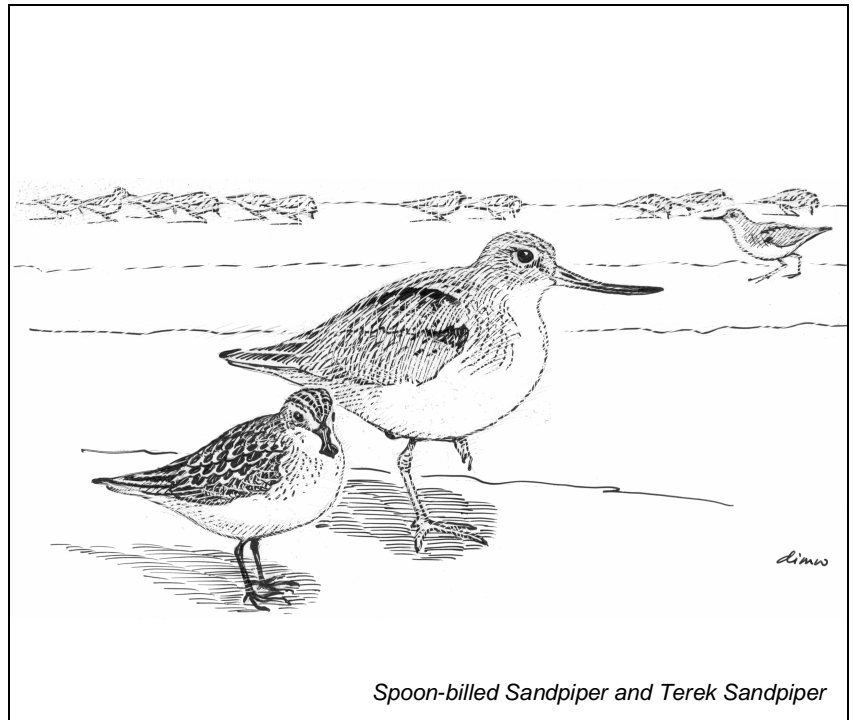


MYANMAR

Spoon-billed Sandpiper conservation tour



Spoon-billed Sandpiper and Terek Sandpiper

The critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper is on the brink of extinction.

Hunting of wading birds on their wintering grounds has been identified as the primary cause of their decline. You can help save this wonderful bird by visiting one of its main wintering grounds in Myanmar. The coast of Arakhan in the west of the country hosts a good number. We will visit by boats and can expect to see several Spoon-billed Sandpipers. We are not just enjoying the observation of this charismatic wader but also help by counting them. We support the local people by leaving a small entrance fee when entering the island, demonstrating the sustaining value of a living Spoon-billed Sandpiper compared to that of a trapped and killed bird. We will meet the wonderfully friendly people and encounter many more birds. Among them the rare Indian Skimmers and towering Sarus Cranes. There are plenty of Irrawaddy Dolphins too. This tour includes a visit to the ancient site of Mrauk Oo, north of Sittwe and the famous Bagan on the Ayeyarwaddy River, where plenty of Myanmar's rural birds include some Burmese endemics.

ITINERARY

YANGON

On arrival in Yangon, the capital of the Union of Myanmar, we will meet our local partner who will take us to the Inyar Lake Hotel for a rest. The eager ones among us can start birdwatching in the hotel grounds and at the lake. We will encounter bulbuls, jacanas and Brown Shrikes here. In the evening we will go to the Shwedagon Pagoda, one of the most prestigious cultural sites in Yangon. The Pagoda also holds one of the most extraordinary wildlife spectacles, which we will encounter at dusk....

BAGAN

From Yangon we will drive to the ancient temple town of Bagan and spend two nights at the Thande Hotel, by the Ayeyarwaddy River. We will start birding on the shores of the majestic Ayeyarwaddy River. Here we will focus on Burmese endemics such as Burmese Bushlark, Hooded Treepie, White-throated Babbler and many others. With a little bit of luck we can get a glimpse of the shy Laggar Falcon. A leisurely boat trip along the Ayeyarwaddy River will focus on River Lapwing and Small Pratincoles. The wonderful Pied Harrier and the pretty White-tailed Stonechat are highlights among the grassland specialities here. All birdwatching is set among the magical setting of the temples and many ancient

buildings. Rural Myanmar has the charm of ox-carts and horses with motorised vehicles quite scarce.

SITTWE AND NAN THAR

An early morning flight from Yangon will take us to Sittwe, the regional capital of Arakhan (Rakhine) in the west of the country. The Shwethazin Hotel is opposite a huge colony of Flying Foxes, which allow close views and photographs from the rooftop garden. In the afternoon we will explore the long white beaches near the town and visit the dunes where we can look through the many waders. Long-toed Stint and Pintail Snipe can be found, with another chance to encounter a Pied Harrier. Citrine Wagtail and Bengal Bushlark are also present. Bicycle rickshaws replace cars in Sittwe, allowing us to further explore this special town on the leisurely way to our restaurant. In the evening the lights are turned off to leave the entire town in complete darkness.

On two mornings we leave Sittwe to head by boat for the island of Nan Thar. A few local people pursue subsistence fishing here and by visiting the island we demonstrate our interest in the island's wildlife. This is the place to begin our search for the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. We can inspect the local people's harvest of marine life; the wealth of different fish and crabs is amazing. Depending on the tide we can walk around the island to encounter our first Spoon-billed Sandpiper among the thousands of waders. Among the

packed shorebirds we can count up to 35 different species! These include Broad-billed Sandpiper, Great Knot and with some luck also the sought-after Nordmann's Greenshank. Evenings and mornings are spectacular as we see hundreds of Bar-headed Geese come to roost on the island.

Our boat tour also takes us further inland along the mangroves of the Kaladan River delta in pursuit of the rare Indian Skimmer and the more numerous Irrawaddy Dolphin. On reaching the ancient temple town of Mrauk Oo, we stay for one night. We pass through agricultural areas that hold healthy populations of rural birds.

HWLAGA FOREST AND MOEYUNGYI WETLAND

A day's excursion into the forest park north of Yangon offers a great opportunity to encounter forest birds such as Rosy Minivet, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Black-naped Monarch, Green-billed Malkoha and with luck the Pale-capped Pigeon.

Later we will travel to the Moeyungyi Bird Sanctuary, a huge flat lake with plenty of freshwater vegetation surrounded by agricultural land. We obtain further insights into rural Myanmar where ox and water buffalo plough the fields. At dusk we get our first impression of the wetland whilst observing thousands of egrets and herons flying to roost in nearby trees. We stay overnight in comfortable chalets and enjoy the dark starry nights free of light pollution.

An early morning excursion by boat takes us around the lake with Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Lesser Whistling Ducks, Purple Swampphen and numerous Purple Herons. Among the waders we will search for Painted Snipe among plenty of Common Snipe and Wood Sandpiper. Asian Openbill Storks start soaring in late morning. With luck we will find some Painted Storks among them and several birds of prey joining in. Striated Grassbirds, and Black-browed and Oriental Reed Warbler are common in lakeside vegetation. After lunch and some birdwatching from the shelter of the restaurant, we leave to travel back to Yangon. We will have one last night back in Yangon before our return flight home.

PACE

On most days breakfast will be at 7am, giving us plenty of time in the productive morning period. It may be earlier at Sittwe when we visit Spoon-billed Sandpipers as we are governed by tide times. The climate is mostly hot in the day and cool at night. It is the dry season, so there is only a small chance of rain, making the birding a pleasure. Most of our wetland birding will be done from the luxury of a boat. On Nan Thar Island in search for Spoon-billed Sandpiper we are encouraged to enter into the mudflats. We may walk up to 4 miles in search of them in parts that include areas of ankle deep mud. During the rest of the trip, a little walking is involved at a steady pace. Many birds close to the boats or near the road.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

Full board accommodation is provided, with one night at the Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon, two nights at the Bagan Thande Hotel, three nights at the Shwe Thazin Hotel, Sittwe, two nights at the Nawaratt Hotel, Mrauk Oo, one night back at the Shwe Thazin Hotel, Sittwe, one night at the Moeyungyi Resort and one night back at the Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon. All are of a high standard, with en suite bathrooms. Meals are served on board of the boat, when we are travelling by boat or in scenic restaurants.

PRICE INCLUDES

All birdwatching excursions with expert leader and local guide, full-board accommodation (starting with dinner on 13th, ending with breakfast on 24th), soft drinks at meal times, local transport by coach, boat trips, reserve entrance fees, international flights and airport taxes and a US\$50 fee towards a local community trust fund that protects the Spoon-billed Sandpipers in the area.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Travel insurance. Personal items, tips, alcoholic drinks, laundry.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Return flights from London Heathrow (via Singapore) to Yangon using the scheduled services of Singapore Airlines. Outbound flight departs late morning, arriving back in the UK early morning. **Domestic flights from Manchester and other UK airports are available on this tour. See booking form for details.**

13 nights including two overnight flights:	12th to 25th January 2011
Principal leader:	Dr Christoph Zöckler
Local guide:	Thiri Htin Hla
Maximum group size:	12 clients with one leader and a local guide
Cost with discount (if you book before 29th September 2010):	£3190 per person sharing
Full Cost:	£3340 per person sharing
Single supplement:	£320
Deposit:	£850



By joining this tour you are contributing to the livelihoods of the local people, but also supporting the crucial conservation work of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Recovery Team. For more info see www.arcona.com/spoonbilled.htm

