

TROPICAL BIRDING TOURS

SUMATRA:

ENDEMICS OF THE EMERALD ISLE

A Tropical Birding Custom Trip

August 2-13, 2026
Guide: Ken Behrens

All photos by Ken Behrens

TOUR SUMMARY

Indonesia is such a huge and biodiverse country that it's hard to know how to tackle it as a travelling birder. Sumatra has emerged as an excellent place to consider for a short trip to this vast archipelago. This huge island is situated in the Sundaland biome, sharing a rich lowland avifauna with Sumatra, Java, and Borneo. But many of the most sought-after Sumatran birds, including a rich set of endemics to this island, are found in the string of mountains that runs along the southern edge of the island. Another local area of endemism is the islands lying off the southern coast, including the Mentawai Islands. This short custom trip focused on these two zones: the mountains and the islands. It started on Sipura Island, where highlights included Mentawai Scops-Owl, Barusan Cuckoo-Dove, Pied Imperial-Pigeon, Ruddy Kingfisher, Mentawai Malkoha, and Sunda Frogmouth. The majority of the trip was spent at three mountain sites. These held an array of incredible birds. On Mount Kerinci, we had Salvadori's Pheasant, Bronze-tailed Peacock-Pheasant, Red-billed Partridge, Sumatran Frogmouth, Sunda Owlet, Wreathed Hornbill, Fire-tufted Barbet, Schneider's Pitta, Long-tailed Broadbill, Sumatran Cochoa, Rufous-vented Niltava, Shiny and Sumatran Whistling-Thrushes, Sumatran Robin, Rusty-breasted and Sumatran Wren-Babblers, and Spot-necked Babbler. Quite a haul for only three days of birding! At lower

elevation, we birded Danau Kaco, where we saw the bird shown on the front page: the awesome Sumatran Ground-Cuckoo. This bird used to be a near-mythical species that very few had ever seen, but is now readily "findable". Our final site was Tapan Road, a place rich in bulbuls including Cream-striped, Sumatran, Spot-necked, and Hairy-backed Bulbuls. Other highlights there included Blyth's Hawk-Eagle, Sumatran Leafbird, Graceful Pitta, and Marbled Wren-Babbler.

In eleven days of birding, we recorded 241 species, including the majority of the species endemic to the island of Sumatra. This tour is also excellent for mammals, something that is not the case for all Asian trips. We recorded 15 species of mammals, including Mentawai and Sumatran Langurs, Siamang, Niobe and Mentawai Three-striped Ground-Squirrels, and the poorly known Mentawai Squirrel.

For an immersive experience of this trip's highlights, check out the 8-minute video trip report:

VIDEO TRIP REPORT on YouTube https://youtu.be/8H0PtZr5bbY

ITINERARY

August 2	Arrival in Padang, Sumatra, Indonesia.
August 3	Padang to Sipura.
August 4-5	Sipura, Mentawai Islands.
August 5	Sipura to Padang.
August 6	Padang to Mount Kerinci.
August 7-8	Mount Kerinci.
August 9	Kerinci to Sungai Penuh.
August 10	Danau Kaco. Night Sungai Penuh.
August 11	Tapan Road. Night Sungai Penuh.
August 12	Tapan Road. Drive to Padang.
August 13	Departures from Padang.

PHOTO GALLERY

A full Flickr gallery of photos from this trip is on Ken's Flickr page: https://www.flickr.com/photos/kbehrens/albums/72177720335648613/

NATURALLY ADVENTUROUS PODCAST EPISODE

Ken and Charley spend a full episode of their podcast talking about Ken's "top 5" wildlife highlights from this trip: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/s7e09-kens-sumatra-top-5/id1525204132?i=1000791857817

BIRD LIST

The full list, including numbers and many other details, can be see as part of the eBird trip report for this trip: https://ebird.org/tripreport/569566

MAMMAL LIST

TREESHREWS: Tupaiidae	
Sumatran Treeshrew	*Tupaia ferruginea*
MONKEYS: Cercopithecidae	
Mentawai Langur	*Presbytis potenziani*
Sumatran Langur	*Presbytis melalophos*
Long-tailed Macaque	*Macaca fascicularis*
Southern Pig-tailed Macaque	*Macaca nemestrina*
GIBBONS: Hylobatidae	
Siamang	*Symphalangus syndactylus*
SQUIRRELS: Sciuridae	
Black Giant Squirrel	*Ratufa bicolor*
Plantain Squirrel	*Callosciurus notatus*
Mentawai Squirrel	*Callosciurus melanogaster*
(Sunda) Black-striped Squirrel	*Callosciurus nigrovittatus*
Niobe Ground Squirrel	*Lariscus niobe*
Mentawai Three-striped Squirrel	*Lariscus obscurus*
Sumatran Mountain Squirrel	*Sundasciurus altitudinis*
RATS AND MICE: Muridae	
Black Rat	*Rattus rattus*
MEGABATS: Pteropodidae	
Long-tongued Fruit Bat	*Macroglossus sobrinus*