









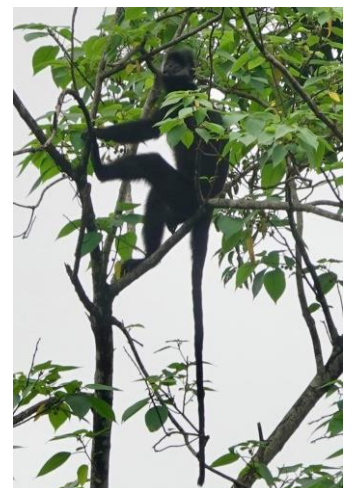
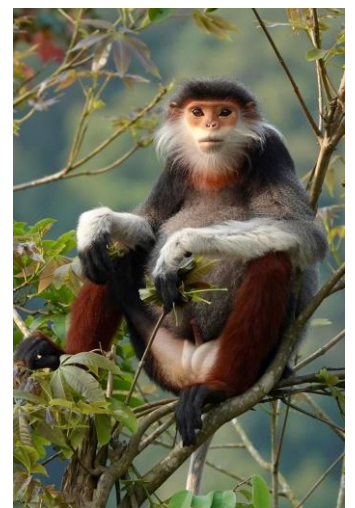
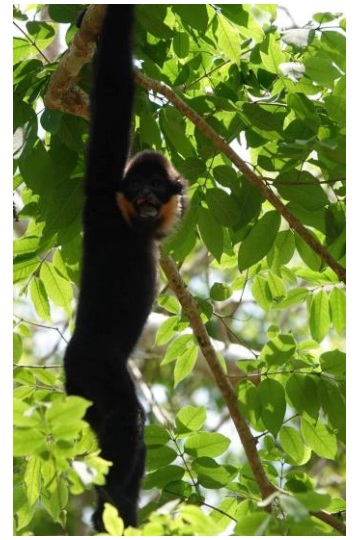


## Vietnam's Rare Primates Tour

**Destinations:** South, Central & Northern Vietnam

**Duration:** 14 Days **Dates:** 1<sup>st</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023

-  Hiking through the last remaining protected forests in South & North Vietnam
-  Having spectacular close views of all three species of endangered Douc Langurs
-  Spotlighting various rodents as well as Large Indian Civet & Burmese Ferret-badger
-  Boat trips in the stunning Van Long Reserve looking for birds, bats & primates
-  After a lot of perseverance we were finally rewarded with Pygmy Slow Loris sighting
-  Seeing various iconic reptiles including Siamese Crocodiles & Malay Krait
-  48 mammal species spotted including Guar, Yellow-throated Marten & many bats
-  Having the expert help of one of Vietnam's top primate specialist guides throughout
-  Observing over 133 species of birds including the Germain's peacock pheasant
-  12 different species of primates recorded during this trip on this successful trip



### Tour Leader / Guides

Martin Royle (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)  
 Luc (Vietnam Primate / Wildlife Guide)  
 Xuan (Ho Chi Minh – Cat Tien Driver)  
 Phoung, Hanh & Hai (Cat Tien Drivers)  
 Buan & Thuy (Central & Northern Vietnam Drivers)  
 Trong (Van Long – Hanoi Driver)  
 Huyen (Cuc Phong Primate Centre Guide)  
 Anh, Trang, Hoa & Thuy (Van Long Boat Drivers)

### Participants

Dr. Cheryl Antonucci  
 Mrs. Deborah Bradley  
 Ms. Jill Clark  
 Mr. Ewan Davies  
 Mr. Richard McManus  
 Ms. Judy Parrish  
 Mr. Paul Sutherland  
 Ms. Lynne Venart

### Overview

**Day 1:** Ho Chi Minh –  
Cat Tien NP

**Days 2-4:** Cat Tien NP

**Day 5:** Cat Tien NP –  
Danang

**Day 6:** Nui Thanh

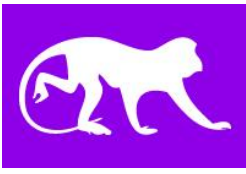
**Day 7:** Son Tra / Bach  
Ma NP

**Day 8:** Bach Ma NP

**Day 9-11:** Phong Nha NP

**Days 12-14:** Van Long –  
Cuc Phoung

**Day 15:** Hanoi - Home



# Day by Day Breakdown

## Overview

Vietnam is home to 25 species of wild primate, for such a small country with a huge human (not one of the primates included) population this is incredible. This tour aims to showcase as many of these primate species as possible, we did not see all 25 (nor did we attempt to see them all), but we did see all but two of our targeted primate species. This tour travels from the south to the north and visits various locations which are among some of the only places where certain species still cling to existence.

South East Asian wildlife (and particularly Vietnamese) is at a turning point in terms of its conservation; currently there are still huge tracts of forest intact, with connecting forest corridors linking vital protected areas and cross boundary forests; where many endangered species still have large enough populations to survive into the future. However this can only happen with the right level of protection and awareness from the local people and their respective governments, as well as international eco-tourism really taking off here. But South East Asia is also the part of the world that is seeing huge deforestation and the proliferation in the illegal animal trade. The billions of US dollars in illegal logging and the animal trafficking trade is taking its toll, so now is the time for people (international tourists and locals) to appreciate what wonderful national parks there are here and also contribute to the local economies so that the locals begin to see that intact forests and living animals are worth more alive than exploited.

Whilst on this particular trip the primates are major focus; with some of the rarest species in the world inhabiting these forests. Some of the langurs, gibbons and douc-langurs are so endangered that there are only 50-100 left in the world. Some of these species are intensively studying and we have a very good chance of seeing them, some are not protected very well at all and so they will be harder to find, but we will endeavour to do our best at all locations or course. Once again we employed the best local guides at each national park who will work alongside our Vietnamese primate specialist guide and our own zoologist escort to try and find as many species as possible.

Alongside the primates we will also be watching out for the larger species that inhabit these forests such as sambar deer, muntjacs and of course a whole host of nocturnal species from rodents and civets to mousedeer. We will also be looking in various bat roosts and enjoying the prolific bird life throughout the varied habitats as we travelled south to north.

We at Royle Safaris hope you enjoy reading this trip report and that it takes you back to your time in Cambodia and Vietnam; and all of the places we visited as well as the sightings log that will hopefully help you identify some of the animals you took pictures of.

Please contact us if you have any questions or queries we are always happy to help.



## Day 1 **Ho Chi Minh / Cat Tien NP**

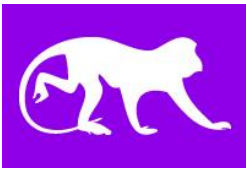
## *Travelling & Wildlife Watching*

Some of the group had arrived the day before and overnighted in the city and a couple of people arrived this morning. Once we had collected everyone from the airport and we were all together in the city we had lunch and then departed in our coach to head north-east to Cat Tien National Park.

Cat Tien is the most popular park in the country and also one of the largest protected areas of forest in South East Asia, the park is home to several species which have their largest populations living here. Leaving the city we crossed the Megan River and then headed into more rural areas arriving at the border of the park at around 4:30pm. The border of the park at the main entrance is a river and so we disembarked the coach and took the ferry over the river to the park. We then settled into the accommodation and had dinner. Around the accommodation and restaurant there were some **Pallas's squirrels** feeding on a fruiting fig tree. There were also some nice birds around here including Asian palm swifts, heart-spotted woodpecker, black drongo, red-billed magpie and lesser racket-tailed drongos. We then headed out for our first spotlighting session after dinner.

One of the first things we noticed was evidence of Asiatic elephants which had been around here (close to the headquarters and accommodation) just four days ago. The resident herd of elephants moves around the park, but they don't tend to stay in the same places for multiple days and so it was unlikely that they would come back around here in the few days we were here.

The insect life was prolific with some very interesting and large moths either side of the road as we walked along with spotlights and thermals looking for anything of interest.



We did have an arboreal rat (not seen by everyone) in dense vegetation which we identified as **chestnut white-bellied rat**. On the path we found an irregular bent-toed gecko on the path as well as many species of spiders and a couple of scorpions on the pathway also. Another cool invertebrate sighting we had was a possible mating aggregation of white *pyrops coelestinus*.

The final sighting of note tonight was a **common palm civet** which Ewan found in his thermal as it crossed the road behind us. We then returned to the accommodation for the night before an early start tomorrow and our first full day looking for wildlife in Cat Tien National Park.

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## Day 2      **Cat Tien NP**

## *Sightseeing*

Predawn this morning Judy was out and around the headquarters she spotted a **small Indian civet**. Then at 6am the group gathered around listening to the wonderful sounds of calling yellow-cheeked gibbons and it was only a matter of seconds before we had amazing views of one of the families of **yellow-cheeked gibbons** as they come out of the forest to visit the headquarters and in particular the rehabilitation centre here. There are some captive gibbons here and the wild **gibbons** come to feed and interact with these gibbons. Which was great for us as they come low down and in the relative open and offer amazing close views and we could observe some nice behaviours.

Whilst we watched the family of 5 **gibbons** including a very playful and entertaining juvenile there were also several **Pallas's squirrels** around in the same large trees and we also spotted a **Cambodian striped squirrel** moving quickly through the same trees as the swinging and calling **gibbons** including a female and her young baby.

The main reason the wild **gibbons** come here each morning (and most afternoons) is because they learnt the feeding schedule of the captive gibbons, so instead of the wild ones stealing all of the captives' food, the staff of the centre now leave some food out specifically for the wild ones. There also seemed to be a good amount of teasing and play from the wild individuals towards the captive ones too.

Along with the gibbons and squirrels we also had some nice bird sightings this morning including black-and-red broadbills, blue-eared barbets, oriental pied hornbills, scarlet minivets, black-naped orioles, orange-breasted trogon, white-rumped shama, green-billed malkoha and many more. Also seen this morning before we had breakfast we had a large male **northern pig-tailed macaque**.

After breakfast we went out into the park deeper, along the way we had nice views of common emerald dove, a very nice female laced woodpecker as well as more **Pallas's squirrels** and then Paul spotted a stunning blue forest lizard at the base of a tree next to the road. Other than that it was pretty quiet, the first drive can often be like that as we spent the best primate viewing time with the gibbons by the headquarters and so the other primates had largely gone deeper into the forest and were resting and being less obvious as the heat increased towards midday. We would have plenty more chances to go out and look for other primates in the following mornings.

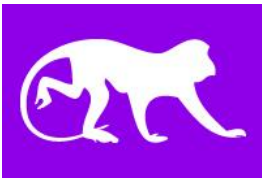
We then returned to the headquarters and had lunch and once it had got a little cooler we went back out on a walk. We visited a couple of hollow trees which were known bat roost sites nearby. Along the way we found a **northern slender-tailed treeshrew** in the vegetation next to the pathway and then at the first roost we had several **lesser false vampire bats** and then nearby we had (in a very bright and open hollow) a mother and baby **northern woolly horseshoe bat**. We walked down river bank and enjoyed some birding there which resulted in a brief scla-breasted partridge, common iora, greater iora, oriental bushwarbler, oriental dollarbird, heart-spotted woodpecker among others. Then as the temperatures dropped further we went deeper into the forest and towards some known locations of primates. We quickly had brief views of one **black-shanked douc** in an isolated tree near the road, but it bolted straight away and didn't come back into view. It was a nice view but very quick and so we carried on and then found two groups of **black-shanked doucs**. Each group had around 5 individuals that we could see but the first group only offered brief views again as they spotted us and moved away quickly through the canopy. The second group gave us better views and it looked bigger than the first group by a few. This group had a nice adult male we could see well and we had better views which was nice.

We then found another lone male **northern pig-tailed macaque** and nearby we had amazing views of a long male **black-shanked douc** which was much more relaxed than the others we had seen so far and posed for us and gave us prolonged views around sunset. Then as the light was fading and we were heading back to the accommodation we had a larger group cross the road above us. We stopped with some of the group of both sides of the road and watched them moving above us as they moved from the interior of the forest towards the riverside. Heading closer to the headquarters we found a troop of **northern pig-tailed macaques** getting ready for roosting and then near the buildings a **lesser mousedeer** crossed the road in front of us.

We then had dinner and afterwards headed out, we quickly found a pair of great-eared nightjars, however with it being at night we couldn't see and appreciate this wonderful bird in its full glory. Sometimes called the 'dragon-bird' it is nice to see in the daylight. If you're not familiar with this species, I recommend looking it up on Google.

Also before we left the main headquarters we had views of **sambar** in the ground grazing in picnic areas and a nice large tokay gecko.

Our main target would be the pygmy slow loris, however we quickly realised that the chances were smaller than usual. They are usually seen in the first 200-300m of bamboo forest from the headquarters heading towards Crocodile Lake. However the park had recently burnt the vegetation next to the road during this stretch of forest, the burning was very disturbing to all wildlife that lives in the bamboo and so the slow lorises would have moved from



the roadside to the riverside. However the bamboo here is largely impenetrable and we were able to convince anyone to hire us a boat and spotlight from the river, the national park was against this for reasons we couldn't get to the bottom of. We would try anyway, but our chances had decreased significantly.

Walking around the parts of the bamboo and forest patches we could get to resulted in sleeping **pig-tailed macaques** and **doucs** as well as coming across many noisy termites, the soldiers create a rattling noise by hitting their heads against their tunnels when threatened. Leading to a rustling noise just off the path nearly everywhere we walked.

Other animals we found tonight included a dark-sided chorus frog, some nice scorpions and an unidentified long-tailed rat we had in the thermal but couldn't find. All in all a quiet night again.



### Day 3 **Cat Tien NP**

### *Sightseeing*

We were out at around 5:15am and headed towards Crocodile Lake as we went to look for primates as they would be starting their days.

There were many groups of **black-shanked doucs** and many were seen much better than yesterday as they climbed around either side of the road and above us as they crossed the road. It was great to see this endangered primate so well and see numerous families doing well. We also saw a male and female Siamese fireback cross the road and several **Pallas's squirrels** in the trees around.

We then returned to the headquarters for breakfast and afterwards went for a walk along some of the trails. We found a pair of green-eared barbets, one of which was busy making a nesting hole in a dead tree. A little further along Paul found a cordyceps fungus which had taken over an ant and we found the desiccated carcass of the ant with the fungus growing tall out of its head on the top of a bush.

We stopped for a group shot at a huge *Polyalthia thorelii* tree, the buttress roots are over 5m tall alone and the tree must be one of the oldest trees in South East Asia. We continued the walk and came out of the forest and back to the road and found a pair of raptors (oriental honey buzzards and crested goshawk), the former posing on a branch and the latter soaring above.

We returned to the headquarters for lunch, during lunch and afterwards clouds started to gather and the thunder started to get louder before it rained heavily, just before lunch Richard found and had nice views of a family of **yellow-cheeked gibbons**. At 4pm we headed out as the rain had stopped and we hoped for increased activity after the rain. As we drove to Crocodile Lake we found more **black-shanked doucs** however as we got to the lake it started to rain again and we didn't see very much, just some more **pig-tailed macaques** and **black-shanked doucs** hunkering down. Coming back towards the headquarters we went from the forest to the patches of grasslands on the other side of the headquarters and found several **sambar** grazing and had nice views of green peafowl before coming back to the headquarters and finding **lesser short-nosed fruit bats** roosting in the restaurant and then after dinner we were back out looking again for pygmy slow lorises.

It was another very quiet night unfortunately, we found several scorpions with the help of Deb's blacklight (including one eating another scorpion), we also found a pair of **lesser mousedeer** just off the trail and in the forest as well as nice views of a oriental whipsnake which was resting on branches just above the pathway.

We then returned to the accommodation for the night and hoped for more luck tomorrow.

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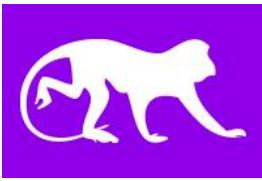
### Day 4 **Cat Tien NP**

### *Wildlife Watching*

This morning we were out again at 5:15am to try and find the rarely seen Annamese silver langur, along the way to the best place for the langur we had a troop of **black-shouk douc** over the road which gave us nice views. As we watched this large troop of **doucs** we heard gibbons calling nearby and we scanned each individual in the group as the silver langurs are often found in larger douc troops. But there were none in this troop.

We then left and walked some of the way towards Crocodile Lake through the forest, we found a couple more smaller groups of **black-shanked doucs** and had nice views of males, females and juveniles as they looked down on us. We also had a nice close green-legged partridge before we returned to the road and vehicle and drove back to the headquarters for breakfast. On the way back we had a male Siamese fireback displaying on the road in good light, displaying to an unseen female.

At breakfast around the rehabilitation centre we had the resident **yellow-cheeked gibbons** around and once again putting on a great show for us. Along with the **gibbons** there was also a large troop of **northern pig-tailed macaques** around the headquarters this morning too.



After lunch at around 2pm the group split. Jill had been having a little trouble walking over the uneven ground on the trail to Crocodile Lake and so Jill and Martin hired a vehicle and went on a safari to the grasslands whilst the rest of the group went with Luc to walk the trail to Crocodile Lake.

On the jeep safari there were many red jungle fowls and green peafowls seen in the patches of grassland and from one of the watch towers we had nice views of a small herd of **guar**. These huge bovines are not too common in Vietnam anymore and Cat Tien is the best place to see them, they sometimes come to the open meadows to graze in the late afternoons and we were lucky enough to see this group and watch them. But even from this distance they were noticeably nervous as they could tell we were in the watch tower. The group had a huge male **gaur** as well as several females and younger males and well as a couple of calves.

Along the way back we spotted several **sambar** and had nice views of a male **northern red muntjac** in a meadow just as the sun was going down and the heavens opened and it started to rain heavily.

The group at Crocodile Lake had some very nice **black-shanked doucs** including amazing views of a female and baby who were very relaxed. At the lake there were several of the critically endangered Siamese crocodiles, they were nearly extinct here several years ago and then reintroductions occurred to boost their numbers and now the lake has perhaps the largest population of this species in the world. Some were in the water and only visible by their tell-tale eyes, ears and noses protruding above the water, whilst some were basking on the shore and in full view.

Also around the lakeside restaurant was a large troop of **long-tailed macaques** which are usually the most common primate species in many South East Asian countries but here they can be difficult to see outside of this troop which lives around the restaurant at the lake.

After dinner the group walked back to the vehicle and most of this was after dark in the forest, they had a pair of **lesser mousedeer** as well as a **large Indian civet** and Ewan and Deb spotted a **Malay porcupine** briefly but the rest of the group couldn't get onto it.



## Day 5 **Cat Tien NP / Danang**

## *Wildlife Watching & Travelling*

This morning was another early start for one last chance to find the Annamese silver langur, however this morning Deb and Richard decided to hire one of the pheasant photography hides instead of going into the forest with the rest of the group.

Whilst looking for the elusive Annamese silver langur (which we failed to see) we did have a single **black-shanked douc** and many birds including red-bellied parakeets, oriental dollarbirds, oriental pied hornbills and thick-billed green pigeons. We continued and had several more sightings of **black-shanked doucs** dotted around the forest, including mothers and youngsters and larger groups. Whilst driving through the forest roads we had a brief **yellow-throated marten** cross the road before we got back to the headquarters and met up with Deb and Richard.

The pheasant hide was a great success which saw a male Germain's peacock pheasant which showed up and gave amazing views and great picture opportunities. Also around the hide were several **northern treeshrews** and **Indochinese ground squirrels**.

We breakfasted and then packed up, leaving at around 9am and heading back to Ho Chi Minh City, we arrived and checked into our flight to Danang, had lunch at the airport and flew without issues. We arrived in Danang and met our new driver and were taken to our hotel near the small forest reserve of Nui Thanh. We had dinner and got a good nights sleep.

## Day 6 **Nui Thanh / Son Tra Reserves**

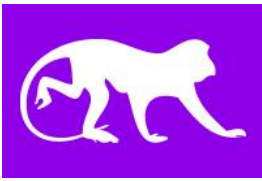
## *Wildlife Watching & Travelling*

This morning at 5:30am we left the hotel and were driven to the small remnants of forest which are home to the largest population of the critically endangered grey-shanked douc langurs in the world. We arrived at the site and walked slowly up the hill towards the best forest. It was extremely hot today, the hottest it had been so far and we were not sure if we had missed the activity period for these notoriously shy primates.

At around 6:30am we arrived at the best location and straight away saw some movement in the tree on a ridge line. We had some fleeting glimpses of them moving and jumping in the thick vegetation. However we did get good enough views to identify them as **grey-shanked doucs**.

We staked them out and waiting for a good long time, in this time we had a female come out into the open and offer better views whilst she fed on fresh leaves in the canopy. Several more became more visible as they moved around the trees and fed.

We also spotted a pair of brown fish owls as they woke from their day roost and flew to another branch further up the slope. There was also an oriental honey-buzzard above the ridge before it landed in a large tree.



After a period of inactivity from the **doucs** they started to get moving again and this time we had better views, especially through Luc's scope. We watched for a while longer as a couple of adults and babies were giving us good views.

As the temperature increased we left the forest and went back to the hotel to freshen up before leaving for Hoi An and lunch by the beach.

After lunch we left and continued to Danang and our next hotel. After checking in we went back out to Son Tra Reserve, which is a peninsular of forest and home to some very cooperative red-shanked doucs, among other species.

We had great views of the **red-shanked doucs** close, as the road cuts through the forested slope you get views onto the canopy of the **doucs** as they sit in the tops of the trees feeding on the freshest leaves. We stayed after dark and did a little spotlighting which included coming across more **red-shanked doucs** and also some **rhesus macaques** sleeping and there were some unidentified rats, but once again no pygmy slow loris.



## Day 7 **Bach Ma National Park**

## *Travelling & Wildlife Watching*

Because of the long day yesterday and the success everyone had with the red-shanked doucs at Son Tra we decided to have a lazy morning around the hotel and then left after lunch to head to Bach Ma National Park.

We arrived in the mountainous park and drove around halfway up to the summit of the main peak here to get to our accommodation. We arrived there at around 3:30pm and straight away saw a **red-cheeked squirrel** around the kitchen area of the restaurant. We then went out for a walk at 4pm. The fog was quite thick, which is not unusual for Bach Ma at any time of year.

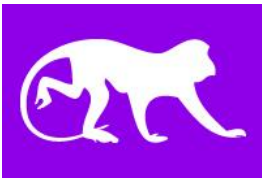
Whilst walking along and searching the forests we found a very nice female impressed tortoise. It was not very impressed by not being able to get off the road due to the high curbs, so we helped it along and got her off the road before a vehicle comes around one of these winding corners too fast.

The invertebrate life along the road is impressive with some particularly spectacular spiny stick insects dotted around. We did have brief views of an **Indochinese ground squirrel** and a silver pheasant crossing the road as well as finding some very nice bamboo orchids in flower on the side of the road. Near a café Luc saw a **inornate squirrel** and then we heard the distinctive barking alarm call of a muntjac. Which of the muntjac species it could have been we will never know, but it was close and the alarming was very persistent. We waited but the alarming didn't come closer to the road and the animal didn't cross the road. Neither did whatever the animal was alarming for. But it was exciting to know that there are some larger terrestrial animals still living in the forests here. With so much loss of larger mammals in the forests of South East Asia it can be easy to think that all have been lost, so hearing this was very pleasing.

We then went back to the accommodation for dinner and afterwards for another walk. Once again there were many insects around including a dazzling variety of moths all attracted by the lights outside the rooms and restaurant. Not long into the walk Luc spotted a **large-tooth ferret badger** down in a stream passing under the road and away into the forest. Luc went down off the road to flush out the badger, looking in all of the gaps, holes and nooks but to no avail. So he came back up and when we flashed the lights back down there a huge black and white Malaya krait was right where Luc had just been standing and thrusting his hands in between rocks. How he didn't find or spook the very venomous snake was beyond all of us and Luc was a little shaken as to how close he was to one of Asia's most venomous snakes. We did have great views of this very pretty snake as it weaved between rocks and slowly disappeared.

Further along we found some nice brown treefrogs and a chocolate brown scolopendra centipede which bright orange legs near the accommodation. Just nearby the accommodation on the road Deb found another white and black banded snake, the Butler's wolf snake, the difference being that this is completely harmless, but would use the similar colouration as the krait as mimicry so that predators would think twice about approaching the snake.





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## Day 8      **Bach Ma National Park**

## *Wildlife Watching*

This morning we woke early and went for a walk down the slope and just leaving the accommodation Martin spotted a **Lang Bian white-bellied rat** running along the wires connecting the rooms to a telegraph wire. It was the same species which was seen nearby the rooms briefly the night before. It seems like a commonly used pathway for the rodents.

As we walked down the slope and the sun started to come out we found a couple of grey-headed fish eagles perched and catching the early morning sun. Whilst watching these eagles we heard some southern white-cheeked gibbons singing their morning chorus. But despite the scanning we did we couldn't see them anywhere. We kept on walking down the slope and had good views of a **Cambodian striped squirrel** and Ewan spotted an Eurasian cuckoo, first calling and then seen.

It then started to rain as we got to a certain elevation and so we turned around and went back to the accommodation for breakfast. Then during the midmorning we waited around the accommodation and the nearby watchtower for a troop of stump-tailed macaques which often come here to feed in the morning. They were very common around the several cafes and restaurants in the park pre covid, but with the closure of the parks and the lack of food at these sites the macaques started to spend more time in the forest and so they were more unpredictable in their movements.

We didn't see the macaques but we did have good views of a pair of golden-throated barbets as well as excellent close views of a stunning male Gai Lai pricklenape lizard.

Later in the day we went back out and headed towards the summit and a cave system which was built during the war and was now home to a colony of bats. The bats were very skittish and despite there being many in the cave (all appearing to be the same species) which had been previously identified as most likely being **intermediate horseshoe bats**, we didn't have amazing views.

Further along as we continued up the road towards the summit we had a **Pallas's squirrel** moving very fast through the canopy, before the mist started to set in again. At the summit we had a mix of rain, mist and sun but did manage to scan for a while, we didn't find any primates in the trees around here but we did see another Gai Lai pricklenape and also a very nice similar frog.

We then left the summit and started headed back down, finding a huge giant earthworm on the pathway and then as we were loading up into the vehicle Deb spotted a **black giant squirrel** in the trees at eye-level, some others had views of the animal as it moved quickly through the trees and away from us.

We went back out after lunch in the afternoon and had brief views of **red-shanked doucs** behind the accommodation building, but then came some very heavy rain and they must have gone into thick vegetation and hunkered down. As the rain eased Richard had good views of some of this troop of **red-shanked doucs** overhead near the watchtower before we left for another afternoon walk. However it was a bit of a washout with some very heavy rain.

There were some frog species around including tiny bubble-nest frogs and large odorous frogs and the resident **red-cheeked squirrel** of the restaurant was seen in the mist. Other sightings of note this afternoon included a very aggressive centipede (which really took a dislike to Cheryl) as well as a woodcock, it seemed strange to see this species in the same forest we had heard gibbons calling in.

After dark the rain didn't let up and the mist was very thick and so we didn't go out for a walk, Deb did go for a little walk along the road nearby the accommodation and found another (likely the same individual) Butler's wolf snake and a nice **Lang Bian white-bellied rat** feeding on seeds low down and next to the road.

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## Day 9      **Bach Ma / Phong Nha NP**

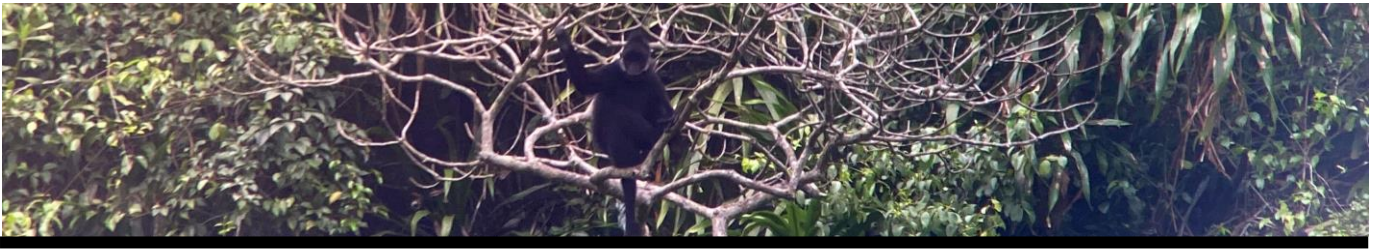
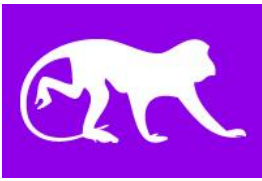
## *Travelling & Wildlife Watching*

This morning we left the accommodation in Bach Ma at around 6:30am and headed up the mountain with one last stop to try and find stump-tailed macaques and white-cheeked gibbons which had alluded us thus far. As we were loading up the vehicle we had views of the usual **red-cheeked squirrel**. So we headed up to a café at the end of the round near the summit. This was the best place to see the macaques in the past. We didn't see them but we did have a male and female silver pheasant along the path and then a small group of **red-shanked doucs** which were close and feeding actively just off the pathway.

We then drove down the mountain and left the park, it was a very misty morning and we couldn't see much into the forest as we descended.

The rest of the morning was spent with us travelling to Phong Nha National Park and we arrived around 1:30pm and checked in and had lunch. After lunch we went into the park and visited some of the areas which Luc had seen Hatinth langurs previously. It wasn't too long before we spotted our first **Hatinth langur**, it was a single animal quite high and mostly hidden, only when it moved and went behind a karst ridge did we see it well, but it was a very fleeting view. Whilst watching this individual and then waiting for it to come back into view we did have very nice views of an Asian fairy bluebird. We couldn't find another one and the only other sighting of note this afternoon was great eye level views of a black drongo feeding on caterpillars one after the other.

We then headed back to the accommodation for dinner and our first night in Phong Nha.



## Day 10 Phong Nha National Park

### *Wildlife Watching*

We started the day at 5:30am and headed into the park looking for primates. Our technique would be driving, walking scanning, driving, walking, scanning etc. At one location Luc heard northern white-cheeked gibbons calling, they were far off but probably just over the closest ridge and in another valley. Unfortunately the rugged nature of this park means that getting just over to the next valley is logistically impossible for us. We waited a while to see if they would come swinging over to our side of the ridge, but they didn't and so we headed on a little more.

We had nice close views of a female common garden lizard on the roadside bushes before we found a troop of **Assamese macques** on the rocks and in the trees moving lots and being active. They were jumping and hanging from branches just over the valley from us and offering nice views in the scope. We moved on after a while and found a second troop of **Assamese macaques** these were more sedentary and feeding when we spotted them. There were also some nice birds around this morning and we had good sightings of grey-chinned minivets, black-crested bulbuls and also a very nice crested goshawk before Luc spotted another group of primates jumping from just off the road, down away from us. But we couldn't find them again and left the park and went back to the accommodation for breakfast.

After breakfast we went for a walk at the back of the accommodation, there is a small population of Hatinth langurs living in the karst outcrops just a few paddy fields away from the accommodation. We heard a male calling and so waited for them to come out as the sun started to creep out from the misty and cloud cover which was common around here. They didn't come out before we had lunch, then after lunch we went back into the park to see if we could find any langurs inside the forest. It was quite a lot cooler temperature wise today than previous days and we were unsure how this would affect the mammals. We did have some more nice birds such as bar-winged flycatcher shrike, crimson sunbirds, olive-bellied sunbird, white-rumped shama, lesser racket-tailed drongo among others.

We moved on and had a pair of **Pallas's squirrels** in the trees nearby another solitary **Hatinth langur** in a relatively close tree to the tree and we had nice views before it climbed down the rocks and away into denser forest. We waited a while but left and then were rewarded with a larger group of **Hatinth langurs** including some very nice views, the group had several adults and youngsters and they were feeding, playing and moving around. We stayed for a while and had great views. One of the younger individuals still had an orange head.

We then returned to the accommodation and had dinner, after dark some of the group headed out to look for nocturnal animals, but the park has banned people from entering and so we had to stick to the periphery of the park and with such many people living around here and quite a lot of development we were not sure what would be around. It was quite quiet with the highlights being a barn owl and an Asiatic toad. Ewan did have some mammals in the thermal across the paddy fields which may have been Burmese hares, but they were too far to get real views of and get them in the spotlight.

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## Day 11 Phong Nha National Park

### *Wildlife Watching*

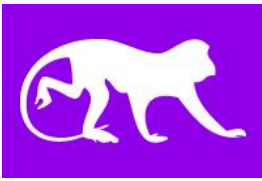
This morning we once again entered the park before breakfast and spotted a group of **Assamese macaques** on the road heading into the park. We once again heard northern white-cheeked gibbons calling, but they were still in another valley from us.

We started to scan along the misty rockfaces and forest canopies and found more **Assamese macaques** just off the road as well as another group on the other side of the valley from us. Also just off the road and in a small tree we found a black-naped monarch on its nest, offering us great views of this pretty flycatcher. The only other mammal of this morning before we went back for breakfast was a **Pallas's squirrel**.

After breakfast we split into two groups, some people went to walk around the botanical gardens in the park in the hope of seeing stump-tailed macaques as well as some birds as well as visiting a beautiful waterfall here. This group had very nice views of four white-winged magpies as well as other birds such as stripe-throated bulbul, Asian brown flycatcher, grey-throated babbler and crimson sunbirds. The other group went to visit Paradise cave which is one of the largest and most spectacular caves in the world. The cave is truly spectacular with amazing stalactites and stalagmites making shapes as it designed by Gaudi. We walked around the various caverns and explored deeper and deeper into the cave. Some of the caverns are so large that you could easily fit huge buildings inside. On leaving the cave and walking down the slope back to the entrance there was a many-banded green snake on the steps, which was the only species of note seen on the visit to the caves.

We then all met up again and went to look for wildlife in the park. Once again there were only more **Assamese macaques** seen including a large group with several young babies playing around. Then as the sun started to set





we found a breeding pair of oriental hobbies at their nest high up on a cliff face. We had great views of this small raptor as they flew around and perched on their nesting ledge.

Then back at the accommodation we had dinner and after dark went out again to see if we could see any nocturnal animals, along with various amphibians including common Asian toad, common painted toad and Annam tree frog as well as a **chestnut niviventer** and a few **Leschenault's rousettes**.



## Day 12 **Ninh Binh**

### *Travelling*

Today was a day largely of travelling as we left Phong Nha and headed north to the town of Ninh Binh and some more spectacular limestone landscapes. We left after a more relaxed start to the day at around 8am.

The 8 hour drive was uneventful, we stopped for lunch en route and made good time, arriving at Ninh Binh at around 6:30pm. We checked into our hotel which was very conveniently located over the road from Van Long Wetland Reserve, which we would be exploring tomorrow. The weather had well and truly set in around Ninh Binh whilst we were there and the fog and rain was near persistent. It was also dark when we arrived and so we settled into the rooms and had dinner with nothing else planned today.

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## Day 13 **Van Long Wetland Reserve**

### *Wildlife Watching*

This morning we had breakfast and headed out at 7am, it was still very misty and wet outside and as the visibility was around 5-10m, we delayed the start of our trip into the reserve until it cleared a little. With the conditions like this, not only wouldn't we be able to see very much (if anything), the Delacour's langurs (the main target here) would not be active until things heated and cleared up a little.

After a couple of hours we realised the weather was not relenting and so we headed out regardless to see what (if anything) we could see. The way to explore the reserve is by hiring little wooden boats driven by local people and head into the waterways in between the floating islands of vegetation and near vertical limestone karsts. This reserve was the spectacular location of the *King Kong: Skull Island* film and the landscape is really amazing (when the mist and rain cleared long enough to see it).

On the boats we found many waterbirds, including yellow bitterns, cinnamon bitterns, Eurasian kingfisher, little grebes, Asian openbills, white-throated kingfisher, little egrets, white-breasted waterhens and common moorhens among others.

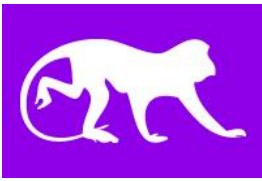
We then came to some of the frequently used rock faces by some of the resident families of **Delacour's langurs** and quickly found a family of them. They were quite close to us as they sat (mostly stationary) on the top of a narrow sharp ridge. This family was mostly adults, but there were a couple of youngsters with them. But these youngsters were the same colouration of the adults and none were orange in colour. They start to turn black and assume the adult pelage around 4 months old. We stayed around here and watched the group for a while, having nice views of them as they sat perched on the rocks and started to move around as the rain eased a little. Some of the largest adults started to feed on the fresh leaves and then a new female came over from the other side of the ridge carrying a young (orange) baby. We then had nice views of this young baby.

What was interesting was the alpha male of the family spent the whole time sat staring up at another rockface, where a second family of **Delacour's langurs** could be seen, it was a smaller group than the closer one we had been watching but their dominant male was equally staring out the other male. Over the **langurs** and causing them some stress was a soaring Bonelli's eagle.

From here we went into a nearby cave, it was a pretty shallow cave and we went as far as we could, but the presence of the boats and our torches disturbed the bats roosting here, we waited a while until they settled down in a small alcove just off the main cave. We could see them well but getting a confirmed ID was very difficult, they were roundleaf bats and it looked like two species here which could have been **intermediate roundleaf bats** (which had been recorded here before) and also **big-eared horseshoe bats**. But we couldn't be 100% sure.

We then left and started back to the entrance of the reserve, once again there were many birds around including some non-waterbird species such as sooty-headed bulbuls, long-tailed shrikes, red-whiskered bulbul and Swinhoe's white-eyes and common tailorbird.

Back at the hotel as had lunch, the afternoon was a washout (literally) with fog and rain setting in strong. After dinner Luc took some of the group out on a wet night walk, which was equally uneventful unfortunately.



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## Day 14 Cuc Phoung National Park

## Wildlife Watching

Today would be a full day spent at the nearby Cuc Phoung National Park. We left at 7:30am after breakfast and with the weather still very bad around Van Long.

We arrived around 8:30am and luckily the weather was much nicer here, although it did rain a little on and off throughout the day.

The first place we would visit is the Cave of Prehistoric Man, on the way Luc and some others in the group spotted a **Javan mongoose** and some red jungle fowl cross the road. When we arrived at the cave we walked along the raised boardwalk and then climbed the steep and slippery stairs up to the cave. This cave is of great importance as it is one of the earliest documented locations of human habitation in Vietnam. Discovered in 1966, the cave revealed human graves, stone axes, pointed bone spears, oyster shell knives, and tools for grinding dating back 7,500 years ago.

There are a few caves around here and we didn't explore every cavern, but the ones we did enter were home to several bats roosting. There were two species in the cave, one was positively identified thanks to great pictures from Cheryl and Carlos Bocos; which is **great roundleaf bat**, the second has not been 100% confirmed but according to surveys from the caves and what we could see and get on the bat detector is likely **shield-faced roundleaf bat**.

From the caves we headed back to the main entrance and the nearby rehabilitation centres which make this park so famous and popular with visitors. First we went to the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre, this is one of the best insitu rescue, breeding and reintroduction centres for primates in the world and according to their website they have rescued over 300 individuals, bred over 200 individuals and released over 100 back into the wild. All fantastic numbers, considering the very low numbers of some of Vietnam's primate species. We were shown around the rescue centre by one of their guides and got up close views of many of the country's rarest species and were told about the great work being done here. Along the way we spotted a **maritime striped squirrel** scurrying in the trees above the enclosures along with Indochinese green magpies and ashy minivets.

After the primate centre we had some lunch in the national park restaurant and then afterwards some of the group headed back to the hotel in Ninh Binh with Martin whilst the rest of the group stayed in Cuc Phoung to visit the Carnivore & Pangolin Conservation Program and the Turtle Conservation Centre. Both of these places do great work with their respective species and the group toured around both of these and had nice views of many of the rescued animals.

Then after dark Luc took them all on a spotlighting walk deep into Cuc Phoung, one final attempt to see if they could find a pygmy slow loris. Before nightfall it rained heavier and heavier and was near torrential during the night. Before dusk the group had some **Pallas's squirrels** around but nothing else of note. After dark when walking along the forested road they had many frogs, various species including dark-sided chorus frogs, Asian common toad, brown tree frog, Orlov's treefrog and John's frog. But the best was left until last, the persistence of the ever enthusiastic Luc was rewarded with a **pygmy slow loris**, this individual was spotted in Ewan's thermal and then in the spotlight as it climbed down a tree ahead of them on one side of the road and then walked across the road and climbed up a tree on the opposite side of the road. A fantastic reward for the group before returned well past midnight back at the hotel

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## Day 15 Van Long Nature Reserve / Hanoi Travelling & Wildlife Watching

This morning the group had a little trip around Van Long again (which was nice for Jill (who couldn't make the boat trip the previous day) and they had distance but nice views of some **Delacour's Langur** before they all loaded up into the vehicle and drove back to Hanoi to catch their return flights home.

# Species List

## Vietnam's Rare Primates Tour – April 2023

**Mammals** (\* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>
2	Pallas's squirrel	<i>Callosciurus erythraeus</i>
3	Inornate squirrel	<i>Callosciurus inornatus</i>
4	Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
5	Lang Bian white-bellied rat	<i>Chiromyscus langbianis</i>
6	Lesser short-nosed fruit bat	<i>Cynopterus brachyotis</i>
7	Northern smooth-tailed treeshrew	<i>Dendrogale murina</i>
8	Asian red-cheeked squirrel	<i>Dremomys rufigenis</i>
9	Asiatic elephant	<i>Elaphus maximus</i>
10	Javan mongoose	<i>Herpestes javanicus</i>
11	Great roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros armiger</i>
12	Intermediate roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros larvatus</i>
13	Shield-faced roundleaf bat	<i>Hipposideros lylei</i>
14	Yellow-cheeked gibbon	<i>Hylobates gabriellae</i>
15	Malay porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>
16	Hardwicke's woolly bat	<i>Kerivoula hardwickii</i>
17	Edward's long-tailed giant rat	<i>Leopoldamys edwardsi</i>
18	Burmese hare	<i>Lepus peguensis</i>
19	Assamese macaque	<i>Macaca assamensis</i>
20	Long-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>
21	Northern pig-tailed macaque	<i>Macaca leonina</i>
22	Rhesus macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
23	Lesser false vampire bat	<i>Megaderma spasma</i>
24	Large-toothed ferret badger	<i>Melogale personata</i>
25	Indochinese ground squirrel	<i>Menetes berdmorei</i>
26	Muntjac sp.	<i>Muntiacus sp.</i>
27	Northern red muntjac	<i>Muntiacus vaginalis</i>
28	Yellow-throated marten	<i>Mustela flavigula</i>
29	Chesnut niviventer	<i>Niviventer fulvescens</i>

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13	Asian openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
14	Oriental pied hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>
15	House swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>
16	Bonelli's eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
17	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
18	Intermediate egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
19	Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
20	Chinese pond-heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>
21	Black-headed bulbul	<i>Brachypodius melanocephalos</i>
22	Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
23	Lesser coucal	<i>Centropus bengalensis</i>
24	Greater coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
25	Asian emerald dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
26	Golden-fronted leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
27	Blue-winged leafbird	<i>Chloropsis moluccensis</i>
28	Asian woolly-necked stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
29	Olive-backed sunbird	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>
30	Ornate sunbird	<i>Cinnyris ornatus</i>
31	Indochinese green magpie	<i>Cissa hypoleuca</i>
32	Feral pigeon	<i>Columbia livia</i>
33	White-rumped shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
34	Oriental magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
35	Indochinese roller	<i>Coracias affinis</i>
36	Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
37	Racket-tailed treepie	<i>Crypsirina temia</i>
38	Common cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
39	Grey-headed canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
40	Black-and-red broadbill	<i>Cymbirhynchus macrorhynchos</i>
41	Asian palm swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
42	Lesser whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
43	Bronze drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>
44	Ashy drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucohaeus</i>
45	Black drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
46	Greater racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
47	Lesser racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>
48	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
49	White-bellied erpornis	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>
50	Great-eared nightjar	<i>Eurostopodus macrotis</i>
51	Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
52	Oriental hobby	<i>Falco severus</i>

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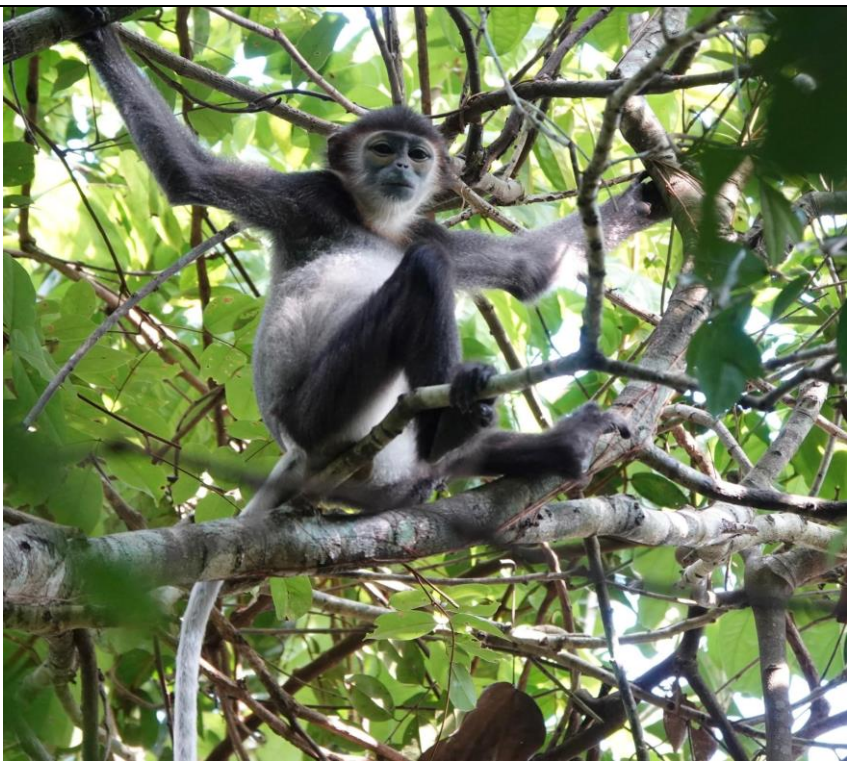
9	Hong Kong whipping frog	<i>Polypedates megacephalus</i>
10	Orlov's treefrog	<i>Rhacophorus orlovi</i>
11	Guenther's frog	<i>Sylvirana guentheri</i>

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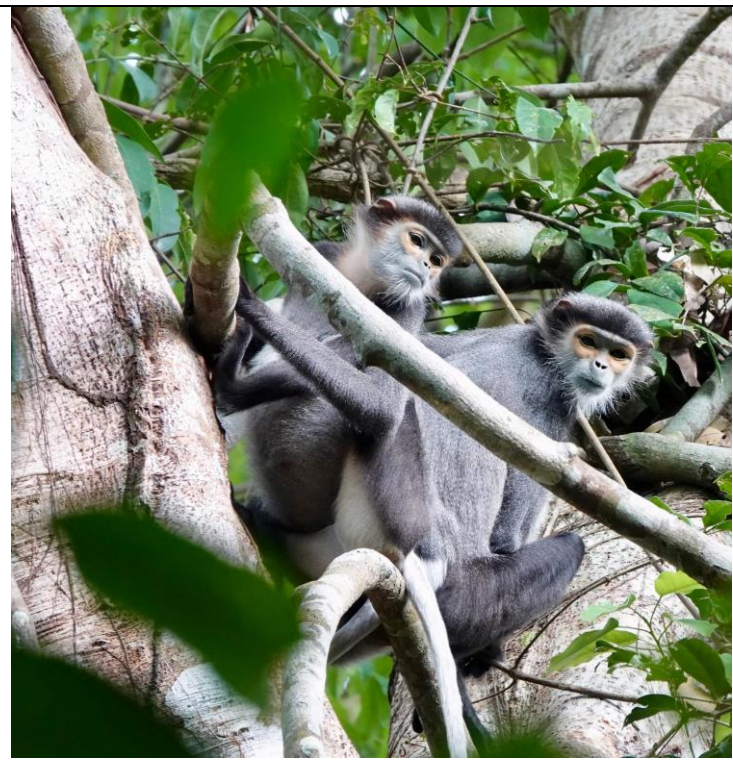
**Fishes** (\* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Bluespotted cornetfish	<i>Fistularia commersonii</i>
2	Largehead hairtail	<i>Trichiurus lepturus</i>

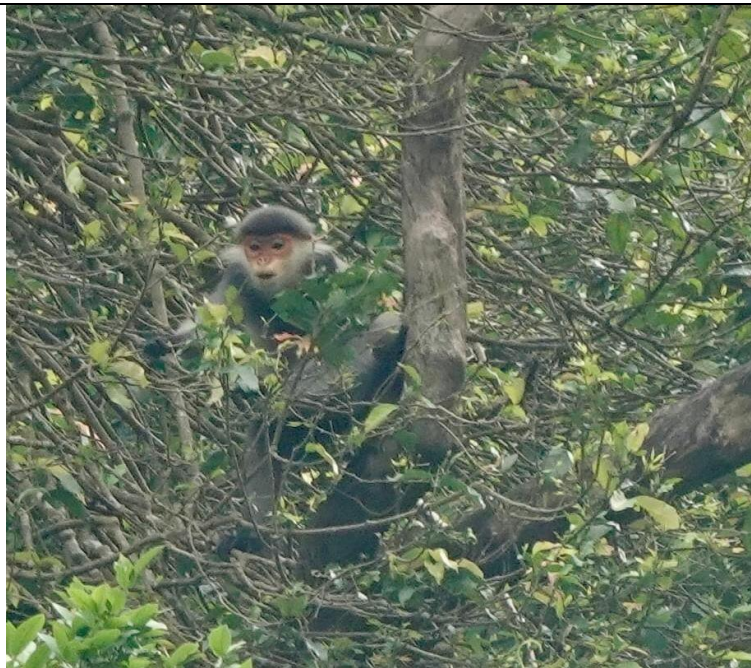
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Black-shanked Douc



Black-shanked Douc



Grey-shanked Douc



Grey-shanked Douc



Red-shanked Douc



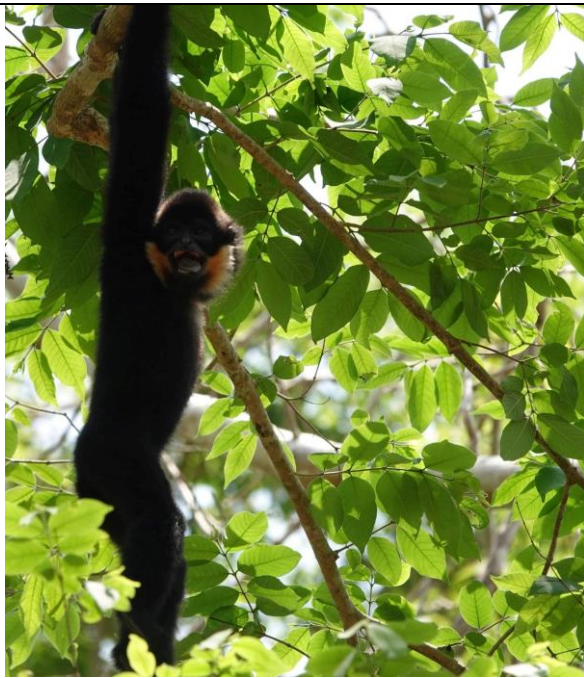
Hatinh Langur



Yellow-cheeked Gibbon



Yellow-cheeked Gibbon



Yellow-cheeked Gibbon



Yellow-cheeked Gibbon



Northern Pig-tailed Macaque



Pygmy Slow Loris (picture is a still from a video – hence the low quality)



Gaur



Asian Red-cheeked Squirrel



Lang Bian White-bellied Rat



Great Roundleaf Bat



Northern Woolly Horseshoe Bat



Green-eared Barbet



Asian Openbill



Crimson Sunbird



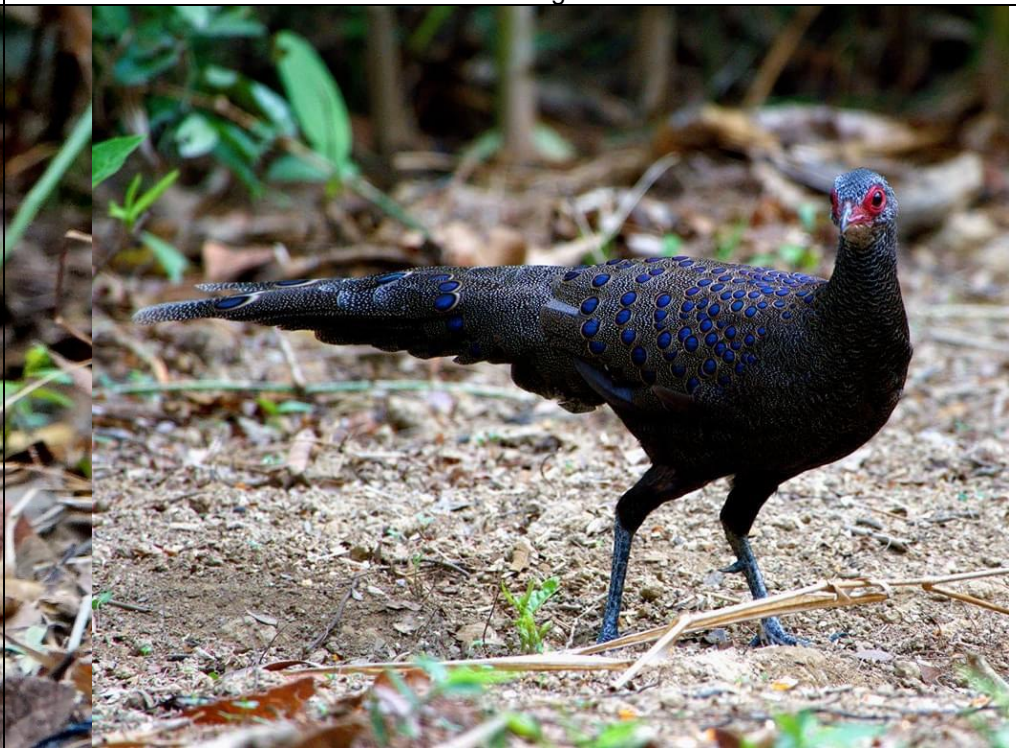
Silver Pheasant



Red Jungle Fowl



Scaly-breasted Partridge



Germain's Peacock Pheasant



Banded Kingfisher



White-rumped Shama



Greater Coucal & Indochinese Ground Squirrel



Green Peacock





Asian Emerald Dove



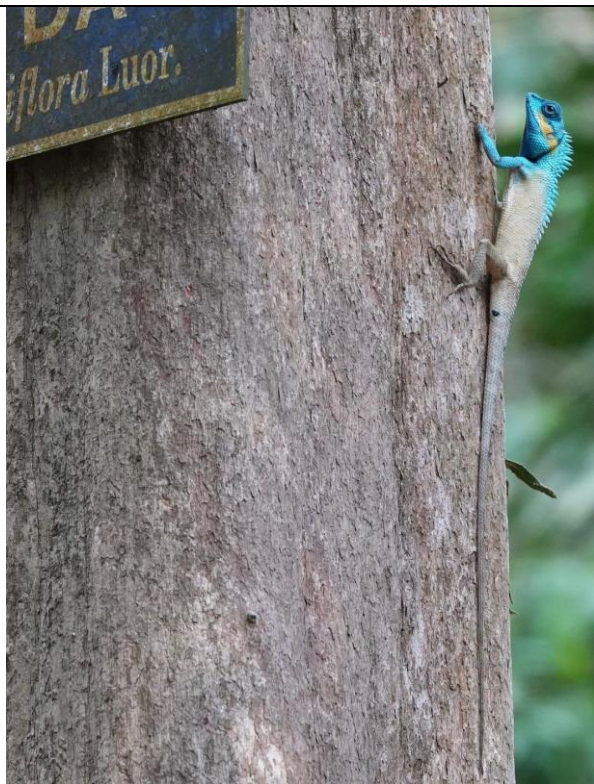
Common Garden Lizard



Gai Lai Pricklenape



Siamese Crocodile



Blue Forest Lizard



Common Sun Skink



Tokay Gecko



Impressed Tortoise



Butler's Wolf Snake



Many-banded Green Snake



Malayan Krait



Mukhlesur's Narrow-mouthed Frog



Brown Tree Frog



Guenther's Frog



Scolopendra species





Cat Tien National Park



Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park



Paradise Cave



Paradise Cave

