

CAMBODIA

Wednesday 22nd February – Thursday 8th March 2012
Extension to Malaysia 7th – 12th March 2012



Situated between Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia has only relatively recently opened up its borders after a long period of isolation to reveal its hidden treasures and some of the most unexpected avian delights in Asia. The most highly prized of these are the amazing and near-mythical Giant Ibis and the exceedingly rare White-shouldered Ibis. Both species are classified as critically endangered by Birdlife International with very restricted ranges and exceedingly small breeding populations. Our tour begins around the splendid Angkor Wat Temple which is undoubtedly one of the most awe-inspiring cultural sites in the world, as well as providing a good introduction to the local avifauna. In fact we have 3 nights at Siem Reap in order to explore two huge, internationally important wetlands.

Firstly we will visit the core reserve of Prek Toale on the Tonle Sap Great Lake and Ang Trapaeng Thmor for the multitude of waterbirds which include the much-wanted Milky Stork and Greater Adjutant. Then we drive to a secluded site in the north of the country at Tmatboey, visiting a very good site for Bengal Florican along the way. From our eco-lodge we'll look for the ibis in the dwindling forest pools, along with White-rumped Falcon, Spotted Wood-owl, Black-headed and Great Slaty Woodpeckers and Burmese Shrike amongst others. And then we visit the remote mixed evergreen Southern Annamitic Forest at Seima. This is a relatively new eco-tourist project where some nice trails give us the possibility of several species of partridge & woodpecker, whilst numerous fruiting trees attract a wide variety of other birds. We also take a boat ride along the Mekong River for the recently discovered Mekong Wagtail and we should also see Irrawaddy Dolphin.

The tour is run in collaboration with the Sam Veasna Centre who works closely with the Wildlife Conservation Society and local communities to promote wildlife conservation in Cambodia. Their main objective is to provide an alternative sustainable livelihood from ecotourism for the local communities at the birding sites which have resulted in a stop in hunting and land use, as well as a programme of environmental education at local schools. Part of the proceeds from this tour is donated for conservation projects.

TARGETS:

- Giant Ibis
- White-shouldered Ibis
- Bengal Florican
- White-rumped Falcon
- Neglected Nuthatch
- Orange-necked Partridge
- Germain's Peacock-pheasant
- Black Baza
- Bar-bellied Pitta
- Mekong Wagtail
- Pied Harrier
- Milky Stork
- Manchurian Reed-warbler
- Spotted Wood-owl
- Greater Adjutant
- Black-headed Woodpecker
- Great Slaty Woodpecker
- 1000's of waterbirds

Our Tour Itinerary:

Days 1 - 2 UK – Siem Reap – 22nd February

Overnight flight from UK to Siem Reap via Kuala Lumpur. Upon arrival we will transfer to a nearby hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 3 Siem Reap – 24th Feb

Following a morning arrival we will transfer to our lovely hotel on the outskirts of the city where we can relax and recover from our journey before heading out to catch our first sighting of the fabulous Angkor Wat temples.

Day 4 Angkor Wat



We will begin our exploration of this fascinating country with a visit to Angkor Great Park, site of the famous Angkor Wat Temple. In fact, over 200 temples can be seen here and their distinctive architecture ranks as one of the modern day wonders of the world. Apsara the Cambodian ministry responsible for the management and conservation of the temples has preserved at least some of the mature dry forest and in places allowed undergrowth to grow, which offers habitat for a variety of species, including Black Baza, Asian Barred Owlet, Coppersmith Barbet, raucous Red-breasted and Alexandrine Parakeets, Asian Paradise-flycatcher, Hainan Blue, Taiga and Asian Brown Flycatchers, Streak-eared Bulbul, White-throated and Blue Rock-thrushes, Forest Wagtail, Olive-

backed Pipit, Dusky Warbler, Greater Racquet-tailed Drongo, Ashy Minivet, Yellow-browed and Pale-legged Leaf-warblers, White-crested Laughingthrush and White-vented Myna. We will stay here to watch a magical sunset and maybe Brown Hawk-owl before visiting an excellent local restaurant for dinner. Night Siem Reap

Days 5 - 6 Prek Toal – Tonle Sap Great Lake – Ang Trapaeng Thmor

Originating as a reservoir on the Angkorian Highway, Ang Trapaeng Thmor was rebuilt as a man-made reservoir during the Khmer Rouge regime in 1976. The reservoir is now a Sarus Crane reserve administered by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) with over 300 of these magnificent birds congregating to feed in the dry season along

with another 198 recorded bird species, 18 of which are globally threatened. By February the dry season will be well underway and a few pairs of Black-necked Storks frequent the site along with many of the large water birds seen at Prek Toal, such as Black-headed Ibis, Milky and Painted Storks, Spot-billed Pelicans, Oriental Darters, Asian Openbills and both Greater and Lesser Adjutants. A few pairs of Bengal Floricans breed here during the dry months though it is wary and a treat rather than a certainty to see. Other grassland species here include Blue-breasted Quail, Oriental Skylark, Indochinese and Australasian Bushlarks, Richard's, Paddyfield and Red-throated Pipits, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Oriental Reed-warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Red Avadavat. Other species here include Black-crowned Night-heron, Yellow,



Cinnamon and Black Bitterns, Little Heron, Watercock, thousands of wildfowl including Cotton Pygmy-goose and Comb Duck, Bronze-winged and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Black Kite, Eastern Marsh and Pied Harriers, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Yellow-vented Bulbul, Plain-backed Sparrow and Black-collared Starling. Numerous waders, rails and shorebirds can be found in the marshy belts of aquatic habitat, and the critically endangered Eld's Deer can usually be seen here as well. The conservation contribution or entrance fee is used for local development and conservation projects such as nest protection and a 'rice bank' which provides an insurance of this staple food for the local community in case of rice crop failure.



We also visit the Core Bird Reserve of Prek Toal on the Tonle Sap Great Lake close to Prek Toal floating village, where we should get superb views of Greater Adjutant and the large water bird colonies. The Tonle Sap is the largest natural lake in South East Asia, fed by the phenomenal annual backflow of water from the Mekong River. Situated in the north-west corner of the lake, Prek Toal core bird reserve is home to the largest breeding colonies of water birds in South-east Asia. The reserve covers 22,000 hectares of seasonally flooded forest where only the tallest trees stand proud of the lake during the annual flood, providing a habitat for cormorants, pelicans, storks, and many other birds to roost and nest. The village of Prek Toal, adjacent to the reserve floats at the river mouth of the Sangke River

where it flows into the lake. Every house is built on a platform of bamboo and moves according to the water level throughout the year. Schools, local restaurants, a church, even vegetable patches, pig-pens and crocodile farms all float. In Cambodia and throughout south-east Asia, this site is unmatched for the number and population of endangered water birds it supports during the dry season. Large numbers of cormorants, storks and pelicans are virtually guaranteed from January to May along with herons, egrets and terns. The sanctuary harbours seven species of global conservation significance: Spot-billed Pelican, Milky and Painted Storks, Lesser



Adjutant, Greater Adjutant, Black-headed Ibis and Oriental Darter, and has a globally significant population of Grey-headed Fish-eagle. Since the Core Reserve was declared in 2002 and came under the protection of the Ministry of Environment as advised by WCS, the numbers of all the above species have increased.

We will travel by boat to Prek Toal and depending on water levels the boat journey cuts through the flooded scrub surrounding Chong Khneas and a small band of primary forest lining the lake where the boat moors for breakfast. Upon arrival we will transfer to a local boat, which is part of an initiative to help spread income from eco-tourism to the local village economy, and heads off into the core reserve to an observation platform next to a bird colony. We'll probably have a picnic lunch here to maximise our birding time and enjoy the noise and clamour of this magnificent spectacle for several hours. Nights Siem Reap.

Day 7 Florican Grasslands - Tmatboey



The critically endangered Bengal Florican and many other waterbirds can be found in the grasslands around the Tonle Sap Lake. The Wildlife Conservation Society has worked with local communities to set up Integrated Farming and Biodiversity Areas (IFBAs) to conserve prime florican habitats and birdwatching trips give an income to the villagers who in return monitor the birds' movements which will greatly aid us in finding them! The peak display time is shortly after dawn so we'll need to be up early to give ourselves the best chance of observing this very special bird. If we haven't seen one already, then we'll make a special effort to find Manchurian Reed Warbler as well. Other species to keep an eye out for include Greater Spotted and Eastern Imperial Eagles which winter in the area and feed on the abundant rodents. There are also large numbers of Eastern Marsh Harriers and smaller number of Pied Harriers wintering in the area,

along with a few Black Kites, Peregrines and numerous resident Brahminy Kites. We may well come across Small Buttonquail or a skulking Lanceolated Warbler if we are lucky! Night at Tmatboey Eco-Lodge.

Days 8 – 9 Tmatboey

Tmatboey is a remote Khmer village of 220 families situated in the centre of the Northern Plains of Cambodia, within the Khulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, the country's largest protected area. The Tmatboey Ibis Site is a conservation project set up by the Wildlife Conservation Society together with the Cambodian Government and Tmatboey village. Once it was realised that the site had potential for birdwatching tourism a local committee was elected which built the guest accommodation and with training from SVC provides the services for the birdwatching groups that visit. In return for the income that this brings, the villagers have signed no hunting and land conversion agreements. The Eco-Lodge is comprised of a central recreational thatched building and 4 surrounding bungalows each with 2 double ensuite rooms with solar powered electricity. The accommodation is basic but comfortable.

Tmatboey is one of only two known nesting sites in Asia for Giant Ibis which use large trees in the forest away from the village, whilst White-shouldered Ibis are found closer to the village where they are reliant on the grassland clearings amongst the dipterocarp forest. So after we



have settled in to our accommodation we can take a short walk through the open forest to where the White-shouldered Ibis usually comes to roost at sunset. But we will have to drive to an even more secluded location before dawn to search for Giant Ibis.



Numerous other species are present including Chinese Francolin, Woolly-necked Stork, Greater Spotted Eagle, Grey-headed Fish-eagle, Rufous-winged Buzzard, the scarce White-rumped Falcon, Brown Fish-owl, Spotted and Brown Wood-owls, Collared and Oriental Scops-owls, Savannah Nightjar, Pale-capped Pigeon, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Great Slaty, White-bellied, Black-headed, Spot-breasted and Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers, Blossom-headed and Red-breasted Parakeets, Neglected Nuthatch (a recent split from Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch), Burmese Shrike, Black-hooded and Black-naped Orioles, Stripe-throated and Sooty-headed Bulbuls, Scarlet-backed and Thick-billed Flowerpeckers, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Common and Large Woodshrikes, Indochinese and Large Cuckooshrikes, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Lesser-

necklaced Laughingthrush, Brown Prinia, Radde's, Two-barred and Yellow-browed Warblers, Racket-tailed and Rufous Treepies, Hair-crested Drongo, Vinous-breasted and White-shouldered Starlings, and Red-billed Blue Magpie. Nights at Tmatboey Eco-Lodge

Day 10 Tmatboey – Kompong Thom

We will have to leave this wonderful area this morning and begin our journey to Kompong Thom, which should allow for some bird watching en-route at the Tonle Sap Grasslands for any species we may still need. Night at Kompong Thom.

Days 11 - 12 Kompong Thom – Seima Protected Forest

We will spend the early morning searching for grassland specialists on the flood plains near Kompong Thom, including Bluethroat, Siberian Rubythroat, Eastern Grey-headed Wagtail, Bright-headed Cisticola, Striated Grassbird, Manchurian and Black-browed Reed-warblers and Yellow-breasted Bunting amongst others. Then we will cross the Mekong River and head to Seima Protected Forest where we should arrive in plenty of time to take our first walk in the mixed evergreen Southern Annamitic Forest.



Seima Protected Forest is the most recent addition to the Cambodian birding circuit and the eco-tourist project is in its infancy but the aim is again to follow the successful model at Tmatboey, in effect trading the benefits of ecotourism for conservation agreements from the local communities. The forest is home to a great variety of habitats with bamboo, evergreen and dry dipterocarp predominating and this reflects on the superb variety of birds present. A new trail has recently begun offering lucky observers views of Germain's Peacock-pheasant, both Scaly-breasted and Orange-breasted Partridges, Red-vented Barbet, Grey-faced Tit-babbler and White-browed Scimitar-babbler, whilst Green Peafowl, Banded Broadbill, both Bar-bellied and

Blue-rumped Pittas and Pin-tailed Parrotfinch are all possible. The rare Orange-necked Partridge is also present but exceedingly hard to locate at present. Cambodia maybe the best place in the world for woodpeckers, with up to 16

species present here such as Great Slaty, White-bellied, Pale-headed, Heart-spotted and Black-and-buff Woodpeckers. The presence of fruiting trees draws in Thick-billed Green-pigeon, Red-vented Barbet, Crimson, Ruby-cheeked and Olive-backed Sunbirds, Great Iora, and both Common Hill and Gold-crested Myna's. During our exploration of this underwatched site we are sure to come across a few surprises! This forest is also home to the largest population of Black-shanked Douc in the world, along with Northern Pig-tailed and Long-tailed Macaques and Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbon. One evening we can take a night drive as there is the possibility of finding mammals such as Common Palm and Small-toothed Civets, Giant Flying Squirrel, Lesser Oriental Chevrotain and Pygmy Loris. Nights at Seima Forest Lodge.

Day 13 Seima Protected Forest – Kratie – Mekong River



After birding along the trails around Keo Seima in the morning we will make our way to Kratie. Along the way we will stop at some pools where Irrawaddy Dolphin can be seen from a boat, as well as the recently discovered Mekong Wagtail. The river habitat is under threat from Chinese dams already constructed and proposed dams in Laos and Cambodia which if constructed will mean the dolphin along with other riverine bird species will become extirpated from Cambodia. Night in Kratie.

Day 14 Kratie – Phnom Penh

Early morning birding should allow Asian Golden and Streaked Weavers to be found before setting off on the journey back to Phnom Penh. Night at Phnom Penh.

Day 15 Phnom Penh – UK – End of Tour - 8th March

In the morning we will transfer to the airport and catch our return flight back to the UK where we will arrive on Day 16.

MALAYSIA EXTENSION: 7th – 12th March

If continuing with the extension we will fly to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and head to Kuala Selangor, situated along the coast for an overnight stay. After checking into our hotel we will have some time to relax before venturing into this excellent area during the late afternoon. Here we will continue our woodpecker quest with Common Flameback, Sunda Pygmy and Laced Woodpeckers all seen regularly. There is a colony of Grey, Purple and Black-crowned Night-herons present, and we should also see Ashy Tailorbird fairly easily as well. If we are lucky then some night birding may produce Buffy Fish-owl as well.

Days 16 - 18 Kuala Selangor – Fraser's Hill

We will return to the park this morning and key in on Mangrove Pitta and Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, both of which are quite tricky species to see! And then we will head up into the hills, to the fabulous Fraser's Hill, just a couple of hour's drive away. During the next few days we will have plenty of time to explore the numerous trails around the attractive former hill station of Fraser's Hill. Set amidst mature broadleaved



evergreen forest at around 1000m this is a wonderful area of forested hills that stretch to the horizon. Our birding will usually be done from well marked trails or from the road which enables pretty decent viewing conditions to sift through the numerous mixed feeding flocks that occur. As always we will target the special birds which here include Mountain Peacock-pheasant, Malaysian Partridge, Bushy-crested and Rhinoceros Hornbills, the endemic Malayan Whistling-thrush, Malayan and Black Laughingthrushes, Fire-tufted Barbet, Rusty-naped Pitta, Black-



and-Crimson Oriole, Javan Cuckooshrike, Rufous-browed Flycatcher, Blue Nuthatch, Collared Babbler and Marbled Wren-babbler. A huge variety of other species are possible here and include an interesting mix of Himalayan and distinctly tropical species including Blyth's Hawk-eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle, Black-thighed Falconet, Green-billed Malkoha, Mountain Imperial-pigeon, Yellow-vented Green-pigeon, Little Cuckoo-dove, Sunda Cuckoo, Collared Owlet, Glossy Swiftlet, Whiskered Treeswift, Helmeted and Wreathed Hornbills, Orange-breasted and Red-headed Trogons, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Speckled Piculet, Buff-rumped, Checker-throated, Bamboo and Bay Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Yellownapes, Black-browed and Gold-whiskered Barbets, Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbills, Pale Blue, Hill Blue and Little Pied Flycatchers, Large Niltava, White-tailed Robin, Lesser Shortwing, Grey-chinned Minivet, Ochraceous, Black-crested and Mountain Bulbuls, Greater and Lesser Racket-

tailed Drongos, Sultan Tit, Himalayan Cutia, Pygmy and Streaked Wren-babblers, Large Scimitar-babbler, Buff-breasted Babbler, Grey-throated, Collared and Golden Babblers, Streaked and Pygmy Wren-babblers, Chestnut-capped and Black Laughingthrushes, Silver-eared Mesia, White-browed and Black-eared Shrike-babblers, Blue-winged Minla, Mountain Fulvetta, White-bellied Erpornis, Long-tailed Sibia, Slaty-backed Forktail, Yellow-bellied and Mountain Leaf-warblers, Mountain Tailorbird, Everett's White-eye, Black-throated Sunbird, Black-and-Crimson Oriole, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Streaked Spiderhunter and Green Magpie.

Day 19 Fraser's Hill – Kuala Lumpur

After some final birding here this morning we will return to Kuala Lumpur for an afternoon flight back to UK.

Day 20 Kuala Lumpur – UK – End of Tour – 12th March

Morning arrival in UK and the conclusion of the tour.

Leaders: Nick Bray and local guides.

Ground Price: £2295.00 Siem Reap/Phnom Penh

Extension Price: £375.00 Kuala Lumpur/Kuala Lumpur

Airfare: £675.00 (approx) UK/UK

Single supplement Main Tour: £175.00 – note single rooms may not be available at Tmatboey or Seima

Single supplement Extension: £75.00 .

Deposit: £400.00

Group size: Minimum for tour to go ahead 4 and maximum of 10 with 2 leaders.

Included in cost: All meals, accommodation in twin rooms en-suite (except Seima), bottled drinking water, all ground transport throughout the tour, boat rides, all reserve entrance fees, conservation donation to protected sites, and services of the local guides and leaders.

Not included: International flights, insurance, visa fee, drinks, camera fees at National Parks, tips, and items of a personal nature. Dinners during extension.

Accommodation: Ranges from good to quite basic. In Siem Reap the hotel is of a good Boutique-style standard. The eco-lodge at Tmatboey has en-suite facilities and at Seima bathroom facilities are shared – both are relatively basic but clean. We are using the best accommodation available closest to the birding sites to utilise our time to best effect.

Tour Code: This is a relatively standard tour where early starts and some late finishes when owling can be expected. Usually there is some time off during the middle of the day to relax. Most of our birding walks will be of a usual slow pace and relatively easy, and there are some long drives involved. The weather is usually warm to hot at this time of year and rain is unlikely.



**ZOOTHERA GLOBAL BIRDING Ltd,
19 Tudor Close, Paignton, Devon. TQ4 7RF
Tel: 01803 431765
e-mail: info@zooterabirding.com
www.zooterabirding.com**

