

SOUTHERN THAILAND



(The Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Gurney's Pitta Tour)

Saturday 8th January – Friday 14th January 2011



Thailand is a perfect destination to visit during the winter months. It offers some of the most exciting birding in south-east Asia with many localised and rare species, plus a rich array of Palearctic migrants. Add to this a good network of roads, excellent cuisine and superb hotels that should ensure a fantastic holiday. This shorter tour has been specifically designed around two of the world's most wanted species and there has never been a better opportunity to see them. Spoon-billed Sandpiper is classified as 'Critically Endangered' by Birdlife International with a world population as little as 150 breeding pairs. Unfortunately it is a declining species and due to its remote breeding grounds the only real chance is to see it on the few known wintering grounds around south-east Asia. The shores and salt pans around the Gulf of

Thailand is currently *THE* place to find this most enigmatic of waders and we will hopefully have ample opportunity to study it at a number of sites. There will be many other shorebirds present during our search, a number of which are also highly prized such as Nordmann's Greenshank, Asiatic Dowitcher, the recently discovered White-faced Plover, Malaysian Plover, Great Knot and both Long-toed and Red-necked Stints amongst a potential 40 or so other waders. Gurney's Pitta is also endangered, maintaining a toe-hold in Southern Thailand as a breeding species at Khao Nor Chuchi. A healthy population has recently been discovered in nearby Myanmar and its long term status appears to be more dependable, however travel to this remote region is not yet possible. We will have assistance in our search from Yotin Meekaew who has an intimate knowledge of this species and an excellent track record in showing people this bird. Add to this a fine assortment of malkohas, bulbuls, babblers, warblers, sunbirds and spiderhunters to find in this tropical paradise, as well as a boat ride through the mangroves that will leave you longing for more.

TARGETS:

- Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- Nordmann's Greenshank
- White-faced Plover
- Chinese Egret
- Chestnut-naped Forktail
- Blyth's Hawk-eagle
- Spectacled Spiderhunter
- Black-and-Yellow Broadbill
- Large Wren-babbler
- Gurney's Pitta
- Banded Pitta
- Red-bearded Bee-eater
- Malaysian Rail-Babbler
- Scarlet-rumped Trogon
- Maroon Woodpecker
- Javan Frogmouth
- Green Broadbill
- Rufous-collared Kingfisher

Our Tour Itinerary:

Days 1 - 2 Bangkok – Samut Sakhon - Petchaburi - Krabi



After a morning arrival in Bangkok we will drive to the nearby Samut Sakhon area for our first taste of birding in this tropical paradise, where we can see a good variety of typical south-east Asian birds around the mangroves. Common species in the area include Little Green Heron, Chinese Pond-heron, Pacific Reef Egret, Black-capped and Collared Kingfishers, Pied Fantail, Yellow-vented Bulbul, and both Dusky and Yellow-browed Warblers. In particular we will look for a few species that we may not see elsewhere such as Mangrove Whistler, Golden-bellied Gerygone and Brown-throated Sunbird. A nearby temple is home to a colony of nesting Germain's

Swiftlets and this spot is also good for Zebra Dove and Plain-backed Sparrow. From here we will drive further along the Gulf of Thailand to Petchaburi. This is a huge area of salt workings where the sheer numbers of waders is a very impressive sight indeed. In recent years this has been a regular wintering site for a small number of wintering Spoon-billed Sandpipers and we have a very good chance of observing this very rare species. We will also concentrate our efforts on the sought-after Nordmann's Greenshank and Asiatic Dowitcher as well. For the wader enthusiast this is heaven as amongst the more familiar species we can find Pacific Golden and Kentish Plovers, Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpipers, large flocks of Great Knots, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, Terek Sandpiper, Temminck's, Red-necked and Long-toed Stints and Red-necked Phalarope amongst an impressive total of around 40 wader species possible here! One of the highlights of our stay here will be a short boat ride to a sandy spit where it is usually possible to see White-fronted Plover, a new species of wader for the world that has recently been discovered here and at a few other localities across south-east Asia. There should also be the regionally endemic Malaysian Plover, along with Great Crested Tern, Pacific Reef Egret and sometimes even a few Chinese Egrets frequent the same area. Our exploration of this area includes numerous marshes, open fields, some nearby scrub, lakes and mangroves which can produce a fine selection of other birds including Yellow and Cinnamon Bitterns, Black-crowned Night-heron, Javan Pond-heron, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Grey-faced Buzzard, Greater Spotted Eagle, Osprey, Watercock, Slaty-breasted Rail, White-browed and Ruddy-breasted Crakes, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Grey-headed Lapwing, Great Black-headed, Brown-headed and Heuglin's Gulls, Whiskered, Caspian and Gull-billed Terns, Plaintive Cuckoo, Pink-necked Green-pigeon, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Black-capped and Collared Kingfishers, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe, Siberian Rubythroat, Streak-eared Bulbul, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Black-browed and Oriental Reed-warblers, Long-tailed and Brown Shrikes. Racket-tailed Treepie and White-vented Myna.

In the afternoon of Day 2 we will return to Bangkok and take the short, internal flight to Krabi. Upon arrival we will drive to the Morakot Resort, situated beside Khao Nor Chuchi for a 2 night stay.

Days 3 - 4 Khao Nor Chuchi – Krungching Forest

These 2 days will be spent in the famous forest of Khao Nor Chuchi, primarily in search of the amazing Gurney's Pitta. Classified as Endangered by Birdlife International due to the very small population to be found here, it is without doubt one of the most amazing birds to be found anywhere in the world. Early mornings are the best time to try for the pitta and our chances are very good, considering we have the expert assistance of Yotin Meekaew who has spent many years observing these avian gems and who probably knows more about them than anyone else in the world. There may also be an opportunity to find the equally impressive Banded Pitta at another location as well. The rest of our time will be spent searching for the specialities of Southern Thailand and enjoying good views of everything. There are many other special birds to look for here including

Black Baza, Blyth's and Changeable Hawk-eagles, Crested Goshawk, Japanese Sparrowhawk, Black-thighed Falconet, Great Eared Nightjar, Red-throated, Brown and Red-crowned Barbets, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Silver-



rumped Needletail, Whiskered Treeswift, Banded Kingfisher, Black-and-Yellow and the amazing Green Broadbill, Streak-breasted, Buff-necked, Grey-and-Buff and Orange-backed Woodpeckers, Orange-breasted Trogon, Asian Drongo Cuckoo, Red-billed, Black-bellied and Raffles's Malkohas, Siberian Blue Robin, Lesser Green Leafbird, Grey-bellied, Stripe-throated, Hairy-backed, Yellow-bellied, Olive-winged and Ochraceous Bulbuls, Dark-throated Oriole, Asian Paradise-flycatcher, Rufous-winged Philentoma, Dark-sided and Fulvous-chested Flycatchers, Moustached, Abbott's, Chestnut-winged and Black-throated Babblers, Large Wren-babbler, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Pale-legged Leaf-warbler, Arctic and Eastern-crowned Warblers, Red-throated, Purple-

naped and Purple-throated Sunbirds, Little and Grey-breasted Spiderhunters, Great and Green Ioras, Yellow-breasted and Yellow-vented Flowerpeckers and Crow-billed Drongo. We will also spend one evening searching for Javan Frogmouth. In the afternoon of Day 4 we will drive to Krungching Forest for a 2 night stay.

Days 5 - 6 Krungching Forest – Krabi



We will have a very special time here visiting the wilderness of Krungching Forest, situated at the very northern tip of the vast Khao Luang National Park. The park covers 570kms of forested mountains, hillsides, rivers, waterfalls and is a place of sheer beauty. A huge variety of birds reside here and amongst many possibilities there are Malaysian Rail-babbler, Buffy Fish-owl, Wallace's Hawk-eagle, Violet and Little Bronze Cuckoos, Thick-billed Green-pigeon, Great Pied, Black and White-crowned Hornbills, Rufous Piculet, Maroon Woodpecker, Scarlet-rumped Trogon, Rufous-collared Kingfisher, Black-bellied, Raffles's, Chestnut-breasted and Red-billed Malkohas, Dusky Broadbill, Red-throated, Gold-whiskered and Brown Barbets, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Blue-winged and Banded Pittas, Ashy Minivet, Fulvous-chested Jungle-Flycatcher, Scaly-breasted, Grey-

eyed, Buff-vented and Spectacled Bulbuls, Dark-throated Oriole, Chestnut-naped Forktail, Maroon-breasted Philentoma, Grey-headed, Scaly-crowned, Ferruginous, Moustached and Chestnut-winged Babblers, Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler, Sultan Tit, Lesser Green Leafbird, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Green Iora, Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker and both Spectacled and Yellow-eared Spiderhunters. On the afternoon of Day 6 we will drive to Krabi for an overnight stay at the Maritime Park and Spa Hotel.

Day 7 Krabi Mangroves Boat Ride – Bangkok – End of Tour

What better way to begin the day than an early morning boat ride through the nearby creeks and mangrove forest close to the town of Krabi? This will give us access to such delights as Mangrove Pitta, Brown-winged and Ruddy Kingfishers, Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, Streak-breasted Woodpecker, Common Flameback, Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, Black-and-Red Broadbill, Dollarbird, Pacific and Striated Swallows, Dusky Crag-martin, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Stripe-throated Bulbul, Mangrove Whistler, White-chested Babbler, Ruby-cheeked Sunbird, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, Ashy Tailorbird and Asian Glossy Starling. After lunch we will rather reluctantly have to fly back to Bangkok and take the onward flight to the UK, and the conclusion of the tour.

Leaders: Nick Bray & Yotin Meekaew.

Tour Price: **£1395.00** per person

Single supplement: £165.00 **Deposit:** £250.00

Group size: Minimum for tour to go ahead 4 and maximum of 8 with 2 leaders

Included in cost: Accommodation in twin rooms en-suite, internal flight, all meals except dinner on Day 7, transport in air-conditioned minibus throughout the tour, boat trips, all reserve entrance fees and services of the leaders.

Not included: International flight, insurance, departure tax, drinks, tips, and items of a personal nature.

Flight information: Please note that you need to arrive in Bangkok in the early morning of Saturday 8th January. Departure should be from Bangkok in the evening of Friday 14th January. Please contact our agent Shane Wheatley at Dial-a-Flight on 01732 591470 or 01732 593196 for the best up-to-date flights that you can book for your requirements.

Accommodation: Ranges from very good to quite basic. The bungalows at Krungching are quite basic but the location is simply superb. Whilst the Morakot Resort at Khao Nor Chuchi provides en-suite facilities and a superb location.

Tour Code: This is a standard birding tour, with some long days in the field. Early starts are normal whilst birding in the tropics and some late finishes are necessary when looking for owls. Walking is easy, but the entrance path to Krungching Forest is quite steep in places. Expect the weather to be warm and humid, with the chance of a light shower.

This tour can be combined with our special 2-week Philippines adventure.

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