



Nine Siamese Crocodiles Hatch at the Koh Kong Reptile Conservation Centre

WCS and Fisheries Administration (FiA) announced that the eggs of nine Siamese crocodiles have hatched at the Koh Kong Reptile Conservation Center (KKRCC).

Listed on IUCN's Red List as Critically Endangered, the global population of Siamese crocodiles is declining at an alarming rate. This species lives only in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. The total population is around 410 wild adults, of which 100-300 live in Cambodia, making it the most important country for the conservation of this species.

"I am so excited to see these hatchlings: It is the first time I have taken care of them since arriving the center," said Ms. Tun Sarorn, caretaker of Royal turtles and Siamese crocodiles at the KKRCC. "Before seeing them, I was surprised to hear their voices from inside the eggs. It was amazing, and I felt so happy because I realized they are coming out. I will feed them all in the next few days with small fish and frogs."



A photograph of two Giant Ibis birds perched on a nest made of sticks in a tree. The birds are dark brown with long, straight bills. The background shows green leaves and branches of the tree.

Sixteen Critically Endangered Giant Ibis Nests Located in Northern Plains of Cambodia

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), working in collaboration with Cambodia's Ministry of Environment (MoE), announced today that 16 nests of the giant ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantea*) have been discovered during the current breeding season in the Northern Plains of Cambodia in Preah Vihear Province. Community members and conservationists are working together under the Bird Nest Protection Program to protect these nests from human disturbances and other threats.

The giant ibis, Cambodia's national bird, is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List, and occurs only in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. About 99 percent of the global population, estimated to contain 194 mature individuals, lives in Cambodia, making it the most important country in the world for giant ibis conservation.

"As of July this year, our research team has recorded 16 nests of the giant ibis; 11 located in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary and five in the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary," said Thong Sokha, Wildlife Research and Monitoring Team Leader for MoE and WCS in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary.

"We expect to find new nests of this species in both sanctuaries because its breeding period is between June and September. Our team is now working closely with local communities to monitor those recorded nests and search for new ones in both sanctuaries," he added.

WCS, in collaboration with MoE, has been involved in the conservation of the giant ibis and its natural habitat in the Northern Plains of Cambodia through various activities. These include the Bird Nest Protection Program, in which local people and contracted community wildlife rangers are rewarded with 'direct conservation payments' when they locate nests, and receive a bonus if nestlings successfully fledge. The program also promotes awareness about the importance of this species, and installs protective measures on nesting trees that prevent small carnivores from eating eggs.

Said Alistair Mould, WCS's Technical Advisor to the Northern Plains of Cambodia: "These latest findings represent the continued importance of the Northern Plains landscape in Preah Vihear Province for conserving this Critically Endangered bird.

Urgent conservation actions for this globally important population include the prioritization of key giant ibis habitat within monthly SMART law enforcement patrols and protected area management plans. In addition, the incorporation of village-level agreements to create Important Ibis Areas (IIAs) is needed to raise awareness and strengthen community participation in the Bird Nest Protection Program.

Nest protection in the Northern Plains of Cambodia is supported by the Akron Zoo, Sam Veasna Centre, the European Union, and Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies.

Thirty Large Mammal Species Recorded in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary

A camera trap study conducted in August, by experts from Kyoto University of Japan and WCS, has recorded the presence of 30 large mammal species in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) in the Northern Plains of Cambodia.

The biodiversity captured in the images demonstrates the extent to which CWS, a protected area containing part of the largest contiguous tract of deciduous dipterocarp forest (DDF) in the Northern Plains, is critical to the conservation of these mammals.

“The results confirm the continued occurrence of large mammals such as Eld’s deer, banteng, elephants and jungle cats in the CWS,” said Ai Suzuki, of Kyoto University and lead author of the study. “Importantly, the globally Endangered large-spotted civet was the fourth most photographed species in CWS.”

DDF are unique and biodiverse forests marked by a prominent dry season, an open canopy and ample grasslands. Once common in the mainland of Southeast Asia, they provide excellent habitat and grazing opportunities for mammals. A robust herbivore population in turn supports predator communities.

“The study highlights the global significance of CWS (formerly Preah Vihear Protected Forest) for conservation of mammal assemblages in a lowland DDF-dominated landscape, a forest-type under-represented as protected area in mainland Southeast Asia,” Ai added.

While DDF are home to many rare species and provide a host of ecosystem services, they never the less face many threats including illegal logging, forest clearing, and habitat conversion.

“WCS Cambodia program has been working with both the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Administration in the Northern Plains landscape, Preah Vihear province since 1999 to successfully improve wildlife protection and increase benefits to local communities,” said Alistair Mould, WCS’s Technical Advisor to Northern Plains of Cambodia.

“This unique area of forest represents both a vital habitat for globally endangered wildlife and a natural wildlife corridor which together contribute to a critical part of the upper watershed catchment for the Stung Sen River. Law enforcement by wildlife sanctuary rangers as well as support from local communities is ongoing to meet current challenges, such as illegal logging, forest clearance and poaching. WCS, in collaboration with Ministry of Environment, is committed to protecting the Northern Plains of Cambodia for biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement,” he added.

This work was supported by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, US Fish and Wildlife Service, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and USAID.



Re-discovery of Endangered White-winged Duck Proves Conservation Success in Northern Plains

After one month of intensive protection by local community members participating in the Bird Nest protection scheme, conservationists from the Ministry of Environment (MoE), local communities and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) finally confirmed that the belongs to a female White-winged duck (IUCN Globally Endangered), which was re-released back into its natural habitat (Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary) in late 2015. This rare duck had received an individual identification ring during rehabilitation at the Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB), which the conservationists were now able to identify and confirm by photograph.

On the 4th of July, a nest with seven eggs of the Globally Endangered White-winged Duck (*Asarcornis scutulata*) was detected within Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary. The three local villagers have since been hired by WCS to safeguard the nest, the first observed in five years within the Northern Plains Landscape, Preah Vihear province.

“I was delighted to see the ring on the bird’s right leg because I joined the release with the local community in December 2015 and still remember it,” said Rours Vann, Wildlife Research Team Leader in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary between WCS and MoE. “The nest of this White-winged Duck has been protected very well by three local men, and the eggs should be hatching soon,” he added.

The White-winged Duck is listed on IUCN’s Red List for Threatened Species as Globally Endangered, primarily because its global population is in decline due to habitat loss, disturbance along key stretches of riverine habitat and illegal poaching. The global population of this enigmatic duck species is estimated to be between 250 – 1,000 individuals, while little is currently known about the numbers present in Cambodia.

“After receiving the information and images from the field, our team has double-checked the records and we are very certain that this is the duck, ACCB in collaboration with MoE and WCS released on 20th December 2015,” said Michael Meyerhoff, Project Manager at the ACCB. “We are so happy to see this duck again, because it shows that joint efforts between international organizations and government agencies to preserve endangered species are not only necessary, but can be very successful”, he emphasized.

The Northern Plains of Cambodia are home to many globally endangered bird species. Those include Critically Endangered Giant Ibis, White-shouldered Ibis, and three species of vulture, globally Endangered White-winged Duck, and many other important wildlife. WCS is working in collaboration with the MoE to conserve Northern Plains’ forests and wildlife through a variety of conservation interventions. The Bird Nest Protection Programme is a payments scheme designed to combat the threat of egg and chick collection. Under the scheme, local people living in two protected areas in the Northern Plains of Cambodia are offered conditional payments if they successfully locate, monitor and protect nests until fledging.

“This finding represents a remarkable conservation success in Northern Plains with the re-discovery, after 1.5 years, of this individual rare female duck in healthy breeding condition,” said Alistair Mould, WCS’s Technical Advisor to Northern Plains of Cambodia.

“This success would not be possible without important support and efforts from local communities and MoE’s wildlife sanctuary rangers committed to protecting forests and wildlife in the Northern Plains,” he added.

Nest protection in the Northern Plains of Cambodia would not be possible without supports from Akron Zoo, Sam Veasna Centre (SVC), the European Union, Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP).



Educating Villagers about Globally Endangered Masked Finfoot

Wildlife Research and Monitoring Team from the Department of Environment, WCS and authorities educated approximately 300 local people in three villages of Raksmeay, Komprak and Antil in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS), Preah Vihear Province about Masked Finfoot, a globally Endangered water bird, and the requirement for community level protection to conserve the species from extinction.

This training was conducted after a nest of Masked Finfoot was recorded for the first time in four years on the Memay River in the KPWS, the only confirmed breeding location in Cambodia for this very rare species.



Young Cambodians Learn About Mekong Turtle Conservation

A camera trap study conducted in August, by experts from Kyoto University of Japan and WCS, has WCS organized an event to raise young students at Svay Chek primary school in Sambo District of Kratie Province understanding about the globally endangered Asian Giant Softshell Turtle living in the Mekong river stretch between Kratie and Stung Treng provinces. This event aims to make them aware of the importance of the Asian Giant Softshell Turtle, threats to the species, and to encourage their support and participation to conserve the species.

During the training, those students were required to draw pictures showing Asian Giant Softshell Turtle, natural habitat and their threats to survive.





Ministry of Environment (MoE), WCS and Wildlife Alliance (WA) released over twenty animals back to the wild in Keo Seima Wildlife sanctuary, Mondulakiri Province. Those wild animals included one tortoise, four primates, four monitor lizards, six snakes, and five common palm civets.

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