Vietnam

Southern and Central Specialities

Northern Extension



Bar-bellied Pitta by Carlos Bocos

After being isolated from the birding and travelling world for so long, Vietnam has become one of the key destinations on the world birding travel map. Our comprehensive Vietnam birding tour takes in all the essential sites, giving us an excellent chance of locating all of Vietnams' available endemic and near endemic species.

Our main tour depart from Ho Chi Minh City heading to the magnificent lowland tropical forests of Cat Tien National Park. Numerous specialities, both avian and mammalian occur here, and we hope to find Blue-rumped and Bar-bellied Pittas, Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, Green Peafowl, Siamese Fireback, the elusive, Orange-necked Partridge, the rare Pale-headed and Black-and-buff Woodpeckers, Orange-breasted Trogon, Ashy-headed Green Pigeon, the stunning Golden-crested Myna, Great Eared Nightjar and Blyth's Frogmouth. Significant mammals in Cat Tien could include Gaur, Pygmy Slow Loris and three beautiful primates: Black-shanked Douc Langur, Indochinese Lutung and Red-cheeked Gibbon, while we'll also seek out Red-shanked Douc and Delacour's Langurs, as well as Northern Buff-cheeked Crested Gibbon during our time further north in the country.

A scenic drive through Di Linh takes us to Da Lat, a former French hill station at the southern extreme of the Central Highlands. From Da Lat we will make day trips to the nearby Mount Lang Biang, Mount Bidoup Nui Ba National Park, the famous Ta Nung Valley and Ho Tuyen Lam for many delectable specialties such as Collared Laughingthrush, Vietnamese Cutia, Vietnamese Greenfinch, Black-crowned Fulvetta, Annam Prinia, Annam (currently Mrs. Gould's) and Lang Biang (currently Black-throated) Sunbirds and the once mythical Grey-crowned Crocias, a species thought to have been extinct for over 50 years! The nearby Deo Nui San Pass also offers some exciting birding and specialties here include White-cheeked and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes, Blue Pitta, Indochinese Green Magpie, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, and the near-endemic Black-headed Parrotbill.

The dry, deciduous woodlands of Yok Don then await us where we hope to find Burmese Nuthatch, Chinese Francolin, Black-headed and Great Slaty Woodpeckers, the scarce White-rumped Falcon, and Rufous-winged Buzzard among an incredible selection of other great birds!

The extensive hill and montane forests of Ngoc Linh and Mang Canh will be our next destination and here we'll search for the extremely range-restricted Golden-winged, Chestnut-eared, Red-tailed, and Black-hooded Laughingthrushes, the recently discovered Black-crowned Barwing, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Green Cochoa, Indochinese Fulvetta and Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler.

Continuing north, we cross over the Sa Mu Pass for Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush before arriving in Bach Ma National Park where highlights include Hodgson's Frogmouth, Masked Laughingthrush, Rufous-throated and Black-browed Fulvettas, Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler, White-gorgeted Flycatcher and Silver Pheasant.

We complete our comprehensive tour of the southern and central specialities in the limestone forests of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, which harbours mouth-watering specialties such as Red-collared Woodpecker, White-winged Magpie, the exceedingly localised Sooty Babbler, Austen's Brown Hornbill and the recently described Limestone Leaf Warbler.

Our Northern extension concentrates on the country's northern-most birding hotspots of Tam Dao and Cuc Phuong National Parks. In the moss-draped montane evergreen forest of Tam Dao we'll target Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, Rufous-headed and Short-tailed Parrotbills, Collared Babbler, Green and Purple Cochoas, Grey Laughingthrush, Indochinese Yuhina and Chestnut Bulbul, while in the lower altitude hill forest at Cuc Phuong specialties include Blue-rumped, Bar-bellied and Eared Pittas, the rare Red-collared Woodpecker, White-tailed Flycatcher, Fujian Niltava, Tonkin (Currently Green-legged) Partridge, Malayan Night Heron, Pied Falconet, Annam Limestone Babbler and Rufous-throated Fulvetta among many other wonderful species.

Now that peace reigns over the once troubled land of Vietnam, we invite the keen birder with a taste for the exotic to explore this incredible country.

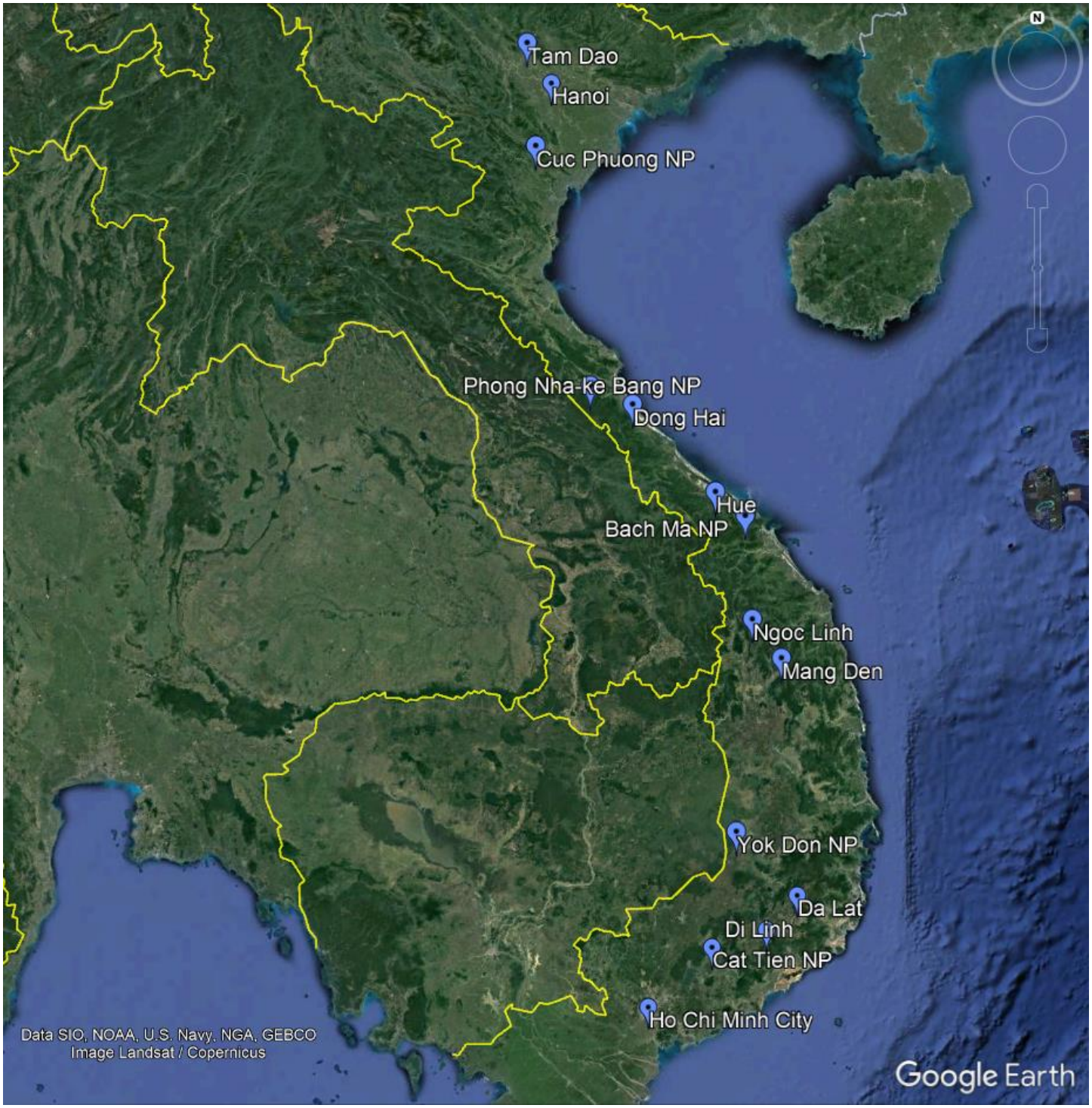
Itinerary & Map

Southern and Central Specialities

Day 1	Arrival in Ho Chi Minh City, transfer Cat Tien National Park
Days 2 to 4	Cat Tien National Park
Day 5	Cat Tien National Park to Di Linh
Day 6	Di Linh to Da Lat
Days 7 & 8	Da Lat area
Day 9	Da Lat to Yok Don National Park
Day 10	Yok Don National Park to Mang Den
Day 11	Mang Den (Mang Canh)
Day 12	Mang Den to Ngoc Linh
Day 13	Ngoc Linh
Day 14	Ngoc Linh to Bach Ma National Park
Day 15	Bach Ma National Park
Day 16	Bach Ma National Park to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park
Day 17	Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park & Sa Mu Pass
Day 18	Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park
Day 19	Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park to Dong Hoi & final departure

Northern Extension

Day 1	Arrival in Dong Hoi, transfer to Cuc Phuong National Park
Day 2	Cuc Phuong National Park
Day 3	Cuc Phuong National Park to Tam Dao
Days 4 & 5	Tam Dao
Day 6	Tam Dao to Hanoi & final departure


Tam Dao
Hanoi
Cuc Phuong NP
Phong Nha-ke Bang NP
Dong Hai
Hue
Bach Ma NP
Ngoc Linh
Mang Den
Yok Don NP
Da Lat
Di Linh
Cat Tien NP
Ho Chi Minh City
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Google Earth

Birding sites in detail



Siamese Fireback by Glen Valentine

Cat Tien National Park. Cat Tien protects the largest remaining area of lowland tropical forest in southern Vietnam, and harbours an incredible diversity of wildlife, including over 330 bird species. Some of the endangered birds found in this impressive reserve include Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, Green Peafowl and the highly elusive and incredibly localized, Orange-necked Partridge.

We will spend our days birding along the network of tracks and forest trails in the Cat Tien National Park. Forest interior specialists that we'll be trying to find during our time in the Park include the shy Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped Pittas, the near-endemic Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, immaculate Siberian Blue Robin, brilliant Banded, Kingfisher, superb Orange-breasted Trogon, Siamese Fireback, the bamboo-loving Yellow-bellied Warbler, winter migrant Pale-footed Bush Warbler, the rather unobtrusive Pale-legged Leaf Warbler, Orange-necked and Green-legged Partridges, Pale Blue and Indochinese Blue Flycatchers, Scaly-crowned, Puff-throated and Buff-breasted Babblers, White-rumped Shama, Forest Wagtail and Purple-naped Sunbird (Spiderhunter).

Narrow, drivable tracks that meander their way through the dense forest and natural clearings at the forest edge provide us with easy access to a range of different habitats and our time birding slowly on foot along these roads will be particularly rewarding and will occupy most of our time in Cat Tien. Here we can find all of the above-mentioned species, while also looking out for Black Baza, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, the impressive Blue-bearded and Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters, Oriental Dollarbird, Great Slaty, White-bellied, Laced, Grey-headed and extremely scarce Black-and-buff Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Common Flameback, the rare, bamboo-specialist Pale-headed Woodpecker, superb Black-and-red, Dusky and Banded Broadbills, Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike, Large Woodshrike, Great Iora, Swinhoe's and Scarlet Minivets, Ashy, Bronzed, Hair-crested and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, Stripe-throated, Ochraceous, Black-headed and Grey-eyed Bulbuls, Racket-tailed Treepie, Dark-necked



Orange-breasted Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine



White-tailed Robin by Glen Valentine

Tailorbird, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Yellow-vented, Thick-billed and Plain Flowerpeckers, Ruby-cheeked, Scarlet and Olive-backed Sunbirds, Blue-winged and Golden-fronted Leafbirds, Little Spiderhunter and the Indochinese endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler.

We will also embark on an open-air safari vehicle game drive through the more open, forest-edge, grassland, and savanna habitats towards the south-western edge of the reserve. This drive in more open habitat is often very productive and regularly produces excellent views of the incomparable Green Peafowl, as well as Siamese Fireback, Red Junglefowl, Plaintive, Asian Emerald and Violet Cuckoos, Green-billed Malkoha, Racket-tailed Treepie, Greater and Lesser Coucals, Lesser Adjutant, Painted Stork, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Germain's Swiftlet, the fast-flying Silver-backed Needletail, Vinous-breasted Starling, Red Turtle Dove, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias, Yellow-bellied and Rufescent Prinias and Chestnut-capped Babbler.

Mammals that are sometimes encountered during this drive include Wild Boar, Gaur, Northern Red Muntjac, Sambar, Lesser Mouse Deer (Chevrotain) and Leopard Cat, while other noteworthy mammals that may be found while transiting through the denser forest between our accommodations and our birding sites/areas include the gorgeous Red-cheeked Gibbon, the localized and highly-threatened Black-shanked Douc Langur, Long-tailed (Crab-eating) and Northern Pig-tailed Macaques, Crab-eating Mongoose and Northern Slender-tailed Treeshrew.

If we are lucky enough to encounter a fruiting tree we may be rewarded with a throng of activity with Thick-billed, Pin-tailed and Ashy-headed Green Pigeons, Green Imperial Pigeon, superb Golden-crested and Common Hill Mynas, Coppersmith, Red-vented, Lineated, Green-eared and Blue-eared Barbets, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Red-breasted Parakeet and Oriental Pied and Great Hornbills all being regular attendants.



Collared Babbler by Glen Valentine

In the evenings there will be the option to embark on night walks around the camp and along the main track and these outings regularly produce sightings of Collared Scops Owl, Brown Hawk-Owl, Asian Barred Owlet, Large-tailed Nightjar, the magnificent, harrier-like Great Eared Nightjar and Common Palm Civet. Chances also exist of finding the rarely seen Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl, the elusive Blyth's Frogmouth, irregular



Collared Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine

Oriental Scops Owl, Brown Fish Owl and the miniscule Pygmy Slow Loris, a rarely encountered nocturnal Prosimian.

Di Linh area. Deo Nui San is home to several Da Lat specialties and affords us a back-up chance of finding some of the area's rarer specialties such as Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes, Black-headed Parrotbill, Vietnamese Cutia, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon and Indochinese Green Magpie, while other specialties include Blue Pitta, Bar-backed Partridge, Green Cochoa, Red-billed Scimitar Babbler and Yellow-billed Nuthatch. Mixed flocks are likely to support Arctic, Blyth's, Yellow-browed and Kloss's Leaf Warblers, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Flavescent Bulbul, Mountain Fulvetta, Black-throated (Grey-crowned) Bushtit, Maroon Oriole, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, White-bellied Erpornis, Mugimaki and Verditer Flycatchers, Rufous-capped Babbler, Dalat and Clicking Shrike-Babblers, White-throated Rock Thrush, Swinhoe's and Scarlet Minivets, Large Woodshrike, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and Streaked Spiderhunter, while Hodgson's Frogmouth can be searched for after dark if we haven't seen it thus far.

Da Lat. We have time to explore the various habitats and key birding sites around the former French colonial hill station of Da Lat. There are four core birding sites in the area, and we are likely to visit each of these localities during our time in the area. These are the Mount Bidoup Nui Ba National Park (a newly opened site but one that's producing some seriously good-quality birds and sightings!), the well-known Ta Nung Valley, the mixed coniferous and broad-leaved forests around Ho Tuyen Lam Dam and the all-original, classic Da Lat forest birding location of Mount Lang Biang.

The Ta Nung Valley has changed a lot in recent years and although much more developed and touristy, it still produces all the great birds that it used to produce in the past when species like Grey-crowned Crocias were rediscovered here. Due to the Valley's small size, the birds and especially the area's specialties seem to be concentrated here and it is still an excellent place to see Grey-crowned Crocias, as well as very distinct local subspecies of Blue-winged Minla (Plain Minla), the endemic subspecies of Rufous-backed (Annam) and Black-headed (White-spectacled) Sibias, Black-throated (Lang Biang) and Mrs. Gould's (Annam) Sunbirds, White-



White-cheeked Laughingthrush by Glen Valentine



Grey-crowned Crocias by Glen Valentine

cheeked Laughingthrush, Red-billed and White-browed Scimitar Babblers, Indochinese Barbet, Vietnamese Greenfinch and Black-headed Parrotbill. We are also likely to encounter Barred Cuckoo-Dove, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Greater Yellownape, Bay Woodpecker, Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, White-throated Fantail, Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Black-throated (soon to be split as Grey-crowned) Bushtit, Mountain, Flavescent, Puff-throated, Ashy (Brown-backed if split) and Black Bulbuls, Grey-throated Babbler, Mountain Tailorbird, the dazzling Asian Fairy-bluebird, Little Pied Flycatcher, Hill Prinia, Large Niltava (the very distinctive and endemic decorata subspecies) and Streaked Spiderhunter during our time here, while the shy and scarce Spot-throated Babbler and Orange-breasted Laughingthrush are also both distinct possibilities. If we are fortunate enough to time our visit with a fruiting tree, we'll have an excellent chance of also finding two of the area's scarcer pigeons: Yellow-vented and Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons.

In addition to the wonderful Ta Nung Valley, The Mount Bidoup Nui Ba National Park will be our second site of major focus since many of Da Lat's trickiest endemics seem to be particularly reliable here. These include the stunning Collared Laughingthrush, Vietnamese Cutia and Black-crowned Fulvetta, while other noteworthy species we'll be on the lookout for include White-tailed Robin, Mountain (Annam) Fulvetta, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Large Niltava, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, the endemic, yellow-crowned subspecies of Common Green Magpie, the attractive Long-tailed Broadbill, stunning Blue Pitta, the plain, endemic subspecies of Lesser Shortwing, the endemic ocularis subspecies of White-spectacled Warbler, Grey-cheeked and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Kloss's and Blyth's Leaf Warblers, Dalat and Clicking Shrike-Babblers, Spotted Forktail and Grey-bellied Tesia and if we are exceedingly lucky we may even find a Green Cochoa, Siberian Thrush or Orange-breasted Laughingthrush.



Indochinese Green Magpie by Carlos Bocos

Mount Lang Biang is a 2, 169 m (7,110ft) high peak situated near the edge of Da Lat and will be used as a potential back-up site for any of the Bidoup specialties that we may miss during our scheduled morning there and also provides chances of the endemic subspecies of Hume's Treecreeper, the scarce, shy and range-

restricted Indochinese Green Magpie, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Mugimaki Flycatcher and Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler).



Blue Pitta by Carlos Bocos

Our explorations of the beautiful pine and broad-leaved evergreen forests that surround Ho Tuyen Lam Dam should also reward us with many wonderful species. The pine forests and surrounding grassland and thickets support Vietnamese Cutia, Vietnamese Greenfinch, Slender-billed Oriole, Green-backed Tit, the larger, endemic subspecies of Red Crossbill (soon to be split as Vietnamese Crossbill), Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Long-tailed (Annam if split) and Grey-chinned Minivets, Grey-faced Buzzard, white-faced Eurasian Jay, Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Black-collared Starling, Burmese Shrike, Grey Bush Chat, Yellow-eyed Babbler and two very recently described endemics: Annam Prinia (a very recent split of the previously-endemic race of Brown Prinia) and Dalat Bush Warbler (split from Russet Bush Warbler), while nocturnal excursions could produce the uncommon Hodgson's Frogmouth and Oriental Scops Owl, as well as Grey Nightjar.

Yok Don National Park. Situated in Daklak Province near the border of north-western Cambodia, the extensive woodlands of the national park are home to many fabulous birds, several of which are highly range-restricted and rather scarce throughout their limited ranges. The avifauna here is typical of the deciduous dipterocarp woodlands that are found in certain parts of Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. Top of the list of specialties found here are Burmese Nuthatch, White-rumped Falcon, Rufous-winged Buzzard, Chinese Francolin and Black-headed Woodpecker and there's even an outside chance of encountering the extremely localised Mekong Wagtail along the banks of the Srepok River, over which we cross to enter the national park.



Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler by Carlos Bocos

Woodpeckers are especially well-represented here and besides the magnificent and much sought-after Black-headed Woodpecker, we'll also be looking out for Rufous, Streak-throated, Freckle-breasted, Grey-capped Pygmy, White-bellied and the gigantic Great Slaty Woodpeckers, as well as Common Flameback and Lesser Yellownape. Alexandrine, Red-breasted and Blossom-headed Parakeets are sometimes seen in flight in the early morning or if we are



Burmese Nuthatch by Glen Valentine

extremely fortunate, perhaps a flock of Grey-headed Parakeets will pass through. Mixed species flocks often harbour Rufous Treepie, Large and Common Woodshrikes, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Black-hooded Oriole, the extravagant Green-billed Malkoha, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Greater Racket-tailed, Bronzed and Hair-crested Drongos, the vibrant Small Minivet, the exquisite Purple Sunbird, Large and Indochinese Cuckooshrikes, (Southern) Sooty-headed Bulbul, Cinereous Tit and Common Iora, while other noteworthy species we are likely to encounter include Collared Falconet, Shikra, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, Crested Treeswift, Lineated Barbet, the pale-faced race of Eurasian Jay, Asian Brown and Taiga Flycatchers, Eurasian Hoopoe, the gaudy Indochinese Roller, Yellow-legged Green Pigeon, Grey-breasted Prinia, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker and Indochinese Bush Lark.

In the evening we'll try and locate both Asian Barred Owlet and Brown Hawk-Owl (Boobook).

Mang Den (Mang Canh). We'll explore the forests above Mang Den town in the Mang Canh protected forest where we'll no doubt encounter a range of fabulous birds. The area's most prized species, the recently discovered (as recently as 1999!) and extremely localized endemic Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush will be our main target species here, but many other eye-catching specialties also occur in these forests, and we'll be on the lookout for them over the course of the next two days. These include the near-endemic Yellow-billed Nuthatch and Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler (Indochinese Wren-Babbler), the highly localized Black-hooded Laughingthrush, the shy and scarce White-winged Magpie and Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Rufous-faced Warbler, Pale Blue and Hainan Blue Flycatchers, White-throated Rock Thrush, Grey-headed Parrotbill, Mountain (Annam if split) Fulvetta, the endemic, black-crested race of Sultan (Annam if split) Tit, Yellow-cheeked Tit, Orange-bellied (Greyish-crowned if split) Leafbird, Collared Owlet, Red-vented and Necklaced (recently-split from Golden-throated) Barbets, Maroon Oriole, Rufous-capped and Golden Babblers, Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers, Orange-headed Thrush, immaculate Long-tailed and Silver-breasted Broadbills, Black-eared, Dalat and Clicking Shrike-Babblers, Red-headed Trogon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Stripe-breasted and Bay Woodpeckers, Black-



Black-hooded Laughingthrush by Carlos Bocos



Rusty-naped Pitta by Carlos Bocos

chinned Yuhina and with a hefty dose of luck, the seldom-seen Rusty-naped Pitta or the scarce, elusive and highly nomadic Pale-capped Pigeon.

Ngoc Linh. This newly opened birding site is the only known locality for the exceedingly localised and beautiful Golden-winged Laughingthrush.

We have time to explore the track up this remote and seldom-visited mountain in search of some of Vietnam's most range-restricted and little-known specialties with the main targets being the Golden-winged Laughingthrush, a species that until very recently had been seen by very few birders, as well as the Indochinese Fulvetta and Black-crowned Barwing that was only discovered in 1996 and is still only known from Mt. Ngoc Linh, the nearby Lo Xo Pass and one site in neighbouring southern Laos!

The supporting cast of mouth-watering targets include Green Cochoa, the brilliant, endemic race of Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Rusty-capped Fulvetta, the brown-backed race of Black-headed Sibia, Rufous-backed Sibia, the gorgeous but scarce and fast-moving Black-throated Parrotbill, the stunning but shy Red-tailed Laughingthrush, White-winged Magpie, Coral-billed (White-throated if split) Scimitar Babbler, Blue-winged and Red-tailed Minlas, the skulking Spot-throated Babbler, Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Black-faced Warbler (a serious range-extension from previously-known populations in extreme north-western Vietnam), the black-throated race of Stripe-throated Yuhina, the undescribed, endemic race of Green Shrike-Babbler and the immaculate Green-tailed Sunbird. There have even been recent reports of the rare Purple Cochoa from the mountain that also constitutes a significant southward range extension of this elusive forest thrush.



Mrs. Gould's (Annam) Sunbird by Glen Valentine

Bach Ma National Park. This park was established in 1991 and protects both lowland and montane forest between the Annamite Mountains and the South China Sea.

Two of Bach Ma's very special avian gems that will be searched for are Annam Partridge (often split from Green-legged Partridge) and the near-endemic Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler, which is actually a kind of ground babbler (*Rimator*) rather than a scimitar babbler! While searching for these highly range-restricted endemics we are likely to encounter other eye-catching species such as the localized, black-crested race of the superb Sultan Tit, Black-browed Fulvetta and Puff-throated Bulbul, while the more open, secondary habitat at



Black-throated Laughingthrush by Keith Valentine

the edge of the park supports Masked Laughingthrush, Daurian Redstart, Light-vented Bulbul, Chinese Blackbird, Brown-throated Sunbird and Grey-capped Greenfinch.

Other low-density forest species we hope to find during our full day in the park include Rufous-throated Fulvetta, White-gorgeted and Ferruginous Flycatchers, Red-flanked Bluetail, Black-throated Laughingthrush, the unique Ratchet-tailed Treepie and the stunning Silver Pheasant.

Mammal highlights could include the recently split Northern Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbon or a family group of Red-shanked Douc Langurs.

In the evening we'll search for the scarce Hodgson's Frogmouth and stand a chance of finding the always-tough-to-see Mountain Scops Owl.

Sa Mu Pass. Our main target species will be the extremely localised and rather shy Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush but our chances of seeing this species is excellent. While searching for the laughingthrush we may also encounter the range-restricted Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler (Indochinese Wren-Babbler), Moustached Barbet, Silver-eared Mesia or the uncommon White-winged Magpie among many other more widespread and regular species.

Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. This is one of Vietnam's most famous national parks. Phong Nha as it is commonly known, is dominated by broad-leaved forest that grows on and around the unique limestone karst that covers much of the reserve. The habitat is similar to Cuc Phuong (covered on our Northern Extension) and therefore has a fair amount of overlap in species but it supports two very specialised limestone forest species that can otherwise only be seen in neighbouring Laos, and these are the Indochinese endemic Sooty Babbler, which inhabits limestone outcrops and was only rediscovered in Central Vietnam in 1994 after initially having been discovered in Laos in 1920 and thereafter eluding detection for over 70 years. The second species is the recently described Limestone Leaf Warbler (split from Sulphur-breasted Warbler). We shouldn't have too much difficulty in finding these two much-desired specialties and during our forays we'll also be watching out for the scarce Austen's Brown Hornbill, the shy and elusive White-winged Magpie, Indochinese Yuhina, the immaculate Slaty-backed Forktail, migratory Japanese Thrush, the secretive but beautifully musical Black-throated Laughingthrush, exquisite Fork-tailed and Crimson Sunbirds, Great Myna, and Cook's Swift overhead. The secretive Blue-rumped, Bar-bellied and Eared Pittas also occur but are difficult to see and if we are equally fortunate, we may encounter the endangered Hatinh Langur or Red-shanked Douc Langur, two localized and rarely seen primates.



Hodgson's Frogmouth by Glen Valentine



Blue-rumped Pitta by Carlos Bocos

Cuc Phuong National Park. This is a beautiful, unique, and fascinating area of forested valleys and extensive limestone rock formations. Our explorations of the various trails through the national park will provide chances of some very exciting and special birds indeed. Highlights and target species are many and include the range and habitat-restricted Annam Limestone Babbler (formerly part of the Limestone Wren-Babbler complex), the localized and rather furtive Rufous-throated Fulvetta, the scarce and under-recorded White-tailed Flycatcher, the attractive Silver-breasted Broadbill, brilliant but shy Common Green Magpie, the bizarre and localized Ratchet-tailed Treepie, the impressive Large Scimitar Babbler, gorgeous White-tailed Robin, Fujian Niltava and Buff-breasted Babbler. In the early morning and late afternoon, we'll watch carefully along the tracks and trails for Silver Pheasants, while flocks of White-bellied Green Pigeons may also be seen perched up at the tops of tall, emergent bare trees. Mixed species flocks are likely to harbour species like Rufous and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, the immaculate Sultan Tit, Plain Flowerpecker, Grey-crowned and Bianchi's Warblers and Japanese Tit.

Two highly sought-after but often elusive and tough-to-see specialties that we will try our best to see during our time in the reserve are the gorgeous Blue-rumped and Eared Pittas, while forest streams support the boldly patterned White-crowned Forktail. We will also keep a vigil skywards for Black Eagle and Brown-backed Needletails in flight over the forest canopy. Besides the beautiful but shy and secretive pittas, we will also be searching the forest undergrowth for skulking denizens like the rarely seen and migratory Rufous-tailed Robin, miniscule Asian Stubtail, over-wintering Japanese and Grey-backed Thrushes, Malayan Night Heron, Red-flanked Bluetail, Manchurian Bush Warbler and Green-legged Partridge (sometimes split as Tonkin Partridge).



Germain's Peacock-Pheasant by Nguyen Hoai Bao

A nocturnal foray may produce Collared Scops Owl and Brown Wood Owl.

Tam Dao. Tam Dao is an old French hill station where the residents of Hanoi would vacation during the hot summer months. Located in the forested hills to the north-west of Vietnam's capital city, the beautiful, lush forests surrounding this small



Golden Babbler by Keith Valentine

town are home to several exciting species of a typically Himalayan flare as they reach the eastern most limit of their range in these forested hills.

We have time to explore select sites where several very special species occur here, and these will be our focus for the next few days. An array of colourful, vibrant, and showy species will be on offer here and include Orange-bellied Leafbird, Blyth's Shrike-Babbler, Golden Babbler, Black-chinned Yuhina, Ashy Bulbul, Golden-throated Barbet, Red-headed Trogon, Red-billed Blue Magpie, and the range-restricted Chestnut Bulbul.

Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Indochinese Yuhina, Pallas's Leaf Warbler, Bianchi's Warbler, the gorgeous Silver-eared Mesia, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler and the recently split David's Fulvetta are regular attendees of mixed species flocks, while rarer flock species we might encounter include Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers, the localised Grey Laughingthrush and three shy and rather unobtrusive and often-elusive bamboo specialists: the striking Collared Babbler and Short-tailed and Rufous-headed Parrotbills. Another bamboo denizen we'll be searching for is the retiring White-gorgeted Flycatcher.

Dense scrub and thickets at the forest edge and in clearings support further skulkers like Pale-footed, Russet and Brown-flanked Bush Warblers. If we are very fortunate, we may encounter a few of Tam Dao's rare and particularly elusive species such as the always-evasive and seldom-seen Green and Purple Cochoas, the smart but very rare and shy Collared Treepie, Blue-naped Pitta and Grey Peacock-Pheasant.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Many long days with hot & humid conditions at some sites. Several evening owling sessions (optional). Food variability is limited.
Birding Ease		Moderate to difficult. Large number of scarce/rare or localised target species. Some forests can be very quiet at times. Sightings can be distant or fleeting, playback & feeding stations are critical to seeing many of the important species. Limited attention paid to widespread species.
Accommodation		Mostly comfortable to good standard. Some more basic lodges, but all have hot water and air-conditioning where necessary.
Walking / Trails		Moderate. Most walking is on roads or wide tracks. One mountain trail that is steep & can be slippery. The extension has a fairly steep climb over stone steps that can be taxing.
Vehicles / Roads		We use a minibus or coach for most of the tour. Roads are sealed, most of a good standard.
Photography		Worthwhile to challenging, typical forest photography difficulties, some dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Leeches are present, to what degree is mostly weather dependent. Hot & humid in the lowlands. Food variability is limited/repetitive.

As in much of Southeast Asia, Vietnam is heavily impacted by the capturing of wild songbirds of almost every native species for the local caged bird trade. The impact is patently evident to the visiting birder, who will find bird densities very low, some forests almost devoid of life and many species nervous, skittish, or secretive. Consequently, many sightings are distant or fleeting. The use of playback and multiple visits to several feeding stations are necessary to ensure reasonable sightings of the many target species.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 19 for those on main tour;
- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 6 for those on the extension;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including bottled water or mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry, and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: Tipping is NOT customary in Japan. However, if you feel that your Rockjumper leaders have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- A fair amount of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover fair distances to get to the best birding areas. It is important for the comfort of yourself and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Leeches do occur in some of the reserves, though encountering them does depend on recent rainfall. We recommend that you bring leech socks.
- Vietnam is a developing country with a limited, though rapidly changing infrastructure which, together with the incredible seasonal changes, means that schedules need to have a degree of flexibility.
- Some accommodations during the tour may have shared washroom facilities.
- This tour does require a good level of fitness, and participants should be in good general health as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

Arrival and Departure Details

The main tour will depart from our preferred pre-tour hotel in Ho Chi Minh City on the morning on day 1, from where we will have a group transfer to Cat Tien National Park. We highly recommend that you arrive the day before the start of the tour in case of any flight delays. The tour will conclude in Dong Hai around mid-day of day 19.

The Northern Extension begins in the early afternoon of day 1 in Dong Hai, from where we will have a group transfer to Cuc Phuong National Park. The extension concludes in Hanoi in the late afternoon of day 6.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City (IATA: SGN), Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi (IATA: HAN) and Dong Hoi Airport (IATA: VDH) are the main ports of entry and departure for these tours.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.