

THAILAND HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 8-25, 2007

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The Orient is a timeless land of ancient cultures, golden pagodas, and wonderful, little-known exotic birds. Thailand, situated at the cross-roads of three bio-geographic provinces, is the heartland of the subcontinent. It hosts a remarkably diverse avifauna of well over 900 species, including some of the world's most beautiful birds. Thailand also offers a plethora of interesting mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, a number of which we shall see. On previous tours we have enjoyed encounters with White-handed Gibbons, the rarely observed Slow Loris, Asiatic Elephant, and a variety of squirrels, including the spectacular Giant Red Flying Squirrel.

This tour is an ideal introduction to the biological riches of the Oriental region. From our bases in lovely accommodations with exquisite food, we will explore nearby birding hot-spots, including the lush lowland forests and deciduous woodlands of the rightly renowned Kaeng Krachan and Khao Yai National Parks, and the rich montane forests of the far north, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Our tour is timed to coincide with the cooler, drier winter season, when there are large numbers of Palearctic migrants present, in addition to resident birds.

While the pheasants are perhaps the finest spectacle of any Oriental tour, Thailand also boasts a vast array of characteristic southeast Asian birds that cannot fail to bedazzle the birdwatcher, including pigeons, parakeets, malkohas, trogons, hornbills, barbets, broadbills, pittas, minivets, bulbuls, leafbirds, spiderhunters, babblers (a really exciting, delightful group), parrotbills, and the challenging Phylloscopus warblers.

This tour can be taken by itself or in combination with our tour to Cambodia (December 28, 2006-January 9, 2007).

January 8-9, Days 1-2: Travel to Bangkok, Thailand. Participants can take any of a number of connections which depart the United States on January 8 and arrive in Bangkok on January 9. Upon arrival and after clearing customs and immigration, participants may proceed to our airport-area hotel, where a room will be reserved in your name. Those arriving in Bangkok early enough on January 9 are welcome to join the leaders for dinner.

Participants continuing from our Cambodia tour are scheduled to arrive in Bangkok from Phnom Penh on January 9 at 10:30 a.m. on Siem Reap Airways Flight 501 (subject to change) and, upon clearing customs and immigration, have the day at leisure in Bangkok.

Participants wanting to avoid the risk of misconnecting with the group or missing dinner should consider arriving in Bangkok on January 8 and spending the night. Upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with any additional lodging arrangements.

NIGHT (January 9): Amari Airport Hotel, Bangkok

January 10, Day 3: Drive to Khao Yai National Park. Despite Bangkok's huge size, there are still remnants of the vast marshes and swamp forests that once characterized the entire Chao Phraya river valley that is the

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centerpiece of continental Thailand. We will visit several sites during the relative cool of the morning, including the famous Buddhist monastery at Wat Pai Lom, where thousands of Asian Open-billed Storks congregate to nest. We will also explore patches of open country, interspersed with pools and freshwater marshes which, at this time of the year, can produce many wonderful surprises in addition to a good diversity of regular migrant and resident species. We will drive northward to the ancient capital of Ayuthya, where we will lunch amidst a pantheon of stupas, and remnants of this lovely and important Siamese antiquity. During our peregrinations, we can expect to encounter a good range of open-country-scrubland and secondary-woodland birds, as well as large numbers of freshwater wetland species. Some of the birds we may encounter include Little Cormorant; possibly Oriental Darter; Purple and Gray herons; Great, Intermediate, Little, and Cattle egrets; Javan Pond-Heron; Yellow, Cinnamon, and possibly Black bitterns; Black-shouldered Kite; Garganey; Cotton Pygmy-Goose; and Lesser Whistling-Duck. Perhaps there may be something even more exotic, such as Baer's Pochard or Falcated Teal. Other species we may encounter include Oriental Honey-Buzzard; Ruddy-breasted Crake; White-breasted Waterhen; Common Moorhen; Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged jacanas; Red-wattled Lapwing; possibly the dapper but increasingly uncommon Gray-headed Lapwing; a smattering of shorebirds, such as Little Ringed Plover and Wood Sandpiper; Red and Spotted turtle doves; Zebra Dove; perhaps Alexandrine Parakeet; Asian Koel; Greater and Lesser coucals; the endearing Spotted Owlet; Common, White-throated, Stork-billed, and the gorgeous Black-capped kingfishers; Indian Roller; Hoopoe; Coppersmith Barbet; Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker; Asian Palm Swift; Yellow-vented and Streak-eared bulbuls; Black Drongo; Thick-billed and Great Reed warblers; Black-browed and Pallas's Grasshopper warblers; Oriental Magpie-Robin; Siberian Stonechat; Red-throated Flycatcher; Pied Fantail; Brown Shrike; Asian Pied and Black-collared starlings; Common and White-vented mynas; the handsome Plain-backed Sparrow; with a bit of luck, the very localized Asian Golden Weaver; and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.

After lunch we will continue on to our very comfortable accommodations near Khao Yai National Park, where we should have time for some relaxed birding around the very attractive gardens—with flocks of Red-breasted Parakeet wheeling overhead and various species of gorgeous sunbirds and flowerpeckers foraging alongside Little Spiderhunter, Hill Myna and Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher.

NIGHT: Juladis Khao Yai Resort

January 11-12, Days 4-5: Khao Yai National Park. Khao Yai National Park is justly regarded as one of the premier reserves in Southeast Asia. It encompasses an area of 2,168 square kilometers and an altitudinal range from 1,600 feet (500 meters) to 4,249 feet (1,328 meters). Its lush, tall, evergreen forests—alternating with grassy clearings, waterfalls, and unpolluted creeks—provide ideal habitat for many species of birds and mammals. Birding is relatively easy along the forest-lined roads, although we will also work the forest trails in order to see some of the more retiring specialties. Typically, one can walk for some time without seeing many birds. Then, suddenly, there is a change in atmosphere, and the forest is alive with activity. Mixed flocks of a dozen or more species and as many as 100 individuals can be frustrating and overwhelming, as well as tremendously exciting. However, after the third or fourth experience of such waves, one learns to sift out the “good” species and not be distracted by the more common—if demonstrative—ones. We shall also keep a watch out for fruiting trees, where we may see congregations of frugivores such as Thick-billed Green Pigeon; Mountain Imperial-Pigeon; Asian Emerald Cuckoo; Brown, Great, Wreathed, and Oriental Pied hornbills; and Green-eared and Moustached barbets. We may also see the dazzling Fairy Bluebird, and, if we are fortunate, Golden-crested Myna. Troops of spectacular-sounding White-handed Gibbons resonate throughout the forest, and we are likely to encounter several species of squirrel, including the attractive Variable Squirrel.

Normally, it will be cool in the mornings and late afternoon and warm during the middle of the day. Bird activity is greatest during the cooler part of the day, so we will concentrate our birding then. Khao Yai is vast, and we cannot hope to see it all. However, we will cover a cross-section of the most productive sites and make specific forays to areas such as Luc Chang cave to see hordes of Wrinkled-lipped Bats, which emerge at dusk, only to be snatched by waiting Peregrines, Shikras, and, occasionally, Oriental Hobbies. Some of the species we may encounter include Besra and Japanese sparrowhawks; Changeable Hawk-Eagle; Silver Pheasant (we had great looks at an adult male on our 2003 tour!); Siamese Fireback (if we are very fortunate); Scaly-breasted Partridge;

Barred Cuckoo-Dove; Thick-billed Pigeon, Vernal Hanging Parrot; Green-billed Malkoha; Brown Hawk-Owl; Mountain Scops-Owl; Great-eared, Large-tailed, and Gray nightjars (these birds provide a marvelous spectacle at dusk); Red-headed and Orange-breasted trogons; Chestnut-headed Bee-eater; Heart-spotted and Great Slaty woodpeckers; Dusky, Banded, and Long-tailed broadbills (these are some of the real gems of the Orient); with a great deal of luck, possibly either Eared or Blue pittas; Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike; Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike; Scarlet Minivet; Red-whiskered, Stripe-throated, Gray-eyed, Puff-throated, and Ashy bulbuls; six species of drongo; Common Green Magpie; Black-naped and Silver orioles (this is a rare but increasingly recorded migrant); Racket-tailed Treepie; Abbott's Babbler; White-browed and the elusive Large scimitar-babblers; and Lesser Necklaced, White-crested, and Black-throated laughingthrushes. The last five species often associate as a small foraging party. We may also see Black-throated Sunbird and Fire-breasted Flowerpecker.

A number of interesting migrants winter in the area, and we are most likely to see the relatively tame Radde's Warbler, which forages near the ground at the edge of the forest, and a host of confusing and challenging "little brown jobs" such as Arctic, Greenish, Double-barred Greenish, Pale-legged, Sulphur-breasted, and Thick-billed warblers; Brown and Red-breasted flycatchers; and the elusive Siberian Blue Robin. If we are very lucky, we may also find such forest specialties as the wild-sounding Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo and Blue and Eared pittas. Khao Yai is also a good place to see a relatively large number of mammals, and we will make a night drive to look for such species as Leopard (infrequent), Sun Bear, Binturong, Wild Pig, Greater Mouse-Deer, Barking Deer, Sambar, Slow Loris, Asian Porcupine, and Asian Elephant, in addition to nocturnal birds. This is a truly wonderful place, and we guarantee that you will find it very difficult to leave behind.

NIGHTS: Juladis Khao Yai Resort

January 13, Day 6: Drive to Bangkok; Afternoon Flight to Chiang Mai. After a final morning's birding, we will head south from Khao Yai back to Bangkok before catching an afternoon flight to Chiang Mai and the outlying foothills of the Himalayas. Chiang Mai, often referred to as Thailand's northern Shangri-la, is an attractive city located in a fertile valley 300 meters above sea level. Founded in 1296, it has withstood invasion from the Burmese and various other influences, to the extent that its people still have their own dialect and cultural traditions. It is an ideal base from which to explore the forested mountains, river valleys, and cultivated plains that extend northwards to the borders of Burma and Laos and the region infamously known as the "Golden Triangle."

NIGHT: Rincome Hotel, Chiang Mai

January 14, Day 7: Morning at Huai Kong Krai; Afternoon Drive to Doi Inthanon National Park. This morning we will visit an area of tall, mixed, dry dipterocarp woodland where, in 2000, VENT became the first bird-tour company to locate a previously unknown population of the spectacular Green Peafowl. Once widespread but unfortunately hunted close to extinction throughout much of its range, this exotic pheasant has until now been virtually impossible to find in Thailand without mounting a mini-expedition. Thus our outing this morning is a very special opportunity. Nevertheless, the birds can be very shy, and we will have to ensure we are on site before dawn—in position to locate the calling males, which bugle from the dense foliage of tall trees. In addition to this marvelous bird, we may also find some of the following: Lesser Whistling-Duck, Chinese Pond-Heron, Common and White-breasted kingfishers, the lovely Rosy as well as the somewhat less lovely Ashy minivets, Eurasian Jay, and perhaps Siberian Rubythroat. We will visit a couple of other interesting sites in the valley where we may find several rather localized, open country species such as the lovely Wire-tailed Swallow and Indochinese Bushlark.

After lunch we will head south, making regular stops along the way for anything of interest, to the foothills of Doi Inthanon National Park. Our attractive accommodations at Doi Inthanon are located in the midst of some birdy scrub and woodland and have consistently produced several good birds over the years.

NIGHT: Doi Inthanon Highland Resort

January 15-16, Days 8-9: Doi Inthanon National Park. We will spend two full days exploring the spectacular Doi Inthanon National Park. Doi Inthanon is Thailand's highest mountain, with a maximum elevation of about 8,200 feet (2,590 meters). Undoubtedly, this is the foremost birding locality in northern Thailand, with 343 species recorded to date. Dry dipterocarp forests on the lower slopes give way to stands of pines interspersed with open grassy areas which support wintering Siberian Rubythroats; Buff-throated, Radde's, and Yellow-streaked warblers; a few Little and Chestnut buntings; and an occasional Gray-faced Buzzard. Hill evergreen forest then grades into lower-stature montane forest at about 4,700 feet (1,500 meters) and hosts a large number of species. Climbing ever higher, we will ascend through some magnificent sub-montane forest, eventually reaching montane forests on the summit. Here, flowering rhododendrons surround a Sphagnum bog that is bisected by a board-walk permitting us to explore the interior of this superb habitat. Some of the birds we may encounter at higher levels include Black Eagle; Common Buzzard; Mountain Hawk-Eagle; Rufous-throated Partridge (we will almost certainly hear pairs duetting, but they are very tough to see, our best chance being as we quietly walk around the Sphagnum bog on the summit shortly after dawn); Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon; with luck, Ashy Wood-Pigeon; Large Hawk- and Asian Emerald cuckoos; Collared Owlet; Great, Golden-throated, and Blue-throated barbets; Stripe-breasted, Maroon, and Bay woodpeckers; Fork-tailed Swift; Short-billed Minivet; Orange-bellied Leafbird; Striated, Mountain, White-headed (very handsome but rather scarce), and Flavescent bulbuls; five drongos; Brown-throated Tree-creeper; Slaty-bellied Tesia; Ashy-throated and White-tailed leaf-warblers; Chestnut-capped Warbler; Red-billed Scimitar-Babbler (if we are lucky); Pygmy Wren-Babbler; Golden Babbler; Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush; White-browed, Chestnut-throated, and Black-eared shrike-babblers; the very attractive Spectacled Barwing; Rufous-winged Fulvetta; Dark-backed and Rufous-backed sibilias; Silver-eared Mesia (a real gem); Chestnut-tailed Minla (noisy, conspicuous, stunningly attractive, and often abundant near the summit); White-browed and Lesser shortwings; Scaly Thrush; Dark-sided Thrush (with luck, one or two can often be found quietly digging away in the soft ground surrounding the summit bog); White-capped River Chat; Plumbeous Redstart; Snowy-browed and Slaty-backed flycatchers; Large, Rufous-bellied and Vivid niltavas; the charming Yellow-bellied Fantail; Yellow-browed and Yellow-cheeked tits; Common Rosefinch; with luck, one of the rarer species such as Pink-browed Rosefinch; and Chestnut Bunting. We will also be on the look out for the inconspicuous and rarely seen Green Cochoa—a most handsome species.

Once every few years there is an exceptional invasion of thrushes and other Palearctic breeding species; perhaps we will be lucky. Species we may encounter include Eye-browed, Chestnut, Gray-sided, and Siberian thrushes; Siberian Bluethroat; and Red-flanked Bluetail. Sometimes the rarely encountered Purple Cochoa can be found with these flocks.

NIGHTS: Doi Inthanon Highland Resort

January 17, Day 10: Drive to Doi Ang Khang. After a final morning's birding, we will head north to Doi Ang Khang, stopping at a couple of sites along the way on the off chance that one or two localized birds are at home!

NIGHT: Ang Khang Nature Resort

January 18-19, Days 11-12: Doi Ang Khang. We have two days to explore this truly lovely area. For much of the time, we will be birding from a narrow, little used, paved road surrounded by stunning, evocative landscapes that will forever be your image of the mystical Burma/Thai borderlands. We will explore an interesting mélange of scrub, native pine woodlands, and biologically rich and diverse mixed broad-leaved evergreen forests. In such a setting, almost anything could turn up. In addition the hills and forests surrounding Doi Ang Khang support some very special birds—in fact, several we are unlikely to encounter anywhere else on tour. Some of the birds we hope to find include Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Speckled Wood-Pigeon, Crested Finchbill, Brown-breasted Bulbul, White-browed Laughingthrush and the rather noisy but shy White-necked Laughingthrush, Red-faced Liocichla, Spot-breasted and Gray-headed parrotbills, and perhaps Giant Nuthatch. Seeing any of these species makes a red-letter day, so be alert! Other species we may encounter here include Black Eagle; Gray-headed Parakeet; Bay, Stripe-breasted, and Crimson-breasted woodpeckers; Striated Bulbul; Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler; Slaty-bellied Tesia; Pale-footed Bush-Warbler; Buff-bellied and Yellow-streaked

warblers; Mountain Tailorbird; Daurian Redstart; White-tailed Robin; Gray-backed Shrike; Japanese White-eye; and Little and Crested buntings.

NIGHT: Ang Khang Nature Resort

January 20, Day 13: Drive to Chiang Mai; Flight to Bangkok. After some final birding, we will drive south to Chiang Mai in time to catch our flight back to Bangkok.

NIGHT: Amari Airport Hotel, Bangkok

January 21, Day 14: Drive via Khok Kam to Kaeng Krachan National Park. This morning we will drive west and south along the Gulf of Siam to Thailand's largest national park, Kaeng Krachan. En route we will stop to examine the extensive mud flats and salt pans which line this part of Thailand's coast. Large numbers of shorebirds congregate here in addition to a few coastal specialties. Species we may encounter include Brahminy Kite; possibly Slaty-breasted Rail; Pacific Golden Plover; Greater and Lesser sand plovers; Marsh, Green, Wood, and Common Sandpipers; Long-toed, Rufous-necked, and Temminck's stints; Brown-headed Gull; Gull-billed and Whiskered terns; House Swift; Collared Kingfisher; Red-whiskered Bulbul; Common Tailorbird; Plain Prinia; Flyeater; Long-tailed Shrike; and Brown-throated Sunbird. In addition, we may find one of nature's most extraordinary members, Spoonbilled Sandpiper. In recent years this blue-ribbon bird has been found fairly regularly wintering here (as we have seen on most of our previous tours), in addition to such other shorebird gems as Nordmann's Greenshank, Asian Dowitcher, Broad-billed Sandpiper, and Great Knot.

Dragging ourselves away from this very birdy locale, we will continue south, making several stops along the coast of the Gulf of Siam to explore extensive areas of mangroves and wetlands and adjoining palm-woodland savanna. We should arrive at our attractive resort some time during the afternoon, possibly in time to do a little birding in the scrub and parkland that surround our accommodations.

NIGHT: Kaeng Krachan Resort

January 22-23, Days 15-16: Kaeng Krachan National Park. Kaeng Krachan National Park, encompassing 1,814 square miles (2,920 sq. km.), is Thailand's largest and one of its most magnificent and exciting conservation areas. Biologically rich tropical broad-leaved evergreen forests cover a large portion of the park up to approximately 3,281 feet (1,000 meters), thereafter merging into distinctly different sub-montane forest. Much of the park is extremely rugged and unexplored; however, a drivable track extends about 23 miles (36 kilometers) eastward into the park and to the highest point reached by road. This permits us fairly easy access, as well as some truly superb views out over a sea of undisturbed forest—as far as the eye can see, way into Burma! This is a rare opportunity now in Southeast Asia.

Although the days will be long (we will have to rise early in order to be at the forest by dawn), the reward of traipsing through one of the few remaining true wilderness areas in Southeast Asia should be more than enough compensation. We will provide lovely *al fresco* breakfasts and lunches in the field, permitting those who wish to spend the entire day enjoying all that these wonderful forests have to offer. For those who prefer a more genteel pace, we will have sufficient vehicles along to permit those who wish to return early to our resort and have a swim or just relax to do so.

Kaeng Krachan's forests host a fabulous array of wildlife, including some very special birds. Several species more characteristic of the humid lowland Sundaic forests occur here at the northern periphery of their range. We shall search for these and a whole host of other exciting birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, other insects, and flowering plants. Species that we may encounter include Oriental Honey-Buzzard; Crested Goshawk; Shikra; Crested Serpent-Eagle; Mountain Hawk-Eagle; Gray Peacock-Pheasant (common and often noisy but very difficult to see); Silver Pheasant (always a challenge); Ferruginous Partridge (tough); Scaly-breasted and Bar-backed partridges; Red Junglefowl; Thick-billed and perhaps the elusive Yellow-vented Green pigeons; Vernal Hanging-Parrot; Chestnut-winged (rare), Oriental, Banded Bay, and Drongo cuckoos; Chestnut-breasted

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Malkoha; Brown Hawk-Owl; Sunda Scops-Owl; Collared Owlet; and Asian Barred Owlet. Several other, much more rarely seen owls—such as the gigantic Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl—also occur in these forests, but the chance of seeing such dreamed-of species is remote. We may also encounter Large-tailed Nightjar; Himalayan Swiftlet; Fork-tailed Swift; the superb Brown Needletail; Gray-rumped and possibly the lovely Whiskered treeswifts; Orange-breasted and the scintillating Red-headed trogons; Blue-eared, perhaps the gorgeous Banded, and Oriental Dwarf kingfishers; Chestnut-headed, Blue-bearded, and possibly Red-bearded bee-eaters; Common Dollarbird; Brown, Oriental Pied, Wreathed, Great, and (with a bit of luck) the very little-known Plain-pouched hornbills; Great, Blue-throated, Moustached, Green-eared, and Blue-eared barbets; Speckled and White-browed piculets; Greater Yellownappe; Laced, Gray-headed, the uncommon Bamboo, Bay, Heart-spotted, and Great Slaty woodpeckers; Common Flameback; perhaps Olive-backed Woodpecker; and Dusky, Banded, Silver-breasted, Long-tailed and possibly Black-and-yellow broadbills. Pittas are no easier here than anywhere else, but we should be alert to such species as Eared, Blue, and, at higher elevations, Rusty-naped. We should encounter Red-rumped Swallow; Large Woodshrike; Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike; Ashy, Gray-chinned, and Scarlet minivets; Forest Wagtail; Common and Great ioras; Greater Green, Blue-winged, and Orange-bellied leafbirds; Black-headed, Black-crested, Stripe-throated, Flavescent, Ochraceous, Buff-vented, Gray-eyed, and Ashy bulbuls; several kinds of drongos; Black-naped Oriole; the severely threatened Silver Oriole (rare); Asian Fairy Bluebird; Crested Jay; the peculiar Ratchet-tailed Tree-pie (only recently discovered here, more than one thousand kilometers from its previously known location); Common Green Magpie; Sultan Tit; Velvet-fronted Nuthatch; Buff-breasted, Abbott's, Rufous-fronted, and Gray-throated babblers; White-hooded Babbler; White-browed, Coral-billed, and Large scimitar-babblers; White-crested, Greater and Lesser Necklaced, and Black-throated laughing-thrushes; Brown-cheeked Fulvetta; if we are very lucky, Black-throated Parrotbill; Yellow-bellied, Golden-spectacled, Dusky, Yellow-browed, Greenish, Sulphur-breasted, and Lanceolated warblers; Dark-necked Tailorbird; Siberian Blue Robin; White-rumped Shama; White-tailed Robin; White-crowned Forktail; Orange-headed Thrush; Dark-sided, Asian Brown, Verditer, Rufous-browed, Blue-and-white Red-breasted, Pale-blue, and Gray-headed flycatchers; White-throated Fantail; Asian Paradise-Flycatcher; Ruby-cheeked Sunbird; Little Spiderhunter; Thick-billed and Buff-bellied flowerpeckers; and Everett's White-eye.

In addition to this wonderful profusion of birds, the relative lack of hunting in this area has resulted in the preservation of a good variety of mammals and large reptiles, not to mention some truly impressive aggregations of butterflies. Some of the mammals that inhabit these forests include Tiger (our chances of actually seeing one are slim); Leopard; Asian Elephant; Sambar Deer; Common and Feae's muntjacs; Slow Loris; Pig-tailed, Stub-tailed and Long-tailed macaques; Dusky Leaf Monkey; White-handed Gibbon; Dhole (Asian Wild Dog); Sun Bear; Yellow-throated Marten; Smooth-coated Otter; a variety of civets; and many species of squirrels.

NIGHTS: Kaeng Krachan Resort

January 24, Day 17: Morning at Kaeng Krachan; Afternoon Drive to Bangkok. After a final morning birding in this wonderful park, we will reluctantly make our way back to Bangkok for our farewell dinner.

NIGHT: Amari Airport Hotel, Bangkok

January 25, Day 18: Departure for Home. Participants can depart at any time today.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADERS: David Bishop and Dion Hobcroft

David Bishop loves his vocation and cannot imagine anything better than exploring wild and beautiful places in Asia in the company of friends and clients. David has spent much of the past 30 years studying the birds and natural history of the Oriental region, in addition to New Guinea and the Southwest Pacific. Once a police officer amid the streets of London's West End, David has emerged as an acknowledged authority on the birds of these exotic regions. His enthusiasm for these places and their birds is contagious. This, along with his skills in locating wildlife, sharing what he sees with others, and conversing with local people in their native language,

ensures you the very finest quality tour. David has undertaken a number of expeditions to survey the birds and other wildlife of previously unexplored regions throughout New Guinea (largely together with Jared Diamond) and the Oriental Region. This has resulted in a number of exciting discoveries and rediscoveries including the incomparable Wallace's Standardwing, a bizarre bird-of-paradise. Some of the results of this work, together with observations gained during the VENT tours he leads, has been published in the scientific and semi-popular literature to which David is a regular contributor. In July 1997, David, together with Brian Coates, published *A Guide to the Birds of Wallacea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Lesser Sundas)*, and David is currently working on other book projects. David lives with his wife and daughter (his son currently resides in England) in the attractive university town of Armidale, NSW, Australia.

Dion Hobcroft has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led tours to Australia, New Guinea, Bhutan, India, Southwest Pacific, China, Japan, and the Bering Sea. His informative and relaxed nature, combined with sharp eyes and ears, have established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. A birder since the age of seven, Dion has birded extensively throughout the Asia-Pacific region, North America, Argentina, and Antarctica. His field studies for over 30 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates have allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in these areas. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australia listing over 750 species, placing him in the top echelons of Australian birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs and calls of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region, and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology and is currently a member of the Australian and New South Wales Rare Bird Committees, and is, occasionally, the voice behind *Birdline NSW*. A popular speaker with natural history societies, Dion has undertaken work with the Australian Antarctic Division, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Australian Museum, CSIRO, Sydney University, James Cook University, Taronga Zoo, and the Zoology Research Unit of the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives with his wife, Lise, and young daughter, Grace, in Lewisham, Sydney.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for this tour is **\$4995** per person in double occupancy from Bangkok. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to dinner on Day 17, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground and air transportation during the tour and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Bangkok and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$850**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the VENT registration form and return it with a deposit of \$500 per person (check or money order in U.S. dollars). If registering by phone, the deposit must be received within 10 days or the space will be released. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refunds are made according to the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before departure date, the deposit less \$75 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself.***

If you cancel:

120 days or more before departure date
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

Your refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$75.
No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance

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agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available, as are other coverages such as terrorism protection; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

DOCUMENTS: In order for U.S. citizens to enter Thailand, a U.S. passport that is valid at least 6 months after departure from Thailand must be presented upon entry into the country. For stays of 30 days or less, a visa is no longer required. Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

CLIMATE: During the tour, you will experience a wide range of temperatures and climate, from the 70s and high 80s in the lowlands, to as low as the 30s at higher elevations. We will almost certainly encounter some rain, possibly heavy rain (unlikely except at night). Generally it will be cool in the morning and warm and humid at midday, but not excessively hot, as this is the coolest time of the year. As soon as we ascend to the hill forests such as those of Khao Yai National Park, it will become noticeably more comfortable in terms of both humidity and temperature. A light sweater for the evening, especially if we go on a night drive, may be welcome. Temperatures are similar in the north around Chiang Mai; however, the early mornings on top of Doi Ang Khang and Doi Inthanon are invariably very cold for the first couple of hours, and a thick, warm sweater is essential.

CLOTHING: Lightweight, dull-colored field clothing is recommended throughout. This includes several pairs of pants and cool, comfortable shirts. Long-sleeved shirts, a dull-colored hat, and sunglasses are recommended for protection from the sun and mosquitoes. Long socks are very useful, so that you can tuck in your pants and further avoid biting insects. A good rainjacket is advisable, as is a collapsible umbrella. Dress will be casual, although you may prefer something slightly dressier for the hotels in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. **PLEASE, absolutely no light or bright colors.** Dark, muted colors help to prevent spooking the birds, particularly when we are in the forest, and thus enable you to see the special birds and mammals.

BOOTS: Although there will be few, if any, really rigorous walks or uphill jaunts, we may infrequently encounter mud, slippery surfaces and stony ground. Add that to the fact that you are on your feet for much of the day, and it is most important that you provide suitable protection and support for your feet and ankles. Light-weight (gortex or some similar material) boots that come up to the ankle and have a good lug-sole are ideal. Many people are apprehensive that these will be too heavy; this is not true. The protection, grip, and day-long comfort that such boots afford is far superior to the seemingly comfortable sneakers/training shoes.

Please remember Thailand is a predominantly Buddhist country and rather conservative about standards of dress. Women should dress modestly: no halter tops, shorts, or miniskirts, please.

LAUNDRY: Twenty-four hour laundry facilities are available at **most** of our accommodations.

HEALTH INFORMATION: Sanitation throughout Thailand is relatively good compared to most tropical areas of the world; however, it is advisable to treat water outside of the large, modern hotels with caution. Ideally, stick to bottled drinks, tea, and coffee. You should not eat salads and uncooked vegetables outside the good hotels.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, you should be up-to-date on both your tetanus and polio boosters. Hepatitis-A and B vaccines are recommended. Malaria is present, and participants are strongly advised to take seek the advice of their doctor with regard to the form of prophylactic to use. There are currently three prophylaxis commonly prescribed: Mefloquine (Lariam), Malarone, and Doxycycline. Vaccinations for cholera, typhoid, and tetanus should be current. Please check with your physician or local travel clinic for more detailed information. Your doctor will advise you on the above and any further medication you may need.

LUGGAGE: International flights limit baggage to two checked pieces and one carry-on per person. The carry-on must be able to fit beneath the seat or in the overhead luggage compartment. When **traveling** it is suggested that you wear clothing and a pair of shoes suitable for birding in case your baggage is delayed. It is wise to carry several copies of a list of your expensive equipment—cameras, binoculars, tape recorders, spotting scopes, etc.—for customs inspectors. This list should include a description of the object (include the serial number if possible), place of purchase, and price. Visitors to Thailand are rarely challenged about such equipment, but U.S. customs may be more difficult. However, if you are taking an inordinately large amount of equipment abroad with you, it is advisable to declare this to a customs officer before you leave the United States. **When packing, please consider those who will have to lift and carry your bags. Two medium-weight bags are incomparably better than one huge, almost-impossible-to-lift suitcase.**

EQUIPMENT:

- **Binoculars.** Of course, a good pair of binoculars is essential, and many people may want to take a spare pair in case of accident or theft. The same advice applies for people who wear glasses or contact lenses.
- **Spotting scope.** Your tour leaders will have spotting scopes. However, you are welcome to and **in fact encouraged to** bring your own. This will be very useful at a number of locations in Thailand.
- **Duffel bags.** One or two small duffel bags can be extremely useful for short trips, and these can be packed in your luggage when not in use. As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and documents in your carry-on bag.
- **A backpack or daypack** will be handy for books, sunscreen, repellents, extra film, etc. Other items of use include a flashlight or headlamp and batteries with spare bulbs, a small canteen/flask for water, a collapsible umbrella, wash cloth, camera, and notebook and pen/pencil.

MISCELLANEOUS: Be sure to bring all necessary prescription drugs, as well as aspirin, antacids, and a supply of antihistamines should you develop a cold. Items such as toothpaste, deodorant, soap, cosmetics, sunscreen, and sunglasses should be brought with you. For those using electric shavers or other powered devices, please remember that electrical power in Thailand is 220 volts. You may need an adapter for your equipment. Insects such as **mosquitoes**, sand-flies, and leeches can occasionally, but just locally (and rarely in Thailand), be a problem. This is best dealt with by wearing long-sleeved shirts of sufficient thickness and density of weave that the “bugs” cannot bite through, long trousers tucked into long socks, and liberal coatings of Cutters or OFF. We recommend the pump-style containers.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website at www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com, which specializes in ornithology books.

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Insight Guides: Thailand. Singapore: Apa Productions, 1985. All Apa productions are superbly produced with magnificent photographs. They also contain a good list of other references for those people wishing to read in more detail on Thai history, culture and religion.

Cummings, J. & S. Martin. *Thailand.* Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2001. A very useful travel bible.

Graham, M. and P. Round. *Thailand's Vanishing Flora and Fauna.* Bangkok: Finance One Public Company, 1994.

Lekagul, B. and J.A. McNeely. *Mammals of Thailand.* Bangkok: The Assoc. Cons. Wild., 1977 (Out of print).

Lekagul, B. *et al.* *Field Guide to the Butterflies of Thailand.* Bangkok: Assoc. Cons. Wild., 1977.

Lekagul, B. and P. D. Round. *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand.* Bangkok: Saha Karn Bhaet, 1991. **This or the new Robson field guide is the field guide you should carry with you on tour. It details and illustrates all the species you will encounter on the VENT Thailand tour.**

McNeely, J. A. and Wachtel, P. S. *Soul of the Tiger—Searching for Nature's Answers in Exotic Southeast Asia.* New York: Doubleday, 1988.

Parr, J. W. K. *Large Mammals of Thailand.* Thailand: Sarakadee Press, 2003.

Robson, C. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-east Asia.* UK: New Holland Publishers, 2000. **This superb new field guide is essential for anyone with even a remote interest in the birds of this exotic region. Although the Thai Guide is sufficient, this guide will provide you with much more cutting-edge detail and up-to-date information; it also covers several species not included in Thai Guide.**

Robson, C. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Thailand.* UK: New Holland Publishers, 2002. **This or the older Lekagul and Round field guide is the field guide you should carry with you on tour. It details and illustrates all the species you will encounter on the VENT Thailand tour.**

Round, P. *Resident Forest Birds in Thailand: Their Status and Conservation.* ICBP Monograph No 2. Cambridge: ICBP., 1988. Available from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, England.

Whitmore, T.C. *Tropical Rainforests of the Far East.* 2nd. Edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1984. A superb account of the vegetation communities and their constituent plants, trees, soils etc in South-East Asia.

Wyatt, D. K. Thailand: *A Short History.* Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panich, 1984.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by

changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on May 24, 2006 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.