

# Trip report Vietnam

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## 1 Introduction

In the spring of 2003, I had the opportunity to travel around the best bird-watching sites in Vietnam during a scouting trip sponsored by Aves Tours ([www.avestours.com](http://www.avestours.com)) for their up-coming Vietnam birding trips. Some time was spent along what has become the usual birding circuit around the country. Much time, however, was invested in the exploration of little known sites, some of which have never been visited by hobby birdwatchers before. Among many remarkable bird sightings, quite a few new regional records were made in the course of these exploratory sorties, which will be outlined in the following site accounts.

## 2 The avifauna of Vietnam

Having opened up to the outside world a decade ago, the Communist Republic of Vietnam is a relatively new destination for birdwatchers. There is much here to water a birder's mouth: The habitats range from montane broad-leaved and pine forests through dipterocarp lowland forests to grasslands and delta marshes. European birdwatchers will be happy to find a substantial Siberian element in the winter avifauna, featuring rare Eastern Palearctic buntings, warblers and shorebirds. While the main bulk of bird species can be found with much more ease in Thailand, travelers to Vietnam will be rewarded by a pronounced endemic subset of species that can otherwise only be seen in neighboring regions of Laos, Cambodia and/or China. Finally, Vietnam hosts some avian endemism of its own, mainly in the form of species that are restricted to the Da Lat Plateau in the south and other mountains or hill regions. The exact number of endemics, however, given as 10 by N. Wheatley ("Where to watch Birds in Asia", 1996, Christopher Helm, London), is constantly changing owing to the discovery of new species, the discovery of populations in neighboring countries, and taxonomic revisions of species status.

## 3 Essential information

Vietnam is not an easy country to travel in. You are advised to go with a tour company. If you want to set out on your own, you have to be aware of certain problems that you may face in the process before designing your trip itinerary. In the following, I intend to give some general advice. Refer to the site accounts for specific information. Most (though not all) of the following information does not apply to the trodden path, but only to more remote localities.

## Communication

If you intend to stay along the well-beaten path (national parks, Da Lat Plateau, cities), you may get by with English without encountering large problems. Other European languages can be helpful, too: Hanoi has a large community of ex-emigrants to East Berlin, so German is widely spoken. French came in handy when talking to doctors and village elders. (I needed to talk to a lot of doctors!) The Vietnamese intelligentsia still seems to like its old colonial language better than English. In the rural north, a surprising number of people sought to communicate with me in Russian. As soon as you step a little off the beaten path, though, communication will start to be your foremost nightmare. The easiest organizational tasks develop into major obstacles, just because no-one understands you and you understand no-one. Do as I did and try the following: Buy a simple language guide and learn fifty important words before you get there. Learn the numbers and everyday sentences well. When you get there, don't expect anyone to understand you: Vietnamese has got to be the most difficult language for a European tongue, considering its 6 tones (two more than Mandarin Chinese) and its wealth of quasi-homophonous (=sound-alike) vowels, coupled with significant differences in the pronunciation of northerners and southerners. Good luck!

## Overcharging

Vietnam is ripe with it, and especially low-budget tourists will do well to plan in some financial cushion. While overcharging in the open tourist areas is mostly tolerable and low-key (comparable to many other countries), it can be excessive and frustrating in the remoter rural areas, especially in the eateries and public busses, where westerners are (more often than not) charged up to 50 times as much as the local price. Avoid it where you can by asking the price before you buy. Show your discontent where they overcharge you more than 10 times, and show your appreciation where they ask you three times the local price or less. Don't haggle but leave when substantially overcharged: A shop owner would not go down by more than a few percent so as not to lose face by admitting that he/she is overcharging. Sometimes, overcharging cannot be circumvented (e.g. when flagging down public transport along rural roads or when there is only a limited number of eateries in town). Expect to pay Western prices and more in those situations if arguing doesn't help. It rarely does, though, in Vietnam.

### Local permits (“Phap”)

Vietnam is off limits to foreigners! Most of it anyway. Foreigners may roam freely in major cities and towns, along major highways and in a few designated tourist areas. Beyond that, however, you need a permit or else you are trespassing and you will be hunted down by the police. Many tourists who come to Vietnam do not realize this is the way it is, because they don't leave the “Lonely Planet” path. I did not realize that either, until I was hunted down by the police time after time. I learned the hard way. The good news is that local permits (“phap”) are not necessarily hard to obtain. You need to go to the police station in the main town of the district where your birding destination is located. Chances are people there will not speak English, so every single word of Vietnamese you learned from that language guidebook will count! Have a pair of binos and a birdbook ready to show them what you are up to. Smile and be polite! Remember that your success will be entirely up to the whims of that local policeman. Most of the off-limits birdwatching sites happen to be situated in sensitive areas, where non-Vietnamese minorities live and where Hanoi doesn't want any foreigners to peek around.

**Important** It is absolutely necessary to have a permit from the district police of the district you will be birding in. Local authorities do not have to honor permits or letters from provincial or national authorities, or from neighboring district police. Some birding sites are only accessible from a certain district capital, but actually belong to the neighboring district, making things very complicated (see Ho Ke Go). Also remember that the possession of that magic little sheet of paper does not always keep all the hassle from you (see Kon Ka Kinh, where illiterate local militiamen harassed me with their machine pistols). Refer to the site accounts to find out about travel restrictions in particular regions.

### Travelling in Vietnam

Only a little more than 10 years ago, Vietnam was one of the poorest countries in the world. People died of famine in a society whose older generation had had to go through 4 consecutive wars. Slowly and very cautiously, the country began to open its doors to the outside world, and ever since then it has been in a process of steady liberalization. This process is still in its infancy and much remains to be done to move the country to a position of greater prosperity. Yet many people (especially those in the city) have managed to benefit from this opening process and have substantially improved their living. The country gives you a sense of unexpectedness and randomness. One day you may be lucky and

get a travel permit to a restricted zone without any problem at all. The next day something easy like finding a hotel that's open to foreigners may be next impossible. One day the park staff tells you you cannot get any food because you failed to ask for it at the entrance. The next day they let you know that you can arrange some food directly with the cook - for half the official price. Near the minority villages, children run away from you, in the nearest town they flock around you. Truly, in Vietnam anything can happen and it is here where I have had some of the most memorable and some of the least memorable experiences of my life.

## 4 Cat Tien National Park

One of very few sizeable remaining wilderness areas in Southern Vietnam, Cat Tien is the last stronghold of some of the region's most intriguing megafauna such as Javan Rhinoceros or Gaur. These animals are but rarely seen, yet the park attracts a great number of nature enthusiasts, mostly birdwatchers in pursuit of some of the country's most splendid birds.

### Birds

The forest inside the park has a peculiar character owing to large-scale destruction during the War. Most old trees are still there (though some still appear badly damaged) making possible the occurrence of large woodpeckers, hornbills and other big birds: For instance, I saw Oriental Pied and Great Hornbill, Red-vented Barbet, Orange-breasted Trogon, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Banded Bay and Violet Cuckoo, Black-and-red and Dusky Broadbill, Racket-tailed Treepie, Black-naped and Black-hooded Oriole, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Pompadour and Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, Lesser Yellow-nape, Greater Flameback as well as Laced, Great Slaty, Heart-spotted and White-bellied Woodpecker. The mid-storey, however, looks quite disturbed over large areas, resulting in a thick understorey. Nevertheless, sufficient areas of less disturbed forest can be found in which birding is excellent (Scaly-crowned, Puff-throated, Abbot's and Gray-faced Tit Babbler, the latter near-endemic). A small trail system around the headquarters gives access to some of that forest, where a stealthy dawn stroll produced skulkers such as Siberian Blue Robin, Scaly-breasted Partridge (ssp. *cognacqi*) and Blue-winged and Bar-bellied Pitta. A track leads up-river from the HQ all the way to a settlement in the Cat-Loc district of the park. Nocturnal jeep rides along this track are good for mammal sightings, while day rides produced Siamese Fireback, Woolly-necked Stork and Lesser Adjutant.

### **Endemic Galliformes:**

Endemic Galliformes: The area hosts two quasi-endemics, Orange-necked Partridge and Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, which have never been recorded far from the park (though the peacock-pheasant has recently been seen as far as adjacent areas in neighboring Cambodia). The peacock-pheasant is common in the park, though can be tricky and was very elusive during my stay (with only two individuals seen). The best strategy is to follow up its advertising call; some park staff can imitate one for you on demand.

### **Cat Loc District**

The endemic partridge is but rarely seen in the vicinity of bamboo-covered hills, particularly around the settlement of Cat Loc. It is well worth spending a whole morning or day around here, though it will be virtually impossible to arrange a pre-dawn jeep ride to Cat Loc (≈20km from the main HQ). Very basic accommodation and food is available there, however. There is a hard-to-find trail which leads through good bamboo near the HQ. Some time investment along here should eventually yield the partridge, though I missed it, instead seeing other bamboo specialists such as Blue-rumped Pitta (several sightings within one morning; difficult elsewhere in the park), White-hooded Babbler, White-browed Piculet, Large and White-browed Scimitar-Babbler, Yellow-bellied Warbler, Rufous Woodpecker, Buff-breasted Babbler, Black-browed Fulvetta and White-rumped Munia. Another good trail leads to a small lake where I sighted Cinnamon Bittern. Wet fields and pastures around the settlement provided the opportunity to see excellent open-country birds (or species foraging there early in the morning), such as Red Junglefowl, Common Flameback, Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, White-breasted Waterhen, Watercock, Vinous-breasted Starling, Baya Weaver, Scaly-breasted Munia, Paddyfield Pipit and wintering Lanceolated Warblers. Crocodile Lake and Bird Lake: Along the way to Cat Loc, there are two lakes at differing distances from the track which are both well worth visiting. The larger one, Crocodile Lake (ca. 15km from the track) is supposed to be good for a great array of waterbirds and assorted weaver species, but was off-limits during my stay due to a German film crew. The smaller one, Bird Lake (2km from the track) is mostly dry, but did provide excellent views of Green Peafowl when I visited. This bird is rarely seen elsewhere in the park (except for Crocodile Lake).

### More birds

The tall trees and open/disturbed areas around the HQ itself and along the river were quite productive, yielding Red-breasted Parakeet, Lineated, Green-eared and Blue-eared Barbet, Green and Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Common, White-throated and Pied Kingfisher, Plaintive Cuckoo, Green-billed Malkoha, Greater Coucal, Indian Roller, Dollarbird, Asian Barred Owllet, Great Eared Nightjar (at dusk), Hill and Golden-crested Myna, Spotted and Red Collared Dove, Cattle Egret, Chinese Pond Heron, Dartar, Brown Shrike, Ashy Drongo, Striped Tit Babbler, Oriental Magpie Robin, Barn Swallow as well as Black-headed, Black-crested, Stripe-throated and Streak-eared Bulbul. Other sightings in Cat Tien included Emerald Dove, Crested Serpent-eagle, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Blue-winged and Golden-fronted Leafbird, Bronzed and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Common and Great Iora, Large Cuckooshrike, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Large Woodshrike, Scarlet Minivet, Black-naped Monarch, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, Asian Brown, Tickell's Blue and Red-throated Flycatcher, White-rumped Shama, Ashy Woodswallow, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Ochraceous Bulbul, Two-barred and Pale legged Leaf Warbler, Gray-breasted and Plain Prinia, Dark-necked Tailorbird, White-crested Laughingthrush, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Thick-billed and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, Ruby-cheeked, Purple-naped, Olive-backed and Crimson Sunbird, Little Spiderhunter and Scaly-breasted Munia.

## 5 Roadside forest ca. 10km N of Madagui

A late afternoon and the subsequent morning were spent around some roadside forest ca. 10km north of Madagui just outside Cat Tien NP in the futile hope of seeing Orange-necked Partridge, which is reported to be more common in the hilly terrain to the north of the national park. This patch of forest, the last to be seen anywhere along the highway from Saigon to Dalat, is on top of one of the larger foothills of the Dalat Plateau and is mostly secondary. Birding is miserable from the road itself owing to heavy traffic and roadside degradation, but can be productive along the maze of trails that can be accessed by taking the track west from near the highest point of the hill. Some of the better species recorded here include Wreathed Hornbill, Hill Myna, Large Scimitar-Babbler, Black-browed Fulvetta, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Siberian Blue Robin, Buff-breasted Babbler, Ochraceous Bulbul and Gray-eyed Bulbul.

## 6 Dinh Linh Pass

The recently split Orange-breasted Laughingthrush, which is nowhere as likely to be seen as here, is sure to revive birders' interest in Di Linh, a long-known site that has been neglected by birders in the past few years. The area additionally hosts a whole bag of other goodies, including some that you are very unlikely to see around Da Lat. The town of Di Linh marks the beginning of the famed Dalat Plateau on your way north from Cat Tien to Da Lat City. An old road from Di Linh to the coast is now in restoration and gives access to a mountain pass ca. 20km outside of Di Linh. Most birders seem to have restricted their birding activities to the roadside forest around the pass (apparently there is some more good forest that can be reached by taking a right at the bridge in the little valley from which you ascend to the pass - coming from Di Linh). The road improvement works have now proceeded far beyond the pass, leaving behind large stretches of roadside that are useless for birds owing to clearance, erosion and steep embankments. These days, many birds will only be seen if you find access into the montane forest. Good montane broad-leaved roadside forest extends to a few kilometers alongside the road on either side of the pass. Below it, there are only conifer plantations of low value. Birding along the roadside can be good early-morning but very quiet throughout the rest of the day. A well-defined but hidden path gives access to a huge area of beautiful montane forest. The path seems to have been cut only recently to enable road workers to harvest good timber from inside. Most of the specialties, including a new record for South Annam, were only seen along this trail system, not along the road (see below).

### Birds

I was surprised at the great number of high-caliber species I found here within only two days and an evening. Among them is a new record for South Annam, namely the Pin-tailed Parrotfinch, an elusive bamboo specialist of which I saw a pair along the above-mentioned path. Additionally, that path should be the most reliable site worldwide for the rare and shy Orange-breasted Laughingthrush, a bird which is now only sporadically seen around Da Lat and which I saw thanks to tape playback. Rusty-naped Pittas were flushed several times around here and good views were obtained of two or three. Some of the more pleasant surprises along this path included a sluggish Green Cochoa and a Scaly Thrush (possibly of the resident ssp.). The creek along this path is home of the Southern Annamese form of Spotted Forktail (which eluded me elsewhere around Dalat), a bird peculiarly isolated from the nearest populations in the Himalayas. Some of the regional endemics I spotted along the path include Black-hooded Laugh-

ingthrush and the local and distinct races of a whole bunch of species, such as Rufous-backed and Black-headed Sibia, Black-throated Tit, Large Niltava, Silver Pheasant, Gray-headed Parrotbill and Red-billed Scimitar-Babbler. Surprisingly distinct individuals of the rufiventer form of Streaked Wren-Babbler (a taxon that is mentioned only cursorily in the ID literature) were seen on the forest floor in the vicinity of giant roots. The roadside was good for larger birds or those higher in the canopy, such as Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Barred Cuckoo Dove, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Black-browed Barbet, Great Hornbill, Long-tailed Broadbill, Streaked Spiderhunter, Black, Flavescent and Mountain Bulbul as well as Maroon Oriole. The conifer plantations are not really worth any time investment, though some of the better species were also seen here, such as White-cheeked Laughingthrush. The area around the pass itself was inhabited by a few species not seen further down, such as Golden-throated Barbet. Other sightings included White-rumped Munia, Mountain Fulvetta, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Yellow-browed Warbler, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, White-throated Fantail, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Ashy, Lesser Racket-tailed and Bronzed Drongo, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Emerald Dove, Green-billed Malkoha, Black-throated and Mrs Gould's Sunbird, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler, Rufous-capped Babbler, Gray-throated Babbler, White-browed Scimitar-Babbler, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Gray-chinned Minivet and Red-headed Trogon.

## 7 Mt. Lang Bian

Lang Bian is a must for birders visiting Dalat, not just because it is the only accessible site for Collared Laughingthrush? The second highest mountain of the Da Lat Plateau, Lang Bian is just a few kilometers outside of Da Lat City. Special permits are no longer needed to visit the area, which is inhabited by a non-Vietnamese minority. On foot, it is a 2-4hrs' walk through old (but anthropogenically altered) coniferous forest to the broad-leaved evergreen forest. Unfortunately, Lang Bian enjoys no formal protection status, and it was irritating to see Dalat city people in action, some of them playing Rambo on the vegetation and the wildlife (using their machete), others screaming their intestines out in a supposed song contest, a third party dumping their backpacks' contents onto the summit, and the odd teenager climbing trees and retrieving orchids or checking bird-traps in which they capture everything from laughingthrushes to mesias for sale. It is time the local authorities stop this wholesale destruction of the mountain and utilize the entrance fee money for protective measures.

## Birds

The conifer zone, while not as diverse as the broad-leaved forest, still harbors some specialties that are hard to see elsewhere, such as the distinct local ssp of Eurasian Jay as well as Vietnamese Greenfinch and Red Crossbill (I missed the latter two at this site). Virtually all migrants I saw on Lang Bian stayed in the conifer zone, among them Mugimaki Flycatcher, White-throated Rock Thrush and Radde's Warbler. Additionally, open-country species preferred this zone (Burmese Shrike, Hill Prinia, Gray Bushchat, Sooty-headed and Red-whiskered Bulbul). The interface between conifers and broad-leaved forest was especially interesting, offering good views of Bay Woodpecker, White-cheeked Laughingthrush and Silver Pheasant. This habitat interface is also the area where most people (incl. myself) have seen Collared Laughingthrush, an elusive bird that is hard to glimpse without playback. The broad-leaved forest is rich in mixed flocks that frequently comprise more than a dozen species. Black-throated Tit, White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, Chestnut-crowned and White-spectacled Warbler, Rufous-capped and Gray-throated Babbler, Mountain and Rufous-winged Fulvetta, Silver-eared Mesia, Black-headed Sibia and Mrs Gould's Sunbird are among the better mixed flock constituents I saw on Lang Bian. Ground skulkers abound in the less disturbed areas (e.g. the contour trail) but require patience and stealth (I saw Siberian Blue Robin, Pygmy Wren-Babbler, Lesser Shortwing and Gray-bellied Tesia). Lang Bian is the highest site along the usual Dalat birding circuit. Watch out for a few high-altitude species that are impossible at some of the lower sites. Some of the ones I saw include Golden-throated Barbet and Ashy-throated Warbler. Other sightings include Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, House Swift, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Long-tailed Minivet, White-throated Fantail, Verditer Flycatcher, Little Pied Flycatcher, White-tailed Robin, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Green-backed Tit, Black Bulbul and Mountain Tailorbird.

## 8 Ho Tuyen Lam Reservoir

This artificial lake attained birder fame more than a decade ago when the Dalat endemic Gray-crowned Crocias - deemed extinct for almost a century - was rediscovered in small but dwindling pockets of forest around the back end of the reservoir. The crocias is still here, though it has become considerably more difficult to see due to continuing degradation of the habitat, and a new site has emerged where chances are higher (see next account). Nonetheless, a comprehensive birding itinerary should include this site, because it boasts several other birds that are fairly tricky elsewhere, not least the Yellow-billed Nuthatch, a

bird with a peculiar mode of distribution that would require you to travel to Hainan (China) if you were to miss it in Vietnam.

## Birds

Black-collared and Vinous-breasted Starling are easy to see around the dam. While this is the site where the Gray-crowned Crocias was originally rediscovered, I doubt that many people will get to see the bird here again, since there are only a few hundred meters of acceptable forest left along the trail where most people have found it, and even those are badly degraded. I did see Rusty-naped Pitta, Spot-throated Babbler, Lesser Shortwing, Gray-bellied Tesia and Eyebrowed Wren Babbler here, though, plus an unidentified *Arborophila* partridge. The conifer prairie in the immediate surroundings of the lake should be given at least some time investment (in fact, some birders have ended up spending most of their time here, as the forest is so degraded and frustrating): A morning along here yielded some goodies that I missed in the conifer zone of Lang Bian, namely the endemic Vietnamese Greenfinch and Red Crossbill. Another highlight was a group of *Cutia* that constantly switched over from conifers to broad-leaved trees and back. Furthermore, Slender-billed Oriole (from the boat), Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Brown-throated Treecreeper (local ssp), Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Green-backed Tit and Banded Bay Cuckoo were only seen in these conifers. From the higher parts of the prairie you have the best chances of spotting Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon and Black-browed Barbet. In a difficult-to-access remnant of primary forest, I chanced upon a huge mixed flock that included the prime-target Yellow-billed Nuthatch, though unfortunately I missed the crocias here. Still, I guess, this is your best bet at the crocias if you do not want to resort to Ta Nung Valley (see next account). Other species within the rich mixed flocks along the upper trail included Mountain Fulvetta, Blue-winged Minla (local ssp), Rufous-capped and Gray-throated Babbler, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, Chestnut-crowned and Yellow-browed Warbler, White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, Black-throated Tit (local ssp), Gray-headed Parrotbill (local ssp), Rufous-backed Sibia (local ssp), Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler, White-browed Scimitar-Babbler, Yellow-cheeked Tit and Large Niltava (local ssp). The lake itself harbored Little Grebe, Osprey, Cinnamon Bittern and Chinese Pond Heron. Other sightings include Streaked and Little Spiderhunter, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Scaly-breasted Munia, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Hill and Plain Prinia, Mountain Tailorbird, Ashy, Flavescent, Mountain and Black Bulbul, Gray Bushchat, Verditer Flycatcher, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, White-throated Fantail, Gray-chinned and Long-tailed Minivet, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Lesser Racket-tailed

Drongo, Asian Fairy Bluebird, House Swift, Red-rumped Swallow, Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Red-whiskered and Sooty-headed Bulbul, White-tailed Robin and Large Cuckooshrike.

## 9 Ta Nung Valleay

For those who have missed the rediscovered Gray-crowned Crocias at its original site around Ho Tuyen Lam, or for those who have too little time to give it a try at several sites, the forested slopes of Ta Nung Valley are probably the best place to go. This new site has apparently not been visited by birders in the last millennium, and besides the crocias an assorted array of Dalat endemics make a trip here worthwhile.

### Birds

The crocias can be seen anywhere along the forested parts of a trail that gives access to a last forest fragment (I saw it only 200m in), though it is by no means guaranteed and good birders have missed it. Ta Nung holds a few other species that can but rarely be seen around the remaining birding sites in the Dalat Palateau, among which I saw Red-billed Scimitar-Babbler. Some of the better mega-avifauna I sighted at Ta Nung was Long-tailed Broadbill, Red-headed Trogon, Bay Woodpecker, Red-vented and Black-browed Barbet as well as the recently split Indochinese species of Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo (according to Robson's guide a new record for S Annam, though other birdwatchers have reported sightings of this species at Di Linh in their reports). The forest is haunted by rich mixed flocks that contained Streaked and Little Spiderhunter, Black-throated Sunbird, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Rufous-backed Sibia (local ssp), Mountain Fulvetta, Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler, Blue-winged Minla (local ssp), Rufous-capped Babbler, White-browed Scimitar-Babbler, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, White-spectacled and Chestnut-crowned Warbler, White-tailed Leaf Warbler, Mountain Tailorbird, Ashy, Mountain and Black 1 Bulbul, Yellow-cheeked and Black throated (local ssp) Tit, Large Niltava (local ssp), White-throated Fantail, Long-tailed Minivet and Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike. Skulkers included Rusty-naped Pitta, Pygmy Wren Babbler, Spot-throated Babbler, Gray-bellied Tesia, White-tailed Robin and Lesser Shortwing. Other sightings: Red-whiskered Bulbul, Hill Myna, Gray Bushchat, Verditer and Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, Ashy and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Asian Fairy Bluebird, House Swift and Mountain Imperial Pigeon.

## 10 Kon Ka Kinh (Kon Kring)

The Central Highlands of Vietnam have been an ornithological terra incognita up until a few years ago. While much survey work has been done on the Dalat Plateau to the south and in the Bach Ma Area to the north, the much higher mountains in the provinces of Quang Nam, Kon Tum and Gia Lai had never been seen by the eyes of an ornithologist for a long time. Then in 1996, the first expedition disembarked on a survey trip to Mt. Ngoc Linh (2598m) in Kon Tum Province, the highest mountain of the range, and came back with two new bird species to science plus a whole bag of new subspecies.

In the course of a follow-up expedition to Mt. Kon Ka Kinh (1748m) in Gia Lai Province in 1999, Jonathan Eames mist-netted an individual of an unfamiliar laughingthrush that closely resembled the widely disjunct Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush and that was later described as a new species, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush ("A new species of Laughingthrush from the Central Highlands of Vietnam", J.C. Eames and C. Eames, *Bull. B. O. C.* 2001; 121, pp.10-23). This species has so far not been found anywhere else with certainty and may be entirely restricted to bamboo-covered ridges at 1500 to 1800m on Kon Ka Kinh and surrounding mountains. How you shouldn't try and get there: Armed with the Eames' publication and a detailed road atlas of Vietnam (sold anywhere in Hanoi and Saigon), I set out to find my way to Mt. Kon Ka Kinh and to see the laughingthrush. The problems were manifold: My atlas, though extremely detailed, did not show a mountain of that name, so the position of the mountain had to be extrapolated from its coordinates on the map provided by Eames and Eames. A look at the map revealed that the closest I could get to the mountain on public roads was from the north (i.e. from Kon Plong in Kon Tum Province) rather than from Gia Lai Province itself, which later proved to be a fatal approach. Kon Plong is accessible from Kon Tum City by hired motortaxi. In Kon Plong, I hired two Vietnamese guides who said they knew the location of a mountain called Kon Ka Kinh, which turned out to be a lie. Due to ignorance about travel restrictions (this was my first off-limits site!), I failed to get a local permit before setting out. One of the guides (with whom I had shared a water bottle) started to vomit vehemently (due to heavy booze the previous night) during our two-day walk to Kon Kring, a Banaar minority village (also depicted in said atlas) that must be very close to the mountain. On the way to Kon Kring we had passed a couple of other Banaar villages where the local "police chiefs" gave me a hard time in account of the missing permit. My two "guides" talked one of them into letting me pass through and he even gave me a piece of paper with his signature as a permit replacement after receiving a "donation for the community". The evening of the second day, after much delay, we

arrived in Kon Kring, a basic village (wooden stilt houses) where children ran away, women hid and men smoked a peculiar type of weed that made them very light-tempered. The local people also knew of no mountain called Kon Ka Kinh but referred to one of the nearby mountains as the highest peak around. Being quite intimidated by a crowd of 25 Banaar men gathering around the fireplace in the chief's hut with a huge pipe, I politely declined their invitation to smoke and immediately went to sleep, arousing a major stir among them, which my guides tried to soothe by "pointing to my religion". I started to feel that my presence here was problematic and that I should try to keep my stay as short as possible, so I got up at 3.00am the following morning to be at the mountain top at dawn. After a long day of birding, I descended to the village, where I was awaited by three militia men with machine pistols. Meanwhile, they had physically abused my two guides because they could not provide a permit. When I presented them with the permit replacement from the neighboring village, they held the paper upside down, revealing their illiteracy. They made me walk ahead, out of the village into the night, following me with their machine pistols. After three hours we arrived at a military post, where I instantly presented my permit replacement to their boss. To my great satisfaction and to that of my guides, their boss started hitting the militia men over their head upon reading the permit, and granted us accommodation for the night. The following day, we walked straight back to the road in Kon Plong in record time.

### **How you should not try and get there**

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### **How you might want to try and get there**

If I were to give Mt. Kon Ka Kinh a second shot, I would certainly not start out from Kon Tum Province to the north, but from K Bang, the nearest town to the south in Gia Lai Province and the district capital of the area. To have the best chance of avoiding problems, a valid permit has to be obtained at the local police station in K Bang. This is certainly one of the areas where it would be good having a tent and provisions, so as not to be dependent on the Banaar people who really have too many problems of their own to be bothering about yours. Consider hiring Vietnamese guides. Learn some relevant Vietnamese vocabulary before coming here.

## Birds

In between all the hassle I experienced at this site, I was able to do some birdwatching, especially on the one full day I had on the high mountain next to Kon Kring that may (or may not) be Kon Ka Kinh. On that mountain, which is accessible on various trails from the village, I spent most time in the bamboo zone along the ridge up on top, in a sort of habitat that very much resembles the one described by Eames and Eames in their description of the new laughingthrush. However, I had no unequivocal sighting of a Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush, and I noted no vocal activity of the species, like Eames and Eames who had been here at the same time of year four years earlier. Like them, I did hear and see the elusive Red-tailed Laughingthrush near the bamboo ridge, plus some other skulkers and rarities such as Gray-headed Parrotbill (probably *ssp. laotianus*, but so far unrecorded from C Annam according to Robson, 2000), Eyebrowed Wren Babbler and Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler (of the newly described *dickinsoni* race). The previous morning, I had been able to steal away from the Banaar village where we had spent the night en route to Kon Kring. Next to the village was a small pocket of degraded forest at about 1300-1400m that proved surprisingly rich in birdlife: Exciting discoveries included the sluggish Green Cochoa, the near-endemic Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Long-tailed Sibia (first record in South and Central Vietnam according to Robson, 2000), Silver-breasted Broadbill, Rufous-backed Sibia (newly described *ssp. roundi*, first record away from type locality), Black-hooded Laughingthrush (newly described *ssp. sweeti*) and Rufous-faced Warbler. But bird sightings in the forest also included some more expected sightings, such as Speckled Piculet, Greater Yellowthroat, Rufous Woodpecker, Black-browed and the near-endemic Red-vented Barbet, Red-headed Trogon, Green-billed Malkoha, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Maroon Oriole, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Long-tailed Minivet, White-throated Fantail, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Flavescent, Puff-throated, Mountain and Black Bulbul, Mountain and Dark-necked Tailorbird, Gray-cheeked and Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Golden Babbler, Black-eared and White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Mountain Fulvetta, Silver-eared Mesia, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Mrs Gould's and Black-throated Sunbird, Streaked Spiderhunter and White-rumped Munia. The cleared land on the way to Kon Kring provided views of Long-tailed and Burmese Shrike, Ashy Drongo, Large-billed Crow, Vinous-breasted and Black-collared Starling, Ashy Woodswallow and Red-whiskered Bulbul.

## 11 **Mt. Ngoc Linh**

The Central Vietnamese Highlands: Intersected by the provincial boundaries between Kon Tum and Quang Nam Provinces, Mt. Ngoc Linh (2598m) is the highest mountain of the Central Vietnamese Highlands and is - on a national level - second only to Mt. Fansipan near the Chinese border. The Central Highlands are the least densely populated part of the country, and up until recently they were the last region of Vietnam where an unbroken belt of forest covered vast expanses of land that straddled all the way to the border with Cambodia and Laos. Much forest clearance and degradation has been waged in Gia Lai, the southern parts of Kon Tum and most of Quang Nam, leaving the border area between Quang Nam, Kon Tum, Laos and Cambodia one of the last untouched wildernesses. This is precisely where Ngoc Linh and a couple of other high mountains are located, but even this last refuge is in peril with the completion of a new highway that creates access to Vietnam's hinterland along the former "Ho Chi Minh Trail" (see below). The whole region had been ornithologically unexplored until Birdlife International conducted some survey work on Ngoc Linh in 1996 and the following years. Ngoc Linh is one among a handful of mountains in the range that reach a much higher altitude than the well-explored Bach Ma Area to the north and even the Da Lat Plateau to the south. This fact coupled with the lack of previous fieldwork were promising indicators for the potential of discovering new taxa on the mountain. Eventually, however, the scientific harvest turned out to be greater than anyone would have anticipated, with two new bird species to science (an *Actinodura* barwing and a laughingthrush) and almost two dozen new subspecies.

### **How to organize your trip to Ngoc Linh**

One would think that the new discoveries from Ngoc Linh, combined with the occurrence of a range of other highly localized and rare species, will make it a mecca for birdwatching generations to come. I doubt that this will happen soon: Ngoc Linh is located in an area inhabited by the Sodang ethnic minority, and Hanoi has earned a reputation of trying to discourage contact between minority people and foreigners. In the Birdlife International office in Hanoi, people were very surprised to hear I had been able to get a local permit to enter the Ngoc Linh area, reassuring me that it took them major bureaucratic hurdles to organize their expeditions there. If you want to access the mountain from its western side (as I and the first Birdlife expedition did), you would have to hire a motortaxi from Kon Tum City to Dak Glei (3hr), the capital of a district of the same name. This road is a segment of the newly built Ho Chi Minh Trail highway, and busses may even have started running by the time you get there.

You would need to get a permit ("phap") at the local police station in Dak Glei. I must have been the first foreigner to request a phap there, and initially their reaction was very reserved until they called their boss who turned out to be extremely cooperative. The Birdlife people in Hanoi later told me that the government has declared Ngoc Linh a restricted zone for foreigners. On the other hand, remember that in Vietnam local authorities have the last say on who is admitted to their land: Elsewhere in the country, the local police have thrown me out of areas where I would have been allowed to go under national regulations (e.g. Phong Nha NP). Granting access to restricted areas is entirely at their discretion. Therefore: if coming here sounds too tempting (as it did to me), stick to the rules and do give it a try at the Dak Glei police. My hope is that - with time - they will see that a substantial number of foreign tourists are willing to overcome the hassle of visiting this remote area. Maybe this will give them the incentive to strengthen conservation efforts, improve living conditions for the local Sodang and make the area more accessible. From Dak Glei, a small settlement with bordertown character, there is only infrequent or no public transport to the village of Muong Hoong (4-7hr) on a track that is in catastrophic condition. You will have to hire a not-too-cheap motortaxi. Most motortaxi drivers decline to take you the last 3km from Muong Hoong to the village of Ngoc Linh. Ngoc Linh is the last settlement that boasts a store. There is no public accommodation in Ngoc Linh, but the local teachers (the only real Vietnamese non-Sodang people in the village) offered me a bed and plenty of food. Alternatively, it may be easier to find accommodation in Muong Hoong, where there is more infrastructure and fewer ethnic Sodang. Access to the mountain is on foot from Ngoc Linh village along a path that constitutes the continuation of the track from Muong Hoong. Many of the Sodang peasants using this trail ran away when they saw me here, especially children and women. After Ngoc Linh Village, the trail leads through another basic Sodang village (only wooden houses), where you have to be careful to take a left at the bifurcation at the end of the village. Following this trail (which veers to the left after the village), you will soon see a second village across a valley, which the main trail leaves to its right en route to a third village in the distance (out of sight). Do not go down into that valley, but take a left onto a minor-looking path and stay on that ridge, ascending the rice paddies for another 2-4km until you reach the lower edge of the forest. Along the trail (especially within the forest), there are a few bifurcations, and you will have to find the right trail to the top by trial and error. There are other trails that give access to the forest from the agricultural land below (e.g. from the third village mentioned above), but none of them seem to go up too high. When planning your itinerary, consider that it will take you at least one day to find the summit

trail or another one giving access to the higher regions of the mountain (those that many of the specialties are confined to). Note that the summit can only be reached at birding pace if you get to the forest edge by first day-light. If you stay in Ngoc Linh Village, this means you would have to get up 2-4hr before dawn, since it is a tough 5-7km hike to the forest edge. On the last two birding days I got up at 2.30am to get to 2000m a.s.l. before dawn in order to increase my chances of finding the endemic, elusive and newly-discovered Golden-winged Laughingthrush. Keep in mind that the summit is not really conspicuous, there are no far views and the trees are only slightly more dwarfed.

## **Birds**

The sites's greatest rarity is the recently (1999) described Golden-winged Laughingthrush, an extremely shy bird that has only ever been found in the narrow elevational belt from 2000-2200m on this mountain (as of 2003). This species might very well be one of the hardest birds to see on earth, and I am likely to be the first person to have seen it after the Birdlife International expeditions. All attempts to find it proved futile until - on the evening of my last field day - I had the glorious idea of playing the voice of the sufficiently closely related Collared Laughingthrush that I had recorded on Lang Bian. It didn't take long until one Golden-winged Laughingthrush flew in to check out the source of the sound (at about 2100m). It vocalized, giving two types of song that both sounded very different from the cat-like call described by Eames et al. (1999) in their species description. Excellent views were had, and I tape-recorded several minutes of both song types, which should be the first recordings of their kind. The second species newly described from Ngoc Linh is the Black-crowned Barwing, which has meanwhile been found at several other localities near Ngoc Linh. It is not as difficult to see because it has a broader elevational range and tolerance for habitat disturbance. I saw them daily, though not commonly, in excellent forest as high up as 2000m as well as hedgerows below the forest edge. Having seen the two most important newly discovered birds, I did miss several among almost a dozen subspecies newly described from Ngoc Linh and surrounding areas: The new *dickinsoni* ssp of Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler was only sighted once by me (White-browed Scimitar-Babbler was also present); the unusually beautiful *Cutia* race *hoae* was seen twice (2200m and 1700m), but unfortunately I entirely missed the quite distinct new subspecies *traii* of Chestnut-tailed Minla, which Eames reported only from the summit region. The new forms *robsoni* of Golden-breasted Fulvetta and *stepanyani* of Rufous-winged Fulvetta were common constituents of mixed flocks at 2000m. Eames's new *kingi* form of Black-headed *Sibia* was also common, but I missed the new race *cui* of the

skulking Rusty-capped Fulvetta, again a bird that Eames only found near the summit region. Equally, I missed the new uthaii Stripe-throated Yuhina and kamoli Black-throated Parrotbill, both birds not seen below 2000m. Most time was invested at 2000 to 2200m in account of the narrow elevational range of the Golden-winged Laughingthrush; regions above 2200m were only visited on two occasions, both in broad noon light, which may be the reason I missed some of the newly discovered subspecies that are confined to higher elevations. Mt Ngoc Linh is highly interesting not only because of the birds recently described by Eames and co-workers. I found several other enigmatic birds that are difficult to see elsewhere, most prominent among which is the Indochinese Fulvetta (ssp *bidouzensis*), which follows mixed flocks at around 2000m. The same elevation is where I saw flocks of the rare Red-tailed Laughingthrush on two occasions. At the lower edge of the forest, I had great views of a Green Cochoa. Glimpses of a White-browed Shortwing required 2 hr of constant waiting at a place at 2100m where a furious male was singing from. Plumbeous Water Redstarts could be seen at stream crossings from the motortaxi en route to Muong Hoong. Interestingly, I found many birds that Robson (2000) does not list as occurring in Central Annam. They constitute range extensions and highlight the low level at which the Central Highlands have been explored biologically. They included Black-browed Barbet, Snowy-browed, Little Pied and Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers, Large Niltava, Mountain Tailorbird, Ashy-throated Warbler, White-spectacled Warbler, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Gray-bellied Tesia (common!), Pygmy Wren Babbler and Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler. Due to the late date, few migrants were seen (only late and lingering individuals of long-distance migrants, e.g. Olive-backed Pipit). Therefore, I was all the more surprised to find a pair of Ferruginous Flycatcher in the forest, a short-distance migrant that should have been back in South China by that time, therefore indicating the possibility of a disjunct breeding population. Future birders should look out for this species here in the summer. Some more common forest birds included Golden-throated Barbet, Red-headed Trogon, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Maroon Oriole, Large Cuckooshrike, White-throated Fantail, Blue Whistling-Thrush, White-gorgeted and Gray-headed Canary Flycatchers, White-tailed Robin, Slaty-backed Forktail, Mountain and Black Bulbul, Yellow-cheeked and Black-throated Tit, White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Rufous-capped and Gray-throated Babblers, Blue-winged and Red-tailed Minla, Silver-eared Mesia, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Streaked Spiderhunter and Green-tailed and Mrs Gould's Sunbird. The agricultural and disturbed areas below the forest edge yielded Spotted Dove, Cattle Egret, Long-tailed Shrike, Large-billed Crow, Oriental Magpie Robin, Black-collared Starling, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Red-

whiskered Bulbul.

### **Alternative sites in the area**

If you do not get a permit to visit Ngoc Linh, another great way of birdwatching in the area is along the newly built Ho-Chi-Minh-Trail highway north of Dak Glei and into Quang Nam Province. This route is a great way to connect to the more northern sites (Bach Ma NP etc.) by terrestrial transport. When I was here, the last bridges were just being completed, and transport was only by motorbike, but the road should be open to traffic by now. This must be the last area in Vietnam that gives you an Amazonian feel, with intact forest stretching as far as the eye can see, and reaching all the way to the road. Clearance has commenced in the vicinity of some of the new settlements that have sprung up as a consequence of immigration by road-workers, and one can just hope that the Vietnamese government will act wisely with this last big jungle they have. Access along the road should be open to foreigners, but permits are possibly required as soon as you step off the road. Some mountains that are just slightly lower than Ngoc Linh are just along this road, one of them immediately west of the turn-off to Muong Hoong, and locals know of trails that lead up to their summits. All these mountains have apparently never been surveyed before, and some of Eames's new finds from Ngoc Linh will presumably turn up here, too, with time.

## **12 Bach Ma**

Around the country's former line of division, in the immediate vicinity of sprawling Hu and D NÆng, is a chain of mountains that stretch from the coast to the Lao border, which - at this point - is only 50km inland. Large expanses in this area were set aside for protection after the war and are now known as Bach Ma National Park. The park - though popular - is somewhat off the usual birding circuit, as most birdwatchers opt to stay around Hanoi and Saigon/Dalat, and if long bus trips were to be avoided you would have to fly to Hu.

### **Habitat**

The Bach Ma chapters of birding guidebooks, tourist brochures, travel guides and the like conjure up images that imply the Bach Ma forests constitute the last pristine example of border-to-coast rainforest in Vietnam, an unspoilt wilderness where primary habitat extends from beach to mountaintop. The truth is far from that: During the war, Bach Ma was the setting of some serious warfare and suffered extensive degradation. All the forest that is accessible to tourists

these days lies within a zone that was clear-cut as little as three decades ago. I do not know whether primary habitat exists at all within the park's boundaries. Trees are thin and the undergrowth is thick. During my stay, the absence of certain guilds such as woodpeckers was notable, and it may well be that specialties such as Red-collared Woodpecker that range among the park's most sought-after species are impossible to find in the areas accessible to birders.

### **Accommodation and transport**

The park entrance is only ca. 3km from the main coastal highway at Cau Hai (between Da Nang and Hu). From the entrance, a road winds up the 16 or so kilometers to the summit of Bach Ma Mountain. Park accommodation is plentiful in the former French colonial hill resort along the last 2km of the road, but by the time you visit it may be worthwhile to inquire whether new accommodation exists at the entrance (in order to be closer to the Pheasant Trail in the early morning, see below). Motortaxis can take you from Cau Hai to the entrance, but no motorbikes are allowed within the park, and expensive jeep transport has to be hired if you do not have your own car or if you don't want to walk the 14km to the nearest accommodation on top.

### **Birding logistics**

Apart from roadside birding, you can watch birds from a trail network that spans large areas of the mountaintop. However, in order to see the two greatest specialties of the park, namely the Crested Argus and the Annam Partridge (the latter quasi-endemic to the park boundaries), you have to get down to lower elevations. Both species are birds that won't be seen from the road (though you can hear them everywhere), so your best bet is a stealthy stroll along Pheasant Trail, the only park trail at low elevations, which splits off from the road at KM 8 (i.e. 5km above the entrance, 8km above Cau Hai). Note that chances of seeing these two galliforms are slim, especially after 8.30am, which creates great transportation problems: Seeing these two species was my greatest priority in Bach Ma, therefore I only invested one late afternoon and an early morning around the mountain top (missing key species there!) and spent the remaining four full days along Pheasant Trail. To get to Pheasant Trail pre-dawn without spending a fortune on jeeps, I needed to get up at 3.30am, hike down 9km from my hotel at KM 14 every morning, and up again every evening. It turned out to be a major hassle to organize packed lunch with the staff, and on two days I didn't eat any breakfast/lunch at all. If you are keen on these two species, Bach Ma is only fun if you have a car of your own or sufficient money. Note also that the recently split Annam Partridge may not hold under DNA scrutiny

and may soon be re-lumped with Scaly-breasted Partridge. I did not discern any vocal differences between them, and the differences in plumage are minor at most and are - in my opinion - smaller or comparable to those between different subspecies of Scaly-breasted Partridge (e.g. *cognacqi* and *chloropus*). The critically endangered Edward's Pheasant must have been a former inhabitant of Bach Ma but has not been seen in the last few decades. It was deemed globally extinct until it was recently re-discovered in degraded forest fragments in Quang Tri Province to the north. Of all the three Central Vietnamese endemic pheasants that face extinction (Edward's, Imperial Pheasant and Vietnamese Fireback), Edward's may actually be the only valid species that does not have a hybrid origin.

## Birds

The Pheasant Trail, where four full days were invested in search of the Great Argus and Annam Partridge, is only 2-4km long. Argus can be heard anywhere along this trail, but seeing this giant bird is another thing: An individual usually calls at 20min intervals, and I have spent up to 6hr with my face in the leaf litter following up a call, having to give up eventually because the birds are just smarter than you are. The closest I ever got was seeing a large unidentified flying object take off through the forest tangles from a position where (10min prior) I had heard the last argus call. With the Annam Partridge it is just like with any other *Arborophila*: Much time has to be spent along the trail without making any noise before you eventually get to see one, and most times glimpses are insufficient for ID. I caught my first satisfactory glimpse at the end of the last day. But the Pheasant Trail can make for pleasant experiences as well: Spending several days along it, I got better and better at finding pittas, culminating on the last day with 8 Bar-bellied and 3 Blue-rumped Pitta sightings within a few hours (though the latter was also seen along the Rhododendron Trail near the top). The first few hundred meters along Pheasant Trail are bamboo-rich, and this is where I had White-browed and Large Scimitar-Babbler. Red-vented Barbet appeared shier here than elsewhere I had seen it. The common White-bellied Erpornis, which was formerly thought to be a *yuhina*, can be found anywhere on the Pheasant Trail, along with Striped Tit-Babbler, Buff-breasted and Scaly-crowned Babbler, White-tailed and Blue-throated Flycatcher (*ssp klossi*) and Green-eared Barbet. Streaked Wren Babblers were rare, only encountered once on a rocky streambed (in addition to another sighting at the mountain top). Confusion surrounds two forms of fulvetta that can be found in the park: The WWF park birdlist notes the common presence of Mountain Fulvetta at high elevations and the low-elevation Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, a species that Robson

(2000) does not recognize as an inhabitant of Central Vietnam. It has been clear that the lowlands of Vietnam harbor a fulvetta that resembles Mountain Fulvetta in coloration, but is more similar to the allopatric lowland Brown-cheeked Fulvetta in song and structure. Robson (2000) accords these controversial populations separate species status and calls them Black-browed Fulvetta. In an internet birding trip-report on Bach Ma, Kevin Vang et al. recognize this new taxonomic treatment but insist that the fulvettas of Bach Ma are all of one species, namely the high-elevation Mountain Fulvetta. I do not concur: Mountain Fulvettas were indeed common in mixed flocks around the summit area, but the fulvettas I saw along Pheasant Trail differed somewhat in coloration and had a completely different song, lacking the buzzy notes of Mountain Fulvetta (recordings were made). Clearly the low-elevation form of fulvetta in Bach Ma belongs to the newly erected species, i.e. Black-browed Fulvetta. In another note, Vang et al. mention that they believe the WWF booklet erroneously lists Blue-winged Leafbird as more common than Orange-bellied Leafbird, since they saw many more individuals of the latter species. Curiously, I did not see any Orange-bellied and only a few Blue-winged Leafbirds, which points to seasonal fluctuations in fruit availability, as acknowledged by Vang et al.

The two tree stumps lining the entrance gate were the home of a Brown Fish Owl family with three young (excellent views!). After ascending the first 300m through degraded scrub, you get to a concrete reservoir with a few older trees around it: This area was the only place in the park where I saw Gray-headed Parakeet, Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush and Racket-tailed Treepie. Mid-elevations can only be birded along the road. Activity is generally low, but one day I had a Spot-necked Babbler, a Black Eagle, a late migrant Dark-sided Flycatcher and an Indian Cuckoo (hard to see, though common by ear) along here. This may also be the area where you can see the elusive Short-tailed Scimitar-Babbler (since four days along Pheasant Trail provided not a sniff), a bird that I entirely missed at Bach Ma. On another evening two White-winged Magpies (said to be rare) crossed the valley in high flight right around KM 9. The sought-after Ratchet-tailed Treepie was common anywhere along the road. Stream crossings usually yielded one or two Slaty-backed Forktails, once even two White-crowned Forktails higher up. The mountain top area, which can be accessed on several trails, hosts a bag of goodies, but in retrospect I spent too little time on it: A morning along the summit trail was enough time to pick up the rare *gayeti* spp of Sultan Tit and the *chauleti* form of Indochinese Green Magpie (for both of which this is one of the easiest spots). However, a shy *Arborophila* around here, which was probably of the endemic form *guttata* of Rufous-throated Partridge, had to be left unidentified. A sighting of one Silver-breasted Broadbill at KM 15 seems to be an addition

to the WWF park list. The last 2km along the summit road are especially good for giant mixed flocks, which held up to 25 Striated Yuhinas at a time, mixed with Silver-eared Mesia (only once), Mountain Fulvetta, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Gray-cheeked Warbler, Black-throated Laughingthrush (only once), Black-throated Tit, White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Gray-chinned Minivet and Golden-throated Barbet (not Black-browed, as erroneously listed in the WWF park list, see Vang et al.). Other bird sightings included Olive-backed Pipit (late migrants!), Crimson Sunbird, Gray-throated Babbler, Golden Babbler, White-crested Laughingthrush, Arctic Warbler (late!), Dark-necked Tailorbird, Gray-eyed, Puff-throated, Black-crested, Red-whiskered and Stripe-throated Bulbul, Striated Swallow, White-rumped Shama, White-throated Fantail, Crow-billed, Bronzed and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Crested Goshawk, Spotted and Emerald Dove, Crested Serpent-eagle, Green-billed Malkoha, White-throated Kingfisher and Red-headed Trogon. Moreover, Eurasian and Drongo Cuckoos were only heard.

### 13 Phong Nha National Park

Phong Nha is the name of the largest cave in Vietnam. The giant cave system undermines an extensive area of limestone crags situated in a dry and infertile part of the country where poverty is particularly prominent. This limestone corridor and the low and scrubby type of forest associated with it divide the Central Highlands to the south from Tonkin's montane forests to the north. Nothing about the spikey limestone pinnacles and the dry bushes growing on them looks tempting to the birder's eye, and yet there is a babbler that has evolved in this peculiar habitat and can only be found in this part of Vietnam and bordering Laos, namely the Sooty Babbler. These days, the cave is an important domestic tourist destination that mainly caters to city "work units" on a free weekend. (In communist Vietnam, workers are associated with a work unit that functions as a substitute for family in many respects). However, even though the national park comprises wide areas around the cave, obviously access for foreigners is restricted to the immediate vicinity of the cave trail (see below), which makes the Sooty Babbler a tricky bugger.

#### Birds

From Dong Hoi (along the coastal highway) private transportation (motortaxi, taxi) has to be hired to get to the village at the park entrance. Several overpriced low-value state hotels can be found around the entrance. Steep limestone hills surround the village and the entire valley, but access is difficult, and a whole

morning was spent in vain trying to locate acceptable habitat on those hills that can be reached on foot. Most habitat on the nearby hills consists of degraded bushes (not trees), and the valley has been converted into rice paddy. White-shouldered Starling is common around the rice fields, and both White-vented and Crested Myna were also seen, although the latter is greatly outnumbered by the former and favors the village itself. Other birds in the agricultural land and the hill scrub included White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munia, Tree Sparrow, Paddyfield Pipit, Olive-backed Sunbird, Striated Grassbird, Green-eared Barbet, Plaintive Cuckoo, Green-billed Malkoha, Spotted Dove, Brown Shrike, Great Tit, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Oriental Magpie Robin and Dark-necked Tailorbird. Better habitat persists on the hills across the river from the entrance, but they are out of the visitor's reach, since the boat only takes you to the dock at the cave, and from there the only way you can go is to the cave entrance. Therefore, on the afternoon of the first day, I hired a motortaxi at the village to take me further afield on the settled side of the river. I went 8-10km on a maze of contry roads until I got into a side-valley where forest reached the valley bottom. Access to the steep limestone slopes was not possible here either. But 2hr in the valley forest sufficed to pick up Hainan Blue Flycatcher, White-crested and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush, Abbott's, Buff-breasted, Puff-throated, Gray-throated and Striped Tit Babbler, Black-naped Monarch, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Crimson Sunbird, Stripe-throated Bulbul and White-rumped Shama. I doubt that Sooty Babblers come down into this forest type, and I would not recommend anyone to leave the vicinity of tourist areas in Phong Nha, since the police tracked me down in that valley forest and held me captive for hours, interrogating me as to the purpose of my stay in the forest. As it was already late in the day, I decided not to be cooperative either and intentionally vexed that arrogant official by playing dumb and having a bad attitude. He finally must have realized that I was not going to give him any money when he released me at 10.00pm. I find their practice scandalous, because Phong Nha has the status of a national park and its roads should therefore be legally accessible to foreigners as long as signs do not point to the contrary. Moreover, I saw many Vietnamese who used the same forest track and were not intercepted by the police.

### **The Sooty Babbler**

Not having seen my target species by the end of the first day, and having aroused the attention of the local police, I decided not to check out some of the more promising pinnacles on my own, but to stay around the cave itself on the next day. The cave (which houses breeding colonies of House and Fork-tailed Swift)

is also situated in an area with non-degraded limestone "forest", but the first boat to the cave dock runs at 8am, by which time the steps up to the cave are crowded with noisy vendors and quickly fill with tourists. The problem you have to overcome is to find access to a side trail that splits off from the cave entrance trail and leads to some undisturbed corner. I found one that goes off to the right from a vendor's thatched roof at about two thirds up the path, before the entrance trail makes an obvious turn to the left and ascends the last segment of stairs below the public toilet. This inconspicuous path consists of mere rocks that serve as stepping stones in between the thorny vegetation and soon merges with a larger up-hill path. Ascending the slope another 300m, you get to a spot where you have to climb up a boulder, behind which the scrub turns into forest with some beautiful old trees. The path ends here (or is too overgrown to carry on), but waiting here for some time eventually yielded the Sooty Babbler. You may want to buy a drink at the vendor's roof to thank him for his cooperation of granting access to the side-path. Note that the local police explicitly stated that access to the cave trail and its surroundings is open to foreigners (as opposed to the forest areas further afield).

## 14 Cat Bin

Central Vietnam's lowland forests have all but disappeared, and with them a number of endemic organisms. The forest fragments around the southern periphery of Ho Ke Go Reservoir in remote Ha Tinh Province are said to be the last refuge of two enigmatic pheasants, Vietnamese Fireback and Imperial Pheasant, that have variously been considered extinct and that recent DNA studies showed to be of hybrid origin. Undisputed taxa restricted to the general area include the lowland subspecies (*parvirostris*) of Short-tailed Scimitar-Babbler. The plight of the area was made well known when the British Birdwatching Fair directed some money and birder's attention to the site a few years ago. Some people saw the potential for making it a birder's site and finance protection through avi-tourist dollars. After some internet research revealed that one birdwatching tour company even plans on including Ho Ke Go in their itinerary in 2004, I was very anxious to take a look at it myself, resulting in the most catastrophic birdwatching experience I have had throughout the entire trip. My visit left me with the impression that all previous conservation efforts have been misdirected and that the area is doomed.

## Access and logistics

The last reports of Imperial Pheasant come from the "vicinity of the settlement of Cat Bin" and this seems to be the spot on which most of the ambitious avitourism projects have centered. Cat Bin cannot be found on maps, but street research revealed that it can be accessed on a pot-hole track from the coastal highway at Ky Anh, 50km south of Ha Tinh. An expensive motortaxi took 4hr to get me 30km inland from Ky Anh to where the plantations became more overgrown and some heavily degraded forest started. I was assured that western birders before me had spent a few nights at Cat Bin, but upon arrival the "settlement" of Cat Bin turned out to be a clearing with a single wooden platform (with a roof) that served as a sleeping ground for 8 forest rangers. I was offered a little space on that platform (no walls or mosquito nets, so plenty of insects) for two very unpleasant nights during which I had to start yelling to some of those "rangers" so that they keep their hands away from my privacy. During the day, the "rangers" kept busy by cooking fish, drinking lots of 80% alcohol and having a rest, while the forest around them steadily decreased in size. All the forest trails I walked were heavily frequented by loggers, and all the larger streams and rivers were filled with logs to be transported to the coast. Loggers were friendly and recognized some of the species I showed them in my book, including the Imperial Pheasant, whose status they assessed as "very rare". If the loggers are to be believed, ground-cuckoos are still abundant in the forest, along with argus and Silver Pheasant. Travel Permits: Evidently it would be best to have a tent and supplies of your own if you decided that Cat Bin was still worth a trip. It would also be good to steer clear of the rangers, since they will insist on coming with you if you make them feel you are their responsibility. Initially, I had one of them follow me around for half an hour, but he soon got bored and turned around. Be warned, however, that you need to obtain a travel permit from the local police at Cam Xuyen, rather than Ky Anh. Even though the district and town of Ky Anh is where you start out from, Cat Bin itself is already a few kilometers beyond the district boundary within Cam Xuyen. The town of Cam Xuyen is roughly halfway between Ky Anh and Ha Tinh on the coastal highway. I myself was oblivious and could only present the chief ranger with a Ky Anh permit. The first day, that seemed to do, but the second day he got nasty about it and insisted I leave immediately. This was not possible, since I could not have walked 30km before dusk, so a little money persuaded him to prostitute himself and generously grant me another night on the "platform from hell". Note, though, that he did not allow me to do any more birding that day and kept me at the platform against my will. Moreover, the next day they only took me to the Birdlife International office at the forest

boundary a few kilometers away, even though I had paid them to take me all the way to Ky Anh. The staff at the office proved little helpful, too, demanding something like a month's wage for the motorbike ride to Ky Anh, such that I was forced to drag my 15kg baggage through the heat of the noon until I got to some settlement where competition among motortaxi drivers reduced the price.

## Birds

No pheasants were seen during my entire stay. The forest was generally of the most degraded type imaginable, with all the older trees missing and the young undergrowth growing thicker and denser over time. Some areas had not been affected by logging as badly as others, and medium-sized trees still persisted in those. In one of these areas I had a quick glimpse at a Short-tailed Scimitar-Babbler, doubtless one of the site's greatest specialties. Gray-faced Tit-Babblers were also notable in that they were confined to the less degraded tracts, whereas Striped Tit-Babblers replaced them elsewhere. Other remarkable species restricted to the less disturbed (though still substantially disturbed) areas include Laced Woodpecker (once), Rufous-throated Fulvetta (common) and Bar-bellied Pitta (ca. 4 sightings). The clearing at "Cat Bin" is along a small river with a few remnant old trees around it. I spent quite some time around here when the forest guards did not allow me to walk off into the forest any more, and the area proved excellent for fruit eaters and larger birds perching on the trees or flying by, such as Jerdon's Baza (one individual), Red-vented Barbet, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Pin-tailed, Thick-billed and Orange-breasted Green-Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Drongo Cuckoo, Dollarbird, Crested Serpent-eagle, Crested Goshawk, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Hill Myna. A late Rusty-rumped Warbler along the riverine vegetation was surprisingly tame. Other sightings include Emerald Dove, Racket-tailed Treepie, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Scarlet Minivet, Black-naped Monarch, White-rumped Shama, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Great Iora, Stripe-throated and Gray-eyed Bulbul, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Arctic Warbler (late!), White-crested Laughingthrush, Scaly-crowned, Puff-throated and Buff-breasted Babbler, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Olive-backed and Crimson Sunbird, Green-billed Malkoha, Black-browed Fulvetta and Puff-throated Bulbul.

## 15 Cau Treo

After the great disappointment at Cat Bin, my thirst for exploration had obviously still not been quenched, and I decided to split the trip to Cuc Phuong

National Park half-way. In my tourist guide book I had read that the road from Vinh to Laos across the Keo Nua pass (at Cau Treo) goes through some undisturbed montane forest. Since this is precisely the area where previous expeditions had found some very rare birds, including Rufous-vented Laughingthrush, I could not resist the temptation of looking for some ways of getting into that forest.

### **Accommodation and transport**

Tay Son is the last town (3 hotels) before the border pass. It is 26km to Laos and more than 15km to the first stretch of roadside forest. Only the last 10km of roadside are forested. Just before the start of the forest, there is a small settlement, where they even have a "tourist lodge" centered around the greatest regional producer of drinking water, but you are advised not to stay here, since the "tourism" signs (e du lich" in Vietnamese) turned out to be a camouflage for a giant border brothel. Arrange your motortaxi from Tay Son the previous night if you want an early morning start. This could be a problem if you do not speak simple Vietnamese.

### **Birds**

The roadside forest is in surprisingly good shape, as compared with the rest of the country. Yet bird activity was at some of the lowest levels of my trip, especially after 8am. The best finds along the higher parts of the road include a Spot-necked Babbler, a Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, a group of Striated Yuhina and an Orange-bellied Leafbird. At each about one third and two thirds up the road from the beginning of the roadside forest, there are trails (the "upper" and the "lower" trail) that split off down the slope to the right. The trailhead of the upper trail is at a hairpin bend of a serpentine where a huge electricity pole stands. The trailhead of the lower trail is in the vicinity of an obvious car lane that leads a few meters into the forest to a dead end. The upper trail leads down quite a bit until it reaches the torrent in the valley. Fork-tailed Sunbirds - which had thus far eluded me - were plentiful along this trail. The lower trail, in contrast, ends in a maze of side trails, each of which leads to its own little illegal banana plantation (this whole area is supposedly gazetted for protection!). The most remarkable bird along the lower trail was a confiding juvenile Malayan Night Heron, a bird Robson (2000) does not list for North Annam and which therefore constitutes a range extension. Buff-breasted Babbblers reached surprising densities along both trails. Other sightings include Green-eared Barbet, Green-billed Malkoha, Crested Serpent-eagle, Crested Goshawk, Blue-winged Leafbird, Crow-billed and Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Racket-tailed Treepie,

Gray-chinned Minivet, Black-crested, Red-whiskered and Puff-throated Bulbul, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Gray-throated Babbler, Striped Tit Babbler, Black-browed Fulvetta and White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina).

## 16 Cuc Phuong National Park

The plains along the lower Red River and their surroundings range amongst the most densely populated areas on earth. It is all the more surprising that a sizeable corridor of beautiful old-growth forest has survived into our days less than two hours from Hanoi. The Vietnamese often allude to Cuc Phuong National Park as the foremost example of the early environmental farsight of their revered leader Ho Chi Minh, who helped set aside this enchanting forest as a permanent reserve right at the beginning of Vietnam's independence.

### Birds

Cuc Phuong is well known among birders for a number of South East Asian forest specialties that have become rare elsewhere in their (often restricted) range and are therefore difficult to find at other easily accessible sites. Among them are Limestone Wren Babbler (confined to limestone crags in the forest), Pied Falconet, Red-collared Woodpecker and Gray Peacock-Pheasant. Unfortunately, my visit was within a time window that seems to be detrimental to bird activity in the park. Consequently, I missed all the above mentioned specialties, even though the falconet (lodge clearing) and the wren babbler are usually seen by most visitors. Instead, I had more than ten sightings of Streaked Wren Babbler family groups, a species with similar habitat requirements that is often confused with its larger congener. The best encounters during my stay include a Malayan Night-Heron in the tree canopy at dusk and a group of three Brown Hornbills at the ancient tree halfway along the circuit trail. The latter path was particularly good for skulkers, yielding sightings of both Blue-rumped and Bar-bellied Pitta as well as Orange-headed Thrush. Ratchet-tailed Treepie and Silver-breasted Broadbill are common, and White-winged Magpie (otherwise irregular) was daily seen along the first 200m of the circuit trail. The lodge clearing and bordering areas are good for Fork-tailed Sunbirds and wintering birds, and despite unseasonal timing I saw a lingering Yellow-rumped Flycatcher. Some of the better resident songbirds I saw in the forest included Rufous-throated Fulvetta, White-tailed and Hainan Blue Flycatcher (all three reasonably common) as well as Sultan Tit (only one sighting). Cuc Phuong must be the area with the highest density of old giant trees in all of North Vietnam. Concomitantly, birders face a high level of diversity in larger forest birds that require tree cavi-

ties: During my stay, I sighted Greater Flameback, Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, White-browed Piculet, Green-eared Barbet, Red-headed Trogon, Drongo Cuckoo, Green-billed Malkoha, Thick-billed Green Pigeon and Hill Myna. Other sightings include: Red Junglefowl, Lesser Coucal, Dollarbird, Crested Serpent-eagle, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Blue-winged Leafbird, Crow-billed Drongo, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Maroon Oriole, Common Iora, Great Iora, Large Cuckooshrike, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Large Woodshrike, Scarlet Minivet, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, White-rumped Shama, Ashy Woodswallow, Black-crested, Red-whiskered, Stripe-throated, Puff-throated and Gray-eyed Bulbul, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Rufescent Prinia, Arctic Warbler, White-tailed Leaf-Warbler, Yellow-bellied Warbler, Buff-breasted Babbler, Puff-throated Babbler, Gray-throated Babbler, Scaly-crowned Babbler, Striped Tit-Babbler, Black-browed Fulvetta, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina), Olive-backed Sunbird and Streaked Spiderhunter.

## 17 Tam Dao

A dilapidated French hill station at the incipient stages of a renaissance, Tam Dao now attracts more Hanoi weekend visitors than ever. Fortunately, the great majority of them merely venture up here to get away from the heat and to savor the questionable local cuisine on offer in the thriving village restaurants, featuring everything from bushmeat to Collocalia nests. Few make it up the hundreds of steps through excellent forest to the radar station on top, and virtually no-one sets out to explore the trails around town, so there is plenty of room for birding in some of Tonkin's last accessible intact montane broad-leaved forest. Tam Dao, which can be reached by bus from Hanoi, chronically suffers from fogginess and drizzle, which can kill bird activity and clear sight conditions. If it rains in Hanoi, consider going to Cuc Phuong first, so as to increase the chances of decent weather at Tam Dao, where clear skies are essential to birding. My three-day visit coincided with splendid weather (supposedly rare enough, I was told), such that I found most of my target species and much more!

### Birds

Some of the greatest rarities at Tam Dao are species that are otherwise confined to the mountains of West Tonkin and neighboring parts of China. These include Gray Laughingthrush, which moves around in big family groups and should eventually be picked up, Short-tailed Parrotbill, a bamboo skulker which I saw twice, and Chestnut Bulbul, the local (but not too rare) counterpart of Ashy Bulbul. Best among all trails is - without doubt - the Watertank Trail. This is

where I repeatedly encountered a family group of Slaty-legged Crake at up to 4m distance (comprising a pair with at least 5 pulli), besides glimpsing a Dark-sided Thrush and an Eyebrowed Wren Babbler. Extensive stands of bamboo around here hosted Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill, White-hooded Babbler and three species of Scimitar-Babbler (Streak-breasted, Coral-billed and Red-billed). Spot-necked Babbler was seen in bushy thickets closer to town. So was Fork-tailed Sunbird, while Green Magpies were represented by both species (Indochinese and Common). Other sightings include: Bay Woodpecker, Red-headed Trogon, Crow-billed Drongo, Gray-chinned Minivet, White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, Puff-throated Bulbul, Black Bulbul, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Golden Babbler, Gray-throated Babbler, Striped Tit-Babbler, Silver-eared Mesia, Gray-cheeked Fulvetta, Striated Yuhina, Black-chinned Yuhina, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina) and Streaked Spiderhunter.

## 18 Xuan Thuy National Park

Before the Red River merges with the South Chinese Sea, it forms a large delta that is used by countless waders as a breeding ground, but especially during migration and in the winter. Xuan Thuy, the core of this delta, which was recently declared a national park, is still a nightmare to get to, but it is well worth to overcome the major logistical challenge of finding your way here. (Currently visits have to be co-ordinated with a travel agent or BirdLife International; contact us at [www.avestours.com](http://www.avestours.com) for more info). Coming here in May, I knew, of course, that I would not have a real chance at all the goodies that are quite regular here in the winter months, such as Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Asian Dowitcher and Nordmann's Greenshank. But the prospect of seeing one of the world's rarest waders, namely Black-faced Spoonbill, sufficed to whet my appetite. (The spoonbills are more numerous in the winter, but I still saw as many as 7 in late May). A boat ride to one of the better sandbanks produced a few shorebirds (though probably greatly diminished by the progress of the season), including Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Common Redshank, Gray-tailed Tattler, Common Greenshank, Sanderling, Red-necked Stint, Broad-billed Sandpiper and Lesser Sandplover. Spot-billed Ducks are easy to see year-round. A walk into the reeds and bushes yielded surprisingly late Oriental Reed Warblers, equally late Arctic Warblers, a few Light-vented Bulbuls and the sonitans race of Yellow-bellied Prinia. Other sightings include: Common Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Greater Coucal, Common Moorhen, Purple Swamphen, White-breasted Waterhen, Caspian Tern, Whiskered Tern, Little Egret, Gray Heron, Great Egret, Chinese Pond Heron, Little Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Yellow Bittern, Long-tailed Shrike, Black Drongo and Tree Sparrow.

## 19 Ba Vi National Park

Organizing a visa for the China leg of my scouting trip, I was confronted with the question of how to bridge two days of waiting time in Hanoi. I decided to visit Ba Vi National Park. Ba Vi is one of the higher mountains south of the Red River Plains about two hours from Hanoi. The plains act as a barrier that cuts off Ba Vi from much of the South Chinese element that makes Tam Dao so interesting. On the other hand, the Ba Vi avifauna has some Lao influence that is missing in Tam Dao, most notably the Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush, which here replaces the Gray Laughingthrush that can be found in Tam Dao (see Robson 2000).

### Logistics

It is probably impossible to get here by direct public transport without local knowledge, so I hired a motortaxi guy in Hanoi who took me there (during heavy rain) and picked me up at an arranged time the next day. After passing the park gate, ascend another few kilometers through orchard habitat to the only hotel in the park. Hotel staff are extremely inflexible, and it took an hour of indignation to make them accept my photocopies as a passport surrogate. From the hotel, follow the summit track (about another 5-7km) into the forest, which gets progressively better towards the top. Near the top, a side trail leads to a military installation through good forest. There are no signs whatsoever, but the soldiers left no doubt that I was unwelcome by being pushy and loud, so avoid buildings. From comments by one of the staff at Birdlife International in Hanoi, I had expected to see only secondary habitat, so I was pleasantly surprised to find some decent forest along the last 2km of the summit road.

### Birds

Birdwatching was marred by heavy fog and fever, so both clear sight and concentration plummeted at times. I missed the Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush, though I doubtless heard one family chatter right after my first stroll into the forest. Yet they failed to re-surface. The vocalization of the whole super species is probably identical, so a tape recording of the Gray Laughingthrush should do. A cool phenomenon is the common presence of the Ashy Bulbul, probably the sister species of the rare Chestnut Bulbul which replaces it north of the Red River in Tam Dao. This is also one of the few sites where Silver-eared Mesia can hardly be missed. Other than that, successful bird sightings in the forest were few and far in between the misty clouds, including Small Niltava, Hainan Blue Flycatcher, Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, White-

throated Fantail, Red-headed Trogon, Scarlet Minivet, Puff-throated and Black Bulbul, Mountain Tailorbird, Buff-breasted Babbler, Golden and Gray-throated Babbler, Striped Tit Babbler, White-bellied Erpornis (=Yuhina) and Streaked Spiderhunter. The orchards yielded Red-billed Blue Magpie, Green-eared Barbet, White-rumped Shama, Great Tit, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Rufescent Prinia and Dark-necked Tailorbird.

## 20 Sa Pa

In the far north-west, Vietnam has been bestowed with a tiny sprinkle of the Eastern Himalayas that lie beyond her borders in Yunnan. It is here, within sight of China, that Fan Si Pan, the country's highest mountain, rises up to 3143m. At its foot, Sa Pa (1650m)- a former hill tribe market - has meanwhile developed into a sprawling provincial capital. The site has only recently been discovered by birders. I know of only three other trip reports in which the site is mentioned (as of Feb 04), but it is likely to become one of the major birding sites of Vietnam in the future.

### Habitat

As anywhere in the country, forest clearance has proceeded apace. Contingent primary forests are probably only left on Fan Si Pan itself, but a hike up this mountain is demanding logistically and time-wise (though it can be done). Much easier access to forest fragments is at the Tram Ton Pass (1900m) along the road into the neighboring Lai Chau Province. This is where a number of species can be seen that are unlikely to surface anywhere else on a Vietnam trip. Amazingly, a whole variety of more temperate, Eastern Palearctic birds can be found in degraded scrub and hedgerows far from the forest. Many of these can otherwise only be encountered in neighboring China.

### Tourism

The whole area is inhabited by montagnards (hill people) of several different ethnicities. Each of them has its own distinctive traditional dress, and many travelers are fascinated by the sight of hundreds of women and men in colorful clothes. These days, thanks to the cultural tourism promoted by Lonely Planet, the government and the like, Sa Pa teems with tourists more than it does with hill people, and regardless of the economic incentive created by tourism, visitors at least have to question the authenticity of their experience when immigrants dressed as tribesmen pose for photos. What does this touristic flair mean to the birder? It is good, because it has made Sa Pa and its surroundings free

for exploration. Most sites are kilometers away from town, but Sa Pa holds no unpleasant surprises in the form of policemen that drag you out of the forest, as foreigners are free to roam around in its surroundings. There is a wealth of excellent hotels to choose from, which is not usually a feature of Vietnamese birding sites (maybe except for Da Lat). Furthermore, Sa Pa and its markets will probably be the most popular site with your non-birding spouse.

## Birds

Ham Rong Gardens: Among the three sites that should be visited in Sa Pa, Ham Rong Gardens is just a short walk out of town and can be used as an acclimatization stop-over. The lower parts of the Gardens are planted with forest-like patches of ornamental trees, some of them epiphyte-laden (Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Small Niltava). Towards the top, grassy and scrubby vegetation takes over, and it is probably here that most interesting species can be seen. Family parties of Vinous-throated Parrotbills are scarce higher up from Sa Pa and flit through the grassy growth in the Gardens. Outside of China, they are probably nowhere easier to see than here. White-browed Laughingthrushes and Rufous-capped Babblers are quite tame here, and in the bushes (Oriental White-eye) at the back of the rocky hill (Blue Rock Thrush) I spotted a shy Rusty-capped Fulvetta. An Arctic Warbler around the entrance was quite late! A few years back, the first Vietnamese Lesser Rufous-headed Parrotbill was seen in the Gardens, but I missed it. Otherwise, there is great overlap with the below-mentioned sites, so refer to those for a few more species to be expected. Note that Ham Rong is far better in the morning, when fewer tourists are out. Towards noon, a set of mega-loudspeakers on the hill is turned on to play pseudo-traditional music at ear-shattering volume, which - during my stay - was not only a nuisance to me, but to all other tourists I met along the trails. Forest: Right at the pass, some forest fragments persist that are enlivened by rich mixed flocks. The avifauna is pronounced Himalayan, and an early morning here will yield sightings that you won't make elsewhere in Vietnam. The trails around here are used by local tribesmen and tribeswomen to carry their produce to the road. White-tailed Nuthatch is a specialty that can be seen on rare occasions in this area (I only had one sighting). Mixed flocks up here were amazingly species-rich, and on occasion I would see 95% of the below species within 15min in a single flock! Minlas included all three species (Chestnut-tailed, Red-tailed and Blue-winged), and one of the specialties that fascinated me most was Yellow-browed Tit. Ground skulkers are present in good numbers, but are more often heard than seen, though I managed to get glimpses of Pygmy Wren Babbler, Gray-bellied Tesia (common!) and Lesser Shortwing.

Both Black-faced Warblers and Yellow-bellied Fantails forage side by side and reveal their striking convergent plumage similarity. Otherwise, warblers are well represented by Blyth's Leaf-Warbler and Ashy-throated Warbler. I regularly saw Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Black-throated and Yellow-cheeked Tit as well as Streak-throated, Golden-breasted, Rufous-winged and Gray-cheeked Fulvettas. Silver-eared Mesia and Red-billed Leothrix also seem to fare well in the degraded forest. The waterfall just below the pass held Plumbeous Water-Redstart and Blue Whistling-Thrush. Some of the less spectacular birds are Mountain Tailorbird, White-rumped Shama and White-throated Fantail. Scrubland: These days, most of the surroundings of Sa Pa are heavily altered by humans, comprising hedgerows, scrub and degraded woodland. Yet I was surprised at the wealth of quality birds that are found there. One area I found particularly fruitful for birds yielded the rare Spot-breasted Parrotbill, Black-headed Greenfinch, a trio of fancy-looking Yuhinas (Stripe-throated, White-collared and Whiskered), the cool Finchbill duo (Crested and Collared), White-browed Laughingthrush and Brown-breasted Bulbul. A shy pair of Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler was tickled out of the bush by tape. The shrubs around a farmhouse were sometimes visited by a flock of small parrotbill that kept me guessing, but I never did get a satisfactory glimpse to make sure whether it is Ashy-throated or Vinous-throated, both of which have been seen here. In the end, I think both were involved. Monotonous songs can be heard from the grassy slopes, and with patience, I was able to see the singers: Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler, Russet Bush-Warbler and Buff-throated Warbler. Thick undergrowth yielded more fluid song in the form of a Spot-throated Babbler. Good sightings in the forest fragments here included Spectacled Barwing, Black-eared Shrike-Babbler, White-tailed Robin, Large Niltava and a whole bag of other flycatchers, such as Brown-breasted (breeding, with juveniles!), Verditer, Gray headed Canary and Little Pied Flycatcher. The bamboo stands even held the rare and stunning Golden Parrotbill (which I also sighted near Tram Ton Pass). A quarry along the road produced Gray Nightjar every night. Otherwise, the scrubby hillsides yielded Fork-tailed and House Swift, Silver-backed Needletail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Hill Prinia, Barn Swallow, Black-throated Sunbird, Gray Bushchat, Common Stonechat, Oriental Magpie Robin and White-browed Piculet. According to trip reports, previous visitors were confident in that the golden-spectacled *Seicercus* warbler they commonly saw and heard in the area is Bianchi's Warbler (*S. valentini*). All these people visited Sa Pa outside of the breeding season. The coverage in Robson's field guide of this genus is partly based on findings by Alström and Olsson, one of two independent research teams that splitted the former *S. burkii* into several species. Note, however, that species boundaries were interpreted differently by the rival team (Martens

et al.). Both teams have recently published clarifications and put forth reasons for differences in their taxonomic interpretations, which seemed to be due to inconsistencies on both parts. The picture emerging from this new insight (see e.g. Martens et al., 2002; in "Bonner zoologische Beitrage") is that Robson's Gray-crowned Warbler (*S. tephrocephalus*) actually comprises two species, namely the widely ranging *S. tephrocephalus* s. str. (which breeds into North Vietnam and which Martens et al. had called *S. distinctus*), and *S. omeiensis* (newly described by Martens et al.), which breeds in Western China and - doubtfully - Burma, but winters also in Indochina as far south as Cambodia. Plumage - though providing clues - is of little help in distinguishing these two species from each other and from *S. valentini*, but *S. valentini*'s song is much simpler and - in contrast to *S. tephrocephalus* and *S. omeiensis* - lacks trills. Visitors to Sa Pa outside of the breeding season should also be aware that the White-spectacled Warbler (*S. affinis*) - often endowed with confusingly yellow spectacles - is another possibility, as is *S. soror*, newly described by Alström and Olsson, and erroneously called *S. latouchei* in Martens et al.'s first treatment of the group. Robson confines the latter's Vietnamese winter range to South Annam, but brave is he who would bet on that. Having traveled to Sa Pa only in the breeding season, I do not know what makes previous visitors so sure about their *Seicercus* identifications. Talking about the *Seicercus* warblers I saw and heard in Sa Pa (from the town up to the pass), I am pretty sure that only one species was involved: It had fairly much white in its tail and seemed to conform with the plumage type exhibited by *S. tephrocephalus* and *S. valentini* in other aspects as well. According to Robson's field guide, only these two species can be expected in West Tonkin during the breeding season. However, Martens et al. (2002), in their summary report on the status quo of *Seicercus* research, fail to mention *S. valentini* as a breeding visitor to North Vietnam, and one may think it odd to find in Sa Pa (at the southern edge of the range) a species that regularly occupies the highest elevations and most temperate conditions in Sichuan and elsewhere. During my stay in Sa Pa, I was unaware of these complexities and - equipped only with Robson's field guide and three trip reports - I expected to find *S. valentini*. If recollection does not fool me, the songs given by Sa Pa's *Seicercus* warblers were all simple and lacked trills. In conclusion, the *Seicercus* commonly breeding around and above Sa Pa in early June must be *S. valentini*, but in the absence of tape recordings, I am reluctant to state that with certainty. When I am back in Sa Pa some time in 2004, I will be more alert as to the complexity of the problem!

## 21 Species list

Note: In addition to the birds I saw during my Vietnam trip, this list also contains all the species recorded during the two weeks I spent in Thailand before entering Vietnam. The Thai sites include Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon, Krabi, Kao Nor Chuchii, Ko Phi Phi, Bangkok, Khao Yai and Kaeng Krachan.

1. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Ho Tuyen Lam
2. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* Kao Sam Roi Yot
3. Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* Cat Tien
4. Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* Cat Tien
5. Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilus javanicus* Cat Tien
6. Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* Xuan Thuy
7. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Kao Sam Roi Yot
8. Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
9. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon
10. Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
11. Pacific Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* Bangkok, Kao Sam Roi Yot
12. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
13. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Cat Tien, Ngoc Linh
14. Little Heron *Butorides virescens* Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Khao Yai, Xuan Thuy
15. Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa* Samut Sakhon
16. Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam, Xuan Thuy
17. Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
18. Malayan Night-Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus* Cau Treo, Cuc Phuong
19. Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinerameus* Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam
20. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* Xuan Thuy
21. Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* Xuan Thuy
22. Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* Kao Sam Roi Yot
23. Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* Krabi
24. Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator* Kao Sam Roi Yot

25. Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong
26. Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi* Khao Yai, Cat Tien
27. Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* Khao Yai, Di Linh, Mt. Lang Bian
28. Gray Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum* Kaeng Krachan
29. Germain's Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini* Cat Tien
30. Scaly-breasted Partridge *Arborophila chloropus* (*ssp chloropus+cognacqi*) Khao Yai, Cat Tien
31. Annam Partridge *Arborophila merlini* Bach Ma
32. Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus* Cat Tien
33. Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* Ho Tuyen Lam
34. Crested Serpent-eagle *Spilornis cheela* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cau Treo, Cat Bin
35. White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* Krabi
36. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis* Bach Ma
37. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* Ko Phi Phi, Krabi, Samut Sakhon
38. Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus* Bach Ma, Cau Treo, Cat Bin
39. Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* Cat Bin
40. Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* Samut Sakhon
41. Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio viridis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Xuan Thuy
42. Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Xuan Thuy
43. Watercock *Gallicrex cinerea* Cat Tien
44. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Krabi, Cat Tien, Xuan Thuy
45. Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon
46. Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* Tam Dao
47. Baillons Crake *Porzana pusilla* Kao Sam Roi Yot
48. Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus* Kao Sam Roi Yot
49. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Samut Sakhon
50. Gray Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
51. Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
52. Lesser Sandplover *Charadrius mongolus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy

53. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
54. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Samut Sakhon
55. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai
56. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
57. Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* Krabi
58. Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
59. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
60. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon
61. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
62. Nordmanns Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* Krabi
63. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* Krabi, Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
64. Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* Samut Sakhon
65. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon
66. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
67. Gray-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* Xuan Thuy
68. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
69. Sanderling *Calidris alba* Xuan Thuy
70. Rufous-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
71. Temmincks Stint *Calidris temminckii* Samut Sakhon
72. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Samut Sakhon
73. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Samut Sakhon
74. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
75. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
76. Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Kao Sam Roi Yot
77. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Bangkok, Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon
78. Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus* Samut Sakhon
79. Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* Krabi, Samut Sakhon
80. Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* Samut Sakhon
81. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
82. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Krabi
83. Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* Ko Phi Phi

84. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Samut Sakhon, Xuan Thuy
85. White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Samut Sakhon
86. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis bengalensis* Samut Sakhon, Cat Tien, Xuan Thuy
87. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Cat Tien, Xuan Thuy
88. Collared Kingfisher *Todiramphus chloris* Bangkok, Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi
89. Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* Bangkok, Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi
90. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Cat Tien, Bach Ma
91. Brown-winged Kingfisher *Halcyon amauroptera* Krabi
92. Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda* Kao Nor Chuchii
93. Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Kao Sam Roi Yot
94. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti* Khao Yai, Cat Tien
95. Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Cat Tien
96. Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* Kao Sam Roi Yot
97. Blue-throated Bee-eater *Merops viridis* Cat Bin
98. Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni* Cat Tien
99. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Khao Yai, Cat Tien
100. Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis orientalis* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin
101. Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus* Khao Yai, Di Linh, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Ba Vi
102. Orange-breasted Trogon *Harpactes oreskios* Cat Tien
103. Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri* Cat Tien
104. Gray-headed Parakeet *Psittacula finschii* Bach Ma
105. Vernal Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus vernalis* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Di Linh
106. Gray-rumped Treeswift *Hemiprocne longipennis* Kao Nor Chuchii
107. Silver-backed Needletail *Hirundapus cochinchinensis* Khao Yai, Sa Pa
108. Brown-backed Needletail *Hirundapus giganteus* Khao Yai
109. House Swift *Apus nipalensis* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Phong Nha, Sa Pa

110. Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus* Phong Nha, Sa Pa
111. Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Khao Yai
112. Germain's Swiftlet *Collocalia germani* Ko Phi Phi
113. Hodgson's (Indochinese) Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx nisicolor* Ta Nung
114. Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* Bach Ma
115. Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus* Samut Sakhon, Cat Tien, Phong Nha
116. Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii* Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam
117. Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus* Cat Tien
118. Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin
119. Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* Samut Sakhon
120. Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* Cat Tien, Xuan Thuy
121. Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis* Cuc Phuong
122. Chestnut-bellied Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus sumatranus* Kao Nor Chuchii
123. Raffles Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus chlorophaeus* Kao Nor Chuchii
124. Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin, Cau Treo
125. Chestnut-breasted Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus curvirostris* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan
126. Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthraceros albirostris albirostris* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien
127. Brown Hornbill *Anorrhinus tickelli* Cuc Phuong
128. Wreathed Hornbill *Aceros undulatus* Khao Yai, Madagui (near Cat Tien)
129. Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Di Linh
130. Green-eared Barbet *Megalaima faiostriata* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cau Treo, Ba Vi
131. Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata* Cat Tien
132. Great Barbet *Megalaima virens* Kaeng Krachan
133. Red-vented Barbet *Megalaima lagrandieri* Cat Tien, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Bach Ma, Cat Bin
134. Blue-eared Barbet *Megalaima australis* Cat Tien
135. Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica* Kaeng Krachan

136. Moustached Barbet *Megalaima inco* 149. Barred Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia*  
*nita* Khao Yai *unchall* Di Linh
137. Black-browed Barbet *Megalaima* 150. Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia*  
*oorti* Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta *tranquebarica* Kao Sam Roi Yot,  
Nung, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh Cat Tien
138. Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima* 151. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinen-*  
*franklinii* Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ngoc *sis* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Ngoc Linh,  
Linh, Bach Ma Bach Ma, Cat Bin, Phong Nha
139. Red-throated Barbet *Magalaima* 152. Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata* Kao  
*mystacophanos* Kao Nor Chuchii Sam Roi Yot, Krabi
140. Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bi-* 153. Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutu-*  
*color* Ko Phi Phi *lata* Khao Yai
141. Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula ae-* 154. Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium*  
*nea* Cat Tien, Cat Bin *cuculooides* Cat Tien
142. Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula* 155. Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonen-*  
*badia* Kaeng Krachan, Ho Tuyen *sis* Bach Ma  
Lam, Ta Nung, Di Linh
143. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron* 156. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* Kao  
*curvirostra* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Sam Roi Yot  
Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat  
Bin
144. Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron* 158. Great Eared Nightjar *Eurostopo-*  
*bicincta* Cat Tien, Cat Bin *odus macrotis* Kaeng Krachan, Khao  
Yai, Cat Tien
145. Pompadour Green Pigeon *Treron* 159. Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Den-*  
*pompadora* Cat Tien *drocopos hyperythrus* Khao Yai
146. Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron* 160. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Den-*  
*sphenura* Ho Tuyen Lam *drocopos major cabanisi* Sa Pa
147. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* 161. Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker  
Krabi, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, *Dendrocopos canicapillus* Ho Tuyen  
Cat Tien, Di Linh, Bach Ma, Cat  
Bin Lam, Lang Bian, Cuc Phuong
148. Pin-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron* 162. Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrho-*  
*apicauda* Cat Bin *tis* Kaeng Krachan, Ta Nung, Lang  
Bian, Tam Dao

163. Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien, Kon Kring
164. White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis* Cat Tien
165. Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha* Kaeng Krachan, Kon Kring
166. Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus* Cat Tien
167. Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cat Bin
168. Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus* Khao Yai, Cat Tien
169. Common Flameback *Dinopium javanense* Cat Tien
170. Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong
171. Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente* Cat Tien
172. Black-and-buff Woodpecker *Meiglyptes jugularis* Khao Yai
173. Buff-rumped Woodpecker *Meiglyptes tristis* Kao Nor Chuchii
174. Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innotatus* Kaeng Krachan, Kon Kring
175. White-browed Piculet *Sasia ochracea* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Sa Pa
176. Gurneys Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* Kao Nor Chuchii
177. Eared Pitta *Pitta phayrei* Khao Yai
178. Blue Pitta *Pitta cyanea* Khao Yai
179. Blue-rumped Pitta *Pitta soror* Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma
180. Rusty-naped Pitta *Pitta oatesi* Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh, Ta Nung
181. Bar-bellied Pitta *Pitta elliotii* Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Bin
182. Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis* Cat Tien
183. Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis* Kao Nor Chuchii
184. Banded Broadbill *Eurylaimus javanicus* Kaeng Krachan
185. Black-and-red Broadbill *Cymbirhynchus macrorynchos* Cat Tien
186. Dusky Broadbill *Corydon sumatranus* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien
187. Silver-breasted Broadbill *Serilophus lunatus* Kaeng Krachan, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma
188. Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Ta Nung, Di Linh
189. Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis* Kao Nor Chuchii, Krabi, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cau Treo
190. Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons* Cat Tien, Cat Bin

191. Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickii* Cau Treo
192. Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Bin
193. Slender-billed Oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris* Ho Tuyen Lam
194. Black-naped Oriole *Oriolus chinensis* Cat Tien
195. Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus* Cat Tien
196. Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii* Di Linh, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong
197. Common Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Tam Dao
198. Indochinese Green Magpie *Cissa hypoleuca* Tam Dao, Bach Ma
199. White-winged Magpie *Urocissa whiteheadi* Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma
200. Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* Ba Vi
201. Racket-tailed Treepie *Crypsirina temia* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Cat Tien, Bach Ma, Cau Treo, Cat Bin
202. Ratchet-tailed Treepie *Temnurus temnurus* Kaeng Krachan, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma
203. Gray Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae* Kaeng Krachan
204. Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius leucotis* Lang Bian
205. Crested Jay *Platylophus galericulatus* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan
206. Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* Bangkok, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
207. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong
208. Great Iora *Aegithina lafresnayei* Kao Nor Chuchii, Krabi, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin
209. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin, Ba Vi
210. Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring
211. Gray-chinned Minivet *Pericrocotus solaris* Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Cau Treo
212. Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin, Phong Nha
213. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Ba Vi
214. Rufous-winged Philentoma *Philentoma pyrropterum* Kao Nor Chuchii
215. Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica* Bangkok

216. White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis* Kaeng Krachan, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Lang Bian, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma, Ba Vi, Sa Pa
217. Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha* Sa Pa
218. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Phong Nha
219. Burmese Shrike *Lanius colluriooides* Lang Bian, Dalat City, Kon Kring
220. Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach schach* Ngoc Linh, Kon Kring, Xuan Thuy
221. Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocer-cus* Xuan Thuy
222. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Ta Nung, Di Linh, Kon Kring
223. Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Di Linh, Bach Ma
224. Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai
225. Crow-billed Drongo *Dicrurus an-nectans* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Cau Treo, Bach Ma
226. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin, Cau Treo
227. Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer* Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
228. Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei* Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong
229. Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos* Khao Yai
230. Indochinese Cuckooshrike *Coracina polioptera* Ho Tuyen Lam
231. Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong
232. Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin
233. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Sa Pa
234. Pacific Swallow *Hirundo tahitica* Krabi
235. Striated Swallow *Hirundo strio-lata badia* Krabi, Bach Ma
236. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo dau-rica* Ho Tuyen Lam
237. Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* Krabi, Khao Yai, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa

238. White-throated Rock Thrush *Monticola gularis* Lang Bian
239. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Kaeng Krachan, Sa Pa
240. Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Di Linh
241. Dark-sided Thrush *Zoothera marginata* Tam Dao
242. Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina aurimacula* Cuc Phuong
243. Green Cochoa *Cochoa viridis* Di Linh, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
244. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica dauurica* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien
245. Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica* Bach Ma
246. Brown-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui* Sa Pa
247. Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea* Ngoc Linh
248. Large Niltava *Niltava grandis* (decorata) Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung; (ssp.?) Ngoc Linh; (grandis) Sa Pa
249. Small Niltava *Niltava macgrigoriae* Ba Vi, Sa Pa
250. Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva albicilla* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien
251. Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni* Lang Bian, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
252. Rufous-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula solitaria* Kaeng Krachan
253. White-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula monileger* Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Tam Dao, Bach Ma
254. Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cuc Phuong
255. Green-backed (=Narcissus) Flycatcher *Ficedula (narcissina) elisae* Kao Nor Chuchii
256. Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* Lang Bian
257. Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophiatea* Ngoc Linh
258. Snowy-browed Flycatcher *Ficedula hyperythra* Ngoc Linh
259. Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana cumatilis* Kaeng Krachan
260. Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina* Ho Tuyen Lam, Lang Bian, Ta Nung, Sa Pa
261. Tickells Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien (incl Madagui)
262. Hill Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis banyumas* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai
263. Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides klossi* Bach Ma
264. Hainan Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis hainanus* Phong Nha, Cuc Phuong, Ba Vi

265. White-tailed Flycatcher *Cyornis concretus* Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma
266. Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* Kaeng Krachan, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Tam Dao, Sa Pa, Ba Vi
267. Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophrys* (*langbianensis*) Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Lang Bian; (*carolinae*) Sa Pa
268. White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* Ngoc Linh
269. Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane* Kao Nor Chuchii, Khao Yai, Cat Tien (incl Madagui), Lang Bian
270. Oriental Magpie Robin - *Copsychus saularis* Bangkok, Cat Tien, Ngoc Linh, Phong Nha, Sa Pa
271. White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Phong Nha, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Bin, Ba Vi, Sa Pa
272. White-tailed Robin *Myiomela leucura* Lang Bian, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
273. Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus* Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
274. Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus* Di Linh
275. White-crowned Forktail *Enicurus leschenaulti* Bach Ma
276. Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus* Khao Yai, Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma
277. Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (*stejnegeri*) Kao Sam Roi Yot; (*przewalskii*) Sa Pa
278. Gray Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Sa Pa
279. Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong
280. Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis* Ko Phi Phi
281. Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra* Kao Sam Roi Yot
282. Vinous-breasted Starling *Sturnus burmannicus* Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring
283. Black-collared Starling *Sturnus nigricollis* Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
284. White-shouldered Starling *Sturnus sinensis* Phong Nha
285. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* Bangkok, Khao Yai
286. White-vented Myna *Acridotheres grandis* Bangkok, Phong Nha
287. Crested Myna *Acridotheres cristatellus* Phong Nha
288. Golden-crested Myna *Ampeliceps coronatus* Cat Tien

289. Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* Khao Yai, Cat Tien (incl Madagui), Ta Nung, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin
290. Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus* (annamensis) Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma; (talifuen-sis) Sa Pa
291. Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus legendrei* Ho Tuyen Lam, Lang Bian
292. Great Tit *Parus major* Phong Nha, Ba Vi
293. Yellow-cheeked Tit *Parus spilonotus* Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
294. Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea* (gayeti) Bach Ma; (sultanea) Cuc Phuong
295. Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus* Sa Pa
296. Chestnut-vented Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Sa Pa
297. White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis* Sa Pa
298. Yellow-billed Nuthatch *Sitta solagiae* Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring
299. Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* Cat Tien, Di Linh, Ngoc Linh, Cau Treo
300. Brown-throated Treecreeper *Certhia discolor meridionalis* Ho Tuyen Lam
301. Collared Finchbill *Spizixos semitorques semitorques* Sa Pa
302. Crested Finchbill *Spizixos canifrons ingrami* Sa Pa
303. Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh, Lang Bian, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Tam Dao, Ba Vi
304. Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes maclellandii* Kaeng Krachan, Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
305. Chestnut Bulbul *Hemixos castanonotus* Tam Dao
306. Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala* Khao Yai, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Ba Vi
307. Black-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus atriceps* Kao Nor Chuchii, Krabi, Khao Yai, Cat Tien
308. Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cau Treo
309. Stripe-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus finlaysoni* Kao Nor Chuchii, Krabi, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin
310. Hairy-backed Bulbul *Tricholestes criniger* Kao Nor Chuchii
311. Ochraceous Bulbul *Alophoixus ochraceus* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien (incl Madagui)

312. Puff-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus pallidus* Khao Yai, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Cat Bin, Bach Ma, Cau Treo, Ba Vi
313. Gray-eyed Bulbul *Iole propinqua* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Madagui (near Cat Tien), Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin, Bach Ma
314. Streak-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus blanfordi* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Cat Tien
315. Cream-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus simplex* Kao Nor Chuchii
316. Red-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus brunneus* Kao Nor Chuchii
317. Spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus erythropthalmos* Krabi
318. Flavescent Bulbul *Pycnonotus flavescens* Kaeng Krachan, Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring
319. Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* Khao Yai, Ta Nung, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin, Cau Treo, Ba Vi
320. Sooty-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus aurigaster* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam
321. Light-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus sinensis hainanus* Xuan Thuy
322. Brown-breasted Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthorrhous* Sa Pa
323. Hill Prinia *Prinia atrogularis* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Sa Pa
324. Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* Samut Sakhon, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam
325. Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris sonitans* Xuan Thuy
326. Gray-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii* Cat Tien
327. Rufescent Prinia *Prinia rufescens* Cuc Phuong, Ba Vi
328. Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin, Cau Treo, Ba Vi
329. Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* Bangkok
330. Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus* Lang Bian, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Ba Vi, Sa Pa
331. Rufous-tailed Tailorbird *Orthotomus sericeus* Kao Nor Chuchii
332. Bright-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis* Khao Yai
333. Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler *Cettia fortipes* Sa Pa
334. Russet Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus madelli mandelli* Sa Pa
335. Spotted Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus (thoracicus) suschkini* Kaeng Krachan
336. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Cat Tien

337. Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* Cat Bin
338. Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* Kao Sam Roi Yot
339. Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis* Xuan Thuy
340. Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris* Phong Nha
341. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Lang Bian
342. Buff-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus subaffinis* Sa Pa
343. Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* Cat Tien
344. Pale-legged Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes* Khao Yai, Cat Tien
345. Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus* Kao Sam Roi Yot
346. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Krabi, Cuc Phuong, Xuan Thuy, Bach Ma, Cat Bin, Sa Pa
347. White-tailed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus davisoni klossi* Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Lang Bian, Di Linh, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong
348. Blyths Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides* Sa Pa
349. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Khao Yai, Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam
350. Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis* Lang Bian, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
351. White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis (ssp. affinis?)* Ta Nung, Lang Bian, Ngoc Linh
352. Bianchis Warbler *Seicercus valentini* Sa Pa
353. Gray-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poliogenys* Kon Kring, Bach Ma
354. Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps* Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
355. Yellow-bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliaris* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong
356. Rufous-faced Warbler *Abroscopus albogularis fulvifacies* Kon Kring
357. Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps ripponi* Sa Pa
358. Gray-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventris* Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
359. Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus siamensis* Sa Pa
360. White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus* Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin
361. Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax pectoralis* Kaeng Krachan

362. Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax monileger pasquieri* Bach Ma, Phong Nha
363. Black-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax chinensis* Kaeng Krachan, Bach Ma
364. Gray Laughingthrush *Garrulax maesi* Tam Dao
365. Black-hooded Laughingthrush *Garrulax milleti* (*milleti*) Di Linh; (*sweeti*) Kon Kring
366. White-cheeked Laughingthrush *Garrulax vassali* Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Ngoc Linh
367. Orange-breasted Laughingthrush *Garrulax annamensis* Di Linh
368. Golden-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax ngoclinhensis* Ngoc Linh
369. Collared Laughingthrush *Garrulax yersini* Lang Bian
370. Red-tailed Laughingthrush *Garrulax milnei* (*ssp.*) Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh
371. White-browed Laughingthrush *Garrulax sannio comis* Sa Pa
372. Cutia *Cutia nipalensis* (*legalleni*) Ho Tuyen Lam; (*hoae*) Ngoc Linh
373. White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis* (*annamensis*) Di Linh; (*ricketti*) Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma
374. Black-eared Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis melanotis* Kon Kring, Sa Pa
375. Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius aenobarbus* (*indochinensis*) Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh; (*intermedius*) Ngoc Linh
376. Pygmy Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla* Lang Bian, Ta Nung, Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa
377. Eyebrowed Wren-Babbler *Napothera epilepidota* Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Tam Dao
378. Streaked Wren-Babbler *Napothera brevicaudata* (*rufiventer*) Di Linh; (*stevensi*) Cuc Phuong; (*proxima*) Bach Ma
379. Large Wren-Babbler *Napothera macrodactyla* Kao Nor Chuchii
380. Large Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus hypoleucos* Khao Yai, Cat Tien (*incl Madagui*), Bach Ma
381. White-browed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh, Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma
382. Red-billed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps* (*alius*) Di Linh, Ta Nung; (*ochraceiceps*) Tam Dao
383. Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus* (*dickinsoni*) Ngoc Linh, Kon Kring; (*orientalis*) Tam Dao
384. Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis* Tam Dao, Sa Pa

385. Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Po-397*. Black-capped Babbler *Pellorneum matorhinus erythrocnemis* Sa Pa
386. Short-tailed Scimitar-Babbler *Jabou388ia* Rufous-fronted Babbler *Stachyris danjoui parvirostris* Cat Bin
387. Striped Tit-Babbler *Macronous gu-* 399. Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris laris* Kao Nor Chuchii, Kaeng Krachan, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cau Treo, Tam Dao, Phong Nha, Cat Bin, Bach Ma, Ba Vi
388. Gray-faced Tit-Babbler *Macronous* 400. Golden Babbler *Stachyris chrysaea kelleyi* Cat Tien, Cat Bin
389. Ferruginous Babbler *Trichastoma bicolor* Kao Nor Chuchii
390. Moustached Babbler *Malacopteron magnirostre* Kao Nor Chuchii
391. Scaly-crowned Babbler *Malacopteron cinereum* Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Bin
392. Short-tailed Babbler *Malacocincla malaccensis* Kao Nor Chuchii
393. Abbotts Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Phong Nha
394. Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Kao Nor Chuchii, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin, Phong Nha
395. Buff-breasted Babbler *Pellorneum tickelli* Cat Tien (incl Madagui), Cuc Phuong, Cau Treo, Cat Bin, Phong Nha, Bach Ma, Ba Vi
396. Spot-throated Babbler *Pellorneum albiventre* Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Sa Pa
401. Gray-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps* Kaeng Krachan, Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ngoc Linh, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Caou Treo, Ba Vi
402. Spot-necked Babbler *Stachyris striolata* Kaeng Krachan, Tam Dao, Cau Treo, Bach Ma
403. Chestnut-winged Babbler *Stachyris erythroptera* Kao Nor Chuchii
404. Chestnut-rumped Babbler *Stachyris maculata* Kao Nor Chuchii
405. Sooty Babbler *Stachyris herberti* Phong Nha
406. White-hooded Babbler *Gampsorhynchus rufulus* Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Tam Dao
407. Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera (orientalis)* Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam; (wingatei) Ngoc Linh, Sa Pa

408. Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta* Sa Pa  
 409. Chestnut-tailed Minla *Minla strigula* Sa Pa  
 410. Black-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe grote* Cat Tien (incl Madagui), Cuc Phuong, Cau Treo, Bach Ma, Cat Bin  
 411. Gray-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morisonia* Sa Pa, Tam Dao  
 412. Mountain Fulvetta *Alcippe peracensis annamensis* Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Kon Kring, Bach Ma  
 413. Rufous-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe rufogularis* Cuc Phuong, Cat Bin  
 414. Rusty-capped Fulvetta *Alcippe dubia genestieri*. Sa Pa  
 415. Streak-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinericeps tonkinensis* Sa Pa  
 416. Indochinese Fulvetta *Alcippe danisibidoupensis* Ngoc Linh  
 417. Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps (klossi)* Lang Bian; (*stepanyani*) Ngoc Linh; (*exul*) Sa Pa  
 418. Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis (robsoni)* Ngoc Linh; (*amoenus*) Sa Pa  
 419. Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argentauris* Lang Bian, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Ba Vi, Sa Pa  
 420. Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea* Sa Pa  
 421. Gray-crowned Crocias *Crocias langbianis* Ta Nung  
 422. Black-crowned Barwing *Actinodura sodangorum* Ngoc Linh  
 423. Spectacled Barwing *Actinodura sayi* Sa Pa  
 424. Rufous-backed Sibia *Heterophasia annectans (eximia)* Di Linh, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam; (*roundi*) Kon Kring  
 425. Black-headed Sibia *Heterophasia desgodinsi (robinsoni)* Di Linh, Lang Bian; (*kingi*) Ngoc Linh  
 426. Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picoides cana* Kon Kring  
 427. Gray-headed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis gularis (margaritae)* Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam; (*laotianus*) Kon Kring  
 428. Spot-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis guttaticollis* Sa Pa  
 429. Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis ruficeps* Tam Dao  
 430. Short-tailed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis davidianus* Tam Dao  
 431. Vinous-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis webbianus elisabethae* Sa Pa  
 432. Golden Parrotbill *Paradoxornis verreauxi craddocki* Sa Pa  
 433. White-bellied Erpornis (= Yuhina) *Erpornis zantholeuca* Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Ta Nung, Ho Tuyen Lam, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Ngoc

- Linh, Bach Ma, Cat Bin, Cau Treo, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Ba Vi*
434. *Black-chinned Yuhina Yuhina nigripenta Tam Dao*
435. *Whiskered Yuhina Yuhina flavicollis Sa Pa*
436. *Striated Yuhina Yuhina castaneiceps Bach Ma, Cau Treo, Tam Dao*
437. *White-collared Yuhina Yuhina diademata Sa Pa*
438. *Stripe-throated Yuhina Yuhina gularis gularis Sa Pa*
439. *Forest Wagtail Dendronanthus indicus Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Kaeng Krachan*
440. *Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava (ssp?) Kao Sam Roi Yot, Samut Sakhon*
441. *Olive-backed Pipit Anthus hodgsoni Ngoc Linh, Bach Ma*
442. *Paddyfield Pipit Anthus rufulus Cat Tien, Phong Nha*
443. *Richard's Pipit Anthus richardi Kao Sam Roi Yot, Khao Yai*
444. *Pin-tailed Parrotfinch Erythrura prasina Di Linh*
445. *Vietnamese Greenfinch Carduelis monguilloti Ho Tuyen Lam*
446. *Black-headed Greenfinch Carduelis ambigua Sa Pa*
447. *Red Crossbill Loxia curvirostra meridionalis Ho Tuyen Lam*
448. *White-bellied Munia Lonchura leucogastra Kao Nor Chuchii*
449. *Scaly-breasted Munia Lonchura punctulata Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam, Phong Nha*
450. *White-rumped Munia Lonchura striata Cat Tien, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Phong Nha*
451. *Eurasian Tree Sparrow Passer montanus Bangkok, Xuan Thuy, Phong Nha, Sa Pa*
452. *Baya Weaver Ploceus philippinus Cat Tien*
453. *Purple-naped Sunbird Hypogramma hypogrammicum Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien*
454. *Olive-backed Sunbird Nectarinia jugularis Ko Phi Phi, Khao Yai, Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong, Phong Nha, Cat Bin*
455. *Crimson Sunbird Aethopyga siparaja Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien, Bach Ma, Phong Nha, Cat Bin*
456. *Mrs Goulds Sunbird Aethopyga gouldiae Di Linh, Lang Bian, Ho Tuyen Lam, Kon Kring, Ngoc Linh*
457. *Fork-tailed Sunbird Aethopyga christinae Cau Treo, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao*
458. *Green-tailed Sunbird Aethopyga nipalensis Ngoc Linh*
459. *Black-throated Sunbird Aethopyga saturata Khao Yai, Ta Nung, Di Linh, Kon Kring, Sa Pa*

460. *Ruby-cheeked Sunbird Anthreptes singalensis* Kao Nor Chuchii, Krabi, Kaeng Krachan, Cat Tien
461. *Little Spiderhunter Arachnothera longirostra* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung
462. *Thick-billed Spiderhunter Arachnothera crassirostris* Kao Nor Chuchii
463. *Streaked Spiderhunter Arachnothera magna* Kaeng Krachan, Di Linh, Ho Tuyen Lam, Ta Nung, Ngoc Linh, Kon Kring, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Ba Vi
464. *Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker Dicaeum cruentatum* Kao Sam Roi Yot, Krabi, Cat Tien
465. *Yellow-breasted Flowerpecker - Prionochilus maculatus* Kao Nor Chuchii
466. *Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker Prionochilus percussus* Kao Nor Chuchii
467. *Thick-billed Flowerpecker Dicaeum agile* Kao Nor Chuchii, Cat Tien
468. *Yellow-vented Flowerpecker Dicaeum chrysorrheum* Kao Nor Chuchii
469. *Orange-bellied Flowerpecker Dicaeum trigonostigma* Kao Nor Chuchii

Heard Only:

Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata ocellata* Bach Ma