

Government of Cambodia declares new Sarus Crane reserve

Title Kampong Trach Important Bird Area (IBA) has finally been designated as Cambodia's second Sarus Crane reserve. On 6 January 2011, Prime Minister Hun Sen signed a sub-decree to establish the *Anlung Pring Management and Conservation Area for Sarus Crane and Other Birds located in Kampong Trach District, Kampot Province*. This signing represented the culmination of consultative and bureaucratic process that began in 2006. 'Almost the entire process has been driven by the vision and dedication of Seng Kim Hout and the credit is his', said Jonathan Eames, Programme Manager for BirdLife International in Indochina. 'At times it felt like the process would never end, but Kim Hout never lost focus or commitment to completing the task', continued Eames. Kampong Trach is one of the three most globally important non-breeding sites in Cambodia (a fourth is situated in Vietnam) for the South-east Asian race *sharpii* of Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*, which is considered globally Vulnerable. The other two are at Ang Trapeang Thmor, which has been a reserve since 2000, and at Boeung Prek Lapouv, where BirdLife and Forestry Administration also worked successfully to establish a Sarus Crane reserve in 2007. The newly declared reserve covers only 217 ha of seasonally inundated grassland and unlike Boeung Prek Lapouv, lies close to the sea and has a tidal regime, supporting mangrove and salt marsh vegetation in addition to wet grassland. In March 2010 the site held over 270 Sarus Cranes, more than 30% of the global population. The Sarus Cranes usually arrive in late November and remain until early May when they begin their migration to the wetlands in the northern and eastern plains of Cambodia where they breed. Bou Vorsak, Acting Programme Manager for BirdLife's work in Cambodia, said this was another major achievement for BirdLife. 'This is the second protected area in Cambodia that we have proposed and succeeded in having the government gazette. We are proud of this achievement.' Since 2004, Kampong Trach IBA has been patrolled by a local conservation group, which have prevented encroachment and stopped hunting, as well as raised awareness of the importance of the area's biodiversity, and the benefits of sustainable use, among the local communities. The site lies close to the Vietnamese frontier where rapid economic development has pushed up land prices. This factor was the main reason why the designation process took so long as local vested interests tried to thwart the process. With the designation of the site as a protected area now in place, the scene is set for larger scale conservation investment. Recently, nearly US\$ 330,000 was granted to the *Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust* and *Mlub Baitong* via the BirdLife/Critical Ecosystem partnership Fund, to fully establish and conserve Boeung Prek Lapouv and Kampong Trach Sarus Crane reserves. These two projects will contribute to their long-term sustainable management by developing and revising site management plans, training and supporting local

conservation groups, piloting longterm financing mechanisms, initiating community based ecotourism, and generating increased support among local people for site conservation. Also, via the CPEF small grants scheme administered directly by BirdLife, *The Cambodian Institute for Research and Rural Development* (CIRD) received nearly US\$20,000 to increase efforts to conserve Kampong Trach, by strengthening the capacity of the local community on improved and sustainable agricultural production, and conducting the feasibility study for introduction and implementation of a 'Wildlife-friendly' produce scheme in this site. This project started since November 2010 and will end in late December 2011.