

Compiled by Frédéric Goes

Thanks to all contributors. In the future, please send any records you think may be of interest (for current or earlier months) to fredbaksey@yahoo.com. Earlier editions can be found at www.samveasna.org. Species names follow Craig Robson (2008) *A field guide to the birds of South-east Asia*.

National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, Protected Forest, Bengal Florican Conservation Area are abbreviated as NP, WS, PF and BFCA respectively. Siem Reap-based *Sam Veasna Center for Wildlife Conservation* and *Angkor Center for Biodiversity Conservation* are abbreviated SVC and ACCB.

Next digest will cover April to June 2012

PHNOM PENH

A *Cacomantis* **cuckoo** near Pochentong airport on 15 January appeared very much like Ruddy-breasted Cuckoo (CS). Experts examined photographs but could not be conclusive on its identity, although it is most likely an aberrant Plaintive Cuckoo.

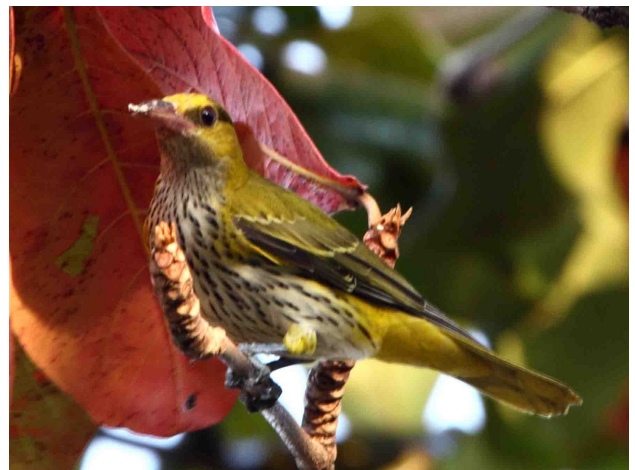
An immature **Black-naped Oriole** visited the WCS office on 21 January (AJ), oddly enough the first documented in the capital.

Repeated bird-survey walks along the southern riverfront on 13 days between 6 January and 3 February recorded 58 species, including the amazing sight of 18 **Sarus Cranes** flying North above the east bank of the Mekong on 13 January. **Common Hoopoe** and **Ashy Minivet** are firsts for the capital.

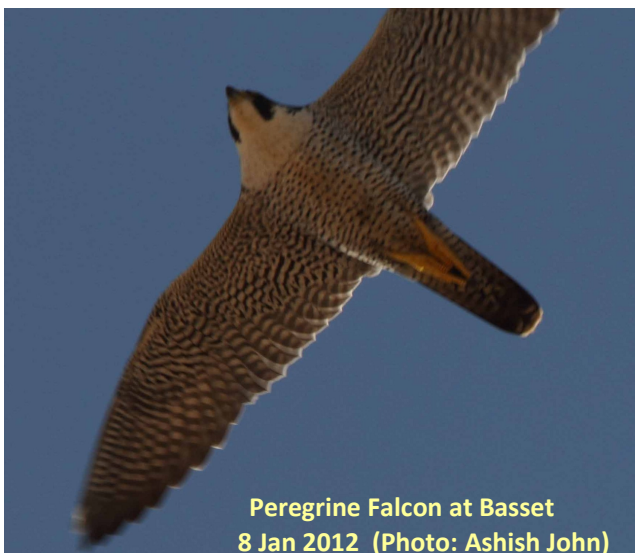
The latter is probably largely overlooked as it is only the second record site from the southeast.

Also rarely noted in Phnom Penh (no documented records since 2003) were **Peregrine Falcons** and **Asian Brown Flycatchers**. To follow on is the presence of **Blossom-headed Parakeets**, probably escapees (or merit-released), but observation of juveniles indicates they may have established a breeding population in the city (all TK).

At Boeng Pumpey, **House Sparrows** on 27 February are probably the first reported from Phnom Penh city that are unlikely to be stemming from the merit-release bird market, and a female **Greater Painted-snipe** was a nice find on 25 March (NE).



Juvenile Black-naped Oriole in Phnom Penh
21 Jan 2012 (Photo: Ashish John)



Peregrine Falcon at Basset
8 Jan 2012 (Photo: Ashish John)

SOUTH-EAST

A single *japonensis* **Peregrine Falcon** was nicely photographed at Basset marsh on 8 January (AJ).

At the nearby Prek Ksach site, across the Prek Phneu bridge were two juvenile **Golden-bellied Gerygones** on 29 January (HN). Birding there on 21 February recorded no less than 64 species in the floodplain shrublands. The most notable were 200+ **Oriental Darters** (largest count for the southeast), a male **Pink-necked Green Pigeon** (in unusual habitat, perhaps the first confirmed from the region), about 30 **Spotted Redshanks**, eight **Garganeys**, one immature **Peregrine Falcon** and a single **Grey-headed Lapwing**. Amongst the **Eastern Yellow Wagtails** was a single individual of the rarely recorded *taivana* subspecies (all TE, SM, DS, FG).

At Phnom Tamao, a nice male **White-throated Rock-thrush** (second for the southeast) was seen in the middle of the zoo, and several parties of **Red Junglefows** were encountered along the exit road on 18 February (FG).

Takeo received the separate visit of three ornithologists, resulting in a series of interesting records in addition to those of its local resident birder (RO). A single **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** was seen at Takeo lake on 22 January (TK) and in a Takeo garden on 15 February (RO), one **Oriental Honey-buzzard**, single **Golden-bellied Gerygone** on two occasions and one **Lanceolated Warbler** in countryside adjacent to the provincial town on 21-25 January (all TK). The latter is a first for the province, as were several **Zebra Doves** noted around town by all observers in January and February (RvZ, TK, FG). A single and juveniles **White-browed Crakes** were seen at Takeo lake on 22-23 January (TK) and 24 February (RO) respectively. The first records for the southeast of **Chestnut-tailed Starling** were made at Koh Andeth on 17-25 January (RvZ), and then a bird was seen along the dirt road to Borey Cholsar harbor on 19 February (FG, RO). The latter had a straw-like material in its beak and was inspecting a hollow part of an electric pole (RO). This is the second recent case indicating the species is a local breeder in Cambodia.

At the Borey Cholsar harbor on 19 February, two pairs of **Asian Golden Weavers** had at least one active nest in a tree, and **House Sparrows** were found nesting at many sites on village electric wires, antennas, *Eucalyptus* tree in the area. Not many birds of interest in the wetlands along the canals further east, apart from four **Painted Storks** in flight, seven **Temminck's Stints** and three **Kentish Plovers** (all FG, RO).



**Chestnut-winged Cuckoo in Takeo
15 Feb 2012 (Photo: Rob Overtoom)**



**The Blue-eared Kingfisher at ease in a Takeo garden
Photo on 24 Feb 2012 (Rob Overtoom)**

At Boeng Prek Lepeuw, several **Golden-bellied Gerygones** heard during 18-24 January (RvZ) add to the recent surge of inland records of this primarily coastal species reported here and in the previous digest. Excellent news there was the sighting of two **Black-faced Spoonbills** on 23 February, indicating the species might become an annual winter visitor at the site.

A **Blue-eared Kingfisher** at a garden pond in Takeo town on 27 January was not only an heretic first for the southeast, but it apparently felt at home and was recurrently seen there during the following months (RO)! The continued presence of this dense forest resident over 80 km away from any decent piece of forest is totally baffling. Another little feathered jem visited the same garden on 29 March: a male **Narcissus Flycatcher** (RO), the sixth record of this species with a narrow spring passage window in Cambodia.

SOUTH-WEST

With the ongoing appalling “development” at Bokor – a National Park shame, it is no surprise that few good birds were found during several visits. A **Large Wood-shrike** was nesting on a cup-shape knot of a branch on a roadside tree (FG, RO), and still seen on the nest on 1 April (RO). Also report-worthy were an **Himalayan Buzzard** on 2 January (RO) and 12 March (FG, RO), a juvenile **Mountain Hawk-eagle** and the Park's first **Greater Spotted Eagle** photographed at the unusual altitude of 800m on 4 February (all RO).

At Kampot estuary, interesting shorebirds included eight **Great Knots** on 7 January and 4 March, three **Ruddy Turnstones** on 4 March (all RO), a single **Far Eastern Curlew** and 24 **Bar-tailed Godwits** on 10 March (FG). Last but not least, a first-winter **Black-tailed Gull** photographed there on 3 February is a second record and, quite ironically, the first from the coast (RO).

At Prey Nup, the regular wintering **Greater Spotted Eagle** was surrounded by seven **Brahminy Kites** on its perching tree on 22 January (RO). The birds was still hanging out there on 11 March, while at least three **Ruddy Kingfishers** and a single **Black-and-Red Broabill** were noted in the mangrove, and a close look at a cooperative **Oriental White-eye** suggested it may be of the *williamsoni* subspecies (all FG, RO).

A trip to Koh Tang offshore archipelago on 4-6 March yielded only one **frigatebird**, one dark morph **Pomarine Jaeger** and five unidentified jaegers, but scattered flocks of maximum ten **Pied Imperial Pigeons** (TE) – these two species had not been recorded since 2002 ! The best species found on Kong Rong Senlem during 14-18 March were two calling **Spotted Wood-owls** and **Indochinese Cuckooshrike**, both only known at few sites in the southwest, and a maximum count of 38 **Oriental Pied Hornbills** (HN, FG).



Oriental White-eye *Z.p. williamsoni*?
Prey Nup mangrove, 11 March 2012
(Photo: Rob Overtoom)

TONLE SAP

The *Asian Waterfowl Census* (AWC) held on 26 January at Prek Toal counted 478 **Purple Herons**, 1,627 **Great Cormorants** and no less than 184 **Greater Adjutants** (per HC). The site now arguably shelters the world largest colony of this Globally Endangered species.

During boat crossings from Siem Reap harbor to Prek Toal, there was one **Common Coot** on 1 February, and two first-winter **Heuglin's Gulls** resting on fishing floats amongst 50 **Brown-headed** and 2-3 **Black-headed Gulls** on 5 February (SM). The only previous record of Heuglin Gull was also from the Tonle Sap lake in 2009. Remarkably, another **Common Coot** (or perhaps the same bird?) was present on the flooded marsh around Phnom Kraom on 3 March (FG, TK, CSp). This winter visitor is rarely seen anywhere away from Ang Tropeang Thmor.

A lone **Wire-tailed Swallow** in the flooded shrublands off Chong Khneas on 24 February (PG) is the first time this species is ever recorded away from the Mekong river – a stray bird? Around 60 **Watercocks** at Phnom Kraom on 25 February is the second highest count of this regionally threatened species (DB).

On 26 February, a birding group spotted no less than 16 males and one female **Bengal Floricans** in Stoung BFCA, definitely a day record (DB). A **Savanna Nightjar** flushed from Prolay grasslands on 28 February was unexpected and a first for the Tonle Sap area (NB, SSo).

The following day, a **White-shouldered Ibis** flew over grasslands and landed to feed at a pond at Wat Pognea Prom, in Chikreng BFCA. It is the first time the species is recorded in this part of the Tonle Sap grasslands. Nearby were 12 **Spot-billed Pelicans** paddling in a ditch and 20 **Painted Storks** roosting in a tall tree (all FG, RO).

NORTH-WEST

The *Asian Waterfowl Census* at Ang Tropeang Thmor reserve totalled an exceptional 61,000 birds on 28 January, with very high counts of numerous species requiring confirmation. The breeding colonies at the site held 119 **Painted Stork** nests and five **Spot-billed Pelican** nests in February (all per HC). The Sarus Crane reserve also collected the best records of the review period. To start with, seven **Lesser Kestrels** (six males) perched near burned fields on 29 January (HS) were a third or fourth national record. Unexpected was a confidently identified **Black Eagle** above the ricefields a few kilometer south of the Reserve on 5 February – a first for the northwest for this dense forest dweller (all HS). Certainly as surprising were the first country records of **Rosy Starling**: four birds seen on 1 March (SSi) and a single adult again on 28 March (SM). The species is a vagrant in other parts of Southeast Asia. A male non-breeding **Grey Bushchat** (first for the site) was apparently seen, probably in February (DN) – too bad the observation of this poorly known species was not better documented. Further on, the *Field Guides* birding tour reported two rarities around the site on 25 February, namely **Western Marsh-harrier** and a few kilometers south of the reservoir **Hen Harrier**, both as a single female-plumaged type, as well as a brood of **Greater Painted-snipes** (a male with two juveniles), the first evidence of breeding in Cambodia (all PG).

Still at Ang Tropeang Thmor on 27 February, an *Aquila* was thought to be an **Indian Spotted Eagle** (NB, SSo) although no supporting details or photos were received. This species is not known to occur outside dry deciduous forest of the north and marginally northeast of the country. On 29-30 March, two **Oriental Plovers** and ten **Purple-backed Starlings** were passage migrant not previously recorded at the Reserve or the northwest (SM).

The VENT birding tour visited the forest-wrapped Beng Meas temple on 22 February, where a **Collared Falconet** and a few **Green Imperial Pigeons** were good finds. At Angkor itself, an astounding total of 60 **Alexandrine Parakeets** on 20 February is arguably the largest national count ever in recent times (all DB). Angkor is one of the only two known sites where this scarce species subsists in the northwest. A probable **Plain Flowerpecker** at Ta Prohm temple, Angkor on 22 February (PG) is reported here as the species is yet to be confirmed for the northwest.

For the second consecutive year, the *Zoothera* birdwatching group recorded **Indochinese Cuckooshrike** at Angkor, on 24 February (NB, SSo).

NORTH

For once, not much novelties there during this period. Apparently only one of the many birding groups recorded (and photographed) an **Indian Spotted Eagle** at Thmat Bauey this dry season, on 26 February (PG). Similarly, **Pale-capped Pigeon** was reported only once as a single bird on 1 March (NB, SSo). A **Pale Blue Flycatcher**, a species yet to be confirmed for Cambodia, was claimed south of Thmat Bauey on 29 February but details are awaited to assess the record (NB, SSo).

All seven nests of **White-rumped Vulture** monitored at two sites within Preah Vihear PF fledged one chick each during March (per SM).

NORTH-EAST

At Western Siem Pang, a brief visit on 21 January found a **Rufous-bellied Woodpecker** – a species apparently not recorded there since 2004, and two additions for the site in the form of one **Bluethroat** and a single **Spotted Redshank** at a forest pool (HW). In February, the two **Red-headed Vulture** nests there were abandoned probably owing to disturbance (logging of nearby trees), while the **Slender-billed Vulture** nest was still active at the end of March (per SM).

On the central Kratie-Stung Treng stretch of the Mekong river, a **Red-headed Vulture** nest was discovered at Koh Rogneu on 11 February and remarkably two chicks fledged during March (per SM). The third study year of riverine-nesting bird in that part of the Mekong resulted in a series of excellent records.

At Koh Narong, a male **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** on 14 March is the first for the northeast and the only one reported during this spring passage while a **White-shouldered Ibis** nest had two nearly fledged young on 22 March. Also noteworthy was a juvenile **Rufous-bellied Eagle** at Koh Enchey on 21 March (all JS).

A fierce night storm stranded numerous gulls and waders on the sandy bank of Koh Preah island on 18 March, amongst which was a single **Slender-billed Gull** – the first for Indochina, and perhaps the first time this coastal species has been recorded that far inland. Other interesting migrants on passage there on the same day included a single **Red-necked Phalarope**, a **Black-tailed Godwit** and two **Eurasian Curlews** – the latter two being a first and second record for the northeast respectively (all JS).



The first Slender-billed Gull record in Indochina, on the Mekong at Kratie, 18 March 2012 (Photo: Jeff Schwilk)

A female **Pale-capped Pigeon** was seen near Sen Monorom on 2 January (JH), and three and seven birds in cultivated/brush area east of Sen Monorom on 11 February 2012 (TK). Birding in Seima PF and areas surrounding Sen Monorom on 6-22 February provided many records of interest. Amongst those are four **Yellow-eyed Babblers** (third Cambodian record) on 20 February near the Mondoliri PF headquarter, a **Booted Eagle** rufous morph (few records, first from the northeast) in secondary growth shrubland southeast of Sen Monorom on 22 February and a single **Tesia**, most probably Grey-bellied (only known from high altitude in the Cardamoms) seen and heard at Seima PF (km 342) on 8 February. Provisional records of two species not (yet?) on the Cambodian list were also made: a single **Grey-streaked Flycatcher** at Seima PF (km 342) on 7 February and three **Japanese White-eyes** in secondary shrub near Sen Monorom on 12 February. Worth reporting on the Bousra road were a **Black-headed Woodpecker** at perhaps 500m on 10 February – the highest altitudinal record for this lowland dry dipterocarp forest specialist, a single **Ashy-headed Green Pigeon** in riparian forest on 19 February and seven **Green Peafowls** along the river crossing the road on 17 February. Finally, a single **Pied Fantail** in shrubland of the plateau on 6 February is a first record for the province of a species usually associated with floodplain wetlands (all TK).

On 29 February, several restricted range species with just ten records in Cambodia were noted at SeimaPF such as **Ashy Bulbuls** and a mating pair of **Speckled Piculet**. At Dak Dam on the same day, an **Eastern Crowned Warbler**, **Annam Barbet** and a pair of **Black-throated Laughingthrushes** are also rarities, while **Spot-throated Babbler** – a species discovered there last year, and **Rufous-fronted/capped Babbler** were heard there were second country record (all DB).

Two adult **Germain Peacock-pheasants** with one chick were seen and a **Malaysian Night-heron** was flushed on three occasions along trails around the headquarters of Seima PF during 16-20 March. This is the earliest date for the night-heron, a rare but regular wet season breeding visitor to the area. Also of interest there on same dates was a vocal record of **Himalayan Cuckoo**, perhaps the first definite record of this recently-split species, otherwise nearly inseparable on plumage from Oriental Cuckoo (all FL, VE).



The male Narcissus Flycatcher on passage in a well-watched Takeo garden
29 March 2012 (Photo: Rob Overtom)

OBSERVERS

AJ	Ashish John
CS	Chhin Sophea
CSp	Chim Sopheap
DN	Duong Nara (SVC)
DS	Dave Showler
DB	David Bishop (<i>Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours</i>)
FG	Frédéric Goes
FL	Frank Lambert
JH	Jim Hackett
JS	Jeff Schwilk
HC	Hong Chamnan
HN	Howie Nielsen
HS	Hanno Stamm
HW	Hugh Wright
NB	Nick Bray (<i>Zoothera</i>)
NE	Nigel Eustace
PG	Phil Gregory (<i>Field Guides Birding Tours</i>)
RO	Rob Overtoom
SM	Simon Mahood
RvZ	Robert van Zalinge
SSi	San Sikol (Srun/SVC)
SSo	Sanh Sophoan (SVC)
TE	Tom Evans
TK	Thomas Kuenzel
VE	Vittoria Elliott