

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DOI INTANON EXPEDITION 1963

INCLUDING A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORNITHOLOGY OF THAT MOUNTAIN.

by E.C. DICKINSON

INTRODUCTION:

This is a short account of a brief expedition to the area of the highest mountain in Thailand. Different individuals went for varying reasons; and as they will probably publish themselves any detailed findings that are of interest in their own subjects this article will deal primarily with the expedition in general and then will cover the more important and interesting ornithological findings.

Part 1. AN ACCOUNT OF THE DOI INTANON EXPEDITION 1963

Preliminaries:

The plan was born in November 1962 when the author was staying near the top of Doi Khun Tan and from the bungalow could be seen in the distance the top of Doi Intanon. It looked interesting. To go alone would have been both difficult and unwise so a search began for other people who might be interested and this led to the formation of a moderate-sized expedition.

The expedition was semi-private, in that it comprised three groups:

- Dusit (or Khao Din) Zoo:

 a team of three led by Phra Maha Dheb, the Deputy-Director of the Zoo.
- S.E.A.T.O. Medical Laboratory (U.S. Component): a team of three led by Lt. J. Neely collecting mosquitoes.
- 3. Amateur participants:
 - ... P.A. Reeves, Entomologist and Botanist.
 - ... A.N. Baughan.
 - ... the author.

Each group bore about one third of the costs, except that S.E.A.T.O. very generously provided much invaluable equipment both for central needs and for the use of members of the other groups. For this grateful thanks are particularly extended to *Col. Hansen* and *Major Scanlon* of that organisation.

In the planning stage help was received from Mr. Alan Tubb of F.A.O.; Mr. Kenneth MacCormic of U.S.I.S.; Khun Tem Smitinand of the Royal Forest Department; Khun Kraisri Nimmanhaeminda, then of the Bangkok Bank of Commerce, Chiengmai, now Director of the Industrial Finance Corporation, Bangkok; and particularly from Dr. Herbert G. Deignan, the celebrated authority on Thai ornithology. Further encouragement was given by Mr. Harold Young of Chiengmai Zoo, Mr. J.D. Macdonald of the British Museum, the Siam Society and numerous others to all of whom thanks are most gratefully extended.

We were lucky to have *Lt. Neely* in Chiengmai prior to the expedition so that he was able to make all the advance arrangements for guides, porters and transport as far as the roads would take us.

Our party was completed by the addition of Nai *Toi Chinda-nusorn*, who was invaluable in the collecting and skinning of birds (Plate 3), Nai *Suchart Tinnalugsa* our excellent guide, and a cook.

The Geography of the area:

The accompanying map is intended to show the location of Doi Intanon in relation to Chiengmai and the area surrounding our camp and our route to the summit of Doi Ang Ka Luang. The complex known by the name of Doi Intanon reaches its maximum height of 8,448 feet in a peak called Doi Ang Ka Luang (Lat. 18°35'N., Long 98°30'E.) (Plate 4). The area West and North of the mountain is virtually impenetrable and remains very wild. The approach that we followed led in from the South-East along the Mae Klang and through a valley of terraced rice, at about 4,000 to 5,000 feet, cultivated by the Karens (Plate 5). Higher, along the ridges are some Meo villages.

To reach this valley we followed the river (Plate 1), mainly along its west bank, after crossing it just below the attractive Mae



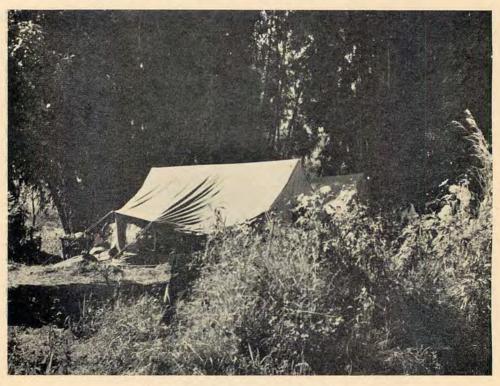
The beginning of the trail at the foot of the Mae Klang waterfall.



Following the Mae Klang in its lower reaches.



A picturesque waterfall on the Mae Klang at about 3,500 feet.



Our camp in the grove of bamboo.

Klang waterfall, which is accesible by road via Chom Thong. Chom Thong lies some 58 kilometres W.S.W. of Chiengmai along the Hod road.

The traditional base camp for parties on their way to the summit of Doi Intanon is known as Ban Garrett, after a botanist who collected there. It lies in the edge of the evergreen jungle, at the head of the cleared valley, at about 5,200 feet and is only 5-6 hours climb from the summit. We camped lower, at about 4,400 feet near the foot of the feature known as Pha Mon which is a steep rounded hill jutting into the valley from the East and dominating it. (Plate 4).

The whole area of Doi Intanon or Doi Ang Ka, including that through which we climbed for two days to get to our base camp, spreads over many square kilometres and includes a wide variety of habitats. The area near the Mae Klang waterfall is dry "pa daeng" or deciduous forest, but within two hours one reaches the wetter lower evergreen forest that runs along the stream. During the second day's climb we ascended the first scarp of dry oak and bamboo light hill forest where the Mae Klang rushes through a tumbling gorge some way below the path; and then, after crossing the stream on a single log fallen across it, we came out at the edge of a very small farmed area, beyond which a belt of bamboo brakes was surmounted by These pines clothed a double ridge, after climbing which we dropped down to the bottom end of the cleared valley of Pha Mon, getting, at the same time as we topped the second ridge, our first view of "the Doi", or Ang Ka Luang, which still seemed, and indeed was, a long way away.

We wound along the narrow banks of the rice terraces and up the valley past the scattered huts of the Karens and occasional clumps of tall bamboo. It was in one such clump beside a Karen house, not then in use, that we pitched our base camp. (Plate 2.)

Not far beyond there the hill slopes running into the valley show the evidence of slash and burn agriculture, with almost no trees left standing and with head-deep lalang growing over most of the slopes; through this a trail winds up to Ban Garrett in the edge of the forest. There the trail virtually dissappeared in the dark, wet, hill evergreen, rich in mosses and orchids. This stretch of the trail was well stocked with leeches. Finally a sharp escarpment led up out of this jungle onto one of the main spurs of the mountain. This at a height of perhaps 6,500 feet is shorn of trees and over-grown with lalang and from its ridge we could look East to Doi Suthep.

Almost immediately the jungle closed in again, and we climbed sharply along a trail marked by blazed giants of the forest which began to change in character until near the summit the undergrowth increased to become almost impassable and the trees, now rather shorter, became swathed in the creepers, orchids, ferns and mosses of the cloud forest. From the summit there was no view, the trees almost closed over our head and even photography of the summit markers was found difficult (Plate 6). There is a grassy "sphagnum" bog, in a depression on a lower part of the summit plateau which one of us reached.

The Expedition in the Field:

We departed from Chiemai at 05.30 on 17th. November 1963 and travelled by Land Rover and Jeep to the Mae Klang waterfall, where our porters awaited us together with the advance luggage and our guide (Plate 1). It took some time to get moving but by 09.30 with a total of 53 porters we were on our way. Progress was relatively slow and we made camp in a bamboo thicket beside the Mae Klang after having covered rather less than 10 kilometres.

The following day better progress was made but it still proved impossible to reach Ban Garrett and it was largely for this reason that the lower site for our base camp was chosen. It proved very comfortable, probably more so than Ban Garrett would have been, but certainly less well placed for our studies.

The porters descended early the next morning with instructions on when to return and collect us. Six of them stayed with us for the following week and were useful camp-followers: those chosen being, of course, the leaders in the long straggling line that had developed during the climb.

The following day was devoted to putting the camp in order and to a few preliminary excursions. In the days that followed we



Checking the nets for birds.



Skinning and preparing a specimen.



The shoulder of Pha Mon which stood above our camp. Looking across to Doi Ang Ka Luang from a ridge near our camp.

worked on our own subjects, working gradually further and further away from the camp. We climbed to the summit of Doi Ang Ka Luang on November 23rd. after a preliminary reconnaissance as far as the lalang-clothed ridge at 6,500 feet two days earlier. For the reconnaissance, but not the climb itself, we had the services of a Meo guide.

The descent of the expedition and its return to Chiengmai was made rapidly on November 26th., rather earlier than originally planned.

Botanical collecting, including some 40-50 orchid plants, was almost exclusively done at heights of 4,000 feet or more. Entomological work was similarly limited and the greatest volume of specimens was taken quite close to our camp. Mosquitoes were collected over a wider altitudinal range from almost all suitable habitat available and some interesting finds were made.

Apart from observations, which were made over a very wide area from the Mae Klang waterfall to the summit of Doi Ang Ka Luang, ornithological work was restricted to the general vicinity of our camp so that the mist nets in use for collecting birds could be visited regularly (Plate 3). The ornithological results of the expedition form the second part of this paper.

Part 2. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORNITHOLOGY OF DOI INTANON.

Ornithological History:

Since it is tallest mountain in Thailand, Doi Intanon has not unnaturally attracted rather more than its fair share of attention: however since the general level of ornithological attention to Thailand is low it is not to be assumed that Doi Intanon has been overcollected.

The work that has been done was concentrated in a decade from 1928 to 1937, and since then Doi Intanon had probably not been visited by an ornithologist until our expedition; as a result some of the notes on selected species refer to apparent changes in status or distribution.

H.M. Smith, the American ichthyologist—who collected indefatigably all over Thailand, and whose bird collections have been dealt

with by *Riley* (1938)—collected there from December 2nd. to 9th. 1928. Checking, from *Riley's* work, his dates and heights at which he took bird specimens it appears that he must have spent the 5th/6th. December at or near the summit of Doi Ang Ka Luang. He came back from this trip with about 90 specimens of almost 50 species that he had collected between the 2nd. and 9th.

H.G. Deignan collected on Doi Intanon several times in the period 1930-38 including quite a long stay in April/May 1931 and his excellent work "The Birds of Northern Thailand" (1945) mentions the mountain in the text of, or bibliographies to, about 180 species. In that volume the following species are reported from Thailand on the basis of Doi Intanon records only:—

Spectacled Barwing. Chestnut-tailed Siva. Actinodura ramsayi. Minla strigula.

Indigo-blue or White-browed Shortwing. Brachypteryx montana.

Ashy-throated Willow or Leaf Warbler. Phylloscopus maculipennis. and a number of subspecies have been erected on the basis of individuals occuring there which differ adequately from the nearest population of the species elsewhere in Thailand or over its borders. H.G. Deignan says "I believe that I have never visited Doi Intanon in November. I consider that you may find birds new to the Siam list up there.... your November visit may turn up some unexpected migratory form too." (in litt.)

C.J. Aagaard visited Doi Ang Ka and collected extensively in the spring of 1931 or 1932. That part of his collection which is now in Chulalongkorn University is currently being renovated. The specimen of Cinclus pallasii referred to by Deignan (1945 p. 12 and p. 399) as "probably there", is there; as also are specimens of Chaimarrornis leucocephalus, Rhyacornis fuliginosus and many others.

The Asiatic Primate Expedition collected on Doi Intanon from 25th. February to 27th. April 1937. They had camps at 4,300 ft,, 5,500 ft., 6,000 ft. and 8,705 ft.; the bird collecting was done mainly by J.A. Griswold Jnr. with the assistance of Lucas Bah and Peter Cheron. It is reported that a "bird net" was used in addition to firearms. The published report "Birds from Northern Siam" by James C. Greenway Jnr. (1940) says that 1060 birds of 87 forms were collected "at Chiengmai, on Mt. Angka and Mt. Nangkao". It goes on to deal



Looking up the valley at the cloud-covered Doi.



Looking down at our camp from a nearby ridge.



The small shrine at the summit. The tobacco tin keeps the names of those who have climbed the Doi.



The shady forest at the summit.

with 66 forms in detail of which 20 were not forms collected on Doi Intanon (Mt. Angka). One has the impression that collecting was highly selective, but very useful series were taken of the important species and these are now at the *Museum of Comparative Zoology*, *Harvard*, *Massachusetts*.

Since the Second World War there has been little ornithological work in Thailand and the publications of this Society make no mention of any collecting on Doi Intanon.

Method of Working:

Our original plan in the ornithological field was "to collect high altitude skulkers" but our camp at 4,400 feet was too low and too far from the edge of the thick wet evergreen.

For the most part we did not use firearms, but "mist nets" of which we had about 40. We set up about 25 of these close enough to our camp for us to be able to visit them regularly throughout the day as well as at dawn and dusk.

As there appear to be no previous articles in the publications of the Siam Society on the use of mist nets a brief explanation is perhaps desirable. Seth H. Low in his paper "Banding with Mist Nets" (1957) says "Mist nets are made in Japan of fine silk or nylon thread, dyed black to make them invisible when set against a dark background. The netting, best described as similar in texture and structure to a hairnet, is mounted loosely on a taut frame of strong twine, crossed by horizontal braces called 'shelfstrings' of the same twine about 1½ to 2 feet apart. The excess netting hangs in a loose bag or pocket below each of the lower shelfstrings. A bird striking the net falls into this pocket and remains there quietly until removed".

This kind of net is then erected tautly between poles—bamboos are ideal—with a background of shrubs, bushes or reeds. Nets should only be used by experienced persons who have received training in how to use them and how to take birds out of them.

Our nets were located in the scrub at the foot of Pha Mon, and along its edge with the rice where that was being harvested; beside and across the stream; and in the nearest wet jungle to the camp—a small gully on the far side of the stream, in which a feeder

stream is followed down the slope from the ridge by a tongue of jungle. The nets placed in this last situation produced most of our best catches.

Results of Mist Netting:

A varying number of nets were erected for up to six days. 50 birds of 24 species were caught: skins of 14 species were retained, the remaining birds being handed over to the Zoo party (22 birds) or released live (11 birds).

The following table shows our catches by dates:

Species:	20/11	21/11	22/11	23/11	24/11	25/11	Total
Accipiter badius			1				1
Phaenicophaeus tristis		1					1
Otus spilocephalus				9		1	1
Pycnonotus atriceps	0					1	1
Pycnonotus melanicterus	1	-		2		2	5
Pycnonotus blanfordi		1			-		1
Hypsipetes mcclellandii				1	4 .		5
Erithacus cyane			1		1	N =	2
Myiomela leucura			1				1
Saxicola caprata			1				1
Saxicola ferrea	1	2					3
Myophonus caeruleus					1		1
Phylloscopus borealis			-1				1
Prinia hodgsonii			1				1
Muscicapa thalassina			1				1
Muscicapa parva		1					1
Muscicapa hyperythra					1		1
Muscicapa sundara			1				1
Rhipidura albicollis					3		3
Motacilla alba				1			1
Motacilla caspica	1		-				1
Anthus hodgsoni	4	2	3	1			10
Zosterops palpebrosa		2		1			3
Emberiza rutila	1				1	1	5

Notes upon Selected Species:

It was a temptation to comment upon each of the beautiful species seen, but in the interests of conserving space these notes are limited to those which may add something to our knowledge of the distribution or seasonal movement of the species within Thailand.

An appendix contains a complete list of the species observed during the course of the expedition.

Mountain Scops Owl (Otus spilocephalus siamensis).

One adult male was caught 25.11.63 and kept as a specimen-Previous records of this little owl in Northern Thailand are only two, one of which was taken by the Asiatic Primate Expedition at 4,300 ft. on Doi Intanon. Ours was taken close to our camp at about 4,400 ft. in scrub. This skin is now with the British Museum (Nat. Hist.). It may be that the birds from Doi Intanon are distinct from those of Peninsular Siam: the type of 'siamensis' comes from there.

Great Hornbill (Buceros bicornis).

I would not judge these birds as common in the area of Doi Intanon. In the space of 10 days only on one occasion were they seen (22.11.63). This makes them scarce by comparison with Khao Yai National Park where several can be seen virtually every day except during the breeding season.

Speckled Piculet. (Picumnus innominatus).

This delightful tiny woodpecker seems to be unchanged in population and habitat since the late 1930's. *Deignan* (1945) does not mention it, and it may not be a good generalisation, but whenever I met it it was within about 6 feet of the ground.

Dusky Crag Martin. (Hirundo concolor).

Deignan (1945) records this species from 4 mountains of the northwestern provinces which do not include Doi Ang Ka. As could have been expected it is present — a flock of these square-tailed birds was seen towards dusk on 23.11.63 at about 6,500 feet along the main ridge to the summit.

Blue-eyed Bulbul.

(Pycnonotus atriceps).

Deignan (1945) records the species as locally common and "restricted...to a maximum elevation of 3,000 feet". It seems that the range or habits of this species must be changing. It was seen and netted in the evergreen along the side of the cleared valley at about 4,600 ft. Deignan does not either name Doi Ang Ka as a known locality for the species.

Chestnut-fronted Shrike-Babbler. (Pteruthius aenobarbus)

One was seen in light forest along the flanks of the cleared valley of Pha Mon on 22.11.63 at about 4,500 feet. This would appear to be the first record for Doi Ang Ka of this species and to add a sixth locality to its known range in Northern Thailand.

Chestnut-tailed Siva. (Minla strigula).

Doi Ang Ka is the only known Thai locality for this species, according to *Deignan* (1945). We found a flock at the very summit of Doi Ang Ka Luang on 23.11.63.—accompanied by Chestnut-capped Babblers (*Alcippe castaneceps*) they were feeding through the undergrowth.

Siberian Blue Robin. (Erithacus cyane).

Two specimens were netted and taken: they showed considerable variation in the colour of the mantle, rump and tail. One is an adult female; the other, an immature bird, was not sexed when skinned and may be either. There does not seem to be a previous record for Doi Ang Ka and these birds at about 4,500 feet were considerably higher than *Deignan's* suggested ranges.

White-capped Water Redstart (Chaimarrornis leucocephalus).

One was seen at the top of the great waterfall of the Mae Klang on 17.11.63. The Mae Klang appears to be a regular wintering spot for this species.

Arctic Warbler. (Phylloscopus borealis)

A male was netted on 22.11.63. The skin has been examined by *H.G. Deignan* who writes that it is of the Siberian or nominate race – *Phylloscopus b. borealis*. This would appear to be the first record for Doi Intanon. *Deignan* (1945) only mentions one record each for

the suspecies 'borealis' & 'examinandus' in Northern Thailand; but by 1963 he has disallowed 'examinandus' and records 'borealis' as a visitor to almost the whole country.

Black-browed Leaf Warbler. (Phylloscopus ricketti)

As Deignan (1945) points out this warbler can easily be mistaken in the field for the commoner Seicercus burkii. I have experience of the latter species (Dickinson 1963), and indeed saw it again on Doi Intanon. However the entire underparts of Ph. ricketti, are yellow and the crown stripe is bright yellow and clearer than in S. burkii. The one example seen on 22.11.63 appears to be the first record from Doi Intanon.

Rufescent Prinia. (Prinia rufescens).

A small party was seen moving through the grassy undergrowth beneath the pines on the top of the ridge west of the cleared valley of Pha Mon. *Deignan* (1945) suggested that *P. rufescens* did not occur on Doi Intanon and found this strange. There remains however no evidence that they are co-habitant with *P.h. erro* in this area during the breeding season.

Yellow-browed Fantail. (Rhipidura hypoxantha)

This is another of the birds on the Thai list from only one or two localities and it is nice to be able to report that it appears to be relatively common above 5,000 feet on Doi Ang Ka Luang: It was not met along the flank ridges.

Black-naped Blue Monarch. (Hypothymis azurea).

This is a lowland species, which *Deignan* (1945) mentions as recurring between 2,000 and 3,500 feet in light evergreen and mixed deciduous forest on certain mountains. It would seem that *Deignan* did not have Doi Intanon in mind for that type of forest reaches about 4,600 feet there and in it with a mixed hunting party we found a male at about 4,500 feet.

Chestnut-flanked White-eye. (Zosterops erythropleura).

On 22.11.63 a large mixed flock of Zosterops palpebrosa and the present species was found in a re-entrant along the eastern side of the main cleared valley. The flock included several of this species but the majority were Z. palpebrosa. This would appear to be the first record for Doi Intanon.

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SUMMARY

- 1. The composition of the Doi Intanon Expedition 1963 is given and acknowledgements are made.
- 2. A description of the area given, with outline notes on the progress of the Expedition.
- 3. The Ornithological history of Doi Intanon is summarised.
- 4. Brief notes are given on 15 species, and the mist netting operations summarised in a table.
- 5. Appendices cover specimens taken and list the 91 species seen.

APPENDIX 1.

List of Species Seen.

Pernis ptilorhynchus Hypsipetes madagascariensis

Accipiter badius Dicrurus aeneus Dicrurus remifer Falco tinnunculus Dicrurus hottentotus Arborophila rufogularis

Lophura nycthemera Oriolus chinensis (or) tenuirostris

Actitis hypoleucos Irena puella

Ducula badia Crypsirina occipitalis Streptopelia chinensis Corvus macrorhynchos

Psittacula finschii Parus major Phaenicophaeus tristis Sitta europaea Otus spilocephalus Sitta magna Halcyon smyrnensis Sitta frontalis Buceros bicornis Certhia discolor Megalaima virens Macronous gularis Megalaima franklinii Garrulax leucolophus Megalaima asiatica Garrulax erythrocephalus Picumnus innominatus Pteruthius aenobarbus

Dendrocopos canicapillus Minla strigula Hirundo concolor Yuhina zantholeuca Hirundo daurica Alcippe castaneceps Hemipus picatus Alcippe morrisonia Tephrodornis virgatus Erithacus cyane Pericrocotus solaris Copsychus saularis Pericrocotus flammeus Rhyacornis fuliginosus Chloropsis cochinchinensis Myiomela leucura Saxicola caprata Chloropsis hardwickii Pycnonotus atriceps Saxicola ferrea Pycnonotus melanicterus Myophonus caeruleus Zoothera dauma Pycnonotus jucosus

Pycnonotus aurigaster Pycnonotus blanfordi Phylloscopus inornatus Criniger pallidus Phylloscopus borealis Hypsipetes mcclellandii Phylloscopus davisoni Hypsipetes flavala Phylloscopus ricketti

Seicercus burkii

Motacilla alba
Motacilla caspica
Anthus hodgsoni
Lanius nasutus
Sturnus nigricollis
Gracula religiosa
Anthreptes singalensis
Dicaeum cruentatum
Zosterops erythropleura
Zosterops palpebrosa
Lonchura striata

Emberiza rutila

APPENDIX 2. List of Specimens taken.

Collector's		Species.	Sex.	Date.
No.				
020	,	Emberiza rutila	?	20.11.63
021	+	Saxicola ferrea	f.	20.11.63
022		Saxicola ferrea	f.	21.11.63
023	4	Pericrocotus solaris	m.	21.11.63
024		Phylloscopus borealis	m.	21.11.63
025		Muscicapa parva	m.	21.11.63
026		Erithacus cyane	f.	22.11.63
027		Prinia hodgsoni	m.	22.11.63
. 028		Muscicapa thalassina	m.	22.11.63
029		Muscicapa sundara	f.	22.11.63
030		Saxicola caprata	m.	22.11.63
031		Myiomela leucura	m.	22.11.63
032	d.	Hypsipetes mcclellandi	i ?	23.11.63
033		Erithacus cyane	f.	24.11.63
034		Muscicapa hyperythra	m.	24.11.63
035		Emberiza rutila	m.	24.11.63
036		Rhipidura albicollis	m.	24.11.63
037		Otus spilocephalus	m.	25.11.63
038		Emberiza rutila	m.	25.11.63
		m-male	f-female	

Note: All these except No. 023 were taken in nets.