

Book review

BIRDS OF CAMBODIA

By Cambodia Bird Guide Association (CBGA)

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The authors of this book are members of the Cambodia Bird Guide Association (CBGA). They are an NGO that provides birding and natural heritage tours across Cambodia. Its most active contributors are Cambodians experienced in bird conservation and trained by researchers from Thailand, Taiwan, the USA and Australia.

This is a field guide. It has a vinyl or vinyl like water resistant flexi-cover. All of Cambodia is covered, stopping at the political borders with its neighbours—Thailand to the north and west, with Laos to the north-east and Vietnam to the east. It aims to cover the assemblage of bird species within its borders in a concise manner.

Like other field guides in the Lynx BirdLife International series this is structured with a basic introduction, in which you will find small sections introducing; geographic scope, climate and a variety of habitats pertinent to Cambodia. Cambodia is a comparatively small country dominated by floodplains, grasslands and a great central lake, *Tonle Sap*. Notes on bird conservation follow and are largely derived from BirdLife International. A list of threatened species and their IUCN listing codes are then given. This is followed by information on 35 birding hotspots and finally notes on how to use the field guide. Most of the book is then given to species accounts. The maps, figures and other sundry metrics are of a high quality and appear to be taken from *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World* (del Hoyo and Collar 2014–2016). Following the species accounts there is a short reference and further reading section. There are three indexes: English, Cambodian (in Khmer script) and lastly a quick index with common group names in English e.g. Woodpeckers and Swallows. A topographical map of Cambodia is repeated inside the front and back covers. The book is in English. There are 1400 colour illustrations with 600 colour distribution maps; 629 species are present with 17 endemics or near-endemics claimed. QR codes (Quick Response Codes) for each species are given, which allow devices, such as mobile phones, to link to Lynx's *Internet Bird Collection* webpages.

This book addresses English speakers interested in Cambodian birds. I presume many of these will be tourists. According to its introduction Cambodia has become a popular birdwatching destination in Asia. Nonetheless there is an index in Khmer

script, which may facilitate more local involvement and research by Cambodians.

Cambodia covers an area of 180 000 km² lying entirely with the tropics. It harbours endemics that cannot be seen elsewhere e.g. the Giant and White-shouldered Ibises (*Thaumatibis gigantea* and *Pseudibis davisoni*). As with the other field-guides in this series, by Lynx and BirdLife International, the research that has gone into the species accounts and quality of the colour figures and maps is perhaps the greatest strength of this book. The text is well laid out following the same logic and order as the other guides in this series, which thus aids its function as a field-guide.

The educational and research benefits of this book lie in its focus on Cambodia. Its greatest practical function being that it can be carried into the field. As such it is suited primarily to English speakers and tourists. Yet it will also function to identify and locate birds for professionals in the field.

Though it is predominately in English the Khmer script will be important in engaging Cambodians with their birds—for whatever their reason: research or tourism. The research is derived from the *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World* as described above and as such is appropriate and reliable. The writing style is professional, clear and concise again appropriate for a field-guide.

Exactly as in other books of this series the supplementary material (beyond the maps and drawings in the species accounts) amounts to two regional maps situated inside the front and rear covers. Both are clear and easily understood: the front gives the names of places and the rear gives the numbers of the birding hotspots, which coincide with notes given in the Introduction.

I would recommend this book to those travelling to Cambodia or within neighbouring countries; Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. It is also useful for those birdwatchers and students of ornithology in south-east Asia who are comfortable reading English. Clearly, it will be drawn on by academics working in Cambodia.

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Reference

del Hoyo, J. and Collar, N. J. (2014–2016). *BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World: Volumes 1 and 2*. (Lynx Edicions: Barcelona.)