

# PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

## VIETNAM

15 March - 3 April 2008

### TOUR REPORT

**LEADER:** CHRIS DOUGHTY

Highlights of our tour to Vietnam were many and varied; here are just some of them that readily spring to mind. The sightings of two species of bitterns, Cinnamon and Yellow, is always a highlight on any tour, as were the endangered Black-faced Spoonbills, the large flocks of ducks, which included Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Garganey and Northern Shovelers, many of which were in freshly moulted breeding plumage. No less than nine male Siamese Firebacks standing and often displaying on the main track at Cat Tien, great looks at a stunning male Green Peafowl, the Asian Dowitcher, in full breeding plumage, the juvenile Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl, an amazing four species of broadbills, Black-and-red, Long-tailed, Silver-breasted and Dusky, the very endangered Swinhoe's Minivet, the seldom seen Manchurian Bush-Warbler, great looks at a Manchurian Reed-Warbler, a rare passage migrant in Vietnam, two very beautiful species of forktails, Slaty-backed and White-crowned, the rarely observed Green Cochoa, the highly localised Limestone Wren-Babblers which performed so well for us, super looks at the endemic Black-crowned Fulvetta, great looks at the recently rediscovered and endemic Grey-crowned Crocias, the near endemic Black-crowned Parrotbill, dazzling Mrs. Gould's Sunbirds, hard to find Red-billed and White-shouldered Starlings and last but not least, the endemic Vietnamese Greenfinch was also of great interest. For many of us the single greatest highlight of the tour was undoubtedly our experience on the small island at Xuan Thuy; where literally dozens of migrating birds were observed at very close quarters, in the small grove of casuarinas that remain on the island. Amongst the many migrating birds we saw there, we found a very rare vagrant to Vietnam; an adult female Dark-throated Thrush, which provided great excitement. By far the best mammal highlight of the tour was the prolonged looks at the family party of Red-shanked Douc Langurs, at Bach Ma; also of interest was the pair of Yellow-throated Martens, at the top of a large tree on Mt. Lang Bian and the two species of treeshrews at Cat Tien. All of this and much more made it a very enjoyable and interesting tour.

Following an eight hour flight from Melbourne, the Australian contingent arrived at Ho Chi Minh international airport and was promptly driven to their very comfortable downtown hotel. During the drive we saw the first bird of the tour, the very smart looking Eurasian Tree Sparrow and on our arrival at the hotel we were greeted by a large flock of wheeling House Swifts; the tour was off and running.

The following day was mainly a travel day, as we battled our way through literally thousands upon thousands of motorbikes as we drove from Ho Chi Minh City to Dalat, on the Lang Bian Plateau. It was not a long drive in terms of distance but rather because

of the low speed limits, narrow roads and heavy congestion. However, there were a few birds along the roadside, which broke up the long drive. Even before leaving sprawling Ho Chi Minh City, we found Black-shouldered Kite, Feral Pigeon, Asian Palm Swift, Indian Roller, Barn Swallow, Plain Prinia and Common Myna. A large raptor circling overhead brought the bus to a screeching halt and we very much enjoyed super close looks at a very obliging Oriental Honey-Buzzard. Not far down the road we came across another soaring raptor, this time it was a Grey-faced Buzzard, this was followed by great flight views of yet another species of raptor, a magnificent Black Eagle, which is always nice to see. Other roadside birds included Cattle Egret, Yellow-vented Bulbul and Black-hooded Oriole. A short stop to look at a roadside tea plantation, enabled us to enjoy a pair of beautiful Green Bee-eaters, a few Red-rumped Swallows, a pair of inquisitive Black-necked Tailorbirds and a small flock of Ashy Woodswallows. A quick walk through some roadside rice paddies close to Di Linh produced a Little Egret, several Chinese Pond-Herons, a few Pintail Snipe, a couple of Spotted Doves, a splendid White-throated Kingfisher, both Richard's and Paddyfield Pipits, Grey Wagtail, a Zitting Cisticola, a flock of Scaly-breasted Munias and even a couple of roadside House Sparrows, which only occur in this part of Vietnam. A quick look at a forested area close to Di Linh was home to Black-browed Barbet, Ochraceous and Black Buleuls and Maroon Oriole. A final circling raptor, turned out to be an adult Chinese Sparrowhawk, on northward migration back to China.

The following morning we left our hotel at dawn and began passing through intensely cultivated land, growing a wide variety of vegetables and hundreds of greenhouses, growing a profusion of brightly coloured roses, marigolds and chrysanthemums. We soon arrived at Mount Lang Bian, the third highest mountain on the Lang Bian Plateau. We took a quick jeep-ride up the steepest part of the road towards its twin peaks and then we made our way on foot to the broadleaved evergreen forest, which blankets the higher slopes. We enjoyed an excellent mornings birding in the forest were we saw a super pair of Grey-chinned Minivets, several Mountain Buleuls, a bizarre looking race of Common Iora, which has a black throat streak, a couple of Eyebrowed Thrushes, one or two of us glimpsed a Lesser Shortwing, they were calling all around us, several fly catching Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers, Ashy-throated, Eastern Crowned, Grey-cheeked and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, lots of Mountain Fulvettas, a pair of diminutive Rufous-capped Babblers, several active flocks of Black-throated Tits, a couple of Black-crowned Fulvettas, which are endemic to Vietnam, the very localised Black-headed Sibia and best of all, the amazing Green Cochoa, which sat out in the open, in full view, for more than 10 minutes. Unbelievable! After our very enjoyable picnic lunch, we walked through large stands of native pines, where we saw a Golden-throated Barbet, a pair of Large Cuckoo-shrikes, a stunning pair of Long-tailed Minivets, a Flavescent Bulbul, an obliging male Grey Bushchat, an immature and an adult female Mugimaki Flycatcher, both Yellow-browed and Two-barred Warblers, a few Green-backed Tits, Black-collared Starling, the endemic Vietnamese Greenfinch, an immature and an adult female Red Crossbill and brilliant looks at the gorgeous Mrs. Gould's Sunbird. We also saw our first mammals of the tour; the widespread Pallas' Squirrel, the diminutive Maritime Striped Squirrel, which is endemic to the central highlands of Indochina and we were extremely fortunate to observe a pair of Yellow-throated Martens, moving around in the treetops.

Our final morning on the Da Lat Plateau was spent in the sheltered and well-forested Ta Nung Valley, the main site for the rare and endemic Grey-crowned Crocias. It is also a very good area for many other species of birds and indeed, they came thick and fast; there was always something on view throughout the entire morning. One of the many highlights was without doubt the flock of four stunning Grey-crowned Crocias, which are endemic to Vietnam and which showed particularly well. The crocias was described from five specimens, collected at two locations in 1938 and 1939; it was not seen again for 55 years, until being rediscovered 14 years ago. Amongst the other birds seen this morning there was a perched Thick-billed Green-Pigeon, good numbers of Mountain Imperial-Pigeons, including good scope views of a bird in the top of an exposed tree branch, tremendous spotting by Ruth, afforded us great looks at a juvenile of the seldom seen Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl, a huge Greater Yellownape, the very uncommon Long-tailed Broadbill, the range restricted Indochinese Cuckoo-shrike, lots of Black-crested Bulbuls and a few Red-whiskered Bulbuls, a pair of Little Pied Flycatchers, a solitary Verditer Flycatcher, a superb adult male Large Niltava, a few friendly White-throated Fantails, a couple of Hill Prinias and a family party of Rufescent Prinias, a particularly secretive Dusky Warbler, a couple of large flocks of the extremely range-restricted White-cheeked Laughingthrush, very close Rufous-backed Sibias, super looks at a pair of Black-crowned Parrotbills which are endemic to Indochina, good looks at the stunning red-breasted *johnsi* race of Black-throated Sunbird, great views of several Streaked Spiderhunters, a pair of delightful Burmese Shrikes, Ashy and Bronzed Drongos, as well as a pair of gorgeous Lesser-Racket-tailed Drongos and a small flock of three Red-billed Blue Magpies.

In the afternoon we saw a Blue Rock-Thrush on the roof of our hotel, before driving to Tuyen Lam Reservoir, a scenic and recreational area, for the many visitors who visit Delat. Here we added small numbers of Little Grebes, enjoyed great scope views of a very striking Cinnamon Bittern, watched a male Shikra deliver food to a female, who sat and ate it while we watched her through the scope; we saw a lone Common Moorhen, a Common Sandpiper, enjoyed great looks at a Greater Coucal, had scope views of a Common Kingfisher, watched a pair of Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, an acrobatic pair of Great Tits, three beautiful Slender-billed Orioles and a splendid Eurasian Jay. A short walk through a nearby pine forest produced a pair of foraging Chestnut-vented Nuthatches, which rounded off a perfect days birding.

Leaving Delat we headed for Cat Tien National Park; we broke the morning drive, with a few roadside birding stops along the way. Birds new for the tour included Lesser Whistling-Duck, a displaying Crested Goshawk, Germain's Swiftlet, a stunning Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Common Hoopoe, Streak-eared Bulbul, a pair of Scarlet-backed Flowerpeckers, Hair-crested Drongo, Large-billed Crow, a beautiful Plain-backed Sparrow and best of all, a fairly co-operative Thick-billed Warbler. On our arrival at Cat Tien National Park, we enjoyed a brief siesta before undertaking a late afternoon walk. Cat Tien was without doubt the easiest birding site on the whole tour and is the largest remaining expanse of lowland forest in northern Cochinchina and has recovered well, following the terrible mauling it received during the civil war of the late sixties and early

seventies. A short walk along the main trail in the park, produced a large number of new birds; we enjoyed a large group of Black-crowned Night-Herons, a couple of Ospreys, Red-collared Dove, great scope views of Green Imperial-Pigeon, small flocks of Red-breasted Parakeets, several fly-by Vernal Hanging-Parrots, scope views of an Asian Barred Owlet, Dollarbird, a superb Oriental Pied Hornbill, a scoped Lineated Barbet, Bay Woodpecker, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, great looks at the showy White-rumped Shama, one or two Asian Brown Flycatchers, a solitary Taiga Flycatcher, several Black-naped Orioles, several Black Drongos, a couple of very attractive Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, a Racket-tailed Treepie and great scope views of a handsome female Golden-crested Myna. The most surprising events of the afternoon walk were a flock of six Oriental Pratincoles, which flew directly over our heads and a group of approximately 100 Orange-breasted Green-Pigeons gathered together, to roost for the night. The day was rounded off perfectly at dusk, with great looks at a couple of monstrous Great Eared Nightjars and a couple of smaller Large-tailed Nightjars.

We spent the following morning, birding a 5 kilometre trail, which led from the main trail in the park, to Crocodile Lake. During the drive to and from the walking trail, we saw no less than 6 male Siamese Firebacks feeding on the track, allowing super looks at this very special Indochinese endemic. During the walk to the lake we saw a wide selection of very special birds; which included a pair of Red Junglefowl, a pair of endangered Swinhoe's Minivets, a small flock of Ashy Minivets, which is a very uncommon winter visitor to this part of the world, we enjoyed watching an unusually confiding female Siberian Blue Robin and the rather skulking Radde's Warbler. Other birds of interest included Emerald Dove, Green-billed Malkoha, Blue-winged Leafbird, Great Iora, Oriental Magpie-Robin and Black-naped Monarch. We also saw a Northern Smooth-tailed Treeshrew, which is endemic to just this small area of Vietnam, as well as the more widespread, but delightful, Northern Treeshrew and a few Cambodian Striped Squirrels.

On reaching the lake, we enjoyed our lunch at the rather basic lake-side lodge, which overlooked the lake. This proved a great vantage point, to look for birds during lunch and I am afraid it became a very bird interrupted lunch. An Oriental Darter perched on a snag with outstretched wings, unfortunately, an all too uncommon bird these days, in this part of the world. There was a beautiful Purple Heron, a couple of Great Egrets and a solitary Intermediate Egret, which is a very scarce bird in Vietnam; we also saw a total of three Yellow Bitterns skulking along the edge of the reedbeds. There was an endangered Lesser Adjutant, great looks at White-breasted Waterhen, a few Purple Swamphens and Bronze-winged Jacanas, a Little Ringed Plover, an uncommon bird in Vietnam, a Common Greenshank, a few Pied Kingfishers, a Siberian Stonechat, several Yellow-bellied Prinias, good numbers of Oriental Reed-Warblers, a Brown-throated Sunbird and best of all, a solitary and very scarce Manchurian Reed-Warbler; which showed well on a couple of occasions. A party of 20 or so Eurasian Wild Pigs also came down to forage along the edge of the lake. During the return walk and drive, we did not expect to find a great deal of birds during the hot and very humid afternoon. We were however, pleasantly surprised to observe Eurasian Sparrowhawk, both Blue-eared and Coppersmith Barbets, a stunning Lesser Yellownappe, Stripe-throated Bulbul, an Asian Fairy Bluebird, a family party of Grey-faced Tit-Babblers, which is an Indochinese endemic and best of

all, good long looks at a perched Dusky Broadbill, a very seldom seen bird.

A full mornings birding in the lowland rainforest of Cat Tien, was a rather frustrating affair, with several of the new birds for the tour, only allowing a quick look. Even so, it was a superb forest to walk through and new birds included Brown Hawk-Owl, Grey-headed Woodpecker, the range restricted Pale-legged Leaf-Warbler, both White-crested and Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrushes, Purple-throated Sunbird and the beautiful Vinous-breasted Starling. By far the best bird of the morning, was the stunning Black-and-red Broadbill, a group of four birds, actually sat there and allowed us to have a good look at them! In the afternoon we decided to do some open country birding and spent our time birding along a track with both short and tall grassland on either side of the track. As we drove along the track a Common Buzzard flew in between our two jeeps and in hot pursuit was a very persistent Shikra. We continued our drive, when suddenly, the brakes were applied and we found ourselves watching a superb male Green Peafowl, just off the side of the track, he looked very regal with his long crest, held bolt-upright, on top of his head, as he trailed his long accentuated tail behind him. Suddenly, a superb adult male Eastern Marsh-Harrier was observed quartering the grassland, putting on a spectacular ariel display. A small flock of three Red-wattled Lapwings then began dive bombing the harrier, they must have had small chicks concealed in the grassland. A short walk along the track produced good scope views of a few Sooty-headed Bulbuls and a couple of Bright-headed Cisticolas. On the drive back to our lodge, late in the afternoon, we found a small flock of attractive Chestnut-capped Babblers, a Brown Shrike, three Lesser Coucals and a Common Flameback. An added bonus was a resplendent male Red Junglefowl, scratching around in short grass, providing tremendous looks, for an extended period of time, they really are beautiful.

On our last morning at Cat Tien, we birded the main track in the park. Once again we enjoyed great views of male Siamese Firebacks, this time we watched them displaying in the middle of the track; giving us a grand total of nine males, seen well, all on the main trail in the park. The main highlights this morning were an immature Violet Cuckoo, which showed particularly well, a very close Green-eared Barbet, yet another Indochinese endemic, a stunning male Scarlet Minivet, a small flock of Black-headed Bulbuls and a Common Tailorbird. It was then time to drive back to Ho Chi Minh City, where we then flew to Da Nang, in central Vietnam, where we spent the night.

The following morning we drove from Da Nang to nearby Bach Ma National Park. We made one birding stop on the way, at Hai Van Pass; where there were the remains of an American fortification, built during the Vietnam War. Not long after arriving at the pass, we found a small flock of Striped Tit-Babblers. A dazzling flash of crimson shot past us in a flash and with little effort we managed to locate a stunning male Crimson Sunbird, in full breeding plumage, feeding on a nearby flowering shrub. Shortly afterwards, we also found a female Ruby-cheeked Sunbird. There were also hundreds of Barn Swallows flying north along the coast, heading for there breeding grounds in China and Russia. On our arrival at Bach Ma National Park, we birded around the park headquarters, which netted us a Green Sandpiper, a splendid Grey-headed Parakeet, Eurasian Blackbird, the range restricted Masked Laughingthrush and a couple of Long-tailed Shrikes. We then

began the drive high up into the mountains, which were unfortunately covered in low cloud, to our fairly basic lodge where we would spend the next two nights. Bach Ma, in its heyday, in the 1930s, comprised of a gathering of no less than 149 French villas. After heavy bombing during the Vietnam War; all that is left of its former glory, are a few dilapidated villas, several crumbling ruins and a few very damp and cold lodges. Following lunch at our lodge, we joined forces with Mr. Choo; our bird-imitating, orange juggling, jack booting, local bird guide, who had a great love for the birds of Bach Ma and together we spent the afternoon birding around the top of the mountain. Mr. Choo, is actually head of security, at Bach Ma National Park. Fortunately for us, the weather cleared and we managed to find one or two mixed species feeding flocks. New birds for us included a female Silver-breasted Broadbill, an Olive-backed Pipit, a male Orange-bellied Leafbird, a very colourful Sulphur-breasted Warbler, hyper-active Black-browed Fulvettas, a solitary Silver-eared Mesia and two separate White-browed Shrike-Babblers.

We spent the whole of the next day birding at various altitudes in the park; but as is usually the case at Bach Ma, the going was very slow. However, it did not rain, it was not covered in low cloud and there were even periods when the sun came out! New birds for the tour did pop into view occasionally and the scenery was spectacular. The first of the new birds today was the beautiful Ratchet-tailed Treepie, this was followed by a small flock of range restricted Chestnut-collared Yuhinas and the equally range restricted Black-throated Laughingthrush; these were followed by a pair of Red-headed Trogons and a splendid Large Hawk-Cuckoo. However, it was not a bird that stole the show this morning; it was a family party of superb Red-shanked Douc Langurs, which must surely be, the most beautiful species of monkey in the world. It is also an Indochinese endemic. As we were driving back to our lodge for lunch; a pair of Rufous-throated Partridges flew across the road in front of one of the vehicles and found themselves trapped against a sheer cliff face, allowing us to enjoy a quick look at them, before they melted away. Following a delightful lunch, we stumbled across a family party of Asian Paradise-Flycatchers, a family party of stunning Sultan Tits, of the black crested race *gayeti*, which was enjoyed by all and a delightful White-spectacled Warbler was seen gathering nesting material by a couple of group members. In the afternoon we managed to find four new species for the tour; Chris saw a male Silver Pheasant and we all saw a stunning Slaty-backed Forktail, an equally stunning Golden Babbler and a White-bellied Yuhina.

On our final morning in Bach Ma National Park, we birding solidly all morning; firstly, around the summit, where low cloud forced us lower, but not before marveling at the very narrow and claustrophobic tunnels that the Viet Cong had carved into the hillsides, in order to survive American bombing, during the Vietnam War. Secondly, we birded the lower slopes, below 800 metres and despite our best efforts, we added just two species and they were seen from the carpark of our restaurant, before breakfast! Fortunately, they were two very attractive birds and both were seen exceptionally well. The first was a pair of White-browed Scimitar-Babblers, followed closely, by a splendid Indochinese Green Magpie, which as the name would suggest, is a very shy, Indochinese endemic. Following lunch, we drove back to Da Nang where we spent the night, at a comfortable Hotel.

Morning flight to Hanoi; where we drove to the Botanical Gardens to do a little birding and we even managed to find a few new birds, which included an attractive Plaintive Cuckoo, a couple of Greenish Warblers, a very nice Blythe's Leaf-Warbler and a small flock of Japanese White-eyes. We then enjoyed a first class lunch, at one of Hanoi's finest restaurants. Following lunch, we drove almost directly to Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam's only Ramsar site, in the Red River Delta. Much of it through a maze of narrow winding roads, with kilometre after kilometre of rice paddies, on both sides of the road, dotted here and there with French colonial Catholic churches, which seemed strangely out of place, amongst the rice paddies. The main reason for our visit to the Red River Delta was to observe the large numbers and diversity of waders from the Northern Palearctic, that winter here; we were particularly interested in finding two great rarities, the Black-faced Spoonbill and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. On our arrival, we had time to enjoy a gentle introduction to the birds of Xuan Thuy, as we went for a short stroll along some nearby shrimp ponds; the only bird of particular interest was a Grey Heron.

Early in the morning we undertook a long but productive walk, in search of a flock of endangered Black-faced Spoonbills, which were wintering in the park. Fortunately, we managed to find two spoonbills which were still at their roost site and we were able to enjoy good, close scope views of them. We also encountered large flocks of ducks, which included freshly moulted, full breeding plumaged Eurasian Wigeons, Eurasian Teal, Garganeys and Northern Shovelers, which were a real treat. Other new birds for our ever growing list were Spot-billed Duck, three separate Slaty-breasted Rails, very obliging Common Redshanks, small flocks of Marsh Sandpipers, a solitary Curlew Sandpiper, a couple of Black-capped Kingfishers, small flocks of Red-throated Pipits, with some of them coming into breeding plumage, an Eastern Yellow Wagtail, a pair of Light-vented Bulbuls, a flock of Red-billed Starlings and a pair of Crested Mynas. On any other day; a Rufous-tailed Robin and a male Siberian Rubythroat, would surely have been the highlights of the days birding, but this was to prove no ordinary day; as Dave had already pointed out a close Asian Dowitcher, in full breeding plumage, feeding amongst a nearby flock of Black-tailed Godwits. Late in the morning, as we were wandering around some rice paddies, a Spotted Redshank flew by us.

In the afternoon, we took a small boat out to a wader high tide roost, on a nearby small island, which became increasingly smaller, as the tide became higher! This would give us a small window of opportunity, to find the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper; but as there were only two birds wintering at Xuan Thuy this year, we were fully aware that we would be looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack and there was no guarantee that they would even be at the roost site at all. However, we did know that there would be a large number and variety of waders roosting on the island, many in freshly moulted breeding plumage and this was a mouth-watering prospect. We were not to be disappointed; we very much enjoyed our time searching through a flock of approximately 1,000 waders, but regrettably, the two Spoon-billed Sandpipers wintering at Xuan Thuy this year, were not amongst them. Even so; we did get great looks at other species of waders that were of interest to us, which included large groups of Grey and Kentish Plovers, large numbers of Greater Sandpipers, many in full breeding plumage, a single Terek Sandpiper, a solitary Great Knot, good numbers of Sanderlings,

Red-necked Stints and Dunlins and best of all three Broad-billed Sandpipers. We then decided to check a small grove of casuarinas on the island; which at this time of year, could be providing cover for birds on their northwards migration, back to Japan, China and Russia. This is when the day really became noteworthy; the casuarinas were absolutely alive with freshly arrived migrants, some flitting from tree to tree, others busily feeding on the ground, as they attempted to refuel, in order to replace the weight they were rapidly losing, as they expended the large amounts of energy that was required, to enable them to fly such huge distances. A Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, flitted from tree to tree, a female Dark-throated Thrush put in an appearance, as did a female Japanese Thrush, a male Bluethroat hopped along the timeline, more than a dozen Siberian Rubythroats were on show, several male Hainan Blue-Flycatchers flitted around, both male and female Hill Blue-Flycatchers were particularly tame. A surprise find was an Asian Stubtail in the top of one of the casuarinas, under normal circumstances; this species is a notorious skulker of the forest undergrowth. Yet another ultra skulker had no option but to show itself; this time, it was the seldom seen Manchurian Bush-Warbler and last but by no means least, a female Chestnut Bunting was also seen very well. What an extraordinary day we had all shared together.

Leaving the Red River Delta behind, we headed off for limestone country, and Cuc Phuong National Park, arriving in time for lunch. Birds of note during the morning drive were a White Wagtail, a White-crowned Forktail, which flew across the road in front of the bus and a pair of beautiful White-shouldered Starlings, feeding in a flowering tree. After lunch, we went birding in the park, it was quite warm to begin with and there was little bird activity, then we began finding birds at regular intervals, and it turned out to be a good afternoon of birding. The most noteworthy birds being, Silver-backed Needletail, a male White-tailed Flycatcher, a male Purple-naped Sunbird, Plain Flowerpecker, Grey-backed Shrike and a Hill Myna.

We spent the following morning birding around the Bong substation, in the heart of the park and in the afternoon, we did some birding, not far from the park headquarters. The morning got off to a great start; as we watched two pairs of Limestone Wren-Babblers interacting with one other, jostling for position at the very top of a limestone pinnacle, where they would sing as loud as they could, before being displaced by one of the others. Unfortunately, that is where the easy birding ended, the rest of the day was one long, hard slog, with, it has to be said, very little return. There were one or two birding bright spots and these included a kettle of Black Kites, spiraling skywards, in order to continue their northwards migration, great views of a Crested Serpent-Eagle circling over the forest, with a serpent grasped firmly in its talons. A pair of Large Woodshrikes showed briefly in the forest canopy and we enjoyed good close looks at a few Olive-backed Sunbirds.

The highlights of the early morning birding the following day were a White-vented Myna, a Yellow-vented Flowerpecker and prolonged views of a stunning adult male Asian Emerald Cuckoo. Following breakfast, we headed north towards Hanoi. We broke the long drive with a quick birding stop at the Van Long Nature Reserve, a large expanse of wetlands, surrounded by pinnacle-like limestone crags. Here birds of particular note included Common Coot, Black-winged Stilt and several flocks of superb Pheasant-tailed

Jacanas. Following a particularly fine lunch in Hanoi, we drove northwards to the former French hill station of Tam Dao; which unlike Bach Ma, is still a flourishing hill resort, with several good hotels. As we neared Tam Dao, every tiny bit of land was covered with short bamboo racks, growing Choko, a vegetable which in Vietnam, is a speciality of this area. We arrived in time to begin our exploration of the area; by far the most noteworthy sighting was that of a group of 5 Pied Harriers, all heading northwards in single file, towards their breeding grounds, far to the north, on the Russian Steppes.

The three limestone peaks of Tam Dao National Park rise above the clouds like a dragon's backbone; however, the accessible areas of the park have a well earned reputation for being completely enveloped by low cloud and fog. This was unfortunately, very much the case during the three days we birded the area. Even so, we did manage to find a small number of new birds for the tour. These included prolonged looks at a perched immature Besra, several Puff-throated Bulbuls, and the jewel-like Pallas's Leaf-Warbler, very active flocks of Grey-cheeked Fulvettas, the very uncommon Spot-necked Babbler, and a large flock of Grey Treepies. Tam Dao, is the only known wintering ground of this species in Vietnam.

At the end of the tour, we had traveled many kilometres together, in a bird filled journey, through this ornithological little known and fascinating country and I hope that you all enjoyed it as much as I did.

## **SYSTEMATIC LIST**

### **PODICIPEDIDAE**

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* A common and widespread resident, large numbers observed at Van Long Nature Reserve.

#### ANHINGIDAE

**Oriental Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster* Two birds observed well at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park. Unfortunately, the Oriental Darter is a rare and declining species in this part of Asia.

#### ARDEIDAE

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* A common bird throughout Vietnam, more common in the north. Large numbers were roosting at Van Long Nature Reserve.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* A solitary bird flew across Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Small numbers present, particularly in the north.

**Intermediate Egret** *Mesopboyx intermedia* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Vietnam. We were very fortunate to see one at close quarters while birding at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park and this was followed by a second sighting of a single bird at Van Long Nature Reserve.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* Commonly encountered throughout the whole of Vietnam.

**Chinese Pond-Heron** *Ardeola bacchus* Commonly encountered throughout the tour. Many of the birds had recently moulted into full breeding plumage.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Commonly encountered in suitable habitat, throughout all of Vietnam.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* This is an uncommon species in Vietnam; a small flock was observed flying along the river, in Cat Tien National Park, during a rain storm.

**Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis* This is also an uncommon species in Vietnam and difficult to see anywhere in the world. We saw four different individuals on the edge of reedbeds at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Cinnamon Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis* Although this species is a fairly common resident of Vietnam, it is difficult to see because it often hides deep in reedbeds. We were extremely fortunate to enjoy prolonged scope views of an adult male which showed remarkably well, along the edge of a reedbed at Tuyen Lam Reservoir, near Delat.

#### CICONIIDAE

**Lesser Adjutant** *Leptoptilos javanicus* Unfortunately, this species is close to extinction in South East Asia, in Vietnam there is only one breeding colony left, which

comprises of approximately 50 individuals. We were pleased to observe a solitary bird flying over Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park. This species is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Its total world population is estimated to be around 5,000 individuals and unfortunately, declining rapidly. The main threats to this species are habitat loss, hunting and human disturbance at nesting sites.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

**Black-faced Spoonbill** *Platalea minor* We enjoyed good close scope views of two of these birds at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. We then saw a few more distant birds in flight. This species is listed as Endangered in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Its total world population is estimated to be around 700 individuals and unfortunately, declining rapidly. Xuan Thuy National Park is one of only three main wintering sites, the other two being in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The main threat to this species is without doubt habitat destruction, both on its breeding and wintering grounds. All are threatened by industrial development and conversion into aquaculture, shrimp ponds etc. Hunting and human disturbance at nesting sites are also a contributing factor.

#### ANATIDAE

**Lesser Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica* Good numbers were observed at a small roadside wetland, close to Delat. Large numbers were also present at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* Small numbers seen very well in the scope, on their wintering grounds in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. The drakes were in freshly moulted, full breeding plumage.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca* Small numbers seen well in the scope, on their wintering grounds in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. The drakes were in freshly moulted, full breeding plumage.

**Spot-billed Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha* A pair was seen in flight in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. This is the far south of this birds range, in South East Asia.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* Large flocks of this very attractive species were observed well in the scope, on their wintering grounds in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. There were also small numbers present at Van Long Nature Reserve. The drakes were in freshly moulted, full breeding plumage.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* Small numbers were observed well in the scope, on their wintering grounds in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. The drakes were in freshly moulted, full breeding plumage.

#### PANDIONIDAE

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Small numbers wintering in southern Vietnam.

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

**Oriental Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* We were fortunate to observe a pair of this uncommon species very well, close to the town of Dinh Quan, during our

drive to Delat.

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Small numbers observed throughout the tour.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* This species is a rare winter visitor to Vietnam and a scarce passage migrant. While birding in Cuc Phuong National Park we saw a small flock of birds which were spiraling upwards on a thermal and on reaching a certain height they all headed northwards in single file, towards China.

**Crested Serpent-Eagle** *Spilornis cheela* A bird was observed in flight in Cuc Phuong National Park. It flew over us and we could clearly see that it was carrying a snake in its talons.

**Eastern Marsh-Harrier** *Circus spilonotus* A superb adult male was seen very closely as it hunted over grassland in Cat Tien National Park. Large numbers were also observed very well on their wintering grounds, in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Pied Harrier** *Circus melanoleucos* We observed a group of five birds spiraling upwards, above the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park, on reaching a certain height, they all headed northwards in single file, heading back to their breeding grounds in the northern Palearctic.

**Crested Goshawk** *Accipiter trivirgatus* Our first sighting was of a single bird in display flight, close to the township of Tan Phu, during our drive to Cat Tien National Park. We also observed a single bird, circling overhead, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badius* Our first sighting was of a pair of birds at Tuyen Lam Reservoir. We watched a perched female in the scope for a prolonged period of time, on one occasion, the male flew in and provided her with food. As this was still early in the breeding season, he was still trying to impress upon her, that he was a good provider. It was also seen in flight on a few occasions, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Chinese Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter soloensis* A scarce passage migrant in Vietnam, we were fortunate to observe an adult bird in flight, close to the town of Lien Hara, during our drive to Delat. A second bird was also seen well in flight, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Besra** *Accipiter virgatus* A scarce and elusive species in Vietnam; we were very fortunate to observe an immature bird perched in dense cover, on the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park. We were able to watch it in the scope, for a prolonged period of time. Unlike most accipiters, this species prefers to sit in dense cover, rather than out in the open.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* This species is a scarce winter visitor to Vietnam. While driving along the main track in Cat Tien National Park an adult female flew across the track, between our two vehicles.

**Grey-faced Buzzard** *Butastur indicus* On the first full day of the tour, we saw a couple of pairs of birds along the roadside, during our drive to Delat. Fortunately, the second pair of birds was very close and we were able to enjoy great looks at this uncommon winter visitor to Vietnam.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* A scarce winter visitor to Vietnam; a solitary bird flew in front of our vehicles, as we were driving through grassland, along the main track in Cat Tien National Park.

**Black Eagle** *Ictinaetus malayensis* We enjoyed a few good sightings throughout the tour.

#### PHASIANIDAE

**Rufous-throated Partridge** *Arborophila rufogularis* While driving in Bach Ma National Park, a pair of this species flew between our two vehicles and found themselves trapped along the cliffside. This enabled those in the second vehicle to see them very well.

**Red Junglefowl** *Gallus gallus* Our first sighting was of a pair of birds which were not seen very well, in the forest at Cat Tien National Park. Fortunately for us, a second male was observed very well in grassland, also in Cat Tien National Park. The male is a very stunning bird.

**Silver Pheasant** *Lophura nycthemera* Some members of the group saw this superb species very well in Bach Ma National Park and most tour participants saw a beautiful male, close to the road in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Siamese Fireback** *Lophura diardi* It is still hard to believe that we saw nine males of this species, along the main track of Cat Tien National Park, many of which were displaying, apparently to one another. Little wonder then, that it was voted Bird of the Trip, by tour participants.



**Green Peafowl** *Pavo muticus* Absolutely superb, prolonged looks at an adult male, foraging in grassland, in Cat Tien National Park. This species is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Its total world population is estimated to be around 7,000 individuals and unfortunately, declining catastrophically. The main threats to this species are habitat loss and hunting for meat and feathers.

#### RALLIDAE

**Slaty-breasted Rail** *Gallirallus striatus* A total of three birds were observed foraging on open estuarine mud at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Seen well on a number of occasions throughout the tour.

**Purple Swampfen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* In Vietnam this bird is a scarce resident, we

observed small numbers of this species very well at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Small numbers of this uncommon resident were observed at Tuyen Lam Reservoir, at a roadside lake near Delat and at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra* A rare winter visitor to Vietnam, small numbers were present in the Van Long Nature Reserve.

#### JACANIDAE

**Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* A scarce resident in Vietnam; good numbers were seen very well at Van Long Nature Reserve.

**Bronze-winged Jacana** *Metopidius indicus* An uncommon resident of Vietnam, we enjoyed several good sightings at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

#### RECURIROSTRIDAE

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* A very scarce resident in Vietnam, we saw them very well at Van Long Nature Reserve.

#### GLAREOLIDAE

**Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum* A scarce resident and breeding visitor to Vietnam, we were fortunate to observe two separate flocks flying high above us in Cat Tien National Park.

#### CHARADRIIDAE

**Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus* This uncommon resident of Vietnam was only observed in grassland, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola* Good numbers of this uncommon winter visitor were seen at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* This species is a scarce resident and common winter visitor to Vietnam. We only saw one bird, it was an adult and we saw it very well in the scope, at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Large numbers of this uncommon winter visitor were seen very well at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Greater Sandplover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* Large numbers of this uncommon winter visitor were observed at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

#### SCOLOPOACIDAE

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* This species is a fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam and we found them in rice paddies, on three separate occasions throughout the tour.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* Large numbers of this uncommon winter visitor were present at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Asian Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* This species is a rare passage migrant in Vietnam; so we were all very pleased when Dave picked out a bird in full breeding plumage, amongst a nearby flock of Black-tailed Godwits, in Xuan Thuy

- National Park.
- Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* A few of these scarce winter visitors were seen well at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus* Fairly good numbers of this common winter visitor were observed very well in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Large numbers of this common winter visitor, were present at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* This species is a fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam. We saw a solitary bird very well at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park, followed by much larger numbers at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* This is a scarce winter visitor to Vietnam, we flushed one along the river, close to the national park headquarters, in Bach Ma National Park.
- Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* This delightful species is an uncommon winter visitor to Vietnam; one bird was picked out amongst the many waders, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Small numbers of this common winter visitor were present throughout the tour.
- Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* This species is an uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant in Vietnam. One bird was picked out amongst the many waders, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.
- Sanderling** *Calidris alba* Good numbers of this scarce winter visitor were present amongst the flocks of waders at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* Fairly good numbers of this common winter visitor were observed during our time at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* A fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam, a few birds were present amongst the waders in Xuan Thuy National Park.
- Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Large numbers of this scarce winter visitor, were present at Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant to Vietnam. We picked out four separate individuals amongst the wader flocks on the small island in Xuan Thuy National Park.

#### COLUMBIDAE

- Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* Regularly observed close to human habitation.
- Red Collared-Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica* Good numbers present in Cat Tien National Park.
- Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis* Regularly seen throughout the tour.
- Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica* A few birds seen well in Cat Tien National Park.
- Orange-breasted Green-Pigeon** *Treron bicincta* Large roosting flocks present in Cat Tien National Park.
- Thick-billed Green-Pigeon** *Treron curvirostra* Frequently observed on the Lang Bian

Plateau and in Cat Tien National Park. A few birds were also observed in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Green Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula aenea* Frequently seen in Cat Tien National.

**Mountain Imperial-Pigeon** *Ducula badia* Frequently observed on the Lang Bian Plateau.

#### PSITTACIDAE

**Grey-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula finschii* This uncommon resident was seen very well, close to the headquarters, in Bach Ma National Park.

**Red-breasted Parakeet** *Psittacula alexandri* Abundant at Cat Tien National Park.

**Vernal Hanging-Parrot** *Loriculus vernalis* Proved to be common in Cat Tien National Park.

#### CUCULIDAE

**Large Hawk-Cuckoo** *Cuculus sparverioides* A scarce passage migrant in central Annam; we were very fortunate to enjoy good scope views of this difficult to see species, while birding in Bach Ma National Park.

**Plaintive Cuckoo** *Cacomantis merulinus* A single bird was observed well in Hanoi Botanical Gardens. A single adult and a female hepatic morph, were amongst the many migrants, in the casuarinas on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Asian Emerald Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx maculatus* This species is an uncommon bird throughout its entire range, including Vietnam. Thanks to great spotting by Joanna, we enjoyed a prolonged look at an adult male, on the main track, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Violet Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus* A scarce resident in Vietnam, we were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at an immature bird in Cat Tien National Park.

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopacea* This fairly common resident was heard frequently at Cat Tien National Park, but was only seen by Marion, while she was having a sicky, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Green-billed Malkoha** *Phaenicophaeus tristis* Regularly seen throughout the tour.

**Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis* Regularly recorded throughout the tour.

**Lesser Coucal** *Centropus bengalensis* This uncommon resident was seen well in Cat Tien and Bach Ma National Parks.

#### STRIGIDAE

**Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl** *Bubo nipalensis* A scarce resident in Vietnam, or anywhere else for that matter; brilliant spotting by Ruth, in the Ta Nung Valley, allowed us to enjoy lengthy scope views of an almost white juvenile, in daylight hours.

**Asian Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium cuculoides* Three separate individuals seen well during daylight hours, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Brown Hawk-Owl** *Ninox scutulata* One bird observed in daylight hours, in Cat Tien National Park.

#### CAPRIMULGUIDAE

**Great Eared-Nightjar** *Eurostopodus macrotis* Great looks at this species in Cat Tien

National Park at dusk. One was also seen in the casuarinas, in Xuan Thuy National Park in daylight hours.

**Large-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus macrurus* Two of these birds were seen very well at dusk, in Cat Tien National Park.

#### APODIDAE

**Germain's Swiftlet** *Aerodramus germani* We enjoyed good, close looks, at this fairly common resident species, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Silver-backed Needletail** *Hirundapus cochinchinensis* Small flocks of this uncommon resident were seen well in both Cuc Phuong and Tam Dao National Parks.

**Asian Palm-Swift** *Cypsiurus balasiensis* Small numbers encountered throughout the tour.

**House Swift** *Apus nipalensis* Scattered sightings throughout the tour, not always close to human habitation. It was particularly common in Ho Chi Minh City.

#### TROGONIDAE

**Red-headed Trogon** *Harpactes erythrocephalus* Seen well in Bach Ma National Park.

#### ALCEDINIDAE

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* This common winter visitor, was regularly encountered throughout the tour, being particularly common in the north.

**White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Regular sightings throughout the tour.

**Black-capped Kingfisher** *Halcyon pileata* This fairly common winter visitor was observed well in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Small numbers seen well in both Cat Tien and Xuan Thuy National Parks.

#### MEROPIDAE

**Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis* Surprisingly, this common resident was only recorded on one occasion. A pair of birds was seen well in a tea plantation, close to Bao Loc, during the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat.

**Chestnut-headed Bee-eater** *Merops leschenaulti* Commonly encountered in Cat Tien National Park.

#### CORACIIDAE

**Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* Regularly seen in small numbers in Cat Tien National Park.

**Dollarbird** *Eurystomus orientalis* Commonly encountered in Cat Tien and Cuc Phuong National Parks.

#### UPUPIDAE

**Common Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* In Vietnam this species is a scarce resident; we were

very fortunate to see a bird fly across the front of our bus during the drive from Delat to Cat Tien National Park.

#### BUCEROTIDAE

**Oriental Pied Hornbill** *Anthracoceros albirostris* Small numbers observed in Cat Tien and Bach Ma National Parks.

#### CAPITONIDAE

**Lineated Barbet** *Megalaima lineata* Proved to be common in Cat Tien National Park.

**Green-eared Barbet** *Megalaima faiostriata* Surprisingly, this common resident was only observed on one occasion. We enjoyed great scope views of a bird, along the main track in Cat Tien National Park.

**Golden-throated Barbet** *Megalaima franklinii* Seen very well on one occasion, on Mt. Lang Bian, near Delat.

**Black-browed Barbet** *Megalaima oorti* Proved to be common throughout the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Blue-eared Barbet** *Megalaima australis* Good looks in the scope at a solitary individual, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Coppersmith Barbet** *Megalaima haemacephala* Only seen on a couple of occasions; both sightings were in Cat Tien National Park.

#### PICIDAE

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Dendropicos spodocephalus* A single bird was seen very well in Cat Tien National Park.

**Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos canicapillus* Seen very well on a few occasions throughout the tour.

**Lesser Yellownape** *Picus chlorolophus* Surprisingly, this common resident was only observed on one occasion, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Greater Yellownape** *Picus flavinucha* Once again, it is surprising that we only saw this common resident on one occasion; while having breakfast in the Ta Nung Valley.

**Common Flameback** *Dinopium javanense* One was seen particularly well in Cat Tien National Park.

**Bay Woodpecker** *Blythipicus pyrrhotis* Good flight views of this very nervous woodpecker, in both Cat Tien and Cuc Phuong National Parks.

#### EURYLAIMIDAE

**Black-and-red Broadbill** *Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos* This stunning species was observed very well on a couple of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

**Long-tailed Broadbill** *Psarisomus dalbousiae* Another very attractive species, this uncommon resident was observed by most members of the group, in the Ta Nung Valley.

**Silver-breasted Broadbill** *Serilophus lunatus* This uncommon resident was seen very well, on one occasion, during our time in Bach Ma National Park.

**Dusky Broadbill** *Corydon sumatranus* Another uncommon resident, we were very fortunate to observe two separate flocks, each of four birds, in Cat Tien National

Park.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* An abundant and widespread winter visitor, throughout the whole of Vietnam. We were very fortunate to observe literally hundreds of this species migrating northwards, along the coast, at Hai Van Pass.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Small numbers wintering throughout Vietnam, with particularly large numbers present in Cat Tien National Park.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* An uncommon resident and winter visitor to Vietnam. We saw it on only one occasion; during a happy stop, close to the town of Nam Dinh, during the drive from Xuan Thuy National Park to Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Eastern Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla macronyx* A couple of this winter visitor were seen well in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* Large numbers of birds observed wintering, throughout the whole of Vietnam.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* A fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam; we saw it only once. A pair of birds was observed in a rice paddy, close to the town of Di Linh, during the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat.

**Paddyfield Pipit** *Anthus rufulus* Seen very well in Rice Paddies at Lien Hara and Delat.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Large numbers of wintering birds were regularly encountered throughout the tour.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* We were very fortunate to enjoy good close looks at a couple of flocks of these uncommon winter visitors, in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta. Some of the birds were sporting freshly acquired breeding plumage and showed lovely brick-red throats.

#### CAMPERHAGIDAE

**Large Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina macei* Surprisingly, this common resident was only observed on one occasion. A pair was observed very well on Mt. Lang Bian.

**Indochinese Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina polioptera* This fairly common resident is endemic to Indochina; we saw a single bird amongst a mixed species feeding flock in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina melaschistos* This fairly common resident and passage migrant was seen on two occasions. Firstly, among the many migrating birds in the casuarina grove, in Xuan Thuy National Park and secondly, in Tam Dao National Park. Both birds were on passage, migrating northwards.

**Swinhoe's Minivet** *Pericrocotus cantonensis* We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at two of this endangered species, on its wintering grounds in Cat Tien National Park.

**Ashy Minivet** *Pericrocotus divaricatus* An uncommon winter visitor to Vietnam, we found a party of four birds associating with the two Swinhoe's Minivets, in Cat

Tien National Park.

- Long-tailed Minivet** *Pericrocotus ethologus* Small numbers of this very attractive species were observed on Mt. Lang Bian, near Delat.
- Scarlet Minivet** *Pericrocotus flammeus* This lowland species of minivet was seen very well, at both Cat Tien and Cuc Phuong National Parks.
- Grey-chinned Minivet** *Pericrocotus solaris* Small numbers observed at Mt. Lang Bian, on the Lang Bian Plateau.
- Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus picatus* Many good sightings throughout the tour.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

- Black-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus atriceps* This uncommon resident, was seen by some members of the tour group in Cat Tien National Park.
- Black-crested Bulbul** *Pycnonotus melanicterus* Regularly sighted throughout the tour.
- Red-whiskered Bulbul** *Pycnonotus jocosus* Very common throughout much of Vietnam.
- Light-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus sinensis* A few of this localised species, were observed in Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.
- Sooty-headed Bulbul** *Pycnonotus aurigaster* We enjoyed regular sightings of this species; which included the race *germaini*, with yellow undertail coverts in the south, and the race *klossi*, with red undertail coverts, in the north.
- Stripe-throated Bulbul** *Pycnonotus finlaysoni* This species proved to be common in Cat Tien National Park.
- Flavescent Bulbul** *Pycnonotus flavescens* Commonly observed on the Lang Bian Plateau.
- Yellow-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus goiavier* This common resident only occurs in southern Vietnam, we saw it on one occasion close to the township of Dinh Quan, during our drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat.
- Streak-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus blanfordi* Good numbers present in Cat Tien National Park.
- Puff-throated Bulbul** *Alophoixus pallidus* A few birds were seen well in Tam Dao National Park.
- Ochraceous Bulbul** *Alophoixus ochraceus* First observed in forest 15 kilometers east of Di Linh and small numbers were regularly seen in Cat Tien National Park.
- Mountain Bulbul** *Ixos mccllellandii* Small numbers observed on the Lang Bian Plateau, these were of the endemic race *griseiventer*
- Black Bulbul** *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* Small numbers of this species were regularly observed throughout the tour.

#### CHLOROPSEIDAE

- Blue-winged Leafbird** *Chloropsis cochinchinensis* Seen very well on a couple of occasions in both Cat Tien and Bach Ma National Parks.
- Orange-bellied Leafbird** *Chloropsis hardwickii* Seen very well at Bach Ma National Park; which is the very southern edge, of this birds range.

#### AEGITHINIDAE

- Common Iora** *Aegithina tibia* The Robson field guide states that this bird is common

throughout Vietnam; however, I think that this is not the case. In seven weeks of birding throughout Vietnam, I saw it only once. We saw a pair very well on Mt. Lang Bian, which according to all the literature, should be race *cambodiana*. However, the many illustrations I have looked at of this race are nothing like the birds we saw. I am of the opinion that the race we saw on Mt. Lang Bian, is an undescribed race.

**Great Iora** *Aegithina lafresnayei* Seen very well on a number of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

#### TURDIDAE

**Blue Rock-Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* Commonly encountered throughout the tour; both the nominate race and race *philippensis*, with the chestnut underparts.

**Japanese Thrush** *Turdus cardis* An uncommon winter visitor to the northern half of Vietnam; it was seen briefly in Bach Ma National Park and then a female was seen very well and at very close quarters, in the grove of casuarinas, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula* A scarce winter visitor to Vietnam, from breeding grounds in China; small numbers were wintering on the lower slopes of both Bach Ma and Cuc Phuong National Parks and it was also seen on one occasion in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* This fairly common winter visitor was observed in small numbers, in rainforest, on the upper slopes of Mt. Lang Bian.

**Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* An extremely rare vagrant to Vietnam. This species breeds in northern and central Siberia and Mongolia and its main wintering grounds are in the Indian subcontinent, extending eastwards to the hills of northern Thailand. However, it is a species that is prone to vagrancy, as there are other records of this species from northern Vietnam and even as far away as Japan. We saw an adult female at very close quarters, in the grove of casuarinas, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Lesser Shortwing** *Brachypteryx leucophrys* This fairly common but extremely skulking resident was glimpsed by Chris and Dave, on the lower slopes of Mt. Lang Bian.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* One bird observed in song flight in rice paddies close to Di Linh, on the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat. A second bird was observed in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Bright-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis* A couple of these uncommon residents were seen very well on one occasion, in tall grassland, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Hill Prinia** *Prinia atrogularis* We enjoyed a good sighting of a family party in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Rufescent Prinia** *Prinia rufescens* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

**Yellow-bellied Prinia** *Prinia flaviventris* Also seen on several occasions throughout the tour.

**Plain Prinia** *Prinia inornata* One bird seen well in scrubland during a happy stop, on the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat.

## SYLVIIDAE

**Asian Stubtail** *Urosphena squameiceps* This uncommon winter visitor was seen very well in a small casuarina, in the grove of casuarinas, on the tiny island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Manchurian Bush-Warbler** *Cettia canturians* This uncommon winter visitor is an ultra-skulker; therefore we were very fortunate to enjoy very good looks at one in the small casuarina grove, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park. One was also glimpsed in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Manchurian Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus tangorum* This bird is a rare passage migrant in Vietnam. We were very fortunate to observe one extremely well on the edge of a reed bed, at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park. This species is listed as Vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Its world population is estimated to be approximately 5,000 individuals and declining rapidly. The main threat to this species is thought to be loss of habitat on its wintering grounds. However, this species is so rarely encountered that its wintering grounds are unknown, and the only country where it is seen during migration, is Vietnam.

**Oriental Reed-Warbler** *Acrocephalus orientalis* This species is an uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. We saw half a dozen or so birds very well, in reedbeds at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park. These birds must have been on migration, as they were not present in this area three and half weeks earlier.

**Thick-billed Warbler** *Acrocephalus aedon* A common but very skulking winter visitor to Vietnam. While driving to Cat Tien National Park, we stopped along the roadside to look at a Streak-eared Bulbul, a relatively common bird, which we had not seen previously on the tour. While we were looking at this bird, a Thick-billed Warbler popped into view, creeping around in the undergrowth. It showed uncharacteristically well for a short period of time, before disappearing back into the undergrowth.

**Common Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sutorius* Commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Dark-necked Tailorbird** *Orthotomus atrogularis* Also commonly encountered throughout the tour.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* This fairly common but skulking winter visitor was seen briefly on two occasions. The first, was in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat and the second, much better sighting, occurred close to the Buddhist Temple, in Tam Dao National Park.

**Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Another skulking species, which is a fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam. We saw it fairly well on two separate occasions, both in Cat Tien National Park.

**Ashy-throated Warbler** *Phylloscopus maculipennis* This uncommon resident was only observed on one occasion, in rainforest, on the lower slopes of Mt. Lang Bian. Fortunately, it was very close and we saw it remarkably well.

**Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* This little gem is an uncommon winter visitor to northern Vietnam. Dave saw it well on one occasion, from his

hotel balcony in Tam Dao National Park.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* By far the commonest *phylloscopus* warbler wintering in Vietnam, we saw it well on several occasions.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* A fairly common winter visitor, but only to northern Vietnam. We first saw it in Hanoi Botanical Gardens and then again in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Two-barred Warbler** *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* Another fairly common winter visitor, which we saw well on a few occasions.

**Pale-legged Leaf-Warbler** *Phylloscopus tenellipes* This common winter visitor was seen well on a couple of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

**Eastern Crowned Warbler** *Phylloscopus coronatus* An uncommon passage migrant through Vietnam. We saw it on Mt. Lang Bian and again in the Ta Nung Valley, both places are on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Blyth's Leaf-Warbler** *Phylloscopus reguloides* Surprisingly, this fairly common winter visitor was only observed on one day of the tour. A small party was seen very well in Hanoi Botanical Gardens.

**Sulphur-breasted Warbler** *Phylloscopus ricketti* Another resident *phylloscopus* warbler; this one is particularly beautiful and uncommon, we saw one very well in Bach Ma National Park.

**White-spectacled Warbler** *Seicercus affinis* Another uncommon resident, this very attractive species was seen very well at Bach Ma National Park, but unfortunately, only by Chris and Dave.

**Grey-cheeked Warbler** *Seicercus poliogenys* This fairly common resident was seen very well on one occasion in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat.

**Chestnut-crowned Warbler** *Seicercus castaniceps* Another fairly common resident which we saw well on a couple of occasions on the Lang Bian Plateau.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

**Asian Brown Flycatcher** *Muscicapa daurica* A common winter visitor to Vietnam, we saw it regularly in Cat Tien National Park and once in Bach Ma National Park.

**Mugimaki Flycatcher** *Ficedula mugimaki* A scarce winter visitor to Vietnam; however, we found good numbers wintering on the Lang Bian Plateau, including a superb full plumaged male.

**Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla* A common winter visitor to Vietnam; we saw it well on a few occasions.

**Little Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula westermanni* We enjoyed a good sighting of this species, in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Verditer Flycatcher** *Eumyias thalassina* This common resident was only observed on two occasions; firstly, in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau and secondly and rather surprisingly, in Hanoi Botanical Gardens. The second bird would have been on northward migration.

**Fugian Niltava** *Niltava davidi* This uncommon resident and winter visitor was seen well by Nev and Pat amongst the many migrants in the casuarina grove, on the

small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park. Later in the tour it was seen by Ian, in Tam Dao National Park.

**Large Niltava** *Niltava grandis* Superb looks at an adult male of this uncommon resident, in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**White-tailed Flycatcher** *Cyornis concretus* We were very fortunate to observe this scarce resident very well, on one occasion, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Hainan Blue-Flycatcher** *Cyornis hainanus* Small numbers of both male and female birds were present in the casuarina grove, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park. We also saw this species well in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Hill Blue-Flycatcher** *Cyornis banyumas* Small numbers of both male and female birds were present in the casuarina grove, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park. We also saw this species well in Tam Dao National Park.

**Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis* Regular sightings throughout the tour.

**Rufous-tailed Robin** *Luscinia sibilans* This species is a very scarce winter visitor to Vietnam; so we were very excited when we enjoyed very good looks at this fairly skulking species in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* There must have been a least a dozen males in full breeding plumage and a similar number of females, of this uncommon and skulking winter visitor, in the casuarinas grove, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park. It was quite a spectacle.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* This rather skulking species is an uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, in the province of East Tonkin, where we enjoyed our only sighting. A male, in almost full breeding plumage, was seen very well hopping along the tide line, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

**Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane* Although a fairly common winter visitor to Vietnam, this species is somewhat of a skulker and does not enjoy being looked at. Therefore, we were very pleased to see two females very well indeed, so well in fact, that you could even see their pink legs. Both sightings occurred while birding in the rainforest of Cat Tien National Park.

**Oriental Magpie-Robin** *Copsychus saularis* Small numbers in Cat Tien National Park, followed by much larger numbers in the north.

**White-rumped Shama** *Copsychus malabaricus* This very attractive species, is a beautiful songster and was readily seen throughout the tour.

**Slaty-backed Forktail** *Enicurus schistaceus* This exquisite bird was first seen by Dave, along the river in Cat Tien National Park. At Bach Ma National Park, we found a pair of birds and most of us managed to see at least one of them.

**White-crowned Forktail** *Enicurus leschenaulti* We were all surprised to see one of these birds fly across the road, in front of the bus and then fly across an open field, during the drive from Xuan Thuy National Park to Cuc Phuong National Park. This species is normally confined to riverside vegetation.

**Green Cochoa** *Cochoa viridis* Without doubt, one of the highlights of the tour, was our sighting of this delightful and very scarce species, at the very southern edge of its

range. We were very fortunate to enjoy a prolonged look at a male bird in the rainforest on Mt. Lang Bian,  
**Siberian Stonechat** *Saxicola maura* We enjoyed many sightings of this fairly common winter visitor, the further north we traveled, the more numerous it became.  
**Grey Bushchat** *Saxicola ferrea* Small numbers were wintering throughout the Lang Bian Plateau.

#### RHIPIDURIDAE

**White-throated Fantail** *Rhipidura albicollis* Scattered sightings throughout the tour.

#### MONARCHIDAE

**Black-naped Monarch** *Hypothymis azurea* We enjoyed several good sightings in Cat Tien National Park.

**Asian Paradise-Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone paradisi* We saw a few of these beautiful birds in both Bach Ma and Cuc Phuong National Parks, including a stunning male of the white morph, in Bach Ma National Park.

#### TIMALIIDAE

**Masked Laughingthrush** *Garrulax perspicillatus* Small flocks were observed on the lower slopes of Bach Ma National Park.

**White-crested Laughingthrush** *Garrulax leucolophus* We were very fortunate to see several very active flocks of this attractive species in Bach Ma National Park, followed by even better sightings at Hai Van Pass.

**Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush** *Garrulax monileger* Once again we were very fortunate to enjoy fairly good looks of this skulking species in Cat Tien National Park, Hai Van Pass and Bach Ma National Park.

**Black-throated Laughingthrush** *Garrulax chinensis* We saw a very nice foraging group in Bach Ma National Park, followed by a second sighting in Tam Dao National Park.

**White-cheeked Laughingthrush** *Garrulax vassali* Almost endemic to Vietnam; occurs in one small area of Laos. We enjoyed great sightings of a large flock in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat.

**White-browed Scimitar-Babbler** *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* Early one morning, right outside the restaurant in Bach Ma National Park, most of us enjoyed great looks at one of these beautiful birds.

**Limestone Wren-Babbler** *Napothera crispifrons* Unbelievably close looks at three pairs of birds together, singing and jostling for position and generally having a good time, just a few meters away from us, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Rufous-capped Babbler** *Stachyris ruficeps* A family party was seen briefly, but well, on Mt. Lang Bian.

**Golden Babbler** *Stachyris chrysaea* Seen well on a couple of occasions in mixed species feeding parties, in Bach Ma National Park.

**Spot-necked Babbler** *Stachyris striolata* This uncommon resident was seen briefly by Chris in Tam Dao National Park.

**Striped Tit-Babbler** *Macronous gularis* Commonly encountered throughout the whole tour.

- Grey-faced Tit-Babbler** *Macronous kelleyi* This Indochinese endemic was seen well in mixed species feeding parties, in Cat Tien National Park.
- Chestnut-capped Babbler** *Timalia pileata* A small flock was seen very well in secondary scrub, this birds favorite habitat, in Cat Tien National Park.
- Silver-eared Mesia** *Leiothrix argentauris* This stunningly attractive bird was seen briefly in Bach Ma National Park and fortunately seen much better on the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park.
- White-browed Shrike-Babbler** *Pteruthius flaviscapis* Seen well on one occasion, in a mixed species feeding flock, in Bach Ma National Park.
- Grey-cheeked Fulvetta** *Alcippe morrisonia* Common in the mixed species feeding flocks, seen in Tam Dao National Park.
- Mountain Fulvetta** *Alcippe peracensis* Common in the mixed species feeding flocks, seen on the Lang Bian Plateau.
- Black-browed Fulvetta** *Alcippe grotei* This Indochinese endemic was common amongst the mixed species feeding flocks, in Bach Ma National Park.
- Black-crowned Fulvetta** *Alcippe klossi* Endemic to the Lang Bian Plateau of southern Vietnam; where fortunately, it is fairly common. We saw a pair extremely well while birding in the rainforest on Mt. Lang Bian. This species is a recent split from Rufous-winged Fulvetta.
- Grey-crowned Crocias** *Crocias langbianis* Great looks at this stunning species, which was once thought to be extinct. We watched a family party amongst a mixed species feeding flock in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat, while having breakfast one morning. Endemic to just three small areas of Vietnam; it is listed as endangered in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Its total population is unknown but is rapidly declining as a result of the destruction and degradation of its montane evergreen forest habitat.
- Rufous-backed Sibia** *Heterophasia annectens* At the far southern edge of this birds range, we saw the dark backed race *eximia*, at very close quarters in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat.
- Black-headed Sibia** *Heterophasia desgodinsi* Once again, this species of sibia is at the southernmost edge of its range, on the Lang Bian Plateau. We saw the isolated *robinsoni* race, which has a bold white eye ring and whitish streaking on the ear coverts, while birding on Mt. Lang Bian.
- Chestnut-collared Yuhina** *Yuhina torqueola* This species is also at the southern edge of its range in Vietnam. It was commonly encountered at both Bach Ma and Tam Dao National Parks. It is a recent split from Striated Yuhina.
- White-bellied Yuhina** *Yuhina zantholeuca* Not uncommon in Bach Ma and Cuc Phuong National Parks. The affinities of this species are uncertain. DNA research now confirms, that which has long been suspected, that it is not a Yuhina at all. It is now thought that it is closely related to New World Vireos!

## PARADOXORNITHIDAE

**Black-crowned Parrotbill** *Paradoxornis margaritae* We enjoyed stunning, very close looks at a pair of birds in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau. A recent split from Grey-headed Parrotbill, this species is endemic to the Lang Bian Plateau and one small area in Mondulhiri Province, of Cambodia.

#### AEGITHALIDAE

**Black-throated Tit** *Aegithalos concinnus* Commonly encountered in the mixed species feeding flocks throughout the tour.

#### PARIDAE

**Great Tit** *Parus major* Seen in bad light at Tuyen Lam Reservoir, near Delat and in much better light at Tam Dao National Park.

**Green-backed Tit** *Parus monticolus* Seen well in the pine forests on Mt. Lang Bian, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Sultan Tit** *Melanochlora sultanea* Great sightings of this very attractive species in Bach Ma National Park. These birds were of the black-crested race *gayeti*.

#### SITTIDAE

**Chestnut-vented Nuthatch** *Sitta nagaensis* Surprisingly, this common resident was only observed on one occasion, during our walk in the pine forest, close to Tuyen Lam Reservoir, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

#### NECTARINIIDAE

**Ruby-cheeked Sunbird** *Chalcoparia singalensis* Seen briefly in both Cat Tien and Bach Ma National Parks.

**Purple-naped Sunbird** *Hypogramma hypogrammicum* This uncommon resident was seen very well in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Brown-throated Sunbird** *Anthreptes malacensis* Seen well in flowering shrubs around the park headquarters and at Crocodile Lake, in Cat Tien National Park. It was also seen well at Hai Van Pass, on our way to Bach Ma National Park.

**Purple-throated Sunbird** *Leptocoma sperata* One or two superb males in full breeding plumage were seen very well feeding on flowering trees in the rainforest of Cat Tien National Park.

**Olive-backed Sunbird** *Cinnyris jugularis* This is the same species of sunbird that occurs in Australia. It is a common resident in Vietnam; we saw it well on one occasion in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Mrs. Gould's Sunbird** *Aethopyga gouldiae* What a stunner! We saw it frequently on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Black-throated Sunbird** *Aethopyga saturata* The distinctive red-breasted race *johnsi*, was seen very well on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Crimson Sunbird** *Aethopyga siparaja* This stunner was easily seen at Hai Van Pass and Bach Ma, Cuc Phuong and Tam Dao National Parks.

**Streaked Spiderhunter** *Arachnothera magna* This stunning species was seen well in the Ta Nung Valley, near Delat and in both Cat Tien and Cuc Phuong National Parks.

#### DICAEIDAE

**Yellow-vented Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum chrysorrheum* A fairly common resident of Vietnam; we saw it very well, on our last morning in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Plain Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum concolor* Once again, a fairly common resident of Vietnam. We saw it well in flowering trees around the park headquarters, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker** *Dicaeum cruentatum* A stunning male was observed in a flowering tree, along the riverside, during our drive from Delat to Cat Tien National Park. This species was seen on a second occasion, in the Hanoi Botanical Gardens.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

**Japanese White-eye** *Zosterops japonicus* A common resident of the far north of Vietnam; we saw a small flock in the Hanoi Botanical Gardens and a few large flocks in Cuc Phuong National Park.

#### ORIOLIDAE

**Black-naped Oriole** *Oriolus chinensis* Several good sightings in Cat Tien National Park.

**Slender-billed Oriole** *Oriolus tenuirostris* We enjoyed very good looks at a family party of this fairly common resident, at Tuyen Lam Reservoir, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus* This common resident was first seen close to Bao Loc Pass, during the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat. It was also seen well on a few occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

**Maroon Oriole** *Oriolus traillii* Another fairly common resident, it was only seen in flight, on two occasions, while birding in the forest 15 kilometers east of Lien Hara.

#### IRENIDAE

**Asian Fairy-bluebird** *Irena puella* We enjoyed a couple of good sightings of this fairly common resident, in Cat Tien National Park.

#### LANIIDAE

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* Several scattered sightings throughout the tour, more common in the north.

**Burmese Shrike** *Lanius colluriooides* This fairly common resident was seen very well in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach* Many good sightings in the north.

**Grey-backed Shrike** *Lanius tephronotus* Seen very well in Cuc Phuong and Tam Dao National Parks.

#### PRIONOPIDAE

**Large Woodshrike** *Tepbrodornis gularis* A small flock was seen fairly well in Cuc Phuong National Park, a much larger flock was seen very well on the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park, close to the Buddhist Temple.

#### DICRURIDAE

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus* Common and widespread, particularly so in the north.

**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* The most numerous and widespread species of drongo in Vietnam.

**Bronzed Drongo** *Dicrurus aeneus* This uncommon resident was observed on one occasion in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau and again, on one occasion, in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus remifer* Seen very well in the Ta Nung Valley, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Hair-crested Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus* Observed only twice, both times the birds were in flight. The first sighting occurred from the bus, during the drive from Delat to Cat Tien National Park and the second sighting occurred in Cuc Phuong National Park.

**Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus* Seen well in Cat Tien and Cuc Phuong National Parks.

#### ARTAMIDAE

**Ashy Woodswallow** *Artamus fuscus* Small flocks seen well on a few occasions.

#### CORVIDAE

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* The black-capped race *leucotis*, was seen very well while we were birding at Tuyen Lam Reservoir, on the Lang Bian Plateau.

**Red-billed Blue Magpie** *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* A small flock of this uncommon resident was seen in the Ta Nung Valley, at the start of the tour. This was followed by a much larger flock, which we saw very well on the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park, at the end of the tour.

**Indochinese Green Magpie** *Cissa hypoleuca* This uncommon Indochinese endemic, showed well on one occasion, early one morning in the car park of our restaurant, in Bach Ma National Park.

**Grey Treepie** *Dendrocitta formosae* A large flock was observed very well, on the lower slopes of Tam Dao National Park. This is the only known wintering area for this species in Vietnam.

**Racket-tailed Treepie** *Crypsirina temia* We enjoyed a few good sightings of this attractive and fairly common resident in Cat Tien and Bach Ma National Parks.

**Ratchet-tailed Treepie** *Temnurus temnurus* This uncommon resident showed well on one occasion, early one morning in the car park of our restaurant, in Bach Ma National Park.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos* This uncommon resident, was only seen in flight, from the bus, close to the town of Lien Hara, during the drive from Delat to Cat Tien National Park.

#### STURNIDAE

**Golden-crested Myna** *Ampeliceps coronatus* This very attractive but scarce resident was seen very well, in the scope, on a couple of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

**Hill Myna** *Gracula religiosa* An uncommon resident; we enjoyed good scope views of

- this very large myna, on a couple of occasions, in Cuc Phuong National Park.
- White-vented Myna** *Acridotheres grandis* Another uncommon resident, we saw it very well on one occasion, in Cuc Phuong National Park.
- Crested Myna** *Acridotheres cristatellus* This uncommon resident was only seen on one occasion, however, it was seen very well. This sighting occurred in Xuan Thuy National Park.
- Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* Small numbers observed throughout the tour.
- Vinous-breasted Starling** *Acridotheres burmannicus* This attractive species of starling was observed very well in Cat Tien National Park.
- White-shouldered Starling** *Sturnia sinensis* An uncommon resident, two pairs of birds were seen very well, feeding in flowering trees, on two separate occasions, close to the small township of Niho Quan.
- Black-collared Starling** *Sturnus nigricollis* This huge and attractive species of starling was seen along the roadside on a few occasions, during our time on the Lang Bian Plateau.
- Red-billed Starling** *Sturnus sericeus* Another uncommon species of starling, we saw a couple of small flocks very well in the Xuan Thuy National Park, in the Red River Delta.

#### PASSERIDAE

- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* This species is an uncommon resident which only occurs in a few isolated areas in the south of Vietnam. Chris saw a couple along the roadside, during the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat.
- Plain-backed Sparrow** *Passer flaveolus* We were very fortunate to enjoy a good look at a very attractive male of this uncommon species of sparrow, during the drive from Delat to Cat Tien National Park.
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* Commonly encountered, wherever there was human habitation.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

- Scaly-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata* A large flock was seen very closely, in rice paddies, close to the township of Di Linh, during the drive from Ho Chi Minh City to Delat. There was also a second sighting in Cuc Phuong National Park.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

- Vietnamese Greenfinch** *Carduelis monguilloti* As the name would suggest, this species is endemic to Vietnam. We enjoyed a few small flocks on the Lang Bian Plateau, near Delat.
- Red Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* We were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at this uncommon resident; we saw a female and an immature bird together, in native pine forest, on the lower slopes of Mt. Lang Bian.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

**Chestnut Bunting** *Emberiza rutila* This attractive species is a very uncommon winter visitor to Vietnam. We were very fortunate to see an adult female very well, in the grove of casuarinas, on the small island, in Xuan Thuy National Park.

## MAMMALS

**Northern Treeshrew** *Tupaia belangeri* Seen well on a couple of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.

**Northern Smooth-tailed Treeshrew** *Dendrogale murina* We were fortunate to see this uncommon species very well, on one occasion in Cat Tien National Park.

**Red-shanked Douc Langur** *Pygathrix nemaeus* This endangered Indochinese endemic only occurs in Cambodia and Vietnam. It is probably the most strikingly coloured monkey in the world. We enjoyed great looks at a family party in Bach Ma National Park.

**Yellow-throated Marten** *Martes flavigula* A pair of these very striking mammals, was seen well at the top of a tall tree on Mt. Lang Bian.

**Small Indian Mongoose** *Herpestes auropunctatus* Seen well by Marion, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Eurasian Wild Pig** *Sus scrofa* We saw a few groups, during our time in Cat Tien National Park.

**Red Muntjac** *Muntiacus muntjak* Seen by Joanna, in grassland, in Cat Tien National Park.

**Pallas' Squirrel** *Callosciurus erythraeus* Common and widespread throughout the whole of Vietnam.

**Maritime Striped Squirrel** *Tamiops maritimus* The common striped squirrel on the Lang Bian Plateau and at Bach Ma and Cuc Phuong National Parks.

**Cambodian Striped Squirrel** *Tamiops rudolphi* We saw this species well on a couple of occasions in Cat Tien National Park.