



## Endemic birds and endangered primates in the heart of Indo-China

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Saturday 5 - Saturday 26 February 2011

Ba Be and Ba Vi extension Saturday 26 February - Wednesday 2 March

### Summary

Vietnam is one of the most beautiful, friendly and fascinating countries in Asia and an early season visit there finds the country at its best, the climate mostly cool, dry and enjoyable, the winter birds still in and the resident ones gearing up for breeding. Vietnam hosts, according to your splitting beliefs, no less than 13 true endemic species (and this number continues to increase as further work is done and new discoveries made), a further 7 or so restricted to Indochina and a number of very interesting and distinct “subspecies” several of which are destined to be future splits. A large range of Southeast Asian species of wider distribution and a host of birds wintering from further north add to the richness of this destination.

Vietnam is also host to the largest selection of mammals of any Southeast Asian country. Many are critically endangered, little known and almost impossible to see but amongst them are more than 20 species of primate – an astonishing total for such a relatively small country. Some are widespread but a unique aspect of this tour is to seek out some of the rarer ones – especially a number of colourful Leaf-Monkeys and two species of endemic Gibbons. We have a chance of up to nine species (Black, Delacour’s Golden-headed and Ha Tinh Leaf-Monkeys, Black-shanked, Grey-shanked and Red-shanked Douc Langurs and Buff-cheeked and Northern White-cheeked Gibbons) some of which are amongst the rarest primates on earth hanging on in their last isolated strongholds.



Grey-crowned Crocias by Nguyen Hoai Bao

Our unique and comprehensive itinerary, covering the best sites from south to north, seeks out all but a few inaccessible endemic birds and several of the mammals. Your leader **Nguyen Hoai Bao** a fine young Vietnamese birder who own Wildtour Company, we shall sample the very best of this unique country in a way that few westerners have ever enjoyed

Transport by minibus, accommodation in good standard hotels and park bungalows and memorable Vietnamese food throughout. Includes park entry fees and all drinks, within reason and including beer and Vietnamese wine, are complementary. Does not include air fares to and from Vietnam, optional tipping or items of a personal nature

Cost: US\$ 5500 per person Ho Chi Minh – Hanoi based on twin sharing rooms.

Single supplement extra on request

Extension depend on size of group

Minimum: 6 people

Maximum: 8 people

**Detail itinerary**



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### Saturday 5 February

Arrival in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Transfer to Majestic Hotel. If time permits a visit to the Cu Chi Tunnel, a renowned historic site some 50km from Ho Chi Minh city centre. Here is but part of the huge and complex underground tunnel system used by the Viet Cong in the Vietnam War.

Evening welcome dinner and briefing

Overnight Majestic Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City

### Sunday 6 February

After an early start we will drive northwards towards the renowned Cat Tien National Park. We will stop en route to search for the rare endemic Orange-necked Partridge. Other endemic forms here include Indochinese Green Magpie and our first (of several) chances for Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped Pittas. Onward to Cat Tien and our first exploration of this superb National Park in the afternoon.

Overnight at the Cat Tien National Park (3 nights)

### Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 February

The premier National Park in South Vietnam, Cat Tien is located in Cochinchina in the Da Lat foothills and boasts an impressive mosaic of forest and seasonal wetlands which largely escaped the defoliants used in the Vietnam War. We will bird by jeep



Photo by Nguyen Hoai Bao

track and forest trails to seek out the endemic Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, other spectacular birds such as Siamese Fireback, Green Peafowl and Scaly-breasted Partridge, both endemic Pittas, the endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler and a host of other species also

known from Malaysia and Thailand.

The park is host to several primate species with our main targets Buff-cheeked Gibbon and Black-shanked Douc Langur. Other mammals such as the huge Gaur, Sambur, Wild Boar and Pig-tailed Macaque are also possible

Overnight Cat Tien National Park



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### **Wednesday 9 February**

After the final morning in Cat Tien, we will make the relatively short drive from Cat Tien up to Di Linh. Here we can find many birds occur in Da Lat but can say easier, including Blue and Rusty-naped Pittas, Spotted Forktail, White-cheeked Black-hooded, Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes, Vietnamese Cutia and the Black-headed Parrotbill ( Split from Grey-headed Parrotbill).

Overnight Khoa Dat Hotel, Di Linh Town

In the morning birding at Di Linh (Nui San pass) then we drive up to the Langbian Plateau and the charming hill resort of Da Lat. We will stop at any interesting patches of habitat en route and also see several charming waterfalls. Da Lat is situated at a delightfully cool 1475 metres asl in a temperate region dotted with lakes and waterfalls and surrounded by forest including various native pine woodlands.



Large Niltava by Nguyen Hoai Bao

Overnight Novotel, Da Lat (3 nights)

### **Thursday 10 and Friday 11 February**

Two full days to explore the Da Lat Plateau including the 2169 metre Mt Langbian, cloaked with evergreen forest right up to its peak and accessed by a progressively steeper footpath. Our efforts should be rewarded however as this is the home of the spectacular endemic Collared Laughing-Thrush, as well as Yellow-billed Nuthatch and the Vietnamese forms of Cutia, Rufous-winged (Black-crowned) Fulvetta and Black-throated (Grey-crowned) Tit which are sure fire bets for splitting before too long. The elusive and handsome Green Cochoa is also here and should be vocal at this time of year and a number of other Asian and wintering birds will also be encountered. Nearer to Da Lat itself is Ta Nung Valley, famous for the relatively recently re-discovered Grey-crowned Crocias which is regularly encountered here. Other endemics such as Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes and Vietnamese Greenfinch are also possible

### **Saturday 12 February**



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Early morning driving to Bi Doup, the new road to Nha Trang, we will stop at Klong Klanh pass where Blyth's Kingfisher, Indochinese Fulvetta will be a bonus of Da Lat plateau birding.

Afternoon drive to Nha Trang and take a further driving to Tuy Hoa

Overnight in Tuy Hoa city

### **Sunday 13 February**

Today we will take a longish driving to Quang Nam where then we will visit Que Son forest, which offers another wilderness forest experience and where we will link with a student studying the rare Grey-shanked Douc Langur and also find another good range of birds, very top! .

Overnight: Camp!

### **Monday 14 February**

In the afternoon of this day we travel from Quang Nam to Da Nang where we will overnight. The Red-shanked Douc Langur is the primate target; either this afternoon or tomorrow morning we will visit Son Tra Island which offers our best chance of sighting this endangered mammal

Overnight Da Nang

### **Tuesday 15 February**

The morning visit Son Tra then drive to Lo Xo, It is about 3 hours from Da Nang to the Lo Xo Pass which has reached recent birding fame as the site to see the endemic Black-crowned Barwing. Here, at the forest edge we have great chance of this recently described species and others to look for here include Brown Hornbill, Indochinese Wren Babbler (formerly known as Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler), White-winged Magpie and Red-tailed Laughingthrush and further chance for Yellow-billed Nuthatch.

Overnight Kham Duc hotel (2 nights)

### **Wednesday 16 - Thursday 17 February**



Indochinese Wren Babbler  
by NHB

One and a half days birding at Lo Xo, this place is the best replacement for Bach Ma as Bach Ma is closed until the end of 2010 for the new building road.

The afternoon this day we will travel to Bach Ma for one night stay at the hillfoot HQ.

### **Friday 18 February**

We leave Bach Ma after finding Annam Partridge for a drive of about 5 hours north to Phong Nha National Park. Our route follows part of the Ho Chi Minh trail but now a modern highway and passes through some of Vietnam's finest scenery. Phong Nha itself is a spectacle of rivers and limestone bluffs and even the almost unknown Vietnamese Pheasant has been seen here. We can try and always hope!

Overnight Saigon-Phong Nha Hotel (3 nights)



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### **Saturday 19 - Sunday 20 February**

Two major targets will occupy our time in Phong Nha, the near endemic Sooty Babbler (also found in similar habitat in adjacent Laos) and the recently described Bar-faced Bulbul (see Forktail 25 (2009) and Birding Asia Number 12). Described from Laos, just over the border, it has now been found in Phong Nha

Here we also have further chances for a range of birds including Siamese Fireback, Red-collared Woodpecker, Brown Hornbill as well as the isolated form of Sulphur-breasted Warbler sometimes split as "Limestone Warbler"

Overnight Saigon-Phong-Nha Hotel

### **Monday 21 February**

A pre-dawn search for two endangered primates - Black and Ha Tinh Leaf Monkeys before the drive north to Cuc Phong National Park

Overnight Cuc Phong National Park (2 nights)

### **Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 February**

Cuc Phuong is Vietnam's oldest National Park and an area of lowland forest and lakes easily accessed by a paved road. It is rich in birdlife and we have our last chances here for both Pittas, Red-collared Woodpecker and White-winged Magpie as well as a supporting cast which includes Malayan Night-Heron, Pied Falconet (we saw both on my scouting trip on 2007), Eared Pitta, Silver-breasted Broadbill, White-tailed Flycatcher, Fujian Niltva and the *annamensis* form of Limestone Wren-Babbler.

At the Van Long Nature Reserve, 30km from Cuc Phong, we will take a sampan ride to some dramatic limestone cliffs that are one of the last haunts of the critically endangered Delacour's Leaf-Monkey.

Overnight Cuc Phuong National Park

### **Thursday 24 February**

We conclude our Vietnam adventure with a visit to Ha Long Bay, the famous series of limestone islands so beloved of Travel Programmes and a World Heritage Site. Our motives will differ however from the numbers of other tourists we will find here as we take a private boat ride to seek out the beautiful and endangered Golden-headed Leaf-Monkey on its island refuge at Cat Na National Park.

Overnight at Ha Long Bay

### **Friday 25 February**

Our Vietnam adventure has taken us from south to north and we have a final drive to Hanoi where we will enjoy a final dinner and overnight.

Overnight Hanoi

### **Saturday 26 February**

Transfer to Hanoi Airport for departure

### **Saturday 26 February – Wednesday 2 March**

#### **Ba Vi and Ba Be Extension**

#### **Saturday 26 February**



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Vietnam is a superbly rich birding destination and new discoveries are being made all the time. Easily accessible from Hanoi is Ba Vi National Park (home to the potentially split (from White-necked) Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush as well as a range of other birds) where we will stay for two nights

Overnight Ba Vi

### **Sunday 27 February**

All day at Ba Vi to track down the Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush and others.

Overnight Ba Vi

### **Monday 28 February**

Ba Vi to Ba Be National Park in the north of Vietnam where the rare and little known White-eared Night-Heron has recently been found to breed (see BirdingAsia Number 12 December 2009).

Overnight Ba Be

### **Tuesday 1 March**

All day at Ba Be to track down the White-eared Night-Heron and others in this little known area

Overnight Ba Be National Park

### **Wednesday 2 March**

Ba Be to Hanoi and depart