



# birdtourASIA

specialists in asian birding tours

## Sabah, Borneo

24<sup>th</sup> October – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2010

**Leader: James Eaton**

Borneo has one of the richest avifauna on earth and our trip explores several different ecosystems, from the mighty Mount Kinabalu to the pristine rainforest of Danum Valley. This will give us the opportunity to record the majority of the islands endemic birds.

We begin our tour at Sukau on the banks of the Kinabatangan River, home to the highly specialised Proboscis Monkey, rare Storm's Stork, 8 species of hornbill and the little-known Bornean Ground Cuckoo. Next is one of the world's oldest and most magnificent rainforests at Danum Valley. Based at the superb Borneo Rainforest Lodge, we will enjoy some of the best lowland rainforest birding in the world; seeking out some of Borneo's lowland specialities, including the bizarre Bristlehead and the stunning Blue-headed Pitta.

We will then move on to the Rafflesia Forest Reserve in the Crocker Range, named after the largest flower in the world for which it is famous. It also allows a chance to record many mid-altitude specialities which are difficult elsewhere such as Bornean Barbet, Fruit-hunter and Bornean Leafbird.

Finally, we visit the endemic hotspot of Mount Kinabalu, reaching a spectacular 4101metres. This area is occupied by lush forest, mountain streams, and most importantly, many fascinating bird species that are unique to the highlands of Borneo. The enigmatic 'Whiteheads Trio' of endemics comprising a spiderhunter, trogon and broadbill are all to be found here.

### Day 1:

Morning arrival into Kota Kinabalu. Afternoon flight to Sandakan and transfer to nearby Sepilok in time for some late afternoon birding. Sepilok is home to a successful Orang-utan rehabilitation project and as a result protects a sizeable chunk of tall secondary forest. This area provides an excellent introduction to Bornean birds and while exploring the trails and newly constructed canopy walkway we might find surprises such as Black-crowned Pitta or the unique Bristlehead. Night at Sepilok.

### Day 2:

After another early morning of birding at Sepilok we head next to Gomantong Caves, famous for their huge numbers of breeding swiftlets and bats. This offers us the chance to identify the four swiftlet species by studying the structure of their nests, undoubtedly the easiest way to separate this difficult group! We then continue to our comfortable lodge on the banks of the Kinabatangan River. Cruising along the River we will hope to find the rare Storm's Stork and will make a special effort to see the unique Proboscis Monkey, with a good chance of several other mammals including Bornean Pygmy Elephant and Orang-utan. We will spend the night in the gorgeous setting of the banks of the Kinabatangan.

### Day 3:

We will spend all day in this area. Our main target here is the Bornean Ground Cuckoo one of Borneo's most mysterious and least-known birds, which has regularly been recorded here in recent years. As we cruise along the river and its tributaries in the comfort of our boat we have the opportunity to observe many of the canopy dwellers that can be more difficult to see at Danum Valley, especially hornbills, with

all eight species possible here. Also found here are a variety of raptors, four species of pitta and a host of frugivores. Night at Sukau.

#### **Day 4:**

After a final morning cruise along the Kinabatangan we drive south to Lahad Datu after lunch. From here we will travel by minibus into the heart of the fabulous Danum Valley Conservation Area to our base for the next four nights, the luxurious Borneo Rainforest Lodge. The spectacular rainforest here is home to some of the rarest and most stunning birds in south-east Asia, including several species endemic to Borneo and the forest we will be birding in is renowned for being one of the best spots to search for them. Night at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

#### **Days 5-7:**

Our lodge at Danum Valley is located in superb primary rainforest and excellent birding begins in the grounds. An extensive trail system allows us to search for some of the more elusive forest species and the fantastic canopy walkway allows a unique insight into species which often remain hidden in the treetops.

Among the specialities we will be searching for are six species of resident pitta, including endemic Black-crowned, Blue-headed, Blue-banded and 'Bornean' Banded, the spectacular Bristlehead, Black-throated and Striped Wren Babblers, Bornean Ground Babbler, together with a fantastic supporting cast of innumerable woodpeckers, babblers, trogons and hornbills.

The area is also rich in mammals and highlights are likely to include Orang-utan, Bornean Gibbon and possibly Bornean Pygmy Elephant. Night-birding is often rewarded by Buffy Fish Owl or Brown Wood Owl and mammals may include several species of flying squirrel, Slow Loris or Leopard Cat. Nights at Borneo Rainforest Lodge.

#### **Day 8:**

After a final morning of birding we will have to tear ourselves away from this fantastic area and bid farewell to Danum Valley, as we return to Lahad Datu and take a flight back to Kota Kinabalu. Night at Kota Kinabalu.

#### **Day 9:**

We will set off early this morning to make the most of our morning visit to the Rafflesia Reserve in the Crocker Mountain Range. This site, which is set at a lower altitude than Mount Kinabalu, gives us the chance to see several birds which are rarely recorded elsewhere. As the sun rises we will enjoy the relative cool by birding along the roadside before retreating into the forest to explore the trails as the heat begins to rise. Our main targets in area are the localised Bornean Bulbul, Bornean Leafbird, Bornean Barbet and Mountain Barbets. In the past we have also recorded Mountain Serpent Eagle, Red-breasted and Crimson-headed Partridges, Whitehead's Broadbill, Streaky-breasted and Whitehead's Spiderhunters, Bornean Treepie, Blyth's Hawk Eagle and the unique Fruithunter. We will then transfer to the Kinabalu National Park for a four-night stay on the slopes of the magnificent Mount Kinabalu.

#### **Days 10-13:**

At 4101 metres, Mount Kinabalu is the highest peak between the Himalaya and Papua New Guinea. The slopes of this mountain are still cloaked in lush, montane forest, containing a huge diversity of plants, insects, mammals, amphibians, and most importantly for us - birds. Many are endemic to the highlands of Borneo.

We will split our time here between birding along the quiet road towards the summit and working the excellent series of trails.

We will be searching in particular for some Kinabalu specialities, including Mountain Serpent Eagle, Red-breasted and Crimson-headed Partridges, Bare-headed, Sunda and Rufous-hooded Laughingthrushes, Mountain Wren Babbler, Bornean Stubtail, Bornean Swiftlet, Fruit-hunter, the superb Whitehead's trio (Trogon, Broadbill, and Spiderhunter) and the elusive Everett's Thrush.

On one of the days we have the opportunity to ascend the lower levels of the summit trail in search of some high altitude specialities, including the aptly named Kinabalu Friendly Warbler, Mountain Black-eye and Pale-faced Bulbul, a distinctive split from Flavescent.

We will also take a day trip to the lower slopes of Kinabalu, to Poring Hot Springs, which has a markedly different avifauna. Here we have further chances of the dazzling Blue-banded and 'Bornean' Banded Pittas as well as one of Borneo's most difficult endemics, Hose's Broadbill and a whole range of rare species including White-necked Babbler, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Warbler and even Chestnut-capped Thrush.

**Day 14:**

International departures from Kota Kinabalu International Airport.

<b>Total tour cost:</b>	<b>£ 2450</b>	<b>\$ 3610</b>
<b>Single room supplement:</b>	<b>£ 320</b>	<b>\$ 475</b>
<b>Deposit:</b>	<b>£ 300</b>	<b>\$ 600</b>

**Maximum Group size: 6**

**The cost includes:**

All accommodation, all main meals, overland transport, internal flights, permits, entrance fees & guide fees

**The cost excludes:**

International flights, departure taxes, insurance, alcoholic drinks & other items of a personal nature

For further information please [e-mail](#) us or phone on **+44 1332 516254**