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## Suan Rot Fai

(Updated 19/05/15)

### Introduction

#### Tweet

Suan Rot Fai, in Bangkok, used to be a golf course until about the year 2000 and this former land use is obvious when taking a walk around the park with obvious fairways and, in some cases, greens and bunkers surviving. This welcome green space, in what is a very crowded city, is well-used by local people and can give one the impression of being somewhere far more suburban if not rural. Birds make use of this area too and quite a good number can be seen in a 2-3 hour morning visit.

For birders trapped in Bangkok or with only a morning or just a short taxi ride to spare Suan Rot Fai offers the chance to see around 40 species, late a short taxi ride from the city centre and at the same time providing an opportunity to escape the smog, traffic and noise that can prove very stressful throughout the city. At certain times of the year the park offers birders a very good chance of finding a rarity or two as many passage migrants stop here to feed and rest as they head to their wintering/breeding grounds.



Scaly-breasted Munias (Photo by Nick Upton)

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### Birding Highlights

Suan Rot Fai is probably the best place to see birds in the centre of Bangkok. Many of the birds that are resident in the city can be found in a single morning here; Coppersmith Barbet, Indian Roller, Pied Fantail, Olive-backed Sunbird, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker and Oriental Magpie Robin are all abundant.

Finding migrants is one of the most exciting aspects of visiting Bangkok's parks for birding and any visit during the dry season is likely to turn up Asian Brown Flycatcher, Taiga Flycatcher, Brown Shrike, Black-naped Oriole and Common Kingfisher. However, this is also an excellent place for finding much rarer migrants, particularly in September/October and March/April when species such as Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Forest Wagtail, Siberian Blue Robin, Asian Paradise Flycatcher and many others are frequently found as they pass through. Rarer migrants which have been found here include Ruddy Kingfisher, Siberian Thrush, Blue-winged Pitta and Thailand's first record of Hartert's Leaf Warbler. On a good morning here during migration the birding can be very good indeed.



Blue-tailed Bee-eater (Photo by Nick Upton)

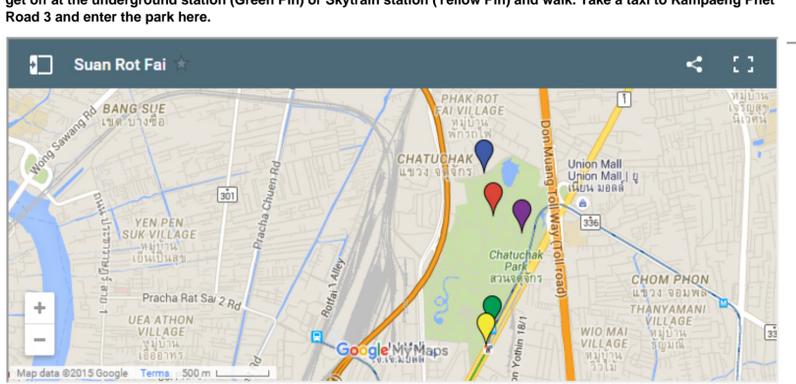
There is a high probability of seeing escaped cage birds here, from Chatuchak market, as it is a stone's throw away, meaning that any birds escaping from captivity on market days will almost inevitably find their way to Suan Rot Fai. I have seen Straw-headed Bulbul in the park and other birds of dubious origin have been seen here, and no doubt will continue to be seen; there seem to be a feral population of Red-whiskered Bulbul and White-rumped Shama here.

A checklist of the birds for this location can be found here - [Suan Rot Fai](#)

**Bird Watching Trips:** If you need help organizing a bird watching trip to Thailand, take a look at the suggested itineraries for ideas on creating a tailor-made trip and contact me for advice: [Thailand bird tours](#).

### Travel Information

Use the interactive map below to plan your journey to Suan Rot Fai (Red Pin). Drive and park at the car park (Blue Pin) or get off at the underground station (Green Pin) or Skytrain station (Yellow Pin) and walk. Take a taxi to Kampaeng Phet Road 3 and enter the park here.



The most convenient way for visitors to get to Suan Rot Fai is by taxi; most taxi drivers know the park but if there is any communication trouble show them the park's name in Thai script: [Suan Rot Fai Thai Script](#). The most convenient place for most taxi journeys to end is on Kampaeng Phet III Road from where there are a couple of obvious entrances to the park but your taxi driver may well drop you off at another spot, it does not really matter.

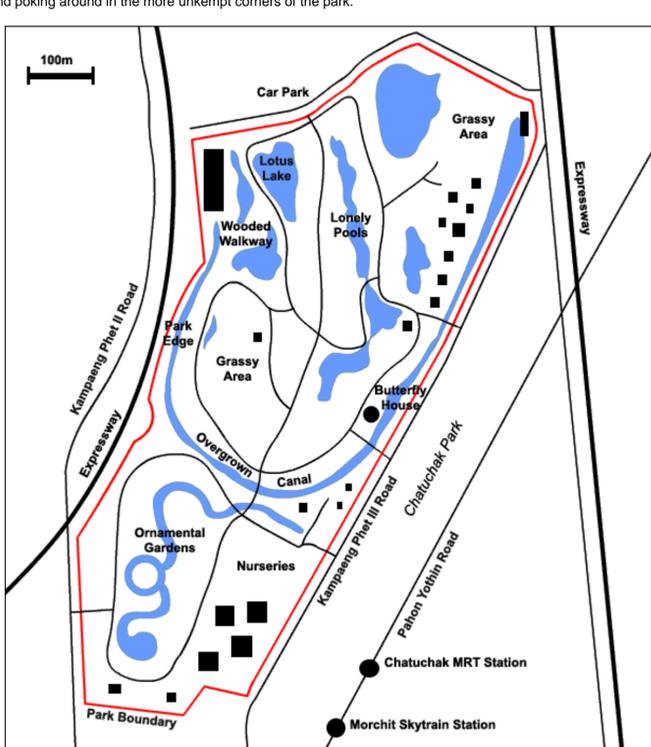
A comfortable and cool alternative is to arrive by skytrain. There are many stations in the city centre and the line terminates near Suan Rot Fai at Morchit station on Phayon Yothin Road. The station is right in front of Chatuchak market and it is only a short walk through the small Chatuchak park to the much larger Suan Rot Fai after crossing Kampaeng Phet III Road. The underground also stops at almost exactly the same spot as the skytrain - the two stations are just 100 metres or so away from each other. The underground is known as the MRT and the station to get off at is Chatuchak.

Lots of buses from all over town stop at Chatuchak so that arriving by this method is easy enough too, although rather slow and dusty.

The distance from the city centre to Suan Rot Fai is too far to make the journey by Tuk-tuk a sensible option; the near-death incidents and pollution would put off all but the most masochistic traveler and taking a motorcycle taxi along the busy roads that lead to Suan Rot Fai is an option only for those that do not care whether they live or die!

### Finding Birds

Finding the commoner birds in Suan Rot Fai is not very difficult, with most of them being fairly abundant and easily encountered, particularly in the early hours of the morning before it gets hot. Finding wintering and passage migrants usually requires more patience and poking around in the more unkempt corners of the park.



**Lotus Lake:** This lotus covered lake is quite obviously a good place to see a few waterbirds, even to the uninitiated it provides by far the most attractive habitat for this type of bird in Suan Rot Fai. Both Javan and Chinese Pond Herons frequent this lake, although you will have to wait until March-May to tell them apart, and there is likely to be a Striated Heron or two skulking around here too. Asian Openbill is becoming a fairly common sight in all parts of the city and this is where you are most likely to see one hunting for food. Little Egret is likely to be seen here too and perhaps Common Kingfisher can be spotted in the "winter" months perched on one of the overhanging trees.

Less common waterbirds are sometimes sighted at Suan Rot Fai and this is a good place to perhaps find a Yellow Bittern. Others have found Cinnamon Bittern and once even a Watercock during a period of flooding.

In the trees around the lake one is likely to find a number of the commoner species such as Plaintive Cuckoo, Pied Fantail, House Sparrow, eastern Jungle Crow and Scaly-breasted Munia.



Javan Pond Heron, Eastern Jungle Crow, Pied Fantail, Asian Brown Flycatcher (Photos by Nick Upton)

**Park Edge:** Where the park borders the expressway is one of the scruffiest parts of the site with piles of brush and trees which overhang the canal. Consequently this is a good place to find insectivorous birds such as wintering Asian Brown Flycatchers, Thick-billed Warblers, Ashy Drongos, Taiga Flycatchers, Yellow-browed Warblers as well as scarcer passage migrants; perhaps a Forest Wagtail, Asian Drongo Cuckoo, Eyebrowed Thrush or Yellow-rumped Flycatcher could be found here.

Certainly this is one of the more-seldom visited corners of the park, so that human disturbance is less of a problem so it could be worth hanging around here, during migratory periods, to see what passes through; White-throated Rockthrush and Large-tailed Nighthawk have both been found here!

**Overgrown Canal:** This canal with its rather overgrown fringing vegetation is an excellent area for birders to spend time in looking for migrant passerines. Commoner migrants will include Arctic Warbler, Eastern Crowned Warbler, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Dark-sided Flycatcher while Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Ashy Minivet and Mugimaki Flycatcher are regular too.

The potential for rarer birds is high with Siberian Blue Robin, Brown-chested Jungle-flycatcher and Tiger Shrike having been found here too. Birds such as Indian Cuckoo, Large Hawk Cuckoo, Eyebrowed Thrush and Crow-billed Drongo are annual passage migrants too and this would be a likely place to find them.

Those who are not familiar with Bangkok's resident species will find Coppersmith Barbet, Asian Koel, Pied Fantail, Common Iora and Common Tailorbird around here as well as others; I have also seen Linedated Barbet in this area.

**Butterfly House:** The areas either side of the Butterfly House are part of a tree nursery and contain a nice mixture of trees which can attract a number of small passerines. I have seen White-rumped Shama, Black-naped Monarch and Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher here as well as Thailand's first, long-staying, Hartert's Leaf Warbler in early 2015. Other overwintering and passage Leaf Warblers are very likely in this habitat; Two-barred, Yellow-browed, Eastern Crowned, Radde's and Arctic Warblers are all regular here. Pale-legged and Sakhalin Leaf Warblers are probable here and at other spots in the park - you will have to induce them to sing at the end of March/April to be able to confidently tell them apart though.



Common Myna, Radde's Warbler (Photos by Nick Upton)

This area closely resembles woodland and it has turned up a variety of good birds over the years including several migrant Cuckoos. However, park staff are quite touchy about people entering the area and there are a number of signs which say "Staff Only" so visitors should please only watch birds from the spots where the public obviously has access so as to not upset the park staff and cause problems for those who regularly bird watch at Suan Rot Fai.

**Grassy Areas:** Much of the park is rather manicured, with lots of lawns and ornamental trees which clearly demarcate parts of the old gold course here. These areas are not prime birding spots but, particularly in the early morning, they are favoured by species such as Common Myna, White-headed Myna, Black-collared Myna and Asian Pied Myna. House Sparrow and Eurasian Tree Sparrow will feed alongside each other on these lawns while Eastern Cattle Egrets and Pond Herons will often be seen strutting around picking out prey from the grass.

The trees surrounding these lawns will often contain Coppersmith Barbet and is a good place to see plenty of Asian Koels; a bird which is usually heard far more often than seen. Migrants in these trees will usually include Ashy Drongo, Hair-crested Drongo, Black-crowned Scops Owl and Black-naped Oriole while Blue-tailed Bee-eaters frequently perch on these trees on order to launch their hunting sorties.

**Bird Watching Trips:** Suan Rot Fai provides a nice morning's birding, particularly when migration is in full swing; a good addition to a longer Thailand birding trip at the right time of year. Adding this location to a birding trip to Thailand will give photographers the chance to get close to a number of species and birders will get the opportunity to see a few species that are otherwise scarce in Thailand. Contact me to arrange a birding trip and/or to discuss the best bird watching options for you: [nickupton@thaibirding.com](mailto:nickupton@thaibirding.com)

**Lonely Pools:** This set of long pools is set well between two main tracks and consequently they receive low levels of human disturbance, making them quite a good place to find birds. For much of their length these pools are bordered by overhanging trees and this makes them attractive to species such as Common and Black-capped Kingfishers as well as the ubiquitous Pied Fantail. A few migrants that like to be close to water could be found here and there have been sightings of Siberian Rubythroat, Oriental Reed Warbler and Dusky Warbler along here. There are a few damp hollows and overgrowth patches in the vicinity of these pools too so watch where you walk and look out for skulkers.

**Wooded Walkway:** This secluded, wooded area seems to be very popular indeed with Coppersmith Barbets but also a good spot to look for scarce passage migrants with some really good birds having been found here in the past; Narcissus Flycatcher, Brown Boobook and Blue-winged Pitta to name a few.

However, on my last visit to the park there was a lot of work occurring around this corner of the park and I am not sure if this area remains secluded or if it is still a good place to look for birds.



Ashy Minivet, Asian Pied Myna (Photos by Nick Upton)

**Ornamental Gardens:** These gardens are the most cared for section with flower displays and regularly maintained gardens. This area is also actually known as Queen Sirikit Park but I include it on this page as it is connected to Suan Rot Fai. Common species such as Streak-eared Bulbul, Asian Koel, House Sparrow, Common Iora, Common Tailorbird and Oriental Magpie Robin will always be seen in this area but for those with time there are some dense areas of vegetation where a few migrants such as Thick-billed Warbler could be skulking and Collared Scops Owl has been found here too; finding passage migrants takes some effort and this area should not be ignored.

Being the part of the site closest to Chatuchak Market this is where escaped species are probably most likely to be encountered; I have seen an escaped Straw-headed Bulbul here.

**Nurseries:** This area of the park is dominated by the nursery section of the site. At first glance it does not appear to be a good place for birding but around the edges and behind some of the buildings are piles of dead and rotting vegetation that may attract insectivorous birds.

Tall trees can attract Leaf Warblers, Drongos and Black-naped Oriole and particularly when trees here are flowering something interesting could turn up; at all times Olive-backed and Brown-throated Sunbirds are likely to be in residence as well as Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.

**Bangkok City Birding**  
Dave Gandy's Bangkok City Birding blog is the best source of up-to-date information on bird sightings at Suan Rot Fai.  
Information from Bangkok City Birding proved invaluable in updating this page: [Bangkok City Birding](#)

Suan Rot Fai is one of those locations which rewards those birders who visit on a regular basis, particularly when the weather conditions are right during migration in autumn and spring. At these times it is worth birding in the park on a daily basis to see which species have recently arrived and perhaps a rarity can be found.

### Facilities

Book a Bangkok hotel through [thaibirding.com](http://thaibirding.com)

Facilities are not really an issue this close to the city centre where there is a vast choice of hotels, indeed Bangkok offers top rate hotels at some of the lowest prices in the world as well as a full range of other lodgings: [Bangkok Hotel Reservations](#). Close to the park is Chatuchak market where virtually anything can be purchased and numerous foodstalls sell cheap and tasty food. Throughout the park are a few food/main entrance there are several small shops. My advice would be to take water and a snack and then take lunch somewhere else in Bangkok, although if food becomes an immediate necessity then simple foodstalls will be found virtually anywhere just a short walk from any of the entrances.



Snack eating at the car park (Photo by Nick Upton)

For those with a non-birding partner or a family this is a good place to simply take a walk or play and there are boats on the lake and bicycles for hire as well as a children's playground.

This location is not a National Park and you will not be charged to go birding here.