

# VIETNAM

## FOREST BIRDS AND ENDEMIC OF INDOCHINA

Blue-bearded Bee-eater  
(Chris Bradshaw)



**Tour A\*Friday January 8th – Saturday January 23rd**  
**Tour B \*Friday January 7th – Saturday January 22nd 2011**  
**Leader: Chris Bradshaw**  
**Group Size: 8**  
**Birds: 260 – 300**

**\*Central Highlands extension to January 28th 2010/January 27th 2011**

**This tour covers a wide range of forest sites in Vietnam and focuses on finding some of the endemic birds of Indochina while also enjoying a range of other more widespread southern Asian species. The tour begins in northern Vietnam where we visit the old French hill station at Tam Dao and explore Vietnam's oldest national park at Cuc Phuong. We then fly south to Saigon where we concentrate on searching for a number of species found only in southern Vietnam. We visit the excellent lowland**

**forest and grassland habitats of Cat Tien National Park before travelling to Da Lat Plateau where a number of very rare and threatened species occur.**

**Chris Bradshaw has travelled extensively in south-east Asia and this will be his fourth trip to Vietnam.**

**Days 1-2:** We fly to Hanoi and arrive on the following morning. On arrival, we transfer to the old French hill resort of Tam Dao for a three-night stay. Tam Dao is situated in the hills on the edge of the Red River Plain at 1000 metres. On arrival, we should have time for some initial birding.

**Days 3-4:** Tam Dao, literally "three islands" in Chinese, describes the three magnificent limestone peaks that, if the clouds clear, will provide the back-drop to our stay. We follow a trail that contours the hillside with habitats of scrub and bamboo before entering more pristine evergreen forest. Areas of bamboo are attractive to Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers, White-hooded Babblers and, if we are lucky, Greater Rufous-headed and Short-tailed Parrotbills. Other birds we may encounter include Grey-throated and Spot-necked Babblers, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey Laughingthrush, Chestnut Bulbul and Fork-tailed Sunbird.

**Day 5:** After some final birding at Tam Dao, we head to Cuc Phuong, Vietnam's oldest protected area for a three-night stay. The park extends over 25,000 hectares amid the limestone "dragon's teeth" mountains c140 kilometres south of Hanoi.

**Days: 6-7:** From our base in the heart of the national park, we search for Bar-bellied, Blue-rumped and Eared Pittas, Limestone Wren-babbler, Red-vented Barbet,



Mugimaki Flycatcher (Scott Maxwell)

White-tailed Flycatcher, Rufous-throated Fulvetta, and corvids including White-winged Magpie, Ratchet-tailed Treepie and Yellow-breasted Green Magpie. If we are lucky, we may find the elusive Red-collared Woodpecker or Silver Pheasant. From the clearing in the centre of the park, we may locate Pied Falconet, Crested Serpent Eagle, Crested Goshawk and Hill Myna. Other birds present include Silver-breasted Broadbill, Puff-throated Bulbul, Grey-throated Babbler, Black-browed Fulvetta and Fork-tailed Sunbird.

**Day 8:** We return to Hanoi and take a flight

south to Ho Chi Minh City or Saigon as it is known to most locals. On arrival in Saigon, we transfer to Cat Tien National Park.

**Days 9-10:** From our base at the park headquarters, we explore the variety of habitats within Cat Tien National Park. The forest edge has Blue-eared, Coppersmith and Green-eared Barbets, Common Flameback, Banded Bay Cuckoo, Buff-breasted Babbler, Blue-winged Leafbird, Black-naped Oriole, and Little Spiderhunter. Other possibilities include Dusky Broadbill, Pale-headed and Black-and-buff Woodpeckers, Purple-throated

Sunbird and Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker. Venturing into the forest, we search for some of the more elusive species including Bar-bellied Pitta. Other birds we hope to locate are Blue-rumped Pitta, Scaly-breasted Partridge, Tickell's and Blue-throated Flycatchers, Great Iora, Black-naped Monarch, White-rumped Shama, Scaly-crowned Babbler and Grey-faced Tit-babbler, the latter being a regional endemic. Driving the tracks through the forest is a good way to search for the gamebirds of Cat Tien. We hope to encounter the elusive Germain's Peacock-pheasant and Siamese Fireback. In grassland areas within the forest we look for Green Peafowl. Evening excursions can be productive for night birds and we should see Great-eared and Large-tailed Nightjars and Brown Hawk Owl. The park is also home to one of the world's most beautiful primates, the Black-shanked Douc Langur.

**Day 11:** After a final morning at Cat Tien, we drive northwards onto the Da Lat plateau to the town of Bao Loc, our base for exploring the pass at Deo Nui San. Two-night stay at Bao Loc.

**Day 12:** We spend today birding along the quiet road over the forested pass at Deo Nui San. Here, we hope to find difficult birds including the endemic Orange-breasted Laughingthrush. Black-hooded and White-cheeked Laughingthrushes are also present with the recently split Black-headed Parrotbill. The forest here is excellent for a number of species not found in the lowlands at Cat Tien - Black-browed and Red-vented Barbets, Long-tailed Broadbill, White-bellied Erpornis, White-tailed Leaf Warbler, Grey-crowned Tit, Black-headed Sibia, White-browed Shrike-babbler, Black-throated Sunbird and Streaked Spiderhunter. With luck, we might encounter rarer species - Blue Pitta, Green Cochoa and Vietnamese Greenfinch.

**Day 13:** After a final morning at Deo Nui San, we transfer to Da Lat, the largest city

in the central highlands. Over the next three days, we explore the montane forests. If there is time on arrival, we visit Datanla Falls for a little late afternoon birding. Although this waterfall is often quite busy with tourists, interesting species occur in Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Large Niltava, Black-browed Barbet and Slaty-backed Forktail.

**Day 14:** This morning we leave early and drive to Mount Lang Bian. Here, we look for the spectacular but secretive Collared Laughingthrush. Moss-covered branches on larger trees are attractive to two recent splits, endemic to Vietnam: Vietnamese Cutia and Black-crowned Fulvetta. We check the undergrowth for the secretive Pygmy Wren-babbler, Lesser Shortwing and Grey-bellied Tesia whilst other possibilities include Maroon Oriole, Blue-winged Minla, Golden-throated Barbet, Orange-bellied Leafbird and Grey-cheeked Warbler. Dropping down the mountain, we explore the pine forests for Common Crossbill, Eurasian Jay and Long-tailed Minivet. Around the cultivated areas we may find Burmese Shrike and Sooty-headed Bulbul.

**Day 15:** We continue our exploration of the Da Lat area in forests at a slightly lower elevation looking for the extremely rare endemic, Grey-crowned Crocias, only rediscovered in the mid-1990s. We, also hope to find Black-hooded Laughingthrushes, Rufous-backed and Black-headed Sibias, Eye-browed Wren-babbler, Mountain Tailorbird, Bay Woodpecker, Large Niltava, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Slender-billed Oriole and Mugimaki Flycatcher.

**Day 16:** After some final birding at Da Lat area, we take a flight to Saigon, and on to Europe where we arrive the next morning.

### Central Highlands Extension

Those taking the extension fly from Saigon to Da Nang where on arrival we follow the main highway to Kham Duc situated

in Vietnam's Central Highlands, a quite remote part and less densely populated region. One-night stay at Kham Duc.

**Day 17:** The Central Highlands have retained a significant level of forest cover and today we visit the Loxo Pass. Our main target is Black-crowned Barwing, a highly localised species first described to science during the 1990s. Other species include Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Long-tailed Broadbill, White-winged Magpie, Maroon Oriole, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Yellow-cheeked Tit and, perhaps, Yellow-billed Nuthatch. Later, we transfer to Bach Ma National Park for a three-night stay.

**Days 18-19:** Today we explore the forests of Bach Ma, one of Vietnam's wettest places. The road from the park entrance to the park guesthouse near the summit is very scenic with sweeping vistas of the forest and the coastal plain. The park accommodation is in renovated colonial villas and the ruins of once grand holiday homes and hotels are scattered along the trails from this point up to the summit. Over 330 species of bird have been recorded at Bach Ma National Park. We have good chances of finding Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Siberian Thrush, Sultan Tit, Brown Hornbill, Short-tailed Scimitar-babbler, Masked Laughingthrush and Silver Pheasant. Some specialities are secretive and difficult to find - Annam Partridge, Crested Argus, Coral-billed Ground-Cuckoo, Blue-rumped Pitta and Blyth's Kingfisher.

**Day 20:** After some final birding at Bach Ma, we head up the highway to Dong Hoi where we have an overnight stay.

**Day 21:** Today we visit Phong Nha National Park which encompasses a large cave system and limestone hills. Here, we search for the near endemic Sooty Babbler, a rare and poorly known species that was only discovered in this part of Vietnam in 1994. Later, we return to Hue in order to fly on to Hanoi and connect with international flights. Arrival is the next day.

<b>Tour Price:</b>	<b>£3760</b>	<b>Single room: £375</b>
<b>Highlands Extension:</b>	<b>£1200</b>	<b>Single room: £120</b>
<b>Tour Price Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City:</b>	<b>£2755</b>	<b>Deposit: £375</b>

This holiday is fully inclusive of international and internal flights, ferry journey, accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

**Not included: a visa to enter Vietnam, drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and fuel surcharges.**

Accommodation is basic at Cuc Phuong and the Central Highlands. Cat Tien is clean and simple. Otherwise, all other accommodation is in fairly good hotels. Cuisine is Vietnamese/Chinese with some French influence; western food is available in the larger cities. Walking on reasonably flat trails and roads. Some steeper trails at Mount Lang Bian, Cuc Phuong and Bach Ma. Some trails can be slippery when wet.