



Royles Christmas Newsletter 2023



Well, one year older and we are still trying to get away to far-flung places! We started the year with a holiday to Cambodia. We have spent very little time in the Far East so we thought we ought to rectify that. On a trip to Cambodia we could visit Angkor Wat and also catch up with a suite of rare and interesting birds, some of which can only be seen in that country. We organised the trip through a local wildlife tour agency who do much to support local villages who look after their wildlife - in fact there are schemes to pay villagers to find nests of rare birds and then receive further payments when the chicks hatch and again when the young birds fledge. There are also schemes to support rice-growers who plant rice in the open forests - they can get a premium for the rice if they commit to not fell trees or poach wildlife.

So after an initial few days of civilization in Siem Reap (very cheap cocktails!) we toured around with a driver and a guide, and often stayed in local village-run eco-lodges and camps. We had some poor weather (it wasn't supposed to rain in January) but we saw most of our target birds. And yes we did go to Angkor Wat - unfortunately the sunrise view was non-existent with thick grey cloud. We were a little underwhelmed by the main Angkor Wat temple but enjoyed some of the smaller ones such as Ta Promh and Bayon and the one near our first camp at Prey Veng.



Right: Breakfast of cold rice, cold omelette and duck egg on the edge of a minefield.



Next was a trip to Georgia and Armenia, a part of the world we had always wanted to visit and it did not disappoint. Wonderful scenery, food and birds, including both Caspian and Caucasian Snowcocks - also bears and tulips!



Our next mini-holiday was to north Norfolk in early June. We stayed in a delightful little cottage at Binham and went bird-watching in the many local reserves. It was a good week - baby Avocets and Bearded Tits - but it was extremely cold and cloudy the whole time - there was a strong northerly wind blowing. Only a few miles inland it was hot and sunny!



And then to northern Peru in October. This was strictly a bird-watching tour and we covered the whole width of the country from Pacific to Amazon. We did see a lot of birds - 498 species - but were left feeling slightly dazed after a long series of 4:00am alarm calls! The trip was named after the key bird of the trip -



the Marvellous Spatuletail - see right. Another key bird was the critically threatened White-winged Guan which is thriving under the protection of the local community.

And so back home and straight into the Pembrokeshire Bird Conference - we were both involved in this and it was very successful with some really interesting talks. We are expecting a very quiet Christmas and a winter of editing the community newsletter and website, acting as treasurer for 3 churches and the Bird Group, administering the Dale moorings, doing bird surveys etc. And Rosemary is still nothing - the total garden species count is now 610. We keep occupied!

With all best wishes for Christmas
and the New Year

Rosemary Pels

