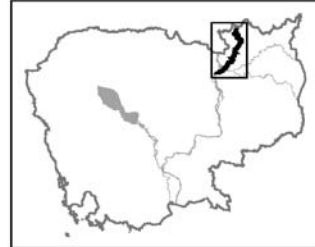


Sekong River

Criteria A1, A2 & A4i

Province(s):	Stung Treng
District(s):	Siem Pang and Sesan
Area (ha):	14,116
Altitude (m asl):	44 to 108
Central coordinates:	13°59'N 106°18'E



General description

The IBA comprises the stretch of the Sekong River from the international border with Laos to its confluence with Mekong River. Along this stretch of the river, there are many different habitats, many of which can be categorised as channel mosaics of rock and sand islands with riverine scrub. There are few stretches with large sandbars, and significant stretches are slow-moving and relatively featureless. For much of its length, the Sekong River is fringed by a belt of gallery forest, about 100 m wide, which is significantly taller than the adjacent deciduous dipterocarp forest, and contains a high proportion of broadleaf evergreen trees. However this has been degraded or cleared for cultivation in many areas.

The IBA supports a suite of bird species restricted to wide, lowland rivers, including River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*, Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*, Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris* and River Tern *Sterna aurantia*. In addition, the IBA supports Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae*, a recently described species, which is thought to be endemic to the Mekong River and its major tributaries. Furthermore, at certain times of the year, the IBA may be important for a number of large waterbirds, including Giant Ibis *Pseudibis gigantea*.

Key bird species

Common name	Scientific name	IBA criteria
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>	A1
White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	A1
Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	A1
Giant Ibis	<i>Pseudibis gigantea</i>	A1 A4i
Mekong Wagtail	<i>Motacilla samveasnae</i>	A1 A2

Biome restricted species

Two species are restricted to the Indo-Malayan Tropical Dry Zone (see Appendix 4).

Globally threatened primate species

Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca fascicularis* and Silvered Langur *Semnopithecus cristatus*.

Globally threatened turtle and crocodile species

Asiatic Softshell Turtle *Amyda cartilaginea* and Asian Giant Softshell Turtle *Pelochelys cantorii*.

Threats to biodiversity

Cutting of trees and clearance of land for agriculture occurs along both banks of the Sekong River, particularly along the lower sections and around Siem Pang town. During the dry season, the temporary fishing camps that are established at sections of channel mosaic habitat are a particular cause for concern, as they represent a source of disturbance to sandbar-nesting birds. This disturbance can take the form of direct persecution, through hunting or egg collection, or accidental disturbance to nesting birds. A potential future threat to the IBA is the development of hydropower schemes upstream along the Sekong River or its tributaries, which may lead to changes in flow patterns with negative impacts on sandbar-nesting birds.

Recommendations

- Efforts must be made to protect sandbar-nesting birds while they are breeding. Community agreements could be set up with individual villages so that the nest areas will not be disturbed.
- Conservation of the Sekong River should be at the scale of the complete river system, as focusing on just one small stretch in isolation could have disastrous consequences.
- New villages and agricultural development along the river should be discouraged, and key stretches of riverine forest should be strictly protected from logging and shifting cultivation.
- Further surveys and research should be carried out, focusing on identifying important stretches of riverine forest and smaller backwater rivers and streams, and better determining the numbers and breeding success of sandbar-nesting birds.

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