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The first records of Red-legged Crake *Rallina fasciata* for Cambodia

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The Red-legged Crake *Rallina fasciata* is a little-known railid, listed as Least Concern by BirdLife International (2015), with a range extending across most of South-East Asia (Robson 2008, Taylor 2015). However, the species has been rarely recorded, with the exception of a few locations in Singapore and Thailand (Li 2009, Wong 2011, Pierce *et al.* 2013), partly because of its skulking nature; it is seldom flushed or observed, and very rarely encountered as camera-trap by-catch during wildlife surveys, indicating that it may indeed be genuinely scarce. This note is a compilation of the only three confirmed Red-legged Crake records from Cambodia. Two are new records, whilst the third has been previously reported (Goes 2013) but is presented here with documentary evidence. These records confirm the species's presence in three protected areas in widely separated parts of the country, and offer limited but important information on its ecology and likely status.

Phnom Kulen National Park, Siem Reap province

The first record—and first breeding record—of Red-legged Crake in Cambodia consists of a series of three camera-trap images of two adults with four downy chicks in Phnom Kulen NP on 30 August 2010. The family was crossing a small, dry seasonal tributary to the Kbal Spean river (13.689°N 104.017°E) at 200 m (Plate 1), about 500 m north of the Kbal Spean river

carvings, a popular tourist destination. The habitat in this area is semi-evergreen forest.

Siem Pang Protected Forest, Stung Treng province

A single adult Red-legged Crake was seen bathing in a small, shallow forest stream (14.351°N 106.257°E) on 23 November 2013 in Siem Pang Protected Forest at 80 m. The bird was observed at a distance of 5 m for one minute and was initially very obliging, only retreating into some bankside vegetation once DW moved to within 3 m. The observation was made less than 1 km from a well-used logging and fishing camp. The stream (the O'Nga in Khmer) is within an area of semi-evergreen forest that dominates the northern part of the Protected Forest. The entire site lies below 350 m.

Seima Protection Forest, Mondulkiri province

On the morning of 15 July 2013, a dead Red-Legged Crake (Plate 2) was found on the forest floor within 70 m of the main Forestry Administration headquarters (12.138°N 106.915°E) at 160 m in Seima Protection Forest. The cause of death was unclear, there being no visible sign of hunting or predation. The habitat is mixed semi-evergreen and bamboo forest with a shrub layer to 3 m and moist leaf-litter, typical of the south-eastern section of Seima PF. It was within 100 m of agricultural land (primarily

Plate 1. Camera-trap image of two adult Red-legged Crakes *Rallina fasciata* with four chicks, showing the habitat they frequented in Phnom Kulen NP, Siem Reap province, Cambodia, 30 August 2010.





Plate 2. Red-legged Crake corpse found in Seima Protection Forest; the image was taken at the Forestry Administration headquarters, 15 July 2013.

rice and cassava) and patches of secondary growth, and there are two permanent rivers 450 m south and 700 m north of the location, hence there is an abundance of suitable habitat for Red-legged Crake in the area (Taylor 2015).

Discussion

The adult birds in each case were identified by the black-and-whitish bars on the wing-coverts, primaries and secondaries, the distinctive bold blackish-and-whitish bars from the lower breast to the vent, the blackish bill, and red legs and feet (Robson 2008). The dark plumage of the downy chicks in Phnom Kulen NP is typical of young rails (Taylor & van Perlo 1998).

These are the first documented records of Red-legged Crake for Cambodia. The presence of Red-legged Crakes within these three protected areas is not unexpected as they all contain suitable habitat, although they are geographically widespread and in very different landscapes, suggesting that the species is not localised in the country.

The ecology of the species is little known, and our record of a family with small chicks is in line with the few documented breeding records in the region (Taylor & van Perlo 1998, Pierce *et al.* 2013). The social organisation and sexual behaviour of the Red-legged Crake remain undocumented, but the species is assumed to be territorial, at least during the breeding season, and monogamous (Taylor & van Perlo 1998, Pierce *et al.* 2013). Its movements are poorly understood and it is both resident and migratory, at least in parts of its normal range, including Thailand and Malaysia (Taylor & van Perlo 1998). Goes (2013) speculated whether it is a resident or breeding visitor in Cambodia: this remains an open question.

The lack of previous confirmed records from Cambodia is likely to be due to the species's skulking nature and low population density. Its population trend, both globally and in Cambodia, is unknown, but its habitat requirements suggest that the species is likely to be scarce but widespread across much of the country, and probably overlooked. The three records presented here are all from primarily semi-evergreen

forest, which is therefore likely to be an important habitat for the species in Cambodia.

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