

A short, 6-day trip to Bang Lang and Hala Bala in Southern Thailand (May 2026)

Although I typically don't use guides in Thailand, since my friend Chris and I were going to new places with limited time, and because I wanted to find a banded linsang, I contacted *Wild Encounter Thailand* with the hope of hiring a guide for Bang Lang. Unfortunately, nobody was available, so we went on our own. I relied on Jon Hall's trip report from last year for information but, unfortunately, I neglected to re-read it while in the parks, so I did miss a couple of opportunities, as described below. We were out mostly during the day, so not so many nocturnal mammals.

Chris picked me up in his truck at the Hat Yai airport and, before driving to Bang Lang, we stopped at the bat caves near the town of Yala... two caves around the Tham Khuha Phimuk Temple. At the Tham Sin cave we saw **Kunz's Leaf-nosed Bats**, **Black-bearded Tomb Bats** and **Large Asian leaf-nosed bats** (please feel free to correct me if any of the IDs below are incorrect, I am far from being an expert on bats).

Black-bearded tomb bats



Kunz's Leaf-nosed Bat



Large Asian
leaf-nosed bat



The Slip cave is open to tourists, but one needs a key to get into the Tham Sin cave. Fortunately, a friendly woman was able to help us (for a small fee). She immediately knew that we were there for the bats. There were also a few **long-tailed macaques** hanging around the caves.

The trip report from 2025 reported only Greater Leaf-nosed Bats and Malayan Horseshoes in the slip cave. We saw what appeared to be tomb bats there as well (mediocre photo below).



Bang Lang

On our way into Bang Lang we saw a dead banded krait on the road. In the Bang Lang trip report from last year they had also encountered a krait, a live one, when they first arrived. As the group from last year eventually saw a banded linsang, was their banded Krait sighting a good omen? There is an interesting connection between these species: the banded linsang's tail is thought to mimic a banded krait, presumably a form of Batesian mimicry. If their banded Krait was a good omen, what was the significance of us seeing a DEAD krait? Spoiler alert: we didn't find a linsang, so bad omen.



We found the guesthouse in Chulaporn Development Village 9.... presumably the same place mentioned in last year's trip report, as it appears to be the only option in town. It's called Hala Bala Safe House and can be found when you look up the village on Google maps. We were the only people staying there, in two of the four available rooms. We were in fact the only tourists in the park, which was fantastic! The guest house is great, and they provide AC, wifi and excellent food...you call in orders and they deliver. We never saw another tourist in the area (or any people in the park, aside from a crew of guys fixing a drainage pipe one day). I've been to many parts of Thailand, and this area felt among the most remote...much like most of rural Thailand did 20 or 30 years ago. We even saw a family of Maniq People (google that name, very interesting). Also, although my friend's phone worked for directions, my eSim (Saily) didn't work at all outside of Hat Yai. In Bang Lang there are two routes into the forest. One is a small road, that we walked, starting from a gate just 50 meters or so from the guest house (next to the Gaur meadow). It leads to the Halasa Waterfall Trail after a couple of km. I did a little predawn spotlighting on foot there one morning and found what I assume was an **Indomalayan pencil-tailed mouse**. While walking the road/trail during the day we saw **giant black squirrels**, **plantain squirrels** and **lowland slender squirrels**, as well as a **sunda colugo**. We also saw several groups of **dusky langurs** and **southern pig-tailed macaques**.



Indo-Malayan pencil-tailed mouse?



Sunda colugo

One must drive through the village and then an additional few km to get to the other road, which runs through several km of excellent forest and dead ends at an abandoned ranger station. We spent most of our time on this road, and during the day as my friend is a birder (and currently doing a Thailand big year). But it is not his fault that I only spent a limited number of nighttime hours spotlighting there, because he offered to let me use his truck at night. I was just a little too jetlagged and lazy.

Off this road we found the Banded linsang location described in 2025's trip report, but at the time I didn't realize it. The site matched that described in the previous report (an old campsite next to a river surrounded by lots of bamboo). But the smoking gun was a photo from the previous report... of fruit bats roosting under the roof of an abandoned structure there. I realized, only after we had left Bang Lang, that where I photographed **short-nosed fruit bats** the background of my photo perfectly matched Jon's (see below). If I had known I was at the actual banded linsang location, I would have spent more time there, especially after dark! But I had it in my head that the linsang site was elsewhere and neglected to refer to the older trip report when I was at that site. I submitted a trip report last year from a different part of Thailand where I almost saw a banded linsang (and got one on a camera trap). Now after this year's dip I am starting to feel as if the banded linsang is my (current) white whale!



short-nosed fruit bats from my visit



Bats from Jon's 2025 trip report... looks like the same location

Just before the road ends at the abandoned ranger station, there is a small road off to the right. This is the road that leads down through bamboo to the abandoned 'linsang' camp. In addition to structures around that camp with short-nosed fruit bats roosting in them, there are several structures surrounding the abandoned ranger station that also house these bats. Some of the bats seem quite large so perhaps they could be Horsfield's Fruit Bats (*Cynopterus horsfieldi*) rather than Lesser Short-nosed Fruit Bats (*Cynopterus brachyotis*)? There is also a set of stairs right at the end of the dead-end road (where the road loops so one can turn around) that lead down to a different part of the same 'linsang' river.

Along the road to the ranger station we also saw Indomalayan pencil-tailed mice as well as what I think was a **Indomalayan Long-Tailed Giant rat** (*Leopoldamys sabanus*)?

Indo-Malayan Long-Tailed Giant rat?
(please correct me if you think I'm wrong)

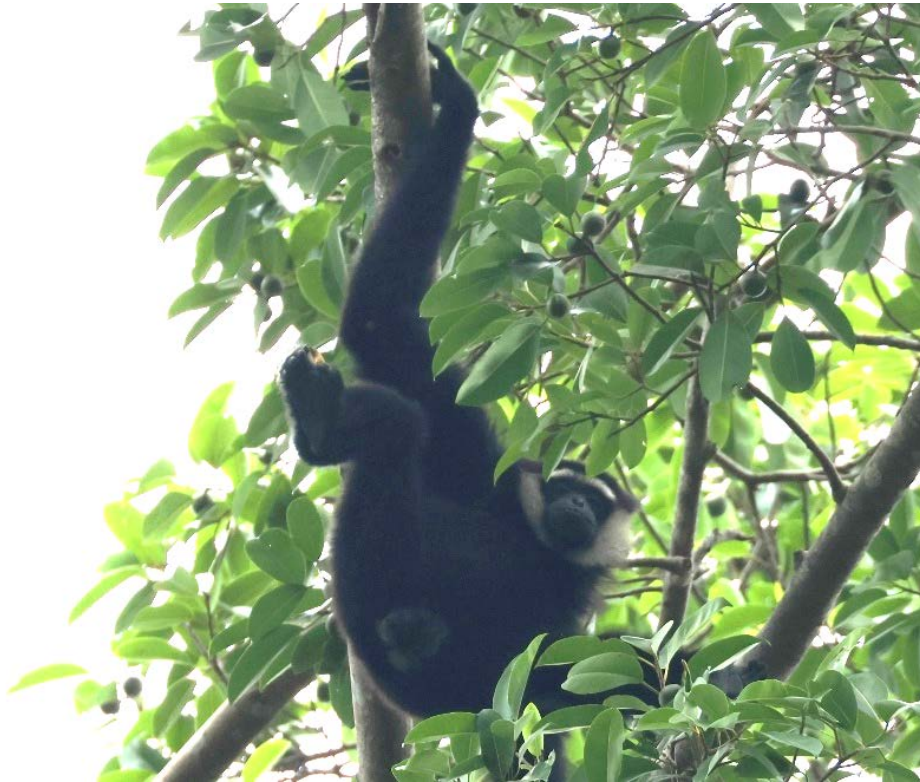


During the day we heard many groups of **agile gibbons** singing near this road and we also saw both dusky langurs and southern pig-tailed macaques.

Hala Bala

We next went down to Hala Bala for a couple of days. There is no longer housing in the park so we stayed at the closest guest house, Resort Pracharat Hala Bala. It's only a couple of km from the park entrance, and those few km are mostly forested. Since the park is closed at night, one possibility for night spotlighting could be to go for a few km on that forested part of the road, before reaching the park entrance gate. We elected not to do this, however due to recent issues in the area (especially given the event in September 2024). There is still a big military/police presence in this part of Thailand and we encountered many checkpoints on the roads in both Yala

and Narathiwat Provinces. But the people everywhere we went were friendly and seemed happy to see foreign visitors. The roads in Hala Bala are longer than Bang Lang, but we still had the place almost completely to ourselves. One night, for a small fee, some of the park employees allowed us to look for frogmouths (that's a bird, for you mammal purists) with them. For this activity, that I'm not sure is officially sanctioned, we walked up the road into the park for a few hundred meters, for about two hours just after dark. Of course, for me it was not about frogmouths, but trying to find mammals with my thermal scope. Unsurprisingly, half a dozen people waving flashlights around and loudly playing frogmouth and owl calls did not attract any mammals.



Agile gibbon

Many agile gibbon groups can be heard throughout the park as well as a few **siamang** groups. Agile gibbons can be heard most everywhere, siamangs seem to be restricted to the higher altitudes. One siamang group sang from very close to the road and I got excellent recordings of them duetting, but I wasn't able to see them despite knowing exactly where they were singing from and bushwhacking in to find them (it was too hilly and forested to get all the way to them). Seeing agile gibbons was much easier. I even saw an encounter with duetting between two groups that were directly above me. I also saw another group from a bridge that is a location commonly used by birders for viewing hornbills. As gibbon territories are very stable, they probably are visible from this viewpoint (albeit a little far away) quite regularly.

There was an incredibly high density of dusky langurs and southern pig-tailed macaques, as well as **Grey-bellied squirrels** (*Callosciurus caniceps*) and lowland slender squirrels.

Near the wildlife research station area there are structures with short-nosed fruit bats roosting under them. Unfortunately, because I neglected to re-review the 2025 trip report discussed above, I forgot to look for Malayan Spotted-winged Fruit Bats near the park entrance or other species in nearby culverts

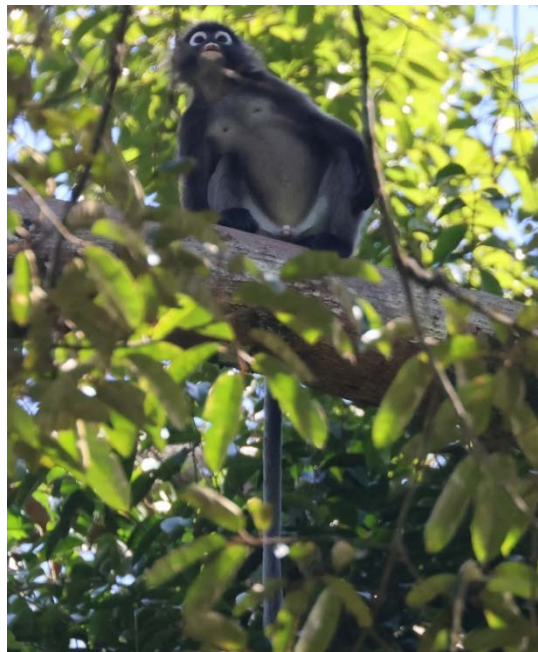


Short-nosed fruit bat under a structure in the wildlife research station area



Grey bellied squirrel enjoying breakfast near the headquarters

Dusky langurs are common everywhere in Hala Bala, but we couldn't find the rarer white-thighed langur



One morning I encountered a pair of **civets** in a tree by the road. Unfortunately, they were backlit and left quickly, making them difficult to identify.



Of the three civet species common in Hala Bala, only the banded would be a lifer for me, so I really want this to be a banded palm civet. Are there bands there, or is that a trick of the light? Please tell me it's true, I can't have another banded mammal elude me 😞