



A nest of Critically Endangered Royal Turtles found in the Sre Ambel River System

A nest of the Critically Endangered Royal Turtle with 16 eggs has been discovered by conservationists from Fisheries Administration (FiA), WCS, and local communities along Sre Ambel River system near Preah Angkeo Village, Sre Ambel District of Koh Kong Province. Three local community rangers have been hired to guard it until the eggs hatch. This is the first nest of Royal Turtle found in 2018.

Listed on IUCN's Red List as Critically Endangered, Southern River Terrapin (*Batagur affinis*), locally known as the Royal Turtle, is one of the world's 25 most endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles. The Royal Turtle is so named because in historical times only the Royal Family could consume its eggs. It is designated as Cambodia's National Reptile by Royal Decree issued on 21 March 2005.

"From January until March is the Royal Turtle's breeding period, so our team is working hard to search for its nests in the Sre Ambel River system. If we find a nest, we will work with the local community to protect it until the eggs hatch and then bring the hatchlings to Koh Kong Reptile Conservation Center where they will be cared for until they are mature and can be released back to the wild," Mr. In Hul, FiA Official and Project Coordinator. [Read more](#)

Three Critically Endangered Red-headed Vulture Nests discovered in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary

Three nests of the Critically Endangered Red-headed Vulture were found in Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary by conservationists from the Ministry of Environment (MoE), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and local communities. The population of this species in Cambodia is possibly less than 50 individuals. These nest discoveries give hope that conservation efforts may save this species from extinction.



A Red-headed Vulture on the nest inside Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary. © Mao Khean / WCS

Global vulture populations are declining at an alarming rate. Cambodia's three vulture species - Red-headed (*Sarcogyps calvus*), Slender-billed (*Gyps tenuirostris*), and White-rumped (*Gyps bengalensis*) - are all listed on the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered. Cambodia supports the largest population of vultures in Southeast Asia, but there only a few hundred individuals left in the country. [Read more](#)

Stakeholders successfully demarcate boundary of Phnom Tbeng Natural Heritage Park

Preah Vihear Provincial authorities, Department of Environment (DoE), local communities and WCS have successfully completed the demarcation of the Phnom Tbeng Natural Heritage Park (PTNHP). This involved clearly delineating the protected area through the placement of 40 concrete posts at key locations on its boundary. The demarcation paves the way for rangers to patrol the park and enforce forest and wildlife protection laws.



Stakeholders stand in front of a concrete pole that marks boundary of Phnom Tbeng Natural Heritage Park. © Uy Sitha / WCS

The boundary demarcation exercise, supported by Rainforest trust, was conducted alongside a community engagement and consultation process. This involved holding community workshops lead by the Preah Vihear DoE, and District and Commune Governors, to present the PTNHP boundary location sub-decree, explain protected area laws and answer questions from the respective communities. Engaging communities on issues concerning the protected area has provided an important opportunity to build awareness and ensure support for future conservation activities. [Read more](#)

World Wetlands Day celebration at the Northern Tonle Sap Protected Landscape

About 1,000 people from the Ministry of environment (MoE), WCS, provincial and local authorities, communities, teachers and students marked the celebration of World Wetlands Day at Chea Sim High School, adjacent to the Northern Tonle Sap Protected Landscape (NTSPL), in Stung District of Kampong Thom Province. The purpose of this event is to raise public awareness of the importance of wetlands for local livelihoods and biodiversity conservation, and inspire individual action to protect it. The participants also took a field visit to see the Critically Endangered Bengal Florican and other waterbirds at the NTSPL.



Stakeholders are showing promotional materials, calling for support and individual action to protect Cambodia's wetlands. © Sun Visal / WCS

Covering 31,159 hectares in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap provinces, NTSPL is a very important wetland habitat supporting bird conservation and livelihoods of local communities living around the area. This grassland habitat in Kompong Thom Province is home to the largest population of the Critically Endangered Bengal Florican in the world, it is critical to their survival. WCS has been working closely with MoE to conserve the NTSPL and the important wildlife that it supports, including the Bengal Florican, through various conservation activities such as assisting law enforcement, bird nest protection, sustainable agriculture, and raising community awareness.

Meeting with Minister of Environment to discuss collaborative conservation activities in Keo Seima

Mr. Colin Poole, WCS Regional Director, and Mr. Ken Sereyrotha, WCS Country Program Director, met H.E. Sam Samal, Minister of Environment and other Ministry of Environment's (MoE) senior officials to discuss cooperation between MoE and WCS in conserving Cambodia's forests and wildlife, especially in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS) over the past 15 years.



Colin Poole (left), was discussing with H.E. Say Samal about cooperation between MoE and WCS in conserving Cambodia's natural resources. © Eng Mengey / WCS

Special attention was dedicated during the meeting to discuss the ongoing investigation and legal prosecution of the murder case involving three conservation heroes who were killed while they were patrolling forests in KSWS on the 30th January 2018. MoE and WCS are extremely shocked and saddened for the loss of these three conservation heroes and jointly re-enforced their commitment to protecting Cambodia's forests and wildlife, especially conservation in KSWS.

Meeting with Director General of Fisheries Administration to discuss collaborative Turtle conservation project activities

Mr. Ken Sereyrotha, WCS's Country Program Director and Colleagues met with H.E. Eng Cheasan, Director General of Fisheries Administration (FiA) and FiA technical working group to discuss the partnership and collaboration between FiA and WCS. Joint conservation activities consist of conserving the Critically Endangered Royal Turtle, Cambodia's national reptile, the Siamese Crocodile along the Sre Ambel River system in Koh Kong Province and the Globally Endangered Asian Giant Softshell Turtle along the Mekong River between Kratie and Stung Treng Provinces.

Additionally, the meeting focused on the establishment of Community Fisheries along the Sre Ambel River system to safeguard the Sre Ambel River system and its biodiversity.



Som Sitha (front right), WCS's Technical Advisor for Koh Kong Conservation project, explained about Royal Turtle conservation at Sre Ambel River system. © Eng Mengey / WCS

Statement from WCS on the killing of three conservation heroes in Keo Seima

"At WCS, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and relatives of our three conservation heroes, Teurn Soknai, Ministry of Environment Ranger; Sek Wathana, Military Police Officer; and Thul Khna, WCS SMART Officer, killed on January 30th in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS) while they were patrolling forest near the Cambodia-Vietnam border.

"Soknai, 37, Wathana, 34, and Khna, 24, were killed when returning from the O'huoc border area after locating an illegal logging camp and confiscating chainsaws and motorbikes used for transporting wood."

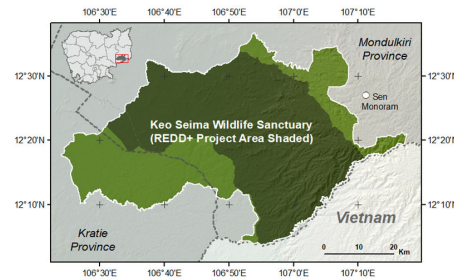
"Every day, rangers and law enforcement staff risk their lives to protect wildlife and forests. We should not allow criminals to destroy the forests of Cambodia and to threaten and murder those working tirelessly to protect this country's natural heritage. Soknai, Wathana, and Khna will always be remembered as conservation heroes." [Read more](#)



(Left to right), Thul Knal, WCS SMART Officer, Toeun Soknai, Ministry of Environment Ranger, and Sek Wathana, Military Police Officer, were killed while patrolling in KSWS on January 30th.

Conservationists encouraged by Cambodia's pursuit of justice in murder case of three Rangers

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is encouraged by the Cambodian Government's actions pursuing justice in connection to the murder two weeks ago of three rangers, including one WCS staff member, and is committed to continue working with the authorities and other partners to protect the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.



Map shows REDD+ project in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.

Ken Serey Rotha, Country Program Director of WCS Cambodia, said: "We will not be deterred in our support of our Cambodian partners who are courageously working to safeguard our country's wildlife in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. Our work in Keo Seima is not easy as the loggers, land-grabbers and poachers ruthlessly target our natural resources and our people, but we will not succumb to their total disregard of the law and the importance of the forest to local communities, biodiversity and our nation. With the continued implementation of the SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) patrol system and with the support from REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) partners we all remain committed to the successful management and protection of Keo Seima. [Read more](#)

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