



**CENTRAL THAILAND:  
SHOREBIRD SPECTACLE AND JUNGLE BIRDING**

**09 – 18 JANUARY 2023**



*Spoon-billed Sandpiper, one of the most sought-after birds on earth*

This short, small-group tour forms a circuit around central Thailand starting and ending in Bangkok. This tour can also easily be combined with our northern Thailand tour, which runs immediately after this one finishes, **Northern Thailand: Spectacular Resident and Migrant Birds** – think **Rusty-naped Pitta**, **Siberian Rubythroat**, **Spot-breasted Parrotbill**, **Mrs. Hume's Pheasant**, **Baer's Pochard**, and an amazing **Pied Harrier** roost, etc., for that tour. Our March southern Thailand tour, **Southern Thailand: 14-day Jewels of the South** – think **Malayan Banded Pitta**, **Mangrove Pitta**, **Scarlet-rumped Trogon**, **Malaysian Rail-babbler**, and **Helmeted Hornbill**, etc., starts a few days after the conclusion of this northern Thailand tour in 2024 and thus could also be combined with the preceding tour(s) for an exciting, comprehensive Thailand adventure. These tours have been designed to focus on the amazing birding that Thailand has to offer during the northern winter, set in gorgeous countryside with incredibly warm people and some of the tastiest food in the world too.

After arrival in Bangkok we head south to the shores of the Bay of Bangkok and the vast areas of salt pans that form the vital overwintering habitat for hundreds of thousands of shorebirds, where one of the most highly sought of these birds on the planet, **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**, can be found during the non-breeding season. We will be putting all of our effort into finding this sought-after bird, along with many other species. In fact, over 40 species of shorebirds can be found here in a couple of days birdwatching! It really is quite staggering witnessing the huge numbers of birds and the species diversity. Other key birds on our radar here include **Great Knot**, **Nordmann's Greenshank**, **Asian Dowitcher**, **Far Eastern Curlew**, **Malaysian Plover**, and 'White-faced' Plover (a very distinctive subspecies of **Kentish Plover** and a bit of a taxonomic mystery). There are of course many other potential highlights to search for during our time here, and **Chinese Egret** will be high on that list.



*We will search for **Chinese Egret** along the coast near Laem Pak Bia.*

After our time at the coast we will venture into farmland (including some rice paddies), where we will look for impressive eagles, such as **Greater Spotted** and **Eastern Imperial Eagles**, and with luck we will find the spectacular **Pied Harrier**, possibly one of the best-looking harriers on the planet. There will also be a long list of typical farmland birds of the region, such as weavers, shrikes, and a wide range of interesting passerines.

We will then dive into about a week of forest birding across two phenomenal reserves Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai National Parks. The potential list of species of birds and other wildlife across these two locations is massive (see the detailed itinerary below for extra details). Some of the most interesting and exciting birds we might find here could include **Blue** and **Eared Pittas**, **Great, Wreathed, Tickell's Brown, Austen's Brown**, and **Oriental Pied Hornbills**, **Black-and-red, Banded, Black-and-yellow, Dusky, Silver-breasted**, and **Long-tailed Broadbills**, **Banded Kingfisher, Kalij and Silver Pheasants, Red Junglefowl, Siamese Fireback, White-fronted Scops Owl, Oriental Bay Owl, Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo, Red-bearded and Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, Common Green Magpie, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Red-headed and Orange-breasted Trogons, Orange-headed Thrush, and Bamboo, Heart-spotted, and Great Slaty Woodpeckers**. Non-avian highlights could include **Lar** (White-handed) and **Pileated Gibbons**, **Asian Elephant**, the Indochinese subspecies of **Leopard** (*Panthera pardus delacouri*), which may include the melanistic form known as "Black Panther" that occurs here, **Sloth Bear**, and **Siamese Crocodile** among the species.



*We will bird the forests of Kaeng Krachan National Park for **Silver-breasted Broadbill** and many other broadbill species.*

This tour visits some stunning forest, and we will also sample some of Thailand's famed, delicious food during our journey. Some of the temples that we will drive past while birding are



absolutely spectacular and worth spending time to appreciate them in their own right. Several sites visited also offer very good photographic opportunities for those with an interest.



*The gorgeous **Blue Pitta** will be searched for during our forest birding.*

### **Itinerary (10 days/9 nights)**

#### **Day 1: Arrival in Bangkok**

After your afternoon arrival at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok you will take the short transfer to our nearby hotel for the night with the rest of the day at leisure. We will have a group evening meal together.

Overnight: Bangkok Airport area

#### **Day 2: Pak Thale and Laem Pak Bia**

After breakfast we will depart our hotel, drive straight to the coast, and start a few days' birding along the edge of the Bay of Bangkok, one of the most important overwintering areas for shorebirds in the whole of Southeast Asia. We will spend the late morning and, after checking in to our nearby hotel and having lunch, the remainder of the afternoon birding in this incredible area. We will be searching through thousands of shorebirds made up of flocks of **Great Knot**, **Common Greenshank**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Black-winged Stilt**, and **Red-necked Stint**, but among them we will also try to find one of the most unique and Critically Endangered (IUCN) shorebirds of

them all, the incredible **Spoon-billed Sandpiper**. Other high-value targets will be **Nordmann's Greenshank**, **Far Eastern Curlew**, and **Asian Dowitcher**.

Overnight: Chao Samran Beach



*Nordmann's Greenshank is another globally rare wader that we will search for.*

### Day 3: Pak Thale and Laem Pak Bia

We will spend the full day birding within a few different areas of salt pans and coastal environments around the Pak Thale and Laem Pak Bia areas, where we hope to find **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** along with the range of shorebirds listed above, but there will also be other birds possible due to visiting different habitats. The number of birds here can be mesmerizing. These may include **Malaysian Plover** and 'White-faced' Plover (a distinctive subspecies of **Kentish Plover**), **Long-toed Stint**, **Grey-headed Lapwing**, **Terek Sandpiper**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Pied Avocet**, **Pin-tailed Snipe**, **Greater Painted-snipe**, and many more.

There will be plenty of other birds to look at while we are in this area, including a wide range of herons, egrets (including **Chinese Egret**), cormorants, storks (including the gorgeous **Painted Stork**), gulls, and terns. There are also plenty of raptors in this area (there is lots of food for hungry **Peregrine Falcons**), and other highlights could include **Mangrove Whistler**, **Golden-bellied Gerygone**, **Common, Pied, Collared, and Black-capped Kingfishers**, **Eurasian Wryneck**, **Freckle-breasted Woodpecker**, **Oriental Skylark**, **White-shouldered Starling**, **Black-browed Reed Warbler**, and **Plain-backed Sparrow**.

Overnight: Chao Samran Beach



*Black-capped Kingfisher is a striking bird.*

#### Day 4: Nong Pla Lai Rice Paddies to Kaeng Krachan National Park

We will leave the coast after breakfast and will check out a few sites around the Nong Pla Lai area, where we will spend the majority of the morning before continuing on to the Kaeng Krachan National Park area. We will be looking for **Greater Spotted Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Eastern Marsh and Pied Harriers, Grey-headed Lapwing, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Green-billed Malkoha, Coppersmith Barbet, Green Bee-eater, Freckle-breasted Woodpecker, Streaked Weaver, Baya Weaver, Asian Golden Weaver, and Bluethroat.**

After checking into our accommodation near Kaeng Krachan National Park we will spend the late afternoon birding from a hide in the forest, where we might find a range of babblers and bulbuls visiting as well as, potentially, **Bar-backed** and **Green-legged Partridges, Large Scimitar Babbler, Common Green Magpie, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Siberian Blue Robin,** or, with extreme luck, **Eared Pitta** coming in to drink/bath at a small forest pool.

Overnight: Near Kaeng Krachan National Park

#### Days 5 - 6: Kaeng Krachan National Park

We will spend two full days birding within and around this exciting park. Our time will be spent at a range of elevations to connect with the associated species of these areas. At the higher elevations of the park we are restricted to birding along a few roads that cut through the park, but this still gives us some fantastic opportunities for some restricted-range species, such as **Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Collared, Spot-necked, Grey-throated, Golden, and Rufous-fronted Babblers,** and **Black-throated Laughingthrush.** Other species on offer here include **Red-**



headed Trogon, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Ferruginous Partridge, Kalij Pheasant, Grey Peacock-Pheasant, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbills, Great Hornbill, Banded Kingfisher, Great Barbet, and Bamboo Woodpecker, along with lots of bulbuls, babblers, and warblers.



*Red-bearded Bee-eater is another beautiful target while in Kaeng Krachan National Park.*

The middle- and lower-elevation areas give us the chance for further exploration of this wonderful park. The long entrance road provides great opportunities for stopping and checking out vantage points to look at patches of forest (often with the sound of **Lar** (White-handed) **Gibbons** echoing around), and there are several trails and roads we can walk to get closer to the birds. Some of the most exciting birds we could find here may include **Blue** and **Eared Pittas**, **White-fronted Scops Owl**, **Oriental Bay Owl**, **Brown Hawk-Owl**, **Vernal Hanging Parrot**, **Heart-spotted** and **Great Slaty Woodpeckers**, **Tickell's Brown**, **Wreathed**, and **Oriental Pied Hornbills**, **Black-thighed Falconet**, **Banded**, **Black-and-red**, **Black-and-yellow**, and **Dusky Broadbills**, **Orange-breasted Trogon**, **Common Green Magpie**, **Sultan Tit**, **Scarlet Minivet**, **Golden-crested** and **Common Hill Mynas**, and **Asian Fairy-bluebird**, along with a wide range of bulbuls, leafbirds, woodpeckers, babblers, and barbets.

On the early morning and late-evening drives into and out of the national park we are most likely to see the shy mammals, and with some luck we may come across **Asian Elephant** or **Leopard** (maybe even including the rare and elusive "Black Panther") on these drives, or even a **Sloth Bear!**

Overnight: Near Kaeng Krachan National Park



*Black-and-yellow Broadbill is always a popular target bird.*



*The attractive Siberian Blue Robin can appear at watering holes.*



### Day 7: Morning birding Kaeng Krachan area and transfer to Khao Yai

We will spend the early morning in a hide in the forest near Kaeng Krachan National Park, where we hope to get good views of **Kalij Pheasant**, **Red Junglefowl**, **Bar-backed Partridge**, **Black-naped Monarch**, **Puff-throated Babbler**, **Racket-tailed Treepie**, **White-browed Scimitar Babbler**, **Greater Necklaced** and **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes**, **White-rumped Shama**, and an assorted range of other interesting passerines.



*The colors of the Common Green Magpie need to be seen to be believed on this gorgeous bird.*

During the midmorning we will commence our journey from the Kaeng Krachan area back around Bangkok and to the northeast. We will stop for lunch along the way and will visit a small temple to look for **Limestone Wren-Babbler** along the way. Some authorities (e.g. BirdLife International) consider the subspecies occurring here to represent a separate species; they call it Rufous Limestone-babbler. We will check into our comfortable hotel late in the afternoon for the next three nights.

Overnight: Khao Yai

### Days 8 - 9: Khao Yai National Park

Another two exciting, bird-filled days await, this time in the famous Khao Yai National Park. This is a very popular national park with the locals due to its proximity to the capital of Bangkok, but the birds seem to be used to the visitors, and due to the good road network through and around the park it is usually possible to find quiet areas where we can enjoy the birds to ourselves.

We will head up to the higher parts of the site first, where we will look for **Silver Pheasant**, **Red-headed Trogon**, **Collared Owlet**, **Black-throated Laughingthrush**, **White-browed Scimitar Babbler**, **Moustached Barbet**, **Grey-backed Shrike**, **Mountain Imperial Pigeon**, **Barred Cuckoo Dove**, **Ashy Bulbul**, and **Blue Rock Thrush**. After enjoying some time in the slightly cooler part of the forest we will drop down to slightly lower elevations in search of some different birds.



*Silver Pheasant is a spectacular target bird during our time in Khao Yai National Park.*

The forests along the way to the top can support some spectacular birds, and a few strategic stops may yield **Long-tailed Broadbill**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Siamese Fireback**, **Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo**, **Blue Pitta**, **Eared Pitta**, **Blue-bearded Bee-eater**, **Orange-breasted Trogon**, **Common Hill Myna**, and **Sultan Tit**.

The plateau area offers some great birding, and hornbills also feature in this part of the park. We will look for **Wreathed Hornbill**, **Great Hornbill**, **Oriental Pied Hornbill**, and **Austen's Brown Hornbill**, along with **Banded Kingfisher**, **Red Junglefowl**, **Scarlet Minivet**, **Green-eared Barbet**, **Laced Woodpecker**, **Streak-breasted Woodpecker**, **Greater Flameback**, **Hainan Blue Flycatcher**, **Mugimaki Flycatcher**, **Buffy Fish Owl**, **Common Kingfisher**, **Blue-eared Kingfisher**, **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater**, **Brown-backed Needletail**, and **White-throated Rock Thrush**.

Forest trails a bit lower down below the plateau area are not only good for the aforementioned hornbills but also for other species, such as **Eared Pitta**, **White-crested Laughingthrush**, **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush**, **Siamese Fireback**, **Orange-breasted Trogon**, **Banded Kingfisher**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Long-tailed Broadbill**, **Siberian Blue Robin**, and **Orange-headed Thrush**.

This park also gives us a chance for observing **Asian Elephant**, and we might also find **Pileated Gibbon**, **Sambar**, **Southern Red Muntjac**, **Black Giant Squirrel**, and other interesting animals, maybe even the rare **Siamese Crocodile**.

Overnight: Khao Yai



*Wreathed Hornbill* occurs in Khao Yai National Park, and we will listen out for its heavy wingbeats to try and locate this beautiful, huge bird.

### **Day 10: Khao Yai National Park area and transfer to Bangkok, where the tour concludes**

We will have a final morning birding around the Khao Yai area outside of the national park. **Red-breasted Parakeets** are often around our hotel as are a range of barbets and starlings, maybe **Pied Bush Chat** or **Eurasian Hoopoe** too, so we will keep a lookout for these before we drive back to Bangkok.

Those participants not continuing on the northern Thailand tour will be dropped off at the Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok for evening departures from Thailand. Those participants continuing on the northern Thailand tour will overnight in a hotel near the airport before flying north the following morning.

Overnight: Not included

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides*



*and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

<b>Duration:</b>	10 days
<b>Group Size:</b>	4-8
<b>Dates:</b>	09 - 18 January 2023
<b>Start:</b>	Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok
<b>End:</b>	Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok
<b>Prices:</b>	US\$4,635 per person sharing – based on 4-8 participants (2023)
<b>Single Supplements:</b>	US\$635 (2023)

**Price includes:**

Meals (from evening meal on day 1 until lunch on day 10)  
Bottled water (please bring a refillable water bottle)  
Accommodation (based on two participants sharing)  
Guiding fees  
All entrance fees to national parks, nature reserves, bird blinds/hides, etc.  
All ground transport while on tour  
Tolls

**Price excludes:**

Flights  
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, minibar, etc.  
Alcoholic and soft drinks  
Personal insurance  
Gratuities