

CAMBODIA

January 11 – 18, 2011



Roosting White-shouldered Ibis in Tmatboey

Photo B. Legnell

This trip report is part of a journey that also includes Vietnam and Thailand. On this trip we not only had the privilege to see over 420 species of birds, of which a number now is on the brink of extinction, but also a few of the rarest mammals in the region. We traveled west-ward from southern Annam in Vietnam, through northern Cambodia and ended by the Burmese border in the northern part of the Thai peninsula. This gave us a cross-section of habitats, as well as impressions of how nature and wildlife preservation functions in these countries.

This was my second trip to Cambodia, Göran had also been there once before, but virgin territory for the rest of the group.

It is a country in rapid change. Tourists are pouring in to Siemreap to see neighbouring Angkor Wat. Brand new 5-star hotels, catering to huge tour-groups, eager to see the temple - as well as Chinese gamblers from Bangkok, KL or Singapore, trying their luck at the huge casino in Poi Pet by the Thai border - are mushrooming up along the main road in the city. Small, cheap and friendly guest-houses are popping up elsewhere in this fast growing town.

Further south, along the Gulf of Thailand, the beach-resort Sihanoukville was recently built with hotels, resorts and another huge casino, favoured by exiled Thai politicians and other rich and influential people from that country, trying to escape the “long” arm of the law... In short, there is a lot of quick dollars floating around, earned from tourism, garment export, gemstone mining (sapphires and rubies along the Thai border, opposite Kanchanaburi, a lucrative business for high ranking Thai military during Pol Pot days), gambling casinos and foreign aid.

A lot of the tourism, casinos, garment manufacturing, agriculture ventures etc., are operated by Vietnamese, Korean and Thai business-concessions. The Vietnamese have big plans for huge, industrial, export-oriented rice farming, irrigated by the biggest lake in South East Asia, Tonle Sap, which can have a huge future impact on this country and it's environment.

It is this struggle between the treasures of the old heritage, with roots in the Ankorian age, one thousand years ago, and the approaching “brand new world” - that for a short moment in time got frozen during the wars of Pol Pot regime in the 70`th – 90`th - that now have brought the country to a critical cross-road for some of the very special avifauna that is found in this country. In fact, I believe it is these very ancient farming methods, with small forest patches of rice-cultivation and the small dams (trapaengs) from Ankorian time which remain to this day, that attracts birds with a habitat in the dry open forest, birds like Giant/White-shouldered Ibis, Woolly-necked/Adjutants/Black-necked Stork, White-winged/Comb Duck. During the dry season these birds still seek food in these 1000 years old dams or trapaeng.

In neighbouring countries, that experienced massive deforestation of this type of deciduous forests, to make room for huge “modern” rice-cultivation, with irrigation-systems that have drained up most wetlands...2-3 harvests/year, geared for export and a handsome \$ income, these birds died out 60 -70 years ago.

Participants; Bengt Legnell, Stockholm/Thailand. Organizer and tour leader.
Henrik Hultén. Malmö.
Mathias Karlsson, Västervik.
Göran Elmqvist, Malmö.
Olof Karlsson, Jönköping.



Göran Elmquist and Olof Karlsson

Photo B. Legnell

January 11

We arrived by air from Saigon in the evening. Saeng Raksa from SVC met us at the airport and drove us to our hotel in the centre of Siemreab.

January 12



Greater Spotted Eagle. Photo B. Legnell

This was our first day birding in Cambodia and the wetlands in Ang Trapaeng about 2 hours drive from Siem Reap was our goal for the day. Sarus Cranes and Comb Ducks was the target. Well, it turned out to be our only minor dip (literally) on the trip, as the area still was so flooded that it was hard to access and bird. Nevertheless we saw some good birds here too. **Cotton Pygmy-goose, Comb Duck (7), Spot-billed Pelican (over 200), Yellow Bittern, Painted Stork (at least 400), Lesser Adjutant (4), Eastern Marsh-Harrier (10-15), Rufous-winged Buzzard (5), a Greater Spotted Eagle, a Peregrine Falcon, Watercock (2), Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Pied Kingfisher (3), Blue-tailed Bee-eater (25, replacing Green here), Fulvous-breasted and Rufous Woodpecker,**

Lanceolated Warbler, Oriental Reed-Warbler, Dusky Warbler (5), Siberian Rubythroat (1), Rufous Treepie (5) and White-shouldered Starling (30) were some other high-lights.



The water was waist-deep sometimes...

Spot-billed Pelicans Photos H. Hultén

Spot-billed Pelican *pelecanus philippensis*; **Near Threatened**. Previously fairly common in South and South-East Asia, the numbers went down to about 5-10,000 individuals in 2002. Due to protection efforts in the breeding colonies in South India and Tonle Sap in Cambodia – the 2 main breeding areas - there are now about 5000 pelicans in South India and another 1000-1500 breeding pairs in Tonle Sap, Cambodia. Small colonies are also getting established in Bang Phra, Thailand. Sri Lanka, Sumatra and possibly also Myanmar have small colonies. Total population; 13-18,000.



Photo B. Legnell

Rice is still planted and harvested by hand

Photo H. Hultén

January 13

Up at 04.00 - and a short drive from Siem Reap down to the harbour - in order to be able to cross the great Tonle Sap to the floating village Prek Toal on the north-west side of the lake, before the sun wandered too high in the sky. Both the lake and the villages, floating by the shore are a world of its own, strange, yet very warm and friendly.



Everything floats in Prek Toal...houses, shops, schools, church and administration, here Fishery Admin.

Tonle Sap and Prek Toal. Tonle Sap is the largest fresh water lake in South East Asia. The Khmer people regard it as the “mother “ of the nation, as it provides fish in abundance, (presently 1,5 million people depends on the lake for a living. 75% of all freshwater fish, or 60% of all Khmer population protein intake, is caught in the lake), thus Cambodia didn't have to rely on agriculture (rice-farming) at the same degree as their neighbour – leaving huge tracts of forests and grassland intact elsewhere - a French 19`th century missionary described the abundance of wildlife in Cambodia at the same level as what could be found on the savannas in Africa “ herds of Elephants, cattle and deer by the thousands everywhere” –

The lake is an ecological hotspot, with over 200 species of fish, 23 types of snakes, 13 types of turtles and huge colonies of water-birds, some endangered elsewhere. It was designated an UNESCO biosphere in 1997 and is considered one of the most important wetlands in Asia. The flow of the lake changes direction twice a year. During rainy season it backs up to an enormous lake of 16,000 km²., up to 10 meter deep and when dry season is over, it has drained out into the Mekong river... and cover only about 2700km²., with a depth of a shallow meter. It is estimated that 20% of Mekong floodwater is absorbed by the lake...or, the other way around, that 60% of the water in Tonle Sap comes from The Mekong. As Mekong now is undergoing huge drainage up-river, hydro-electrical dam constructions, irrigation etc., the lake can be at risk in the future.

Around 2001 huge colonies of waterfowls was discovered around the lake, Storks, Pelicans and Darters that where extinct elsewhere in South East Asia was found in considerable numbers. Esp. the waterways around the village Prek Toal on the north-western shore of the lake provides huge colonies of birds. Since local fishermen regularly harvested eggs and chicks from these colonies, a comprehensive protection program was launched around the lake.

Number of Breeding pairs in Tonle Sap.

<u>Species</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2007</u>
Asian Openbill	600	959	7682
Painted Stork	1000	1707	3121
Milky Stork	?	2	10
Great Adjutant	30	56	77
Lesser Adjutant	40	158	253
Black-headed Ibis	200	---	1000
Spot-billed Pelican	700	1117	2592
Oriental Darter	241	1125	4053



School kids in uniform...on their way to...



... the floating school



Life has to be “floating”, since the dry season lake shrink down to a fraction of its wet season size, and the lake-shore suddenly change a few miles or so...so they just “float along with the tide”. Here a Buddhist monk and a woman on her way to the grocery-store – boat! - Photos B. Legnell



The visit to the village was very interesting. Here we had to change to a smaller boat, as the water level in January is getting low (a February visit to the Prek Toal delta may be almost impossible, as chances are one have to wade up to the waste in mud, in order to get to the nesting/roosting sites).



On our way...once we arrived to the mouth of the canal, we had to change into small paddle canoes, as the water was very shallow. On tow after our boat were 5 canoes, 3 for us, the canteen canoe...and a hitch-hiking fisherman family in their canoe...on their way fishing...

Photo B. Legnell

There are three platforms accessible to visitors in this area. We managed to reach platform nr. 2, as not even our small canoes could bring us any further inside.



Peregrine Falcon. *Japonensis*?

Photo B. Legnell

There were huge numbers of **Oriental Darters** (4-500) and **Spot-billed Pelicans** (200) in colonies along the waterway. Both species start their breeding season in December, a few months before the Storks with peak breeding in April – May.



Göran and Bengt Photo H. Hultén



Spot-billed Pelican Photo B. Legnell

From the dangerously weak looking platform nr 2 we could survey the area to platform nr 1 (one of the main breeding areas for Greater Adjutant) and saw 4 **Greater Adjutants** there. A **Milky Stork** could be seen in a colony of **Painted Stork** and **Asian Openbill** at a closer distance.



Greater Adjutant

Photo H. Hultén

Greater Adjutant *Leptopilos dubius* Endangered. This huge stork, about 150 cm standing, was once widespread and common in East and South-East Asia. There was a drastic decline during the first half of the 20th century and now only two small breeding areas are left. The biggest one in Assam, India where 650-800 birds still remain, the other one around Prek Toal, Tonle Sap in Cambodia where 150-200 birds can be found. A small scattered population of about 15-20 pairs in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary in the very north of Cambodia were recently found.



Platform nr. 2

Photo G. Elmquist



Blue-tailed Bee-eater

B.Legnell

Among other birds seen at Prek Toal was **Black Bittern (2), Osprey (1), Gray-headed Fish-Eagle (2), Peregrine Falcon (1), Watercock (1), Common Moorhen (1) and Eurasian Coot (2).**



Milky Stork (right) w Painted Stork Photo H. Hultén



Painted Storks

Photo B.Legnell

Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* **Vulnerable**. There has been a drastic decline, esp. the population in peninsular Malaysia is almost extinct now with only 5-10 pairs left (a reintroduction program is started). The main breeding populations are found in a handful of colonies along the coast-line of Sumatra and the northern tip of Java with an estimated 5000 birds...and then there is PrekToal, Tonle Sap, the only fresh-water population, with 10-15 breeding pairs...



Fishermen at dawn on the Great Tonle Sap

Photo G. Elmquist

Jan. 14.

After having lived in comfort at a nice, small family-owned guest-house in Siemreab a few days, it was now time to “rough it up” a little. Our plan was to travel up to Tmatboey in Preah Vihear province, not far from the Thai border – the now world famous Ankorian-age Preah Vihear Temple, that has been the site of numerous clashes between Cambodian and Thai armed forces

in recent years, is situated only about 30 km from the village - ...and soldiers had been clashing with deadly outcome just a couple of days earlier....!

We started early, as we wanted to spend the morning in the grasslands west of the city Kampong Thom. The target was the rare and extremely shy Bustard, Bengal Florican. On the way there we picked up the local village headman and his helpers, who had spent the previous day trying to locate the bird for us.



Looking for the elusive Florican. G. Elmquist



Fishing in the important grassland water holes. B. Legnell

Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* Critically Endangered. There are two separate populations left of this Bustard. A very small one of about 30-50 pairs in Nepal and Assam and possibly up to 600 individuals (80% of world population) in the grasslands north-east of Tonle Sap, that forms the core area for the bird. There has been a drastic decline since the 1980s – the Cambodian population was estimated to about 3000 then. The Nepal population reported a 50% decline during the same time period. Destruction of their habitats is the main reason. Strong pressure from rich local and regional agricultural investors brought big grassland areas to the plow for rice and agricultural farming in the Florican habitat in Cambodia. In 2010 the Cambodian government assigned 5 grassland habitats for the Florican and there is some hope. Bird counts (Displaying males in March-April) showed 57 males in 2009 and 88 in 2010, in the area we visited outside Kampong Thom. Similar trends are reported from Nepal and Assam.



It was a privilege to get help from the village chief finding the Florican...and see local villagers getting involved.
Photo B Legnell

Since the village chief had sent out his people scouting the area the day before, he knew approximately where the male **Bengal Florican** was...females are very hard to find...in this vast grassland. It didn't take long before one of the villagers had flushed up this beautiful male. In flight it looks a little like **Pheasant-tailed Jacana** that was quite common in the small water ponds spread out in the grassland. The villagers had also seen a small group of **Sarus Cranes**, which we had dipped in Ang Trapaeng. We saw a group of 4 at a distance. It paid off to check out some of the small water ponds for wintering **Blue-throats, Siberian Rybythroats, Stonechats and Eastern Yellow Wagtails**, that was seen in small numbers. We also flushed up about 5 **Australian Bushlarks** and about as many **Oriental Skylarks**, birds that is increasingly more difficult to see elsewhere in South-East Asia due to lack of proper grassland. A group of cute **Small Buttonquails** ran off in the grass. Other typical grassland birds we saw was **Zitting Cisticola, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Oriental Reed-Warbler, Striated Grassbird, Pied Fantail, Brown Shrike, Burmese Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Common Woodshrike (2), Red Avadavat (10)**. Perhaps the most noticeable observation at the grassland was a winter-vagrant male **Hen Harrier**. Rare here!

After the morning visit at the Kampong Thom grassland it was time to head up north. It would take most of the afternoon to reach Tmatboey in Preah Vihear province.



Many new roads are being built in Preah Vihear province along the Thai border and everywhere a "corridor", about 500 meter wide, on both side of the road is cleared for settlement and cultivation...this is Ibis habitat!

Preah Vihear Province – Northern Plains and Tmatboey. Scientists worldwide are increasingly giving their attention to the globally important Northern Plains in Cambodia, centering around Preah Vihear province and the huge wildlife sanctuary Kulen Prom Tep. Here the biggest stretch of dry dipterocarp forest that once grew from Bangkok to Saigon still remains. Isarn (north-east Thailand) just across the border was more or less de-forested during the first half of the 20th century f.ex. In this unique environment critically endangered wildlife – Crocodiles, Deer, Bovides, Big Cats, Storks, Ibises, Ducks, Vultures etc - that once occurred all over South-East Asia, have found their last refuge. Many scientists believe it is the interaction between the wetlands around Tonle Sap, just south of the forested north, that make the area so special – storks, Ibises and deer migrate between the areas, spending dry season south and returning to the north during rainy season, some to breed, some to feed. It is a sparsely populated region, averaging 5 – 6 persons/km². It is also the poorest region, partly inhabited by ethnic minorities like the Kouei (Kui) people. Since Thailand is enforcing a logging-ban – Cambodia also have a partial logging ban since 2001 – and since the influential Cambodian military...and to some extent police... has control of the region – most of the provincial heads are army officers - there has been a lot of illegal logging and wildlife trade to Thailand by these influential persons. -

Historically, Preah Vihaer and Siemreap to the south, was the area where the hindu influenced Khmer empire originated, and where they built all their gigantic cities and temples. (ie. Angkor Wat) The empire lasted only a few hundred years, around 1000 years ago, and their influence covered most of South- East Asia. It is also in Preah Vihear province that the Khmer Rouge had their stronghold. Pol Pot was born and buried in a village along the Thai border here.

In 2010 I spent some time traveling in the province by motorcycle, and saw huge road construction programs. Since the border with Thailand along the ancient Khmer temple, Wat Preah Vihaer, is hotly disputed and the two countries almost have gone to war over the issue a few times, Cambodia plans to re-settle many thousand poor people from Phnom Penh here. Large corridors, 500 meter wide, are cleared on both sides of the road in the forests, so people can settle and farm, rubber-tree plantations planted etc...all in an effort to regain control from military superior Thailand. Until recently there were no roads and hardly any people here. Access to the temple could only be done from the Thai side (visiting tourists had to pay 200 Bath – almost \$US10 – to enter the complex.) Some of these new roads are located in prime Ibis habitats...and I wonder where all the people will get the wood to build the 1000s of homes and houses needed...?

Kulen Prom Tep wildlife sanctuary was established by Prince Sihanouk in the 1960s, as a sanctuary for the Kouprey - a rare forest ox - that the American Zoologist Charles H Wharton had found here 1951. He counted about 5-600 animals and managed to film them. Many now believe the animal is extinct since the the 1980s or 90s. The last confirmed sighting was 1983...there still are many rumors connected to this animal which is Cambodia's national symbol... It is within these borders that critically endangered Giant and White-shouldered Ibis, White-winged Wood-Duck, Black-necked Stork, White-rumped, Slender-billed and Red-headed Vultures, Green Peafowl etc have found a last sanctuary,

Tmatboey village is situated inside Kulen Prom Tep Sanctuary in Preah Vihaer province, only about 20-30 km from the disputed border. This is a core area for esp. White-shouldered Ibis. In order to motivate the villagers to preserve the birds WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society - that has a finger in all conservation efforts in Cambodia-) and SVC (Sam Vaesana Center - a local NGO-) opened up the village for birding visitors. About \$15,000 is annually pumped in to the village through visitors, schools are built and freshwater pumps installed and annual income doubled for the 220 families...and the Ibis population is increasing dramatically...



Male White-rumped Falcon

Photo H. Hultén

On the way up to Tmatboey, Bengt suddenly saw some movements in the trees and we stopped our little caravan of two Pajero 4x4. In a tree a handsome male and also a female **White-rumped Falcon** sat. The female is almost more beautiful than the male with her deep rufous crown and upper mantle. Nara, our local guide remembered that he had seen the falcon in the same area before. This bird is increasingly more difficult to see, as the dry forests where it thrives, is being put to the axe. In Thailand it is almost impossible to find it anymore and it is getting difficult to see in Myanmar and Vietnam as well.

Just 5 minutes later we passed by a **Collared Falconet** that sat on an electrical wire beside the road...think the bird experienced the first paparazzi attack in its short life...but it didn't want to leave it's favourite wire with lots of yummy flying termites to feed on. We passed by a couple of ancient Khmer temples on the way, as old and almost as big as Angkor.



Only just over 15 cm...Collared Falconet



Göran, Bengt, Olle, our guide Nara, Mathias and Henrik.

We had a lovely welcome party waiting for us, when we arrived to Tmatboey. A **Black Baza** flew over our heads...but more spectacular, huge flocks of Parakeets were feeding on left over rice, after harvest. About 300 **Blossom-headed Parakeets**, 20 **Red-breasted Parakeets** and even 4 **Alexandrine Parakeets**, just outside the village. It was very encouraging to see that the forest here was so full of parakeets...elsewhere in South-East Asia parakeets are in drastic decline due to habitat loss and wildlife trade...though wildlife trade is also a trade here unfortunately... Together with the villagers in Tmatboey, WCS built 5 bungalows complete with a dining area, for visiting birders in 2007. All electricity is supplied by solar panels. The place, situated just outside Tmatboey village, is also used for the training of birdguides and people that will work in environmental programs all over Cambodia. SVC, that were our host during the stay in Cambodia, is often responsible for this training program. We spent the next 3 nights here.



Black Baza, with the characteristic flight silhouette



Blossom-headed Parakeet B.Legnell

Just before sunset, the local village guide took us about a kilometre outside the village. On the other side of an old rice field stood a large, dead tree. Quietly we waited for the first **White-shouldered Ibis** to arrive at the roosting-site. A **Spotted Wood-Owl** was calling in the distance. **2 Asian Barred Owlets** flew in and sat down in a nearby tree to entertain us, as we were waiting...Then **2 Spotted Owlets** joined their relatives, and sat down in a tree on the other side of us. The sun had sunk below horizon when the first Ibis majestically flew in over the open sky. Then a few more! And more!! And even more, flew in!!! Finally 17, a record number, had gathered in the tree after a day feeding in pairs or small flocks in the tiny, almost dried up pools scattered all over the surrounding forest. This was the biggest roosting site, only a short distance from the village. Our village-guide told us about 30 White-shouldered Ibises could be found in the Tmatboey district.



White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisonia* Critically Endangered. Good News. Hugh Wright from the University of East Anglia, who presently is working with the White-shouldered in Cambodia, led an inventory of the birds during the summer of 2010. They visited all known roosting sites in the country and counted simultaneously 429 individuals, up about 30% from the 2009 count of 310. So the population in Cambodia – there may also be a small one in southern Laos – may be reaching 500. The only other known population is in eastern Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. Since this location is poorly known, Birdlife estimate the population there to be 30 – 100 birds.

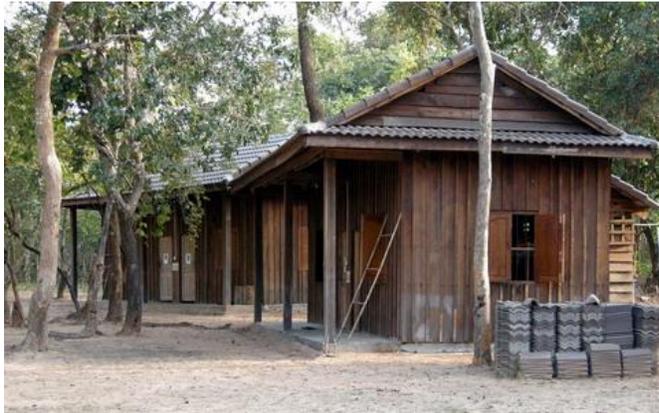
In Tmatboey, the situation for this Ibis also looks good;

White-shouldered Ibis in Tmatboey.							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Nests.	1	1	2	3	4	4	6
Adults .	2	2	4	7	15	15	28

I don't have any figures for Tmatboey 2009 – 2011...but we counted 17 in one single roost in January 2011 and villagers estimated the total amount of White-shouldered Ibises in that particular district to be 30-40 individuals...that would mean about 7% of the total world-population...

January 15.

It was with great anticipation we woke up this morning, remembering the fantastic previous day. Today we wanted to see the Giant one....a nice early breakfast, mostly made by local ingredients...think only the instant coffee – to my relief – was “imported”. Chicken, eggs, pork, fish, fruit and vegetables that was served each meal, came from the village (or close by).



Our Bungalow in Tmatboey



Black-headed Woodpecker Photos H.Hultén

...then off to a potential feeding pond, or Trapaeng, for the Giant Ibis. This time we dipped it, but saw a few **Lesser Adjutants** and 2 **White-shouldered Ibises** there. We had to travel to the Trapaeng where the Giants are most commonly seen (I think the local guides try to visit different Trapaengs in order not to disturb the birds too much – the Giant Ibis seemed more affected by disturbances, compared to the White-shouldered, and this particular pond had been visited by a Japanese couple a few days earlier...they got a quick glimpse of one bird

there, after having searched for them a number of days...) We slowly approached the muddy pool. 4 or 5 **Lesser Adjutants** flew off. Suddenly a **Giant Ibis** flew off from the pond and sat down high up in a nearby tree, watchfully keeping an eye on us – wow!



Giant Ibis Photo B. Legnell



Lesser Adjutant Photo H.Hultén

Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea* Critically Endangered. In 2007 T. Clements compiled recent reports and commented “Together, this data suggest a minimum estimate of 100 pairs (20-30 at each of the two high density sites, 5 – 10 at each of the 7 known low density sites)”. The range of the Ibis is confined to northern Cambodia – where most birds are found – as well as the southern tip of Laos and the Vietnamese side that borders to northern Cambodia (Yok Don National Park, Nguyen Hoai Bao wrote me in May - 2011 and confirmed they now can be seen there.) T. Clements comments in Birdlife’s Info-sheet that “there has been an extremely rapid population decline over the last three generations. (It was once found all over South-East Asia) Clements continue, “Deforestation scenarios project that Cambodia will lose 50% or more of its forest habitat in the next 25 years, a great portion of which is expected to be the lowland areas inhabited by the Giant Ibis. For example, recent assessment have shown that Cambodia lose 1-2% of it-s forests annually during 2002 – 2006. Giant Ibis are known to be highly sensitive to human disturbances, hence increased deforestation and habitat fragmentation would have a disproportional effect on the remaining population”

Soon another 5 **Giant Ibises** flew off from the trapaeng, which was partially covered in greenery, which made it difficult to see the birds feeding there. What a treat, 6 **Giant Ibises**!



Mathias Karlsson



Henrik Hultén

There were a lot of Parakeets everywhere in this dry type of forest and we saw many big flocks of **Blossom-headed** and **Red-breasted Parakeets**, many feeding for grain in the rice-stubble. Even a few smaller flocks of **Alexandrine Parakeet**. There were also plenty of Woodpeckers here. We saw **Gray-capped** (2-3), **Fulvous-breasted** (2), **Yellow-crowned** (1), **Rufous** 3-4), **White-bellied** (1), **Lesser Yellownape** (1), **Black-headed** (3-4) **Common** (2-3) and **Greater Flameback** (3-4), **Heart-spotted** (2) and **Great Slaty Woodpecker** (the world's largest Woodpecker. We saw 4-5 and heard a few more) during our 3 days here. I believe the presence of these types of birds in these quantities indicates a fairly healthy forest, as they all need big old trees to nest and feed.



Great Slaty Woodpecker



Black-headed Woodpecker



Heart-spotted Woodpecker(female)

The presence of big Owls is another indication of a healthy forest and during our 3-day visit in Tmatboey we saw or heard **Oriental Scops-Owl** (1-2 heard), **Brown Fish-Owl** (2), **Spotted Wood-Owl** (1 heard), **Brown Wood-Owl** (1), **Asian Barred Owl** (4-5) and **Spotted Owl** (2).



Asian Barred Owl



Crested Serpent-Eagle



Woolly-necked Stork Photos H.Hultén

Some other birds we saw during our 3 day stay in Tmatboey was; **Chinese Francolin** (heard daily), **Lesser Adjutant** (totally about 7-10), **Changeable Hawk-Eagle** (2), **Rufous-winged Buzzard** (10-15), **Green Sandpiper** (1), **Thick-billed Pigeon** (10), **Yellow-footed Pigeon** (20-30), **Green Imperial Pigeon** (10-15), **Large-tailed Nightjar** (heard), **Stork-billed Kingfisher** (2-3), **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater** (1), **Euro-Asian Hoopoe** (5-7), **Oriental Pied Hornbill** (20-30), **Indochinese Bushlark** (3-5), **Brown Prinia** (3), **Hainan Blue Flycatcher** (2), **Tickell's Blue Flycatcher** (6-8), **Siberian Blue Robin** (1), **Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch** (2), **Large and Common Woodshrike**, **Blue Magpie**. See bird list at the end of this report for complete list.



Bengt and Olof having Breakfast in the hay (still chilly)



Typical dry Dipterocarp forest.

January 16.

The target today was Pale-capped Pigeon...but the only dip in Cambodia. Our guide saw a few

while scouting a few fruiting trees for us...but we came too late. There were lots of **Yellow-footed Pigeons** – the most common pigeon in this dry forest – and **Thick-billed Pigeons** in the fruiting trees, sharing the small figs with flocks of **Oriental Pied Hornbills** as well as **Lineated** and **Coppersmith Barbets**. While looking for the Pigeon, a **Black-necked Stork** came flying over our heads...so fast no one managed to raise a camera...the race that occur in South and South-East Asia *asiaticus* is almost extinct in South-East Asia (one pair in Yok Don, Vietnam and some here in Cambodia) A very small, but stable population on the Indian sub-continent...about 1000 total. The Australian race is more common, with up to 20,000 pairs.



Typical little rice-field (now burnt) in the forest, and a dam (trapaeng) hidden amongst the trees...where Storks and Ibises can find food during dry season...

Yellow-footed Pigeon
Photos B. Legnell



A lot has changed in Tmatboey village since birdwatchers came there to have a look at the Ibises. Clean water, a new school, improvements on the road...and many of the villagers has new part-time jobs as guides, cooks, drivers etc. Before, the young tried to leave the village for "big city"...now many have started to re-build and improve their houses...and that is a good sign...AND...the Ibis population increases! Photos B. Legnell

January 17.

On our way back to Siemreab from Tmatboey we stopped by one of the many ancient temples from Ankorian times. I think there are almost 30 of them shattered in the forests in northern Cambodia, almost as big as Angkor. The surrounding forests often are quite good for birding, as

they often have been protected, even though wars and turmoil. Woodpeckers, Ibises, Parakeets and Storks thrive here. I started to wonder if the ancestors to the "talking" **Hill Mynas** in one temple ruin we visited, actually had first learned to talk 1000 years ago, when they acted as "Temple-birds" for the priests...these birds otherwise are amongst the first to disappear as cage birds in the bird trade...but here they are protected and thriving, talking an old Khmer dialect... the locals assured me the birds indeed were wild and not released, they had always stayed around the ruin...and no one fully understood the dialect they spoke...



Photos G. Elmquist and H. Hultén



It is not cheap to go birding in Cambodia ...(unless you are well connected or just "go by faith") SVC is operating the Ang Trapaeng and Tmatboey camps (as well as the camps in Cheep and Semi) on mandate from WCS. We paid about \$ 1150/person (the group paid for me), all inclusive. Some of the funds SVC receive goes back to the villages...but it is a very special country to go birding in!

I am arranging a similar trip to Vietnam (Yok Don, Dalat and Cat Tien) and Cambodia (Prek Toal and Tmatboey) -with possibility to extend a week to Thailand – Spoonbilled Sandpiper etc – We leave first week of January 2012 and stay 14-15 days. Price \$5000. For info, contact Bengt Legnell at kontakt@orientbirding.com

List of Birds seen in Cambodia Jan. 11 – 18, 2011.

Lesser Whistling Duck	about 1000 in Ang Trapaeng
Comb Duck	7 in Ang Trapaeng
Cotton Pygmy-Goose	about 300 in Ang Trapaeng. 2 in Prek Toal.
Indian Spot-billed Duck	about 10 in Ang Trapaeng, 3 in Prek Toal, 5 in Kampong Thom.
Garganey	5 in Prek Toal
Chinese Francolin	Heard daily in Tmatboey (seen once)
Red Junglefowl	Heard and seen daily in Tmatboey.
Little Grebe	1 in Prek Toal
Spot-billed Pelican	about 200 in Ang Trapaeng and about the same number in Prek Toal
Indian Cormorant	1 in Ang Trapaeng (prob. lots more) about 200 in Prek Toal.
Great Cormorant	about 20 in Prek Toal
Darter	4-500 in Prek Toal.



Gray Heron	about 50 in Ang Trapaeng and about 10 in Prek Toal
Purple Heron	5 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Prek Toal and about 10 in Kampong Thom
Great Egret	10 in Ang Trapaeng. Very common in Prek Toal
Little Egret	very common in all locations in Cambodia
Intermediate Egret	very common in wetland (outnumber Great Egret) 2-3 in Tmatboey
Chinese/Java Pond-Heron	very common in all locations (winter-plumage and inseparable)
Cattle Egret	common in wetland, less so in Tmatboey
Yellow Bittern	2 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Prek Toal
Black Bittern	2 in Prek Toal
Milky Stork	1 in Prek Toal
Painted Stork	about 100 in Ang Trapaeng, maybe 500 in Prek Toal
Asian Openbill	about 100 in Prek Toal, 17 in Kampong Thom
Woolly-necked Stork	5-7 in Tmatboey

Black-necked Stork.....1 in Tmatboey
Lesser Adjutant.....4 in Ang Trapaeng, 10-15 in Tmatboey
Greater Adjutant.....4 in Prek Toal

White-shouldered Ibis.....17-21 in Tmatboey
Giant Ibis.....6 in Tmatboey

Osprey.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal
Black Baza.....2 in Tmatboey
Black-shouldered Kite.....3 in Ang Trapaeng, 8 in Kampong Thom, 2 on the way to Tmatboey
Black Kite.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal
Brahminy Kite.....3 in Prek Toal
Gray-headed Fish-Eagle.....2 in Prek Toal
Crested Serpent-Eagle.....7-9 in Tmatboey
Eastern March Harrier.....at least 10 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Kampong Thom
Hen Harrier.....1 male in Kampong Thom
Shikra.....a few daily in Tmatboey
Rufous-winged Buzzard.....about 10 daily in Tmatboey
Greater Spotted Eagle.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 along the road towards Poi Pet
Changeable Hawk-Eagle.....2 in Tmatboey
White-rumped Falcon.....2 by the road on the way to Tmatboey
Collared Falconet.....1 by the road on the way to Tmatboey
Peregrine Falcon.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal, 1 by the road towards Poi Pet

Small Buttonquail.....5 in Kampong Thom

Sarus Crane.....4 in Kampong Thom

White-breasted Waterhen.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Prek Toal
Ruddy-breasted Crake.....Heard in Prek Toal
Watercock.....2 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal
Purple Swamphen.....20 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Prek Toal
Common Moorhen.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal

Bengal Florican.....1 in Kampong Thom grassland

Pheasant-tailed Jacana.....5 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Kampong Thom grassland
Bronze-winged Jacana.....5 in Ang Trapaeng

Red-wattled Lapwing.....3 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Kampong Thom, 1 in Tmatboey

Pin-tailed/Common Snipe.....1 flushed in Kampong Thom...too fast to identify
Green Sandpiper.....1 in Tmatboey
Wood Sandpiper.....1 in Ang Trapaeng
Common Redshank.....1 in Kampong Thom grassland

Whiskered Tern.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 100 in Prek Toal

Rock Dove.....Very common anywhere where there are humans

Red-collared Dove.....common in all locations except Prek Toal
Spotted Dove.....very common in all locations except Prek Toal
Zebra Dove.....Common in Ang Trapaeng
Thick-billed Pigeon.....10 in Tmatboey
Yellow-footed Pigeon.....about 20 (prob. more, several unidentified flocks) Tmatboey
Green Imperial Pigeon.....about 20 in Tmatboey

Alexandrine Parakeet.....16 in Tmatboey
Blossom-headed Parakeet.....about 400 (prob.more, several unidentified flocks) Tmatboey
Red-breasted Parakeet.....about 100 identified in the flocks. Tmatboey
Vernal Hanging Parrot.....1 in Tmatboey

Banded Bay Cuckoo.....the sound of this bird followed us from Vietnam to Thailand
. Heard daily in Tmatboey
Plaintive Cuckoo.....2 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Prek Toal, 1 on the way to Tmatboey
Violet Cuckoo.....1 on the way to Tmatboey
Asian Koel.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 + 1 heard in Tmatboey
Green-billed Malkoha.....over 10 in Tmatboey
Greater Coucal.....Seen and heard daily in all locations
Lesser Coucal.....3 in Ang Trapaeng

Oriental Scops Owl.....heard 2 evenings outside our bungalow, Tmatboey.
Brown Fish Owl.....2 seen together in Tmatboey
Spotted Wood-Owl.....1 heard from the Ibis roost. Tmatboey
Brown Wood-Owl.....1 seen. Tmatboey
Asian Barred Owlet.....Seen/heard daily. Tmatboey
Spotted Owlet.....2 seen at the Ibis roost. Tmatboey

Large-tailed Nightjar.....heard twice in Tmatboey

Asian Palm-Swift.....Several seen daily in all locations
Crested Tree-swift.....10-50 seen daily in Tmatboey

Common Kingfisher.....3-5 daily in the wetlands
Stork-billed Kingfisher.....2 seen together in Tmatboey
White-throated Kingfisher.....3-10 daily in all locations
Black-capped Kingfisher.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 5 in Prek Toal
Pied Kingfisher.....3 in Ang Trapaeng

Green Bee-eater.....2 in Ang Trapaeng. Common in Tmatboey
Blue-tailed Bee-eater.....20-30 in both Ang Trapaeng and Prek Toal
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater.....3 in Tmatboey

Indian Roller.....3 in Ang Trapaeng. Common in Tmatboey

Eurasian Hoopoe.....3-4 daily in Tmatboey

Oriental Pied Hornbill.....10-15 daily at Tmatboey
Lineated Barbet.....a few seen and heard in Tmatboey

Green-eared Barbet.....1 heard in Tmatboey
Blue-eared Barbet.....a few seen or heard daily in Tmatboey
Coppersmith Barbet.....groups of 10-15 in fruiting trees. Tmatboey

Gray-capped Woodpecker.....2-3 in Tmatboey
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Tmatboey
Rufous Woodpecker.....1 in Tmatboey.
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker.....1 in Tmatboey
White-bellied Woodpecker.....1 in an old temple ruin on the way from Tmatboey
Lesser Yellownape.....1 in Tmatboey
Greater Yellownape.....4 in Tmatboey
Black-headed Woodpecker.....3-4 in Tmatboey
Common Flameback.....2-3 in Tmatboey
Greater Flameback.....1-2 seen daily in Tmatboey
Heart-spotted Woodpecker.....Male and Female in Tmatboey
Great Slaty Woodpecker.....2-3 seen daily and a few heard daily. Tmatboey

Australasian Bushlark.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 5 in Kampong Thom
Indochinese Bushlark.....2-5 daily in Tmatboey
Oriental Skylark.....5 in Kampong Thom

Bank Swallow.....10-20 daily in Tmatboey
Barn Swallow.....Very common in all habitats
Red-rumped Swallow.....3-10 daily in Tmatboey

Oriental Pipit (Paddyfield Pipit).....20 in Ang Trapaeng, common in Kampong Thom
Olive-backed Pipit.....2-10 daily in Tmatboey
Eastern Yellow Wagtail.....2 in Kampong Thom

Large Cuckoo-shrike.....2-5 daily in Tmatboey
Indochinese Cuckoo-shrike.....2 in Tmatboey
Scarlet Minivet.....4 in Tmatboey
Small Minivet.....seen daily, with up to 20 ex, in Tmatboey
Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike.....1 in Tmatboey

Black-headed Bulbul.....1 in an old temple ruin on the way from Tmatboey
Black-crested Bulbul.....about 20 in Tmatboey
Sooty-headed Bulbul.....2-10 daily in Tmatboey
Stripe-throated Bulbul.....3 in Ang Trapaeng, about 5 in Tmatboey
Yellow-vented Bulbul.....5 in Ang Trapaeng, 5 in Kampong Thom grassland
Streak-eared Bulbul.....Common in Prek Toal and Tmatboey
Gray-eyed Bulbul.....2 in Tmatboey

Blue-winged Leafbird.....5 in Tmatboey
Golden-fronted Leafbird.....1 in Tmatboey
Common Iora.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, common in Tmatboey

White-throated Rock-thrush.....1 in Tmatboey

Zitting Cisticola.....about 20 in Kampong Thom grassland
Brown Prinia.....3 in Tmatboey

Rufescent Prinia.....about 10 in Tmatboey
Yellow-bellied Prinia.....1 in Prek Toal, about 15 in Kampong Thom grassland
Lanceolated Warbler.....1 in Ang Trapaeng
Black-browed Reed-Warbler.....5 in Prek Toal
Oriental Reed-Warbler.....3 in Ang Trapaeng, 1 in Kampong Thom grassland
Common Tailorbird.....common in Prek Toal
Dusky Warbler.....5 in Ang Trapaeng,5 in Prek Toal, heard twice in Tmatboey
Yellow-browed Warbler.....common in all locations
Pale-legged Leaf-Warbler.....about 5 in Tmatboey
Two-barred Warbler.....3 in Tmatboey
Striated Grassbird.....3 in Kampong Thom Grassland

Asian Brown Flycatcher.....1 in Tmatboey
Taiga Flycatcher.....common in Tmatboey
Verditer Flycatcher.....2 in Tmatboey
Hainan Blue Flycatcher.....2 in Tmatboey, 2 in the temple-ruins
Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher.....about 7 in Tmatboey

Siberian Ruby-throat.....1 in Ang Trapaeng, 2 in Kampong Thom grassland
Bluethroat.....3 in Kampong Thom grassland
Siberian Blue Robin.....1 in Tmatboey
Oriental Magpie-robin.....a few in Ang Trapaeng and also in Tmatboey
Stonechat.....common in all locations
Pied Bushchat.....4 in Ang Trapaeng, common in Tmatboey

Pied Fantail.....common in Ang Trapaeng and Tmatboey
Black-naped Monarch.....3 in Tmatboey, 1 at the temple-ruins
Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher.....a few in Tmatboey

White-crested Laughingthrush.....heard on two occasions in Tmatboey
Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush.....a flock of 7 in Tmatboey
Scaly-crowned Babbler.....5 seen and 3-4 heard in Tmatboey
Rufous-capped Babbler.....a few heard in Tmatboey
Striped Tit-babbler.....common in Tmatboey

Yellow-bellied Yuhina (Erpornis).....1 in Tmatboey

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch.....2 in Tmatboey
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch.....6 in Tmatboey

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird.....7-8 in Tmatboey
Purple Sunbird.....common in Tmatboey
Olive-backed Sunbird.....seen in all locations

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.....Seen in Siemreab etc.
Thick-billed Flowerpecker.....Seen twice (5+1) in Tmatboey

Black-naped Oriole.....1 in the temple-ruins
Black-hooded Oriole.....common (5-10 daily) in Tmatboey

Brown Shrike.....Seen in all locations. Quite common winter visitor
Burmese Shrike.....1 in Kampong Thom. 1-2 daily in Tmatboey
Long-tailed shrike.....1 in Kampong Thom grassland

Large Woodshrike.....3 in Tmatboey
Common Woodshrike.....seen twice (5+1) in Tmatboey

Black Drongo.....very common. Seen in all locations
Ashy Drongo.....common in Tmatboey (mostly wintering *leucogenis* & *salangensis*)
Bronzed Drongo.....1+2 in Tmatboey, 1 in the temple-ruins
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo.....several in Ang Trapaeng, Prek Toal and Tmatboey

Blue Magpie.....small flocks seen daily in Tmatboey
Rufous Treepie.....5 in Ang Trapaeng, 3 on the way to Tmatboey
Racket-tailed Treepie.....2+1 in Tmatboey

Large-billed Crow.....small numbers in all locations

Common Hill Myna.....3-4 in the temple-ruin
White-vented Myna.....very common in urban habitats.
Common Myna.....very Common in urban habitats.
Vinous-breasted Starling.....2 on the way to Tmatboey
Black-collared Starling.....very common in most habitats
White-shouldered Starling..... about 30 in Ang Trapaeng.

Nutmeg Mannekin.....20 in Ang Trapeang
House Sparrow.....5 in Ang Trapaeng. Expanding colonization eastwards.
Plain-backed Sparrow.....10 in Ang Trapaeng and 2 in Tmatboey.
Eurasian Tree Sparrow.....very common in Siemreab province. None!? Elsewhere.
Baya Weaver.....about 50 in Ang Trapaeng
Red Avadavat..... small groups (nesting?) in Kampong Thom

