

## Xe Kong Plains

Criteria: A1, A2, A3 &amp; A4i

**Province(s):** Champasak and Attapu  
**Protected area:** Xe Pian NPA  
**Area:** 37,150 ha

**Latitude:** 14°32'N  
**Longitude:** 106°22'E

**General description**

The IBA is located mainly inside Xe Pian National Protected Area, in southern Lao P.D.R. The topography of the IBA is dominated by an extensive alluvial plain, which is crossed by two lowland rivers: the Xe Pian and Xe Khampho. A third large, lowland river, the Xe Kong, forms the south-eastern boundary of the IBA, and the upstream section of this river, outside of Xe Pian National Protected Area, is also included within the IBA. The vegetation of the IBA is dominated by dry dipterocarp forest but mixed deciduous forest and semi-evergreen forest are found along the rivers. There are numerous pools throughout the IBA, some of which are seasonal (Duckworth *et al.* 1998, Thewlis *et al.* 1998). To the south, the IBA is contiguous with Western Siem Pang IBA (KH032) in Cambodia, which supports a similar mosaic of habitats. To the west and east, the IBA is contiguous with blocks of denser, semi-evergreen forest. The IBA supports small numbers of several large waterbird species, including Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*, White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, Giant Ibis *Thaumatibis gigantea*, Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* and Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*. The populations of large waterbirds within the IBA adjoin larger populations in Cambodia, and, therefore, their viability may be greater than their small size might suggest. The open, dry dipterocarp forest is an important habitat for a number of raptor species, including White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, Slender-billed Vulture *G. tenuirostris* and Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*. While the IBA is almost certainly not large enough by itself to support viable populations of these three vulture species in the long-term, it forms part of a network of sites throughout southern Lao P.D.R. and northern Cambodia that may be able to. The large, lowland rivers running through the IBA are important for a number of globally threatened and near-threatened bird species, most notably Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*, Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis* and Grey-headed Fish Eagle *I. ichhyaetus*. Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* has also been recorded, and, while the IBA has not, as yet, been confirmed to regularly support a significant population, this might simply reflect limited survey work in the wet season. In addition, the rivers support a suite of sandbar-nesting birds, including Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris* (Duckworth *et al.* 1999), River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*, Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea* and River Tern *Sterna aurantia* (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). Another riverine species found at the IBA is the recently described Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae* (Duckworth *et al.* 2001).

**Key bird species**

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
[Siamese Fireback <i>Lophura diardi</i> ]	A1, A3	NT	PARL	During a survey between March and May 1995, the species was reported to occur by local people (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of low national and global significance.
Green Peafowl <i>Pavo muticus</i>	A1, A3	VU	ARL	Singles were heard at two localities near the confluence of the Xe Khampho and Xe Pian on several days in March 1993, and the species was reported by local people to occur near the confluence of the Xe Pian and Xe Kong (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). The species was reported to occur by local people during a survey in May 1995 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1998). While the population at the IBA is of moderate to high national significance, given the vastly larger populations in parts of Cambodia, it is of low global significance.
Sarus Crane <i>Grus antigone</i>	A1	VU	ARL	Two birds were seen at a pool in March 1989 (Salter 1993 cited in Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Two birds were seen in April or May 1991 (Cox <i>et al.</i> 1991). Two adults and a juvenile were seen in March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). The species was recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of high national significance but moderate to low global significance.

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Masked Finfoot <i>Heliopais personata</i>	A1, A3	VU	ARL	Two singles were seen on the Xe Pian in March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). At least five birds were observed on the Xe Pian downstream of Ban Phonsaat in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of high national and global significance.
Lesser Fish Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	A1	NT	ARL	One to three birds were seen on several occasions at the confluence of the Xe Pian and Xe Khampho in March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). One bird was regularly encountered along the Xe Pian and another was seen 5 km north of Ban Phonsaat in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of high national significance and moderate global significance.
Grey-headed Fish Eagle <i>I. ichthyaetus</i>	A1	NT	ARL	One to three birds were seen almost daily in March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). Two birds were seen perched on the ground in a nearly dry pool in the north of the IBA in April 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of high national significance but low global significance.
White-rumped Vulture <i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	A1, A3	CR	ARL	The species was commonly recorded together with other vulture species during March 1993, with a maximum confirmed count of 11 birds at a single water buffalo carcass (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996, 1998). Two to eight birds were seen daily in May 1995; and two were seen in September 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Between 6 and 17 birds were seen between Senamsai and Ban Sompoy in December 1997 (Robichaud 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The species was also recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of high national and global significance.
Slender-billed Vulture <i>G. tenuirostris</i>	A1, A3	CR	ARL	The species was commonly recorded together with other vulture species during March 1993, with a maximum confirmed count of 10 birds at a single water buffalo carcass (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996, 1998). Between 8 and 19 birds were seen between Senamsai and Ban Sompoy in December 1997 (Robichaud 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The species was also recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of high national and global significance.
Red-headed Vulture <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	A1, A3	NT	ARL	The species was commonly recorded together with other vulture species during March 1993, with a maximum count of 10 birds at a single water buffalo carcass (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996, 1998). Between two and eight birds were seen daily in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Between 1 and 13 birds were seen between Senamsai and Ban Sompoy in December 1997 (Robichaud 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The species was also recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of high national and global significance.
White-rumped Falcon <i>Polihierax insignis</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	The species was recorded once during March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). The species was also recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of moderate national significance and moderate to low global significance.
†Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	A1	NT	ARL	Three birds were seen repeatedly along the Xe Pian and one bird was seen along the Xe Kong in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Two birds were reported to be present on the Xe Kong near Ban Sompoy in December 1997 (Robichaud 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). Two birds were seen at the mouth of the Xe Pian in April 1998 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). It is possible that the IBA does not regularly support a significant population of this species, although it may be that the species is a wet-season visitor, and, hence, has been under-recorded during surveys to date. The population at the IBA is of moderate to high national significance but low global significance.

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
White-shouldered Ibis <i>Pseudibis davisoni</i>	A1	CR	ARL	Singles (probably the same bird) were seen on three days during March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). A party of three was repeatedly seen along the Xe Pian in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Two birds were seen near Ban Sompoy in December 1997 (Robichaud 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). One bird was seen on the Xe Pian in April 1998 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is of high national and global significance.
Giant Ibis <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i>	A1, A4i	CR	ARL	Single birds were seen on one day in March 1993 and two days in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of high national significance and moderate to high global significance.
Lesser Adjutant <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	A1	VU	ARL	The species was recorded daily in March 1993, with a maximum of five birds together (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). One bird was seen soaring in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). A fully grown young bird was seen on one of two nests near Ban Sompoy in February 1998 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The species was also recorded between 2000 and 2001 (Poulsen unpubl.). The population at the IBA is of high national significance but moderate to low global significance.
Grey-faced Tit Babbler <i>Macronous kelleyi</i>	A2			The species was commonly recorded between February and March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). The species was commonly recorded between March and May 1995 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of very low national and global significance.
Mekong Wagtail <i>Motacilla samveasnae</i>	A1, A2	NT		During March 1993, two birds were seen at the confluence of the Xe Khampho and Xe Pian, one was seen on the Xe Khampho and two were seen at Nong Puler (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 2001). Up to three birds were seen on the Xe Kong, upstream of the confluence with the Xe Pian, in May 1993 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 2001). The population at the IBA is of moderate national significance but low global significance.
[Asian Golden Weaver <i>Ploceus hypoxanthus</i> ]	A1	NT	ARL	At least 10 birds, provisionally identified as this species, were observed at a communal roost at a small seasonal pool, and three birds were seen by another pool in March 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1996). The population at the IBA is of high national significance but moderate to low global significance.

Notes: [ ] = unconfirmed record; † = not confirmed to regularly occur in significant numbers.

**Biome-restricted species:** The site qualifies under criterion A3 because it supports 14 species restricted to the Indochinese Tropical Moist Forests (Biome 09) and 22 species restricted to the Indo-Malayan Tropical Dry Zone (Biome 11) (Thewlis *et al.* 1996, Duckworth *et al.* 1998, Poulsen unpubl.). See Appendix 3 for details.

### Threats to biodiversity

Hunting and disturbance to birds are among the major threats to biodiversity at the IBA. There are a number of permanent human settlements within the IBA and levels of human activity are relatively high, particularly along the main rivers and at non-flowing wetlands. Large waterbirds, Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus* and fish eagles are particularly susceptible to hunting pressure (Duckworth *et al.* 1993). In addition to direct persecution, incidental disturbance is also a threat, particularly to sandbar-nesting birds. Habitat loss is currently not a severe threat at the IBA, except along the rivers, although it may become so in the future, particularly at wetlands.

### References

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