

CAMBODIA RECENT BIRD REPORTS, MARCH-APRIL 2011 *

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Thanks to all contributors. In the future, please send any records you think may be of interest (for current or earlier months) to tevens@wcs.org and fredbaksey@yahoo.com. Earlier editions can be found at www.samveasna.org. Names follow Craig Robson (2008) *A field guide to the birds of Thailand and South-east Asia*. National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, Protected Forest and Sam Veasna Center are abbreviated as NP, WS, PF and SVC respectively.

Next digest will cover May to July 2011

* The many records of interest from the SVC super-tour (10-23 February) could not be included in the previous review and are added here.

GENERAL

Two coordinated **Sarus Crane** censuses were conducted across Cambodia and Vietnam during the review period, with totals of 736 birds on 25-27 March and 505 birds on 29-30 April, both down from the 869 peak in late February and suggesting that once again a significant proportion of birds were being missed during the later part of the season. This may be due to the existence of a new, as yet unidentified, key site somewhere in the region. In March the 357 birds at Ang Trapeang Thmor and 251 at Phu My/Kampong Trach made up almost the entire count for the Cambodian part of the census (many observers per RvZ).

Twenty vulture nests were recorded across Cambodia during the 2010-11 breeding season (per SC): 11 **White-rumped**, 6 **Red-headed** and 3 **Slender-billed**. The Slender-billed Vulture nests were in Western Siem Pang (1) and Lomphat WS (2). Only one vulture nest was confirmed in Mondulkiri PF this year, but it is conceivable that the colony has moved to an area that is harder to survey (TNEG).

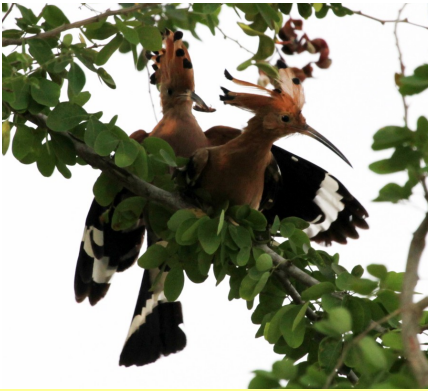
PHNOM PENH

A migrant **Blue-winged Pitta** turned up in a garden in Boeng Keng Kang I on 30 April (HN).

SOUTH-EAST

On 17 March at Boeng Prek Lepeuw at least five nesting sites of **Asian Golden Weavers** (3-8 nests per site) were found along irrigation channels, suggesting the species is relatively common in the area (RvZ). A boat trip in search of the satellite-tagged Black-faced Spoonbill and its travelling companions took place in the same area on 19 March (RO, RvZ). At Kompong Ampul harbor, Borei Cholsar district (Takeo), two large trees were full of nesting **House** and **Eurasian Tree Sparrows** and the three weaver species, with at least 12 nests of **Asian Golden Weavers**. A large flock of waterbirds was found well north of Boeng Prek Lepeuw, holding, amongst others, 100+ **Painted Storks**, 100+ **Asian Openbills**, 20 **Black-headed Ibis**, 20-40 **Black-tailed Godwits**, and 45 **Indian Spot-billed Ducks**; four **Red-necked Phalaropes** were firsts for the south-east and 100-200 **Marsh Sandpipers** was the highest recorded count for the country. A few minutes later, five **Black-faced Spoonbills** flew in and landed in front of the observers, including the antenna-tagged individual! Satellite-tracking data indicates that the birds stayed in the same area until the next day, then moved near to Neak Leung (Prey Veng) on 21 March, where they remained for a full month. On 21 April, the tagged bird started its return migration, and was tracked near Pleiku, in southern Annam, east of Mondolkiri province.



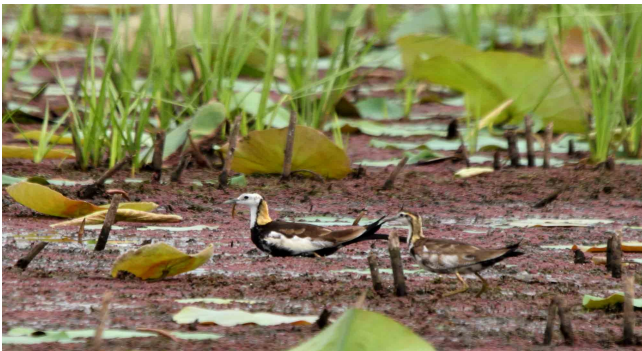


Common Hoopoe at Takeo, 8/4/2011 (Photo: Rob Overtoom)

A **Forest Wagtail** was at ease in a Takeo town garden on 23 March, and a pair of **Common Hoopoe** was mating there on 8 April (RO).

At Basset marshes, there were three **Zebra Doves** on 15 April (PI), and peak counts included over 100 **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas** on 9 April and 360+ **Cotton Pygmy-geese**, 20+ **Oriental Darters**, 5 **White-browed Crakes** and a record count of 250+ **Little Grebes** on 23 April (TDE, CP).

No less than 49 species were recorded during a morning visit to Boeng Veal Samnap on 29 April. Of interest were a single **White-browed Crake**, two **White-winged Terns** (and six along the Mekong), four **Chestnut Munias**, eleven **Spot-billed Pelicans**, six **Oriental Darters** and 'good numbers' of **Pheasant-tailed Jacanas**, some assuming breeding plumage (HN, AJ, AY).



Pheasant-tailed Jacanas (left) and Oriental Darter (right) at Boeng Veal Samnap, 29/4/2011 (Photos: Ashish John)

SOUTH-WEST

A **Dollarbird** was seen at Koh Rong Samloeng in early March (PI). A probable **White's Thrush** trapped and photographed on 24 March at Phnom Tumpuor, within Phnom Samkos WS (CS) is awaiting definite identification from experts. A male **Yellow-rumped Flycatcher** photographed at Rainbow Lodge (Koh Kong) on 1 April (GC) is the third country record, and also a first for the south-west .

Interesting shorebirds present on the Kampot river estuary included nine **Great Knots**, three **Ruddy Turnstones** and a single **Far Eastern Curlew** (a 3rd record for Cambodia) on 26 March. On 23-24 April, there were eight **Great Knots**, groups of two and of three **Grey-tailed Tattlers**, three **Bar-tailed Godwits**, six **Ruddy Turnstones** and the first two **Little Terns** of the year (all RO).

In the Prey Nup mangrove area, a single **Asian Dowitcher** was on mudflats at the Kompong Smach river mouth on 27 March (RO) – the third country record of this Near-Threatened species and the first since 1996.

TONLE SAP

Two **Black-headed Gulls** – an annual visitor in small numbers – and two **Gull-billed Terns** – a first inland record, were observed on the northern tip of Tonle Sap lake on 11 February (HN/SVC).

High numbers of **Eastern Marsh Harriers** – triple figures, and by far the largest documented flock of **Baya Weavers** – over 1000, were noted south of Krous Kraom on 3 February (JE). A **Long-tailed Shrike** at Krous Kraom on 18 February was a new record for the Tonle Sap floodplain, while four **Long-toed Stints** were the firsts from the Tonle Sap grasslands (HN/SVC). **Chestnut-eared Bunting** seems to have become a regular visitor to the Stoung grasslands in small numbers with three records this dry season: two birds at Wat Prohoot on 29 January (JE), a single there on 23 February and a single at Prolay on 11 March (HN/SVC).



Far Eastern Curlew at Kampot, 26/3/2011 (Photo: Rob Overtoom)

NORTH-WEST

An **Oriental Darter** and a flock of six **Chinese Sparrowhawks** visiting Angkor Wat on 10 February were nice sights. On 12 February, there was a great harvest of ducks at Ang Tropeang Thmor reservoir: five **Eurasian Wigeons** – the second recent record, 160 **Northern Pintails** – the highest country count, 5,000 **Garganeys** and 500 **Eurasian Teals**. Other noteworthy records there on the same day were four **White-browed Crakes**, four **Long-toed Stints** and one **Temminck's Stint**. Last but not least, a **Hen Harrier** (second recent record), and a single **Chestnut-eared Bunting** were both additions for the site, the latter being also the first record outside the Tonle Sap grasslands (all HN/SVC).

Two **Ruffs** were seen on the Tonle Sap floodplain near Siem Reap on 23 February (HN/SVC), a species rarely recorded and previously only known from Ang Tropeang Thmor in the north-west. On 27 March, a juvenile **Eastern Imperial Eagle** offered excellent flight views at Ang Tropeang Thmor (TDE, SS), where it is an occasional visitor. At Kbal Spean, a single **Jerdon's Baza** flew over the foothills on 10 March and night calls recorded mid-March (but regularly heard in the previous months) were identified as those of **Blyth's Frogmouth**, a first for the north-west; and the first **Blue-winged Pittas** were heard there on 17 April, only a day later than last year (all MH).

NORTH

Records of interest omitted in the previous review were an immature **Indian Spotted Eagle** on 31 January and a pair of **Pale-capped Pigeons** on 1 February at Thmat Bauey (JE). A pair of **Pale-capped Pigeons** was seen there again on 15 February, and a pair of **White-winged Ducks** was found at Tonle Lepeu on 16 February and another pair at O'Koki on 17 February. Three additions for the Northern Plains were made at O'Koki: singles of **Eastern Crowned Warbler** and **Sulphur-breasted Warbler** on 17 February and a single **Black-and-Red Broadbill** on 8 March (all HN/SVC). **Coral-billed Ground Cuckoo** was heard north of O'Koki on 9 March (HN/SVC). A mysterious black-headed **Trogon** was observed at Tropeang Pring, Chhep PF on 19 March (HR).

A **Himalayan Griffon** was at the Trapeang Krous vulture restaurant on 17 March with two there on 11 April (per SC). A juvenile **Brahminy Kite** photographed at Trapeang Krous on 7 April was an unusual record for the Northern Plains (EJA). Searches around last year's **Indian Spotted Eagle** nest site near Thnal village, Kompong Thom Province, were inconclusive. An unidentified eagle was found sitting on a nest in March in a new location nearby (and the nest guard reported two birds were sometimes present), but this nest was later abandoned (MH, SV). Confirmed photographs of one **Indian Spotted Eagle** were taken at the same general location on 9 April (JS, SV).

NORTH-EAST

At Kratie marsh on 3 February, **Streaked Weavers** perhaps numbered 1500 birds – a national record count – but there were only a single breeding-plumaged male and a couple of female **Asian Golden Weavers**, plus a male **Japanese Sparrowhawk** and two **Grey-headed Lapwings** (JE). Two **Grey-headed Lapwings** and seven **Asian Golden Weavers** were also present there on 22 February (HN/SVC).

The second study year of riverine-nesting birds took place from 31 January to 3 May in the complex Mekong channel habitat at the Kratie-Stung Treng provincial boundary. **Green Peafowl** and **White-shouldered Ibis** were recorded almost daily, while **Oriental Darter** was common after mid-March. Nests of **River Tern** (15), **Great Thick-knee** (2), **River Lapwing** (20), **Little Ringed Plover** (27) and **Small Pratincole** (88) were monitored. Breeding of other species of conservation concern such as **Brown Fish-owl**, **Buffy Fish-owl**, **Spotted Wood-owl** and **Grey-headed Fish-eagle** was confirmed. Breeding was also noted for a series of forest species through mist-netting (brood patch) and observations (nests, fledged juveniles), including a nest of **Chestnut-tailed Starling** found on 24 March, a species previously thought to be a winter visitor in Cambodia. A single **Grey-headed Lapwing** on 20 March, **Green Sandpiper** after mid-March, a single **Pacific Golden Plover** on 27 April and two **Eurasian Thick-knees** in late April-early May were noted on passage (all AC).

An impressive collection of raptors was recorded in Mondolkiri during the SVC super-tour on 20-22 February, namely an **Oriental Hobby** at Seima PF, three **Jerdon's Buzas** at Seima PF plus a pair at Dak Dam, **Mountain Hawk-Eagle** at Seima PF, **Besra** at both sites and **Himalayan Buzzard** at Seima PF – the latter two being first records for the province. Two **Chinese Francolins** at circa 800m on the road to Dak Dam on 21 February were at the highest altitude on record for Cambodia. Birding at Dak Dam on the same date also produced its typical set of restricted range species and/or national rarities (less than 10 records) such as the elusive **Speckled Piculet**, **Black-crowned Parrotbill**, a nesting pair of **Maroon Oriole**, **Ashy Bulbul**, **Grey-crowned Tits** and **White-cheeked Laughingthrushes**. Furthermore, a calling **Blue Pitta** was the second record from the province and the north-east while a single **Chestnut-flanked White-eye** – only a first for the north-east and the second recent record (the first since 1927 at Bokor being from Phnom Samkos WS in December 2010, eluding our review!). Last but not least, two **Rufous-capped Babblers** heard (and one seen) in the Dak Dam area, also on 21 February, were a first record for Cambodia, and the birds were located and one came into view again at the same site two weeks later (all HN/SVC).

In Seima PF, one **Spot-bellied Eagle Owl** was seen on 16 April (JS). **Orange-necked Partridge** continues to be heard quite regularly along two trails near the headquarters, often in response to playback, but there were only two visual contacts this season. One, on 22 April, was of an adult with two chicks (JS). At km 157 in Seima PF, there was a displaying pair of **Rufous-bellied Eagles** on 22 April, and a **Cinnamon Bittern** and a **Hooded Pitta** on 24 and 25 April respectively (MH).

The first **Scaly/White's Thrush** from the north-east and a **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** were at O'Katoh, southeast Phnom Prich WS on 28 March (TNEG). A **Black Eagle** was seen at Dak Dam on 15 March (SS).

On 10 March, a first-winter **Himalayan Griffon** visited the Western Siem Pang vulture restaurant site for about 5 minutes (per SC). On 14 March, either this or another first-winter **Himalayan Griffon** visited a dead cow at Veal Kreul perhaps 10 km distant (JoE¹).

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SC	Song Chansocheat
SS	Sanh Sophoan
SV	Son Virak
TDE	Tom Evans
TNEG	Tom Gray



The tentative **White's Thrush** caught in Phnom Samkos WS, 24/3/2011. (Photo: Chhin Sophea)

¹ Photos can be seen in Issue 37 of The Babbler, available online.