

- Thailand 18th – 30th November 2013

Phil Telfer + Mark Bibby.

A quick summary of a twelve day search for mammals in North and Central Thailand guided by Rattapon Kaichid (known as Tu) who together with his wife Jan runs Nature Focus Thailand, they can be very highly recommended. Many thanks to Jon Hall for their email contact which is Krattapon@yahoo.com

Tu is a really nice guy to travel with , he's an excellent all-round wildlife guide and his connections help smooth the way in many of the national parks.

Based on our target species, Tu and Jan put together the following itinerary:

- Three days – Huai Kha Khaeng wildlife sanctuary
- Three days - Khao Yai national park
- Four days – Kaeng Krachan national park
- One day – Salt pans for Spoon-billed sandpiper
- One day – Ban Tha Kham bay for Irawaddy dolphin and Finless porpoise

This was quite easy going, giving us a fair bit of time in each of the main centres. I think we did very well scoring 43 species with good views of most of these although we had no luck with any of the mega mammals such as Clouded leopard, Marbled cat, Golden cat or Sun bear which are all possibles and seen from time to time. A couple of weeks before our visit a group had seen a Golden cat catching a dove in front of one of the bird blinds. A Sun bear had been seen crossing the road one morning near the top of the mountain at Kaeng Krachan and a group that arrived there at the same time as us went on to see a Binturong an hour or so later.

Huai Kha Khaeng

HKK is a four to five hour drive north of Bangkok and we stayed at the Hup Patad resort about 20 minutes from the park entrance.

This is a good site for Banteng and also has Wild water buffalo. The Banteng are best looked for from a lookout tower at a clearing in the forest which is also a display ground for Green Peafowl. We had no luck here on the first afternoon and on the second day the park authorities decided to close the tower as the peafowl were displaying. Tu managed to get us in there late afternoon for a quick look and this time we got lucky when three Banteng came out of the forest to the edge of the clearing. We were told that Dholes are often seen from this tower as well.

We usually had lunch in the small restaurant by the park headquarters and saw several Black giant squirrels in the trees around here. The third night was spent camping inside the park which gave us the chance for a bit of on-foot spotlighting. After a slowish day we notched up 4 species within 15 minutes of turning the lights on, Wild boar, Common palm civet, 2 Golden jackals and Burmese hare which proved to be common on the campground clearing.

Hog deer



Smooth otter



Khao Yai

Spotlighting drives are off-limits in most Northern Thai parks, which is pretty frustrating given the potential for some exciting species. One exception is Khao yai where one hour organised drives leave en masse at 7pm and again at 8pm. Never seen anything like it with up to 60 vehicles all out together on the same circuit mostly blinding the Sambar deer that hang out around the park headquarters. There is much development going on here and far too many people when we visited, mostly weekenders up from Bangkok. We did take a couple of the night drives and saw Slow loris, Small indian civet, Small-toothed palm civet and many Malayan porcupines. The spotlighters we were assigned put in a good effort for us though and tried to keep away from the other vehicles, one of them doing really well to find us a feeding Tail-less fruit bat. I visited Khao yai many years ago and thought it was a great park then but can't really recommend it now although you may do better avoiding the weekends. On our last day here we took an excursion to a hilltop lookout on the edge of the park where we spotted a small group of Gaur in a distant clearing in the forest.

Variable squirrel.



Kaeng Krachan

This was my favourite park much quieter than Khao Yai. It's a couple of hours drive south from Bangkok and a large area of forest stretching up into the mountains along the border with Burma. We stayed here at the highly recommended Ban Maka resort. There is one road through the park which runs for about an hour and a half from the park entrance to the top of the mountain, with a campground about a third of the way up. There aren't many walking trails so most wildlife watching is from the road or along the streams. There are three streams to cross which may be difficult without a 4x4 and probably means the closure of the high part of the park during the wet season.

We went to an area outside the park where Stump-tailed macaques are reliably seen but we also saw a couple on the road near the park entrance.



Stump-tailed macaque.

At the ranger station at the top of the hill they throw food scraps out the back of the kitchen. This is a good spot to see Yellow-throated Marten and this area is also good for Fea's Muntjac. The road continues for 7km. past the small café here and dead-ends at a clearing in the forest. This road has great potential and we drove it several times, seeing two Crab-eating Mongooses and this is where others had seen Sun bear and Binturong.



Fea's munjac.



Yellow-throated marten.

One night was spent camping in the park and the campground here also has a small restaurant where they put food scraps out each evening. This attracts many Malayan porcupines and after a couple of hours we also saw a couple of Masked palm civet and later a couple of Brush-tailed porcupines.



Brush-tailed porcupine.

Staying at the campground again gives you the chance to do some spotlighting on foot. We saw Masked palm civet, Red muntjac, a sleeping White-handed gibbon and Slow loris are sometimes found here. You may get away with an unofficial night drive to the top of the mountain and back . A friend, Roy Taylor did this last year and had a Clouded leopard cross the road in front of his car.



Indochinese Ground squirrel.

Ban Tha Kham.

On our last morning in Thailand we took a boat out to look for Irawaddy dolphins which are commonly seen and Finless porpoise which are only occasionally seen. The weather wasn't ideal and our boatman didn't seem too hopeful. After about 3 hours we were heading back in and had more or less given it up when we found 3 or 4 Irawaddy dolphins and had decent views for a minute or two before they disappeared again. No luck with the Finless porpoises although they had apparently been seen quite recently.

Mammals in order seen.

1. Hog deer.
2. Black giant squirrel.
3. Pallas' squirrel.
4. Grey-bellied squirrel.
5. Northern Treeshrew.
6. Red muntjac.
7. Long-tailed macaque.
8. Variable squirrel.
9. Eld's deer.
10. Burmese striped squirrel.
11. Banteng.
12. Sambar.
13. Smooth coated otter.
14. Black-bearded tomb bat.
15. Long-winged tomb bat.
16. Wild boar.
17. Common palm civet.
18. Golden jackal.
19. Burmese hare.
20. Northern pig-tailed macaque.
21. Slow loris.
22. Small indian civet.
23. Malayan porcupine.
24. Northern tail-less fruitbat.
25. Small toothed palm civet.
26. Gaur.
27. White-handed gibbon.
28. Pileated gibbon.
29. Lyle's flying fox.
30. Stump-tailed macaque.
31. Yellow-throated marten.
32. Fea's muntjac.
33. Dusky langur.
34. Banded langur.
35. Crab-eating mongoose.
36. Leopard cat.
37. Indochinese ground squirrel.
38. Masked palm civet.
39. Brush-tailed porcupine.
40. Croslet horseshoe bat.
41. Lesser mousedeer.
42. Intermediate roundleaf bat.
43. Irawaddy dolphin.