

Cambodia Recent Bird Reports, February 2010

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This issue mainly covers February 2010, with many records also from January. Thanks to all contributors. In the future, please send any records you think may be of interest (for current or earlier months) to both revans@wcs.org and fredbaksey@yahoo.com. The archive can be found at www.samveasna.org. Names follow Craig Robson (2008) *A field guide to the birds of Thailand and South-east Asia*.

General

A coordinated regional Sarus Crane census was held on 26-27 February and produced at least 595 cranes (per RvZ), including 95 at Vietnamese sites (per TT). This was lower than the recent record count from January 2010, in part because at the last minute the Tonle Sap grasslands could not be surveyed thoroughly and so no cranes were found there, although some are known to be resident at this season.

South-east

At Koki Beach (Kien Svay) there were 21-30 **Small Pratincoles** at the regular mainland colony site on 20 February, plus 10 **Caspian Terns** (TDE).

On the Bassac Marshes two **Spotted Owlets** and two **Grey-headed Lapwings** were seen and one **Slaty-breasted Rail** mist-netted near Jroy Russey village during 20-24 January (WCS Avian Influenza team per JR). The owl is under-recorded in recent years in Cambodia and no previous records of the rail have been traced from the Southeast.

At Boeung Prek Lapeuv the last 20 **Sarus Cranes** of the year were seen on 22 February, just before the census, a fairly typical departure date (SeV and DT per SKH).

One **Grey-faced Buzzard** was seen at Phnom Tamao during 8-10 January (WCS Avian Influenza team per JR). Five firsts for Takeo province were also recorded - **Asian Koel**, **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** and a hepatic **Himalayan Cuckoo** (**Oriental** not excluded) in the town, **House Sparrows** nesting at Wat Preuk Sar on 5 February and seen near Phnom Tamao on 6 February and a **White-browed Crake** at Takeo lake on 6 February (FG, RO, JN). Also at Wat Preuk Sar on this date were a **Spotted Owlet** and a **Grey Heron** colony with 21 nests, 18 adults and 26 fledglings.

South-west

During an overflight in the Tmar Bang area on 6 February a concentration of hundreds of hornbills was filmed; most were **Oriental Pied** with some **Great Hornbills** (AM).

Near the guest house at Kirirom, a **Great Hornbill** was seen on 30 January and a party of **Silver Pheasants** on 31 January (GoK and PL). It is reassuring that the hornbills are still present at this site which faces high human pressure.

Four **Oriental Darters** in mangroves near Kep on 14-15 January were in unusual habitat (WCS Avian Influenza team per JR).

The mid-season census produced 214 **Sarus Cranes** at Kampong Trach on 27 February (US, ED and SoV per SKH), with peak counts earlier in the month of 260 on 4 February (JCE per SKH) and 277 on 6 February (KT LCG per SKH). The latter appears to be an all-time record for the site and another sign that this may be an exceptional year for crane numbers

At Wat Chum Kreal, Kampot, a colony of **Grey Herons** held 30 occupied nests on 2 February and single **Ruddy-breasted** and **Slaty-breasted Rails** were seen nearby on 4 February but the heronry found in 2001 at Wat Prey Russey is now abandoned, reportedly in the last 2-3 years (FG, RO). **House Sparrows**

were nesting near the Kampot salt pans on 3 February (possibly a first record for the south-west) and **Golden-bellied Gerygone** was also heard (FG, RO). On 4 February the Kampot estuary held 13 **Eurasian Curlews**, 30+ **Whimbrels**, an impressive 62 **Caspian Terns**, 18 **Ruddy Turnstones** (the largest flock recorded in Cambodia and perhaps the first documented since 2001) and one **Bar-tailed Godwit** (FG, RO).

At Prey Nup mangroves, a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** was present from the end of January to at least 18 February (RO) a **Greater Spotted Eagle** on 13 December (RO) and 1 and 5 February (RO, FG) and up to 5 **Lesser Adjutants** each weekend from 23 January to at least 20 February (LN, RO, CO, FG). At least three different **Little Bronze Cuckoos** were heard and one **Watercock** and two juvenile **Golden-bellied Gerygones** seen on 1 February (FG, RO). The bronze cuckoos are now regularly seen/heard here (RO).

Tonle Sap

The Bengal Florican grasslands have produced an excellent series of recent records, headed by a very large *Aquila* eagle at Krous Kraom on 6 February that was probably Cambodia's first **Steppe Eagle** (MH et al.). Photos are currently being circulated for confirmation. A **Citrine Wagtail** on 10 January at Lveang Russei is believed to be the second for Cambodia (LS and UGS). Other very rarely recorded species in Cambodia included a **Chestnut-eared Bunting** at Wat Prohoot on 4 January and 3 February, with two there on 11 February (SS, HN, RvZ and SVC team) and a male **Western Marsh-harrier** at Chikraeng IFBA on 6 February (RvZ). A **Manchurian Reed-warbler** and a pair of **Blue-breasted Quails** were seen at Wat Prohoot, 28 January (JaE/Birdtour Asia) and two **Rain Quails** at Wat Rolous on 24 February (HN/SVC), whilst a **Black-headed Bulbul** in flooded scrub at Chikraeng on 6 February was an unusual record for the floodplain (RvZ). A concentration of around 1000 **Common Sand-martins** (Pale not totally excluded) was a notably high count at Stoung on 10 February (RvZ).

A **Baillon's Crake** was seen at Prek Toal on 20 January (SM/SVC) and a **Collared Kingfisher** there on 28 February (DN/SVC). On 19 February there were 500-1000 **Sand Martins** (again, Pale Martin not totally excluded) at the mouth of the Sangke River (FG).

Northwest

At Angkor on 7 January a **Besra** and a suspected **Grey-headed Fish-eagle** (immature) were both noteworthy (LS and UGS). A **Radde's Warbler** in a Siem Reap town garden on 7 February may be the first documented for the Angkor region and a **Racket-tailed Treepie** at Kbal Spean on 16-17 February was new for that site (FG).

A dark morph **Short-toed Snake-eagle** was seen at Ang Trapeang Thmor (ATT) on 7 February (SS/SVC per FG). This represents one of several records in quick succession around Cambodia this dry season, remarkable for a species that has very rarely been recorded in the country before. Two **Tufted Ducks**, an adult male **Western Marsh-harrier** and two **Greater Adjutants** were seen at ATT on 17 February (HN/SVC). This is only the second record for the site and the country of Tufted Duck. Five **Common Coots** were seen there on 20-21 February (FG), and the census on 27 February produced 275 **Sarus Cranes** (ATT team per RvZ).

North

Two **Short-toed Snake-eagles** (27 January) and an apparent **Indian Spotted Eagle** (also in late January) were seen and photographed at Tmatboey (JaE/Birdtour Asia).

During the crane census 11 **Sarus Cranes** were recorded across Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS team per RvZ). A female **Chinese Blackbird** was seen at Tukhung station on 21 February (HW).

One **Himalayan Griffon** attended a vulture restaurant at Veal Krous on 16 January (per HR and PB) and two there on 21 February (HN/SVC). Even more excitingly, a **Cinereous Vulture** was found at the Veal Cheang Kao vulture restaurant on 11 January (per HR and PB).

North-east

Siem Pang District provided many records. A **Short-toed Snake-eagle** was seen on 13 January and a **Jerdon's Baza** on 20 January (HW). In early February a juvenile **Greater Spotted Eagle** was seen on several dates and photographed at a pool in dry dipterocarp habitat 20 km west of Siem Pang town (HW). **Peaceful Doves** were recorded at three locations from Stung Treng town to Siem Pang town and beyond on 16 January, suggesting they are now widespread in this region (FG). An **Indian Spotted Eagle** was seen at Trapeang Boeng on 22 January (FG) and regularly on various other dates in recent months, possibly all the same individual (HW/JCE). The first confirmed **Slender-billed Vulture** nest for western Siem Pang has been found (FG and other observers) with an adult on the nest on 22 January. Other notables/firsts for the western Siem Pang area were a **Mountain Hawk-eagle** on 19 January, a **Coral-billed Ground-cuckoo** heard on 20 January, **Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush** on 21 January, a **Grey-headed Fish-eagle** at Boeng Kampha also on 21 January, single **White-rumped Pygmy-falcons** on 23 and 24 January, a **Spotted Wood-owl** on 23 January, a pair of **Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers** on 24 January and unusually high numbers of **Grey-headed Canary-flycatchers** along the O Khampha during this period (all FG).

Along the Sekong from Siem Pang to Stung Treng there were counts of 8 **River Terns**, 7 **River Lapwings**, 10+ **Small Pratincoles**, and 1 **Peregrine Falcon** but no **Mekong Wagtails** on 25 January (FG). At the Srepok bridge there were two **Wire-tailed Swallows** on 26 January apparently nest-building and four there on 28 January (FG). There were also 2 **Mekong Wagtails** there on 26 January and 3 on 28 January (FG).

During 26-28 January a group searched the Se San for river-nesting species, from Ksach Thmei up through Veunsai to a set of rapids halfway between Taveng and Andoung Meas (AC, FG and HN). The most notable and disappointing finding was the lack of **Black-bellied Terns**, as this was the stretch where the last two known breeding pairs in Indochina were present as late as 2003 (see Cambodia Bird News 11:26-31). It seems likely that this species is now extinct in the Mekong basin. The team are still analysing previous records to clarify whether declines can be inferred for other species - summing their peak counts for each stretch in 2010 gives 8 **River Terns**, 60 **River Lapwings**, 1 **Great Thick-knee**, 148 **Small Pratincoles**, 56 **Little Ringed Plovers**, 8 **Mekong Wagtails** and one **Pied Kingfisher**. Other records included 1 **Grey-headed Fish-eagle**, 2 **Green Peafowl**, 1 **Brahminy Kite**, a few **Lesser Adjutants**, 1 **White-rumped Vulture**, 2 **Red-headed Vultures** and, at Voensai, a **Germain's Peacock-pheasant** caught nearby the day before by hunters. The team hopes to publish a more detailed account of this important trip shortly.

In Seima Protection Forest there were sightings of several species seldom recorded at the site. An **Oriental Hobby** was seen near HQ on 26 and 27 December 2009 (HW and AS), a **Black-throated Laughingthrush** near HQ on 6 February (DN/SVC), a **Yellow-crowned Woodpecker** at the Elephant Valley Project (Pu Trom) on 13 February (TNEG) and a **Chestnut-winged Cuckoo** near HQ on 20 February (EP). A flock of at least 15 **Golden-crested Mynas** on 25 February (EP and HN/SVC) was also notable.

In Mondulkiri Protected Forest, a **Grey-faced Buzzard** was seen near Mereuch on 6 January (AK) and a party of ten **Swinhoe's Minivets** near Trapeang Chouk on 22 February (TNEG). In Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary a **Siamese Fireback**, an **Ashy-headed Green-pigeon** and a **Great Hornbill** on 10 February at the Laoka outpost were notable (TNEG).

In February the first period of intensive study around Koh Khnaer and Sait Leo villages along the 'Central Section' of the Mekong has already produced most of the expected riverine species including a few **White-shouldered Ibis**, a nesting pair of **Lesser Fish-eagles** and **Green Peafowl** heard daily in small numbers (AC).

Other news

A good recent Cambodia trip report by Lene Smith and Uffe Gjøl Sørensen is available from uffe@ugsorensen.dk.

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