



# SEIMA PROTECTION FOREST INFORMATION FOR VISITORS



## **Introduction**

The Seima Protection Forest (SPF) is located in eastern Cambodia in Mondulkiri and Kratie provinces, along the border with Viet Nam. It was declared in 2002 as a Biodiversity Conservation Area. In recognition of its importance for biodiversity and environmental services the area was declared a Protected Forest by Prime Minister Hun Sen in 2009. The total size of the Protected Forest is 2,927 km<sup>2</sup> (292,690 ha). The Core Protection Forest is 1,879 km<sup>2</sup> (187,983 ha). The combined area of the Buffer Protection Forests east and west of the core is 1,047km<sup>2</sup> (104,707 ha).

The area is now managed for conservation of biodiversity, environmental services and livelihoods by the Department of Wildlife and Biodiversity of the Forestry Administration. Technical assistance is provided by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), who have been working in Cambodia since 1999, and active in southern Mondulkiri since 2000. Please remember that both WCS and you are guests of the Cambodian government and behave accordingly.

These notes are intended as a guide to the area for visitors. The information is relevant for national and international visitors including anyone from long term researchers to tourists passing through.

A selection of photographs of the site can be viewed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/seima/sets/>

## **Waiver**

All guests of WCS are required to sign a waiver before staying at the SPF. These can be obtained from the administration department in Phnom Penh.

## **Weather and Seasons**

Generally the area has 2 distinct seasons, dry and wet.

Dry season generally runs from November to late April. There is very little rainfall during this period. In the early dry season the nights can be quite cool, and the days hot sunny, and dry. Later in the dry season it can get very hot, in the upper 30s C, but humidity is still relatively low.

This is the time when most field work takes place in SPF. The dry conditions are more pleasant to work in, and it is possible to access most of the site by vehicle. There are very few leeches.

Wet season is from May to October, but the wettest months are June and September. The day temperatures are in the low 30s C, and humidity is high. Typically it rains in the afternoon and early evening on most days, but rainfall patterns are not very predictable.

By late June most of the roads into the conservation area are impassable. Generally little field work takes place in the wet season. Leeches also become a nuisance in the evergreen forest areas.

## **Getting to/from SPF**

There is now a good road from Phnom Penh most of the way to SPF. This is currently the most reliable way to get to the site. There is no regular air service to Sen Monorom, however Mission Aviation Fellowship does still fly there on occasion.

## **Bus**

There is a direct Rith Mony bus service from Phnom Penh to and from Sen Monorom that passes by the Keo Seima Headquarters, and station at O Reang. This service runs daily in the dry season, but cannot travel in the wet season due to the condition of the road.

Departs Phnom Penh at 7am. Arrives at Keo Seima between 2:30 and 4pm

Departs Sen Monorom at 7 am, passes O Reang at about 8 am and Headquarters at about 9 am. Arrives Phnom Penh at about 5pm.

Cost : \$8 one way to/from Keo Seima

Tickets can be bought in advance in Phnom Penh, and can be arranged with the Camp Coordinator in Keo Seima.

### **Shared Taxi**

Shared taxis run year round.

Camry sedan cars depart from Street 80 in Phnom Penh at 8 am. Arrives Keo Seima at about 2pm

In the wet season the Camry taxis do not operate. The slightly less comfortable pick-up trucks (ute) run from the same location in Phnom Penh, departing at 7:30

Returning Camry and pick-ups pass Keo Seima Headquarters at about 8 – 9:30 in the morning. They arrive in Phnom Penh at about 3 pm.

Cost \$12.50 per person each way. Bookings should be made in advance to ensure a seat.

Note: these are cramped, paying double the cost guarantees the whole front passenger seat for one person. This can be arranged in advance.

Alternatively pick-ups depart from Keo Seima at about 1 am. This option takes you as far as Suong or Memot towns. From there one needs to take a bus. It gets you to Phnom Penh before 1pm.

### **Charter Taxi**

A Camry can be chartered. This is the most comfortable way to travel. Cars can take 1 – 6 passengers. Cost : about \$75 one way to/from Keo Seima/Phnom Penh.

Must be booked in advance.

A pick up can also be chartered. Note these rarely have double cabs, but can carry a lot more baggage. Cost about \$150 one way to/from Keo Seima/Phnom Penh.

Must be booked in advance.

## **Accommodation**

### **Cost**

Keo Seima Headquarters, Keo Seima and O Reang station:

FA and WCS employees, project partners and guests:	\$3 per person / night
Foreign researchers, other NGOs:	\$5 per person / night
Cambodian researchers/research assistants:	\$3 per person / night
Visitors, and tourists:	\$10 per person / night

This includes running costs in the camps and 3 meals per day, drinking water & tea/coffee.

There is no charge for camping in the forest, but you will need to buy food. A cook / camp guard will need to be hired for the duration of field work.

A single bill covering all costs will be prepared by the Camp Coordinator at the end of your stay. Long term visitors will be charged monthly.

Security is good at project facilities, but normal precautions should be taken with valuable equipment and cash. The project does not take responsibility for any equipment or belongings left

at camp. Storage of equipment can be arranged if you are away from the site for extended periods. Storage should be arranged with the Camp Coordinator.

Please keep project facilities tidy. Have consideration for other visitors and guests. The meeting room, guest-house, office and mess are government buildings used regularly for official functions by VIPs, other visitors and project partners, often at short notice. Please help ensure that project facilities are presentable at all times.

### **Keo Seima Head Quarters**

The guest house is basic but comfortable. It is the furthest building along on the right of the line of structures on the ridge top above the main road about 5 km east of Keo Seima.

The guest house currently has a dorm room with 7 beds, and second room with 2 beds. All beds have mosquito nets. Light blankets are provided. In December and early January you may need a light sleeping bag. A sleeping sheet is not essential but some people find them more comfortable than the nylon sheets that are provided. Please bring your own toiletries and towel. Two basic bathrooms are available in the guest house with cold-water showers and western style toilets.

The kitchen / mess is the first building of the row. The office is the green concrete building in the middle of the row.

### **O Reang**

The project has built a station on the edge of the Sen Monorom plateau next to the main road at the eastern edge of the Protection Forest. The station has 4 rooms upstairs. There are no beds, but mattresses and mosquito nets are available. The station is at about 550m above sea level. In the early dry season it can get quite cool at nights and so a light sleeping bag is recommended from November to March. Squat toilets and Asian style bathing facilities are available.

NOTE : Water supplies are limited at O Reang in the dry season. Please use water sparingly where possible. In the dry season it may be necessary to wash in the nearby stream.

### **Kml 64**

This station is located about half-way between base camp and O'Reang. Facilities were upgraded in 2008. The main building can sleep up to 5 in dorm conditions. There is running water for 2 showers and a western-style toilet.

### **Sre Pleng**

This basic sub-station is in a remote part of the site. It can be accessed by vehicle in the dry season, but the roads are impassable in the wet season. Facilities consist of a small building with space of hammocks or mattresses on the floor. Water is available from a hand pump, and there is a squat toilet.

### **Forest Camps**

Camping in the forest is usually in hammocks. These can be borrowed from WCS if advance notice is given. They have integrated mosquito nets and are usually strung under a tarpaulin to protect from dew or rain. Most field work takes place in the dry season when heavy rain is rare.

Camp sites are located near permanent water sources. Please be sure to bathe downstream from where cooking/drinking water is taken. Please do not use any detergents or cleaning chemicals except for mild soap, to be used sparingly.

## **Meals and drinking water**

### **At stations**

#### Food

Three meals a day are provided at Keo Seima and O Reang stations. A cook can be provided for Km164 and Sre Pleng. Food is basic but good Khmer food, consisting of rice with vegetables, meat/fish and soup. Note that breakfast is also usually rice and fish. Vegetarian meals can be prepared if advance notice is given.

Many visitors like to bring extra snack food (eg peanut butter, cookies, muesli bars) with them. Fresh bread is now available most days from Keo Seima and can be purchased if requested.

Meal times :

Breakfast :	06 30 - 07 15
Lunch :	11 30 - 12 15
Dinner :	18 00 - 19 00

Early or late meals can be arranged with advance notice. Packed lunches can be prepared if notice is given the previous evening.

#### Drinks

Drinking water is available at all camps. It is boiled and safe. In Keo Seima this is from the large stainless steel urn in the corner of the kitchen / mess.

Tea and coffee are provided at Keo Seima Headquarters kitchen, where a thermos of hot water is always available.

Other drinks (eg coke etc) can be purchased from Keo Seima town. Drinking of alcohol is discouraged in Headquarters. However beer can be purchased in Keo Seima.

Ice can be purchased from Keo Seima. There is a fridge in the office for cooling drinks and making ice.

### **In the forest**

Forest food is simple. Most meals consist of rice with tinned or dried fish cooked over a wood fire.

Drinking water is from the permanent water sources at camps. It is always boiled thoroughly.

Note that water is limited in the dry season. Dehydration is a real risk in the heat. Be sure to carry plenty of water with you from your campsite, it is often impossible to refill water during the day.

## **Laundry**

A laundry service is available at Keo Seima Headquarters. Please hand laundry to camp house - keeper. Depending on weather it will be returned in 24 - 72 hours.

Cost is approximately \$2 for a set of clothes. Visitors are of course welcome to do their own laundry if they choose.

## **Rubbish**

Please dispose of rubbish carefully. Rubbish bins are provided in the guest house. Please use them. If you wish to dispose of your own rubbish please do so in the designated rubbish pits, where it is burned regularly.

Do not leave any rubbish in the forest. Plastic and paper waste can be burned in the forest. Cans can be left in the forest to rot, but must be burned beforehand to remove paper and plastic coatings. Please ensure that any fires are extinguished completely before leaving a campsite.

## **Batteries and Hazardous waste**

Do not leave used batteries in the forest. Bring all batteries back from field trips. Do not put batteries in the rubbish bin or pits. Used batteries are collected separately and are taken to Phnom Penh for disposal.

Hazardous chemicals such as formalin should not be dumped in the camps. Any used chemicals should be brought back to Phnom Penh.

## **Power**

There is mains electricity from Viet Nam at the Keo Seima Headquarters. This is at 230 v. It is usually available 24 hours a day, but power-cuts are regular. Please remember to turn off unnecessary lights and fans so that we can keep the bills down.

The O Reang station has a generator for electricity. Output is 220 v. Normal operating times are from dusk (approximately 6 pm) to 9 pm. The generator can be run outside of these hours if requested. Cost to visitors for extra generator use : \$2 per hour.

Solar power is available at Km164, and Sre Pleng. This should be enough to slowly charge batteries, and provide lighting. A portable generator is available if more power is needed.

## **Telecommunications**

There is mobile phone coverage on the Camshin and Mobitel networks at Keo Seima Headquarters only. There is some Camshin coverage at other parts of the conservation area, including O Reang.

The office phone can be used for making work related calls, with approval from the camp coordinator or other senior staff.

The phone can accept local, national, and international calls at no cost.

Internet is available on the desktops and the office has WiFi.

## **Computers**

The project has 3 desktop computers at the main office in Keo Seima. Visitors can occasionally use these facilities as long as it does not clash with project activities. Please check with the camp coordinator and project TA.

All the computers have standard MS Office software, plus ESRI GIS software.

## **Transport within SPF**

### **Project vehicles**

The project has 3 pick-ups permanently on site. These are usually reserved for project activities.

On occasion they can be used by visitors at a rate of \$0.50 per kilometre.

### **Moto taxi**

Motorbikes can be hired from the local villages. This can be with or without a driver. They are small scooters, but can often provide access to areas when all other modes of transport cannot. These can be arranged from Keo Seima Headquarters. Please ask the camp coordinator for assistance.

### **Local charter**

There are pick-ups available for hire from Keo Seima. They are likely to be willing to only drive along the main road and the project prefers that they are not used to access the interior of the Protection Forest. Please ask the camp coordinator for assistance in organising one of these.

## **Guides and translators**

Local guides or field assistants can be provided if sufficient notice is given (at least one full day). None of the local guides speak English. There is a standard pay scale for local labour. The current rates are:

10,000 Riel per day per person

plus 10,000 riel for food costs if staying out in the forest.

15,000 riel for day/night work.

Any meals in camp eaten by the field assistant will be charged to the visitor.

The camp coordinator can help in finding and hiring local assistants. If preferred the project can organise payment for labour and food, and provide the visitor with a single receipt/invoice at the end of the stay (or on a monthly basis for long term visitors) for all expenses

Please do not tip guides or staff (see below).

There are several local people who have worked with the project for many years, know the area very well, and have worked with several different research projects. They may be available to help if there are no other project priorities.

The Camp coordinator and some other project staff speak English and can help to translate some of the time.

## **Cultural Points**

Please be respectful of local culture and customs. One should be considerate everywhere, but this is of particular importance in local villages.

### Dress

Wearing long trousers and shirts (short or long sleeved) is preferred, a good, clean t-shirt can be suitable, shorts are acceptable when relaxing in the evening, but not in work hours, especially when meeting with project partners. Note that sleeveless shirts / vests are never acceptable. Footwear should always be removed when entering houses, and SPF buildings.

### Interactions

Please be patient. Life may have a different pace to what one is used to, this does not mean that things will not be done. Raised voices, aggression and public arguments are taboo. Losing one's temper is offensive and will usually be counter-productive. Similarly, overt criticism of people should be strictly avoided.

### Tips and Donations

To avoid problems with jealousy the project requests that no cash tips are made directly to staff or local people.

A fund is being set up in Headquarters to help provide funds to local villages for appropriate development activities. If you would like to assist, the project asks that donations can be made to this fund.

Villagers in Andong Kroulong have set up a village fund used for patrolling and village development activities. They may ask visitors for a donation if you go on an official visit there. This is entirely voluntary; a few dollars per visitor is an appropriate amount to give. It is usually more convenient and discreet to organise this after leaving the village and then pass it through a project staff member.

## **Health and Safety**

There are a few poisonous snakes in the forests – notably *Trimeresurus* pit vipers, banded kraits and cobras, but they are rarely encountered.

Leeches, ticks and day flying mosquitoes can be a nuisance in the wet season. Mosquitoes and ticks are best controlled with DEET based repellent and long sleeved shirts. Leeches can be controlled by wearing leech socks, or 2 pairs of ordinary socks, and long trousers. Scorpions and centipedes can give a painful sting. You are advised to shake out boots and to check backpacks and jackets before putting them.

Encounters with bears and tigers are extremely infrequent. There may be some chance of encountering elephants. Please check with project staff for any information regarding the known locations of elephants. If you hear, or suspect you hear elephants, do not approach them, move away slowly and quietly.

Malaria is a concern in the wet season and you should seek independent medical advice on appropriate prophylaxis and treatment. Should malaria be suspected, blood tests can be carried out in Keo Seima town but it is recommended that follow-up treatment be sought in Phnom Penh (e.g. SOS clinic tel number 023 216 911, 012 816 911). If this is not possible the most convenient and effective treatment is probably *Malarine* which can be purchased in Phnom Penh (the recommended pharmacy is Pharmacie de la Gare, #81Eo Monivong). Seek current advice on avoiding fake anti-malarials, which are common.

Dehydration is one of the main health concerns in the dry season. Water in the camps is boiled and safe to drink. Be sure to re-hydrate in the mornings, and carry plenty (at least 2 lt) of water with you when in the forest. Oral rehydration salts can be purchased in Phnom Penh.

It is believed that no mines were laid in the project area during the civil war so there is relatively low risk from exploring the forest off the trails. However a large number of bombs were dropped on the area in the American War, particularly near to the border with Viet Nam and there may be a small chance of finding some unexploded ordinance. As a simple precaution do not disturb any unidentifiable metal objects you may encounter in the forest.

## **Suggested Activities**

Birdwatching around Headquarters can be quite rewarding, especially during the northern hemisphere winter when the areas is used by several species of migrant passerines. Check the grass and scrub in the log yard.

Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbons can be heard most mornings in around dawn. They can be seen occasionally in the trees on the ridge north of the buildings. Scan the tops of the tallest trees along the ridge.

### **Walks**

The following are easy walks from Keo Seima Headquarters.

#### **Finfoot pond**

- A pleasant walk along the main road in the late afternoon or early morning.
- About 6Km out and back.
- Walking time 1 ½ - 3 hours.
- Follow the main road east from Headquarters over the large hill to where there is a pond on the south side of the road.
- In the evenings scan the trees for primates. Black-shanked Doucs and Long-tailed Macaques are seen regularly. The latter are more frequent closer to the water courses. The walk is also good for forest edge and canopy birds such as bulbuls, mynas, leafbirds, pigeons and barbets

- The pond was home to a Masked Finfoot from March – June 2006, and again in March 2007. Other birds seen around the pond include 3 species of kingfisher, Oriental Darter, several herons, and needle-tails.
- For those in need of exercise this is a pleasant run.
- Note that traffic is relatively heavy from about 8 am to 5 pm.

### O Pam trail

- A walk through bamboo and disturbed semi-evergreen forest.
- Approximately 3km from main road to O Pam river.
- Walking time 2 – 4 hours
- The trail head can be hard to locate. Please check before following this trail for the first time
- Access is from a small path running south of the main road near to the bridge closest to the main entrance. Follow the path by the house on the south side of the road. The path then cuts through farmland and through a small section of disturbed forest. The trail continues across another area of open scrub, bending east and heading into taller forest. On entering the bamboo the trail becomes clearer. The path is a cart track that runs approximately easterly along the O Pam river.
- A good morning birdwatching walk. This trail is probably the best for Orange-necked Partridge, other species seen regularly include Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Grey-faced Tit-babbler and several woodpecker species. Mammals regularly encountered include Wild Pig, squirrels, and Northern Slender-tailed Treeshrew.
- Elephants use this area. Dung and tracks are seen frequently. If you hear elephants do not try to approach them. Move away quietly.

### O Nguiy Trail

- A walk through bamboo behind the camp. A suitable alternative to the O Pam trail when elephants are present or time is short.
- Approximately 1-4 Km through bamboo forest, exiting in farmland.
- The trail leaves from behind the north-east corner of the logyard, climbs over the ridge, and loops around following a small creek east for about 3km before joining the main road at Finfoot Pond.
- Black-shanked Douc and Yellow-cheeked Crested Gibbons have been seen in the tall trees along the ridge. The habitat is suitable for Orange-necked Partridge.
- Pygmy Loris and Lesser Mouse-deer can be seen on most night walks along this trail
- This trail may be over-grown. Please check with project staff.

### **Night drives**

Night drives can be arranged in project vehicles. In order to minimise disturbance we limit this to a maximum of 2 drives per week.

Weather permitting drives usually leave at about 8 pm and last approximately 2 ½ hours. Lamps will be provided. Note that it can be surprisingly cool on the back of the pick-up at night, a long sleeved shirt or sweater is recommended.

Animals seen frequently include nightjars, flying-squirrels, and common palm civet. In the wet season Gaur are seen regularly. Other animals that have been seen include Sambar, loris sp, porcupines, Small Indian Civet, Large Indian Civet, Colugo, Siamese Hare, and Leopard Cat. There is a charge to tourists and non-project visitors of \$30 per vehicle for night drives. Please give at least 24 hours notice.

## **Wildlife records**

The Project maintains a database of all sightings, including opportunistic and anecdotal records. Any information is greatly appreciated, including bird lists and records of tracks, scat or other signs.

Where possible please provide a GPS waypoint for of the record (UTM with India/Thailand Datum) and any other information such as time, number of individuals etc. If an accurate waypoint is not available, a good description of the location, for example distance along the main road, or a trail, is still valuable.

The project is particularly interested in records of Globally Threatened species (IUCN red listed species), but are keen for any records of any species. A folder has been prepared listing all these key wildlife species, including information on their status in the SPF, if it is not readily available please feel free to ask to see a copy.

Please submit any records to the camp coordinator, project TA, or any other senior staff.

## Useful Telephone Numbers

<b>Staff</b>	
WCS Office Phnom Penh	+855 23 217205
Solita – general assistance, Phnom Penh	+855 12 737373
Sok Heng (Office Administrator, PP). Medical emergencies & admin	+855 12 798258
Edward Pollard (SBCP Technical Advisor)	+855 12 820189
SBCP Headquarters	+855 12 926008
<b>Transport</b>	
Sen Monorom Taxi - Camry	012 381 027
	012 847 940
Sen Monorom Taxi - Pick up	012 956 377
	012 973 906
	012 785 830 (double cab)
Bus	023 223 025
MAF	023 880 060
<b>Other</b>	
SOS clinic Phnom Penh	023 216 911