

Trip Report Thailand 2025

Intro

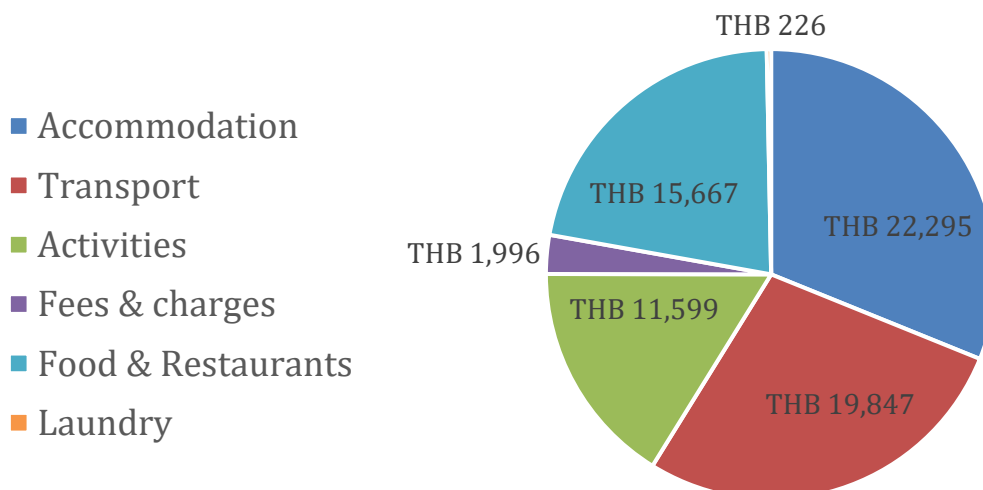
We (Jorick van de Water and Onnika van Oosterbosch) visited Thailand as part of our year-long sabbatical focused on mammals (primates mostly), birds, and visiting conservation organisations. Thailand was our first country, and we mainly visited locations in the central part before continuing to Laos.

We are not hardcore birders with set target lists or mammalwatchers staying up all night, but enjoy being in nature, arranging things (mostly) ourselves, and recording what we see. The primary goal of writing these trip reports is to give practical tips and insights for other travellers who want to self-arrange most of their trip as well. Practicalities for travel were taken mostly from trip reports on Cloudbirders and Mammalwatching, with a special shoutout for Rob & Romy Jansen's detailed trip report (2024). Similarly, **mammals**, **birds** and **herptofauna** we successfully identified are marked, to make scanning for species easier. If it doesn't have a colour, we didn't see or hear it but just mention it as a possibility.

We booked the rental car, most accommodations and most of the activities in advance to give us a smooth start of the trip. Accommodations were booked either through Booking or Agoda, or directly through WhatsApp which is sometimes easier, cheaper and/or better for the accommodation. Accommodations in national parks proved to be a bit more complicated and were booked through friends in Thailand or while travelling in Thailand.

All expenses in Thailand were meticulously administrated by Onnika and separated into different categories. In some instances, categories were combined in a single one. For example in the case of packages which are both accommodation and activity, these are categorised as activity. For the breakdown in THB, with a total cost of 71,630 THB (give or take some conversion fluctuations), see below.

All photos were all taken by me (Jorick van de Water), using Canon R7 + RF100-500L. Photos in this report and much more is posted on my Instagram: [@wild.water.photos](https://www.instagram.com/wild.water.photos). If you have any questions about our itinerary, contacts or sightings, you are very welcome to contact me there!



Itinerary overview

07-11-2025	Flight Amsterdam → Muscat → Bangkok
08-11-2025	Bangkok → Khok Kham → Phetchaburi
09-11-2025	Pak Thale / Laem Phak Bia
10-11-2025	Pak Thale → Kaeng Krachan / Bird Hide
11-11-2025	Full day Kaeng Krachan
12-11-2025	Full day Kaeng Krachan
13-11-2025	Kaeng Krachan → Cha-am
14-11-2025	Cha-am → Kui Buri
15-11-2025	Kui Buri → Khao Sam Roi Yot
16-11-2025	Khao Sam Roi Yot
17-11-2025	Khao Sam Roi Yot → Sai Kaew
18-11-2025	Sai Kaew → Black Kite roost → Khao Yai
19-11-2025	Full day Khao Yai
20-11-2025	Full day Khao Yai
21-11-2025	Full day Khao Yai
22-11-2025	Khao Yai → Sakaerat
23-11-2025	Full day Sakaerat
24-11-2025	Sakaerat → Phu Khiao (closed) → Chulabhorn
25-11-2025	Chulabhorn → Loei
26-11-2025	Loei → Nam Nao
27-11-2025	Full day Nam Nao
28-11-2025	Full day Nam Nao
29-11-2025	Nam Nao → Udon Thani
30-11-2025	Udon Thani → Vientiane (Laos)

Logistics

Transportation & Navigation

We rented a car through Hertz; a Toyota Yaris with 60,000 km on it, in good condition. Pickup at Suvarnabhumi was quick; registration at the desk to driving away took as little as 30 minutes. The total price was €363,30 for 22 days. The delivery at Udon Thani airport was similarly quick. Roads in Thailand are good and general driving behaviour is good as well. Navigation was done with (offline downloaded) Google Maps and driving times were usually very accurate. For trails in and around National parks maps.me came in very handy.

Sim Card

We paid 199 THB for a sim card with unlimited data at 7-eleven with unlimited data for 30 days. Since 2025 these sim cards are less available in the 7-eleven shops, and we had to visit several shops before we found this option. The regular tourist sim card that is more readily available is around 2000 THB.

Payments

Most payments were made in cash taken from ATMs, where most of them charge 250 THB withdrawal fee (check the ATM fee finder app). Where possible and where no extra charges were applied we paid by card. Our card (Wise) worked everywhere without issues and almost always uses a lower conversion rate in comparison to other cards. Use [this link](#) to receive a free card or make a fee-free transfer of up to €500.

Weather

Our trip started just after the end of the wet season. The first week we had some pretty heavy showers (even with some thunder) in the late afternoon and night, but nothing that impeded our activities. Temperatures were around 30 during daytime and 20 at nighttime. Though later in the month and towards Nam Nao and Loei, night temperatures dropped to as low as 3 degrees with daytime temperatures in the pleasant 20-25's.

Other practicalities

To save on buying and lugging around water bottles all the time, we brought our [Water-to-Go](#) filter bottle with us to drink tap water and reduce our plastic bottle usage. During the whole trip we did not have to buy a single water bottle. On previous travels we used an older model bottle which was not easy to drink from, but the newer models are much better. The filters can last up to 3 months when used by 2 people until it starts to get more difficult to drink water due to the filter being 'full'. If you're also interested in using this filter bottle, be sure to use the code **JWATER15** to get an additional 15% discount.

Khok Kham

After picking up the rental car we immediately drove through Bangkok on our way to Khok Kham (13.51274, 100.35052), hoping to get our eyes on a Spoon-billed Sandpiper. There is a little information building along the road, but it looked closed/deserted. We parked our car and walked the site. Although it's mostly salt pans, they have a hideout with pictures of local birds on the south side at 13.50888, 100.35044. Walking the ridges we saw more birdlife than sitting in the hideout, mostly because it overlooks just one salt pan. Eventually we were unsuccessful in our search for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, mostly because we lacked a scope, just started off birding in Thailand and it was already quite late in the morning (~12:00). Because we just started off birding, most of it was photographing most of the lookalike birds to be able to identify them later. Especially focusing on the bills in the hopes there was something spoon-billed between them all. Nonetheless, it was a good start with many species such as **Tibetan Sand-Plover**, **Greater Sand-Plover**, **Kentish Plover**, **Common Redshank**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Common Greenshank**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Sanderling** and **Dunlin**.

Bang Tabun lakes & more

From Khok Kham we went on our way towards Phetchaburi. We passed by the area known as Bang Tabun and several other locations marked on eBird. Especially the area between “Ban Kum aquaculture ponds & paddies” and “Thong Chai--Khiri Rattaya paddies” was very enjoyable with some **White-breasted Waterhen**, **Bronze-winged Jacana**, **Asian Openbill** and **Painted Storks**, both **Black-capped Kingfisher** and **Collared Kingfisher**, **Brown Shrike**, **Amur Stonechat**, **Siamese Pied Starling**, **Green Malkoha**, **Baya Weaver**, **Asian Golden Weaver**, a huge **Asian Water Monitor**, and our first primate: a **Long-tailed Macaque**.



Pak Thale

To stay close enough to make the morning drive to Pak Thale, we stayed at A+ Homotel in Phetchaburi for 720 THB per night, which we could recommend. Simple rooms and friendly staff who also have some bird guide contacts for Pak Thale birding if you want to.

We spent two mornings birding Pak Thale. Once again unsuccessful for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper, but the fields were quite enjoyable in the early morning. There is a little information building, but this seemed closed or deserted just like Khok Kham's. There are a couple of ridges to walk, in between the salt pans. You could make a nice circle – or square – over the ridges from where you can see most of the salt pans, especially with a scope. But of course, this could change depending on the season. As we were quite early in the season, it was fairly quiet, we saw just 2 other birding groups, although a lady showed up at 08:00 selling Spoon-billed Sandpiper merch. Scanning the flats (and later identifying from the pictures) we added **Black-bellied Plover**, **Pacific Golden-Plover**, **Terek Sandpiper** and **Wood Sandpiper** to the list.

Around 9:00 the temperatures combined with the humidity get quite high which make it uncomfortable to stand unshaded. Besides the big building at 13.14800, 100.05948, there is little shade to be found. The little pond next to the information office gives some nice photo-ops for some other common waterbirds such as the **Black-necked Stilts**, **Javan Pond-Herons** or a **Common Kingfisher**. On the way back to Phetchaburi, we also made a quick stop at 13.14789, 100.04402, which is also a good place to park the car and have a walk around in between the canals, paddies and shrubs. Along the road we also saw our first **Indochinese Roller** here.



Pak Thale



Indochinese Roller

Baan Maka

Like many visitors to Kaeng Krachan NP, we stayed at Baan Maka. Baan Maka offers guided tours as well as bookings for four bird hides/feeders around the area. Staying includes a basic breakfast, and they also offer nice (vegetarian) lunch/dinner options, even though lunch is best taken in the park. Staff is very helpful with booking other accommodations (such as national parks or otherwise, where a phone call and some Thai speaking is needed). Prior to arriving to Baan Maka we stopped by the Indian Thick-knee stakeout (12.96896, 99.84683), where I only saw one **Indian Thick-knee** which was gone before I could get my camera.

After arriving to Baan Maka we visited Mr Bird hide (250 THB per person), in the afternoon from 14:00 to 17:00. The drive towards the hide took about half an hour and requires a 4x4 in the wet season. On our way there we saw – most likely – a **Yellow-Throated Marten** cross the road.

Besides birds the hide was also visited by a **Lesser Chevrotain**, **Northern Treeshrew**, **Indochinese Ground Squirrel** and **Northern Gray-bellied Squirrel**. The hide proved quite a productive hide, and despite Baan Maka's warnings the lighting was actually quite nice. According to the number of chairs inside, the hide can get very busy. Bird visitors were a **Bar-backed Partridge** and **Scaly-breasted Partridge** that came in and out of view, a family of **Greater Yellow-nape**, **Puff-throated Babbler**, **Brown-cheeked Fulvetta**, and 3 species of laughingthrush: **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush**, **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush** and **White-crested Laughingthrush**. Towards the end, the highlight was a visit of a **Gray Peacock-Pheasant**.

After returning to Baan Maka and a good dinner, we concluded the day with a guided night walk around the Baan Maka grounds for 300 THB per person. This started off with an **Asian Barred Owlet** sitting basically above the restaurant, a **Brown Boobook** on the powerlines at the entrance, and several **Collared Scops-Owls** towards the lake area. The walk goes a bit further out into the vegetable grounds where we also got a look at a **Large-tailed Nightjar** and a **Red-necked Keelback**. Besides birds, we were lucky enough to spot two **Bengal Slow Loris**, with one in a tree just beside one of the bungalows. Just next to the path at the bungalows there was also a **White-lipped Pit Viper** and a completely white **Asian Vine Snake**.



Gray Peacock-Pheasant



Bengal Slow Loris

Upon leaving Baan Maka on the last day we also paid a quick morning visit to Ban Song Nok (12.84686, 99.57990) for their bird feeder (bring bug spray!). 'Booking' their feeder directly (200 THB per person) is cheaper than through Baan Makaa but you can just show up in the morning, pay and take a seat. The bird feeder is nice enough but not spectacular, and we noted 2 **Gray-headed Woodpeckers**, 2 **Siamese Pied Starling**, and a **Golden-fronted Leafbird** among other more common species. A **Western Striped Squirrel** and **Northern Gray-bellied Squirrel** were also very fond of the bananas.

Kaeng Krachan

From Baan Maka, we made two visits to Kaeng Krachan; on a Tuesday and Wednesday. As it was somewhat shoulder season coming out of the rainy period, we only saw about 10 other vehicles in the park during our visits, max. Park entrance was 300 THB per person, and an additional 30 THB if you bring your own vehicle. You can buy snacks at the entrance of Baan Maka or at the restaurant which is about 15 km into the park. With the entry ticket you're allowed to leave and re-enter the park on the same day, for example if you want to lunch outside of the park. Especially in the morning it is more useful to drive into the park as the sunlight is behind you, while in the afternoon it is logically the opposite.

There is only one main road through the park and through the white km signposts it can be easily divided into several parts. The road ends at Phanoen Thung at km 30 (although you can continue a little bit more until the Tortip waterfall). Up to the campsite at Ban Krang at km 15, the road is wide and very well paved, which allows for stops and roadside birding. After Ban Krang there are several weirs and streams after which you are only allowed with a 4x4. High clearance alone wouldn't have been enough: even though the wet season was running to an end, some parts were very steep, slippery, and uneven. There are about 3 or 4 walking trails, which are best walked with leech socks (at least during our visit shortly after the rainy season). Most birding was done roadside or around the car and we feel like we didn't miss anything by not walking the trails.

The first day we did a guided tour all the way to Phanoen Thung, which is about 30 km and requires a 4x4. We booked guide Piak through Baan Maka, 3800 THB for a full day. While he is listed as the 3rd or 4th option at Baan Maka (later checked, now he's 2nd), we were very pleased with him. What he lacked in English he more than made up with his spotting.



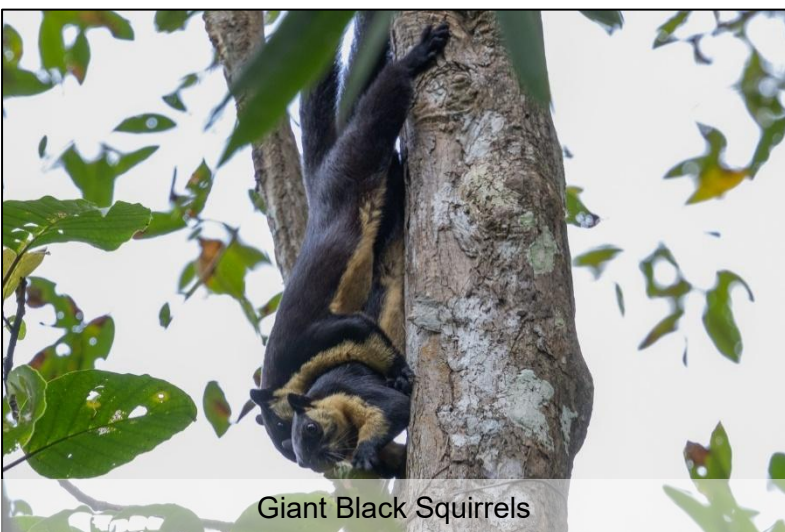
Western Striped Squirrel



Golden-fronted Leafbird

The park can be divided into several stretches, based on the white kilometre markers:

- The first part up to the 7 km mark is quite densely covered. We crossed this about 6 times and hardly had any sightings during these times. This part did show the most signs of elephant activity though, with quite some fresh dung and broken branches in the early morning.
- The part between 7 and 9 is also known as the woodpecker stretch and we added quite a lot of birds to our list here. The first morning we started with a flyover from a **Great Slaty Woodpecker**, followed by some **Oriental Pied-Hornbills** and **Great Hornbills** that flew to a nearby tree. The fruiting trees at the beginning of the stretch were very popular with **Green-eared Barbets**, while the leafless trees at the end of the stretch were very popular with woodpeckers, such as **Heart-spotted Woodpecker**, **Common Flameback** and **Greater Flameback**. This is also the location where we had the most raptor flyovers; **Gray-faced Buzzard**, **Crested Goshawk** and **Shikra**. Other birdwatchers also pointed out a **Burmese Python** lying in a ditch on just off the road here.
- Between 9 and 13 are some pools with signs for both Gaur and Sambar deer, which we didn't encounter. Also some Northern Red Muntjac were also seen here, but not by us. We did however see a big group of **Stump-tailed Macaques** on this road in the afternoon on our second day. After they were of our presence they slowly moved into the trees on the roadside and did not seem shy at all.
- At km 13 there now even is a sign which says 'leopard' as it has gotten quite used to the visitors. Although we didn't see it, apparently it crosses very regularly and even stays on the road some time. The sign points to a trail nearby, but we're not sure what is the meaning of this... as if you should walk the trail to see the leopard? Between here and the campsite, there are just a few vistas, and we didn't note many birds here as well.
- At 15 km is the Ban Krang campsite, which seemed somewhat rundown. There is a small information centre and a restaurant, but not much else. We wanted to refill our water filter bottle at a toilet building, but there was no functioning water anywhere around the campsite. The restaurant closes at 16:00, so lunch is possible. If you want some food in the evening, you should order it early and have it packed. Meals were around 50 THB and good quality. The trees around the campsite are quite good for some **Giant Black Squirrels**, of which we found two very cute cuddling ones. Walking around the campsite towards the weirs one afternoon we had a small group of **Dusky Leaf Monkeys** 'walk along' with us through the trees and bamboo, including one very cute young one visible on the cover page.



Giant Black Squirrels

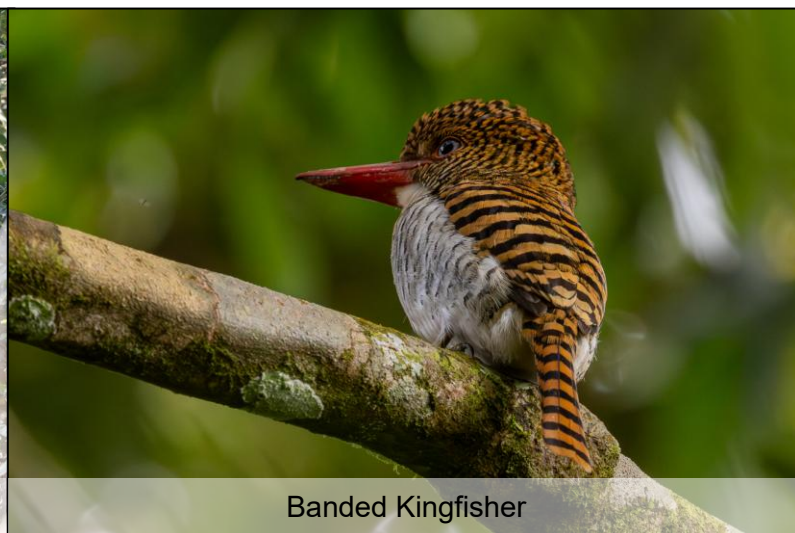


Stump-tailed Macaques

- During certain times of the day, only going up or going down is allowed between both campsites. Officially it's up until 08:00, and then again 13:00-15:00. Down 09:00-11:30 and 16:00-17:00. However, it did not seem very strict and it's vague what happens in the times between. There are many twists and turns which only make one way travel possible. We can't say there were highlights at specific km marks, with the only exception that there is a spot about halfway which has signposts for not getting out of the car as an Indochinese Tiger has been spotted here. Going up, we had a group of **Lar Gibbon** calling and swinging around in the trees, but way too fast to take any photos. Not much later we noticed a small family of 3 **Robinson's Banded Langur**, with one sitting down (almost posing) beautifully in a tree just a little off the road. Along this stretch we had very good views of a **Red-bearded Bee-eater**, followed by a **Greater Leafbird** close to the top. Going down we had a **Banded Kingfisher**, a pair of **Wreathed Hornbills** flying off, and group of **Rusty-cheeked Hornbills** when going down later in the afternoon.
- The campsite at Phanoen Thung seemed to be in much better condition than Ban Krang. This was also evident by the number of campers. Ban Krang had about 2 or 3 tents, while at Phanoen Thung there were about 5-10 4x4's with rooftop tents and 5-10 tents pitched. The restaurant was also open for longer, with similar pricing to Ban Krang and good prices of around 50-70 THB for a meal. Nice views around the area and bird life seemed to be more interesting. Around the campsite we had several **Great Hornbills**, and a **Speckled Piculet** just upon entering. Sitting down for lunch, some **Ochraceous Bulbuls** and a **Collared Babbler** visited the trees in the back of the restaurant. Both campsites have **Sun Bears** visiting the area behind the restaurant for scraps, and behind the restaurant at Phanoen Thung we saw one. At Ban Krang there are supposedly also 2, although they didn't come out during our lunch. Of course this depends on the number of visitors and therefore the amount of scraps 😊.



Robinson's Banded Langur



Banded Kingfisher

Cha-am

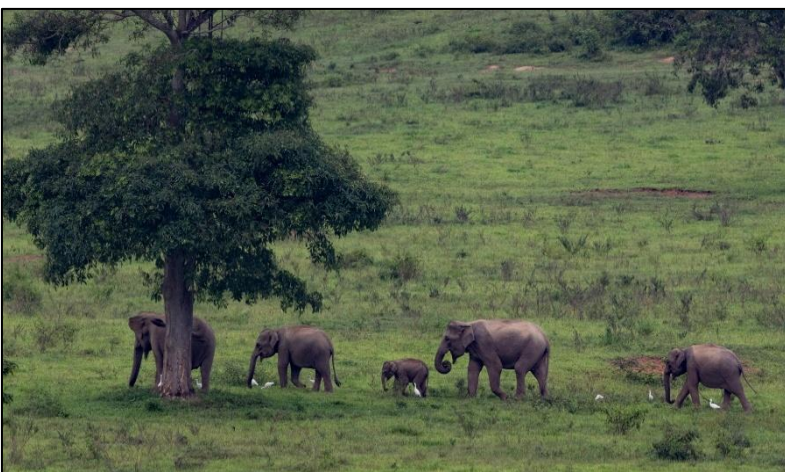
Cha-am was an impromptu and quick stopover, as we initially wanted to camp in Kaeng Krachan but did not because of the poor state and the weather. We didn't do much wildlife watching in Cha-am, except visiting a viewing site for a bat fly-out. As in many places in Thailand, thousands of bats – most likely **Wrinkle-lipped Free-tailed Bats** – fly out at dusk from their roosting site. For 50 THB per person, you can have a seat on the terrace at 12.87257, 99.93947, get a drink and watch the bats fly out. For a day trip this can be combined with a walk at Khao Nang Panthurat Forest Park at 12.83983, 99.95303, which seemed nice enough with a big number of **Long-tailed Macaques** roaming around the parking area.

Kui buri

Kui buri is one of the few places that does a safari in Thailand, and it's primarily focused on elephants. It costs 200 THB per person for the park entrance ticket and another 850 THB for a jeep. Apparently, you can go at any time between 14:00 and 17:00 and sit with max 8 people in the back of a jeep. We found it fairly busy; we did the safari around 16:30 and saw around 20 safari vehicles filled to the brim driving around within the park.

We passed by two main observation posts with long distance views at 12.16238, 99.65996 and 12.18584, 99.65142. The rangers constantly keep in contact with one another, so they often know exactly where the herds of elephants are. From the second observation post, we observed 6 **Asian Elephants** and 1 **Gaur** from a distance. As the safari is mainly about the elephants, the guides did not focus on any birds. We only saw a couple of **Asian Green Bee-eaters** and a big flock of about 30 **Black Baza**. On the way back - close to the entrance – we came across two more herds of **Gaur**; the first with roughly 20, and the second about 50. Apparently, there were also some lighter **Gaur x Banteng** hybrids within the group.

The main reason to visit the park was also to meet up with Antoinette van de Water from the organisation Bring The Elephant Home (BTEH). As the village Ban Ruam Thai is surrounded by forest, there is quite some human-elephant conflict with the elephants coming into the village to raid the crops and trees. BTEH aims to prevent this by implementing measures to deter the elephants coming into the fields, such as planting lemongrass and using beehives. They combine this with some community-based tourism involving lemongrass, with tourism activities such as making tom yum, lipbalm, and soaps.



Asian Elephants



Gaur x Banteng (?) & Gaur

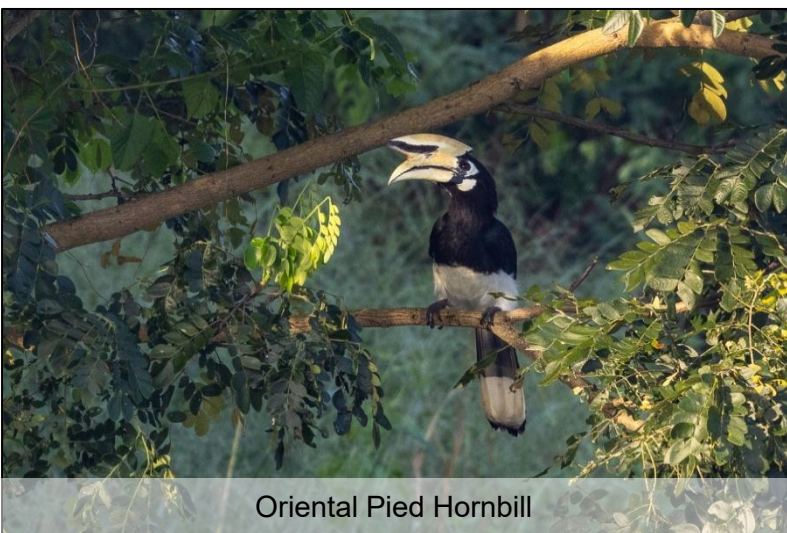
We stayed at บ้านไร่คงมั่งริสอร์ท for 1200 THB per night including a big breakfast. They can be contacted through Facebook (Baanraikongmun Kuiburi). This is conveniently across a little restaurant to have some good and affordable lunch and/or dinner. During a morning walk to a nearby reservoir at 12.11152, 99.65450 we had some good views of common species such as **Purple Heron**, **Little Grebe**, **White-throated Kingfisher**, **Bronze-winged Jacana**, **Streak-eared Bulbul**, **Yellow-eared Bulbul** and 4 **Oriental Pied-Hornbills**. During breakfast, from the veranda of one of the accommodation's houses, we had another flock of about 10 **Black Baza** flying by. In the big trees across the little stream, we got some enjoyable views of a **Lineated Barbet**, **Greater Flameback** and an **Oriental Honey-Buzzard**.

Khao Sam Roi Yot & Beng Bua

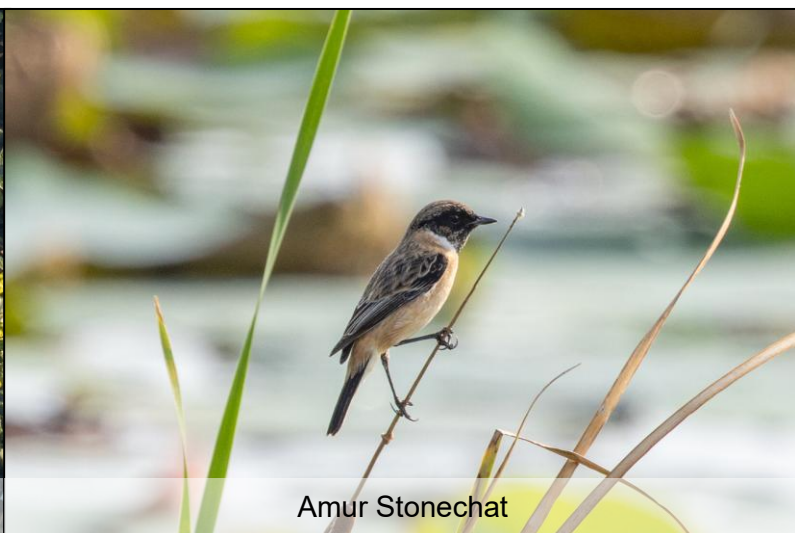
Around Khao Sam Roi Yot we didn't mainly focus on wildlife watching. Visiting Praya Nakhon temple is a nice walk through the forest and along the beach. There is a big car park for 20 THB with plenty of food options (although hardly any for breakfast) at the entrance at 12.20574, 100.01002. You can skip the first part of the walk by taking a boat, although it was a enjoyable walk with good views. Entrance fee is 200 THB per person.

On the first part before the beach we came across a troop of about 10 **Long-tailed Macaques**, while at the beach there were several **Dusky Leaf Monkeys** up in the trees, seemingly waiting for the groundskeepers to go away with their leaf blowers. In the cave itself we saw a bat or two flying by but couldn't locate any of them afterwards. On the way back we had a big **Asian Water Monitor** scurrying off near the beach, and a visit from a little **Oriental Garden Lizard**.

The next day we drove up to the Beng Bua Boardwalk and had a walk around there. We read somewhere that the park entrance of 200 THB lasts for 24 hours, but it wasn't timestamped so we unfortunately had to pay the park entrance price again. The area is full of common waterbirds such as **Gray-headed Swamphen**, **Bronze-winged Jacana**, **White-winged Tern**, **Egrets** (of all sizes) and **Hérons**. With a boat ride (500 THB per boat) we hoped to add some bitterns to the list and get closer to a raptor flying in the back, but no such luck. Only some nice views of an **Amur Stonechat** at the gazebo and some **Bank Swallows** that joined us for the boat ride.



Oriental Pied Hornbill



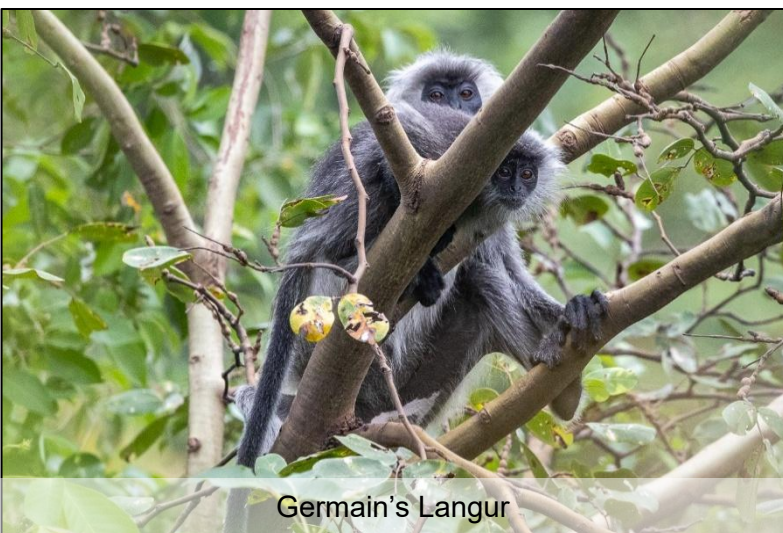
Amur Stonechat

Sai Kaew Beach

Most of Sai Kaew beach is marine compound, so the entrance is strict. Entrance times are between 08:00 and 18:00. Hand in your ID just off the main road, continue to buy a ticket for 100 THB per person at the little building further inside and have it checked just before you go on the road, which leads through the (interesting) forest towards the actual (uninteresting) beach.

The parking grounds at the end of the road (with many touristic restaurants) are big and are full of **Long-tailed Macaques** and **Northern Pig-tailed Macaques**, with most of them being cheeky as always. We saw the **Germain's Langur** only briefly along the forested road when driving in, but they quickly scurried off into the bushes once we got close and before we got any pictures. We tried the parking grounds as well, but no luck. When walking back part of the entrance road, we only saw it far away and scurrying off as soon as they were spotted. We tried again the next morning, walking back part of the entrance road from the parking lot and managed to see six of them down the slope, but only after hearing them first. Taking pictures, it's clear they kept an eye on us as well. Birdwise the only interesting species seen were a **Black-crowned Night Heron** at the little lake near the restaurants (supposedly the Germain's Langurs also hang out here from time to time), and a **White-bellied Sea-Eagle** soaring above.

Driving towards Khao Yai we made three quick stops. The first one was at Khao Mai Kaeo Preservation Park. It has some small trails behind a park, but unfortunately for us about a hundred school children were released into the park which made birdwatching somewhat difficult. **Lineated Barbet**, **Racket-tailed Treepie**, **Green-billed Malkoha** and 2 **Sooty-headed Bulbuls** were the most interesting birds of the visit. The second visit was at the Ban Bang Phra reservoir (no hunting wildlife area), but we were not allowed in ("no" and arms in x position) even though it had a sign with entry prices specifically for foreigners (200 THB). We tried to get some views of the place or a different way in through a fish breeding site, but this clearly didn't feel as the right place. Time to move on then. The third visit was at the **Black Kite** roosting site Pak Phli (14.09716, 101.27293). Although they are very common, it was impressive to see as much as 200 of them all in one place. A nice area to get some good views, also of some **herons**, **egrets**, a **White-Throated Kingfisher** and some **Siamese Pied Starlings**. But as the sun was quickly setting, we had to move on to Khao Yai.



Germain's Langur



Northern Pig-tailed Macaque

Khao Yai

We drove in Khao Yai quite late, after 17:00. Check-in was until 18:00 and it's around 30 km from the southern entrance towards the visitor centre. Driving by 14.36205, 101.34550, we saw a lot of cars waiting as supposedly one or more elephants were just spotted there. It seemed a popular spot to wait around late afternoon before leaving the park on the south side.

We booked the accommodation beforehand through friends living in Thailand, and as 4 nights wasn't available on 1 location, we had 2 nights in 2 different lodges. It is difficult to book the accommodation beforehand – outside of Thailand – because after reservation the payment needs to be made within 2 days, and most international banks usually take a longer time or the supplied information does not give any bank details to make a bank transfer. If you're in Thailand you can visit a Krungthai bank (and supposedly also a 7-eleven) to make the payment. We did so with Nam Nao later on and it worked fine. Alternative is staying in a tent for 350 THB, although you have to be careful not to leave food in the tent as a couple we spoke to had their tent raided by **Long-tailed Macaques**, which are very common in the park.

The quality of the rooms was ok, although the rooms were very different. The first two nights we stayed in a room in the Thanarat area (14.40071, 101.37018) which had a big comfy bed, warm shower and fan. No AC but was not required as the nights were quite chilly. We were asked to park our car somewhere close to the houses (not the designated parking area), due to the elephants in the area. We did a quick night walk around the grounds the first night. Apart from a quick flash of a bird, a quick flash of a bat and a lot of rustling in the tall grass we were unsuccessful. Just when we were about to go back inside when we spotted a **Small Indian Civet** in the bushes close to the garbage bins!

The next two nights we stayed at the rooms in Suraswati, where the rooms were a lot smaller and everything looked a bit more rundown. Still, beds were comfy enough and the showers were warm. In both places all the rooms are attached so you have to hope you don't have neighbours who like karaoke (as we had the last two nights). The weather was somewhat chilly with it being around 22 degrees during the day time and 14 at night, but with a lot of wind.

Whatever you do, avoid the weekends (also Friday night) as it gets extremely busy and loud, which is not particularly helpful when looking for animals.



Small Indian Civet



Black-crested Bulbul

Visitor centre & restaurant(s)

The restaurant at the visitor centre closes at 16:30 every day (meals are about 50-60 THB, breakfast as well and some stores open earlier than others, although some also only open on the busier days). Other food options inside the park are limited. **Northern Pig-tailed Macaques** are abundant around the visitor centre and (of course) around the restaurant. Between the entrance and the start of trail 1 are a set of small stairs towards the cellar of the visitor centre (where they keep a lot of unused museum pieces) which houses many bats going out around sunset. I took a quick look inside but I could only identify a couple of **Exotic Roundleaf Bats**, as far as my bat knowledge goes. The times we were there we also searched the river for some Smooth-coated Otters, but without luck. The area behind the restaurant was quite productive at times with **Rosy Minivet**, **Brown-rumped Minivet**, **Ashy Minivet**, **Common Green-Magpie**, **White-crested Laughingthrushes** and a **Blue-eared Kingfisher**. Very docile **Sambar Deer** were often found here as well, snacking on the scraps from the kitchens.

Aside from the restaurants at the visitor centre, the restaurant at 14.40601, 101.37104 is open daily from 08:00 to 20:00 and had very good fresh cooked local meals, made to order on the spot (veg non spicy etc) for 50 THB on average, so we went there most days; big shout out! However, we also tried visiting for lunch one day at 14:00 with no one around. On two of the evenings having dinner here, we had an **East Asian Porcupine** walking by around sunset just in front of the restaurant, walking the exact same path each time.



White-crested Laughingthrush



Common Green-Magpie

Pha Diaw Dai & Khao Khieaw viewpoints

We drove the road towards Khao Khieaw twice. Along the way you pass by a spot with a little temple and the Pha Diaw Dai boardwalk. The temple is a nice area to park the car and walk back to the first sandy parking space or walk a bit. The Pha Diaw Dai viewpoint has a full wooden boardwalk towards the viewpoint on a rock. At Khao Khieaw you can get some snacks at the top but cannot continue by car. Both times we drove this route we had some bad luck as the first time it was very windy, and the second time was during the weekend (Saturday), which made birding absolutely impossible due to the huge number of cyclists, motorists and others. The parking place at the top viewpoint was completely full. The only birds we saw during the first day were two **Oriental Pied-Hornbills**.

Trails

Officially you need a guide to walk most trails, but trail 1, 2 and 7 can be done without. Guides can be booked at the visitor's centre. For basically all the trails we walked (probably except the one to the watchtower), we would recommend getting leech socks, especially during the season we were there. For many tours they are provided, and the guides also wear this. They can be bought at the visitor centre's store for 70 THB, although for tall people or people with big feet they can be on the short side and consequently constantly sliding down. For maximum effect spray it with mosquito repellent as well.

Trail 1

We walked this path a total of three times. It's a good path which can be very busy and noisy at times as it is right behind the visitor centre. Almost no leeches and nice vegetation. The first time we walked it, we were quickly rewarded with a group of 6 **Lar Gibbon** slowly moving through the trees, including 1 juvenile. 2 days later when walking the same trail in the afternoon, we most likely saw a part of this group as well. Just before ending the trail at the rope bridge, we had 2 **Northern Red Muntjac** casually strolling by. Later we saw several more of them just grazing on the main roadside. **Finlayson's Squirrels** were quite common, especially after we started to recognize the 3-4 times squishy breathing sound. Although this trail can be quite birdy, we didn't record much new, with the only exception being a **Thick-billed Green Pigeon**.



Lar Gibbon



Lar Gibbon

Trail 2

We walked this trail once on our 2nd day at 07:00 from the parking area. As you're walking along some waterfalls (noisy) and as we had quite some wind, birdwatching was a challenge. That's why we only walked a small part of the trail before going back. A flyby of 15 **Wreathed Hornbills** and our first good sightings of **Asian Fairy-Bluebirds** made it worthwhile. Although the path was hardly marked it was fine to walk, with no leeches as well.

Trail 3

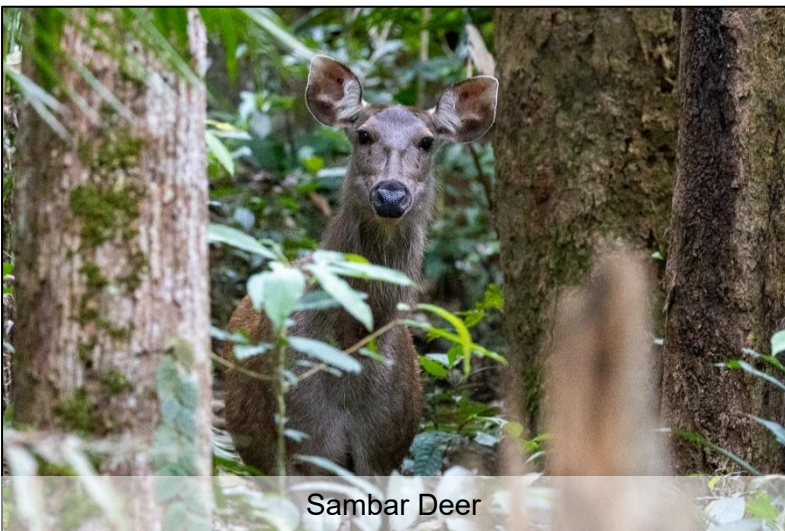
We did not walk trail 3 but felt like this would have been one of the better trails to walk as it seems to go through some good forests. However it seemed very busy at times (mostly later in the day) with many large groups starting the trail at the same time.

Trail 4/5

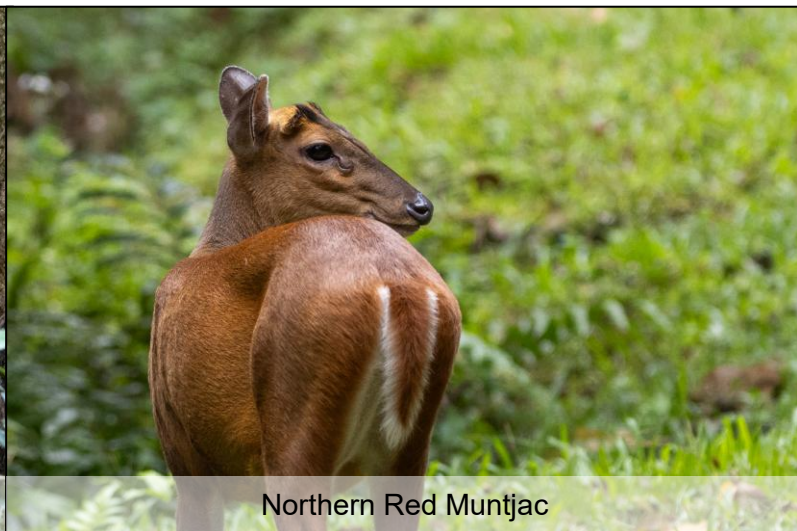
We initially started trail 4/5, along the road towards the visitor centre where the sign for the start of the trail is. This path did not seem to be used at all; many leeches, no signage and a lot of thorns made us turn around after 15 minutes. Although quite common, encountering a **Sambar Deer** in the middle of the forest is a fun experience. Later, we heard others initiating this trail behind the restaurant at 14.43769, 101.37047 which was supposedly a lot better and also used by the guides. Just ignore the forbidden entry sign, apparently.

Nong Phak Chi Observation Tower

We only quickly visited the observation tower during the daytime. Signs of Gaur and Elephants, but no luck spotting them. The path towards the observation tower (from the road) is good, dry and wide, so it's nice to walk. Trails 3 and 5 pass by the watchtower, and logically it is best to visit in the early morning or late afternoon.



Sambar Deer



Northern Red Muntjac

Trail 6

We walked this trail together with a guide, which we booked from the visitor centre, for 1000 THB. The trail is 8 km and is the longest in the park. The guide is mandatory. but unfortunately it was just a 'guy that walks in front'; he did not (try to) spot any wildlife and hardly spoke any English. In the end, we walked the trail in 4 hours (instead of the advertised 5), and still we kept losing him as he was always up ahead. The trail had plenty of signs and the path was clear so it was easily done without a guide, although not allowed to park rules. The first part of route 6 overlaps with trail 1. As soon as we left trail 1 we saw many very fresh elephant signs such as dung, broken branches, signs ripped off the trees and of course the footprints. Only birds of note we saw was an **Orange-breasted Trogon** and a group of **Wreathed Hornbills** flying off in the distance. Along the way we had several **Finlayson's Squirrel** and **Northern Gray-bellied Squirrel**, and a quick getaway from a **Small Spotted Coral Snake**.

We also partially walked this trail from the end earlier, as we heard some Pileated Gibbons from the parking area. We did feel like the waterfall here (Haew Su Wet) is more beautiful and approachable than Haew Narok to the south, and it is also less crowded. Around the waterfall, it also seemed that there is more chance of spotting birds and other wildlife.

Trail 7

According to the park's own information this is the best path to see the Pileated Gibbon, or Crowned Gibbon as they call it. We started the walk from the side of the reservoir dam. The path has good signage, is in good condition and goes through some different vegetations. As it is more covered, bird sightings are a bit more difficult here though, but it was an enjoyable path which took just over an hour to walk. It ends along a nice open path going towards the lake. Unfortunately there were no (new) birds or mammals of note for us to be recorded here.

Haew Narok

Close to south entrance. Relatively busy compared to the rest of the park during a weekday. Easy to walk, with many visitors on flip-flops. About 1 km with the last part being quite some steep stairs. The bridge at the beginning provides the best view along the river for some birds or mammal spotting, although we only spotted a **Northern Gray-bellied Squirrel**.



Finlayson's Squirrel

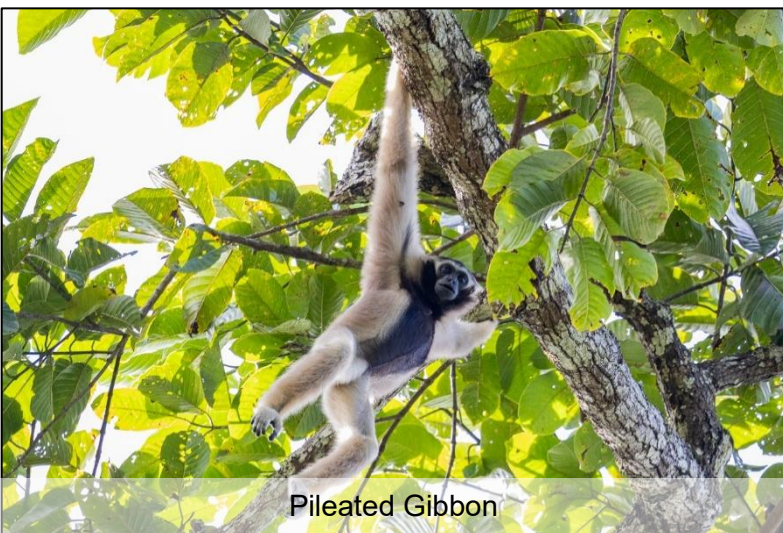


Wreathed Hornbills

Waterfall to Phu Kluaymai

Walking back from the Haew Su Wet back to the Phu Kluaymai campground was our most rewarding hike. After having lunch at the waterfalls, we walked the road back to the campground (after seeing a **Blue Rock-Thrush** but having just missed a Blue-Bearded Bee-eater at the parking area). The road has nice vistas and seems to have high chances of wildlife. It also isn't as busy as the main road and only gets busier around afternoon when most people go to the waterfall. Along the road at approximately 14.43458, 101.40222 we suddenly had some green leaves falling, which is when we spotted a group of **Pileated Gibbons** right above us! After some time observing them, it seemed to be a mixed/hybrid group of 2 **Pileated Gibbon** and 2 **Lar Gibbon**. Continuing the walk to the campground we had an **Asian Elephant** crossing the road on two occasions, causing quite the roadblock! Park rangers were quick to the scene to manage the situation.

At the Phu Kluaymai campsite there's a nice veranda overlooking the water where we had some good views of **Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters**. The trees just north of the campsite were good for **Cambodian Flowerpeckers**. From Phu Kluaymai back to the visitor centre we hitchhiked as it was getting darker, and we already walked trail 6 that day.



Pileated Gibbon



Asian Elephant

Night drive

For 600 THB per person you can arrange a night drive (8 people max in a car), with a choice of starting at 19:00 or 20:00. We were picked up at our accommodation. The night drive is exactly one hour and all the cars seemed to be driving the exact same route. We drove in a platoon of 3 cars, but on other days we saw them driving with almost 20 in a row (and another 15 later on). As they hardly stopped when they spotted something, the constant wind, diesel fumes and short sightings did not make for the best experience. The usual targets, also for us, were two **East Asian Porcupine**, and some **Sambar Deer**. Going on your own night drive is somewhat difficult, as the road south of Thanarat is closed. It is possible to drive between Thanarat and Suraswadee Youth Camp though, as there are no barriers in between. One evening we left the little restaurant just when it was dark and got caught in a platoon of one of the night drives. On the field opposite the reservoir, they spotted an **Indochinese Golden Jackal**, but did not seem to care. As we did not have our torch with us we quickly drove back to our room to get it. As we returned it was still there, just like the platoon of the night drive.



East Asian Porcupine



Indochinese Golden Jackal

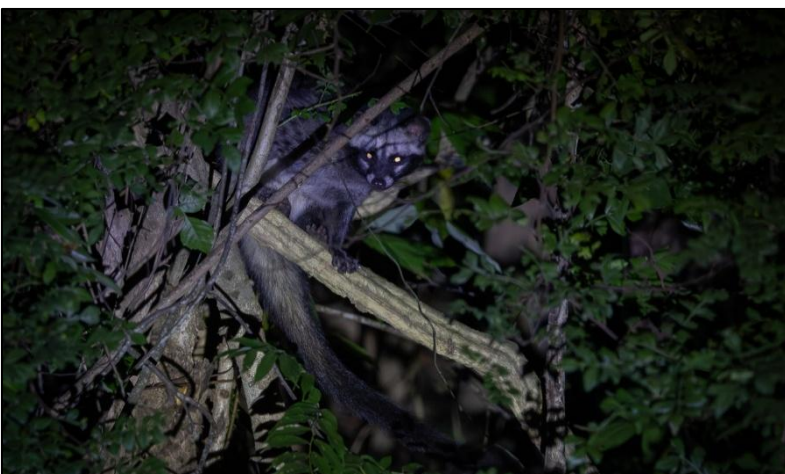
Sakearat

Driving away from Khao Yai (on a Saturday) we noticed how insanely busy it can get in Khao Yai. Leaving the northern exit we had hordes of people driving in, and the amount huge and upscale accommodations just outside the park are insane. We stopped at Municipality Office (14,53461 101,37904) for some **Red-Breasted Parakeets** being loud in the trees above (easily heard, much more difficult to get a view let alone a picture of). We had another stopover at Ban Tha Chang Spring (14,54780 101,42064) which is supposed to be a good spot for Mainland Serow, but not if you visit unplanned in the middle of the day, during the weekend, like us. Very busy with people going to kayak on the river. Nice food though!

Sakaerat was a nice stopover between Khao Yai and Phu Khiao/Nam Nao. We arranged a room through WhatsApp contacts beforehand, which cost us 300 THB per person. More recently they have a (very active) Instagram (@sakaerat_thailand), which is your best bet for contacting them as we tried multiple outlets. We were advised not to visit around February or March, as the bush fires tend to get quite heavy.

Our accommodation was a little house with bathroom, hot shower, fridge and water kettle. You can have buffet-style breakfast (07:30), lunch (12:00) and dinner (18:00) for 110, 130 and 155 THB. You just have to be on time and do your own dishes afterwards 😊, accompanied by semi-domesticated **Wild Boar** eating the scraps. As many schools visit the research station, basically every day, it can be quite noisy until 21:00.

While there we met Julia and Raj doing research on the **Bengal Slow Loris** and reptiles respectively. We went with them for a night walk on both evenings, primarily looking for the Lorises. Unfortunately, we only had one eye-shine and that was it. Especially here it is advised to search for the Loris with a red light instead of a white light, as extensive research is being done on them. Animals we did see were two **Common Palm Civets** that come and eat the crumbs left by the schoolchildren after stargazing at 14.43458, 101.40222, some **White-lipped Pit Vipers**, a **Vine Snake** and a huge **Tarantula** hidden in one of the benches near the restaurant. The lake-area further on is supposedly a good area for Indian Giant Flying Squirrel.



Common Palm Civet



White-lipped Pit Viper

The major attraction at Sakaerat is the **Siamese Fireback**, and we saw 14 of them! These usually come out at a specific location (14.50413, 101.92625, look for the signposts) at specific times. They mostly come by at 07:00 (we saw a lot of school children coming back by truck a little later) and at 15:00. It's not really a secret that the Firebacks are fed rice to have them come out every day for the visiting school children. The restaurant area also a lot of white **Finlayson's Squirrels** climbing about, looking for food left behind by the school children. In the evenings we often heard **Northern Red Muntjac** barking in the distance and later we had both **Large-tailed Nightjars** and **Spotted Owlets** calling.

Phu Khiao / Chulabhorn dam

We contacted this park beforehand (October) to ask if it would be possible to stay inside. We were told that it was not an option, but that a day trip was possible. However, upon arrival we found that it was closed due to road construction, until beginning next year (2026). We found a Google review of someone who visited two days earlier saying it would close down just a day later. In our earlier correspondence they said entrance prices would be 200 THB, but on the sign it said 400 THB. So if you want to visit this park make sure to get in contact beforehand to verify if it's open and what the prices are.

Instead, we checked into a hotel near the Chulabhorn dam. Rooms were pretty good for 900 THB, and the dinner was good as well. From here, it was a nice walk through the forest towards the temple at 16.5166, 101.64726 where we saw an **Orange-Breasted Trogon** and a **Great Slaty Woodpecker**. On our way back around 17:15 we accidentally scared a group of around 5 **Indochinese Gray Langurs** out of their sleeping tree. The next morning we drove around the area of the dam and could hear **Pileated Gibbons** calling in the distance and saw a **Gray-faced Buzzard** flying above.



Orange-breasted Trogon

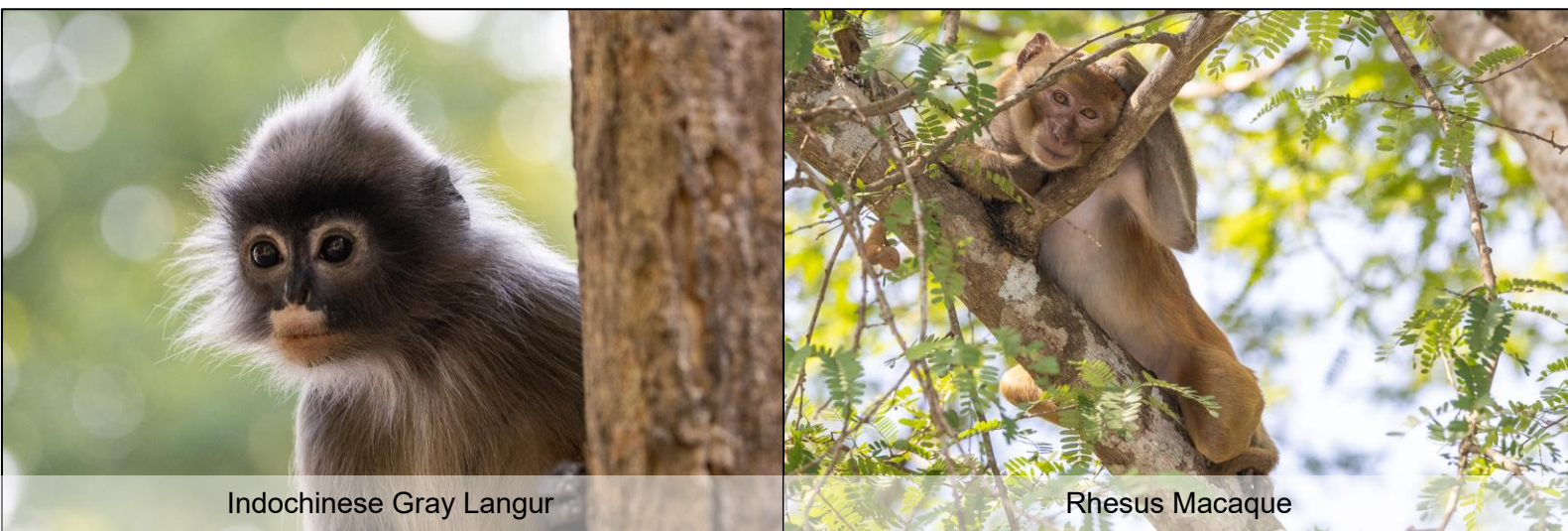


Siamese Fireback

Loei

We visited the temple twice; once in the afternoon and again the next morning. Entrance is free. The first afternoon we visited roughly between 15:00 and 16:00, but did not see the Indochinese Gray Langurs, only a bunch of dogs. Monks with leaf blowers going around probably didn't help either. A person watering the plants told us they could be seen around sunset, but after an hour of waiting we opted for the next morning. The trees around the temple were filled with both **Finlayson's Squirrels** and **Northern Gray-bellied Squirrels** though.

The next morning we returned at 08:00 and found the first group of **Indochinese Gray Langur** quite quickly, close to the parking area. They were slowly coming down the neighbouring limestone mountain. Nearing 09:00, the plant-watering man also returned, with bags full of bananas and some other vegetables to feed the langurs. Judging from the banners and feeding platforms, this seems to be a daily occurrence. Still, it did not seem to be a touristy thing, as we were the only visitors around and the man hand-fed the Langurs one by one. They were calm and behaved, and each of them took 1 banana to go back up in the tree to enjoy it. Only the mothers with young came for 2-3 bananas. There were supposedly 3 distinct groups, each with around 25 individuals, and on that morning we saw 15-20 of 2 groups. Between all the Langurs there was one very well-behaved **Rhesus Macaque**, also patiently waiting his turn for a banana and somehow doing his absolute best posing for pictures.



Indochinese Gray Langur

Rhesus Macaque

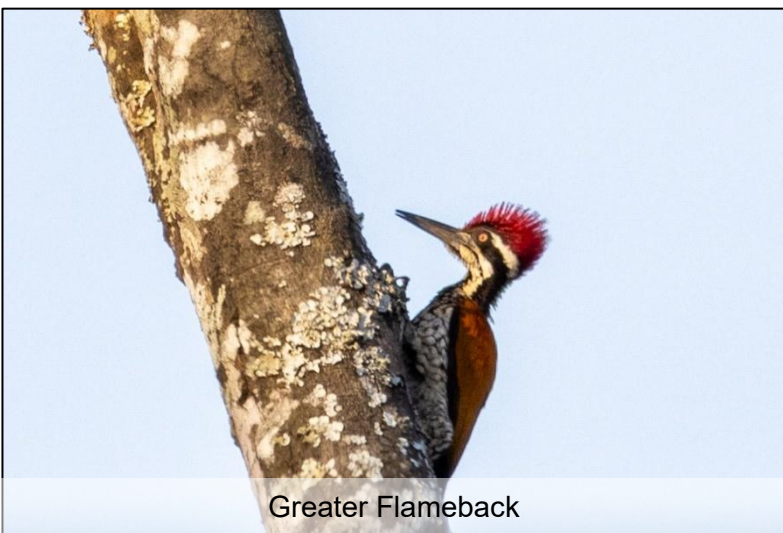
Nam Nao NP

Entrance to the park is 200 THB per person, plus 30 for the car. This ticket is valid for 5 days, and you can go out and back in with the same ticket. We paid 3110 THB for 3 nights in 2 different houses. This included one night on a Friday which is more expensive. We reserved through Facebook and had to pay within 2 days through bank in Thailand. Make sure to bring the pdf by print, they didn't accept digital pdf at the bank. We were relatively late with booking so got a house for 6 people (#301) and a house for 4 people (#201) on different locations within the park. Condition of the houses was basic though, especially the first one which seemed quite old and was mostly made of wood and got very cold (3 degrees) at night. Second was better which was a brick house and had a veranda.

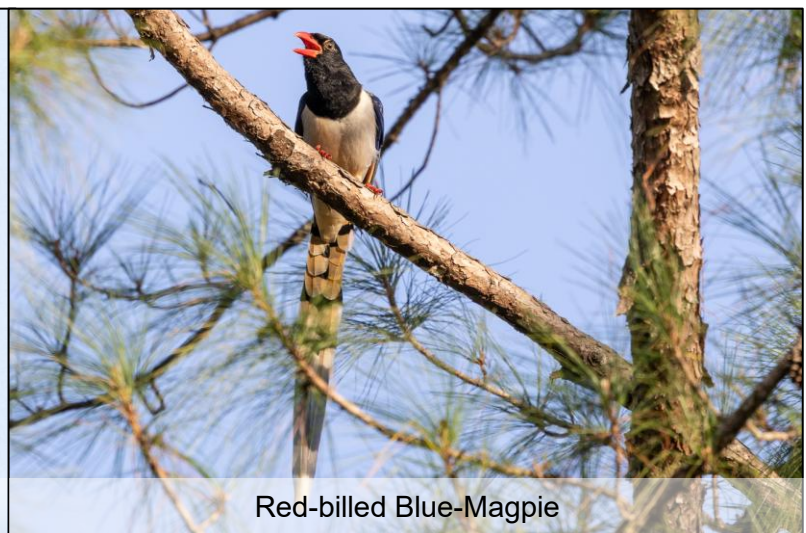
It might be cheaper if you can get a smaller house by booking well ahead of time. The first house was a bit mouldy and the windows didn't close, but they have insect screens. With 3°C at night we used all the available blankets. It had a fridge, kettle, old tv, towels and bedding. Hot shower available as long as the electricity works. It is also possible to camp in the park, and we saw many locals here with their own tent. Hiring a tent at the visitor centre is also an option for 30 THB per person, plus extra for pillows, sleeping bag, etc. Visitors to the park seem much more nature-oriented compared to Khao Yai, and the atmosphere is a lot quieter. There are 2 restaurants and 2 shops near the visitors' centre. Meals were between 50 and 180 THB. Coffee for 20 THB. **Red-billed Blue-Magpies** are common (and noisy) throughout the camping area.

Inside the park there are several trails to walk, and you must register at the visitor's office before you go. They warn you plenty about the leeches (which is especially true for the first part of the longer trail), and you can buy leech socks there for 80 THB. The short trail is paved quite well, and we didn't encounter any leeches there. The small trail is partially paved, mostly flat terrain and can be walked in an hour if you don't encounter any birds (like us unfortunately).

The longest trail of around 5 km took us about 3½ hours. Along the way there are 2 options to shorten it to 3 or 2 km. It says there is also a viewpoint about 2/3 of the way in, although it did not have any views (or we missed it?). The list walking the trail was relatively short, but still with an **Orange-Breasted Trogon**, **Brown-cheeked Fulvetta**, **Blue Rock-Thrush** and **Blue-winged Leafbird**. Going up the hill there was lots of elephant dung, but all quite old.



Greater Flameback



Red-billed Blue-Magpie

Pine trail

This trail is outside the park (16.7369, 101.55131) and there is no checkpoint or fee to walk the trail. The car can be parked just outside the gate (which seems to be destroyed by an elephant), or you could walk to the entrance from the park. We walked this trail twice, morning and afternoon, and liked it very much even though it was not particularly fruitful for new species. First time we walked in about 2,5 km. From 2 km onwards the trees change from pine to evergreen. On Maps.me the path stops at a certain point but we continued for at least another km before returning on the second day. The first part is mostly pine with good views and many trees good for woodpeckers, even though we only noted **Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker** here and a **Greater Yellownape** in the forests later. A **Burmese Nuthatch** and **Little Pied Flycatcher** were nice additions to the list as well. Mammal-wise we saw 2 species of squirrel: **Finlayson's Squirrel** and **Indochinese Ground Squirrel**. Additionally, a **Wild Boar** and a **Northern Red Muntjac** in the long grass were spooked by us. There were clear signs of Elephant footprints and dung, but none of them really fresh.

Just outside the park there is also a watchtower (16,72282 101,58578), which was locked when we arrived. Most likely you need to contact wildlife services to open it. The water holes had lots of fresh elephant dung though, so it seems there often is activity around here. Next to the water holes is also a large lake, nice for some birdwatching.

Udon Thani

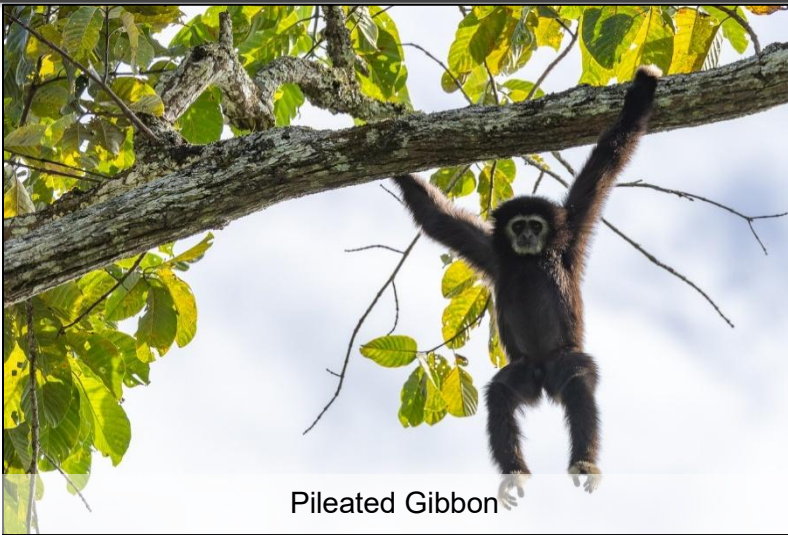
We delivered the car at the Udon Thani airport and stayed one night in the city before taking the bus towards Laos. Ending our adventures in Thailand.



Indochinese Ground Squirrel



Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker



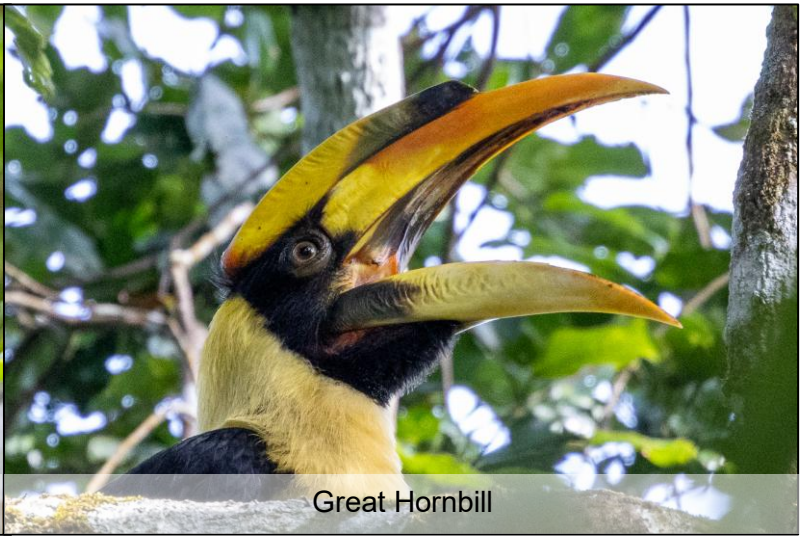
Pileated Gibbon



Red-bearded Bee-eater



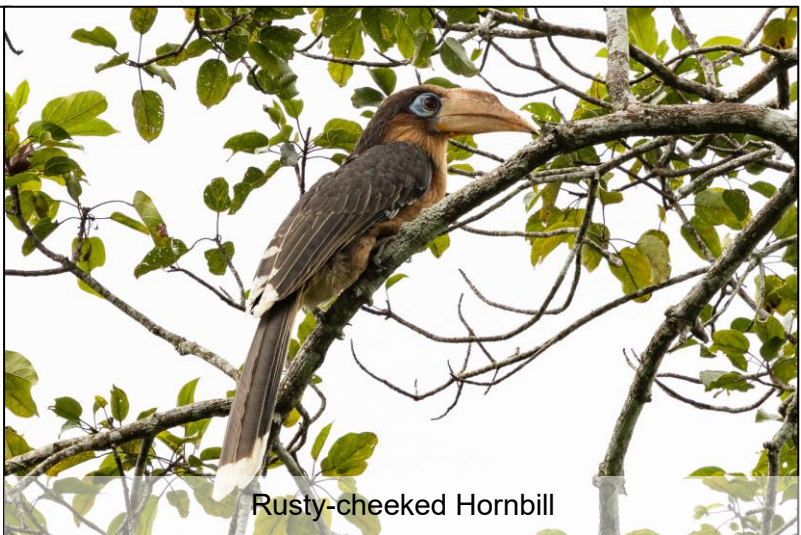
Indochinese Gray Langur



Great Hornbill



Dusky Leaf Monkey



Rusty-cheeked Hornbill

Species list

Birds

For the full bird species list (201 species) with checklists and locations, see the trip report on eBird (<https://ebird.org/tripreport/434047>)

Mammals

Though not particularly active on this platform, I have uploaded several species to [iNaturalist](#). In total we recorded 32 species of mammals.

English	Binomial
Lar Gibbon / White-handed Gibbon	<i>Hylobates lar</i>
Pileated Gibbon / Crowned Gibbon	<i>Hylobates pileatus</i>
Robinson's Banded Langur	<i>Presbytis robinsoni</i>
Dusky Langur / Spectacled Leaf Monkey	<i>Trachypithecus obscurus</i>
Germain's Langur / Indochinese Lutung	<i>Trachypithecus germaini</i>
Indochinese Gray Langur	<i>Trachypithecus crepusculus</i>
Long-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca fascicularis</i>
Stump-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca arctoides</i>
Northern Pig-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca leonina</i>
Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
Bengal Slow Loris	<i>Nycticebus bengalensis</i>
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>
Sambar Deer	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>
Sun Bear	<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
(Indochinese) Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
Northern Red Muntjac / Barking Deer	<i>Muntiacus vaginalis</i>
Lesser Chevrotain / Mouse Deer	<i>Tragulus kanchil</i>
East Asian Porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>
Yellow-throated Marten	<i>Martes flavicula</i>
Small Indian Civet	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
Southern Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus musanga</i>
Black Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>
Finlayson's Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus finlaysonii</i>
Northern Gray-bellied Squirrel	<i>Callosciurus caniceps</i>
Indochinese Ground Squirrel	<i>Menetes berdmorei</i>
Western Striped Squirrel	<i>Tamiops maclellandii</i>
Northern Treeshrew	<i>Tupaia belangeri</i>
Exotic Roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros gentilis</i>
Wrinkle-lipped Freetail Bat	<i>Mops plicatus</i>

Herptofauna

English	Binomial
Asian Water Monitor	<i>Crocodylus intermedius</i>
Oriental Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>
Burmese Python	<i>Python bivittatus</i>
White-lipped Pit Viper	<i>Trimeresurus albolabris</i>
Asian Vine Snake	<i>Ahaetulla prasina</i>
Red-necked Keelback	<i>Rhabdophis subminiatus</i>
Small Spotted Coral Snake	<i>Calliophis maculiceps</i>