



Laotian Endemic Mammals

April 2023

Trip Report

Immediately after our Vietnam Rare Primates Group Tour, our direct Martin Royle headed to Laos to meet a solo client on a private tour to try and see the amazing Kha-nyou (also known as the Laotian Rock Rat). This client (Dr. Stewart Summers) is after seeing a member of every family of mammals in the world. He has already ticked off a member of every bird family and only has a few mammal families left. He has done several trips with Royle Safaris in the past and we have helped him with fulfilling some of these remaining families.

The discovery of the Kha-nyou in 2005 resulted in a new family of rodents being described and ever since it was an animal high on Stewart's (and many other mammalwatchers lists). The problem came in the form that hardly anyone had ever seen one and the locations where they live was not fully known. That all changed a couple of years ago when an intrepid mammalwatcher (and specific cat enthusiast) Stuart Chapman found a likely location in Laos. He was living there working for WWF and had explored most of the country and found this specific location.

This trip is both one of success and one of failure. Firstly we (Martin and Stewart) managed to get to the location that Stuart had visited and contact the same local, we were successful in seeing endemic **Lao Langurs** as well as the **Kha-nyou** (and several other species of small mammals), however the intense interest some of the local (hunters – trackers – poachers (probably a combination of all)) showed in us wanting to see one was not being channelled in the right way. We were increasingly concerned that they were going to capture some, maybe even kill some, redistribute some to areas easier for people to see them and other things which would heavily impact the small local population of Kha-nyou. We managed to find our Kha-nyou using the thermal scope and scouting out areas around the accommodation (which backed up along a huge limestone cliff face). This was on the last day (after dark) and it showed that we were perhaps looking in the wrong places previously. We also visited some local caves (there are huge caverns and extensive cave systems throughout the region) and most had some very nice bat colonies. We have done our best to ID these species, but they are not 100% confirmed in all cases.

Due to the nature of locals and the very likely scenario that certain numbers of Kha-nyou will be heavily disturbed or even killed with an increase of people coming to see this species, we have decided not to disclose any more information. In conversation with Stuart Chapman and Jon Hall the original trip report that was quite revealing in how to get to this place has been removed. Royle Safaris will be working over the next few years with a purpose of trying to come up with a better plan to see the species without disturbing the species. Like we did on this trip, where the one we saw was not trapped, touched or disturbed in anyway, but we are conscious that local people were out in other areas (trying to help us) looking for them and their methods of doing this were likely not to the standards we require for repeated wildlife watching.

We do believe that this species can be seen repeatedly without disturbance in the future, but it is not quite there yet. One of the other reasons for this report is that we managed to see Lao langurs (which are possibly more endangered than Kha-nyou) at the rock view point (which is widely known) and that is important as we were the first mammalwatchers to visit the location since they had installed a very popular zipline through their habitat. It was unknown to Stuart and others who had visited in the past whether the zipline and subsequent development of the area had resulted in the population of langurs leaving the area or dying out completely. So we are happy to announce they are still there and can still be seen with relative ease.

For those of the birding persuasion we also had some nice views of the endemic Bare-faced Bulbul at the rock view point where we saw the Lao Langur.

Species List

Mammals

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Trident roundleaf bat	<i>Aselliscus stoliczkanus</i>
2	Variable squirrel	<i>Callosciurus finlaysonii</i>
3	Cave nectar bat	<i>Eonycteris spelaea</i>
4	Ashy roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros cineraceus</i>
5	Intermediate roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros larvatus</i>
6	Kha-nyou	<i>Laonastes aegmaumus</i>
7	Western bent-winged bat	<i>Miniopterus magnater</i>
8	Horsfield's bat	<i>Myotis horsfieldii</i>
9	Northern woolly horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus perniger</i>
10	Cambodian striped squirrel	<i>Tamias rodolphii</i>
11	Lao langur	<i>Trachypithecus laotum</i>
12	Northern treeshrew	<i>Tupaia belangeri</i>

Many seen in groups in several different caves
Seen well and close at the rock view point and also near the Kha-nyou location
Small numbers seen in smaller caves in Kha-nyou location
Small numbers seen in smaller caves in Kha-nyou location
Many seen in large and small colonies in various different caves
A couple possible sightings (briefly in low light) when staking out locations in early morning / evening but in hindsight may have been tree-shrews which seemed common. One was found with a thermal in between rocks in an outcrop at the base of a cliff at night. Found in spotlight and was unmistakably Kha-nyou, distinctive nose and bushy tail ruling out other species. Seen as it was in a rock crevice and then disappeared into the gaps in between the rocks. We waited for a long time, but it didn't emerge again.
Small numbers seen in smaller caves in Kha-nyou location
Small numbers seen in various caves
Many seen in large and small colonies in various different caves
Seen in the forest nearby Kha-nyou location
A couple seen at distance at the rock view point. Spotting scope would have been better than binoculars
Several seen in the forests around the Kha-nyou locaiton

Note: Some bats identified 100% at roosts or with good views. Others identified with spectrograms in combination with sightings (no spectrograms without visual confirmation are recorded as a sighting), behaviour and habitat – so not 100% but best educated guesses. For more information please email me.

Birds

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
2	Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
3	Striated swallow	<i>Cecropis striolata</i>
4	Asian emerald dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
5	Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>

6	White-rumped shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
7	Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
8	Ashy drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
9	Black drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
10	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
11	Blue whistling thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>
12	Bare-faced bulbul	<i>Nok hualon</i>
13	Scarlet minivet	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i>
14	Sooty-headed bulbul	<i>Pyconotus aurigaster</i>
15	Black-crested bulbul	<i>Rubigula flaviventris</i>
16	Pied bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
17	Sooty babbler	<i>Stachyris herberti</i>

A small numbers seen around the rock view point – not difficult to find or see well.

Reptiles

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Common sun skink	<i>Eutropis multifasciata</i>
2	Tokay gecko	<i>Gekko gekko</i>
3	Flat-tailed house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus platyurus</i>

Amphibians

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Asian common toad	<i>Duttaphrynus melanostictus</i>
2	Green puddle frog	<i>Occidozyga lima</i>

Freshwater Fishes

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1		<i>Cyclocheilichthys armatus</i>
2		<i>Henicorhynchus ornatipinnis</i>



Lao Langur (the small black blob on the far right of the limestone karst – with the white head) – the below picture is taken of the same rocks after the langur moved – to confirm it wasn't just a monkey shaped and coloured rock 😊



Lao Langur-less rock formation



Likely Northern Woolly Horseshoe Bat



Likely Intermediate Roundleaf Bat



Bare-faced Bulbul

