

Trip Report: Vietnam Highland Birding, April 1-6, 2008

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Introduction

Arrangements for the trip was made through Richard Craik of Vietnam Birding (website: www.vietnambirding.com). Richard made all the land arrangements inclusive of transportation, accommodation, meals, single internal flight from Saigon to Da Lat and of course guiding. Tipping was however not covered and proved a quite a hassle as we needed to keep loose change. Doreen Ang accompanied me on this trip.

Day One (Apr 1, 2008)

We arrived on SQ175 landing at Saigon airport at 09h30 local time (Vietnam is one hour behind Singapore). It took us about just 10 minutes to clear customs, thanks to the new airport facelift.

We met our guide at about 14h00 and were on the Vietnam Airlines flight VN466 to Da Lat at about 15h30. The flight took about 45 minutes. We reached Da Lat airport at 16h30 and were picked up by our driver Lywin 15 minutes later.

We dropped by the weekend resort of Datanla Falls at 17h00 on the way to our hotel at Da Lat. This was mixed pine and broadleaved forest in an amusement park by the road to Da Lat. Birdlife was decidedly poor and made worse by the gloomy sky. Our first lifer of the trip was a flock of 1-2 of the smart looking **White-cheeked Laughingthrushes**, an Indochinese endemic. Later, we got closer looks at another flock of 5-6 birds. Also present were a Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike and our only pair of White-browed Shrike-babblers of the trip. As the waterfall area was closed for the day, we left the amusement park and headed for a side trail that took us down an area of pines. These were the native Da Lat Pine *Pinus kesiya*. We got good looks of Barred Cuckoo-dove and also saw Verditer Flycatcher. The Black-browed or Annam Barbet per latest split, was common and we saw one on a dead tree well. A four-note call puzzled us until its owner flew up to a pine tree to reveal a green woodpecker. This was a Grey-headed Woodpecker, a bird I have only seen in Taiwan. Soon, a yellow bird appeared and we found it perched high up a pine. This was the Slender-billed Oriole, a bird long on my wanted list. Frustratingly, it flew off soon after before we could get a good look of its head. With the light fading rapidly, we decided to save our oriole for another day. We finished our first day with a modest 14 species including one lifer – White-cheeked Laughingthrush.

The town of Da Lat at 1500 metres above sea level was cool and appeared like a French Fraser's Hill, only much larger.

Just before 18h00 we reached the cosy Dreams Hotel, our home for the next five nights. We also met Ms Dung (pronounced as Yom), a warm lady who also speaks good English. She is the lady boss of this well known hotel for "internet backpackers".

Dinner was at the internet café across the street, one of Richard's favourite and seemingly popular with birders.

Day Two (Apr 2, 2008)

We had breakfast at the lobby area at 05h30. The table was full of French loaves, egg (done anyway you like), juice, coffee or tea and lots of fresh fruits. We were out of the hotel by 06h00 and birding by 06h15.

For our first real birding at Da Lat, Richard took us to a relatively new site called Ta Nung Valley, where the crocias was discovered around 1999. This was a beautiful place of remnant broadleaved forest with pines at the start of the trail. We explored the trail leading in, the rocky streambed and the forest trail. Yellow-browed Warblers were much in evidence as were Black-browed Barbet, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Verditer Flycatcher and Black Bulbul. As we walked down the trail of pines, Richard pointed out our first lifers of the morning. Above us we saw at close range, a few of the tiny **Grey-crowned Tits**, a recent split from the wider ranging Black-throated Tit. These birds lack the rufous of their supposed congeners and were very active.

Shortly after, Doreen found our second lifers – a pair of **Vietnamese Cutias** perched on a pine. These also gave good views and were another recent split, giving Vietnam another endemic bird.

We were soon standing near a vegetable plot at the edge of a broadleaved forest remnant when Richard played his crocia tape. Sure enough, we heard responses real quick and soon saw the much desired **Grey-crowned Crocias** at the crown of a thickly foliated tree. These looked very much like shrikes with their black masks, grey crown and white underparts. We saw at least another pair and heard several more in the morning here.

Further down the trail and near good forests, we encountered the distinct races of Mrs Gould's and Black-throated Sunbirds, the latter spotting an orange breast band, a Blue Whistling Thrush, Hill Prinia and a Slaty-backed Forktail. Other good birds seen here included at least 2 Long-tailed Broadbills, a male Red-headed Trogon and more White-cheeked Laughingthrushes. There was a single response from a distant Black-hooded Laughingthrush but none from the Orange-breasted. We left Ta Nung Valley at 11h45 with a score of 46 species including three lifers.

Lunch was a leisurely affair in a restaurant in Da Lat.

By 15h00, we resumed our birding at Ho Tuyen Lam, an artificial lake next to Da Lat. Near the entrance of the park, we stopped to look at a grassland patch and found Plain Prinia and a surprise lifer, **Chestnut-capped Babbler**, skulking in the bushes.

Past the entrance of Ho Tuyen Lam, we walked up the pine forests past some chalets and an elephant yard. Here we got much better views of the **Slender-billed Oriole** which had two different calls – a scolding chatter which differs from the familiar Black-naped back home and the usual short fluty whistler which resembles it. Birdlife was decidedly poorer in pine forests and we took two hours to record 29 species. Best of all was the Great Tit-like **Green-backed Tit**, which was new to me. Other notables include Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Lesser Yellownape, a single Common Hoopoe, Eurasian Jay, Ashy Woodswallow, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch, Large Woodshrike and Indochinese Cuckooshrike. By the lake we counted a single Oriental Darter and eight Little Grebes, twice the tally of the entire population in Singapore!

We spent our second successive evening at Datanla but it was decidedly uninspiring. The gloomy skies didn't help. We recorded under 10 species in less than half an hour including Indian Cuckoo and our only Asian Brown Flycatcher of the trip.

We finished Day 2 with 72 species in all including six lifers. These included a much better studied Slender-billed Oriole at Ho Tuyen Lam, Green-backed Tit, Grey-crowned Tit, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Vietnamese Cutia and Grey-crowned Crocias.

Dinner in Da Lat.

Day Three (Apr 3, 2008)

For Day Three, our main focus was Mount Langbiang and our targets, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Collared Laughingthrush, Black-crowned Fulvetta, Red Crossbill and Vietnamese Greenfinch. We arrived at park HQ at 06h30 and Richard worked with the rangers to get our jeep. Birding around the park office, I found a male Siberian Rubythroat in a clump of trees. The jeep took us to turn-off to the Telecoms hill in a few minutes and we were able to enjoy the fresh mountain air as we walked up through the pines to the first camp site.

The pine forests at the first campsite was quite lively with Olive-backed Pipit, Grey Bushchat, Large Niltava and Eurasian Jay the obvious ones. Soon, we followed Richard to the edge where the broadleaved forests started. He played the Collared Laughingthrush's calls and the response was unexpectedly rowdy. A pair sang almost immediately from cover less than 20 metres from us and soon popped up at the edge showing full views but always moving too fast for a bino view. Eventually, it became a duel of tape versus bird and bird triumphed this round as I got only head and tail views through my bino although Doreen managed an eyeful of a bird which perched on a very low branch. After about half an hour, the birds retreated into the bush and we had no choice but to abandon this site.

Back in the pines, we were cheered somewhat with finding our first **Vietnamese Greenfinches** perched at the top of a pine tree. Eventually we hiked up the summit trail into broadleaved forests proper. Here we found a few bird waves one of which brought us a **Black-crowned Fulvetta**, our second new bird of the day. We also got another glimpse of the Collared Laughingthrush on the summit trail but again it was too fast and not very responsive.

Bird activity had died down by 11h00 and we headed back to the first campsite and the down the hill to the HQ. Along the way, we birded in the pine forests hoping to connect with Red Crossbills. No luck! The best birds were a pair of Long-tailed Minivets. The male was seen feeding a juvenile Banded Bay Cuckoo.

We were back at the foot by 14h30 after a good morning's birding that produced 44 species including two lifers.

We had a late lunch of instant vegetable noodles at a café in Datanla followed by 90 minutes of birding. This produced 16 birds including a handsome male White-throated Rock Thrush. We left for Da Lat at 17h15.

We finished Day 3 with 52 species including two lifers – Vietnamese Greenfinch and Black-crowned Fulvetta. Personally, it was a most frustrating day for me as I got close to but failed to nail one of most sought after Vietnamese endemics – the Collared Laughingthrush.

Dinner in Da Lat.

Day Four (Apr 4, 2008)

The original plan had been to bird Ho Tuyen Lam (for Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes, Yellow-billed Nuthatch and Red Crossbill) in the morning but I was determined to see Collared Laughingthrush and so we headed there for the second morning running.

We reached the park entrance at 07h30. A quick check of the rubythroat tree revealed no activity except for some bulbuls. The jeep was quickly arranged and we were at the turnoff to the Telecoms Peak by 07h00. This time Lywn came along with his camera gear. It was a lot windier than the day before. The wind was howling on the ascent to the first plateau. By 07h30 we were in position for the Collared Laughingthrush. Richard got to work on his ipod and we soon had responses. After 15 minutes of waiting, it was clear we were again chasing shadows although Lywin got a naked eye view. I was extremely dejected to miss the bird for the second morning running but there was nothing I could do but try another site.

Up the summit trail, Richard played his tape near another known site and a bird came in soon after and cross over to the other side of the trail. With gentle coaxing and some anxious positioning, I was able to get

a half second view of the whole bird frozen in time in a liana before it disappeared. **Collared Laughingthrush** in the bag and mission accomplished!

With the laughingthrush secured we focused on seeing the elusive Yellow-billed Nuthatch. We worked both summit trails but didn't find the nuthatch. Instead we found a few mixed flocks which included a lifer for me in the form of the **White-spectacled Warbler**. Other notables included Blue-and-white Flycatcher, Ashy-throated Warbler, Yellow-cheeked Tit and more Black-crowned Fulvettas.

We walked back to the hill road where we were picked up by the jeep at 13h30. The morning birding was good with 34 species recorded and two lifers nailed, including the Collared Laughingthrush at last!

We had lunch in Da Lat and then spent the afternoon exploring another part of Ho Tuyen Lam. We reached the place at 15h30 and paid for the boat that took 15 minutes to navigate the lake to another arm of Ho Tuyen Lam. Here we again passed through a holiday chalet into mixed pine and oak forests. Birdlife was low but we did see the usual stuff at the pine forest. Best bird of the afternoon was a flock of **Yellow-billed Nuthatches**, which was found in an oak in mixed pine and broadleaved forest. We also heard many crocias but no Black-hooded or Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes. There were again no sign of crossbills.

Back at the lake, we added Osprey, Little Grebe, Striated Heron and Chinese Pond Heron.

We finished Day Four with 56 species including three lifers – Yellow-billed Nuthatch, White-spectacled Warbler and, finally, Collared Laughingthrush!

Dinner in Da Lat.

Day Five (Apr 5, 2008)

With just two days left and both Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes still elusive, we opted for Ta Nung Valley for Day Five with the last day at Di Linh in case our laughingthrush assault failed.

We reached the track leading to Ta Nung Valley at 06h20 and were surprised to see a Danish birding group there with their mini-bus. After a lengthy conversation, we moved on to find our own quarry – the elusive Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes. The morning showed us how difficult it was to nail these two birds. Despite at least three chances with the Orange-breasted, we only got a glimpse or two as the bird skulked in the bushes but never showed themselves. The black-hooded only responded once but never showed themselves. So, after nearly six hours, it was a defeated party of four including Lywin, that emerged from Ta Nung for lunch in Da Lat at 12h00. We had recorded 48 species but did not managed a single lifer. It was demoralizing!

At 14h45, we were back at Ta Nung. We explored an overgrown boundary trail which gave us our best view of Grey-crowned Crocias and also checked out the forest trail. However, even though there were two more responses from the Orange-breasted laughingthrush we failed to see it. The only consolation was that we managed two lifers – a **Red-vented Barbet** scoped on a dead tree and a **Grey-cheeked Warbler** at point blank range in a lantana bush. Walking back up the trail, Doreen found a pair of Vietnamese Cutias for great looks.

We finished Day Five with 53 species including two lifers – Red-vented Barbet and Grey-cheeked Warbler. With both Black-hooded and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes still missing, it made for a tense final day.

Dinner in Da Lat.

Day Six (Apr 6, 2008)

Our sixth and final day in Vietnam saw us at the breakfast table by 04h30.

It took us almost two hours but we were at the tea house by 07h00 and we birded down the road for the next three hours or so. The cloudy weather appeared to have affected the birds for activity was slow. With its lower elevation, we were soon seeing different birds such as Little Spiderhunter, Speckled Piculet and Vernal Hanging Parrots. Soon, we heard an oriole call and saw a flash of red as one flew over. We located it on a tall tree and were soon admiring our first **Maroon Oriole** of the trip. However we did not see the Black-crowned Parrotbills on the road.

At 10h00, we decided to bird the steep hill forest behind the tea stall. It took 45 minutes of walking before we reached an open freshly logged flat area. Here our fortune changed for the better. The sky turned blue and birds started calling again. We finally got our first views of a flock of 5 **Black-hooded Laughingthrushes** and they were followed by yet more glimpses of 1-2 **Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes**. Glimpses were all we got as the birds refused to cooperate and simply disappeared without a trace after a while. We also got good looks at the rather distinctive subspecies of Black-headed *Sibia* before descending the trail at 11h45 but missed a Black-crowned Parrotbill which only Richard saw.

We finished our birding at 12h00 adding as one of the last birds, a pair of Silver-breasted Broadbills by the tea stall.

We finished Day Six with 42 species including three lifers – Maroon Oriole, Black-hooded Laughingthrush and Orange-breasted Laughingthrush.

The drive from Da Lat to Saigon airport took about six hours including two stops. We reached the airport at 18h30 and said goodbye to our birding companions for the past week.

SQ185 left Saigon at 19h50 and landed at Changi Airport T3 at 22h45. So ended our Vietnamese birding adventure.

Birding Highlights

The intent of our six-day trip to Vietnam was to see as many of the Vietnamese endemics confined to the Da Lat Plateau as possible. There were six species which met this criterion, including three that were promoted to full species status very recently. Second priority were the Indochinese endemics, e.g. Red-vented Barbet, and third priority those with bigger ranges which I have missed so far, e.g. Green Cochoa. Consulting Nigel Wheatley's "Where to Watch Birds in Asia" and the few available trip reports on Vietnam in *Surfbirds*, I estimated a yield of between 15 and 25 species. In the end, I got **17** species.

In total, I recorded 134 species during this trip, including all six Da Lat endemics and 5 of 8 Indochinese species possible in the Da Lat Plateau. Richard also saw Black-crowned Parrotbill at Di Linh and our driver saw Spotted Forktail while we were up the trail at above the tea stall here. The most notable miss of the trip was probably Red Crossbill, potentially a split in the future due to its disjunct range (the other site being Myanmar). The other Indochinese endemics (other than the parrotbill) missed on this trip were Indochinese Green Magpie and Indochinese Fulvetta (present only at nearby Neo Bi Doup).

Thirteen species were heard only. See below for full checklist.

My overall impression of Vietnam montane avifauna based on this short visit is one of low diversity and density, somewhat offset by the periodic bird waves. The species total for a morning birding is on par with Singapore forest birding but far below Malaysian forest birding. Broadleaved evergreen forests ranked higher in terms of diversity with pine forests rather poor by comparison. Birds appear to be rather thin on the ground though found at more than one site except for Collared Laughingthrush which is a Langbiang speciality. Another problem could be the overplaying of tapes in what is peak birding tour period in Da Lat.

The endemic laughingthrushes were very tough to see being very shy and skulking even with the aid of tape in what would seem to be the peak breeding season. In contrast, the fulvetta, crocias, cutia and greenfinch were relatively easier, being seen on more than one occasion.

On hindsight, we should have spent more time birding (maybe an afternoon) at Di Linh as it was very birdy (both road and the tea stall trail) and put in more focus and effort on finding the six Vietnamese endemics and the eight or so Indochinese endemics. Ta Nung Valley was also quite productive but Ho Tuyen Lam was only moderately so and Datanla was an absolute waste of time. Langbiang was good but visiting it on two mornings may have deprived us of a fair shot at other good sites.

Overall, I was happy to have nailed all the Da Lat endemics (although the Orange-breasted Laughingthrush is a BVD) as well as eleven extra lifers. There would appear to be no reason to return to Da Lat except perhaps to get a better look at the Orange-breasted Laughingthrush and to see the very local Red Crossbill. Of course, I would need to come back to Vietnam and do the central (Bach Ma) and north (Tam Dao and Cuc Phuong) and even Cat Tien in the south of this fascinating country sometime in the future.

Other Wildlife

Non-bird wildlife was scarce, probably because the general area has been subjected to hunting and because of its status as an unprotected area. We saw two grey squirrels.

Leeches were generally scarce and encountered only in forest trails on Ta Nung Valley and Mount Langbiang. I was not bitten even though a leech was picked up at Ta Nung.

Complete Species List

(Nomenclature and systematics follow Inskipp *et al* 1996 with some exceptions taking into account recent taxonomic revisions. Vietnamese endemics are referred to in capitals and Indochinese endemics with an asterisk (*).)

Chinese Francolin *Francolinus pintadeanus*
Heard both days (Apr 3-4) at Mount Langbiang.

Rufous-throated Partridge *Arborophila rufogularis*
Heard at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Bar-backed Partridge *Arborophila brunneopectus*
Heard close by at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Red Jungle Fowl *Gallus gallus*
Heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5.

Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*
One seen in a bird wave along the road at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus canicapillus*
Singles in pine forests at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2 and 4.

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*
One in pine forest at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha*
One at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
One seen in pines at Datanla on Apr 1.

Greater Goldenback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

Heard at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 3.

Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*

Singles seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5. Also heard at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4.

***Red-vented Barbet** *Megalaima lagrandieri*

Heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and one seen well (thru scope) on evening of Apr 5.

Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima franklini*

Recorded in higher elevations at Mt Langbiang with 2-4 birds seen on Apr 3 and 1-2 on Apr 4.

Black-browed Barbet *Megalaima oorti*

Referred by some as Annam Barbet, *M. annamensis*. This species was very common in broadleaved evergreen forests at lower elevations and was recorded from most sites.

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One seen in pine forest at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*

A male at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and a male and a female here on Apr 5.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*

One heard (seen by Richard) at the entrance to Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*

Singles seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5.

Hodgson's Hawk-cuckoo *Hierococcyx nisicolor*

One heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

One heard at Datanla on Apr 1 and 2.

Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*

One heard at Datanla on Apr 2. Another seen being fed by a male Long-tailed Minivet in pine forest at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

Asian Drongo-cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*

One heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*

Singles seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5 and Di Linh on Apr 6.

Vernal Hanging Parrot *Loriculus vernalis*

Regular over the road at Di Linh on Apr 6 with 2 scoped as they fed on flowers.

Silver-backed Needletail *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*

Small numbers seen at Datanla on Apr 1, Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4 and over Di Linh on Apr 6.

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

Common and nesting in Da Lat town. Also seen at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4.

Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*

One heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Common Pigeon *Columba livia*

Present at Saigon on Apr 6.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Common in Datanla, Ho Tuyen Lam and Ta Nung Valley.

Barred Cuckoo Dove *Macropygia unchall*

Present at Datanla on Apr 1 and 3. Also seen at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*

Present at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5.

Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula badia*

Common and recorded at all sites.

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*

One by the lake at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One seen by the lake at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Birds seen en-route to sites on Apr 1 and 5.

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

One seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*

One seen circling over Di Linh on Apr 6.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

One perched on a pine at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*

Singles at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4 and Di Linh on Apr 6.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Seen both days (Apr 2 and 4) at Ho Tuyen Lam with a maximum of nine (including one chick) on Apr 4.

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

At Ho Tuyen Lam, one was seen on Apr 2 and three (circling with a Black Eagle) on Apr 4.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Two at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

One at Datanala on Apr 1 and 3, singles at the foot of Mt Langbiang and a few by the lakeside at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2 and 4. Some birds were in transitional plumage.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*

1-2 at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 3.

Silver-breasted Broadbill *Serilophus lunatus*

A pair seen and heard above the tea stall at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarismomus dalhousiae*

1-2 seen in forest trail at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2. Birds were heard here again on Apr 4 and at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella*

Common and vocal at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5, and at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Burmese Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Recorded at Datanla, Ho Tuyen Lam and Mt Langbiang on Apr 1-3.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Several seen at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2 and 4, and at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3 and 4. Subspecies *leucotis*.

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*

A few at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Slender-billed Oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris*

A few seen at Datanla on Apr 1-3. Also present and seen well at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*

One male seen well at Di Linh on Apr 6. Subspecies *traillii*.

Indochinese Cuckooshrike *Coracina polioptera*

A few in pines at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2. Singles at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

A pair seen at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3. Male was seen feeding a juvenile Banded Bay Cuckoo. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Several at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*

Seen at Datanla, Ta Nung Valley, Ho Tuyen Lam and Di Linh.

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

Recorded at Ta Nung Valley, Mt Langbiang and Di Linh.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Recorded at most sites.

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer*

Present at Ta Nung Valley and Di Linh.

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis*

A few in pines at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

White-throated Rock Thrush *Monticola gularis*

A male seen at Datanla on Apr 3.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

Singles seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5.

Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophrys*

Common and recorded at Datanla, Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Two squabbling birds were seen on the ground at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*
One at Datanla Falls on Apr 3.

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*
Two females in pines at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3 were the only records.

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*
Recorded at Ta Nung Valley, Mt Langbiang, Ho Tuyen Lam and Di Linh.

Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana*
A male seen in broadleaved forest at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*
Common and recorded from all sites.

Large Niltava *Niltava grandis*
Seen at Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Females have distinctive blue crown.

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*
Common at most sites around Da Lat.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*
A male seen in a tree at the park entrance of Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

White-tailed Robin *Myiomela leucura*
One male seen in pine forest while descending Mt Langbiang on Apr 3.

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*
One along a stream at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*
Recorded at Ho Tuyen Lam and Mt Langbiang.

Black-collared Starling *Sturnus nigricollis*
Recorded at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2 and 3.

Vinous-breasted Starling *Sturnus burmannicus*
One seen in pines at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 3.

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch *Sitta nagaensis*
This pine specialist was very common at Ho Tuyen Lam, Mt Langbiang and Datanla Falls. Subspecies *grisiventris*.

***Yellow-billed Nuthatch** *Sitta solangiae*
A group of three birds, including a juvenile, seen in a tree in a clump of broadleaved forest at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 3. Subspecies *fortior*.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*
Recorded at Ho Tuyen Lam and Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *legendrei*.

Yellow-cheeked Tit *Parus spilonotus*
One was seen at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4. Subspecies *basileus*.

***Grey-crowned Tit** *Aegithalos annamensis*

A split from the Black-throated Tit superspecies complex, this species is restricted to Southern Indochina. It was recorded in both forest types at all sites.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Recorded at Datanla and Ho Tuyen Lam.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Several over Di Linh on Apr 6.

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

Present at Di Linh. Subspecies *johnsi*.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Recorded at Ta Nung Valley, Ho Tuyen Lam and Mt Langbiang.

Sooty-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus aurigaster*

Recorded at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Flavescent Bulbul *Pycnonotus flavescens*

Common at Ta Nung Valley, Mt Langbiang and Di Linh. Subspecies *sordidus*.

Ochraceous Bulbul *Pycnonotus ochraceus*

Recorded at most sites. Subspecies *hallae*.

Grey-eyed Bulbul *Iole propinqua*

Common at Ta Nung Valley and also seen at Di Linh on Apr 6. Subspecies *aquilonis*.

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*

Common at Ta Nung Valley. Subspecies *remotus*.

Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii*

Common at Mt Langbiang and Ta Nung Valley. Subspecies *griseiventer*.

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

Common in both pine and broadleaved forests at all sites.

Hill Prinia *Prinia atrogularis*

Common and seen well at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 3 and 4. Subspecies *klossi*.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

One in roadside scrub at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer*

Heard in broadleaved forests at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3-4 and Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5. Glimpsed on Apr 3 at the main trail campsite. Has nice shortwing-like song.

Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus*

Present in broadleaved forest at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3 and one seen here on Apr 4.

Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*

Common along the road at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

One seen on the roadside at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis*

One seen at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Very common and seen and heard daily at most sites in Da Lat.

Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*

Common at Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *ticehursti*.

White-tailed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus davisoni*

Common at all sites visited.

White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis*

A flock seen and heard at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4. Subspecies *ocularis*.

Grey-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poliogenys*

One seen at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

One seen in broadleaved forest at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3. Subspecies *annamensis*.

***Black-hooded Laughingthrush** *Garrulax milleti*

A flock of 4-5 seen well at the tea stall trail at Di Linh on Apr 6. Also heard at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5.

***White-checked Laughingthrush** *Garrulax vassali*

Common and present at all sites visited: Datanla, Ta Nung Valley, Ho Tuyen Lam, Mt Langbiang and Di Linh.

ORANGE-BREASTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH *Garrulax annamensis*

Extremely shy and skulking, we glimpsed this bird at Ta Nung a few times on Apr 5 and at Di Linh on Apr 6 but both times, we never got the desired bino views despite a total of at least six encounters. This species would respond to tape about 5-10 minutes after it has been played and come in close but kept to dense foliage. Sometimes, the birds would reply with loud bubbly songs of their own but the birds would invariably remain in cover and then slip away as quietly as they had come in. Definitely one of the toughest birds I have encountered. BVD!

COLLARED LAUGHINGTHRUSH *Garrulax yersini*

One of the most beautiful laughingthrushes in the region. A pair was found on the edge of broadleaved evergreen forest by the first flat campsite at Mt Langbiang. Richard played a tape at 07h15 on Apr 3 and the birds flew straight to the forest edge catching all of us by surprise. I only got naked eye views of the birds hopping in to investigate the intruder and bino views of head and tail. There were at least two other spots on the summit trail where we got a response but again we only saw shadows. On Apr 4, we tried again. The birds at the first spot replied but did not show. Luckily for me, a bird at the summit trail responded to tape and allowed me to see it well as it froze on a liana for less than a second.

White-browed Scimitar-babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*

One heard and glimpsed at the edge of broadleaved forest at the first (pine) campsite at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Red-billed Scimitar-babbler *Pomatorhinus ochraiceps*

One heard close at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5 while we were waiting for a response from an Orange-breasted Laughingthrush in lantana bushes.

Pygmy Wren Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla*

One seen close up in broadleaved forest at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*

Present and common at Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *pagana*.

Chestnut-capped Babbler *Timalia pileata*

One seen in scrub/grassland at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

VIETNAMESE CUTIA *Cutia legalleni*

Pairs (the same pair?) seen in pine forest at Ta Nung on Apr 2 and 5. Very attractive with full striped on the underparts.

White-browed Shrike-babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*

A pair seen in pines at Datanla on Apr 1. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Chestnut-fronted Shrike-babbler *Pteruthius aenobarbus*

Singles at Mt Langbiang on Apr 4 and Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5. Subspecies *indochinensis*.

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanoptera*

Present at Mt Langbiang and Ta Nung Valley. Subspecies *orientalis*.

BLACK-CROWNED FULVETTA *Alcippe klossi*

This cute bird was encountered only in broadleaved forests at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3-4.

Mountain Fulvetta *Alcippe peracensis*

Present at Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *annamensis* split by some as distinct species, Annam Fulvetta.

GREY-CROWNED CROCIAS *Crociias langbianis*

A few flocks (pairs) seen at Ta Nung Valley on the morning of Apr 2. Also heard several at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4. Best view was a single in sunlit tree at eye level just 15 metres away in a boundary trail at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5. BEST BIRD OF THE TRIP!

Rufous-backed Sibia *Heterophasia annectans*

1-2 birds at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2 and 5. Subspecies *exima*.

Black-headed Sibia *Heterophasia melanoleuca*

Two seen well at the tea stall trail at Di Linh on Apr 6. Also heard at Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *robinsoni*.

White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca*

Two at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 5 and one along the road at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Mrs Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*

Common at Ta Nung Valley and Mt Langbiang. Subspecies *annamensis*.

Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*

Common at Ta Nung Valley. Subspecies *johnsi* has orange breast band.

Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*

A number seen by the road at Di Linh on Apr 6.

Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna*

Common at Ta Nung Valley, Mt Langbiang and Di Linh.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Common in towns and wherever there are houses.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Singles at the foot of mt Langbiang on Apr 3 and 4.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

At least two birds in pine forests at Mt Langbiang on Apr 2.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

At least two with Scaly-breasted Munias in open scrub at Ta Nung Valley on Apr 2.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

A few at T Nung on Apr 2 and a few in roadside scrub at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 2.

VIETNAMESE GREENFINCH *Carduelis monguilloti*

Two birds seen in pine forests at Mt Langbiang on Apr 3. One at Ho Tuyen Lam on Apr 4 and one along the road at Di Linh on Apr 6.