

Cambodia

14 birding days in late 2011-early 2012

Jim and Maria Hackett

23 ticks (but look at the QUALITY!)



Sophoan and Maria



1. Introduction. We will soon be with the birds (**Section 3**). However, I will introduce Sophoan (our wonderful guide) early (**Section 2**). **Section 4** has some logistical information. **Section 5** is a brief Conclusion. **Appendix 1** is my ticklist. **Appendix 2** is my wishlist for the (large) chunk of the world that begins on the west coast of Ireland and ends at the line of Wallace.

2. Sophoan. Sophoan (her family name is Sanh) is 32 years of age, one of seven children, lives with her family in Siem Reap (when she is not guiding or birding [on her own] both in Cambodia and elsewhere), and says I have a big nose! Cheeky thing! She mentioned that her dad (who is a ‘big baby’) was, initially, a Professor of Chemistry, next an instructor in foreign languages (the police told him to desist from such work in the Pol Pot years), and (finally, I think), a tour guide. Her life list is about 1,000. She is a delightful woman, with great (birding!) eyes and ears. She has a comprehensive sounds file. She is very talented, extremely well-organized, charming, and funny. She says Maria is ‘little’, like Asian women (this went down well!). I recommend her *very highly*; insist on having her guide you if you plan to do Cambodia.

3. The birds

3.1 Pre-birds. We depart Cairns on Dec. 21, overnight in Singapore (*dim sum* and Tiger beer, at midnight, in the food court just outside our hotel [Changi Village], are good). On Dec. 22 I have good bacon-and-eggs at the food court and we are off to Siem Reap (about a 2 h flight). Sophoan is there to meet us. We drop by the office of the Sam Veasna Center (for Wildlife Conservation), our tour company, to pay what is owing in \$US and to meet Nick Butler, the ‘Co-Ordinator’. A cheerful expat Pom, he has been in Cambodia for many years. He emphasizes that the company has a policy of directly paying villagers to not cut down (or

otherwise trash) good habo, that such arrangements are policed, and that the company trains local guides. Sophoan takes us for a lunch of Cambodian food; not much to our liking. We are soon in our (very good) accommodation; this is the Sonalong Boutique Village and Resort (essentially a hotel; www.sonalongvillage.com; sonalongvillage@gmail.com) located one street over from the Sam Veasna Center. The manager (Chhay Hak) is attentive (Sophoan is with us; the manager hopes he may accommodate more Sam Veasna punters in future). Attractive cabins in a lush garden; an immaculate (large) pool; more-than-adequate evening nosh (prawns, morning glory, spring rolls, pork and cashews; \$US34 for two with beer and wine; we eat in-house tonight); very good breakfasts (included in the \$US55-59/night/double tariff; a 'Sam Veasna discount' is operative). We *highly recommend* this place in Siem Reap. It is a bit out-of-town; this is in fact an advantage. Quiet. A tuk-tuk (plentiful; \$US1 per person) will have you in the thick of things ('Pub Street'; more thereof below) in about 5 min. On December 23 we breakfast on chocolately coffee, bacon-and-eggs, and delightfully fresh baguettes (a legacy of the French). We have our 'temple day'. Angkor Bloody Wat. I should not trivialize the visit (I am trying to mellow a bit with age; this does not come easily). We think that 'Tomb Raider' was filmed here; Angelina Jolie tributes may be found all over the town. Suffice it to say that the temple is a very large (and comprehensively moated) religious folly. Three levels. Very Indiana Jones-ish. Many carvings of bare-breasted women are in evidence. If you push the correct nipple, the hope is that a massive sandstone boulder will groan to one side, revealing a set of cobwebbed stairs untrodden for centuries, at the bottom of which is a cavern filled with extraordinary things. I did my best to make this happen, under the glare of a somewhat disapproving Blue Rock Thrush. No secret of Angkor Wat was revealed to me. We next proceed to another temple (Bayon) where large facial images (supposedly differing subtly in expression), on towers, rule over a ground-level shambles of collapsed stones. Look; neither of us has even the faintest interest in sandstone constructs that have displaced forest. I want birds; Maria wants shops. Temples: bye-bye. We go home at 12.20 and Maria goes off 'shopping' in town; I just relax in our cool room. Cheap beer (50 cents a tankard) and dinner (very cheap and adequate pizza) in Pub Street conclude the day.

3.2 The birds. December 24 is **day 1** of birding. I am up at 05.30 to meet Sophoan and we are off to the Prek Toal storkery; it is a 30 min drive to the lakeshore and a boat ride of 90 min or so to the floating town of the same name, where we transfer to another boat (with a 'guide', a driver, and a young lad who does nothing much but is cheerful). We putter for 30 min or so through a floating forest (well, I suppose the trees are in fact rooted in mud; my botanical skills are meagre; where is Mike Leven when you need him?). The trees rise to 20 m or so. They were evident from the plane as we approached Siem Reap a few days ago. Charming.



The village of Prek Toal and (bottom) the start of the ‘floating’ forest.

Our destination is a wobbly small platform (that holds four at a pinch) located 15 m or so up a tree; this affords a panoramic view of the storkery. A man lives in a floating tent below; he is the ‘warden’ and his shift is one week in length (he likes a small tip as one departs). The place is a bit grockly; boats bearing perhaps 10 tourists arrive and one is forced to share the platform with them. Fortunately, they bugger off after a bit. How about the birds? Sophoan is quickly onto not one, but perhaps 10, **Greater Adjutants**. They are a bit distant but my 30X eyepiece eventually gets me a good perched view, with that ridiculous wattle drooping over the bird’s shoulder. However, the best views are in flight. The Adjutants have a low wing loading and are thus the first storks to take to a (weak) thermal. We have a monospecific kettle. The two-toned upperwing is very obvious. Open-Billed Storks abound; we have perhaps 40 Painteds; Lesser Adjutants are nearby. But they are not what I want. And Sophoan is wonderful. She studies a group of Painted and becomes alert. One of them (we can see the back only) seems to be very white, thus with no pink at the rear. We watch and watch. Eventually, the bird turns left, giving us a good profile. It is all-white! No black in the wings. Although the bird is a bit distant, we can also note that the red area of the face is smaller than that of the Painteds. A **Milky Stork!** The day warms and the storkery disperses in many thermal kettles. All birds are gone by 13.00. Time to go. Back to an excellent deep-fried fish lunch in Prek Toal town, and home. Maria has had a manicure costing about \$US2. Pub Street offers a roast beef sandwich and pork spare ribs for dinner. On **day 2** we are on the road at 05.30, with our fine driver Dar (who will be with us for the rest of the trip), in a twin-cab Ford diesel 4WD ute. The legroom in the back is not great and it is awkward to get in and out, but we will manage. The aircon works after a fashion. Critically, we have no mechanical problems at all (partly ‘cos Dar looks after the motor [we had an oil and filter change somewhere, for example]). The engine just purrs and purrs. All of our gear is placed in a big blue box in the tray; the box is secured by padlocks. We are off to the ‘Florican Grasslands’ near the village of Kampong Thom (the last 5 km to the site is very rough [we come off a bitumen highway]; the clearance and traction of the 4WD are invaluable). Sophoan, with her

customary efficiency, has been on her mobile and two locals await us at a village. The habo seems to be rice paddies as far as the eye can see. But the Wildlife Conservation Society (a US-based outfit) has purchased several tracts of land and these are not farmed; grass grows to maybe 40 cm. We walk for 30 min or so through paddies and approach the grassland. It doesn't take long. Sophoan puts them up. Three **Bengal Floricans**. They land, we approach, and are rewarded with terrific scope views as the birds (at least two of which are immature males) quietly walk away. I get **Richard's Pipit** (yes, I know this is a tart's tick and I should have looked at more pipits on earlier visits to SE Asia; I blame the taxonomists for constantly revising the genus) and a single **Small Buttonquail** (barrelling away, in buttonquail fashion). We drive for some hours to the village of Tmat Boey (pronounced 'Tomato Boy') near the Kulen Promtep sanctuary (again, the last 5 km or so are very rough). They weren't expecting us till tomorrow so we have to wait for a room to be opened. The accommodation is rather grim; a basic cabin (one of eight), but with an adequate bathroom featuring hottish water, occupied by a friendly brown tree-frog that ends up in Maria's bed, on her shoulder and back, and eventually in her handbag (but jumps out and away upon discovery). Meals are taken on a bare table placed on a bare (but roofed) slab of concrete. Any atmosphere is lacking; the place has all the charm of a prison farm. The promised hammocks and cold G&Ts are absent. Although we bring our own beer (on ice), a 50% (or so) premium is imposed on us for the drinking thereof. Trivial, in global terms, but irritating, and reflective of the 'couldn't-give-a-shit' attitude of the villagers, who tend to the lazy and indifferent. We are not impressed with the Sam Veasna 'involve the villagers' philosophy; the buggers should all be moved out. However, we are (fortunately) not here for the ambience. On the positive side, some of our trip money goes to a 'village conservation fund'; the locals agree, in turn, to practice conservation. They are rewarded for spotting and monitoring nests until fledging. The White-Shouldered Ibis numbers have been steadily climbing. The Pol Pot era was of course a major worry; the ready availability of firearms caused the numbers of big game in the park to become greatly reduced. Wildlife Conservation Society people returned (with alacrity) in 1999 and got things back on track.

Dusk is approaching and Sophoan knows where to go. We drive a short distance to the edge of a bare paddock holding a few palms and I am directed to keep an eye on the topmost branches of a dead tree perhaps 300 m distant. Why? Because, as it begins to darken, the birds arrive. And perch on their favourite roost. We have nine **White-Shouldered Ibis**; crippling scope views against the evening sky. An excellent Chrissy pressy.



Back home, dinner is poor (well, the chicken soup is OK). Our beer is warm; Dar gets ice for the esky later. Sleep is elusive; loud ‘music’ emanates from the village and Maria has a bad cold and cough.

On **day 3** we have a 04.30 start, with our local (excellent) guide Ree, and stand in the dark by a paddy hoping that the main target will fly in at dawn to the small pool of residual water. We hear calls to either side but the birds do not come. No worries; Ree knows what to do. I eat a couple of bananas for brekky and we walk through (delightful) deciduous dipterocarp forest and pause at the margins of paddies made in times past (thus [mercifully] no more) in the same forest. One bird is flushed as we approach a pool; I see it but very badly. That will not do! Ree is not perturbed; we walk some more and approach yet another pool. He sees it immediately and I have the scope onto it in no time. A magnificent, perched, **Giant Ibis**. The sun is in my eyes, so we circle the tree and put up the scope again. Crippling view. I am enjoying a final look in the bins when a White-Shouldered flies in and perches on the same branch! Scope-filling views of both special ibises together!



The pressure is off! We bird the forest and Sophoan calls out **Brown Prinia** without much drama. We are on a trail and glance up; two Black Storks leisurely thermal. Sophoan is smitten; this is not only a lifer for her but is a first for Cambodia (the necessary report has already been written by Sophoan [with a little editing help from me] and has been accepted

by the national committee)! Lunch is two fried eggs; I can't stomach rice anymore. The arvo is warm and quiet, tho' White-Shouldered give the (no doubt false) impression of being rather common; we have several. Dinner is peanuts and a (too small) bit of fried chook. On **day 4** we start at 05.30 (I have boiled eggs and bananas); we have a special target (I did see it, but very badly, in Myanmar). Ree knows the spot. We drive back to, and along, the bitumen road, scanning trees and exploring the margins of clearings. Sophoan gets a very distant view; we must do better. And we do! After an hour or so, we hear the call perhaps 200 m distant and I find a pair of **White-Rumped Falcons** billing and cooing on a bare branch. Excellent!



Cartoon by Brendan Wenzel

I enquire of Sophoan when we might get the **Indochinese Bushlark**? 'Oh, there they are', she says! A pair trackside as we drive back! We will now try for something difficult; Ree knows a site. We walk to a patch of forest and Ree tells us to wait; he will check things out. He returns in 20 min or so; yes, the birds are there but flew off as he approached and we need to search in the big trees to the right. So we do, for 30 min or so. Nothing. Ree goes off to explore some more and returns looking dejected; the birds have gone. Ree's mobile rings; he glances upward as he raises the thing to his ear, and there is the bird! A beautiful **Spotted Wood Owl** stares sleepily down at us. And there is another special creature for me this morning; my particular **Neglected Nuthatch** is not so for the few minutes I take to tick it. The arvo is again quiet; we are at the riverside but everything is lifeless. Dinner is good (for a change); we have a new cook who makes chicken tom yum soup and who cooks morning glory (I love this vegy). Maria reports that the geckos here do indeed go 'GECKO', and very loudly; our (introduced) Cairns species does not have this call.

On **day 5** we are at the river bank again, and **Van Hasselt's Sunbird** is not difficult in the dawn. We are off to Okoki, in the Preah Vihear Protected Forest; we are almost in Laos. The last 20 km of the road is terrible, and we have a police escort. This is 'Officer Dar' (to distinguish him from 'Driver Dar') on a motorbike, complete with a carbine slung across the petrol tank. It is explained that the area is remote, and that Officer Dar (who smiles a lot and

is a very fine chap) can whizz off rapidly to get help if anything goes amiss. Nothing does, fortunately. We have a fine ‘tented camp’ in a clearing in thick dipterocarp forest; the locals have even put welcome mats outside the tent flaps! The camp is very attractive. There is a safari-style double tent for me and Maria (the beds are off the ground and come with mossie nets) and a single for Sophoan. Both Dars sleep in hammocks, as do the (four or so) locals who came earlier in the day to set things up. This they have done in a most competent manner, and they are friendly and helpful. ‘Ecotourism’ at its best. The only downside is the Eastern loo; we use the bush. The shower is very primitive; just water from a holey bucket; Maria fills up her collapsible bucket and bird-baths in the tent. Sophoan also eschews the shower and is so impressed with Maria’s bucket that we give it to her at the end of the trip.

Driver Dar knows we are fed up with rice and does us chicken and chips! He cooks these mid-arvo (when we are off sitting behind a blind, failing to find a certain duck at a forest pool), gives Maria a few chips as a taster, and re-heats everything at dinnertime! KFC can rest easy; Dar is a better driver than he is a cook! But it was very nice of him to try! We do have cold white wine (we stopped at a gas station; the associated shop had alcohol).

On **day 6** we are up before dawn to target that duck. There are in fact two forest pools that are readily accessible and our local guide Ta settles Sophoan and me at one (perhaps a 20-min walk into the forest) and goes off to monitor the other. We sit quietly. Nothing. Then we hear the rustle of Ta returning. The bird is at the other pool! A fast 15-min walk and we approach the blind. Nothing. Has the bird gone? We wait. With a big splash, and displaying those wing patches, the **White-Winged Duck** plunges into the pool and swims/strolls toward the blind. To spend the next 30 min feeding (probing for frogs and whatever else lives in mud) on the bank 10 m distant! Ultra-crippling view! I will mention that, in my humble view, the ‘duck’ is a ‘goose’. It honks. Ta videos the bird on his mobile and Maria gets a showing when we return to camp. We later learn that the next two parties to visit Okoki (soon after we left) dipped!

Brekky is fried eggs and a token sampling of sweetened peanuts; the latter prepared by Dependable Driver Dar! Coral-Billed Ground-Cuckoo has been recorded from nearby forest in the past and we waste a few hours finding nothing; the bird likes to drink at forest pools but open water is quite plentiful at the moment and the bird could be anywhere; it is not the breeding season and we thus get no response to the call. A siesta back at the ranch and we walk locally in the arvo. Sophoan calls in **Laced Woody**; we have a brief but adequate view. An odd bird; this woody seems to be very shy in comparison with other woodys. On the morning of **day 7** we have Laced again briefly, eggs for brekky, and are off on a good new road (thus not back over the really rough track via which we entered; Dar told us then he was giving us a ‘free massage’!). However, it is 89 km, via the new road, to a junction that we must access, compared to 22 km via the track. So we do not save any time but are a bit more comfortable. We farewell Officer Dar (who is having mild motorbike problems, as in the brakes don’t work) and drive to the Sambor Village Hotel in Kampong Thom. The hotel is situated near the (polluted) Stung Seng river; we have a pleasant detached bungalow in a leafy garden. There is aircon and hot water. Maria had asked the Sam Veasna folks to book

us in here rather than into their preferred hotel, which has a karaoke lounge! You should do likewise. We take sundowners and dinner in-house; there is refreshing G&T and beer and more-than-adequate fish and chips and beef bourguignon. This is just an overnight stop en route to the next birding place; we are off (after a brekky of baguette and eggs; tasty) early on **day 8** to the Seima Protected Forest. Lunch en route is rather overdone chicken/cheese baguettes. At the forest, Sophoan has arranged for us to have the ‘VIP suite’; this is a double room, with a bathroom, just off the main park HQ. The room is good tho’ the views are wanting. At the back, a jumble of about 100 motorbikes, confiscated from illegally operating timbergetters, lie dying. At the front, about 80 vehicles (including a fair number of expensive 4WDs), similarly confiscated, rust slowly away. We meet a Frenchman (Gregory) and his mum; they are here in some official capacity. Another Frenchman, Damien, is in charge of security, patrols (with a ‘team’) unarmed, and had a bad day today because he was threatened by a man with a gun! Sophoan finds **Green-Eared Barbet** efficiently. In the late arvo we walk below the park HQ searching for Orange-Necked Partridge (which is supposedly here); we get no sniff thereof. Dinner (in the HQ canteen) is barely edible; we make do with (mostly) peanuts and bananas. The morning of **day 9** is poor; we get no ticks. A couple of locals take us to where Green-Legged Partridge is supposedly to be found; no go. Sophoan is playing a few calls (of other birds) and there is a response; we have lovely views of **Black-and-Buff Woody**. Dinner tonight is rendered a bit more edible by the fact that the cook has (on request) prepared some deep-fried (very small) fish; I manage to get a mouthful or so of flesh off the creatures. Maria eats next-to-nothing.

On **day 10** we are off at 05.00 for the Nature Lodge (www.naturelodgecambodia.com/) at Sen Monorom in the Mondulkiri Highlands near the Vietnam border (it is cool and windy in the morning and starry [including the Southern Cross] at night). The Lodge proudly proclaims that it is *not* in the Lonely Planet! We arrive in time for a (very slow [I asked for tea for Maria five times!]) but good) brekky of scramblers and ham (cheese on toast for Maria). We are told we cannot have a room till noon but Maria physically checks our cabin at 09.00; it is clearly ready, so in she goes. It is stand-alone pleasant place, with a verandah; the loo is outside (but surrounded by a high wall). Maria visits the nearby ‘town’ (about 2 km distant) and reports that it is not very attractive. The bloke who was to pick her up was 45 min late, his excuse being that he fell asleep over his PC! Maria has to wait in the hot sun. Meanwhile, Sophoan and I are off to the grounds of the (nearby) Oromis Lodge; we walk uphill gently to allow treetops to be scanned. It is still windy and we have nothing. We return to the base of the hill and Sophoan spots something; we soon have the scope up. A female (thus very dull) **Pale-Capped Pigeon** sits mid-level in a tree. Dinner is good fried fish for me, preceded by refreshing (limy) G&Ts. On **day 11** we are off at 05.30 to scan more treetops (I need Barred Cuckoo-Dove and a fruit pigeon or two); no go. We are not far from the Seima Protected Forest and Sophoan has been on the mobile to arrange something! We meet a guide we hope is knowledgeable and walk a trail; there do indeed appear to be fresh ‘plates’ cleared of leaves on the path. Sophoan plays; there is no response for an hour or so and then, suddenly, the birds call from only 100 m away. We move into the forest, sit quietly, and Sophoan plays again. We wait. I see a big leaf move. It is not a leaf; it is a **Green-**

Legged Partridge; a pair bob quietly to within 15 m of us and then walk uphill and away! A good tick! Back home, a quick pack, and we are off to Kratie (on the Mekong) and an anonymous hotel which is adequate. Dinner locally is terrible; the menu features (pretentious) French dishes, all of which are off (as in not available). We make do with poor pizza and beef in red wine. We are not here for the food! Not-too-early on **day 12** Sophoan and I are in the car; we have a target of which Sophoan is confident. We drive for perhaps 20 min along the Mekong to a place where the river contains small grassy sandbars featuring rocks and a few shrubs; it takes us but a few minutes in a boat to be among those sandbars, logging an Irrawaddy Dolphin on the way. Sophoan plays and we quickly have about six **Mekong Wagtails**; several birds perch, giving full bin views. This tick is indeed rather easy. No complaints!

Our last birding spot beckons; we drive to Kampot via Phnom Penh. Lunch is a burger for me, and chicken satays for Maria, in the 'Blue Pumpkin', a pleasant riverside noshery, with WiFi, where you can lounge (if you want) on a sheet-coated divan while your food is brought on a tray. We arrive at Les Manguiers ('the Mango Trees') (<http://www.mangokampot.com/>) at about 15.45. We have a superb bungalow on/over the wide river (this is the only such bungalow; the other accommodation is less attractive); the hills of Bokor National Park beckon on the far side. We are very near northern Thailand. It takes us a little while to figure out the dinner 'rules'. Briefly, you need to tell the (efficient, very hard-working) Chinese manageress (who is always on duty at the bar) that you will be *in* for dinner, specify fish or non-fish (there is no menu), and turn up at the bar anytime after 19.00, indicating that you would like to eat. Soon thereafter, dinner will be brought to you as you sit in a pavilion overlooking the water. Do not wait to be called to table! You will be waiting all night. The G&Ts are refreshing and dinner is good fish for me and good (for a change) chook for Maria.

It is **day 13** and Sophoan and I are off at 05.30 to Bokor. It is very slow going; the forest habo is attractive (apart from that in the area where a hotel and casino [!] are being built near the top of the hill) but seems rather lifeless. Sophoan makes the (valid) point that I need very few birds and that she could sparkle things up a bit were she to play calls of creatures I do not require. A walk on a forest trail gives her two lifers: Orange-Headed Ground-Thrush and White-Tailed Robin. We do get **Plain-Tailed Warbler** (one of the Golden-Speccy splits) easily, and Sophoan draws my attention to the local 'form' of Fire-Breasted Flowerpecker; the experts say it is a future split. There is no red anywhere. The split will be the **Cambodian Flowerpecker**. Maria goes into the local village, which she reports is quite nice, with old French architecture. Here she has her hair washed; the hairdresser squirts shampoo on dry hair and massages it in for 30 min; a rinse and drying with (very) hot tongs follow. The idea seems to be that you condition the hair before destroying it. The 1 h show costs US\$3. A full-body massage (US\$4 for 1 h) and a facial (an outrageous US\$12!) follow. Dinner features excellent squid (for me) and the ubiquitous chicken for Maria. On **day 14** we are off at 05.30 to go back to the park. We are driving up on a wide road when Sophoan hears something out of the window; we pile out of the vehicle and have several **Indochinese Green Magpies**; very fine things! That will be it for Cambodia; we search all day for perched pigeons but see

nothing. This evening (fine fish for me; more chook for Maria) we meet a charming English lady, and her American (female) companion; they are ‘doing’ Cambodia and ask Sophoan if the hotel that they have reserved in Siem Reap, the ‘Golden Banana’ is OK? ‘Well, yes’, says Sophoan, ‘but it is, er, a *gay* hotel’. There is a clue in the name! We don’t know if the ladies changed their plans! On January 7 2012 we return to Siem Reap (visiting a ‘tarantula restaurant’ on the way; the spiders are crispy-fried; Sophoan enjoys having a live one [perhaps 8 cm long] crawl over her!). We have a few Jetstar-mandated rest days back in the Sonalong. We celebrate our 29th wedding anniversary with a remarkably expensive lunch at the local version of Raffles. Maria does some mop-up shopping (with the aid of courteous tuk-tuk driver Srun); we swim in the pool; we eat in Pub Street (avoid the ‘Red Piano’).

4. Logistical notes

4.1 Our tour company. As mentioned, we used the Sam Veasna Center for Wildlife Conservation. They have a website (<http://samveasna.org/>) and the Booking Manager (Raksa) is very efficient. We sent \$US2,000 by TT as a deposit and brought the rest (about \$US5,000) to Siem Reap in cash. Sam Veasna was a Government official who was instrumental, with the help of the Wildlife Conservation Society, in establishing reserves in Cambodia; he died in the field, of malaria, when only 33 years old. Parenthetically, the Society took on the care of his widow and children; this was very good of them. Sam is remembered in the name of the Mekong Wagtail; this is *Motacilla samveasnae*. Currently, the Center facilitates birding at eight sites in Cambodia and is researching a further two sites in the Cardamom Mountains; an opening-up of these two places may allow the Cambodian Laughing and Red-Collared Woody to be targeted. The logistics will likely feature Okoki-style tented accommodation.

I thought that the trip was rather expensive, but Nick will presumably say that paying the Tmat Boey locals to not shoot things (for example) is not cheap. That aside, everything went very well (tho’ the food in so-called ‘remote’ places [they are not all that isolated, really; Cambodia is not Australia] needs attention). Sophoan really made the trip, of course. Again, Dar is an excellent driver and you should ask for him if he is available.

4.2 Getting there and back. We flew Jetstar from Cairns to Singapore, with a 3 h stop in Darwin. We overnighed in the Changi Village Hotel, which is fine (cool rooms), not too expensive, and is located fairly close (8 km) to the airport (with free shuttles that run hourly; a cab is cheap [\$S12] if you miss a shuttle). Best of all, there is a large ‘food (and drink) court’ just outside the hotel (go out the front door and turn right). The next day we flew Jetstar to Siem Reap. Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months; the necessary visa is then issued (quite quickly) at the airport (cost: \$US20 if you have some photos but \$US21 if not). Coming home, the flights proceeded in reverse order. A note: You may read that a \$US25 departure tax is to be paid at the Cambodian airport of departure. No; this changed in late 2011. The tax is now included in your fare, as usual. In Singapore on our way home, we could not get into the Changi Village (it was booked out); we ended up in the ‘Grand Mercure Roxy’ which is expensive, not close to the airport, and situated in a shitty part of town. The message is: Book the Changi Village in advance, either on their website

(<http://www.stayvillage.com/changi/>) or (Maria's preference) through a booking agency (if you book direct you get no refund if you cancel).

4.3 Money: This bit is easy. Bring \$US and do not change any. The *de facto* local currency is the \$US; small amounts of change are sometimes given in local 'riels', of which about 4,000=\$US1. The smallest note seems to be worth about 25 cents; use the local currency to pay for tuk-tuks? VISA is accepted by (most?) hotels and flasher restaurants. Not in Pub Street. No big deal. ATMs are abundant and dispense \$US (at least in Siem Reap).

4.4 Communications: Every second shop is a 'mobile phone shop' and coverage is near-total. Everyone has at least one mobile (Dar has two!). It would be easy to slip a SIM card into an unlocked mobile, bank some credit, and call the world. We didn't bother. Internet cafes are few because, these days, you are expected to carry your hardware with you! Thus, Maria was very often able to use her Ipad (little bigger than a mobile phone) to access (and send) email, and even to interrogate the Web. The necessary WiFi zones abound; you may need to ask a hotel desk (for example) for the password, which is usually 123456789.

4.5 Health: I was fine. Maria got a cold (with an awful cough); antiseptic lozenges and (later) a few broad-spectrum antibiotics (easily purchased over-the-counter from any of the many pharmacies; stock up on them for later use back home?) got her right in the end. Drink plenty of water (not from taps). I got a few bites; apply mossie repellent (dengue is apparently about).

4.6 Food: Cambodian food ranges from the excellent (very rare; try local fish) to the awful (rather more common). The 'cuisine' is a bit like Thai without the spices. Unusually, we always opted for Western food (if we could get it). If you don't eat fish you are (largely) stuck with (usually bony) chook. The usual caveat applies: If you are holidaying in Phnom Penh I expect that the food will be both varied and good. In Siem Reap, Pub Street offers 50-cent beers and a wide variety of food that trends to the average. An exception is the fare served by the '8th Street Café' (they also serve cheap but tasty G&Ts). Outside Siem Reap, the food deteriorates rapidly. Of (apparently) four cooks who take shifts at Tmat Boey, only one (on our last night) made anything nice (a tasty chicken tom yum soup; she had prepared the coconut milk herself [thus from a coconut!]; she did not open a can). There is no excuse for this. It would be easy to bring some half-decent fish and meat supplies from Siem Reap. The food at the Seima Protected Forest canteen is inedible. I recall only three good meals in Cambodia: delicious deep-fried fish in the floating town of Prek Toal, fine squid at Les Manguiers, and fish and chips in the 8th Street Café (Siem Reap). However, you won't starve. Peanuts and bananas are always available. We had no tummy upsets.

4.7 Drink: We were only ever served Angkor beer (which is fine); other Cambodian beers are advertised but seem to be unpopular. A can of Angkor is about 70 cents in a shop. Imported beer (Singha, Tiger, etc.) can be purchased for about double that price. Cheap (about \$US12 in a restaurant; \$US8 in a service station shop) but drinkable Australian and Chilean wines (red and white) are widely available.

4.8 Equipment. Sophoan has a scope (I suspect not a very good one; she will get her first good pair of bins soon; she saved up for them and they are in the mail) but did not bring it along. Bring your own. I carried my small Nikon scope fitted with a 30X eyepiece. I would have liked to have had my zoom eyepiece (max magnification 45X on the small scope) on occasion (at the storkery, for example). I also have a big Nikon scope on which the zoom eyepiece delivers 56X. However, I suggest that a big scope is too heavy (even for the locals who will often be carrying the thing). I purchased the biggie to allow of sea-/mudflat-watching while standing beside a car (the idea being that it was never necessary to lug the contraption around). The message is: Bring a small scope but max the mag; do *not* expect the guide to have a scope. I brought my sooper-doooper Wolfeyes torch, which was useful (at the lowest setting) when negotiating forest tracks in the predawn. Bring a universal adapter and a fleece (needed only once-or-twice for an hour or two over dawn). Don't overpack clothes; washing is cheap (about \$1.50 a kg) and commonly available.

5. Conclusion. I got 23 ticks (**Appendix 1**), half of which are megas. **Appendix 2** shows that SE Asia (thus the area covered in Robson) has only 10-or-so endemics that I need ('gamebirds' and night birds excluded; these are very hit-or-miss). I toyed with visiting northern Burma, but (a) there are too few birds (annotated in **Appendix 2**) and (b) Thiri (of last year's trip) tells me that the region is currently off-limits because of militant action. However, Sumatra/Borneo (I have never been to Sumatra) hold 150-or-so ticks for me; I need to focus on these places for now. (Later) trips to NE India and S China (Yunnan) may mop up other species.

Ethiopia in November 2012 is booked (Birdquest). In the interim, I hope to enjoy another birding trip (no plans as yet).

The bird list goes to 6,807. Ethiopia should yield 100-odd ticks. The big SEVEN beckons!

Appendix 1

Ticks in Cambodia

Green-Legged Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila chloropus</i>	
White-Winged Duck	<i>Asarcornis scutulata</i>	
Milky Stork	<i>Mycteria cinerea</i>	
Greater Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos dubius</i>	
White-Shouldered Ibis	<i>Pseudibis davisoni</i>	
Giant Ibis	<i>Pseudibis gigantea</i>	
Bengal Florican	<i>Eupodotis bengalensis</i>	
White-Rumped Falcon	<i>Polihierax insignis</i>	
Small Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	
Pale-Capped Pigeon	<i>Columba punicea</i>	
Spotted Wood Owl	<i>Strix seloputo</i>	
Green-Eared Barbet	<i>Megalaima faiostricta</i>	
Laced Woodpecker	<i>Picus vittatus</i>	
Black-and-Buff Woodpecker	<i>Meiglyptes jugularis</i>	
Indochinese Green Magpie	<i>Cissa hypoleuca</i>	
Indochinese Bushlark	<i>Mirafra erythrocephala</i>	
Brown Prinia	<i>Prinia polychroa</i>	
Plain-Tailed (or Alström's)		
Warbler	<i>Seicercus soror</i>	Note 1
Mekong Wagtail	<i>Motacilla samveasnae</i>	Note 2
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	Note 3
Van Hasselt's Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma brasiliiana</i>	Note 4
Neglected Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neglecta</i>	Note 5
Cambodian Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum cambodianum</i>	Note 6

Note 1: A Golden-Speccy split. See <http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/species.jsp?avibaseid=65EA17D986DD56A6>. Also HBW vol. 11 page 677.

Note 2: See <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=30239>. Also HBW vol. 9 page 779.

Note 3: See HBW vol. 9 page 745.

Note 4: A new taxon. See Also <http://www.flickr.com/photos/yambarudan/5567509877/>. Not in HBW.

Note 5: A new split. See HBW vol. 13 page 130. Also <http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/species.jsp?avibaseid=23F3AE9CE14BEDC2>.

Note 6: A future split (so I split it now). See HBW vol. 13 page 387.

Appendix 2

Wishlist, January 2012, from the west coast of Ireland to the Line of Wallace. Birds: 464. WPal birds: 25.

Begin with Robson; Birds of SE Asia. Show endems only (not many). Show birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java, and Bali in CAPITALS. Add extras from Birds of China in *italics*. Add extras from 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent' in **bold**. Add extras from the Western Pal underlined. M&S: the Monroe and Sibley tick text; NM: Northern Myanmar.

**214 Non-passerines (102
game/night birds)**

Nicobar Scrubfowl
Painted Spurfowl
 Long-Billed Part
 Black Part
White-Cheeked Part NMr
 Malayan Part
 Orange-Necked Part
 Chestnut-Headed Part
 Siamese Part (not in M&S)
 GREY-BREASTED PART
 CHESTNUT-BELLIED PART
 RED-BILLED PART
 RED-BREASTED PART
 CRIMSON-HEADED PART
 Annam Part
 Ferruginous Part
Grey Part
Taiwan Part
Chestnut-Breasted Part
Sichuan Part
White-Necklaced Part
Hainan Part
See-See Part
Blyth's Tragopan NMu
Western Tragopan
Satyr Tragopan
 Imperial Pheasant
 Edwards' Pheasant
 Vietnamese Pheasant
Brown Eared-Pheasant
Elliott's Pheasant
Reeves' Pheasant
Cheer's Pheasant
 SUMATRAN PHEASANT
 BULWER'S PHEASANT
 SALVADORI'S PHEASANT
 Crestless Fireback
Sclater's Monal NMu
Chinese Monal
 Mountain Peacock-Pheasant
Grey Peacock-Pheasant
 SUMATRAN PEACOCK-
 PHEASANT
 BORNEAN PEACOCK-
 PHEASANT
 Malayan Peacock-Pheasant
 Crested Argus
 Great Argus
Grey Junglefowl
 GREEN JUNGLEFOWL
Snow Partridge
Altai Snowcock
Caucasian Snowcock
Caspian Snowcock
Jungle Bush-Quail
Rock Bush-Quail
Painted Bush-Quail
Manipur Bush-Quail
Siberian Grouse
Black Grouse
Hazel Grouse
Western Capercaillie
Black-Billed Capercaillie

Painted Francolin
 Caucasian Black Grouse
 TABON SCRUBFOWL

Lesser White-Fronted Goose
Red-Breasted Goose
Pink-Footed Goose
Barnacle Goose
White-Headed Duck
 Sunda Teal

Red-Collared Woodpecker
Pale-Headed Woodpecker NMu
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Middle Spotted Woodpecker
Green Woodpecker
Scaly-Bellied Woodpecker
Sind Woodpecker
Himalayan Woodpecker
 SUNDA WOODPECKER

BROWN-THROATED BARB
 BLACK-BANDED BARB
 MOUNTAIN BARB
 FLAME-FRONTED BARB
 GOLDEN-NAPED BARB
 BORNEAN BARB

Oriental Dwarf King
 SMALL BLUE KING
 BLACK-BACKED KING
 JAVAN KING

HOSE'S BROADBILL
 WHITEHEAD'S
 BROADBILL

Brown Hornbill
 WHITE-CROWNED HORNBILL
 WRINKLED HORNBILL
 Plain-Pouched Hornbill
Narcondam Hornbill
 RED-NAPED TROGON
 CINNAMON-RUMPED
 TROGON
 BLUE-TAILED TROGON
 WHITEHEAD'S TROGON

Violet Cuckoo
 Coral-Billed Ground-Cuckoo
 SUNDA GROUND-CUCKOO
 SUNDA COUCAL

Slaty-Headed Parakeet
Nicobar Parakeet
 YELLOW-CRESTED
 COCKATOO
 GREAT-BILLED PARROT
 THICK-BILLED PARROT
 YELLOW-THROATED
 HANGING-
 PARROT

Cave Swiftlet
 Indochinese Swiftlet
 VOLCANO SWIFTLET

White-Fronted Scops Owl
 Reddish Scops-Owl
Mountain Scops NM
Striated Scops
Pallid Scops
Andaman Scops

Nicobar Scops
 STRESEMANN'S SCOPS
 JAVAN SCOPS
 MANTANANI SCOPS
 SIMEULUE SCOPS
 ENGGANO SCOPS
 RAJAH SCOPS
 MENTAWAI SCOPS
Eurasian Pygmy-Owl
Hume's Owl (not in M&S)
 Spot-Bellied Eagle-Owl
 Barred Eagle-Owl
 Dusky Eagle-Owl
 Mottled Wood-Owl
Sichuan Wood-Owl
Ural Owl
Great Grey Owl
Andaman Hawk-Owl
Chestnut-Backed Owlet
 JAVAN BARRED OWLET
Forest Owlet
 Large Frog
 Gould's Frog
Hodgson's Frog
 DULIT FROG
 SHORT-TAILED FROG
 SUNDA FROG
 Malaysian Eared Night
Egyptian Night
Vaurie's Night
 BONAPARTE'S NIGHT
 SALVADORI'S NIGHT

CINNAMON-HEADED PIG
 SUMATRAN GREEN PIG
 GREY-CHEEKED GREEN PIG
 Pink-Necked Pigeon
 Yellow-Vented Pigeon
Yellow-Eyed Pigeon
Long-Toed Pig
Black-Chinned Fruit-Dove
 PINK-HEADED FRUIT-
 DOVE
 BLACK-NAPED FRUIT-
 DOVE
 BLACK-BACKED FRUIT-
 DOVE
Barred Cuckoo-Dove NMr
Andaman Cuckoo-Dove
 RUDDY CUCKOO-DOVE
 Nicobar Pigeon
 DARK-BACKED IMP
 GREY IMP
 PINK-HEADED IMP
 SILVERY WOOD-PIG
 ISLAND COLLARED-
 DOVE

Masked Finfoot
Band-Bellied Crane
Andaman Crane
Swinhoe's Rail

Solitary Snipe
Great Snipe
Jack Snipe
Indian Courser
Jerdon's Courser

Sociable Lapwing
 JAVANESE LAPWING
Purple Sandpiper
 JAVAN PLOVER
Slender-Billed Curlew
 RUFOUS WOODCOCK

Chestnut-Bellied Sandgrouse
Painted Sandgrouse
 Hooded Crane
 Red-Crowned Crane

Little Bustard
McQueen's Bustard (not in M&S)

Indian Bustard
Little Bustard
Lesser Florican

Red Kite
Nicobar Sparrowhawk
Levant Sparrowhawk
 MOUNTAIN SERPENT-EAGLE
 JAVAN HAWK-EAGLE

White-Bellied Heron NM
White-Eared Night-Heron
Japanese Night-Heron
Crested Ibis

STORM'S STORK

Eared Pitta
Blue-Naped Pitta NM?
Rusty-Naped Pitta NM?
 GIANT PITTA
 MANGROVE PITTA
 SCHNEIDER'S PITTA
 BLUE-BANDED PITTA
 BLUE-HEADED PITTA
 ELEGANT PITTA
 BLACK-CROWNED PITTA

250 Passerines

Marshall's Iora

Siberian Jay
White-Winged Magpie
 SHORT-TAILED MAGPIE
Collared Treepie NM
 SUMATRAN TREEPIE
 BORNEAN TREEPIE
 BORNEAN BRISTLEHEAD
 SUMATRAN DRONGO
 MALAYSIAN RAIL-BABBLER
Silver Oriole
 JAVAN C'SHRIKE
 MALAYSIAN C'SHRIKE
 SUNDA C'SHRIKE
 BLACK-BREASTED
 FRUITHUNTER

White-Bellied Minivet
 FIERY MINIVET
 SUNDA MINIVET
 BLUE-MASKED LEAFBIRD

Blue-Capped Rock-Thrush
 Malayan Whist-Thr
 SHINY WHIST-THR
 SUNDA WHIST-THR
Chinese Thrush
Grey-Backed Thrush

EVERETT'S THRUSH
 SUNDA THRUSH
Ring Ouzel

SUNDA FORKTAIL
Purple Cochoa NM?
Green Cochoa NM?
 SUMATRAN COCHOA
 JAVAN COCHOA

Brown-Chested Jungle-Fly
 RUFOUS-TAILED JUNGLE-FLY
Pygmy Blue Fly NM
 EYEBROWED FLY
 INDIGO FLY
 RUFOUS-CHESTED FLY
 RUECK'S BLUE FLY
 RUFOUS-VENTED NILTAVA

Gould's Shortwing
 BORNEAN STUBTAIL
Rusty-Bellied Shortwing NMu
Hodgson's Bushchat
White-Browed Bushchat
Blackthroat
White-Throated Robin
Blue-Fronted Robin
 SUNDA ROBIN

Spot-Winged Starling
 BLACK-WINGED STARLING
 SHORT-TAILED STARLING
 JAVAN MYNA (not in M&S)
 BALI MYNA

Black-Headed Jay

Kashmir Nuthatch
Yellow-Billed Nuthatch
White-Cheeked Nuthatch
Corsican Nuthatch
Algerian Nuthatch
Kruper's Nuthatch
Western Rock Nuthatch

White-Crowned Penduline-Tit
Siberian Tit
Dark-Grey Tit
Yellow-Breasted Tit
Black-Headed Tit
Fire-Capped Tit
 Black-Billed Tit
White-Naped Tit
Black-Crested Tit
White-Cheeked Tit
 Crested Tit
 PYGMY TIT

White-Eyed River-Martin
Rufous-Tailed Wheatear
Finsch's Wheatear
Hume's Wheatear
Variable Wheatear

BLACK-AND-WHITE BUL
Olive Bul NM
Nicobar Bul
White-Eared Bul
 CREAM-STRIPED BUL
 SPOT-NECKED BUL
 BLUE-WATTLED BUL

ORANGE-SPOTTED BUL
 HOOK-BILLED BUL
 SUNDA BUL

Rufous-Fronted Prinia
Rufous-Vented Prinia
 BAR-WINGED PRINIA

Chestnut-Crowned Bush-Warb
Long-Billed Bush-Warb
Russet Bush-Warb (not in M&S) NM
 SUNDA BUSH-WARB
 FRIENDLY BUSH-WARB
 One *Seicercus* (not in M&S) NM
Grasshopper Warbler
Sulphur-Bellied Warbler
Plain Leaf-Warbler
Brooks' Leaf-Warbler
Chinese Leaf-Warbler (not in M&S)
FOUR leaf-warblers (not in M&S)
Japanese Swamp-Warbler (not in M&S)
Upcher's Warbler
River Warbler
Aquatic Warbler
Icterine Warbler
 SUNDA WARBLER

Garrulax ferrarius pl. 86 (not in M&S)
G. castonotis pl. 86 (not in M&S).
Rufous-Necked Laughter NMu
Chestnut-Backed Laughter NMu
Yellow-Throated Laughter
Rufous-Vented Laughter NMu
Spot-Breasted Laughter NMu
 Orange-Breasted Laughter (not in M&S)
 Golden-Winged Laughter (not in M&S)
Red-Winged Laughter
Red-Tailed Laughter
White-Speckled Laughter
Variagated Laughter
White-Whiskered Laughter
Omei Shan Liocichla
 SUNDA LAUGHER
 RUFOUS-FRONTED LAUGHER

Marsh Babbler

Spot-Throated Babb NM
Slender-Billed Scimbabb NMu
 Short-Tailed Scimbabb
Jerdon's Babb
Slender-Billed Babb
Spiny Babb
Snowy-Throated Babb NM
 Sooty Babb
Spot-Necked Babb NM
 WHITE-NECKED BABBLER
 WHITE-BREASTED BABB
 WHITE-BIBBED BABB

CRESCENT-CHESTED
BABB
White-Hooded Babb NMu
Rufous-Tailed Babb
TEMMINCK'S BABB
BUETIKOFER'S BABB
BLACK-BROWED BABB
VANDERBILT'S BABB
GREY-CHEEKED TIT-BABB

Rufous-Throated Wrenbabb
Rusty-Throated Wrenbabb
Tawny-Breasted Wrenbabb
Nepal Wrenbabb
LARGE WRENBABB
MARBLED WRENBABB
Bar-Winged Wrenbabb
Long-Tailed Wrenbabb
Long-Billed Wrenbabb
Wedge-Billed Wrenbabb NMr
(split – Cachar WBW)
BORNEAN WRENBABB
RUSTY-BREASTED
WRENBABB
BLACK-THROATED
WRENBABB
MOUNTAIN WRENBABB

Indochinese Fulvetta (not in
M&S)
Black-Browed Fulvetta (not in
M&S)
Gold-Fronted Fulvetta
Spectacled Fulvetta
Ludlow's Fulvetta
JAVAN FULVETTA

Black-Crowned Barwing
Streaked Barwing
Hoary-Throated Barwing
CHESTNUT-CRESTED
YUHINA
SPOTTED CROCIAS

Brown Pbill
Ashy-Throated Pbill
Short-Tailed Pbill
Black-Browed Pbill
Rufous-Headed Pbill (two) NM
Black-Breasted Pbill
Reed Pbill
Grey-Hooded Pbill
Rusty-Throated Pbill

SCARLET-BREASTED FPECK
BROWN-BACKED FPECK
RED-CHESTED FPECK
BLACK-SIDED FPECK
BLOOD-BREASTED FPECK
SCARLET-HEADED FPECK

COPPER-THROATED SBIRD
TEMMINCK'S SBIRD
WHITE-FLANKED SBIRD
BORNEAN SPIDERH
WHITEHEAD'S SPIDERH

Singing Lark
White-Winged Lark
Black Lark

Japanese Skylark
Indian Lark
Black-Crowned Sparrowlark
Rufous-Tailed Lark
Tawny Lark

JAVAN TESIA
INDONESIAN HON
Black-Breasted Weaver
Yellow Weaver
Siberian Accentor
Radde's Accentor
Spectacled Finch

Blanford's Rosefinch
Dark-Rumped Rosefinch NMr
Crimson Rosefinch
**Sillem Mountain-Finch (not
in M&S)**
Jankowski's Bunting
White-Capped Bunting
Cinereous Bunting

JAVAN MUNIA
WHITE-HEADED MUNIA
BLACK-FACED MUNIA

Green Avadavat
Sind Sparrow
Pale Rock-Sparrow
JAVA SPARROW
Orange Bullfinch
Black-and-Yellow Grosbeak
Tibetan Siskin
MOUNTAIN SERIN
TAWNY-BREASTED P'FINCH
Canary
Citril Finch
Scottish Crossbill
Parrot Crossbill

ENGGANO WH'EYE
BLACK-CAPPED WH'EYE
MOUNTAIN WH'EYE
JAVAN WH'EYE
LEMON-BELLIED WH'EYE
JAVAN GREY- THROATED
WH'EYE
PYGMY WH'EYE
MOUNTAIN BLACKEYE

OLIVE-BACKED TAILOR
RUFIOUS-TAILED FAN
WHITE-BELLIED FAN
BORNEAN WHIST
WHITE-VENTED WHIST