

# CAMBODIA BIRD NEWS

ព័ត៌មានអំពីសត្វល្អិតសត្វល្អិនសត្វល្អិតសត្វល្អិន

n°6 - Dec 2000 - អង្គការសត្វល្អិតសត្វល្អិនសត្វល្អិតសត្វល្អិន - In English - En français

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# Editorial វិចារណាភត



A captive Buffy Fish Owl  
in Sre Khlong  
wildlife market

## CAMBODIA BIRD NEWS

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Jails are places for criminals.

Zoos in Cambodia are prisons for animals. But what crime did they commit? None, they just had the bad luck of encountering the most dangerous species on earth: Man, who captured them for money.

មោឃកូនទៅណែលសត្វស្រុកខ្មែរ.....សត្វក្នុងគ្រុឌ Who are those unfortunate animals? How many are there? Where are they shown? What is their fate? These are a few questions that CBN attempts to answer on the basis of data collected across the country during fourteen months. The study on captive wildlife clearly demonstrates that, as zoos continue to mushroom, their detrimental impact on Cambodia's threatened wildlife heritage shouldn't be ignored.

Hunted, poached, traded like goods and now also dying in zoos, wildlife continues to suffer from man in Cambodia. Human beings are thinking animals. This gives them an unlimited power over all other living creatures on earth. This also means Man is responsible for his acts and behavior towards all other animals, his brothers and sisters of life.

We have the power, but we decide the use we make of it, between shame and dignity. Exploiting wildlife for profit, imprisoning animals for our pleasure, making animals die in captivity because of our negligence or incompetence deeply dishonours the human race.

It is only in fully respecting others, including other species, that Man deserves dignity. Buddhism advocates for the respect of all forms of life. Doesn't the word respect imply more than just refrain from killing? Shouldn't it also encompass the respect for the integrity and freedom of wild animals? Until that day, as a writer rightly pointed it, our species is the missing link between the ape and a truly human being.

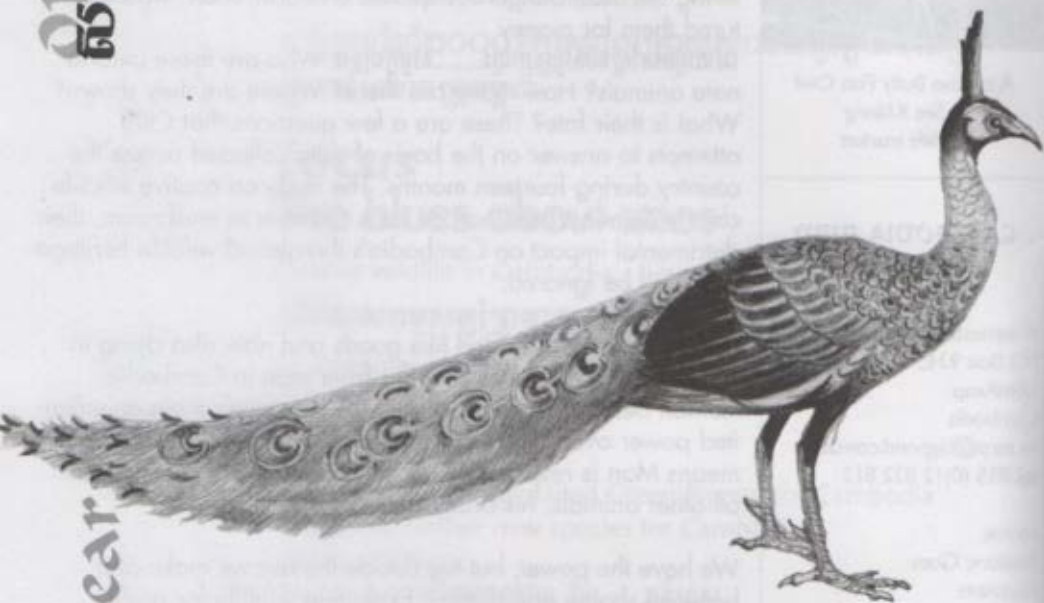
Frederic Goes, Siem Reap - 4 January 2001

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# Cambodia: the last chance for the green peafowl?

BY Tan Setha, Frédéric Goes and Pete Davidson



the birds of the year

**T**HE GREEN PEAFOWL *Pavo muticus* is a bird which has always fascinated man by its beauty and its extraordinary 1000-eyes fanning tail. Unfortunately, its large size combined with its attractive dress are the very reason for its current predicament: hunting for food and for trade of its tail feathers are driving the species to global extinction in the wild. This majestic bird was formerly abundant in Cambodia and ancient Khmer carved it on

the temples of Angkor. Although now extirpated from large parts of the country, important populations discovered this year in Mondolkiri and Preah Vihear confirm that Cambodia is probably the last stronghold for the species in the world. It is to highlight both these recent findings and the importance of Cambodia for the species survival that we chose the Green Peafowl as the bird of the year 2000.

**T**HE GREEN PEAFOWL is a large terrestrial bird with glossy dark green plumage and a tall, erect crest. The male has an extraordinary tail, or train, actually formed by its greatly elongated upper-tail covert feathers, measuring one and half metres - twice as long as his body. Formerly abundant across much of Southeast Asia, occurring from north-east India to Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia (Java), the Green Peafowl has undergone a widespread and serious decline in the last few decades and is classified as Globally Threatened - Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2000). Information on the current status of Green Peafowl across its historical range is patchy, but a recent review paints a bleak picture (McGowan et al. 1998). It is now considered to be absent from most former sites in the region, with a global population numbering just 5,000-10,000 birds (Birdlife International in prep.).

### **Ecology: habitat use and behavior**

The Cambodian Bird of the Year shows a marked preference for open forest habitat and forest fringes along rivers or near ponds (Brickle *et al.* 1998). It is primarily associated with lowlands although it can be found up to 915 meters in Southeast Asia (Robson 2000). The dry deciduous forests with grassy understoreys found across large areas of northern and eastern Cambodia provide an ideal habitat for the species. The Peafowl is omnivorous, feeding mostly on grains, seeds, shoots, buds, leaves, fruits, insects and even frogs

and lizards. It is often found in small parties, foraging for food in the early morning and late afternoon. It is wary and usually prefers to run away rather than fly to flee an approaching human. It has the habit of roosting on large trees early in the evening and calling just after going to roost and again prior to descending at dawn. This characteristic behaviour renders the species easy to locate and hunt (Birdlife International in prep.).

### **Life history**

From late February until April, the males start to give their loud, unmistakable "kan gnoak" territorial call to attract the females. March, the peak calling season, is the best period to survey this shy and otherwise secretive species. Populations can be estimated by counting the number of calling males. Mating is preceded by the courtship show of the male: drooping his wings and exposing his rufous flight feathers, he displays his magnificent tail and struts around the female. The female usually lays four or five eggs in a simple nest scrape on the ground, either in tall grass or under cover of bushes. The incubation period lasts about 30 days and the chicks leave the nest soon after hatching, thereafter being cared for by the female only (Birdlife International in prep.).

### **A very precarious survival**

Extinct in Malaysia, and almost so in northeast India and Bangladesh, the Green Peafowl is seriously threatened throughout the rest of its range with the largest populations thought to remain in Indochina. In Thailand, it

## Recent records of Green Peafowl in Cambodia

Date	No	Habitat	Location	Source
<b>S o u t h w e s t</b>				
Jan 1998	1 (heard)	Dry dipterocarp	Lower slopes of Kirirom NP	Goes et al 1998
Feb 1998	1 (heard)	Degraded forest	Teuk Chou river, Bokor NP.	Goes et al. 1998
April 1998	2 chicks	Degraded forest mosaic	Svay village, West Bokor NP.	Goes et al. 1998
March 2000	1 F?	Dry dipterocarp	South of Pursat	Daltry & Momberg 2000
22/8/2000	6	Dry dipterocarp	Sre Ambel river, Samling in Koh Kong prov.	B. Stuart and S. Platt verbally
<b>N o r t h e a s t</b>				
[1994??]	2 or 3	Mekong river	Kratie-Stung Treng border	L.Forsythe, in litt.
May 1996	7 of 11 days	Dry dipterocarp?	Northeast Mondolkiri	Desay and Lic Vuthy 1996
Jan 1997	(2)	(Dry dipterocarp)	Lumphat, Ratanakiri prov.	Duckworth and Hedges 1998
5-6/2000	'several'	Mixed deciduous/dry dipterocarp	Phnom Prich northeast MDK	Timmins in prep.
18/3/2000	1 male	Dry dipterocarp	Keo Seima, Southern MDK	Tan and Pich
30/4/2000	1F+2-4 ch	Dry dipterocarp	Keo Seima, southern MDK	Tan and Pich
30/4/2000	1F +1 F	Grassy clearing	Keo.Seima, southern MDK	Tan and Pich
April 2000	(1 adult) (2 chicks)	(Dry dipterocarp)	Keo.Seima, southern MDK	Tan and Pich
2/5/2000	3 F	Edge of SE forest	Snoul WS, Kratie province	Tan and Pich
5/11/2000	6	Dry dipterocarp	Snoul WS, Kratie province	Roubeix in litt.
<b>N o r t h</b>				
May 1999	(1M+ 1F)	(Dry dipterocarp)	From Chum Ksan, Preah Vihear	Goes 1999
May 2000?	1	Dry dipterocarp	Roadside, Svay Leu, Siem Reap	Goes 2000
Dec. 2000	Min. of 11 birds	Mixed deciduous/dry dipterocarp	Chep, Chum Ksan and Kulen districts, Preah Vihear	WCS Surveys

Note: Brackets signal captive birds, the habitat type where they were presumably caught

MDK = Mondolkiri province / SE forest = Semi-evergreen forest



probably patchily distributed and likely to be highly threatened by human persecution.

**Northeast: a potential world stronghold**

Until this year, there has been limited information on the species status in the northeast. It was frequently recorded during a mammal survey of north-eastern Mondolkiri province in 1996 and captives were seen in a district of Ratanakiri province in 1997. However, no evidence other than local reports of the species was found during a survey of the Sesan and Srepok river valleys in Ratanakiri in May-June 1998 (Timmins and Men Soriyun 1998).

In 2000, local people reported that peafowls are easy to see by vehicle (often in double figures) along the road from the provincial capital to the northern district of Khonyek (Timmins in prep.), and several were seen in a wide-ranging survey of the area. In southern Mondolkiri province and adjacent Snoul Wildlife Sanctuary, Kratie province, a Wildlife Conservation Society bird survey recorded a minimum of nine birds from four encounters between March and early May 2000. In addition, local reports indicate that peafowls are still widespread and locally common in much of the area. The region appears to support

a substantial population of Green Peafowl and could potentially hold the largest remaining contiguous population of the species remaining in the world, when combined with that in Dak Lak province, Vietnam (Tan Setha and Pich Bunnat 2000). A wide-ranging calling count survey and assessment of threats are planned for these areas in February-March 2001, to provide a clearer picture of the species' status and distribution.

**North: an important gap to fill**

The status and significance of the population in the extensive dry forest covering northern Cambodia remains largely unknown. Several captive birds and incidental reports from the Preah Vihear, Siem Reap and Kompong Thom provinces suggested that it may be a stronghold for the species. Several records were obtained during WCS surveys in Preah Vihear in December 2000, further reinforcing this supposition. The area will be a high priority for further surveys in order to complete the current picture of Green Peafowl populations in Cambodia and assess threats to their survival.

## Threats to Green Peafowl

The biggest threats to Green Peafowl in Cambodia are considered to be from direct human exploitation through hunting birds for food and trade. In Mondolkiri, where the species is clearly declining, sets of tail feathers, transportation of live birds, and chicks for sale were witnessed, highlighting high level of persecution (Tan Setha and Pich Bunnat 2000). The population of the northern provinces is also likely to be seriously threatened as an intensive trade of peafowl tails was observed at the Thai border in 1996 (Garvan O'Keeffe, verbally). The apparent preference birds show for lowland riverine forest and adjacent open forest often brings them into direct contact with humans in their favoured habitats. As such, direct exploitation by people is to be regarded as the main reason for the extinction of Green Peafowl from large tracts of remaining suitable habitat (Birdlife International in prep.).

## Give a future to Green Peafowl in Cambodia

Recent data collected this year goes some way to confirming that Cambodia probably still holds the largest and the healthiest populations of Green Peafowl in the world. However, the species is clearly declining everywhere in the country due to human persecution. To save the species from national extinction requires real commitment from all players and decision-makers. Enforcement of hunting bans and wildlife laws, and monitoring of human access and other activities

need to be implemented on-the-ground within key sites such as the Samling's logging concession and Snoul WS. Also, and perhaps as important, is to launch a national awareness campaign through the media to inform Cambodians about their Peafowl heritage and the threats that must be addressed to ensure it has future. Emphasis should be placed on the trade of 'train' feathers. Cambodians should be more aware that his and her natural heritage is also a kind of richness, and that through responsible behaviour, they can help save the threatened wildlife of their country, ensuring that the Peafowl carved on the wall of the Bayon by ancient Khmers continue to be seen alive and free in the forests of Cambodia for the happiness and delight of our children and grand-children.





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# បក្សីប្រចាំឆ្នាំ២០០០ ឱកាសចូលក្រោយសំរាប់

## សត្វក្រោកមាណក្នុងព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

រៀបរៀងដោយ លោក ពាន់ សេដ្ឋា



សត្វក្រោកជាបក្សីមួយប្រភេទដែលមានរូបរាងល្អ ឆើតដោយសារសម្រស់ និង កន្ទុយរាងដូចដូងដែល មានរាងជាភ្នែកមួយពាន់នៅពិលើខ្នងធម្មតា ។ ប៉ុន្តែ គួរអោយស្តាយដោយសារសម្រស់របស់វាបាន ធ្វើអោយសត្វប្រភេទនេះទទួលរងនូវការបំផ្លិច បំផ្លាញយ៉ាងធ្ងន់ធ្ងរជាពិសេសការបរាញ់យកធ្វើម្ហូប និង យករោមស្លាបកន្ទុយ និង ការចិញ្ចឹមជូញដូរ សត្វរស់ ។ បញ្ហាទាំងនេះហើយដែលបណ្តាល អោយប្រភេទក្រោកស្ទើរតែផុតពូជទាំងស្រុងពីក្នុង ព្រៃ ។ រហយង់ច្រើនសន្និកសន្ទាប់នៃប្រភេទសត្វ ក្រោកកាលពីអតីតកាលត្រូវបានកត់នៅប្រទេស កម្ពុជា ហើយបុព្វបុរសខ្មែរសម័យដើមក៏បានឆ្លាក់រូប ក្រោកលើជញ្ជាំងប្រាសាទអង្គរផងដែរ ។ សូម្បី តែបច្ចុប្បន្នប្រភេទក្រោកត្រូវបានផុតពូជពីតំបន់មួយ ចំនួនធំនៅប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ។ រហយង់ច្រើននៃ ប្រភេទនេះ ត្រូវបានរកឃើញក្នុងឆ្នាំនេះក្នុងខេត្ត មណ្ឌលគីរីដែលបញ្ជាក់អោយឃើញថា ប្រទេសកម្ពុជាអាចជាតំបន់ការពារសត្វចុងក្រោយ ក្នុងពិភពលោក ។ ដោយសារការរកឃើញ និង សារៈសំខាន់យ៉ាងខ្លាំងរបស់វាដែលប្រទេស កម្ពុជាត្រូវធ្វើការស្រាវជ្រាវស្រង់ជីវិតសត្វទាំងនេះឡើង វិញទើបយើងជ្រើសរើសប្រភេទក្រោកនេះជាបក្សី ប្រចាំឆ្នាំ ២០០០ ។