

**Endemic primate weekend,
Central Highlands, Vietnam:
5-7 October, 2019**



Grey-shanked douc

Of the three species of douc found in Vietnam, the Grey-shanked douc requires a bit more effort and having already seen the relatively easy to see Red-shanked douc at Son Tra (near Danang) and the Black-shanked douc at Cat Tien National Park, I decided to make the short flight from Laos to see the rarer and more elusive Grey-shanked douc. I also added the Hatinh langur as a trip target.

From a mammal watching perspective, it couldn't have been easier. Both species were spotted within an hour of leaving the vehicles. Viewing ranged from 100m to 300m and it was possible to both observe and photograph the animals. The primates showed no signs of stress and neither hid nor fled. This, coupled with their constrained habitat makes viewing a certainty. From a conservation perspective however, the future of these animals is literally on the rocks. Both species occur in low numbers, are squeezed into tiny fragments of native forest and are only found in Vietnam. The good news is that the limestone cliffs of the Annamites have ensured that something survived in these inaccessible and precipitously steep sided mountains. There are also a small number of dedicated conservationists trying to prevent the total annihilation of Vietnam's endemic and rare species and this some gives reason for hope.

After landing in Danang, It took about 90 minutes to arrive in Du Vy village where we were met by three local rangers who two years ago, established a village ranger team to protect the **Grey-shanked doucs**. We left immediately and walked up through recently cleared acacia to a hillside from where we could view a small patch of forest about 500m long by 200m wide. The doucs were easy to see as they moved from tree to tree. There were 15 animals in this group and a total of 50 animals in adjacent but now isolated hilltops. Tuan's plan is to reconnect these isolated populations by replanting native trees under a project awaiting government approval.

The next day we drove 6 hours to Quang Binh province which is home to another endangered and endemic primate, the **Hatinh langur**. We arrived by 3pm and set out immediately with a local ranger towards the limestone outcrops that dominate the landscape. Within 15 minutes, we found a group of seven animals resting on the rocks. We were about 250 m away and had long views of the group. As it started to get dark, they climbed up the rocks to their nighttime retreat, usually a cave high up and out of view. We also visited a cave which, was "netted" to remove all the bats about 2 years ago. The cave has slowly been recolonized and there are at least 3 species. The most numerous (several hundred) are **Trident roundleaf** and also what I think are **Ashy roundleaf bats**. We then headed back and had dinner with one of the community rangers, another conservation hero to whom the survival of these primates depends. The following morning we were in the field by 6am and viewed another two groups of 5 and 10 animals respectively. In total it is estimated that 100 animals live in this area with the total population in Vietnam 1500 animals.



Hatinh langur

My guide, Tuan, is one of Vietnam's conservation stars. He has worked for 10 years in primate conservation and co-founded his own NGO, Green Viet. Green Viet's flagship project is Son Tra Nature Reserve (on the edge of Danang), home to over 1000 **Red-shanked doucs**. Tuan guides to supplement his income and also to bring foreign tourists into rural areas to generate local income.

All arrangements, transport, hotels were arranged by Tuan. Access to both sites is by permission only so there is no way to self-guide. Tuan is knowledgeable, responsive on email and offers good rates. He also runs the "Big 5" endemic primate trip targeting red-shanked douc, grey-shanked douc, Hatinh langur, Delacour's langur and the Cat Ba Langur as a one week package and also a 3 day package targeting the "Douc Triple Set". Given the restricted habitat range and lack of fear of people, the

success rate for viewing all species is 100% in my view. The only drawback is that there are very few other mammal species to be seen in these areas.

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Itinerary

5 October Flight to Danang (1.5 hours from Bangkok). Picked up at the airport and drove two hours to the village near the Douc site. Met local rangers and walked for 45 mins through a recently cut acacia plantation to the small patch of remaining natural forest. Spent an hour observing the doucs before returning to the village. Overnight in motel 30 mins from the village.

6 October Departed motel and drove 6 hours to the Hatinh langur site in Quang Binh province. Arrived by 3pm and left immediately for the site. The langurs were just 10 minutes from the road. Also visited a nearby cave home to at least 3 species of bat. Spent the night in a basic homestay nearby

7 October Early morning viewing of two new groups of langurs. Return to Danang and depart.

Mammals

1	Grey-shanked douc <i>Pygathrix cineria</i>	Ten adults observed for one hour between 4-5pm. Distance of 100m and showing no signs of stress by our presence.
2	Hatinh langur <i>Trachypithecus hatinhensis</i>	Three groups of animals seen in families of 5-10 animals. Easy to observe.
3	Pallas's squirrel <i>Calloscurius erythraeus</i>	A pair seen in scrub on the edge of the douc site.
4	Northern pig-tailed macaque <i>Macaca leonina</i>	One animal seen by the road side of the new highway that cuts through the edge of Bach ma National Park.
5	Trident roundleaf bat <i>Aselliscus stoliczkanus</i>	A few individuals in a cave near Hatinh langur site. Awaiting confirmation of spp identity.
6	Ashy roundleaf bat <i>Hipposideros cineraceus</i>	Large colony in a cave near Hatinh langur site. Awaiting confirmation of spp identity

Hatinh Langur

