

BIRDWATCHING-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE SEIMA PROTECTION FOREST: YEAR ONE REVIEW

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Overview

This document reviews the success of the first year of ecotourism activities in the Seima Protection Forest (SPF), Mondulkiri¹. The document outlines the model that is being applied, and compares success against the objectives that were developed in 2008. Lessons learned are outlined and targets set for the second year of implementation

Bird-based ecotourism was trialled successfully in early 2009, five groups totalling 22 international visitors came and each spent 2-3 days at the site, and expressing satisfaction at observing many rare and special bird (and other) species. \$270 was paid in direct fees to newly trained village guides etc, and \$660 was collected in levies for the community conservation fund (to be spent on development projects chosen by the village committees).

One significant change from the plan was that tourists stayed in FA accommodation at the Km164 ranger station in the core area of the SPF. This proved successful and will be repeated in 2010. The longer term plan to build dedicated tourist accommodation at another location remains. Tourists were generally satisfied with the birdwatching experience, but no Orange-necked Partridges were seen in 2009. It is not clear why this was the case, but it should be noted that no groups made a dedicated effort to locate the partridge and all were more keen on seeing a range of species.

Community involvement was better than anticipated. Five local guides began training and assisted with various aspects of the tours. Expectations of the communities must, however, be carefully managed so as not to produce unrealistic expectations of the benefits from the project.

In year two there will be continued capacity building for SVC guides and community members. In addition, based on the success of this pilot year, the potential for replicating the model in other villages in the SPF will be evaluated.

របាយការណ៍សង្ខេប

របាយការណ៍នៃឯកសារនេះ គឺជាការជោគជ័យនៃសកម្មភាពអនុវត្តន៍អេកូទេសចរណ៍នៅឆ្នាំដំបូងក្នុងតំបន់ព្រៃការពារសិមា ខេត្តមណ្ឌលគីរី ។ លទ្ធផលរបាយការណ៍នេះជាកំរិតដែលនឹងអនុវត្តន៍ ព្រមទាំងប្រៀបធៀបនៃការជោគជ័យហើយឆ្លុះបញ្ចាំងពីគោលបំណង ដែលបានអនុវត្តន៍ឆ្នាំ ២០០៨ ។ មេរៀនបទពិសោធន៍គឺជាគោលដៅនិងទិសដៅសម្រាប់យកមកអនុវត្តន៍នៅឆ្នាំទីពីរបន្តទៀត ។

ទីតាំងអេកូទេសចរណ៍មើលសត្វស្លាប ត្រូវបានត្រាយផ្លូវដោយរួចរាល់នាចុងឆ្នាំ ២០០៩នេះ និងមានភ្ញៀវអន្តរជាតិមកទស្សនាចំនួន ២២ នាក់ ដែលចំណាយពេលពី២ទៅ៣ថ្ងៃ ហើយពួកគាត់បានសំដែងនូវសេចក្តីសោមនស្សរីករាយជាទីបំផុត ដែលសង្កេតមើលឃើញប្រភេទសត្វស្លាបដឹកម្រនិងប្រភេទសត្វស្លាបជាច្រើនផ្សេងៗទៀត ។ ទឹកប្រាក់ចំនួន ២៧០ ដុល្លារអាមេរិក ត្រូវបានបង់ជូនដោយផ្ទាល់ដល់អ្នកនាំផ្លូវដែលមកពីភូមិស្រែស្ទឹង និងទឹកប្រាក់ចំនួន ៦៦០ ដុល្លារអាមេរិក ចំណាយសម្រាប់គម្រោងអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ភូមិ ដែលនឹងត្រូវជ្រើសរើសដោយគណៈកម្មាធិការសហគមន៍ខ្លួនឯង ។

ទីកន្លែងសំខាន់មួយទៀត គឺផែនការផ្លាស់ប្តូរដោយឱ្យអ្នកទេសចរណ៍ស្នាក់នៅរដ្ឋបាលព្រៃឈើនៃផ្លូវគីឡូម៉ែត្រ

¹ The SPF was declared by sub-decree # 143 on 7th August 2009. The area was formerly known as the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area (SBCA).

១៦៤ ដែលជាចំណុចកណ្តាលតំបន់ព្រៃការពារសីមា ។ សឱ្យឃើញនៃភាពជោគជ័យនេះ នឹងអនុវត្តន៍បន្តម្តងទៀតនៅឆ្នាំ ២០១០ ។ ផែនការរយៈពេលវែង គឺដើម្បីសាងសង់ផ្ទះស្នាក់សម្រាប់អ្នកទេសចរណ៍ នៅកន្លែងណាដែលសេសសល់ ។ ជាទូទៅអ្នកទេសចរណ៍សប្បាយរីករាយជាមួយនឹងបទពិសោធន៍មើលសត្វ ប៉ុន្តែគួរឱ្យសោកស្តាយដែលមិនឃើញសត្វទាទ្រូង ឈ្លើង នៅឆ្នាំ២០០៩ ។ វាមិនទាន់ច្បាស់ថា មកពីមូលហេតុអ្វីទេក្នុងករណីនេះ ប៉ុន្តែសូមកត់សម្គាល់ថា ពុំមានក្រុមណាមួយខិតខំប្រឹងប្រែងស្វែងរកប្រភេទសត្វស្លាបទា និង ប្រភេទអំបូរ សត្វជាច្រើនផ្សេងៗទៀតទេ ។

ទាក់ទិននឹងសហគមន៍វិញ គឺប្រសើរជាងការគិត ដែលមានក្រុមនាំភ្ញៀវចំនួន៥នាក់ ចាប់ផ្តើមបណ្តុះបណ្តាល និងបានជួយលើដំនើរការសម្រាប់ទេសចរណ៍រួចរាល់ជាច្រើនចំនុច ។ យើងត្រូវគ្រប់គ្រងដោយប្រុងប្រយ័ត្នលើការរំពឹងទុក របស់សហគមន៍ ដើម្បីកាត់បន្ថយពីការរំពឹងទុកមិនប្រាកដ នៃផលចំណេញពីគម្រោងនេះ ។

នៅឆ្នាំទីពីរ នឹងបន្តកសាងសមត្ថភាពចំពោះក្រុមនាំភ្ញៀវមជ្ឈមណ្ឌលសមវាសនា និង សមាជិកសហគមន៍ ។ ដោយបន្ថែមផងដែរថា មូលដ្ឋានលើបទពិសោធន៍ឆ្នាំនេះ គឺជាសក្តានុពលសម្រាប់គាំទ្រភូមិផ្សេងៗទៀត នៅតំបន់ព្រៃ ការពារសីមា ដែលនឹងត្រូវបានសិក្សាវាយតម្លៃនោះ ។

Introduction

The SPF is a Forestry Administration managed protected areas in eastern Cambodia. The area is managed to combine biodiversity conservation with the maintenance of local livelihoods. The SPF consists of a Core Protection Forest which is the focus of activities to conserve biodiversity, and Buffer Protection Forest areas, where suitable development activities can occur². In the Core Protection Forest area small-scale livelihood support activities, such as securing tenure, agricultural extension, and water supply improvements are being carried out. The project design envisions larger-scale activities in the Buffer Protection Forest areas. These activities should assist poverty alleviation in remote rural communities, but will not significantly impact on the biodiversity, social and cultural values of the area.

Poverty levels in most of the villages in the SPF are high. Villagers suffer from food insecurity and are highly dependent on forest products for cash income. Low-volume, high margin tourism has the potential to provide significant income to some villages in the SPF. The increased income will reduce the dependency on forest products and linking financial incentives directly to healthy populations will reduce pressure on key wildlife species.

The model being piloted in the SPF is designed to provide livelihood alternatives to small impoverished villages in the conservation area. Given the nature of the SPF, dense forest with low densities of elusive wildlife, it is unlikely that the site is suitable for the high volumes of tourists that are needed for tourism become a source of sustainable financing of the SPF.

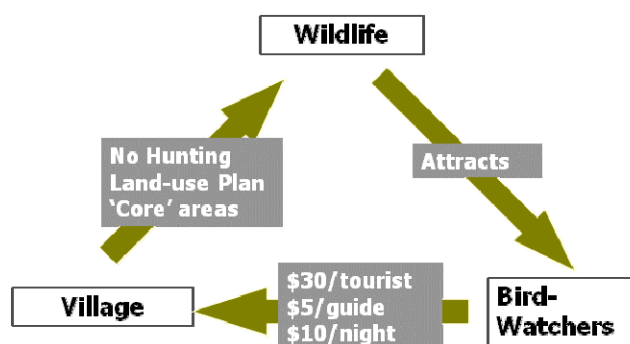
The project is currently being piloted in two villages, it is hoped that the impact in these villages will be significant. If the project proves successful, and there is sufficient market demand the model can be expanded to other villages. However to minimise impact on the forest and wildlife it is expected that tourist numbers should always be kept low.

Model

The model for tourism is closely based on that implemented at the village of Tmatboey in Preah Vihear. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Cambodia Program established the Tmatboey Ibis Ecotourism Project with government partners in 2005³. The project aims to conserve the globally threatened large waterbirds found at Tmatboey, using the ibises as 'flagships', through establishing a local community-based tourism enterprise that directly links revenue received to long-term species conservation

At Tmatboey, site-based tourism services are managed by an elected village committee, with facilitation and training provided by WCS and partners. A local NGO, the Sam Veasna Center (SVC), provides not-for-profit travel agency services to link the village to appropriate overseas customers. Tourists contribute to the local economy both directly, through payments to villagers for services such as accommodation, guiding, cooking, transportation, and indirectly through a \$30 donation to the village

development fund. Bird conservation is linked to the tourism through an agreement between the community, the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary and WCS. The agreement stipulates that tourism revenue is subject to the villagers agreeing to manage habitats and protect key species, through a village land-use plan and a no hunting policy. The land-use plan is a Government approved zonation, decided through negotiation with the



² Article 6 of the Sub-decree states "The Buffer Protection Forest Areas will be used for sustainable economic development activities that also ensure low impact on customary use of forest products and by-products by local communities, or development of community-based ecotourism whilst ensuring conservation of forest cover and sustainable use of biological diversity" (unofficial translation)

³ Clements T., A John, K Nielsen, Chea Vicheka, Ear Sokha, Meas Piseth, and Hout Piseth (2008). *Case Study: Tmatboey Community-based Ecotourism Project, Cambodia*. USAID - Translinks

community, that sets out which areas can be used for agriculture and residential land, and for sustainable harvesting of natural resources.

The vision for SPF is that visiting birdwatchers stay in or near the village, and access the forest directly from there. The village would benefit by direct income from staying at a community guest house, preparation of food, and guiding. It is planned initially to test this in one community, with the possibility of expanding to other villages in the future. Conservation benefits will be gained by providing a direct incentive not to convert forest or hunt wildlife. Target species, such as the Orange-necked Partridge are currently at risk from unregulated expansion of farmland and from hunting. If significant income is linked to sightings of this species pressures from hunting should be decreased.

If no suitable site can be found other options may be considered such as establishment of a community-run tourist facility away from any single village, which is managed and staffed by residents of target communities. Alternative methods of benefit sharing would have to be developed with this version of the model. The project will be evaluated at key stages in its development and if necessary altered to fit local conditions.

Legal Issues

Legal questions exist regarding the development of a community-based tourism venture in an FA-managed conservation area. The status of the community venture needs to be clarified, and tourism areas zoned appropriately. The most appropriate model is that the Ministry or FA would approve the activities, perhaps through a licensing system. The FA would then also have full oversight over community and NGO activities.

Article 27 of the 2002 Cambodian Law on Forestry states:

The Minister of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has the authority to issue a permit for use of forest to an individual or legal entity to conduct the following activities within the Permanent Forest Reserves:

- 1- Technical and scientific research;
- 2- Agricultural education or training;
- 3- Use of water resources for irrigation or agricultural purposes upon the agreement of the Minister of Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology.
- 4- Establishment of botanical garden or experimental station;
- 5- Establishment of a transferring nursery ; and
- 6- To establish Recreation, sightseeing business or film or video documentation.**

Such a permit pursuant to this Article shall not be used to harvest forest products & byproducts from the area specified, unless extraction is for the purpose of silviculture research or forest improvement.

This article could perhaps be the basis of a licensing system

Target Species

Discussions with the SVC, and experienced bird tour leaders indicate that the key target species that would be of interest to visiting birdwatchers are those typical of the lowland forests of the Southern Annamites range. Specifically they are interested in:

1. Orange-necked Partridge
2. Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Siamese Fireback, Green Peafowl, Pittas
3. Other local specialties (eg Red-vented Barbet, Pale-headed Woodpecker, Grey-faced Tit Babbler, Golden-crested Myna)

Surveys have shown that these birds are found in the SPF and in some cases can be seen easily. Of additional interest is the opportunity to observe mammals in the SPF, particularly primates, and small nocturnal mammals such as civets

The site also offers very good opportunities for seeing mammals, especially primates. Tour companies have indicated that although their clients' main concern is seeing rare species of birds, the opportunity to see large and unusual mammals such as Black-shanked Douc and Gaur will add to the experience and enjoyment of a visit to the SPF.

Target Communities

The bird tourism market's interest in the above species result in clear constraints on where this model can be implemented. The key target species have limited distribution in southern Vietnam and eastern Cambodia. This contributes the interest to birdwatchers and many of these species are seen regularly only in Cat Tien National Park in Vietnam. The Orange-necked Partridge has a particularly limited distribution. In Cambodia it has only been recorded from a small area of the SPF. The species appears to be largely confined to bamboo forest, which in the SPF is localised in southern Keo Seima district. Until recently it was listed as Endangered by IUCN, but this was revised in 2009 to Least Concern (Near-threatened) as it seems to occur in quite large numbers and to tolerate logging and hunting quite well.

The Seima Biodiversity Conservation Project has been doing community work in the neighbouring villages of O Rona and Sre Levi since 2006. These villages consist of a string of settlements along a district road, and a side track. To date work by WCS, Forestry Administration (FA) and partners⁴ has focused on land-use planning, organisation of an indigenous land tenure committee and agricultural extension. These villages were selected as the potential target villages for implementation of this model because of their history of contact with the project, the existence of community committees with reasonable capacity, the relative ease of access, and their proximity to suitable habitat for priority species. Discussions were held with village representatives to gauge levels of interest and commitment which revealed broad support for the concept.

Partners

Forestry Administration: FA has been the managing authority for the SPF since 2002. The project Deputy Director has oversight of all community development activities in the conservation area and supervises many aspects of this project including: coordination with the commune council, collaboration with provincial line departments, and integration with other project activities such as land-use planning and supported law enforcement teams

Wildlife Conservation Society – Cambodia Program: WCS has been working in the SPF since 2000. They have partnered the FA in all conservation activities. WCS has extensive experience and expertise in this sort of small-scale ecotourism development through its work in Preah Vihear. WCS coordinates the activities of all partners.

Local Villagers: The Indigenous Tenure Commissions in O Ronna and nascent commission in Sre Levi are important partners. They are the main village institutions involved with the development of village-based tourism and in the distribution of benefits.

Sam Veasna Center: The SVC has partnered WCS in the development of ecotourism in several other sites in Cambodia, including Tmatboey. Their role in Mondulkiri is to provide training to villagers in guiding and tourist management, and to market and run tours to Mondulkiri.

Year one plan

The initiative is outlined in the project pre-feasibility report⁵. This described implementation in three phases during the 2008/2009 season:

Phase 1

Dry season 2007/8

- a. Locating target species and target villages.
Before significant resources are committed to this project it was necessary to determine whether the target species are found reliably, and to identify a target village.
This involved study tours initially by SBCEP staff, and later by villagers from the target villages, followed by discussions that the villagers wish to proceed..

⁴ Agricultural support has been provided by the Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) and Agricultural Technical Services Association (ATSA). Land tenure assistance is provided by My Village (MVI), the Mondulkiri Provincial Department of Rural Development and Department of Land and the Ministry of Interior.

⁵ Pollard E. (2008) *Development of a Birdwatching Ecotourism Project in the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area. Pre-feasibility Study*. WCS Cambodia Program. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- b. Initial group formation
Working with community groups in the target villages to build capacity, develop a business model, discuss benefit-sharing issues and confirm that the project will be financially feasible
- d. Identification of potential guides
- e. Assess stage one and re-evaluate strategy

Phase 2

Late 2008

- a. Continued group development / capacity building
- b. Guide training, selection and improvement of trails.
- c. Marketing (carried out by the SVC)

Phase 3

Dry season 2008/2009

- a. First tourists.
- b. Continued on the job training and development of village institutions.
- c. Selection of a site for a community-run tourist accommodation.
- d. Determine sources of financing and support for infrastructure development, including lodge construction and road improvements.
- e. Assess implementation and re-evaluate strategy

Year 1 evaluation

Evaluation of the first year will be set against the targets listed above. Generally the first year was a success with 22 tourists visiting the SPF with the SVC.

Site Development

Accommodation

In the pre-feasibility phase management of the SPF decided that it would be too much disturbance having tourists staying at the SPF base camp in Keo Seima. SVC staff evaluated a guest house in Keo Seima market centre late 2008 and determined that this too was probably not suitable for tourists. The accommodation was sub-standard and the location in the market is not pleasant.

A compromise was reached with the FA and it was decided that tourists could stay at the ranger station on the main road. A small amount of work was needed to bring the building up to standard however. In late 2008 and early 2009 a water supply was connected to a nearby spring, solar electricity installed, and new furniture and cooking equipment which is reserved for the use of tourists was purchased.

Locating tourists at this station is still seen as an interim measure prior to the construction of purpose-built tourist accommodation elsewhere but has so far been a success. Visitors generally responded very positively to staying there. The location is closer to the forest than other options, providing rewarding wildlife viewing directly from the buildings.

Trail selection

In late 2008 Howie Nielsen returned to the SPF with 11 guides and staff from the SVC. This was to familiarise the staff with the site, the trails and target species. The locations of suitable trails were finalised (see map in annexe 2 and notes in annexe 3). All of these trails are accessed from the main road. In contrast to other birdwatching destinations visited by the SVC (eg Tmatboey and O Koki in Preah Vihear) visitors will generally need transport from the accommodation to trail heads, only one trail (behind the camp at Km164) is easily available from the accommodation.

Based on this information on trails a suggested 3 day/ 2 night itinerary has been developed (annexe 4).

New Lodge

No progress has been made with the development of a purpose-built tourism lodge. SVC staff suggest that Sre Levi and O Rona may not be suitable for a village-based guesthouse. They feel that tourists will not find the villages or the immediate landscape aesthetically pleasing and that access to good habitat from the villages is too hard. Additionally the FA has expressed its preference for the development of a lodge on a plot of land next to their base camp that was formerly occupied by a sawmill. This has the advantages of being on the main road, with access to electricity and easy access to Orange-necked Partridge sites. It is however relatively far from the participating villages (but closer than the current option at Km164) which may complicate management of the site and make it harder for communities to feel 'ownership'

The decision on how this site will be developed, and how this work will be funded has been delayed due to current uncertainties over the numbers of tourists that will be visiting. The global economic recession has impacted on the tourism industry, and tourism numbers in general have declined in 2009. In this economic climate investing in the relatively expensive infrastructure is considered unwise.

Community-group development

Study Tours

In order to understand more fully the ecotourism model that is being used in other parts of Cambodia two study tours were organised to Tmatboey in Preah Vihear. The first was for project staff who are implementing the initiative in Mondulkiri, and the second was for residents of villages in the SPF.

SBCP staff visited Tmatboey in April 2008. They stayed at the community-run guesthouse, met with the village tourism group, and joined guided birdwatching walks in the forest. This tour helped staff greatly, and highlighted the similarities and differences between the two sites, and what might need to be done to adapt the model for the SPF. Notable differences included:

- Easier birdwatching in the open forests of Preah Vihear
- Tmatboey is more an aesthetically more pleasing village and landscape. This may influence decisions on locating a guesthouse in Mondulkiri
- The agricultural calendar. Dry season in Tmatboey is a relatively quiet time, whereas in Mondulkiri many households are busy harvesting cassava at the time when tourists will be visiting. This has an impact on opportunity costs for villagers potentially wanting to get involved.
- A higher standard of living and level of education in Tmatboey may make it easier to implement the model there.

Some advantages of the target villages in Mondulkiri were also noted:

- A clear demand from tour companies, easy access to the main road and greater confidence that the target species are observable.
- The villages are relatively small, therefore a greater percentage of the village could be directly involved, and benefits will not have to be spread as far.
- Village institutions such as PLUP committee and ITC are being organised.
- CRDT work with farmer groups which could provide food for tourists
- Credit groups have been formed and has included some training on simple financial management that could be built upon.

In October 2008 the community groups⁶ in the villages of O Rona and Sre Levi received small grants from the CSPPM program to cover the costs of a study tour to Tmatboey. They were accompanied by staff from WCS/SBCP, the local NGO Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT) and Keo Seima District government. This tour was also very successful. All the stakeholders gained a greater understanding of the potential benefits of the project, as well as the effort needed to implement it successfully.

⁶ In these villages the community-based organisations (CBOs) are in the form of Indigenous Tenure Commissions (ITCs). These groups are in the process of being formally recognised by the Ministry of Interior.

Guide Selection and training

Prior to the October study tour meetings were held with the O Rona and Sre Levi community groups to explain the idea of community-based tourism and its potential in Mondulkiri. Members of the village executive and other interested villagers participated in the study tour.

The target for training and capacity building in the first year has been to identify and train guides from participating communities. Initially the main duty of these guides is assist the SVC tour leaders in finding the trails. In due course the village guides will learn birdwatching skills and will be more responsible for locating target species, especially the enigmatic Orange-necked Partridge. The first training session took place in November 2008. Five villagers from O Rona and Sre Levi were interested in taking part. All had been on the Tmatboey study tour. They were trained on the locations of the key trails, how birdwatching happens, how to prepare the trails for tourists and the basics of locating and identifying birds.

Follow-up training took place throughout the dry season including the clearing of trails, basic management of tourist facilities, and continued improvement of bird-guiding skills.

2009 Tours

Between January and April 2009 the SPF was visited by:

- 5 SVC-run tours (Annexe 1: Basic data on 2009 tours.);
- 22 tourists and;
- 6 SVC guides (plus seven drivers).

One tour did not stay in the SPF but stayed in a hotel in Snoul and travelled to the SPF.

Successes

Overall there were no significant issues from the tours in 2009. The accommodation arrangements were satisfactory, the water supply sufficient, and there were no complaints about the food. Most visitors were happy with the birdwatching, and at least one tour described the SPF as the highlight of their countrywide tour.

There were few problems with the five village guides. Two of them have shown particular interest and have great potential to become expert guides in the future.

Problems

Few problems were encountered in the first year, and the issues should be relatively easy to solve. The most significant issue is perhaps too high levels of expectation from the village guides. Although it was clearly stated at the early stages that there was relatively little work this year there was some dissatisfaction at the number of days of work available. The SBCP ecotourism coordinator handled this issue adequately, but it highlights the importance of setting expectations correctly. It does also however reveal that some community members are keen to participate to a greater extent. Increased involvement of the community in more aspects of the tourism in year 2 (2010) help meet some of the expectations. Day labour will be provided using donor support. Activities will include trail maintenance, preparation of new trails, and other training courses and will provide additional income while tourist numbers are still modest.

Delays during the construction of the water supply at Km164 meant that the accommodation there was not completely ready in time for the first tour. The tourists stayed one night at base camp, and at their insistence stayed the second night at the partially ready station at Km164. The station was completely ready in time for the second tour. Some guests complained about the dormitory accommodation at Km164. This is unavoidable but can be managed. Tourists need to be made aware in advance that they will be in shared accommodation. In addition simple screens can be purchased to be placed between beds should people request more privacy. It is essential that during tours only tourists and SVC staff stay in the accommodation block.

The challenges of forest birdwatching were highlighted in the first year. Bird tours to the SPF are a little different than other SVC destinations. At other locations the location of target species is reasonably predictable, and there is a limited selection of trails or areas. In the SPF selection of the trails needs to be

based on discussions with the tour group, and understanding of what they are most interested in seeing. In this first year tour leaders had to discuss the plans with the WCS TA on site and the SVC guides regularly sought advice from WCS. In coming years the SVC guides will learn the site better, and should be able to make these decisions alone. Greater skill is needed to locate and identify birds in closed, tall forest, compared with wetlands, or open deciduous dipterocarp forest. Most of the SVC guides are still developing these skills, but in this first year finding and identifying birds was more dependent on the skill of the tour leader. This was particularly apparent in the failure of any tour group to see Orange-necked Partridge. Experience early in 2008 showed that this is possible, but it requires patience, perseverance and skilled use of playback. The failure to find the partridges this season may be due to several factors. Most of the tourists that visited in 2009 were interested in seeing the Orange-necked Partridge, but it was not the highest priority. Most were interested in seeing a broad suite of forest species, and were less keen to dedicate several sessions to locating the partridges. Several groups only tried to find the partridges on one session and then spent the rest of the time on other trails where the partridge is not present. In addition SVC guides and tour leaders have had little or no experience with calling the partridges in with playback. This lack of experience may also help explain the failure to see the birds this season. This can only be improved with more experience. In time also the village guides will become more familiar with the target species, and how to find them. This may also increase the chances of tourists seeing the Orange-necked Partridge.

Income

Income from tourist activities in this first year has been relatively modest (see Annexe 1: Basic data on 2009 tours.). Direct income to villagers was through payments for guide services, and for basic trail and accommodation maintenance. Through the season this direct payment totalled \$270. All five of the first participating community members received some of this income. The money was not equally split however. Some villagers were more engaged, and worked more days than others. A further \$660 dollars have been collected as 'conservation fees' which is being kept as a village development fund. This money will be available to be used to fund activities or items that will benefit the whole village, not only the participating households. Finally \$435 dollars of income was used to cover food and other costs in the SPF. In future years most of this income will be captured by the villagers as they take over more aspects of the enterprise. For example food will be purchased from other villagers, and community members will be paid to cook food and prepare the facilities.

Conservation linkages

In this first year of operations efforts have focused on generating general interest amongst partners, the practicalities of running tours to the SPF and whether there is sufficient interest from tourists. To date there has been very little attempt to create clear links to conservation. These links need to be encouraged as soon as possible if the project is to have conservation as well as income generation benefits.

Promotion

SVC has been promoting the SPF on its website and with bird tour companies since 2007. A strategy that proved successful. So much so that more groups visited the site than had originally been anticipated. A downturn in tourism through 2009 however has led to the cancellation of several large tours. Visitor numbers are expected to be lower in 2010. New ways to promote the site, possibly to expatriates living in Cambodia, and local service providers to reduce costs, are being considered.

Financial Viability

At present the operation is heavily subsidised by donor funding. The enterprise needs to be financially viable if it is to succeed in the long-term. A financial model for the Tmatboey ecotourism venture has been developed by the Haas Business School (University of California, Berkeley). A preliminary analysis has been carried out using this model, but adapting the inputs to fit the assumed conditions in Mondulkiri. This viability analysis will need to be refined using more accurate inputs, based on the income expectations of participating villagers.

The most significant differences between the situations in Mondulkiri and Preah Vihear are: Sre Levi is a much smaller village, with many fewer households, therefore the community fund, and other village wide contributions are lower; there is no village-run guesthouse and no loan repayments; and there is no nest

protection program in Mondulkiri, but contributions could be made to cover some FA patrolling costs. The following assumptions were made: pay to the committee and staff is the same in Mondulkiri, and that operating costs (food, water etc) are similar; an annual conservation fund target of \$1000, plus \$10 per household; a fee to the FA; and a contribution to patrol costs of \$500 per year. In these situations the enterprise would reach breakeven point at about 40 tourists paying \$10 per day, or 35 tourists paying \$20 per day. If tourism numbers return to 2008 levels, this appears possible.

Key lessons learned

The first year has been broadly successful. Several important lessons have been learned:

- It can work. There is sufficient interest from bird-tourists to justify investing in further development of the project. The tourists were interested in the site, and enjoyed the bird and other wildlife viewing opportunities. In addition community interest is high, and there is potential to train some expert guides.
- The expectations of tourists and participating villagers do however need to be carefully managed. Tourists should be made aware of the shared accommodation, and the limited facilities (updated information for tourists and SVC website is provided in annexe 4). It is possible that some of the village guides thought there would be more work available this year than was the case. Some were disappointed at the limited number of days work each month, and the short tourist season. This revealed the importance of being clear in explaining what is actually going to happen. It is important to strike the balance between encouraging interest in the initiative, whilst remaining realistic about the opportunities. There will be greater opportunities in year two and further into the future, but all partners must be careful not to overestimate the work available. If high expectations are not met, this will lead to dissatisfaction with the project, resulting in poor service, and potentially total failure. This may be especially important given the possible downturn in tourist numbers in 2010 and 2011 because of the global financial situation. As mentioned above project funds may be used to counter this temporarily, by providing employment in cutting new trails and activities
- The accommodation at Km164 is suitable. This proved to be a success and all visitors liked the location and facilities. A few more improvements will need to be made to make the building more suitable. These are mainly cosmetic additions such as more shelving and hooks, better information, screens for privacy and the provision of soft drinks. Ultimately purpose-built accommodation should still be built. This will be dependent on securing funding and reassessing the financial assumptions.
- Tour groups were interested in seeing a range of species, rather than only the partridge (see next point). Therefore trails such as those to Sre Mepop, and at Km163 were more popular than ones in the bamboo. All tour group expressed great interest in seeing Green Peafowl (only one group saw them, from the vehicle at the roadside at approximately Km160). At present no reliable, easily accessible peafowl sites are known due to disturbance during road upgrades - but we can expect the km 157 to be a good location once again in 2011 after roadworks end and the location has had some time to recover .
- The Orange-necked Partridge is hard to locate. Despite being heard regularly through the season no partridges were seen. It is not clear why this was the case. Until more is known about where, when and how to see the partridge, it may be that only several sessions of intensive searching will reveal this enigmatic bird.
- There is the need for a great deal more training and capacity building for both SVC staff and community members.

Community members:

- Further training in bird guiding.
- Guest house management
- Cooking for tourists
- Financial management. During year 2 the community group should begin to make decisions about costs and pricing.
- Establishment and management of the community fund

SVC

- Continued training and exposure to forest bird-watching. The skills and knowledge needed to lead tours in the SPF are different from those required at other SVC sites. In addition at other sites most target species are in known locations, in the SPF the tour leaders need to be

able to decide on the best trails based on the wishes of the clients. SVC guides will need to be able to make these decisions, in this first year these choices were usually made after discussions between the tourists and the WCS Technical Advisor.

- Night walks. There was considerable interest from tourist in night walks to see mammals and nocturnal birds. This is possible but SVC guides will need training on how to locate nocturnal animals, and in safety at night.

To date little has been learnt of the effectiveness of conservation linkages. Now that the basic feasibility of the tourism concept has been established in the minds of villagers, partners and customers, it is important that this becomes integrated into all aspects of project development - trainings, staff selection, fund disbursement, links to other parts of the program etc

Project targets for year 2

- Training
 - Continued training of SVC and local guides. *Outcome: Improve guiding skills*
 - New training to SVC and local guides on how to conduct night-walks. *Outcome: successful and safe night walks on at least one tour*
 - New training to community group on cooking and guest management. Outcomes: villagers provide food and do the cooking for tourists; villagers prepare and manage the tourist accommodation. *Outcome: At least one tour is catered for by village groups*
 - New training on establishment and use of a community fund. *Outcome: fund established with bank account, rules on use and distribution of fund drafted.*
- Minor up-grade of accommodation. *Outcome: all improvements made before arrival of first group*
 - Bathrooms: hooks
 - Furniture & equipment: screens, shelving, table, water dispenser
 - Decoration: Project posters & literature, photographs, maps.
- Development
 - Improve the success in finding Orange-necked Partridge. *Outcome: tour groups see the partridge in 2010*
 - Locate an alternative site for Green Peafowl. *Outcome: Site located and at least one tour group visit*
 - SVC guides familiar with the regularly seen mammal species. *Outcome: SVC guides can find and identify Black-shanked Douc, and can identify other species such as macaques, deer and civets*
 - Create new trail from close to SPF base camp to Sre Mepop. *Outcome: trail complete*
 - Evaluate potential for developing a second site within the SPF (eg Andoung Kraloung). *Outcome: evaluation report, decision made on second village and tour*
- Conservation linkages
 - Links between involvement with tourism work and conservation created. *Outcome: Involvement with tourism tied to land-use plan*
 - Awareness by villagers on links between income from tourists and restrictions on land-clearance and hunting.
- Promotion
 - Continued marketing of tours to birdwatchers. *Outcome: at least 2 bird tours groups*
- New product research
 - Investigation of other potential markets and products with clear links to conservation. *Outcome: Pilot of additional tour model.*

Acknowledgements

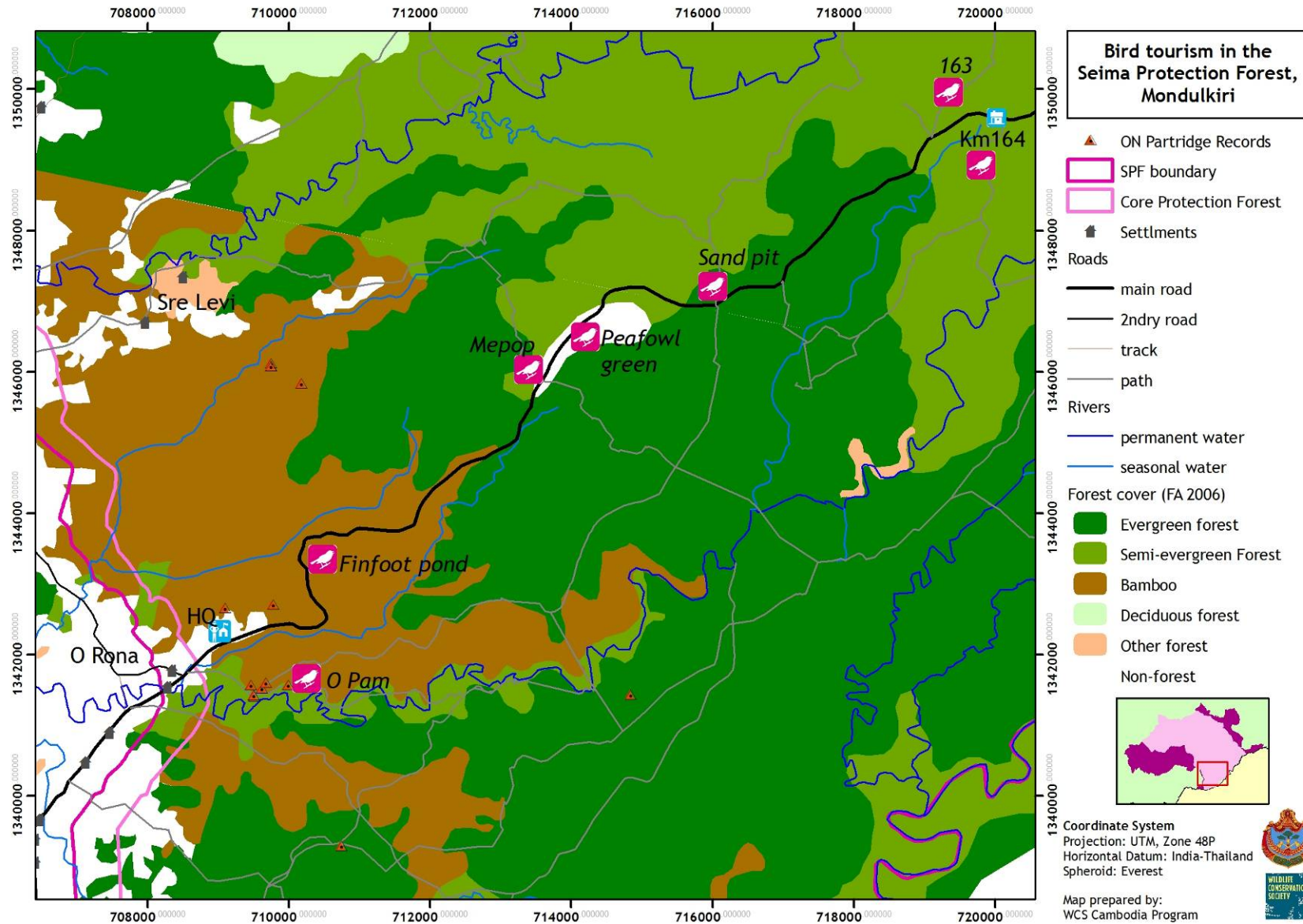
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Annexe 1: Basic data on 2009 tours.

Info				Numbers						Notes	Village income				SPF income	
Dates	Tour Group	SVC Guide	Nights	Leader	Male	Female	SVC	driver	Total		Guide pay	other work	total direct to village	cons fee	food & accom	SPF costs
21 - 23 Jan	Thai Twitch	Sophoan	2	1	3		1	2	7	first night in HQ, 2nd in 164	15	50	65	120	70	40
13 - 17 Feb	Pierre van Wielen	Nara	3	1	2	1	1	2	7		15	50	65	120	105	60
25 - 27 Feb	SVC	Howie, Art	2		1	2	2	2	7		15	60	75	90	70	30
25 - 27 Feb	Birdquest	Nara	2	1	8		1		10	Stayed in Snuol, 2 days in SPF	15		15	270	n/a	n/a
6 - 8 Apr	Tony Sawbridge	Sophoan	2		1	1	1	1	4		15	35	50	60	40	20
				3	15	4			35		270		660			

Annexe 2: Map of birdwatching sites



Annexe 3: Target species trail recommendations

Howie Nielsen – Sam Veasna Center, November 2008

Orange-necked Partridge: O Pam trail is the premier site for this species. The ONP trail has records, but I don't know the distance from the road. The trails from Sre Levi appear too distant, requiring excessive travel time. There may be a future for these trails, but for the 2008/9 season the O Pam is where to focus your search. You must be able to identify the call and differentiate it from scaly-breasted partridge, which is common in the area.

Germain's Peacock-pheasant: A widespread species that essentially needs to be heard to be located. Tape playback gives you the best chance of seeing this species. You must be entirely still (no noise or movement), and inconspicuous, using vegetation for cover.

I have seen this bird on either side of Mepop on the Km 157 trail. Km 164 and the north side of 159 have produced the bird. Learn the call and use this to locate.

Siamese Fireback: I would assume this is also widespread but I have only had one proper look at a pair on the ONP trail.

Green Peafowl: The open green at 158 has been destroyed by the road construction camp. However, birds still are seen on the periphery of the area. Veal Mepop is said to be good for this species. Best chance is along the road early and as it calls at dusk.

Pittas: Can be found on most trails, and can be called in with play-back. Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped are present year-round. Hooded and Blue-winged are wet-season visitors only, arriving around mid-April.

Pale-headed Woodpecker: to be looked for in larger, more mature bamboo groves. This species is tape responsive. O Pam is good. I have also seen it near Sre Levi, behind WCS camp, and along Km 157

Red-vented Barbet: Km 164 and 159 in the quarry have been productive for this species. It can be looked for in areas that allow treetop scanning.

Golden-crested Myna: Check all small flocks. This is a tree top species

Large Scimitar-babbler: Tape responsive. Make sure you recognize the call. They often associate with laughing thrush flocks. Try tapes when around these flocks. The birds tend to stay hidden and close to the ground. They can work around your group in a circle. Use your ears.

Grey-faced Tit-babbler: Listen for the monotonous pooping call, rather like a small owl. This bird is wide spread. Tape responsive.

Black-shanked Douc: The mile or two beyond WCS camp in the evenings, the Duocs can be seen in the treetops.

Large mammals can be seen on night drives to Km 164

Annexe 4: Suggested Itinerary and tourist information

Birdwatching Tours in the Seima Protection Forest (SPF), Mondulkiri, Cambodia

Itinerary:

Day 1: Lunch in Kratie. Transfer to SPF base camp (approximately 2 ½ hours). One of the largest remaining blocks of Southern Annamitic forest lies in this little explored corner of Cambodia. This provides a chance to see birds not encountered elsewhere in the country. Species that could be seen include those more commonly associated with Viet Nam such as: Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Red-vented Barbet, Pale-headed Woodpecker, Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped Pitta, Golden-crested Myna and Grey-faced Tit-babbler. All of these are possible whilst searching for the localized Orange-necked Partridge. The first evening will be spent looking for this enigmatic bird in its favoured habitat of bamboo forest, close to the base camp. After dinner we drive deeper into the forest to our accommodation, providing the opportunity for seeing nocturnal wildlife along the road.

Day 2: Early morning, to the call of Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbons, we will travel deeper into the conservation area to an area of less disturbed forest. Green Peafowl are seen regularly in the area and are sometimes observed by the main road. In the evening we may return to the bamboo to continue the search for Orange-necked Partridge and allow opportunities to track down the other Southern Annamite specialties. Evenings are the best time to see the area's mammalian specialty, the Black-shanked Douc. Possibly more than half of the world's population of this endangered primate are found in the SPF. They are seen commonly in roadside trees. Weather permitting, night walks may be available giving the chance for observing owls, nightjars, flying-squirrels, several species of civets, and perhaps Sambar Deer.

Day 3: Final morning search for any elusive rainforest birds that may have eluded us. Mid-morning departure to Phnom Penh

General Information

Tourist facilities and systems are still being developed. In 2010 we will stay in basic dormitory-style accommodation at a ranger station deep in the forest. Meals are of typical Khmer food.

Bird watching will be in disturbed evergreen and bamboo forest along rudimentary trails and tracks. Sturdy boots are recommended. It is the dry season so leeches will not be a problem, but mosquitoes can be an annoyance. There is a chance that elephants are in the area, guides will know how to handle these situations, and it is imperative that visitors follow their instructions. Elephants and other unforeseen events may affect the itinerary.

Costs

<i>Item</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Board and Lodging (K164)		
Tourist	Guest-night	\$10
SVC Guide	Guest-night	\$5
Driver	Guest-night	\$5
Conservation Fee		
Tourist only	Guest -visit	\$30
Guide	Day	\$5
Extras		
Night Walk	Guest-walk	tbd
Sre Pleng day-trip	Unit	tbd

Annexe 5: Photos from year 1

Figure 1: Accommodation at the Km164 FA Station



Figure 2: Interior of tourist accommodation



Figure 3: Tourists viewing Black-shanked Doucs from the accommodation block



Figure 4: Birdwatcher scanning the canopy on the Road-Mepop trail

