

## News from the Field:

Harriet Ibbett

### Central Cambodia, Biodiversity impacts of land use change

*Harriet Ibbett researched the Impact of grassland user groups on Bengal Florican populations in Central Cambodia, as part of her MSc in Conservation Science at Imperial College*

In April 2015 I was generously gifted a grant from TAAF to conduct research to assess the impact of local people on Bengal florican populations in central Cambodia. My aim was to gain a greater understanding of the drivers behind land use change in the grassland landscape, to identify other potential threats to floricans and to identify how local people interacted with grassland habitat. The Bengal florican is a critically endangered bustard species, of which the Cambodia population (the world's largest remaining population) is increasingly threatened by the expansion of rice cultivation.



Harriet interviews Cambodian farmers

Armed with the resources to successfully conduct my research I travelled to Cambodia to work with Wildlife Conservation Society to conduct social surveys in villages surrounding florican breeding sites on the floodplain of the great Tonle Sap Lake. Research revealed rapid adoption of intensive rice cultivation by local people over the last ten years and a low, but significant, prevalence of bird hunting amongst floodplain communities. Findings helped to identify several areas for future research for WCS and some immediate actions that could be implemented in order to support sustainable agricultural development and improve florican conservation. I am extremely grateful to have been given the

opportunity to conduct this research, not only did it provide me with an excellent insight into the challenges of collecting data in developing countries, but I was lucky enough to have a unique exposure into rural Cambodian life and have learnt lessons which will undoubtedly guide me through my future career. Thank you TAAF.

(Harriet Ibbett)



Male Bengal florican (Credit: Jeremy Holden, Flora and Fauna International)