

## THAILAND VISIT

In September 2004 Chris visited Thailand for two and half weeks to work with palaeontologists from both Thailand and New Zealand – his role to research and reconstruct some extraordinary fossils found in Permian age limestone. His travels with the team took him through NE Thailand.

The fossil project is one initiated by Hamish Campbell (IGNS NZ) and Chongpan Chonglakmani of University of Suranaree (Nakhon Ratchasima) following their discovery of extraordinary Alatoconchid fossils in Permian-age (290–250mya) rocks of NE Thailand. The long term aim, once the fossil's morphology has been established (published), will be to set up an interpretive centre and fossil trail at one of the fossil locations. The team included senior geology students from University of Suranaree, one of whom, Mongkul Udchachan, is studying these fossils for his PHD. The trip was funded by the ISAT Linkage Fund (International Science and Technology Linkage Fund) which is administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand and the University of Suranaree, with further support from Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) Thailand.



**Alatoconchids** are gigantic bivalves of a form quite unique, there is certainly nothing like them existing today. They could be as large (almost as flat) as a table top, measuring two to three metres long and up to one to two metres wide! The fossils are found in limestone formations with other fossils such as brachiopods, gastropods, crinoids and corals.

Photo *Alatoconchid* bed – *Khao Sompote*

Photo *Alatoconchid* fossils – *Khao Sompote*



Outcrops containing these fossils are found along the line of mountains that fringe the western edge of the Khorat Plateau (the north-eastern bulge of Thailand).

Photo *Project team crossing tapioca and corn fields to one of the outcrops*



In the coming months Chris with the help of the palaeontologists is preparing artwork that will show what these fossils looked like, how they might have lived as well as the environment in which they inhabited. We will be able to post some of this work on our website once it is completed. This artwork will be used to promote the project and secure funding for the development of the interpretive centre at the old Khao Sompote quarry site.

Chris stayed on for a week to do some birding with a Thai birding guide Wachara and the chance to explore some other areas of Thailand.



Photo *Pheasant-tailed Jacana* (Pinit Saengkaew)

Photo *Lookout at Pha Daew Dai, Khao Yai NP*

Photo *Wetlands – Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park*



Thailand has a wonderful range of wildlife in a variety of habitats and is a fascinating place to tour. Forest species: hornbills, barbets, trogons, gibbons, squirrels and elephants amongst the mountains and forests of Khao Yai National Park; waders and egrets amongst the shrimp farms near Samut Sakhun; and waterfowl at the extraordinary wetlands and tidal flats of Khao Ram Soi Yot National Park.

Chris will be returning to Thailand to work on the fossil project in 2006. With the help of Thai bird-watching guide Pinit Saengkaew we are preparing an itinerary for a wildlife tour that will run in conjunction with this visit and any subsequent visits. A tour summary will be posted on this website shortly. Anyone interested in touring Thailand with Chris and Pinit please contact us for more information.

