

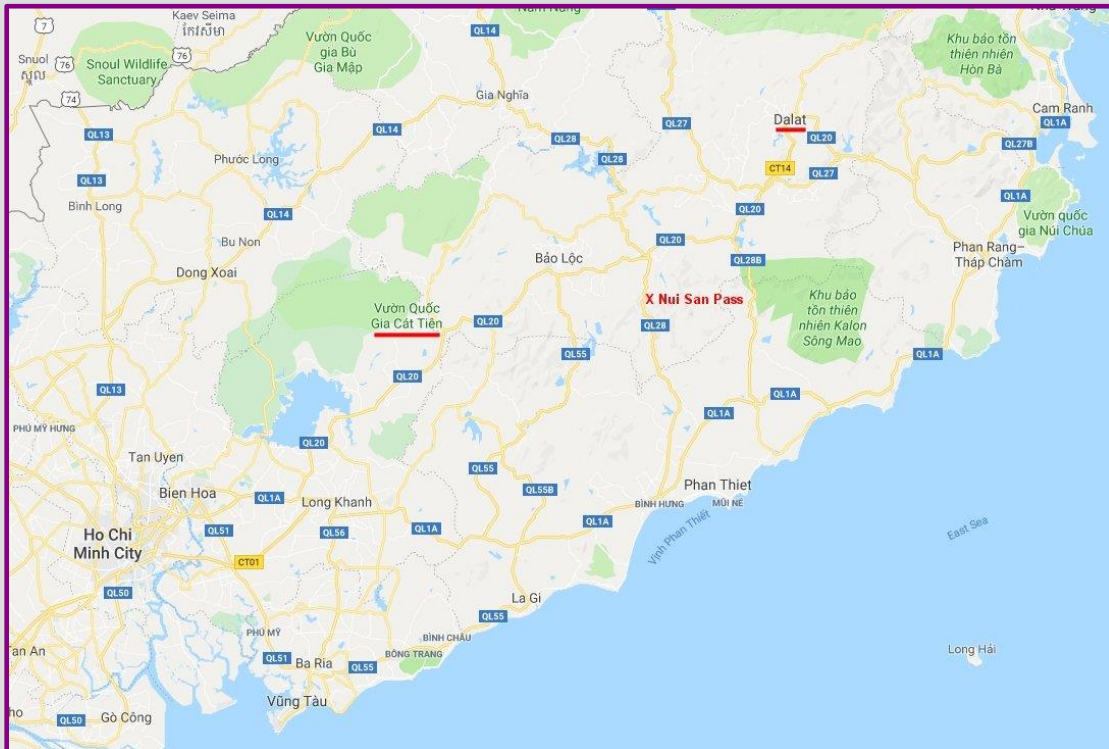
Vietnam



South Annam



18th to 25th April, 2019



Thursday 18 th	Cat Tien – Accommodation area Cat Tien – Elephant Hills	11:15 – 14:30 15:30 – 18:00
Friday 19 th	Cat Tien - Observation hides Cat Tien - Forest walk	06:00 – 15:00 15:30 – 19:00
Saturday 20 th	Cat Tien - Observation hides Cat Tien - main track	06:00 – 14:30 15:30 – 18:00
Sunday 21 st	Cat Tien - Observation hides Nui San Pass	06:00 – 10:00 14:00 – 18:00
Monday 22 nd	Nui San Pass Dalat Waterfalls Pine Forest	06:00 – 13:30 16:00 – 17:45
Tuesday 23 rd	Bidoup National Park Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat	06:00 – 14:30 15:15 – 16:00 16:15 – 17:45
Wednesday 24 th	Ta Nung Valley Mixed pine broadleaf forest, Da Lat	07:00 – 11:00 16:00 – 18:00
Thursday 25 th	Khu Du Lich resort, Da Lat	06:00 – 07:45

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Introduction

I was sold on the idea of this trip pretty quickly with the phrase "I've found a company that have their own hides to see up to four species of Pitta". Vietnam isn't the first destination to trip off birder's tongues, and to be honest, a family trip I had to the tourist sites in January where there really weren't many birds to be seen wouldn't in itself have engendered a great deal extra interest in me, either. But if you are a birder who either likes endemics (37 endemics or near endemics), quantity of species (over 900 at the last count for the country), or are like us and want to experience some top species at close quarters for imaging or just pure enjoyment, it certainly fits the bill. The company we had found are Wildtour (www.vietnamwildtour.com) and seem to be the only company fully licensed for tours within Vietnam. They strictly speaking don't own the hides ("feeding stations" in their terms) at Cat Tien, since they pay a princely sum of \$15000 per year to hire them, which gives generally exclusive access to the hides. They also own and maintain 7 feeding stations at Nui San Pass, near Di Linh, which forms a useful mid altitude stop off for some birds which can't be found at either Cat Tien or the higher altitude of Da Lat.



Within the week we were planning, we opted to stay in a small area of South Vietnam (specifically South Annam, bordered to the West by Cochinchina), flying into and out of Ho Chi Minh airport, with a not too uncomfortable 3 hour drive to Cat Tien, then a longer 6 hour drive back from Da Lat. This gives a good range of species and habitats within a manageable circuit. In outline, the three localities visited are:

Cat Tien

This is a lowland site that was established by the Vietnamese government in 1992. It is reached by a ferry crossing over a narrow stretch of the Dong Nai river which borders it, and there are both budget and higher priced accommodations on site. We stayed in the former, which was more than adequate for a couple of birders, as was the food in the restaurant. Be ready for some high temperatures and high humidity here (mid 30'sC and almost 100% respectively at some times during our stay). There is a track which cuts through the accommodation and headquarters area, which goes on for several miles in each



direction and gives some good roadside birding. The hides/feeding stations seem very rough and ready, being built of a simple metal frame and having plastic sheets over with rough slits cut in them. There are usually hard plastic seats to sit on. However, there are still locks on these, and they are well tended by the company with the feed of mealworms and corn. Be ready for uncomfortable heat in them, and they also do get leaches at times.

Nui San Pass



Sometimes tagged as Di Linh, this is in fact about 17km away from the town of that name. It is more an area than a location, and consists of hilly forests at an altitude just short of 1000m. The company use a small 6 bedroomed lodging about 10 minutes drive from the feeding stations, but that may be about to be sold. There are 7 feeding stations, and most have either an upward or downward steep climb to get to them, from only a few metres to 100+ metres in length. It is worth the occasional hassle though, since some of the birding in these hides can be excellent (it can also be quiet at times in some of the hides). As

opposed to Cat Tien, the temperatures are hot rather than baking, and insect activity seems to lessen also.

Da Lat

This is the higher elevation location, with the highest of the birding sites used at just over 1600m. The town itself is very large and busy, but is a convenient base for the birding. The plus side is that there is more accommodation choice and it is thus of a generally higher standard. The other plus is that there is a greater variety of habitat to choose from, since we encountered anywhere from quiet in forest sites, to busy tourist destinations such as the Tiuclam Monastery and Ta Nang, and roadside birding on new tarmac. Temperatures are cooler yet again, although when we were there it still was T-shirt weather first thing, and could reach hot through the middle of the day (around 30xxxC on the last full day). The slight difference within the national park here is that it is illegal to feed the wildlife, so the hides which were used at the former two sites should not be used. Since this is recognised as an endemic hotspot, it follows that there are many species local only to here, and there also seems to be a move to split even more species from current subspecies (it is worth checking the IOC for the latest updates, though).



Timing and weather

The rainy season is from May to September/October, and this means that some of the trails would be very messy, if passable at all. We chose April since it was still within the dry season (we did have drizzly rain on our first full day), and breeding would either be starting or under way. The entrance airport of choice is Ho Chi Minh, which we reached direct from London Heathrow on a 13 hour flight.

There are good long hours for birding at this time of the year. It gets light at around 5:30am, and dark at around 6pm. We were usually picked up at around that 5:30am time for a 6am birding start. We were either taken back to a restaurant at around 8am for breakfast and for lunch at around 1pm.

Tips

- The electricity sockets are the 2 pin type as used in Europe
- Good quality grips on walking shoes or boots are preferred for some of the routes to the hides
- Leach socks are useful for Cat Tien
- Food is very good. Vietnamese is usually served, although they also seem keen to turn out omelette when they spot a westerner
- The local currency is the Dong, although with the company we used all was provided for. However, any pricing is often quoted in terms of \$US, although day to day I'm not sure local businesses would accept this over the Dong
- Wifi was provided in Cat Tien and Da Lat, but not when visiting Nui San Pass
- While there are some decent South-east Asia field guides available, it really is worth investing in the more recent "Birds of Vietnam" by Lê Quý Minh & Richard Craik (published by Lynx). It has much more accurate distribution maps, and also illustrations of the species forms which occur in Vietnam. Be wary of some of their own splits, although they do often qualify these with the original superspecies.

DIARY

Cat Tien

(Day 1)



After a 12+ hour flight from Heathrow to Ho Chi Minh and then a 4 hour drive following a swift pickup from the airport by Quang, our bird guide, and his driver, we found ourselves at the river ferry crossing that separated the main road from the reserve of Cat Tien. The drive itself was unproductive for birds as predicted, since most of the journey was through busy building lined roads, but there was a stark contrast when we were on the tin lid that passed as the ferry. The forests of the reserve opposite beckoned, with the welcoming committee of a Grey-headed Fish Eagle in the distance. We were shuttled straight to our rooms, with the welcome order that we would be birding in 10 minutes. Suitcases had contents strewn over the beds while we searched for important items (tripod, caps, leach socks, etc) and we met up with Quang outside the room. He explained that the best times of day were the usual morning and evening, so we would do a quick reconnoitre locally to give us a flavour. We hadn't bargained on how good that flavour would be. A brief and loud singing Rufescent Prinia ushered in a show put on by Lesser Yellownapes, Black-and-red Broadbills and performing Bronzed & Greater Racket-tailed Drongos. As we slowly meandered along the track, we constantly added new birds, with Violet Cuckoo, Racket-tailed Treepie, and various Bulbuls (Streak-eared & Stripe-throated being the most common). Black-naped Oriole we had thought would have migrated by now, but we did expect the Black-hooded Orioles. The only Minivet was a young male Scarlet, with a second

Violet Cuckoo for good measure. The return took us toward the restaurant for lunch, where we munched after adding Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike.

The plan was then to rest up until mid afternoon, when we would be heading out again to catch the birdlife waking up again after a siesta. The distractions of the birds we had quickly totted up put paid to that however. Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker was the intro to Large Woodshrike and Indochinese Cuckooshrike. Much better views of the rather loud Rufescent Prinia were had, and an equally loud call led to the first of 3 White-breasted Kingfishers. A Great Iora added to the Common Iora earlier on, and while watching one of a few showy White-rumped Shamans, a Racket-tailed Treepie crossed and landed in the distance from the track. More Black-hooded Orioles were in the company of an Ashy Drongo, and a Common Tailorbird. Now it really was time to drag a hot and sweaty body from the high temperatures before the afternoon sortie began.



We were back out of the accommodation again at 3.30 prompt and met Quang as he exited his. The plans had changed slightly – due to the very high temperatures (mid 30's C) we would walk half an hour or so around the accommodation blocks first, giving the other location time to cool (relatively) a little. We walked slowly along the track, and it was obvious that there was less evidence of bird life than even an hour or so ago, save for adding Grey-eyed Bulbul to the day's sightings. As we were starting to stake out a potential show for Silver Pheasant, the truck pulled up and we hopped on board. The rear of the truck was open, and the rush of air from the movement of it was pleasant in the still high temperatures. We were heading straight along the track from the headquarters to an area called Elephant Hills which had been developed into short rides between higher vegetation to encourage Peafowl. We were tasked with looking along these as we drove, which didn't yield much save for a lone young Sambar at one of the distant waterholes. We then decamped after around 6 miles of driving, where the challenge was now to walk back to Headquarters and look for birds. Luckily, it didn't take too long for a Green Peafowl to be spotted in one of these said areas, along with 2 separate Red Junglefowl. The walk back was particularly notable for Parakeets, with a good number of busy and noisy Red-breasted being joined by lesser, and just as vocal Blossom-headed. At the drop off point, a Yellow-bellied Prinia was just as musical as the earlier Rufescent Prinias, although not quite as showy. Sooty Bulbuls were a welcome change from a couple of their commoner cousins. A good number of Coucals were mainly seen and occasionally heard, all but one being Lesser. A pair of Common Flamebacks was seen flying away. Overhead, mainly Barn Swallows were interspersed with Pacific, but the Swiftlets with them, although likely to Germain's, needed



to be better seen before a decision as made. The fun came to a premature end when it actually started to rain, so owl watching was knocked on the head, and a ride back the order of the early evening. I assumed the Vietnamese weather wasn't aware of the fact that this was still the dry season!

Cat Tien

(Day 2)

After a surprisingly broken if not fulfilling 9 hours sleep, we were up and ready to go at dawn. Objective this morning was to sit on a hard plastic seat for a couple of hours in a hide to wait for birds – in particular pittas. The sky was looking a little menacing as we trekked the 500m or so along the track then through the forest, but the standard menu of Bronzed Drongo, White-rumped Shama, etc, as well as overflying Greater Flameback, were a welcome wake up call. In addition, as we entered the forest a family trio of Yellow-cheeked Gibbons seemed to be investigating the area of the primate enclosures. The hide was the usual for the region – a simple metal frame with plastic draped over (and holes roughly cut out for viewing). Yet it had locks and chains to prevent improper entry! Mealworms despatched in front of the hide, we spent 2 hours in here waiting patiently. The hoped for pittas didn't put in an appearance, but there were regular visits from pairs of White-rumped Shama, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Abbott's Babbler. The latter were feeding an immature. A Northern Smooth-tailed Treeshrew, obviously spending its time on the ground, was scratting around to the rear of the viewing area. Just as impressive was a chorus of singing Gibbons, which continued for half an hour or so mid watch.



Ironically, as we reached the track again with the delightful thoughts of breakfast in mind, a Blue-winged Pitta was calling not too far away. A bit of patience and it eventually flew into our sights. Still can't get used to having to look into the canopy for pittas, yet that was exactly where it resided, occasionally moving to a more favoured tree. Another, and probably even a third, were also heard calling, responding to the call of the first, not too far away.

Post breakfast until lunch sit was at another hide/feeding station even nearer to the track and to the opposite side of the headquarters accommodation. This was the same format – metal frame with plastic sheet cover, and small plastic chairs inside. Perfect! Quang had been out earlier and scattered some corn on the floor to hopefully entice fowl to the site, and there were a couple of ornamental pools for the birds to drink from. We spent 3 hours in the hide this time (pre lunch that is), and the sun had won the battle with the earlier clouds giving a semi oven effect (although this was tempered by the forest cover overhead). For the leachophobes out there, we also had a couple of the little vermin trying to find some flesh to suck on – we cut off their attack in time thankfully. The sit in was excellent, even better species wise than the one first thing this morning. One of the targets here was Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, and after a patient wait, one did appear, tentatively to the rear of the bush at first, then in the open. Coincidentally, a pair of Green-legged Partridges chose this time to make their first of a few walk-ins. Bulbuls regularly popped in, with a single Ochraceous between the more frequent Stripe-throated & Streak-eared. White-rumped Shama, Siberian Blue Robin and Tickell's Blue Flycatcher were regular fare, but a White-throated Kingfisher was seen only a couple of times, with a pair of Pin-striped

Tit-babblers there only once. A Blue-winged Pitta was calling nearby, and had been progressively approaching our base, but didn't actually show itself in the end. To represent the mammals, an Indochinese Ground Squirrel spent some time munching on the provided corn. A short foray out of the rear of the hide found a Common Tailorbird and Black-naped Monarch. Just about leaving time we were treated to a stunning male Ruby-cheeked Sunbird feeding more or less in front of us. This could have been the pre-lunch treat, but was usurped somewhat by a calling Brown Hawk-Owl which was only a small diversion on the way to the restaurant.



The post lunch choice was to relax in our nice air conditioned room, or spend more time in the hot, sweaty, leach infested (well, there were 2 after all!) hide staring at a few bits of corn and a couple of water holes. So after we had gulped the last bits of delicious Vietnamese fish, it was of course straight back to the hide again. It was actually hotter this time than in the direct sun outside, but another couple of very gratifying hours were spent here. Earlier on, bird activity was much less than it had been during the morning, with a few of the earlier usuals occasionally popping in, with the addition of a Racket-tailed Treepie. However, at more or less mid afternoon (14:30ish), the bulbuls and ensemble must have decided this was the time to find the water in the pools in front of us to drink and bathe. Grey-eyed Bulbuls were amongst the more plentiful Stripe-throated & Streak-eared. Oriental Magpie-robin paid its first visit later on, and Emerald Doves became more frequent attendees. At this time, there was always a handful of birds around the water. Then, just as we were looking at the clock and deciding it was almost the deathly hour for birds here, the same Germain's Peacock-Pheasant as earlier made a return, along with a pair of Green-legged Partridges and even a male Red Junglefowl. This had to be a sign that we had run our luck, and that it was also time to get back and meet for the next stroll out around the forest.



The mid afternoon walk turned into a return-in-the-dark walk. We set off past park headquarters and continued on the track for a short way, and then cut into the forest, walking for some time through quite thick woodland. Temperatures are generally high, and the humidity also high, so this not only makes for some tough going, but there is also some danger of leaches (Quang had a couple on him but we were spared!). The leach socks and long trousers didn't help temperature regulation, though. The initial part of the walk was along a concrete track, and we did pick up some good birds here. Bar-winged

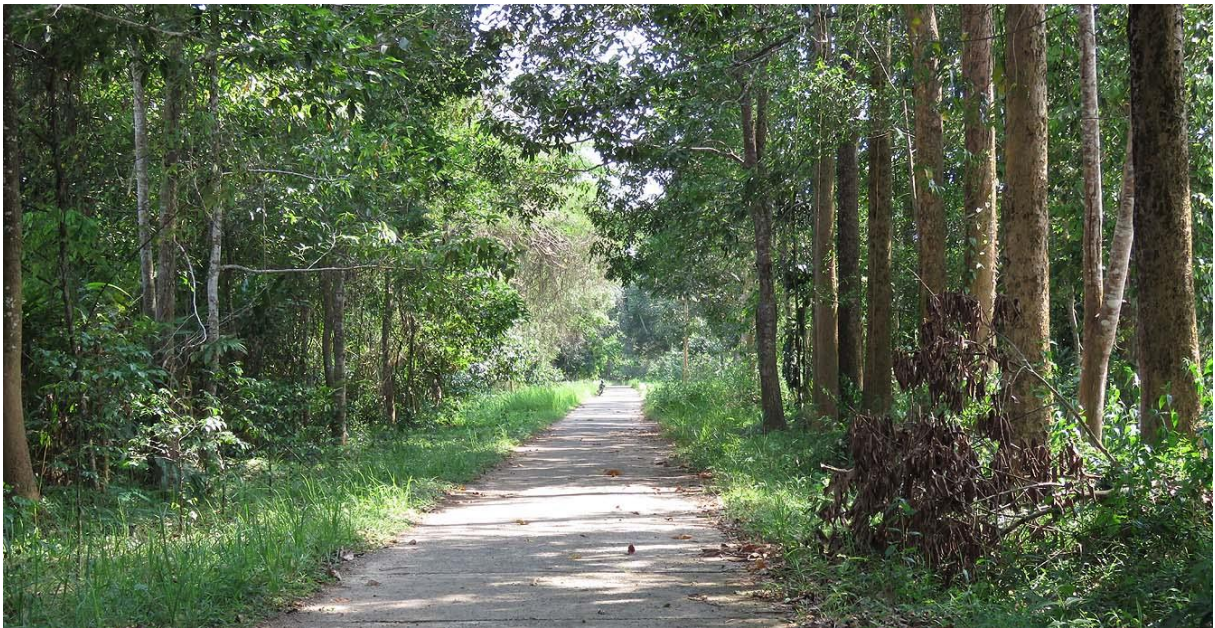
Flycatcher-shrikes were high up: Dark-necked Tailorbirds were low down and close, as well as very active. A Common Flameback flew over then landed. Perhaps topping this was a fiercely rufous White-browed Piculet, which didn't stay in the same place for long before

disappearing. The walk in the forest had to be a patient one, since some of the target species, such as pitta, had to be first heard then enticed with playback song. They were heard infrequently, but a single female Bar-bellied Pitta was seen briefly, after staking out its approximate call location for a short while. Orange-breasted Trogon for some strange reason fell more easily, with one bird picked out (its back to us, unfortunately) fairly early on, and a second briefer bird further along, although it did face us. We eventually left the narrow forest track to meet the initial concrete road, although we walked away from base for a short while. This turned up a couple of Puff-throated Babblers bathing in a roadside puddle. We turned back shortly after fighting off the occasional biting fly, and then searched for owls and nightjars as the darkness drew in. We managed a blank on observations, but did hear a few Great Eared Nightjars which didn't have the decency to show themselves.

Cat Tien

(Day 3)

First port of call for the morning was a feeding station not too distant from the first of the day before. In fact it seemed very close to the track through the park headquarters, although at this time of the morning not much human activity could be detected from it. The 2 hours we spent there were probably the quietest of our hide work so far, with much of the time watching regular Abbott's Babbler and some warring White-rumped Shammas, with the female taking time off outside of the battles to collect nesting material. Pre-recorded call of Blue-winged Pitta was played, since at least 3 were calling in the area. They weren't too bothered to approach our hideout, with the closest calls one seen through the gaps in the plastic sheeting above and one landing and hiding in one of the trees to our front. Things sparked up somewhat just before we were leaving when a Purple-naped Sunbird was alongside a couple of Little Spiderhunters. Perhaps one of the highlights again was the chorus of Buff-cheeked Gibbons which seemed to start at bang on 7am. One other mammal of note – a Northern Smooth-tailed Treeshrew fidgeting around to the rear of the feeding area, just behind some of the vegetation.



After breakfast the same pattern as yesterday was repeated. Wander a short way along the main track in the opposite direction to the morning, and veer off right this time to another feeding station with hide. It didn't seem quite as hot as yesterday morning, and also without the high humidity, which made the stay relatively more comfortable. Corn dispatched to the open area of the hide, we settled on the rather hard plastic seats again to stare out of the slits in the plastic sheeting. The 3 hours this time were quite good, interspersed with times where there was little activity. However, amongst the first birds to appear were a pair of Buff-breasted Babblers, looking for all the world initially like the Abbott's from earlier. They also seemed to have the grey supercilium, but a closer look found a slimmer, darker bill, and longer tail. As usual, White-rumped Shammas were regular here, and even had a nest under construction in a hollow stump just outside of the hide

entrance. Improving on the poorish views of the previous evening, a pair of Puff-throated Babblers became regulars, always sticking close together. In addition to the pair of Indochinese Striped Squirrels, a Northern Smooth-tailed Treeshrew was much more showy than the one seen earlier. Common Tailorbirds were regularly heard and also very active, but one was pinned down later on. Half way through the session, and the hoped for Germain's Peacock-Pheasant made an appearance, along with a female Red Junglefowl and chick. A few skittish passers through were Racket-tailed Treepie, Green-billed Malkoha, Greater Coucal and White-breasted Kingfisher, with a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher preferring to stay behind the hide. An Orange-breasted Trogon was calling tantalisingly close by, but stayed out of sight as it moved around. Another occurrence which repeated itself was a very good bird as we left the hide for lunch. After a brief Large Woodshrike, a Rufous Woodpecker was seen in high trees along the main road to headquarters.



Post lunch we again declined the kind thought of a midday siesta, and instead headed back to the same feeding station as this time yesterday. Quang had already popped out to unlock it and put out some corn, so everything was all go when we arrived. We didn't have to wait until later in the session for things to kick off this time, since today there seemed to be a constant presence of birds to feast on. A trio of White-crested Laughingthrushes followed us in, to join the usual Stripe-throated Bulbuls and White-rumped Shamans. Not long after the Siberian Blue Robin appeared, but strangely this was the only time it was to be seen today. Stars of the show was a pair of Siamese Firebacks which deigned to show a few times. The male seemed more reluctant than the female, who stayed longer each time. The pair of Green-legged Partridges had added one to the clan to be a trio. While Puff-throated Babbler weren't to be seen here yesterday, they were much more regular today. A Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Racket-tailed Treepie were occasionals. A couple of the now known species proved a little puzzling at first. 3 Streak-eared Bulbuls had all the credentials apart from the streak ears, although very close inspection saw a hint of this. They were of course juvenile Streak-eared. 3 Babblers were much more difficult. All 3 had the shape and jizz of Buff-breasted, but were all different colours. The darker one had been bathing so looked even darker, but was fairly well nailed on. Another was a more washed out version, while the third looked almost ghostly in comparison, which accentuated the long legs to almost Siberian Blue Robin standards. It turned out that our guess was correct – all Buff-breasted Babblers, with the lighter coloured ones juveniles. Another newbie for the site was Lesser Yellownappe, which unfortunately kept towards the back of the clearing.

Plan for the late afternoon and early evening was to walk the main track towards Elephant Hills slowly, birding along the way, and double back for nocturnals. It was good to finally leave the leach socks behind for once – they're not particularly comfortable in high heat and humidity. The first section of the walk, just beyond the ferry dock, was very productive. Golden-fronted Leafbirds and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker complimented the more usual fare of Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, Bronzed Drongo, and Greater Coucal, with Common Flameback thrown in for good measure. Once we hit the denser forest, the birding became more difficult. We walked a few miles there and a few miles back, and what would have been a bit of a fruitless effort was partly saved by half decent views of one of 4 calling Blue-winged Pittas, a couple of Ochraceous Bulbuls, and the almost constant curtain calls

of White-rumped Shamans. As dusk fell, various owl and nightjar calls were played, mainly without success, but the walk was well and truly elevated by not one but two Great-eared Nightjars flying around above us.

Cat Tien

(Day 4)

There had been reports from one of the other guides that both Blue-winged & Bar-bellied Pittas had been seen at the first hide we visited on the first day, so it was obvious where we were going to head this morning. Quang had forgotten his keys as we approached the hide, so his "run" back to get them gave us time to catch up on Black-headed Bulbul and a brief Blue-winged Pitta. Back in the familiar surroundings of the plastic seats and roughly cut slits in the black plastic hides, we settled back for a wait. Which is why, after an immediate appearance of a family of 4 Abbott's Babblers, the slow approach of a Blue-rumped Pitta was a massive surprise. Quang had apparently been playing all 3 pitta calls in rotation, but there hadn't been a sniff of this species so far. It and a female continued to put in sporadic cameos throughout our vigil, usually staying to the rear in the shade, but the male occasionally came out for the mealworms. On cameos, a couple of Wild Boars approached the feeding area, but were startled before they came out into the open. During the watch, the usual White-rumped Shamans and Abbott's Babblers were constant, but a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher was a late entrant to the scene. As we packed up again to go for breakfast, the Buff-cheeked Gibbons stepped up the morning chorus, and were then spotted hanging around the primate enclosures – no doubt taunting the captives within! Bizarrely, each departure from a hide had given us a good bird. This morning was no different. A Collared Falconet flew over the headquarters buildings, and landed on a bare branch, then to be joined briefly by a second.

Post breakfast walk as almost a fill in before leaving. We walked for around half an hour in the Elephant Hills direction, but all was very quiet until we reached the turning point. Then more Blue-winged Pittas called, with one almost flying between us to the other side of the track. On the return, a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo preceded a mini eruption in birds – 2 Great Ioras and an active Dark-necked Tailorbird, with backdrop of more White-rumped Shamans and Streak-eared Bulbuls. As we neared the room to collect the luggage, both of the Black-and-red Broadbills were tending to their nest building duties.

Nui San Pass

And so it was to our second birding destination. A 3 hour drive and good lunch on the way, passing through the decent sized city that is Di Linh, found us at a much greater altitude than of the last few days (approximately 900 metres here). This meant that there was a noticeable drop in the temperatures, from very hot to just hot, and a resultant reduction in the chances of leaches in the forest. The landscape here is predictably mountainous, with a lot of forest near to our designated birding area, much of which has been cultivated on the route to there (quite a few tea plantations were evident). The forest is actually quite thick, and whilst harbouring a very good range of birds, the company here has cut rough trails through at certain spots, and then made small clearings for feeding stations with blinds (the concept of a hide is a little off the mark for these!).



For most of the afternoon, we went to three of these and tried our luck – the variety of species (if any) tends to vary each day and at each hide, so that the expected birds don't always play ball. This was certainly true of the first one we went to. After gently moving on a trio of hunters (they flout the law presumably with bribes to catch and sell birds, orchids, felled trees, and anything else they can sell), we parked the car on a roadside

gravel pull in and ascended a tricky but short dirt track to a blind which itself was on a slope. Mealworms and bird recordings in place, we called time after only 20 minutes or so when it was obvious nothing was playing ball. A short hop in the car found another, whose track descended about 100 metres to a much more substantial area, which had a better feel to it (the sighting of a Pale-legged Leaf-warbler as we parked helped here). We again waited about 20 minutes (at the same time munching on a superb jackfruit) before Quang decided this was also too quiet. The pair of Orange-headed Thrushes and Siberian Blue Robin that did deign to show might have thought otherwise. Then on to the third feeding station, where another member of the tour company was already waiting. Apparently this chap has the job of keeping all the 7 feeding stations stocked up. He doesn't even watch the birds, but does kip in the area during the heat of the afternoon.



This last feeding station was the absolute opposite of the first two. Quang had stated earlier that all died down after 4pm which is when we would be leaving. Yet good birds were still popping in by 5:20pm. No sooner had the mealworms been replenished when the first of a pair of Buff-breasted Babblers muscled in on the grub (!!!). These birds had more obvious streaking on the breast than the plainer chested ones at Cat Tien. Shortly after, a female Siberian Thrush paid its one and only visit. Then the rush started. In a short space of time, female Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher, and then pairs of Black-throated Laughingthrush and



White-browed Scimitar Babbler called in. All 3 species would be regular returnees before we left. A couple of Orange-headed Thrushes were also regular, and appeared to be of different subspecies, one with plain face, the other having two shadowy vertical dark stripes. There was a bit of a lull in new species, and then a male White-throated Rock Thrush preceded a stunning Indonesian Green Magpie. This was the last new species to enter the dining area, but there was still time left for the male Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher to step in.

There wasn't much time left in the day after such an excellent sit in at the feeding station, so we ambled down the gradient of the mountain road to pick up any roadside birds, then to be picked up by the driver and taken to the accommodation. Straight away, a fairly elusive Indochinese Barbet was picked out of the canopy before it flew to the opposite side of the road not to be seen again. One had been calling not too far from the feeding area so it was good to catch up. Not much more of note happened bar a trio of Black-crested Bulbuls and a pair of overflying Vinous-breasted Starlings.

Nui San Pass

(Day 5)

First feeding station of the morning was the same as the second one we visited yesterday. We arrived reasonably early in a wonderfully cool temperature hoping for Blue Pitta. During the one hour stay, we certainly heard a couple calling, but they didn't seem interested in the delicious banquet of mealworms we had provided. However, any visit can't be bad when a Siberian Blue Robin puts in an appearance, and this one kept coming back. A Northern Treeshrew provided the mammalian interest. The only other visitors were singing Blue-throated Blue Robin and late Orange-headed Thrush. We then broke off for breakfast, where Mountain Imperial Pigeon was gazing down from a high tree, and very brief Blue

Whistling Thrush flew from the stream alongside. Behind the restaurant, a Streaked Spiderhunter was feeding from bush to bush.



A new feeding station to us beckoned, this one a slightly different construction to the previous ones. We descended quite a long hill through the forest, passing the good omen of a couple of Long-tailed Broadbills on the way down, to find a closed off square hide with open top. This meant we not only had decent views of the feeding area, but could also see the forest above ground level around us. This was to be the key to the enjoyment of this site. We had come for Blue Pitta and possible Silver Pheasant. The latter showed no signs and the former only a couple of birds calling sporadically. However, the accompanying avian life in the surrounding trees during our stay was superb and almost constant. After the usual female Siberian Blue Robin had put in an appearance, Puff-throated Bulbuls gave tantalisingly brief views. Mountain Fulvetta and White-throated Fantails busily fed at eye level around us, but White-bellied Erpornis kept to the rear of the area. The higher trees above were very productive, giving us Speckled Piculet, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Indochinese Barbet, while a gap through the trees seemed popular for Blue-winged Leafbird, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Indochinese Cuckooshrike, and Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike. Buff-breasted Babbler put in a late appearance to the feeding area, and we managed to pin down one of two Yellow-bellied Warblers as we left.

The next feeding station was a bit of a disappointment in itself. Waiting for a hoped for Orange-breasted Laughingthrush, all we turned up was another female Siberian Blue Robin. Quang went to check another station while we waited, but was away for some time while nothing was showing, so we decided to go back down to the road to see what we could pick out. This was a great move, since it only took a couple of minutes to spot a pair of Besra over the tops of the hills. Another larger raptor was flying from us not showing any useful features, but another circled above the lower hills giving good flight views. The closer of the two turned out to be Rufous-bellied Eagle, and the other may have been the same species, but views were very poor. Also here while waiting were Black-crested Bulbul, Ashy Drongo and Grey-eyed Bulbul.

When Quang had returned, he asked if we wanted to return to the first hide for the outside possibility of Blue Pitta, or walk along the forest edge to see what we could find. He had reckoned that Blue Pitta was only really a possible during early morning, but if there was to be any chance ! So of course we opted for the long shot. And what a decision. After the prerequisite Siberian Blue Robin and Orange-headed Thrush, I couldn't believe my eyes when I turned to look to my right and a female Blue Pitta was staring back at me. It hopped straight off, then less than a minute later was feeding in front of us. Time now was about 11:30. It didn't take much time for the male to appear as well. The latter was the shyer of the two, with the female showing many times over the next half an hour or so. This was the high excitement but not the end of the good birds. Midday came and went as we notched up very active Grey-throated Babbler in the background, Puff-throated Bulbul perching briefly over the feeding area, and a pair of White-browed Scimitar Babbler feeding an immature which was parked up to the rear of the opening. Last and by no means least, a couple of White-cheeked Laughingthrushes put in a first appearance, although they

preferred also to stay to the rear of the feeding area, generally behind the foliage. After this we tried our luck on the way out to pin down a pair of Long-tailed Broadbills which had a nest, but for some reason they didn't turn out.

Da Lat Waterfall Pine Forest

A two hour drive and another few hundred metres in altitude – Da Lat plateau is apparently around 1500 metres high – and we were on the outskirts of the busy and tourist infested city of the same name. We headed straight for the trap that is the waterfalls, but naturally didn't pay the £10 to enter the popular bit with the throng. We headed instead up a small hill and into the small tract of pine woodland, which is purportedly the only one in this part of Vietnam. We had expected an end of the day fill in with a few decent birds, but this proved to be yet another excellent session. As soon as we passed the cafe at the top, we were into the woodland proper, which was quiet for people but not for the birds. In fact, as soon as we stepped out of the car in the car park, Black Bulbuls were flying between the trees, and just at the corner of the tarmac, a viewpoint down found a pair of very confiding Grey Bushchats. Hoopoes seemed to be constantly flying to and fro, but this was likely to be the same pair tending a nest, since they seemed to be carrying food. Spotted Doves preceded an elusive Hill Prinia, but there then followed a more showy cast including Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Green-backed Tit, and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker. A Eurasian Jay in a nearby group of trees was quite different from those in Europe having a white face. A skittish Burmese Shrike preceded some time trying to catch up with and have a good look at a pair of Slender-billed Orioles, whose call was very much different from the species' already seen. After trying to pin down a briefly calling Oriental Scops Owl without success, walking a bit further found a collection of Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes, White-throated Fantail, and Streaked Spiderhunter. We then descended a little towards a valley containing a couple of small pools (with Chinese Pond-heron flying out), and spent yet more time pinning down a singing Mountain Tailorbird. It was happier keeping itself under the denser vegetation cover, until eventually yet briefly coming out into the open. As we neared the end of the walk we added another Burmese Shrike, with yet another near to the cafe (along with a couple of Scaly-breasted Munias). Last action was yet another Burmese Shrike, looking like it had a bad wing but could still just about fly, and then an Ashy Drongo hammering a large insect to bits before devouring it.



Bidoup National Park

(Day 6)

It took at least half an hour to drive to the locations in the national park where we were to do our birding. Apparently, there is no feeding of the birds allowed in here, and so any setting up of feeding stations would be illegal. So we spent 6 hours of the morning at 2 good viewing areas waiting for any birds to come. Within a short time, a pair of Large Niltavas appeared, and it was apparent that they had a family nearby judging by the amount of worms that were taken. A pair of Snowy-browed Flycatchers followed shortly afterwards, although they weren't quite as showy as the Niltavas. Other birds were much more skittish and didn't use the viewpoint. Mountain Fulvetta stuck to the higher branches,

whereas a White-tailed Robin would not come very far out of cover. Only other bird was a White-throated Fantail overhead, but there was no sign of any hoped for laughingthrushes.



We spent much more time at the second viewing point – just over 4 hours. This had possibly the best birding so far, not through numbers of species or quantity of birds, but the quality of the main 3 species which turned out here. A trio of Collared Laughingthrushes were relative latecomers to the show, but took central stage when they were present. Best of all for us was the almost constant performance put on by a pair of Grey-bellied Tesias and a Pygmy Cupwing. Both were difficult to pin down for any length of time to begin with, but the Tesias in particular eventually showed well. One even did a slow circuit behind where we were hidden, calling all the time, once less than a metre from where we sat. For some reason, they didn't tolerate the presence of the laughingthrushes, scolding much of the time they were there. The Cupwing was very brief to start with, darting in for food, but gave better views with time. White-tailed Robin and Snowy-browed Flycatcher were much more obliging here, as was a single Large Niltava male. On response to playing a call, a female Mrs Gould's Sunbird was going ballistic in front of us, and a Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher almost as much to the side.

After a quick lunch of egg in noodles, we headed for the third viewing area to again try to see some forest birds. This was down a tricky steep decline through the forest, and wouldn't have been a joke in wet weather. We stayed here for only about an hour since it seemed obvious that there was going to be very little activity, save for a skittish White-tailed Robin and difficult to see Grey-throated Robin. However, on the drive there we did disturb an Eastern Jungle Crow from the road, and had both Eurasian Jay and Black-collared Starling over the road on the way back to Da Lat.

Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat

So a change of tack and scenery was called for. We crossed a lot of the bustle of the city to pull into the car park for this religious Buddhist site. Naturally there were people everywhere, taking selfies by the shedload and generally getting in the way. A far cry from the peace of the forest earlier. There was a target in mind though. This is supposed to be a good location for Vietnamese Greenfinch, since they tend to seek shelter with the monks in the restricted access part of the monastery. We ignored the gawping of the passers by, keeping eyes peeled on the tops of the trees to stand for a while just next to where the birds could be expected. First blood was the surprise of only the first Common Myna of the trip, as well as Green-backed Tits and Chestnut-vented



Nuthatches in the pines to the front of us. The wait was in vain for the finches, but did turn up a very smart Black-headed Sibia just before we were due to leave.

Road above Tuyen Lam Resort

Yet another change of tactic for the last outing of the day, and this turned out to be a major bonus. We decamped from the car just around the corner from the resort gates, and walked slowly up the hill and along, birding the forest which was mainly to our left on the way. The sun was also shining against this side of the road, which may even have urged the birds on to a better performance. The road itself was also generally fairly quiet, with only a few scooters and vehicles passing by. The initial avian interest was much of what we had seen already in the form of Black-crested Bulbuls, the first of a few Grey Bushchats, and a Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike. As we neared the corner, looking above us in the trees on the opposite side of the road were a few active Black-throated Bushtits. This was the start of a good series of birds in a very short distance. Before we crept on, however, we doubled back a little for a few Vietnamese Greenfinches in a much smaller tree which were much less active, just next to the opposite side of the road. Venturing further up, but only for 50 metres or so, the road bent to the right, and the nearby forest above the elbow of the bend was electric for variety of birds in the strong sunshine. It was kicked off by a Blue-winged Minla flying in, so we set down backpacks and rested against the crash barrier while staring up. First in was a female Mrs Gould's Sunbird, not to be outdone some time later by a stunning male. Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo on a bare branch higher up was in the company of Eastern Crowned Warbler, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, and a pair of Indonesian Barbets which were visiting a nest hole. We had to crane our necks downwards from this to watch the usually hidden pair of Hill Prinias at the side of the road. Continuing the higher vigil were the delights of Black-throated Sunbird and Chestnut-capped Warbler, as well as a couple of other small warblers which weren't seen well enough for identification.



We tore ourselves away from the feast to amble further along the road, where the entrance structure to a spa resort sported its very own Cambodian Striped Squirrel. The pines to the left of the descent from here were to be the last of the day's birding and were just as good as earlier. Ashy Drongo started the balled rolling, with a Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker tending a hole in a tree. A couple of White-cheeked Laughingthrushes was moving between low bushes, and a trio of Black-headed Sibias did likewise further down. Last and by no means least, a Vietnamese Cutia had been heard some way into the forest, but with patience and a bit of persuasion it was drawn a lot closer to us. This was at first in the expected high canopy, but for some strange reason it flew down to a much lower tree opposite us giving crippling views. Great way to end the day.

Ta Nung Valley

(Day 7)

When we first arrived at the site, it looked like a nice peaceful walk down a track taking in birdlife in the trees surrounding. And at first this was very much the case, but as the

morning went on, it was obvious it was a bit of playground for the selfie obsessed posers that the world seems to have generated. Yet this also the best place in Da Lat for Grey-crowned Crocias, as well as a host of other species which we picked up during the morning. The track descends through fairly open areas to the small lakes below, which are surrounded by good forest as well as many playthings for the tourists. A corner of the forest just above 3 small huts was particularly productive, even though many of the birds required some neck craning to see. The play kicked off with Flavescent Bulbul and brief Indochinese Barbet, after which we came across a bushful of very active Mrs Gould's Sunbirds, which we spent some frustrating time trying to photograph. After finally succeeding, we pinned down the first of 2 Grey-crowned Crocias. Unfortunately, they favour the canopy but decent views were had if a little distant.



As we walked further down to the corner of the forest at the base of the track, we just kept on turning up many species, pick of which were the second Crocias, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, and a huge Red-vented Barbet directly over us. Hill Prinias were much more obliging today, although the group of Verditer Flycatchers feeding were a little more distant. We then walked over to the corner of the lake, to gaze up at calling Dalat Shrike-babbler. Lying on our backs was the key to best views here, and a Necklaced Barbet in the same tree gave brief views before flying into cover. Another Red-vented Barbet flew into a bare tree next to this, which also hosted a trio of Asian Fairy Bluebirds. Back from the lake and in the shade of a tree hosting an ice cream van, as well as horrific Asian music blaring out of tinny speakers, a Barred Cuckoo Dove was spotted nearby, and stayed feeding on the same berries for some time. By this time, Black-headed Sibias seemed to have gained the energy to move about, and some were singing for the first time last in the morning. Ascending the track again to the car, it was noticeable that the sunbirds that were so active had now vacated the nectar bushes, in their place leaving the scooter youth to take their self portraits.

Mixed pine and broadleaf forest, Da Lat

This location is somewhere Quang reckons he has discovered only recently, and so it doesn't have a name as such. It consists of a rough and narrow at times concrete track, which undulates in the lower hills above Da Lat through either pine or broadleaf forest. The initial ten minutes or so were spent looking at a dirt path through some pine forest, but apart from Mountain Bulbul when we returned it was very quiet. So we re-joined the concrete track and tried our luck at birding the forest margins alongside it. This kicked off in short time with a male Mrs Gould's Sunbird, but the walk was enlivened as we reached a bend and dip in



the track to find a small party of Black-headed Parrotbills. They were generally quite elusive, but occasionally stopped to allow us a good gander. Also at this point were a few Blue-winged Minlas and a White-cheeked Laughingthrush. We added some of the more common species as we wended our way, including Ashy Drongo, Flavescent Bulbul and Verditer Flycatcher. When we came to a crossroads overlooking the valley below, the concrete fizzled out to a rough track with a crossroads, dutifully overseen by a pair of Black Bulbuls. Quang was obviously looking more closely at this area, and I have no doubt this was the specific locale he was looking for. We combed the area as he played the call of one bird in particular, and we even waded through some of the thicker vegetation off track for a search. It obviously wasn't the Grey Bushchat or trio of Chestnut-vented Nuthatches he was craving for, or the House Swifts overhead. We crossed over to a dirt path through the grass again searching, until we had a response. A bit of a wait and more responses in kind, then we were eventually looking at a singing Dalat Bush Warbler. The IOC still have this as a subspecies of Russet Bush Warbler, and even the more recent splits (non IOC) have kept this as Annam Bush Warbler, which has a range across South to North Annam. However, he was chuffed to bits that we had seen the last of his Da Lat endemics, so this last species of the day ended very much on a good note.

Khu Du Lich resort

(Day 8)



There was apparently a resort of the above name 800m into the forest, but we conducted our birding on the forest edge of the main road which led to this and also the dirt tracks through the forest itself. The forest edge was mainly broadleaf, which quickly became pine as we entered the tracks and then back to broadleaf again as we ventured further. Sun was shining strongly again on our last morning, and the session was so good that it can't be classed as a last morning fill in. There were some new birds for the trip, but the highlights were the stunning views of some species we had already

seen but this time in real close up. The first bird of the day, Black-headed Parrotbill, exemplified this, showing for longer and in better light than the previous evening. Indochinese Barbet was arguably even more impressive, with crippling views in the strong early morning light. After a Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, a Long-tailed Broadbill was seen briefly within the vegetation, but a male and trio of female Scarlet Minivets almost burned with colour at the top of a tree. Just after sorting out the yellowish cast to the breast of a Kloss's Warbler, a pair of Speckled Piculets were pinned down at the top of one of the pines, and a couple of Vietnamese Greenfinch likewise in the opposite direction.

Turning into the forest and on to the rough dirt track, a couple of Chestnut-vented Nuthatches fiddled around at the top of one of the pines. A short distance along the track, a tricky calling Blyth's Leaf Warbler preceded a group of very active Red-billed Scimitar Babblers, whose bright red bill lived up to the name. Mrs Gould's Sunbird and flythrough Maroon Oriole came just before an excellent finale in a semi clearing. Overhead and not too distant this time, a male Dalat Shrike Babbler gave stunning if not too elongated views. A female 10 minutes later tearing a butterfly to bits would pose for longer. Then a pair of Vietnamese Cutia were picked out directly overhead, and stayed for some time being only 10 metres or so above us. On the other side of the track, a Necklaced Barbet made up for my brief and incomplete views the day before, this time spending some time on open branches. Great finish to the trip birding, and finally completed on the walk back by perched Maroon Oriole this time and our last Large Niltava.

SPECIES SEEN

Green-legged Partridge

Arborophila chloropus

These only appeared at one specific hide at Cat Tien, where there were 2 on the first day we saw them and 3 on the following day. We wondered at first if they wandered around with the Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, since they turned up at the same time on the first sighting, but their more regular visits without the latter afterwards disproved this



Red Junglefowl

Gallus gallus

The local form of this species has a prominent white spot on the face of the male (1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 2 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 male Cat Tien observation hides; Female and chick Cat Tien observation hides; Pair Cat Tien main track)

Siamese Fireback

Lophura diardi

We had seen this species previously in Thailand, and has thought it was quite an impressive looking bird. However, it's only in close up that both the male and female can be truly appreciated. We saw such a pair at one of the Cat Tien observation hides



Germain's Peacock-Pheasant

Polyplectron germaini

This species seems to be one of the sought after ones perhaps due to distribution. Caught in the correct lighting conditions, it is an impressively marked bird, especially when the blue spots catch the light. We saw single birds at two of the observation hides at Cat Tien

Green Peafowl

Pavo muticus

Another of the supposed must see birds at Cat Tien. They are a remarkable looking bird, but generally have to be worked for. We saw 2 separate males at the Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien, where we were driven the few kilometres to the location from headquarters, and then had to scan the rides specifically cut to attract them on either side of the track. Both birds were towards the rear



Chinese Pond Heron

Ardeola bacchus

1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 Ho Chi Minh outskirts

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

1 at lake, Da Lat

Rufous-bellied Eagle

Lophotriorchis kienerii

Not many birds of prey were seen during the trip, and our guide had told us that they are generally not seen very often as of the two larger BOPs spotted from Nui San Pass, one circled a few times over head and a look at the images of the underwing pattern later confirmed the sighting

Besra

Accipiter virgatus

Just before we spotted the Eagle above, this pair of Besra at Nui San Pass were seen in what looked like a display flight above the tree line. Good views of the underwing pattern again confirmed identification

Grey-headed Fish Eagle

Haliaeetus ichthyaetus

This bird was a sort of "Welcome to Cat Tien" for us. As we sat on the ferry crossing the river to the national park, 1 was seen circling over the water and forest at some distance, but the distinctive tail pattern was obvious

Red-wattled Lapwing

Vanellus indicus

4 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 outskirts Ho Chi Minh

Red Turtle Dove

Streptopelia tranquebarica

~50 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Spotted Dove

Spilopelia chinensis

2 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 3 Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat

3-4 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat

Barred Cuckoo-Dove

Macropygia unchall

Only 1 bird was seen, in the Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat. It was slowly and quietly feeding in a fig tree next to the ice cream area of the park. It was strange at first to see so little barring on the breast, apart from a few scattered marks which could be seen when close to



Common Emerald Dove

Chalcophaps indica

2 birds were seen together at Cat Tien observation hides, with only 1 on the subsequent visit to the same observation hide on the second visit. For some reason the male of the two didn't tolerate the female, chasing it back from the copious amount of corn put down for feeding

Zebra Dove

Geopelia striata

2 Cat Tien

Green Imperial Pigeon

Ducula aenea

~15 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Mountain Imperial Pigeon

Ducula badia

All birds seen were flying (1 Nui San Pass; 1 over Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat; 3 over Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)

Greater Coucal

Centropus sinensis

1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track walk; 1 in the open fields next to our previous accommodation just outside of Di Linh



Lesser Coucal

Centropus bengalensis

7 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Green-billed Malkoha

Phaenicophaeus tristis

4 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 2 Nui San Pass; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat



Asian Koel

Eudynamis scolopaceus

As is usual for this common species, they were more often heard than seen. The only time any were seen was strangely from the room of our hotel in Da Lat (2 heard Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 near to Monet Garden Hotel, Da Lat)

Violet Cuckoo

Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus

2 were seen in the Cat Tien headquarters area



Banded Bay Cuckoo

Cacomantis sonneratii

1 heard Cat Tien headquarters area

Plaintive Cuckoo

Cacomantis merulinus

1 female at Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien, was at the top of a tree for a short time only

Brown Hawk-Owl

Ninox scutulata

This bird was something of a surprise, since it was calling during the middle of the day, and full marks to the guide for hearing it in the distance and eventually pinning it down at Cat Tien headquarters, near to our restaurant



Great Eared Nightjar

Lyncornis macrotis

Most birding trips to Cat Tien seem to see this species, but they still need to be worked for. They can usually be heard just before dusk along the main tracks from the park headquarters, but call playback is really needed to see them. We heard 4 on the Cat Tien forest walk, but didn't manage to see them, with 2 seen well overhead on the following evening at the same spot

Grey Nightjar

Caprimulgus jotaka

The only bird we actually saw was over the Monet Garden Hotel in Da Lat as we prepared to check in, then it or another heard calling after dark. During the 3 nights we slept there, they could be heard calling on and off throughout the night

Himalayan Swiftlet

Aerodramus brevirostris

Swiftlets can be a difficult group of birds to identify at any time, due to their similarity and speed of flight. Our hide had called them as Germain's Swiftlets early on, but we hadn't had a good look at them to confirm this, until they were seen to have the plainer rump of Himalayan. Both species seem to occur in the area though the winter months, although Germain's may be commoner nearer to the coast (Common over Cat Tien; Quite common over Ho Chi Minh)

Asian Palm Swift

Cypsiurus balasiensis

2 Ho Chi Minh airport; 3 over Cat Tien headquarters; 3+4 Cat Tien main track walk

House Swift

Apus nipalensis

Some over Monet Garden Hotel, Da Lat; Some over Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1 over Ho Chi Minh

Orange-breasted Trogon

Harpactes oreskios

The guide did well to pick out the perched female a little distance above and from us in the thicker part of the forest during the Cat Tien forest walk. If we were to quibble, it was facing away from us the whole time, but a male seen for a much shorter time and at a greater distance shortly after was much more impressive front on. 1 was also heard the following day from one of the Cat Tien observation hides



White-throated Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis

3 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1+1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1+1 Cat Tien main track walk; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Merops leschenaulti

This was surprisingly the only Bee-eater species which we saw, and even then in small numbers (2 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien)

Great Hornbill

Buceros bicornis

1 Cat Tien forest walk overhead, with a second with it heard only. As with the bee-eater above, we had expected more hornbills to be seen

Red-vented Barbet

Psilopogon lagrandieri

2 sightings at the Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat may have been of the same bird. They are one of the largest of the Asian barbets, and even though both sightings were of birds perching at some distance above us, they were still impressive



Green-eared Barbet

Psilopogon faiostriatus

1 Cat Tien headquarters area

Necklaced Barbet

Psilopogon auricularis

The first of 2 birds seen, in the Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat, was unfortunately only very brief and the diagnostic throat pattern wasn't seen at all. The second at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat, more than made up for this, since it perched for some time on a couple of branches in the open



Indochinese Barbet

Psilopogon annamensis

This is the most likely of the barbets to be encountered on a trip here, and the number calling in the forests was testament to this. Views seemed to improve each time, culminating in a final showy individual (1+1 Nui San Pass; Pair visiting nest hole, Tuyen Lam Resort; 1 seen and more heard Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area)

Speckled Piculet

Picumnus innominatus

1 Nui San Pass; 2 top of pines Khu Du Lich resort are, Da Lat



White-browed Piculet

Sasia ochracea

1 Cat Tien forest walk

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker

Yungipicus canicapillus

1 Cat Tien main track walk; 1 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 hammering at a hole in a tree Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat



Lesser Yellownape

Picus chlorolophus

These birds were only seen at Cat Tien, but were very regular, and especially at the western end of the accommodation area (At least 2 pairs Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track walk; 1 Cat Tien observation hides)

Common Flameback

Dinopium javanense

Another impressive woodpecker specie only seen at Cat Tien (2 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien forest walk overhead, with a second with it heard only; 1 Cat Tien main track walk)



Rufous Woodpecker

Micropternus brachyurus

This uncommon woodpecker species seen at Cat Tien landed in the avenue of trees just West of the accommodation area, flew over the road briefly, then wasn't seen again

Collared Falconet

Microhierax caerulescens

The first of the pair seen was picked up flying through the Cat Tien headquarters area. It was refound straight after perched on a bare branch to the rear of the buildings, and was quickly joined by what was presumably its mate



Blossom-headed Parakeet

Psittacula roseata

At least 6 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Red-breasted Parakeet

Psittacula alexandri

At least 25 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Black-and-red Broadbill

Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchus

This was the first of our really notable birds at Cat Tien, where we quickly found 2 pairs in the accommodation headquarters area. Two of these birds were building a nest almost directly above the road near to our room, and could be more or less guaranteed to be seen around here



Long-tailed Broadbill

Psarisomus dalhousiae

Always an impressive bird, those seen were all but too briefly within forests. We did stake out a nest which was being built over the main road through the mountain at Nui San Pass, but unfortunately the birds didn't turn up (2 + 2 single Nui San Pass; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)

Blue-rumped Pitta

Hydrornis soror

After hearing and seeing both Blue-winged & Bar-bellied Pittas the previous 2 days, the appearance of a pair of these at the first observation hide we had visited was a complete surprise, since there had been no sign of them until then. We had even revisited the hide since there had been reports of the former two species being spotted there the previous day, so what a result. It was the male of the pair which was the bolder, coming occasionally into the clearing for some laid out food, but they generally kept to the more enclosed rear of the feeding station



Blue Pitta

Hydrornis cyaneus

For heart stopping moments, the first appearance of the pair in the Nui San Pass hides must have taken the trophy. We had sat in vigil waiting for one of these at various hides over the morning, and had given up hope as the morning drew on. They are supposed to be only really active in the first couple of hours in the day, and because of this we were given a choice of revisiting this hide or walking the forest edge for more likely species. We had come for pittas in the main after so returned to the first hide of the day. After waiting for some time, I happened to glance sideways at the narrow entrance opening of the blind to see a Blue Pitta staring back at me. After not swearing at all (!!!) it reappeared a few seconds later in the feeding area, and the male a few minutes afterwards



Male



Female

Bar-bellied Pitta

Hydrornis elliotii

Of the 4 species of pitta we came across, this was easily the briefest. We had been searching for some time and using call playback to try to locate one, and the 1 female on the Cat Tien forest walk which we did manage to clock emerged into the track and disappeared around the corner within a couple of seconds

Blue-winged Pitta

Pitta moluccensis

This species was a paradox, since of the 4 seen, it seems to be the one seen by fewest of the reports we looked at, but on our visit, was the most common encountered (sight and

sound) by a distance. Apart from a few flying birds which were all too brief, the best observation was after leaving the hide on the first morning and pinning one down high up in a tree (1 seen of 4 calling Cat Tien main track walk; 4 calling Cat Tien observation hide; 1 heard Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 near Cat Tien headquarters, with a second flying near Cat Tien observation hides - at least 3 in addition heard; 1 seen flying over track out of 4 calling Cat Tien main track)



Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike

Hemipus picatus

A regular sighting in some of the forests in small numbers (1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 then 2 together Cat Tien forest walk; another 1 on subsequent Cat Tien main track walk; 2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 Nui San Pass; at least 2 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; 2 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat)

Large Woodshrike

Tephrodornis virgatus

1+1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides



Great Iora

Aegithina lafresnayei

2 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 on approach to Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track

Common Iora

Aegithina tiphia

5 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 5 Cat Tien headquarters area; Quite a few throughout at Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien main track walk

Long-tailed Minivet

Pericrocotus ethologus annamensis

3 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest

Scarlet Minivet

Pericrocotus speciosus

A juvenile male Cat Tien headquarters area was all that was seen perched until the final morning (with an addition 1 flying over Cat Tien observation hides), until the perfect light on the last morning on 1 male and 3 females Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat highlights the group at the top of the trees



Male



Female

Indochinese Cuckooshrike

Lalage polioptera

1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Nui San Pass

Burmese Shrike

Lanius collurio

3 at Da Lat Waterfall pine forest were the only ones seen during the birding on the trip, with the last bird of the day particularly close, albeit with what looked like a broken wing. Then ironically, 6 en route from Da Lat to Ho Chi Minh doubled the number of those seen while actually birding



White-bellied Erpornis

Erpornis zantholeuca

1 Nui San Pass at the very rear of one of the observation hides

Dalat Shrike-babbler

Pteruthius annamensis

The specific name gives this away as one of the specialities of the Da Lat area, and is a striking bird in itself. The 1 seen in the Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat had to be picked out of the dense tree some height above us, and we resorted to lying on our backs to get any views at all. Then on the last morning, separate male and female were seen at much closer quarters at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat. The male was seen well but for short periods as it moved around in a nearby tree before flying off, but the female was much more obliging while tearing a butterfly apart



Slender-billed Oriole

Oriolus tenuirostris

At least 2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest

Black-naped Oriole

Oriolus chinensis

1 Cat Tien headquarters area

Black-hooded Oriole

Oriolus xanthornus

4 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien main track walk



Maroon Oriole

Oriolus traillii

1 was perched at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat. Either this or a second bird had flown across the same area previously



Ashy Drongo

Dicrurus leucophaeus

The birds seen ranged from classic light grey in the lower altitudes to a darker smoky grey higher up (3 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 3 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Nui San Pass; 1 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; ~6 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 2 Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1+2 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)

Bronzed Drongo

Dicrurus aeneus

These birds were only seen at Cat Tien, where they were possibly the most regular species to be encountered (at least 6 Cat Tien headquarters area; at least 8 throughout Cat Tien; 4 Cat Tien observation hides; at least 10 Cat Tien main track walk)



Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus remifer

The higher elevation of the 2 racket tailed species (1+3 Nui San Pass; Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; 2 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 2 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus paradiseus

The lower elevation of the 2 racket tailed species (At least 4 Cat Tien headquarters area; 2 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track walk)

White-throated Fantail

Rhipidura albicollis

2 Nui San Pass; 2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1+1 Bidoup National Park; 1 Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Black-naped Monarch

Hypothymis azurea

Pair with nest Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track walk

Eurasian Jay

Garrulus glandarius

The individuals encountered here have quite a unique look, with a white face lacking in the more western forms (1 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 flew over road from Bidoup National Park)



Indochinese Green Magpie

Cissa hypoleuca

Having seen Common Green Magpie in Malaysia, the impact of this bird was a bit of a surprise. This Indochinese species lacks the white edged black tertials of the more common form, but seems to make a much greater impact despite being smaller. The bird we saw

from one of the blinds at Nui San Pass still seemed large, all the more intimidating by the raised crest and rough scolding call. The yellow of the breast and belly was noticeable

Racket-tailed Treepie

Crypsirina temia

At least 5 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1+1 Cat Tien observation hides; 2 Cat Tien main track walk; 3+ Cat Tien observation hides



Eastern Jungle Crow

Corvus leuallantii

1 on road Bidoup National Park. This was the only one seen until 2 flew across the airfield before departure at Ho Chi Minh airport

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher

Culicicapa ceylonensis

1 Bidoup National Park; 1 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat

Green-backed Tit

Parus monticolus

At least 6 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; At least 4 Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat. All of the birds seen were very active high up in pines

Black-headed Bulbul

Pycnonotus atriceps

2 Cat Tien

Black-crested Bulbul

Pycnonotus flaviventri

1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 3 Nui San Pass; At least 8 Nui San Pass; 2 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat



Sooty-headed Bulbul

Pycnonotus aurigaste

3 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat

Stripe-throated Bulbul

Pycnonotus finlaysoni

Commonly seen at Cat Tien (At least 6 Cat Tien headquarters area; At least 12 Cat Tien observation hides)



Flavescent Bulbul

Pycnonotus flavescens

At least 10 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; At least 6 Mixed forest above Da Lat

Yellow-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus goiavier

2 on the Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat

Puff-throated Bulbul

Alophoixus pallidus

1+2 Nui San Pass, where the best view was of one landing on a branch overhanging the feeding area on front of one of the feeding station blinds

Streak-eared Bulbul

Pycnonotus conradi

Very common around Cat Tien (3-4 Cat Tien headquarters area; At least 8 Cat Tien observation hides; 3 juveniles Cat Tien observation hides)



Ochraceous Bulbul

Alophoixus ochraceus

The subspecies found in South Annam is almost impossible to distinguish visually from Puff-throated Bulbul. Apparently, genetic samples have revealed that only this species of the two is present in Cat Tien, where 2 were seen on the main track walk

Mountain Bulbul

Ixos mccllellandii

1 Mixed forest above Da Lat

Grey-eyed Bulbul

Iole propinqua

1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 2 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Nui San Pass



Black Bulbul

Hypsipetes leucocephalus

6+ Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 3-4 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; Quite common Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 5+ forest above Da Lat; ~6 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

At least 40 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Pacific Swallow

Hirundo tahitica

At least 10 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Pygmy Cupwing

Pnoepyga pusilla

This bird was one of a double act with Grey-bellied Tesia which added to some of the most enjoyable birding of the trip at Bidoup National Park. The Tesia had been picked up a little earlier in front of the blind when the Cupwing appeared. Over a couple of hours, it made sporadic appearances, each time seeming to emerge quickly from the rear of the viewing area, quite often sneaking a worm and then nipping off again



Yellow-bellied Warbler

Abroscopus superciliaris

1 Nui San Pass as we left one of the feeding stations

Mountain Tailorbird

Phyllergates cucullatus

1 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest. The powerful song of this bird was obvious, but it preferred to keep well hidden inside its chosen bush. A bit of patience and we eventually had great views



Grey-bellied Tesia

Tesia cyaniventer

This pair of birds within the forest at Bidoup National Park was quite easily the most intensely watched species of the whole trip. Over the 4 plus hours that we were present at this particular viewing area, we waited countless times for one or the other to reappear, sometimes only very briefly or half hidden. Patience was rewarded by the occasional longer stage show, and one of the birds twice did a circuit behind our hideout, calling all the while when only down to less than a metre away



Black-throated Bushtit

Aegithalos concinnus

At least 2 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat

Eastern Crowned Warbler

Phylloscopus coronatus

1 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat

Pale-legged Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus tenellipes

1 Nui San Pass

Chestnut-crowned Warbler

Phylloscopus castaniceps

1 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat was seen only briefly and at some distance

Blyth's Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus reguloides

This species and Kloss's are two of the now splits that used to be White-tailed Leaf Warbler. The white on the tail of these species is hard to see in itself, but separating needs a lot more care. Luckily, the one Blyth's seen was also heard calling at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Kloss's Leaf Warbler

Phylloscopus ogilviegranti

Another of the former White-tailed Leaf Warbler superspecies, decent views of the rather yellowish breast and belly of this bird were seen at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Russet Bush Warbler

Locustella mandelli

This was the last bird to be seen in the Mixed forest above Da Lat. The guide was quite excited about any potential sighting, since he maintained this was an endemic to the Da Lat area (as Da Lat Bush Warbler). It would seem that the IOC would disagree, since they don't even recognise the higher split of Annam Bush Warbler, but in some ways that may be semantics, since the birds in this area nonetheless may well have characteristics of their own. Some of the enjoyment in seeing them is also in their shy nature, since they tend to prefer to keep down low in thick cover. We had declined the offer of trooping up a densely covered hill the previous evening to try our luck and in turn were rewarded with a last minute Vietnamese Cutia, so imagine the pleasure, after hearing a slightly earlier Bush Warbler without an appearance, when one was homed in on singing away at almost the last decent light of the day

Hill Prinia

Prinia superciliaris

This is another of those loud songsters that annoyingly prefers to keep to denser cover. We had to wait until the last one was known to be present in the Ta Nung Valley to get gripping views (1 seen briefly Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; Pair Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat



Rufescent Prinia

Prinia rufescens

As with Hill Prinia, this species has a song louder than its size should allow, but again they prefer to discharge it from within cover. Thankfully, the active birds at Cat Tien would give themselves up with only a modicum of patience spent (3 Cat Tien headquarters area; 2 at Cat Tien accommodation area

Yellow-bellied Prinia

Prinia flaviventris

2 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien, one of which gave briefly good views as it emerged singing from its reedy cover

Common Tailorbird

Orthotomus sutorius

1 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1+3 Cat Tien observation hides; 4 Cat Tien main track walk



Dark-necked Tailorbird

Orthotomus atrogularis

2 Cat Tien forest walk; 1 Cat Tien main track

White-browed Scimitar Babbler

Pomatorhinus schisticeps

These impressively marked birds were seen at very close quarters in 2 of the feeding stations at the Nui San Pass. The second 2 were with and feeding an immature



Red-billed Scimitar Babbler

Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps

We had hoped to see an approaching and calling group of these following our first Black-headed Parrotbills the evening before we actually saw 2+ at the Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat. There may have been more, but we were grateful for what we got considering how active they were in the forest

Grey-throated Babbler

Stachyris nigriceps

1 Nui San Pass, staying within the vegetation to the rear of one of the feeding stations

Pin-striped Tit-Babbler

Macronus gularis

2 together at one of the Cat Tien observation hides

Chestnut-capped Babbler

Timalia pileata

3 seen briefly at the Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Mountain Fulvetta

Alcippe peracensis

2+ Nui San Pass; 1 Bidoup National Park

Abbott's Babbler

Malacocincla abbotti

We saw these before we saw Buff-breasted Babbler at another of the hides at Cat Tien, and at first found separation of the two troublesome. However, it quickly became clear that the Abbott's are a more rotund and stocky bird, with a larger and greyer bill (1 Cat Tien observation hides; then a family of 4 at the same Cat Tien observation hide)



Puff-throated Babbler*Pellorneum ruficeps*

2 during the Cat Tien forest walk were in poor light and a little distance, as opposed to the 2+2 at different hides at Cat Tien observation hides; 1 was also seen at one of the feeding stations at the Nui San Pass

Buff-breasted Babbler*Pellorneum tickelli*

One of the reasons for the tricky initial separation from Abbott's Babbler was the lack of any streaking on the breasts of the birds seen at Cat Tien. The ones seen at Nui San Pass did have this distinguishing feature (2 at one hide Cat Tien observation hides; adult with 2 juveniles Cat Tien observation hides; 2 Nui San Pass)

**Vietnamese Cutia***Cutia legalleni*

This is perhaps one of the birds which you always hope for when visiting the area, due to its good looks and also nuthatch like behaviour. However, it is not always an easy task, mainly due to its habit of keeping to the upper story. The first that we saw on the Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat, tried to fit its billing. We first heard it some distance away, and the initial views were quite high up until it decided to fly down much closer for better examination. The 2 at Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat, were much more obliging from the off, feeding on the trunks of trees not too high above where we stood

Grey-crowned Crocias*Laniellus langbianis*

There are some similarities between this bird and the Cutia, since it also receives prime billing in the area, sharing good looks and also the habit of staying in the canopy. The best place to see them is at the Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat, where we managed to connect with 2 separate birds, although they lived up to their reputation of staying high up

Collared Laughingthrush*Trochalopteron yersini*

These birds are in the short list of very difficult endemics which are hard to catch up at higher altitude. We were lucky in that 3 regularly visited our stake out within Bidoup National Park, where they usually caused a clamour with the Tesias when they called in

**Blue-winged Minla***Actinodura cyanouroptera*

6+ Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 3+ Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Black-headed Sibia*Heterophasia desgodinsi*

The first individual that we saw was the most confiding at Tiulam Monastery, Da Lat, being perched right out on the open for some time. The 3 on the Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat and 10+ at Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat seemed much more preoccupied with feeding within the cover of trees

**White-crested Laughingthrush***Garrulax leucolophus*

2+3 at the same Cat Tien observation hide on consecutive days



Black-throated Laughingthrush

Pterorhinus chinensis

2 visited one of the feeding stations at Nui San Pass in late afternoon

White-cheeked Laughingthrush

Pterorhinus vassali

2 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 2 Nui San Pass; 2 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Black-headed Parrotbill

Psittiparus margaritae

3+ Mixed forest above Da Lat; 3+ Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat



Asian Fairy-bluebird

Irena puella

3 together at Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch

Sitta nagaensis

2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 3 Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat; 3 Mixed forest above Da Lat; 2 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch

Sitta frontalis

1 in trees above one of the feeding stations at Nui San Pass

Common Myna

Acridotheres tristis

1 Tiuclam Monastery, Da Lat

Vinous-breasted Starling

Acridotheres burmannicus

2 over Nui San Pass

Black-collared Starling

Gracupica nigricollis

1 over road from Bidoup National Park; 2 from Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat en route to Da Lat

Orange-headed Thrush

Geokichla citrina

Of the birds seen at Nui San Pass, there seemed to be two different races, one with a plain face, the other with 2 faded black vertical lines on the face (2 different twosomes at Nui San Pass; with 1 Nui San Pass the following day. All were at feeding stations)



Siberian Thrush

Geokichla sibirica

Female Nui San Pass feeding station

Oriental Magpie-Robin

Copsychus saularis

1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; Female Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien forest walk; 1 male Cat Tien observation hides



White-rumped Shama

Copsychus malabaricus

Very common and obvious at Cat Tien (~6 Cat Tien headquarters area; Pair Cat Tien observation hides; 2+2+2 at different hides Cat Tien observation hides; at least 6 Cat Tien main track walk; 2 Cat Tien observation hides; ~4 Cat Tien main track)

Asian Brown Flycatcher

Muscicapa dauurica

3 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien



Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

Cyornis tickelliae

Pair Cat Tien observation hides; 1+1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 flew across track Cat Tien main track walk



Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher

Cyornis rubeculoides

The subspecies here has the orange of the breast extending almost all of the way to the chin so care must be taken with Tickell's (2 pairs at different feeding stations Nui San Pass)

Large Niltava

Niltava grandis

In good light, the black and blue of these birds can be very reminiscent of White-tailed Robin, which also shared some of the feeding stations with it, although the jizz is very different (Pair with young + 1 at second viewing area Bidoup National Park; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)



Male



Female

Verditer Flycatcher

Eumyias thalassinus

3+ Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 Mixed forest above Da Lat

Siberian Blue Robin

Larvivora cyane

There always seemed to be a one of these at the Cat Tien feeding stations (1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 female at one hide and male at another Cat Tien observation hides on following day; 1 Nui San Pass; 1 male and 3 separate females Nui San Pass at a separate feeding station)



White-tailed Robin

Myiomela leucura

1+1+1 Bidoup National Park. The only bird seen for any length of time and at close quarters was the second bird, with all being at separate viewing areas

Blue Whistling Thrush

Myophonus caeruleus

1 seen briefly Nui San Pass, where it was disturbed and flew off downstream next to the lunch cafe

Snowy-browed Flycatcher

Ficedula hyperythra

2 separate pairs at first 2 viewing areas, Bidoup National Park



White-throated Rock Thrush

Monticola gularis

A stunning male was at one of the feeding stations late afternoon at the Nui San Pass



Grey Bush Chat

Saxicola ferreus

Pair & 1 more male and 2 females Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 4 Road above Tuyen Lam Resort, Da Lat; 3 males forest above Da Lat; 1 male Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat



Male



Female

Blue-winged Leafbird

Chloropsis cochinchinensis

1 Nui San Pass, seen briefly in the canopy opening from one of the observation screens

Golden-fronted Leafbird

Chloropsis aurifrons

At least 4 Cat Tien main track walk

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker

Dicaeum ignipectus

2 males Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker

Dicaeum cruentatum

1 male Cat Tien headquarters area

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird

Chalcoparia singalensis

1 Cat Tien observation hides



Olive-backed Sunbird

Cinnyris jugularis

1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 1 Cat Tien forest walk; ~8 at rest stop en route from Dal Lat to Ho Chi Minh

Mrs. Gould's Sunbird

Aethopyga gouldiae

This was the most obvious and possibly common of the sunbirds seen, but they were always frantically feeding on flowering bushes (Female Bidoup National Park; pair Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat; ~8 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat; 1 male Mixed forest above Da Lat; 1 male Khu Du Lich resort area, Da Lat)



Black-throated Sunbird

Aethopyga saturata

Male along the Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat

Purple-naped Sunbird

Kurochkinogramma hypogrammicum

1 Cat Tien observation hides

Little Spiderhunter

Arachnothera longirostra

1+2 Cat Tien observation hides

Streaked Spiderhunter

Arachnothera magna

1 Nui San Pass; 1 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest; 1 Ta Nung Valley, Da Lat



Vietnamese Greenfinch

Chloris monguilloti

This is another of the endemics which bird trips hope to see. We thought we heard them on our first visit to the pines in the Da Lat waterfall area, but without joy. However, we did subsequently see some at other locations in the Da Lat locality, with 3+ Road above Tuyen Lam Resort and 2 Khu Du Lich resort area

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

3 Da Lat; Few at Ho Chi Minh

Scaly-breasted Munia

Lonchura punctulata

2 Da Lat Waterfall pine forest

MAMMALS

Northern Smooth-Tailed Treeshrew *Dendrogale murina*

We saw 2 of these diminutive and spindly-tailed treeshrews at the Cat Tien observation hides, from different feeding stations. The first one remained elusive to the rear of the thicker vegetation, but the second was much more confiding



Northern Treeshrew *Tupaia belangeri*

These were seen at higher altitude from the feeding stations and viewing areas, and were never shy in showing themselves (2 Nui San Pass; 1+1 Bidoup National Park)

Red-cheeked Gibbon *Nomascus gabriellae*

A family party of these live in the Cat Tien area, and we saw a male and 2 females on our first approach to the feeding stations next to the primate enclosure on the first morning. The only other time we saw them was when 2 were spotted in the same place when leaving the same feeding stations for the last time. Their call is possibly even more impressive than seeing them, and usually started near to the primate enclosure each morning around 7am

Pallas's Squirrel *Callosciurus erythraeus*

2 Cat Tien headquarters area; 1 Cat Tien observation hides; 1 Cat Tien main track



Indochinese Ground Squirrel *Menetes berdmorei*

At least 2 Cat Tien observation hides, and the following day 2+1 Cat Tien observation hides

Cambodian Striped Squirrel *Tamiops rodolphii*

Perhaps one of the strangest mammalian sightings, with 1 along the Road above Tuyen Lam Resort Da Lat, seen climbing the roof of the entrance arch to the resort itself



Red Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*

1 Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien, seen briefly when crossing the track

Sambar *Rusa unicolor*

1 juvenile at a watering hole at Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

1 ventured briefly out of the undergrowth at Elephant Mountain area, Cat Tien; 2 approached one of the feeding stations at one of the Cat Tien observation hides

