbler; White-browed and the elusive Large scimitar-babblers; and Lesser Necklaced, White-crested, and Black-throated laughingthrushes. The last five species often associate as a mixed foraging party and are typically shy. We may also see Eastern Crimson Sunbird and Fire-breasted Flowerpecker.



**Silver Pheasants seen on the roadside at Khao Yai. © Dion Hobcroft**

A number of interesting migrants winter in the area, and we are most likely to see the relatively tame Radde's Warbler, which forages near the ground at the edge of the forest, and a host of confusing and challenging "little brown jobs" such as Pale-legged, Sulphur-breasted, and Thick-billed warblers; Asian Brown and Taiga flycatchers; and the elusive Siberian Blue Robin. If we are very lucky, we may also find such forest specialties as the wild-sounding Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo. Khao Yai is also a good place to see a relatively large number of





With luck, we may encounter Asian Elephants in Khao Yai. © Dion Hobcroft

mammals, and we will make a special night drive to look for such species as Binturong, Small Indian Civet, Lesser Mouse-Deer, Barking Deer, Sambar, Slow Loris, Malayan Porcupine and Asian Elephant in addition to nocturnal birds. This is a truly wonderful place that you will find difficult to leave behind.

NIGHTS: Balios Resort Khao Yai, Moo Si

**March 26, Day 7: Drive to Bangkok; Afternoon Flight to Chiang Mai.** After a final morning's birding, we will head south from Khao Yai back to Bangkok before catching an afternoon flight to Chiang Mai and the outlying foothills of the Himalayas. Chiang Mai, often referred to as Thailand's northern "Shangri-La," is an attractive city located in a fertile valley 300 meters above sea level. Founded in 1296, it has withstood invasion from the Burmese and various other influences, to the extent that its people still have their own dialect and cultural traditions. It is an ideal base from which to explore the forested mountains, river valleys, and cultivated plains that extend northwards to the borders of Burma and Laos and the region known as the "Golden Triangle."

NIGHT: Empress Hotel, Chiang Mai

**March 27, Day 8: Morning at Huai Kong Krai; Afternoon Drive to Doi Inthanon National Park.** This morning we will visit an area of tall, mixed, dry dipterocarp woodland that holds a small population of the spectacular Green Peafowl. Once widespread but unfortunately hunted close to extinction throughout much of its range, this exotic pheasant has until now been virtually impossible to find in Thailand without mounting a mini-expedition. Thus, our outing this morning is a very special opportunity. Nevertheless, the birds can be very shy, and we will have to ensure we are on-site before dawn—in position to locate the calling males, which bugle from the dense foliage of tall trees. In addition to this marvelous bird, we may also find some of the following: Lesser Whistling-Duck, Chinese Pond-Heron, Common and White-throated kingfishers, the lovely Rosy Minivet, Eurasian Jay, and perhaps the handsome Black Baza. We will then return to Chiang Mai for lunch before driving southwards to Doi Inthanon National Park. If time permits, we will start our exploration of the park this afternoon by exploring dry woodlands adjacent to our hotel. We have encountered a good variety of birds in this area, including the scarce and beautiful Blossom-headed Parakeet, Plain-backed Sparrow and Indochinese Bushlark.

NIGHT: Inthanon Highland Resort, Doi Inthanon National Park

**March 28-29, Days 9-10: Doi Inthanon National Park.** We will spend two full days and one whole morning exploring the spectacular Doi Inthanon National Park. Doi Inthanon is Thailand's highest mountain, with a maximum elevation of about 8,200 feet (2,590 meters). Undoubtedly, this is the foremost birding locality in northern Thailand, with 343 species recorded to date. Dry teak forests on the lower slopes give way to stands of pines interspersed with open grassy areas which support wintering Buff-throated, Radde's, and Yellow-streaked warblers; a few Little and Chestnut buntings; and an occasional Gray-faced Buzzard. Hill evergreen forest then grades into lower-stature montane forest at about 4,700 feet (1,500 meters) and hosts a large number of species. Climbing ever higher, we will ascend through some magnificent sub-montane forest, eventually reaching montane forests on the summit. Here, flowering rhododendrons surround a sphagnum bog that is bisected by a boardwalk, permitting us to explore the interior of this superb habitat. Some of the birds we may encounter at higher levels include Common Buzzard; Mountain Hawk-Eagle; Rufous-throated Partridge (we will almost certainly hear pairs duetting, but they are tough to see; our best chance being as we quietly walk around the sphagnum bog on the summit shortly after dawn); Wedge-tailed Pigeon; with luck, Ashy Wood-Pigeon; Large Hawk- and Asian Emerald cuckoos; Collared Owlet; Great, Golden-throated, and Blue-throated barbets; Stripe-breasted and Bay

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woodpeckers; Cook's Swift; Short-billed and Gray-chinned minivets; Orange-bellied Leafbird; Striated, Mountain, White-headed (scarce), and Flavescent bulbuls; five drongos; Hume's Treecreeper; Slaty-bellied Tesia; Ashy-throated, Buff-barred and Davison's leaf-warblers; Chestnut-crowned Warbler; Pygmy Cupwing; Golden Babbler; Silver-eared Laughingthrush; Blyth's, Chestnut-fronted, and Black-eared shrike-babblers; the very attractive Spectacled Barwing; Rufous-winged Fulvetta; Dark-backed and Rufous-backed sibilias; Silver-eared Mesia (a real gem); Chestnut-tailed Minla (noisy, conspicuous, stunningly attractive, and often quite numerous near the summit); White-browed and Lesser shortwings; Scaly Thrush; Dark-sided Thrush (with luck, one or two can often be found quietly digging away in the soft ground surrounding the summit bog); White-capped Redstart; Plumbeous Redstart; Snowy-browed and Slaty-backed flycatchers; Large, Rufous-bellied, Small and Vivid niltavas; the charming Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail; Yellow-browed and Yellow-cheeked tits; and Common Rosefinch. We will also be on the lookout for the inconspicuous and rarely seen Green and Purple cochoas. Once every few years there is an exceptional winter invasion of thrushes and flycatchers; perhaps we will be lucky. Species we may encounter include Gray-winged Blackbird; Eye-browed, Chestnut and Gray-sided thrushes; Siberian Blue Robin and Himalayan Bluetail.

NIGHTS: Inthanon Highland Resort, Doi Inthanon National Park

**March 30, Day 11: Morning at Doi Inthanon; Afternoon Drive to Fang.** We will spend the morning in the dry teak woodlands looking for a number of rare species including both Black-headed and White-bellied woodpecker, the dapper Collared Falconet, Eurasian Jay, and with luck Red-billed Blue-Magpie. If time permits, we will explore some photogenic rice fields with a chance to see Gray-headed Lapwing, Rufous-winged Buzzard, Greater Painted Snipe and with good fortune, perhaps Blue-breasted Quail. We will have lunch at Chiang Mai before heading north towards the town of Fang. En route, we will explore the base of Doi Chiang Dao. Well protected forest adjoining a spectacular monastery may give us the chance to connect with certain species like Streaked Wren-Babbler, Pin-tailed Pigeon, Purple-naped Spiderhunter and Great Iora.

NIGHT: Sleeping Tree Hotel, Fang

**March 31, Day 12: Doi Ang Khang.** Doi Ang Khang is a remote mountain area that has remarkably good road access. We have the entire day to explore this lovely area. For much of the time, we will be birding from a narrow, little used, paved road surrounded by stunning, evocative landscapes that will forever be your image of the mystical Burmese-Thai border. We will explore an interesting mélange of scrub, native pine woodlands, and biologically rich and diverse mixed broad-leaved evergreen forests. Doi Ang Khang supports some special birds—in fact, several we are unlikely to encounter anywhere else on the tour. Some of the birds we hope to find include Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, White-browed Laughingthrush and the noisy but very shy White-necked Laughingthrush, Scarlet-faced Liochla, Spot-breasted and Gray-headed parrotbills, and perhaps Giant Nuthatch (scarce). Other species we may encounter here include Speckled Piculet, Bay and Stripe-breasted woodpeckers, Striated Bulbul, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler, Slaty-bellied Tesia, Russet Bush-Warbler, Buff-throated and Yellow-streaked warblers, Mountain Tailorbird, Daurian Redstart, White-tailed Robin, Gray-backed Shrike, Japanese White-eye, and Little and Crested buntings.

NIGHT: Sleeping Tree Hotel, Fang

**April 1-2, Days 13-14: Doi Lang.** A paved, forest-lined road extends along the border of Myanmar to a remote section of Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park. This quiet forest area called Doi Lang offers spectacular birding on both sides of the mountain, the road currently closed to complete access due to a washed-out bridge. There are wonderful vistas over range after range of forested ridges. On previous visits we have found several Thai rarities including Hume's Pheasant, Giant Nuthatch, Rusty-naped Pitta, Hodgson's Frogmouth, Gray-headed Parakeet, Whiskered Yuhina, Long-tailed Sibia, Crimson-breasted Woodpecker, Spot-breasted Laughingthrush, White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Black-throated Tit, Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Chestnut Thrush, Black-headed Greenfinch and Crested Finchbill. Other great birds which have been recorded here include Himalayan Cutia and



Some years highly secretive birds like the Rusty-naped Pitta make an appearance, like this male at Doi Lang. © Dion Hobcroft

the ultra-shy Red-tailed Laughingthrush. We will take advantage of two full mornings to explore both sides of the mountain to give us the best chance to see as many of these rarities as possible.

During the afternoons, we will visit an area of partially flooded rice fields, marshes, and scrubfields. This can be very good for northern migrants, and a number of species new to Thailand have been found here. Some of the species we may encounter include Pied and Eastern Marsh-harriers; Barred Buttonquail; Gray-headed Lapwing; Oriental Pratincole; Pin-tailed Snipe; Eurasian Wryneck; Bluethroat; Siberian Rubythroat; Pied Bushchat; Radde's, Dusky, Pallas's Grasshopper and Oriental Reed-warblers; Lanceolated Warbler (skulking, but this is one of the easier places to see this "mouse"); Yellow-eyed Babbler; Citrine Wagtail; Red-throated Pipit; Chestnut-tailed Starling; Wire-tailed Swallow; and Burmese Shrike.

NIGHTS: Sleeping Tree Hotel, Fang

**April 3, Day 15: Morning at Chiang Saen; Afternoon at Chiang Rai; Flight to Bangkok.** We must depart early this morning for our drive eastwards into the heart of the Golden Triangle and the lovely but ancient city of Chiang Saen, which is located on the imposing Mekong River. On nearby Chiang Saen Lake, we may encounter large numbers of Lesser Whistling-Ducks and some Indian Spotbill Ducks in addition to wintering northern



Paleartic migrants. We have a good chance to see Garganey, White-browed Crake and Gray-headed Swampphen. After lunch, we will drive to Chiang Rai for our mid-afternoon flight back to Bangkok.

NIGHT: Novotel Airport Hotel, Bangkok

**April 4, Day 16: Bangkok to Kaeng Krachan.** In the morning we will make our way to Kaeng Krachan National Park and our comfortable accommodations. We can visit a popular private protected garden on the edge of the national park where small ponds of water often attract a good variety of forest birds and allow some excellent photographic opportunities. Some of the species we have seen here on recent visits include both Greater and Lesser Necklaced laughingthrushes, with luck Large Scimitar-Babbler, Siberian Blue Robin or Bar-backed Partridge.

NIGHT: Baan Maka Chalet, Kaeng Krachan National Park



The rather bizarre Dusky Broadbill, one of five broadbills possible to encounter in Kaeng Krachan. © Dion Hobcroft

**April 5-6, Days 17-18: Kaeng Krachan National Park.** Kaeng Krachan National Park, encompassing 1,814 square miles (2,920 square kilometers), is Thailand's largest and one of its most magnificent and exciting conservation areas. Biologically rich tropical broad-leaved evergreen forests cover a large portion of the park up to approximately 3,281 feet (1,000 meters), thereafter merging into distinctly different sub-montane forest. Much of the park is extremely rugged and unexplored; however, a drivable track extends about 23 miles (36 kilometers) eastward into the park and to the highest point reached by road. This permits us fairly easy access, as well as some truly superb views out over a sea of undisturbed forest—as far as the eye can see, way into Burma. This is a rare opportunity now in Southeast Asia. Please note we will be birding in park vehicles, typically pickup trucks with four-wheel

drive.

Although the days will be long (we will have to rise early in order to be at the forest by dawn), the reward of birding in one of the few remaining true wilderness areas in Southeast Asia should be more than enough compensation. We will provide lovely *al fresco* breakfasts and lunches in the field, permitting those who wish, to spend the entire day enjoying all that these wonderful forests have to offer. For those who prefer a more genteel pace, we will have sufficient vehicles along to permit those who wish to return early to our hotel and just relax, to do so.

Kaeng Krachan's forests host a fabulous array of wildlife, including some very special birds. Several species more characteristic of the humid lowland Sundaic forests occur here at the northern edge of their range. We shall search



for these and a whole host of other exciting birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, other insects, and flowering plants.



**We have had luck in recent years at stake-outs for a number of rarely seen birds like these White-fronted Scops-Owls in Kaeng Krachan. © Dion Hobcroft**

Species that we may encounter include Oriental Honey-Buzzard; Crested Goshawk; Shikra; Crested Serpent-Eagle; Mountain Hawk-Eagle; Gray Peacock-Pheasant (often noisy but very difficult to see); Kalij Pheasant (always a challenge); Ferruginous Partridge (tough); Scaly-breasted and Bar-backed partridges; Red Junglefowl; Thick-billed and the elusive Yellow-vented green-pigeons; Vernal Hanging-Parrot; Chestnut-winged (rare), Indian, Banded Bay, and Drongo cuckoos; Chestnut-breasted and Raffle's malkohas; Brown Boobook; Collared Scops-Owl; Collared Owlet; and Asian Barred Owlet. Several other, much more rarely seen owls—such as the Barred Eagle-Owl and White-fronted Scops-owl—also occur in these forests, but the chance of seeing them is remote. We may also encounter Large-tailed Nightjar; Himalayan Swiftlet; Cook's Swift; the superb Brown-backed Needletail; Gray-rumped and possibly Whiskered treeswifts; Orange-breasted and the scintillating Red-headed trogons; perhaps the gorgeous Banded, and Oriental Dwarf kingfishers; Chestnut-headed, Blue-bearded, and possibly Red-bearded bee-eaters; Dollarbird; Tickell's Brown, Oriental Pied, Wreathed, and Great hornbills; Great, Blue-throated, Moustached, Green-eared, and Blue-eared barbets; Speckled and White-browed piculets; Greater Yellownap; Laced, Gray-headed, the uncommon Bamboo, Bay, Heart-spotted, and Great Slaty woodpeckers; Common Flameback; and Dusky, Banded, Silver-breasted, Long-tailed and possibly Black-and-yellow broadbills. Pittas are no easier here than anywhere else, but we should be alert to such species as Eared, Blue, and, at higher elevations, Rusty-naped. We will be on the lookout for Red-rumped Swallow; Large Woodshrike; Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike; Ashy, Gray-chinned, and Scarlet minivets; Forest Wagtail; Common and Great ioras; Greater Green, Blue-winged, and Orange-bellied leafbirds; Black-headed, Black-crested, Stripe-throated, Flavescent, Ochraceous, Olive, Gray-eyed, and Ashy bulbuls; several kinds of drongos; Black-naped Oriole; the severely threatened Silver Oriole (rare); Asian Fairy-bluebird; Crested Jay; the peculiar Ratchet-tailed Treepie (only recently discovered here, more than two thousand kilometers from its previously known location);

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Common Green Magpie; Sultan Tit; Velvet-fronted Nuthatch; Buff-breasted, Abbott's, Rufous-fronted, Spot-necked and Gray-throated babblers; the bamboo specialist Collared Babbler; White-browed and Large scimitar-babblers; Greater and Lesser Necklaced, and Black-throated laughingthrushes; Brown-cheeked Fulvetta; Yellow-bellied, Plain-tailed, Eastern Crowned and Sulphur-breasted warblers; Dark-necked Tailorbird; Siberian Blue Robin; White-rumped Shama; White-crowned Forktail; Orange-headed Thrush; Dark-sided, Asian Brown, Verditer, Rufous-browed, Blue-and-white, Pale-blue and Gray-headed Canary flycatchers; White-throated Fantail; Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher; Ruby-cheeked Sunbird; Little Spiderhunter; Thick-billed and Yellow-vented flowerpeckers; and Everett's White-eye.

In addition to this wonderful profusion of birds, the relative lack of hunting in this area has resulted in the preservation of a good variety of mammals and large reptiles, not to mention some truly impressive aggregations of butterflies. Some of the mammals we have seen previously that inhabit these forests include Leopard; Asian Elephant; Sambar; Common and Fea's muntjacs; Slow Loris; Pig-tailed, Stump-tailed and Long-tailed macaques; Dusky and Banded langur; White-handed Gibbon; Dhole (Asian wild dog); Sun Bear; Yellow-throated Marten; Smooth Otter; a variety of civets; and many species of squirrels.

In recent years some entrepreneurial local people have set up a variety of wildlife hides where the group can sit on chairs in a concealed blind and watch birds and mammals come to water and food. Some truly rare birds can come in like Gray Peacock-Pheasant, Blue Pitta and Slaty-legged Crake. We will make enquiries with the local people and book some of these hides if the chances are high to see some of these secretive birds. They are excellent for photography.

NIGHTS: Baan Maka Chalet, Kaeng Krachan National Park

**April 7, Day 19: Morning at Kaeng Krachan; Afternoon Drive to Bangkok.** After a final morning birding in this wonderful reserve, we will reluctantly make our way back to Bangkok for our farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Novotel Airport Hotel, Bangkok

**April 8, Day 20: Departure for Home.** Participants can depart at any time today.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 8 participants.

**TOUR LEADER:** Dion Hobcroft



**Dion Hobcroft** has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 180) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA,



Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 19) and Daniel (age 15).

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for this tour is **\$8,395** per person in double occupancy from Bangkok. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to dinner on Day 19, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground and air transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leader. It does not include airfare from your home to Bangkok and return, airport departure taxes (typically included in ticket pricing), alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$1,045**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa, or American Express at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard, Visa, American Express), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (October 21, 2020).

**CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:** Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre- and post-tour extensions. **For your protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If you cancel:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$500\*

No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where you, the customer, are not at fault and have not cancelled in violation of the terms and conditions of any of the contract for transportation or travel services, all sums paid to VENT for services not received by you will be promptly refunded by VENT to you unless you otherwise advise VENT in writing. This policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside the services described in the tour itinerary.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Resolutions as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™**. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most highly regarded travel insurance programs available.

Critical benefits of **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance** include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available but must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause (must be purchased within 14 days of tour deposit). Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird](http://ripcordrescuetravelinsurance.com/ventbird); or click the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. ***Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.***

**DOCUMENTS:** In order for U.S. citizens to enter Thailand, a U.S. passport that is valid at least six months after departure from Thailand must be presented upon entry into the country. For stays of 30 days or less, a visa is not required. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

**CLIMATE:** During the tour, you will experience a wide range of temperatures and climate, from the 80s and high 90s in the lowlands, to as low as the 30s at higher elevations. We may encounter some rain, but at this time of the year, this is an uncommon event. Generally it will be cool in the morning and warm to hot and humid at midday. As soon as we ascend to the hill forests such as those of Khao Yai National Park, it will become noticeably more comfortable in terms of both humidity and temperature. A sweater for the evening, especially if we go on a night drive, will be necessary. Temperatures are similar in the north around Chiang Mai; however, the early



mornings on top of Doi Ang Khang, Doi Lang and Doi Inthanon are often quite cold for the first couple of hours, and a thick, warm sweater, jacket, hat and gloves are recommended.

**CLOTHING:** Lightweight, dull-colored field clothing is recommended throughout. This includes several pairs of pants and cool, comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts, a dull-colored hat, and sunglasses are recommended for protection from the sun and mosquitoes. Long socks are very useful, so that you can tuck in your pants and further avoid biting insects. A good rain jacket is advisable, as is a collapsible umbrella. Dress will be casual, although you may prefer something slightly dressier for the hotels in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. PLEASE, absolutely no light or bright colors. Dark, muted colors help to prevent spooking the birds, particularly when we are in the forest, and thus enable you to see the special birds and mammals.

Please remember Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country and rather conservative about standards of dress, especially when in the areas of temples.

**BOOTS:** Although there will be few, if any, really rigorous walks or uphill jaunts, we may infrequently encounter mud, slippery surfaces and stony ground. Add that to the fact that you are on your feet for much of the day, and it is most important that you provide suitable protection and support for your feet and ankles. Light-weight (Gore-Tex or some similar material) boots that come up to the ankle and have a good lug-sole are ideal. Many people are apprehensive that these will be too heavy; this is not true. The protection, grip, and day-long comfort that such boots afford are far superior to the seemingly comfortable sneakers/training shoes.

**DIFFICULTY:** In general our tour of Thailand is easy and not especially physically demanding. Most of the time we will be walking on level ground either on paved or unpaved roads or tracks and very occasionally trails. At one or two sites such as at Doi Chiang Dao and Kaeng Krachan, there may be some uphill walking but this is infrequent and will always be at a gentle pace with regular stops. Again this will not be especially physically demanding.

At most of the places we visit, especially in the warm, tropical lowlands, it will be important to be in the field before dawn so that we can hear the birds singing as the day starts up. In several cases, including some very critical species, this may be our only opportunity to discover if they are present or not. In addition it can be a very good time to catch the occasional nightjar, owl or even nocturnal mammal. Typically we return to our hotel or lodge for lunch and then rest up and re-charge our batteries before going out again in the late afternoon. This is not wasting good birding time because bird activity is virtually nil during the heat of the day and by re-charging our batteries and concentrating our efforts at the most optimal time of day, we will be in good shape to properly enjoy whatever comes our way.

**LAUNDRY:** Twenty-four hour laundry facilities are available at all of our accommodations.

**HEALTH INFORMATION:** Sanitation throughout Thailand is relatively good compared to most tropical areas of the world; however, it is advisable to treat water outside of the large, modern hotels with caution. Ideally, stick to bottled drinks, tea, and coffee. You should not eat salads and uncooked vegetables outside of the good hotels.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, you should be up-to-date on both your tetanus and polio boosters. Hepatitis A and B vaccines are recommended.

Malaria is present but rare, and participants are advised to take the advice of their doctor with regard to the form of prophylactic to use. There are currently three prophylaxis commonly prescribed: Mefloquine (Lariam), Malarone, and Doxycycline. Vaccinations for cholera, typhoid, and tetanus should be current. Please check with your physician or local travel clinic for more detailed information. Your doctor will advise you on the above and any further medication you may need.

If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all

medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour, recorded Travelers' Information Line (800-CDC-INFO) (232-4636). You can check the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada [www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html) (click on Travel Health).

**INTERNET AVAILABILITY:** Wi-Fi is available at most locations on this tour.

**LUGGAGE:** International flights limit baggage to two checked pieces (44 pounds in total) and one carry-on per person. The carry-on must be able to fit beneath the seat or in the overhead luggage compartment. When traveling, it is suggested that you wear clothing and a pair of shoes suitable for birding in case your baggage is delayed, although this is a rare event.

Liquid restrictions apply on domestic flights and the same items that are not allowed to travel in the USA are prohibited on domestic flights in Thailand like scissors and other sharp items, larger tubes of tooth paste, sunscreen and insect repellent. Please put these in your checked bag as well as your tripod. Valuable items like essential medications, telescopes, binoculars, cameras and computers should always travel in your carry-on.

On occasion, luggage can be sent with our drivers between locations so you will not have to check your bags on the domestic flights. In this case, you will only need to take what you will need for one or two nights (toothbrush, binoculars, etc.)

The Novotel Airport Hotel in Bangkok has luggage storage facilities.

**ACCOMMODATION:** Most of our hotels rank among some of the loveliest hotels in Asia and offer internet facilities of varying speed. Accommodations in Doi Inthanon and Kaeng Krachan are clean, comfortable and air-conditioned with private bathroom facilities. In the Baan Maka Chalet in Kaeng Krachan, we are staying in quite a remote, jungle location and the accommodation is easily the best available. They do have limited internet facilities. All of the hotels offer laundry service.

**CURRENCY:** The unit of currency is the Baht (pronounced BART). It is a good idea to carry several small-denomination bills for personal purchases. You can easily exchange currency at all major hotels and airports which offer varying rates. A good alternative is to use automatic teller machines, though there will often be a small charge for the convenience but a good exchange rate. International credit cards are accepted at most hotels, but rarely elsewhere. It is a good idea to let your credit card provider be aware that you will be traveling so they do not cancel your card when charges start coming in from overseas!

**EQUIPMENT:**

- **Binoculars.** Of course, a good pair of binoculars is essential, and many people may want to take a spare pair in case of accident or theft. The same advice applies for people who wear glasses or contact lenses.
- **Spotting scope.** Your tour leader will have a spotting scope. However, you are welcome to and **in fact strongly encouraged** to bring your own. This will be very useful at a number of locations in Thailand.
- **Duffel bags.** One or two small duffel bags can be extremely useful for short trips, and these can be packed in your luggage when not in use. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and documents in your carry-on bag.



- **A belt pack or daypack** will be handy for books, sunscreen, repellents, camera, etc. Other items of use include a flashlight or headlamp and batteries with spare bulbs, a water bottle, a collapsible umbrella, wash cloth, camera, and notebook and pen/pencil.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Be sure to bring all necessary prescription drugs, as well as aspirin, antacids, and a supply of antihistamines should you develop a cold. Items such as toothpaste, deodorant, soap, cosmetics, sunscreen, and sunglasses should be brought with you but can also be easily purchased. For those using electric shavers or other powered devices, please remember that electrical power in Thailand is 220 volts. You may need an adapter for your equipment. Insects such as **mosquitoes**, sand-flies, and leeches can occasionally, but just locally (and rarely in Thailand), be a problem. This is best dealt with by wearing long-sleeved shirts of sufficient thickness and density of weave that the “bugs” cannot bite through, and long trousers tucked into long socks. We also recommend *Cutter* lotion in the squeeze bottle or pump-style *Off!*

Electricity: The electric current is 220V at 50 hertz (cycles). Despite the reliability of power in Thailand, it is always a good idea to carry a small flashlight or headlamp just in case; spare bulbs and batteries are essential.

Weights and measures: Generally the metric system is used, although the imperial system is understood.

Time: When it is midnight in Los Angeles, it will be 3:00 p.m. in Bangkok.

Language: Thai is a tonal language and consequently very difficult for English speakers to learn. Many people throughout Thailand speak some level of English. Elsewhere, older people may not and some of the people in the north such as the Karen and Hmong hill-tribes will only speak their local dialect.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Whatever you do, bring sufficient digital memory cards with you. Characteristically in tropical forest areas, photographing wildlife, in particular birds, will be difficult; however, there will be several times when we are in more open country when the lighting is better and the opportunities can be surprisingly good. Thailand has some wonderfully striking and unusual scenery, and we will visit some superb sites. When photographing people, it is courteous to ask first, a smile helps greatly, and if the subject declines, please do not force the issue.

**SUGGESTED READING:** A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) and [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

We also recommend Andrew Isles bookstore for the Asia-Pacific region at [www.andrewisles.com/AndrewIsles/](http://www.andrewisles.com/AndrewIsles/). Andrew can also often obtain difficult to find and out of print books.

*Insight Guides: Thailand.* Singapore: Apa Productions, most recent edition. All Apa productions are superbly produced with magnificent photographs. They also contain a good list of other references for those people wishing to read in more detail on Thai history, culture and religion.

Cummings, J. & S. Martin. *Thailand.* Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, most recent edition. A very useful travel guide.

Francis, C.M. *Mammals of Thailand and South-East Asia.* Bangkok: Asia Books New Holland Publishers, 2008. The best field guide to the mammals of the country. Recommended.

Graham, M. and P. Round. *Thailand's Vanishing Flora and Fauna.* Bangkok: Finance One Public Company, 1994.

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Lekagul, B. and J.A. McNeely. *Mammals of Thailand*. Bangkok: The Assoc. Cons. Wild., 1977 (Out of print).

Lekagul, B. *et al.* *Field Guide to the Butterflies of Thailand*. Bangkok: Assoc. Cons. Wild., 1977.

Lekagul, B. and P. D. Round. *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand*. Bangkok: Saha Karn Bhaet, 1991.

McNeely, J. A. and Wachtel, P. S. *Soul of the Tiger—Searching for Nature's Answers in Exotic Southeast Asia*. New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Parr, J. W. K. *Large Mammals of Thailand*. Thailand: Sarakadee Press, 2003.

Robson, C. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-east Asia*. UK: New Holland Publishers, most recent edition.

Robson, C. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Thailand*. UK: New Holland Publishers, most recent edition. **This or the older Lekagul and Round field guide is THE field guide you should carry with you on tour. It details and illustrates all the species you will encounter on our Thailand tour.**

Round, P. *Resident Forest Birds in Thailand: Their Status and Conservation*. ICBP Monograph No 2. Cambridge: ICBP, 1988. Available from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, England.

Whitmore, T.C. *Tropical Rainforests of the Far East*. 2nd. Edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1984. A superb account of the vegetation communities and their constituent plants, trees, soils etc. in South-East Asia.

Wyatt, D. K. Thailand: *A Short History*. Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panich, 1984.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your tour leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved 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. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on May 27, 2020 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.

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