

BIRDING REPORT

SRI PHANG NGA, LAEM PAKARANG, TON PARIWAT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND TALANG BATTLEFIELD -28/12/08

-by Ike Suriwong

My last birding trip of the year was scheduled on the 28th of December with John Wilkins, a retired diplomat from England who was vacationing in Phuket. We decided to try the Phang Nga tour again and this time we were hoping for a lot of birds to help fill John's list and help him reach a new record for birds seen in a single year.

The two-hour drive got us to Sri Phang Nga National park at 7.30 AM. The sound of White handed Gibbons in the trees behind the lodge were welcoming. Chinese Pond Heron were common in the clearing near the restaurants and a single Javan was also noted. On the road to the campsite we heard a lot but seeing birds was difficult as most preferred the high branches where they were silhouetted against the morning sky. We did find a few interesting birds such as Asian Fairy Bluebird, Black napped Oriole, Black Headed Bulbul, Arctic Warbler and Asian Paradise Flycatcher. In the river we found a Little Cormorant and a single Little Heron.

Once at the campsite we hunted around the river for Lesser Fish Eagle but the bird was not fishing today. We did find Black Capped Kingfisher and Pied Wagtail in the riverside up the trail to the waterfall. A tall dead tree had an interesting collection of birds such as Chinese Pond Heron, Ashy Drongo (pale morph), Ashy Minivet and an Oriental Honey Buzzard. Prize of the collection was a single male Siberian Thrush warming up in the tender rays of the morning sun.

A pair of Orchraceous Bulbuls came close and we also found a nesting Buff vented Bulbul near the information kiosk. Forest Wagtail were fairly common and in the high trees Scarlet Minivet and a Lesser Green Leafbird were seen foraging. Down near the stream we had a pair of calling Crested Serpent Eagle, with one perched on a dead tree only 50 meters from where we stood.

Before heading back to headquarters, a flock of seven or more Bushy Crested Hornbill flew overhead, all in complete silence.

On the road back we stopped to check out an odd noise coming from within the forest and were awarded with White Crowned Hornbill, four birds flying only meters above our heads and again in complete silence.

Lunch was at the park canteen and the food was cheap and delicious.

Before heading to our next stop we drove down to the Phang Nga river to see if we could find any River Lapwing. Unfortunately there were no birds present at the site but we did find around 15 Grey headed Lapwing. Stripe throated Bulbul were calling from the shrubs on the riverbank and a few Little Egret were seen feeding in the shallows. A Marsh Sandpiper was seen along with Common Sandpiper and a Grey Wagtail in the muddy edges of the river.

Next we headed down to Laem Pakarang to find some waders and terns. Greater Crested Tern was the first bird we encountered and the sand spit on the left side of the cape had a single Lesser Crested Tern along with a few Little Tern, all bathing in the shallows. A White winged and two Whiskered Tern were also present.

There were a lot of people at the cape that day and more were heading up the beach for a picnic, so we were limited in our birding time there. Waders included Greater and lesser Sand Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone (in breeding plumage), Bar tailed Godwit, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Black winged Stilt, Grey Plover, Common and Green Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Whimbrel and Eurasian Curlew. Other birds were Common and White throated Kingfisher, Pacific Reef Egret, Little Heron and Little, Intermediate and Great Egrets.

Next we visited the Thap Lamru Navy Base Golf Club looking for the River Lapwing. The sun was high in the sky and the heat was quite unbearable so naturally the birdlife was rather scarce. Paddyfield Pipit, Common and White Vented Myna, Blue tailed Bee Eater, White breasted Waterhen and Oriental Magpie Robin were a few of the common species we encountered.

The next stop was at Ton Pariwat Waterfall which took about an hour to drive to from our location. Forgetting it was a Sunday (and right smack on the New Year as well) was a very big mistake. The place was trashed out with dozens of people in literally every crevasse of the falls and more were headed in that direction with truckloads of Thai tourists, some coming from as far away as Bangkok and Korat!

Not a single bird was seen in this usually abundant park, much to John's disappointment.

Our next two stops would also be disappointing, with the Mangrove walkway and Ao Phang Nga National Park being just as quiet as ever.

We decided to call it a day and head back to Phuket. John shared with me his desire to see Asian Openbill and I told him we'd give it a shot. We headed down to Talang and looked up the birds at their usual address on Soi Pitak 8. Very luckily for John there were two birds roosting there. The rest of the flock had moved on southward and could be seen circling in the far distance.

Before heading home we dropped by at Laguna for a few more lifers, and luckily we found them. Cotton Pigmy Geese were dabbling in the shallow waters of the big lake and nearby we found a family of Little Grebe. A mysterious duck, which resembled a very dishelved Falcated Duck was seen and I never found time to go back there and find out what it really was. The Cotton Pigmy Geese and the mystery duck took to

flight after being disturbed by a local man wearing a Fantasea shirt who was setting traps on the pond fringes among the reedbeds. This had me rather upset and I hope he will be caught and punished for trapping the birds here.

Other birds in the pond included Common Moorhen, Lesser Whistling Duck and Little Cormorant. A Brahminy Kite was seen in flight above the lake and a Yellow Wagtail completed the day's list, which came to a total of 72 species. John also celebrated a new annual birding record for himself, having seen over 400 species in a single year.

Birdlist

(Note: birds in the list are recorded in a first-come-first-record basis, which means some species which were seen in previous locations will not be recorded twice.)

Sri Phang Nga

Wreathed Hornbill
Greater Racket tailed Drongo
Chinese Pond Heron
Little Egret
Common Myna
Dollarbird
Crimson Sunbird
Grey headed Flycatcher
Black headed Bulbul
Mugimaki Flycatcher
Forest Wagtail
Swinhoes Minivet
Crow billed Drongo
Vernal Hanging Parrot
Thick billed Pigeon
Lesser Fish Eagle

Little Cormorant
Red throated Flycatcher
Black capped Kingfisher
Golden Crested Myna
Asian fairy Bluebird
Buff rumped Woodpecker
Ashy Drongo (both species)
Black naped Oriole
Common Woodshrike
Black Bittern
Chinese Goshawk
Ashy Minivet
Long billed Spiderhunter
Great Hornbill
Whiskered Treeswift
Greater Green Leafbird

Grey breasted Spiderhunter
Black crested Bulbul
Yellow Wagtail
Cream vented Bulbul
Spectacled Bulbul
Little Spiderhunter
Asian Brown Flycatcher
Moustached Babbler
Orchraceous Bulbul
Lesser Green Leafbird
Puff backed Bulbul
Germaine's Swiftlet
Silver rumped Needletail
Arctic Warbler
Crimson-breasted Flowerpecker

Phang Nga River

River Lapwing
Intermediate Egret
Barn Swallow
Pacific Swallow
Chestnut capped Bee Eater
Stripe throated Bulbul

Grey Capped Woodpecker
Pacific Golden Plover
Common Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Scarlet breasted Flowerpecker
Spotted Dove

Brown throated Sunbird
Pacific Swift
Black Browed Reed Warbler
White throated Kingfisher
Common Tailorbird

Laem Pakarang

Brown Shrike
Eurasian Tree Sparrow
Greater Sand Plover
Lesser Sand Plover
Little Tern
Grey Plover
Whimbrel

Sanderling
Common Kingfisher
Bar tailed Godwit
Grey tailed Tattler
Ruddy Turnstone
Red necked Stint
Terek Snadpiper

Nordmanns Greenshank
Pacific Reef Egret
Chinese Egret
Indian Roller
White faced Sand Plover
Curlew Sandpiper

Thai Muang Golf Course

Pink necked Pigeon
Large billed Crow
Coppersmith Barbet
Blue tailed Bee Eater
Asian Koel
Black Drongo
Paddyfield Pipit
Common Iora

Streak eared Bulbul
Brahminy Kite
Chestnut tailed Starling
Orange breasted Pigeon
Sand Martin
Black shouldered Kite
Red Wattled Lapwing
Purple Swamphen

Blue throated Bee Eater
Japanese Sparrowhawk
Pintail Snipe
White breasted Waterhen
Greater Coucal
Lesser Coucal
Thick billed Reed Warbler
Zebra Dove