

Cambodia Recent Bird Reports, January 2010

Compiled by Tom Evans and Frederic Goes

When Colin Poole and Fred Goes left Cambodia a few years ago it proved difficult for the remaining birding enthusiasts to find the time to keep publishing Cambodia Bird News at the high standard everybody had come to expect. Sadly that is still true, but we are now attempting to revive one part of it - the practice of collating interesting reports on a regular basis. We hope to share them online amongst the resident birding community and visiting birders. For now we aim for a monthly edition, so here is a digest for January 2010, with a few records from December 2009. A few January records came in after our deadline and have been held over to next month. Thanks to all contributors. In the future, please send any records you think may be of interest (for current or earlier months) to tevans@wcs.org and fredbaksey@yahoo.com.

General

The annual cycle of Sarus Crane counts began on the weekend of 17th January, with a remarkable 766 counted across 9 sites by teams from many NGOs and government agencies (many observers per RvZ). The annual peak is usually not reached until March but this is already higher than last year's peak, and indeed the highest total ever recorded for Cambodia - it may be due to early drying of pools on the breeding grounds. An additional 68 were also found at sites in Vietnam (TT).

In tandem with the crane census the Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC), now in its 12th year in Cambodia, covered 8 sites. Given the size of the sites and level of coverage, most of the AWC counts listed below should be viewed as minima.

Several organised bird tour groups have visited Cambodia this month but their records have not all been obtained yet.

South-east

A visit to Fishing Lots 6 and 4 near Prasat village on the Bassac Marshes on 15 January (TDE) produced 4 **Grey-headed Lapwings**, 12 **Oriental Darters**, 1 juvenile **Spot-billed Pelican** and several good counts of commoner species including 500 **Intermediate Egrets**, 140 **Little Grebes**, 98 **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas** and 360 **Cotton Pygmy Geese**.

In Phnom Penh several **Peaceful Doves** heard and seen near the southern riverfront on 12 January appear to be the first recorded for the city (FG). A **Common Koel** calling from gardens in Boeung Keng Kong I on several dates mid-month is the only one TDE can recall in six years living there; another was heard at the Russian Embassy on 13 January (FG).

The January **Sarus Crane** census produced 265 birds at Boeung Prek Lapeuv on 16 January (SeV, DT and USO per SK) and 182 at Kampong Trach on 17 January (US, SoV, EN and UED per SK). This is an unusually high January count for the latter site. The AWC at Boeung Prek Lapeuv on 15 January produced 600 **Little Cormorants**, 43 **Oriental Darters**, 408 **Painted Storks**, 193 **Asian Openbills** and 206 **Garganey** (SeV, DT and USO per SK) whilst on 22 January Kampong Trach produced 36 **Black-headed Ibises** (US, SoV, EN and UED per SK).

South-west

A population of **Green Peafowl** that may have ecotourism potential was reported from a community forestry site in Toul Samrong Village, Krang Skier Commune, Teuk Phos District, Kampong Chhnang Province (FM). This is well north of the nearest known area of occurrence.

A **Buffy Fish Owl** was photographed in the Prey Nup mangroves on 17 January and there were 17 **Black-headed Ibis** there on 13 December, both firsts for the site (RO). Some facilities now exist for tourists to visit this beautiful private mangrove nature reserve¹.

A **Barn Owl** in Kampot on 31 January appears to be the first recent record for the South-west (CO).

Tonle Sap

The January **Sarus Crane** census produced 59 at Stoung-Chikraeng, 10 at Baray and 47 at Srayov on 17 January (IFBA team per RvZ). These are good numbers but down from the very large flocks in January 2009. No Sarus Cranes were recorded during the January census in the Preah Net Preah area this year this year but notable AWC counts from Boeung Keab Kdam included 7 **Oriental Darters**, 280 **Purple Swamphens**, 180 **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas**, 70 **Bronze-winged Jacanas**, 11 **Comb Ducks** and 186 **Cotton Pygmy Geese** (MH and PS).

At Prek Toal the annual **Grey-headed Fish-eagle** nest survey 10-18 December revealed 45 nests, down from 58 in late 2008 (PT per SV). This is attributed mainly to poorer coverage due to low water levels. On 12 December 2009 a **Buffy Fish Owl** nest was found at Prek Toal with one chick (PT per SV).

The AWC on 16 January produced impressive numbers of the colonial species, including 1,099 **Great Cormorants**, 9,603 **Indian Shags**, 313 **Little Cormorants**, 2,621 **Oriental Darters**, 1,940 **Painted Storks**, 14,998 **Asian Openbills**, 130 **Greater Adjutants** and 2,637 **Spot-billed Pelicans** (PT per SV). The colonies are having another very good year, although the first major nest-robbery event for some time was recorded. In late January 526 stork eggs (mostly Asian Openbill with some Painted Stork) were confiscated from a group of six poachers.

Northwest

On 10 January the burning of stubbles at harvested rice fields at Ang Trapeang Thmor attracted a notable selection of raptors including 13+ **Black Kites**, 2+ **Greater Spotted Eagles**, 1 **Peregrine**, 1 **Aquila eagle** (not identified) and, most notably, 7 probable **Lesser Kestrels** (MH, CP and SoV). The first Lesser Kestrels for the country were only recorded in 2009 and it is exciting to see a suggestion of increased numbers this winter - observers should be alert for the species when visiting this and similar sites across Cambodia.

The January **Sarus Crane** census at ATT produced 199 birds on 17 January (RvZ, NK, HC, EB and the ATT team). The AWC counts on the same day produced nearly 5200 **Lesser Whistling Ducks** (well down on some recent years), 160 **Comb Ducks**, 125 **Cotton Pygmy Geese**, almost 1300 **Little Egrets** and an impressive 54 **Black Kites** plus four **Common Coots** but oddly no **Brahminy Kites**, **Garganeys**, **Asian Openbills** or **Black-headed Ibis**. 335 **Painted Storks** and 590 **Spot-billed Pelicans** were counted, fewer than in some recent years. The newly established colony of these two species seems to have grown although it is not yet confirmed that the pelicans have built nests. **Common Coot** numbers rose to 12 by 23 January (RvZ and MH).

North

Eighteen **Sarus Cranes** were found in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary in Preah Vihear during the AWC count on 10 January (RV). The AWC in Preah Vihear Protected Forest on 19 January produced impressive totals of 74 **Lesser Adjutants**, 16 **Greater Adjutants**, 2 **Black-necked Storks** and 7 **White-winged Ducks** (Preah Vihear Protected Forest team per RV).

North-east

¹ For enquiries please call Jos Stiers on 012 812087

A **Collared Kingfisher** at Kampi Pool on the Mekong near Kratie on 12 January was only the second for the North-east region (SS).

Four **Sarus Cranes** were seen at Boeung Nava (northern Siem Pang) on 18 January and 9+ **Green Peafowl** along the Sekong river on 25 January (FG). At least 18 and possibly 21 **White-shouldered Ibises** were seen on a brief visit to eastern Siem Pang (FG) suggesting that the area possibly supports a population of similar size to eastern Siem Pang, according to the observer. At least 30 **vultures** were also seen at a carcass there, including at least 7 Red-headed. A flock of white-headed **Black Bulbuls** and one **Jerdon's Baza** were found in Siem Pang on approx 18 January (HW).

In Mondulkiri Protected Forest, three **Sarus Cranes**, one a juvenile, were at Trapeang Thmat on 31 December 2009 (TNEG). Many **Green Peafowl** were heard on the north edge of Nong Grilok forest, eastern Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary in mid January (Phnom Prich team per TNEG).

On 6 December 2009 a recce team from SVC (HN, SS *et al.*) visited unprotected forest at about 800 m altitude near Dak Dam border crossing, Mondulkiri and easily found several species rarely recorded in the province, namely **Black-browed Barbet**, **Oriental Turtle Dove**, **Common Kestrel**, **White-browed Shrike Babbler**, **White-throated Fantail**, **Silver-eared Mesia**, **Blue-winged Siva**, **Black-crowned Parrotbill**, **White-cheeked** and **Black-throated Laughingthrushes** and **Grey-crowned Tit**.

In Seima Protection Forest, an SVC bird tour group found 2 **Pin-tailed Parrotfinches** among seeding bamboos on 15 January - the first noted at the site since 2002 [SS].

Upcoming events

The next Sarus Crane censuses will take place on 26-27 February and 27-28 March. Volunteers are welcome, please contact Robert van Zalinge if you wish to participate (robertvanzalinge@yahoo.com). Robert would also be pleased to hear of ornithologists able to participate as volunteers in the annual Bengal Florican census, from mid March through to early May.

Other news

Two new graduate researchers arrived: Andrea Claassen began her first season of fieldwork on threats affecting the survival of sandbar-nesting birds along the Mekong and its tributaries whilst Marten Bleeker began work on Red-headed Vultures. We wish them both luck and lots of good incidental records! Charlotte Packman has also returned for another intensive season of work on Bengal Floricans.

The latest edition of the Cambodian Journal of Natural History has been published and is available for free download². It contains two ornithological papers - a status review of Green Peafowl in Cambodia by Fred Goes and a compilation of records from Botum Sakor National Park by Alex Royan. WCS has also released a report summarising the 2009 bird monitoring data from in and around Tonle Sap; it is available for download from the WCS website³.

Observers

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² <https://docs.google.com/fileview?id=0Bw9INWC6pZmEMmUyODU0YmYtMWVlNS00NjkzLTg0ODgtODI2NiRlYzQ3Y2Nm&hl=en>

³ www.wcscambodia.org

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