



the WWF Cambodia Newsletter

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WWF, global environmental conservation organisation

More White-shouldered Ibis discovered in northern Cambodia

Following up on reports from local villagers, WWF recently discovered a very important roost site for White-shouldered Ibis (*Pseudibis davisoni*) which is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The roost site was regularly used by 18 White-shouldered Ibis and two other individuals roosted nearby. These exciting discoveries occurred just seven months after WWF initiated a bird nest protection program in the "central section" of the Mekong for White-shouldered Ibis, Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) (listed as Vulnerable by IUCN), and Greater Adjutant (*Leptoptilos dubius*) (listed as Endangered by IUCN). The "central section" is a 56-km long area along the Mekong between Kratie and Stung Treng towns that has extremely high biodiversity values, a finding confirmed by biological surveys conducted by WWF in 2006-2007.

The surveys estimated the population of White-shouldered Ibis in the "central section" to range between 78-125 individuals. With a global population estimated at less than 500 birds, the "central section" may support the largest population of these birds in the world. WWF worked closely with the Forestry Administration and local villagers



White-shoulder Ibis at Central Section.
© Sok Ko / WWF Cambodia Programme

this past breeding season to safeguard eight nests (7 chicks were fledged) of White-shouldered Ibis and nine nests (14 chicks were fledged) of Lesser Adjutant. WWF hopes to expand the nest protection program for the 2010 breeding season which runs from January through April.

Recent wet season surveys have confirmed the presence of White-shouldered Ibis, Woolly-necked Stork, Painted Stork, Darter, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Brahminy Kite, Mekong Wagtail, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Grey Heron, and many other interesting species.

WWF vulture restaurant demonstrates encouraging results

Within the last six months, WWF Eastern Plains landscape project team recorded 30 individuals of three critically endangered vulture species: Red-headed Vulture, White-rumped Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture. Since 2004, WWF has been using vulture restaurants on a bi-monthly basis in both Monduliri Protected Forest and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary to provide food for vultures and help monitor the populations.

Cambodia is among the few countries where diclofenac (veterinary medicine used to treat domestic cattle) is not used; and Cambodia's protected areas, including the Eastern Plains, form Indo-Chinese dry forests landscape considered to be irreplaceably globally significant for



Critically endangered Vultures at a vulture restaurant in the dry forest Eastern Plains.
© JP Delpal

vulture conservation. This is a good opportunity to save these species which are declining rapidly elsewhere, especially in South Asia.

More wildlife captured on film in the Eastern Plains landscape

With more than 160 camera traps set in the area by WWF project team wildlife can be regularly recorded suggesting that they are on the way to recovery. Species such as Banteng, Gaur and Sambar are important Tiger prey and photographing these three threatened species highlights the global significance of Cambodia's dry forests within the Eastern Plains landscape. Their densities will be estimated by distance sampling from line transects. This photo of wild elephants and baby not only confirms the presence of this endangered animal in the area, but also shows that the reproduction is taking place.



Many species are beginning to relax due to reduced pressures from hunting and habitat degradation. During the last quarter Apr-Jun, eight chainsaws have been confiscated and destroyed to punish illegally cutting of forests for timber. The WWF's enforcement team has recorded and filed twelve cases of illegal logging and wildlife hunting. Following this increased effort, illegal activities were reduced by 50 percent compared with the previous quarter.

WWF works with Cambodian government on protecting the country's unique dry forests Eastern Plains landscape with a total area of 5,955 km² and where globally significant wildlife including Asian Tiger have better chance to be recovered. The WWF's Eastern Plains landscape project fits well within the newly established Cambodia's national forest programme aiming at developing a workable social, economic and political framework for conservation and sustainable management of forests through the following priority programmes: national forest demarcation, classification and registration, forest resource management and conservation, forest law enforcement and governance, national community forestry, capacity building and research development and sustainable forest financing mechanisms.

Mekong dolphins on the brink of extinction

Environmental contaminants in the Mekong River has pushed the population of Irrawaddy dolphins to the brink of extinction, a new report by WWF has revealed.

Currently estimated to be between 64 and 76 individuals, the population has suffered, since 2003, 88 deaths of which over 60% were calves under 2 weeks old. The Irrawaddy dolphin inhabits a 190km stretch of the Mekong River between Cambodia and Lao PDR.

"Necropsy analysis identified a bacterial disease as the cause of the calf deaths. This disease would not be fatal unless the dolphin's immune systems were suppressed, as they were in these cases, by environmental contaminants," said Dr Verné Dove, report author and veterinarian with WWF Cambodia.

Researchers found toxic levels of pesticides such as DDT and environmental contaminants such as PCBs during analysis of the dead dolphin calves. High levels of mercury, which directly affects the immune system making the animals more susceptible to infectious disease, were also found in some of the dead dolphins.



The International Whaling Commission was held in Portugal June 22nd-26th and attended by Director of Cambodian Fisheries Administration and other senior government officials. At this meeting, the Cambodian delegation raised concerns about Mekong river dolphins and specifically mentioned the problem of toxic contamination, referring to WWF's report on the subject stating that they work well with WWF in Cambodia. © Sarah / WWF

Limited genetic diversity due to inbreeding was another factor in the dolphin deaths.

"A trans-boundary preventative health programme is urgently needed to manage the disease affected animals in order to reduce the number of deaths each year," said Seng Teak, Country Director of WWF Cambodia.

Minister's visit to Prek Thnot helps boost sustainable rattan management and production

In his recent visit to WWF's rattan site in Cambodia south-west (Kampot coastal province), his Excellency Dr. Chan Sarun Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries was impressed by the works WWF and the Prek Thnot community have achieved in applying model of sustainable rattan harvest and production in the past years.

His Excellency Minister supports and congratulates WWF initiative of community-based rattan resource management as a way to help maintain the forests ecosystem. Researches on rattan growth and yield, growing nursery to produce seedlings and rattan enrichment in forest all helped develop a sustainable rattan harvesting model. He was also very pleased to witness by himself community involvement in processing rattan, an important non-timber forest product upon which they depend for livelihoods development. The already established community-model of rattan processing not only helped villagers generate household incomes, but also contributed to reducing unsustainable exports of raw rattan to neighbouring countries.

During the visit, his Excellency Minister



His Excellency Minister Chan Sarun (middle) and Mr Seng Teak, WWF Country Director (right) during the visit. © Ou Ratanak / WWF Cambodia

also learned that WWF is applying the model of sustainable rattan management in other area within Kampot and other provinces including Preah Vihea, Koh Kong, Preah Sihanouk and Kampong Thom, while also moving onto increasing the capacity of production of small and medium enterprises to meet the environmentally-friendly processing standard for future integration into international markets. Cambodia has the potential to enter its rattan products in international markets if the rattan resource is properly managed to meet sustainable supply and production.

Ecotourism in Mondulkiri to begin its first operation in November

The WWF ecotourism project in cooperation with the Royal University of Phnom Penh and Cambodia Community-based Ecotourism Network conducted several training programmes for the target communities to equip them with the necessary skills to provide high quality service to tourists. Training provided were guiding and hospitality including hygiene, food preparation and home-stay management. Tourists will be introduced to some of magnificent wildlife and plants. There will be an opportunity to gain insight into culture and tradition of the indigenous Phnong. Tourists will experience staying in a community home-stay adjacent to the spirit forest, while having the opportunity for elephant rides, hiking and mountain biking in the country's unique dry forest landscape. WWF is working with relevant government agencies to develop ecotourism in Cambodia's Eastern Plains landscape as a way to support sustainable financing of protected areas management, while also providing alternative livelihoods for local communities.

WWF promotes best mining management practices

The WWF-supported protected areas and other conservation zones in the northeast region of Cambodia have now been under a serious threat of numerous mining projects which are planned and being implemented by the national and international companies. To-date, there are more than 10 mineral exploration projects in Mondulkiri province. They mainly focus on bauxite gold, copper and other metal resources. With lack of proper governance in planning and decision making process, a concern over social and environmental impacts is growing especially in relations to the natural biodiversity and livelihood of the local people.

WWF is working with local community, relevant government agencies, NGOs and private sector to promote best management practices for mining development in Cambodia and help make sure that social and environmental costs are included in the policy formulation and in the decision making process.

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